



Orientation and Training Center (OTC)

Washington State Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) Volume 4, Issue 2

Upcoming Events

- 12/16 **Graduation and Holiday Party**
- 1/3 **Assessments/ New Student Planning**
- 1/9 **Training and Case Conferences**
- 2/3 **Challenge Activity— Snowshoeing**
- 2/21 **Assessments/ New Student Planning**
- 2/27 **Training and Case Conferences**

“Teaching Has Become My Passion.”

By Donna Lawrence, Instructor



Home Economics Instructor Donna Lawrence works with Student Willie Jones while he prepares a meal for class.

Five years ago, I began working at the Orientation and Training Center (OTC) part-time as a residential instructor at the Gene-see Park Apartments. I witnessed amazing progress by students and was so moved by the commitment of the OTC staff. I have had many jobs always endeavoring to “make a difference” and I have finally found the one

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Self-Defense Teaches Students to Stay Safe, Builds Confidence

By Shanequa Alexander, Student

On October 18, the Orientation and Training Center (OTC) held a self-defense workshop taught by two instructors from Train for Defense. The class included a review of strategies to stay safe in public as well as self-defense techniques to use if ever attacked.

The thought of ever having to use such violent techniques was terrifying

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Student Monica Salazar defends herself in a self-defense demonstration by Train for Defense.

Orientation and Training Center (OTC)

Capsizing in a Kayak Raises the Bar

By Leah Thomas, Student



OTC Students kayak the beautiful Puget Sound.

I am so glad I did not let fear stop me. Capsizing raised the bar for me to get over and I did it!

On a misty Friday morning, double kayaks were lined up along the shore waiting to be shoved into the cold waters of the Puget Sound. Students and staff from the Orientation and Training Center (OTC) sat ready in tandem kayaks for their maiden voyage that paired sighted guides with students and staff who are blind for the 4.5-mile paddle off Alki Beach.

Kayaking made me feel independent. It was like driving a car again. When I capsized, it was really scary but turned out to be a very good lesson. Because even though I turned upside down in the boat, that experience made me more determined. I had never been kayaking before and was really eager to try it.

Finally, out in the kayak, feeling the calm of the smooth water,

paddling in unison with my tandem buddy felt great. Pretty soon we were speeding through the waves competing with one of the other kayaks! It was a blast. It was so fun I want to get a kayak for my family so we can all share this empowering fun experience.

I am so glad I did not let fear stop me. Capsizing raised the bar for me to get over and I did it!

Teaching

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for me.

As now, the full-time Home Economics Instructor, teaching has become my passion. There is nothing like working with a student

when they succeed at a task they had thought was impossible. Exploring new strategies and practicing old ones to empower students is such a privilege. I have

the freedom and the support to create curriculum for healthy and green ways to set up a home. I enjoy all the diversity and challenges presented every day.

Self-Defense

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but the potential for ever being attacked was far worse. We were taught how to get out of several positions such as a choke hold or arm grab. We were taught to use everything from our feet to our elbows and fists to defend ourselves. I thought all these techniques were fascinating

until it came down towards the end of the class and we were told we would be individually attacked by simulation and all the skills we'd just learned would be applied!

When it was all over, I realized during the simulated attack that I had the strength to fight and

that I could really, really protect myself if it ever came down to it. After this self-defense class was over, my confidence level had increased a thousand notches which will help me better in life when I grab my cane and take a stroll down the street. I will indeed walk with my head held high.



Student Shanequa Alexander fights back during a self-defense demonstration.

Feedback Encourages a More Pedestrian-Friendly Sidewalk

By Tracy "Dino" Sanchez, Student

In April 2011, walking towards OTC's former Genesee apartment complex on Alaska Street, east of the DSB Seattle office, a gentleman walked ahead of me in the same direction pushing a baby carriage. As we approached an outside USPS mailbox to our right in the parking lot of the local Post Office, a vehicle pulled up to it. The car, facing north towards Alaska Street, took up more than three quarters of the sidewalk.

The gentleman walking ahead of me proceeded to push the baby carriage around the vehicle and at that same moment the driver let up off of the brakes to inch towards the street, bumping the carriage softly. The man immediately yelled at the driver to stop, as I

gaped and joined him in a mean stare towards the driver. The driver apologized. I stopped and let the driver continue on his way while the man and carriage disappeared around the next intersection.

