

# NDVS/SB OUTREACH NEWSLETTER

*NDVS/SB provides individualized services and resources to infants, children, and adults with visual impairment to empower them in achieving their goals.*



*Pictured above is Amanda, Emmett, Ian, and Hadley in front of their Christmas tree.*

## Family Focus: The Sorenson Family Gwinner, ND



Eight-year-old Ian Sorenson lives in Gwinner, ND, with his parents Amanda and Rick and siblings Emmett (5) and Hadley (3). Ian receives outreach services from NDVS/SB at his home, at school, and in his community. Read our interview with Ian's mom Amanda to find out more about Ian and to hear how he and other children with visual impairment can thrive.

### **Tell us about your son Ian and his visual impairment.**

Ian is an 8-year-old who is very social. He's always saying hi and wanting to give hugs. He is in the second grade and loves being around other kids. He attends school at North Sargent. Ian participates in Riding for Dreams, which is a therapeutic riding program. He loves riding horse! Ian has a few different medical conditions, including Dandy Walker, agenesis of the corpus callosum, mutation of the NDP gene, seizure disorder, and craniosynostosis. Ian also has CVI. His eyes are healthy; it's his brain that doesn't communicate with his eyes to tell him what he sees.

### **When was he diagnosed? What was your reaction to his diagnosis?**

When he was a couple of weeks old, his doctor had suspicions about his eyesight. Then, at a couple of months old, his pediatrician said that he is probably blind. Right away I would say I was in denial because anytime someone would say something about his vision, it would be like I heard it for the first time even though it wasn't.

### **How has NDVS/SB assisted your son and your family throughout his life?**

NDVS/SB staff started coming to our house once a month when he was couple of months old. They helped him help explore different types of toys and performed activities with him to adapt to his vision needs. An employee from NDVS/SB also came with to eye doctor appointments, and when Ian started preschool, they would go to his school and give his teachers ideas on ways to help Ian. When Ian started Kindergarten, the NDVS Superintendent gave a presentation on visual impairment to the staff at Ian's school.

### **Tell us about any struggles and triumphs your family has faced surrounding Ian's vision.**

When we take Ian to a new place that he is not familiar with, you have to help steer his walker so he doesn't crash into anything. Also, it's hard to know that he will not get to see what our faces look like. On the other hand, it amazes me the way Ian moves around our house and knows where everything is. Also, how he can walk down the school hallways so confidently.

### **What are your hopes for his future?**

I hope that Ian keeps his determination. When he wants something, he just keeps pushing on! I hope that NDVS/SB and his school will keep working together and adapting his classroom, hallways, and playground to his vision needs so he can thrive.



## CVI Resource Spotlight:

<https://cvi.bridgeschool.org/>

The Bridge School provides high quality academic and social experiences that support students of all abilities. The majority of their students are diagnosed with Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI). Research guides their practices, which means they are constantly adapting and changing to best support their students' needs. Their website shares research as well as lesson plans, curriculum, professional development opportunities, and information on their school, which is located in Hillsborough, California. TVI Mary Verlinde recommends this resource because "it is a good resource for CVI information, especially pertaining to Augmentative Communication which can be an area that is difficult to implement with CVI students." Whether you are a teacher or a parent, check it out for yourself.

## Fun for the Whole Family with Elf on the Shelf

### Learn how to Write Image Descriptions

When your child can't see the pictures in a book or on a screen, image descriptions can bridge the information gap. Image descriptions convey the same or equivalent information that a sighted reader would get when they look at a picture. Here is a fun activity to help your entire family learn how to write image descriptions and teach them why they are important, courtesy of the Paths to Technology blog on Perkins eLearning site.

The Elf on the Shelf book and toy are used in many households this time of year. The mischievous elf moves around the house, watching for naughty and nice behaviors to report back to Santa. He moves to a new place each morning, and can be found in funny scenarios, such as in the snack cupboard covered in crumbs or having tea with other dolls.

For this activity, your child should decide where the elf will sit next. Siblings or other family members can help create the scenario and add more details. Then together, your family can write a description of the elf's scenario. What details need to be included? What can be left out? Have your child share their opinion of what wording is best and most descriptive.

Example from Perkins eLearning site:



**Image Description: Smiling elf sitting cross-legged in an open microwave with popped popcorn spilling out.**

**If your child enjoyed this image description activity, consider entering them into the Benefits of Audio Description in Education (BADIE) contest. We've had winners from North Dakota in the past! For information on the contest, go to <https://dcmp.org/learn/657>**

For more information on this activity, visit [this link](#).