



## REACHING OUT

NORTH DAKOTA VISION SERVICES/SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

#85

May 2017

### TVI Spotlight: Danielle Hillebrand

Meet this Reaching Out's featured TVI Danielle Hillebrand from West Fargo Public Schools!

When asked how she became interested in pursuing a career in vision, she mentioned that her career began with teaching students with significant support needs. This involved her working closely along with a TVI who taught her many tricks of the trade. When she went back to school to get her Master's degree, her TVI mentor suggested looking into becoming one herself. It didn't take much convincing since this had become a strong interest for her.

Some of her favorite aspects of the job are getting to work one on one with students and families. It creates a very intimate environment that she enjoys. She gets to know the whole student by supporting their needs through the Core and Expanded Core Curriculums. Her job often takes her outside the school walls to be able to increase their independence in their home and community which has built relationships with students and families that is irreplaceable to her.

If she could change one thing about her students she would wish for them to never feel that their visual impairment was holding them back. She wants them to have the courage to take risks, to learn new things, to explore, to develop relationships, and to achieve their goals.



-Ryan Torgerson

We will be featuring a TVI in each newsletter so if you would like to be included, email Ryan at [rltorgerson@nd.gov](mailto:rltorgerson@nd.gov) for more information.

#### Upcoming Events:

**APRIL 30- MAY 5**

EARLY ELEMENTARY STP

**MAY 14-19**

ADULT WEEK

**MAY 29**

OFFICE CLOSED (MEMORIAL DAY)

**JUNE 1**

LAST DAY OF SCHOOL PROGRAMMING

**JUNE 4-9**

ADULT WEEK

**JUNE 20-23**

TEEN CAMP

**JULY 4**

OFFICE CLOSED (INDEPENDENCE DAY)

**JULY 31-AUG 4**

KIDS CAMP

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# Reaching Out

## Short Term Programming Fun

The 5th-8th Grade STP was great! Two special events that occurred to support the theme of "Let's Get Moving." One special event was a tour of the UND Wellness Center, complete with three personal trainers helping the students navigate the various cardio and strength training machines in the circuit room. We walked the track, learning that 8 times around equals a mile, which the students were very surprised at. Next we had a presentation from two UND Dietetic students who are interning at the Wellness Center. They talked to the students about the importance of eating a variety of fruits and vegetables and the nutrients that our bodies need. The students then were able to go to the Kitchen Classroom and cut up a variety of fruit to make a fruit salad. We all enjoyed the tasty snack!

Another event was learning how to Zumba! Our faithful Delta Gamma volunteers came over to our school on Thursday evening between 6:30-7:30. One of the girls was a Zumba instructor, so it was a good workout. The students said they enjoyed it, as the DG's always bring in a lot of great energy!

-Deb Johnsen



## Superintendent's Scoop

Early 2017 has been devoted to legislative work. Trips to Bismarck to present our budget (part of House Bill 1013) were made on January 10th and March 8th. As I write this update the legislature is still in session but will wrap up within days. This has been a difficult session for the legislature and state agencies. The budget gap was unprecedented which meant that state agencies were directed to make reductions of 10% or more. For NDVS/SB this meant reducing staff by 1.5 positions in addition to other cuts. This has been challenging but we are convinced that we can continue to provide high quality service to children and adults by operating even more efficiently. Personally, I would not be as confident if it were not for our amazing, dedicated staff for whom I am very grateful. The sacrifices are real, but we will weather this storm with determination and a smile.

Strategic Planning began in March via a video conference with Dr. Brent Askvig at the North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities.



He visited with our planning team about a structure for conducting the process in several steps throughout the year. All staff will be given opportunity for input, focus groups

will be formed to solicit feedback and a manageable written plan will be the outcome that will lead us into the next biennium. Through this plan we will position ourselves to provide the best possible service to the people of North Dakota in the next two years and beyond.

In ending I would like to share that these larger issues are important but what keeps our staff excited and energized are the meaningful and fun services that we provide. Our short-term program weeks in early 2017 have been abuzz with excitement. The teen weeks have focused to a much higher degree on real job experiences, for example. Our elementary and middle school weeks are intense and the hallways erupt in talking and laughter when these friends reunite and learn life skills together. Our goalball tournament and trip with students to South Dakota were crazy fun! The annual Family Weekend/Card Contest with the NDSB Foundation and parent planners was very successful again. To cap off the spring, we just hosted the Dakotas AER professional conference. We have much to be grateful for and look forward to the rest of the year with anticipation.

-Paul Olson

## Reaching Out

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### South Dakota Goalball Trip

This year I have been given the privilege and honor of being the “coach” for goalball at NDVS/SB. It has been a lot of fun working more with the students, getting to know them and seeing their improvements throughout the year. February 10<sup>th</sup> we had South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired come up to our school for a goalball event and they in return invited us to their school for a small tournament they host.

There was a great turnout of students that attended this year. Paul joined me as we left Grand Forks around noon on Friday March 31<sup>st</sup> with Alyssa, Jyoti and Jyoti’s cousin Anjali. We stopped in Fargo to pick up Lilli and in Jamestown to have Rylee join us along with our Minot Regional Coordinator Erika Moulton. We then proceeded south towards Aberdeen when Lanna and one of her new students, Zack, tailed behind us the rest of the way.

We were happily greeted at the door when we arrived by some of the SD students who showed us to our rooms right away so that we could get cleaned up for supper which was in about 20 minutes. On the menu was pizza and green beans and a wonderful salad bar. After supper, the coaches met briefly to go over the teams and then everyone met in the gym for Forensics. Forensics is a public speaking event where competitors are judged. Some of our students used this time as a talent show. Alyssa recited a poem she wrote on the way down, Lilly sang a song and Jyoti played the guitar. We were then rushed off to the Red Rooster Coffee Shop for the remainder of the evening.

The Red Rooster was a very interesting place to say the least. I have not been to many

coffee shops in the past but have definitely never been in one that was this bustling with locals young to old. One of the things that makes this place different from others is that they have an open mic slash karaoke night a couple nights out of the week. We were able to listen to the local talent as we sipped on our mochas, lattes, hot chocolates, malts or whatever else we decided to order courtesy of the SD student council who gave all players and coaches in attendance \$5 to help pay for our evening toddy. I definitely cannot forget about our own Elvis impersonator Lilly who got up and sang an excellent rendition of “Can’t Help Falling in Love.”



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On Saturday morning, there was no fooling around when shortly after waking up we met in the lunch room for pancakes, sausage, fruit, and yogurt. The perfect breakfast before starting goalball at 8:30. There were enough students in attendance that we were able to put together 5 teams and played round robin style so that each team was able to play each other. All teams were very well matched and everyone came out a winner for the weekend receiving medals for their outstanding play.

The matches were over just in time to load up our vehicle and meet in the lunch room one last time for taco salad and to say our goodbyes before heading out on our four and half hour journey back to Grand Forks. It was a great trip, albeit fairly short, but the students had a great time meeting up with and talking with their peers from out of state. Thank you Jodi, Tevan and everyone else for your wonderful hospitality while we were down there. We look forward to next year for another wonderful time.

-Ryan Torgerson



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