Witnessing this incident prompted me to speak with the manager of this Post Office regarding the location of its mailbox and the safety hazard it incurs. An appointment was made for me to meet with the manager at a later date. Photos showed how much of the sidewalk was occupied by cars that stopped at the mailbox. They also showed that drivers had obstructed views of any pedestrian walk on the sidewalk heading east.

In mid-May, I met with the assistant manager, due to the main manager being unavaila-

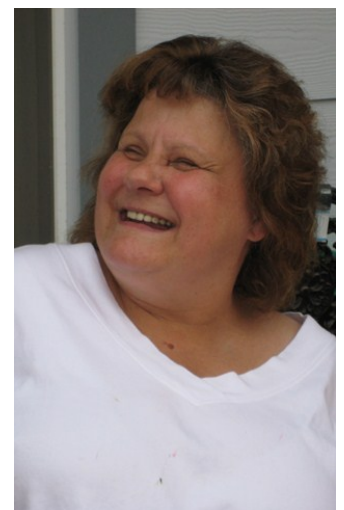
ble. The Vice President of OTC's Student Council, Leah Thomas and Student Council Liaison, Instructor David Friedman accompanied me to the appointment. I shared my story with the assistant manager and showed him pictures. We discussed several options but the one that stood out and seemed the easiest was to move the mailbox back a few feet away from the sidewalk where it looked like another box was bolted down before.

Two and half months later under new management, a work order was submitted and the mailbox was moved back a few feet in the parking lot. A photo was taken and a thank you letter was written and presented to the post office for its timely efforts.



Dino Sanchez presents a thank-you letter to the Post Office staff for their timely efforts.

I was delighted to learn that I could function as well as any other adult; I simply needed to do things a bit differently.



Former Instructor Julie Brannon now works at the Seattle Lighthouse for the Blind.

Goodbye (for Now), Julie!

By Mary Lorenz, Julie

On September 2, we said good-bye to Julie Brannon, our Career Instructor, who now works as a manager at the Seattle Lighthouse. Julie created the Career

Class curriculum and set up many an internship site for students, which provided them with real-life work experience. She put in many hours outside of

her work hours to arrange the internships and career possibilities for students. She is greatly missed by students and staff.



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Former Student Carrie Lampel plans to become a teacher.

The Orientation and Training Center (OTC) provides adults with comprehensive and intensive training in the alternative skills of blindness. The OTC develops the whole person through maintaining a highly-interactive facility and program which opens students to a world of recreation, community involvement and volunteerism with the purpose of grounding them in the skills that lead to employment.

For more information on the OTC, visit our website, www.dsb.wa.gov, or contact Program Manager, Keiko Namekata, keinamekata@dsb.wa.gov or (206)906-5500.

From Student to Teacher, Blind Individuals Can Do It

By Carrie Lampel, Former Student

Approximately two years ago, Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) counselor, Lisa Wheeler came to my home to discuss my vocational options. During our conversation, she inquired as to what my previous employment history had been. When she heard that I had teaching experience, she asked whether or not I'd consider returning to that field.

At the time, I thought that option was totally beyond my reach. I couldn't fathom the idea of a blind/visually-impaired teacher, let alone becoming one myself. I still recall Lisa's broad smile, and her statement which was something like, "Just wait until you meet your teachers and the manager of the Ori-

entation and Training Center (OTC). I think you might be surprised just how much blind/visually-impaired people can do." Well, that was the understatement of the year!

When I began at the OTC, I had almost no blindness skills. My teachers were all excellent. I will be forever grateful for the skills in Braille, Orientation and Mobility, computers, home economics, and career planning that I gained. I was delighted to learn that I could function as well as any other adult; I simply needed to do things a bit differently.

That knowledge and training has opened up many new doors for me. I graduated from the OTC in September of 2010 and

for the past year I have been attending college to earn the prerequisites to apply to a graduate program at Portland State University. When I am finished, I will be a teacher of visually-impaired learners. Mere words cannot explain the profound difference that DSB and OTC have made in my life.

Since June 2011, I have tutored Braille and other subjects as needed at the OTC. Through volunteering, I have had an opportunity to share the abilities and enthusiasm that I acquired at the OTC, the greatest of which is the firm belief that blind/visually-impaired individuals can accomplish anything that they set their minds to. Way to go, OTC staff!

All opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual authors. For more information on the Orientation and Training Center (OTC), visit us on the web (www.dsb.wa.gov/otc) or email us (info@dsb.wa.gov).