



## A Note From The DSB Child and Family Staff

The days are longer. The sun is shining, and the kids are home from school. It must be summer. Keeping children busy and engaged over the long summer months can be a challenge. We hope this issue of DSB's ABC Newsletter gives you ideas for your child, and your whole family. Take this time to help your child explore their senses, expand their world, and enjoy the wonders of the outdoors.

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## Can Blind People Grow Gardens?

*By Ernest Jones*



The question I hear most often is, "How do you, being blind, know the difference between weeds and garden plants?"

Really, telling weeds apart from garden produce plants is not that hard - you just have to know what you planted and where you planted it. I don't wear garden gloves as I must be able to feel the plant with my fingers.

In the early stages of growth it is hard to tell the zucchini apart from pumpkins or winter squash. It is also hard to tell cucumbers apart from melons, thus knowing where these are planted is important. Young corn shoots may feel a lot like grass but knowing where you planted the corn will help you know what is corn and what is grass.

Tomato plants as well as carrots have a distinct odor to them and once you know that fragrance you will know immediately when you touch them.

I do all my garden work from soil preparation, planting, watering, weeding and harvesting. My garden is in raised beds. I harvest the beans for drying or canning as well as the green beans, corn, carrots, potatoes, broccoli and cauliflower. But, I have to admit that my wife is better at picking ripe strawberries, tomatoes and ripe melons than I am.

Being blind should not stop a person from raising a great garden though they may need help in preparing the soil for planting if not in raised beds.

Stretch a soaker hose across this worked up soil, then use this hose as a guideline and plant right along its side. Most crops like the soaker hose covered with dirt along with the seeds. I find it best to have the soaker hose on top of the ground when planting corn for corn has tough roots that will wrap around the soaker hose when it is buried. After you have the first soaker hose lined up across the garden you can step 2 to 4 feet, depending on what you are planting and stretch out the next soaker hose. I find using the soaker hose best for several reasons: It gives me something to plant right along as a guide, it helps identify where the garden rows are and it allows for the aisles between rows to remain mostly dry, making walking in the garden easier. I use garden soaker hoses, one per row, so when that crop has ended I can shut off the water supply to it. Of course one can use lawn/garden sprinklers also if they desire.



Gardens come in all sizes and it is surprising what can be grown in a 4 square foot area. Many garden plants can also be grown in large pots on the deck but watering these may be a problem as the soil will dry fast.

Don't let blindness stop you from enjoying growing a garden. Why not give it a try this summer?

## **There Is Still Time To Learn New SCILS**

*Summer Camp for Independent Living Skills (SCILS):*

DSB developed a summer program for blind/visually impaired students **ages 9 to 13** that focuses on the Expanded Core Curriculum. Students learn age-appropriate daily living skills. They connect with their peers from around Washington State. And they make new friends and have lots of fun too! Application packets were sent early spring and there are still openings!

Spokane Location of SCILS: This is a weekend retreat for families of blind/visually impaired pre-teens in the central and eastern part of Washington. It is held the weekend of August 8-10, 2014. Planned activities include tandem bicycling riding, Mobius Science Center field trip, and Karaoke. If you want an application packet, please contact Debbie Brown: [debbie.brown@dsb.wa.gov](mailto:debbie.brown@dsb.wa.gov) or phone 509.456.2933

Seattle Location of SCILS: This is a week long day camp based out of Delta Delta Delta sorority house near the University of Washington. It is held the week of July 21-25 and includes activities at the sorority house and nearby neighborhood. For more information or to request an application, please contact Janet George: [janet.george@dsb.wa.gov](mailto:janet.george@dsb.wa.gov) or phone 206.721.4103

## **Summer Reading Isn't Rocket Science.....Or Is It?**

*By: Mandy Gonnson (WTBBL Youth Services Librarian)*



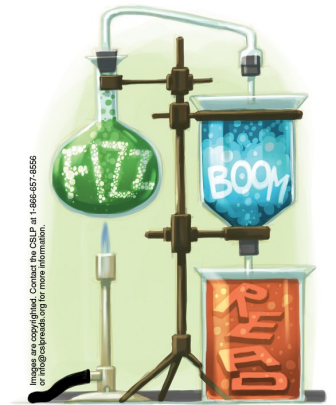
Take your student's reading to the next level by enrolling in a summer reading program! Offered by the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library (WTBBL) and many local public libraries, summer reading programs encourage students to set reading goals, and offer exciting rewards like prizes and special activities. Students who read during the summer are more likely to remember information from the previous school year and will start the new school year ready to learn.

This year, WTBBL is sponsoring STEAM-focused (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) programs called "Fizz Boom Read" for grades PreK-6, and "Spark a Reaction" for grades 7-12. For more information and to register, visit: <http://www.wtbbl.org/youthevents.aspx>

WTBBL is also hosting a Summer Reading Launch Party on Sat. June 14<sup>th</sup> from 11am-2pm for kids & families. Uncover the mysteries of science through special workshops from the Pacific Science Center, hands-on experiments, stories, and STEAM activities. For kids and families of all ages! Not registered with WTBBL? Come and check us out! RSVP by June 12<sup>th</sup> to Mandy Gonnens at [mandy.gonnens@sos.wa.gov](mailto:mandy.gonnens@sos.wa.gov) or 206-615-0400.

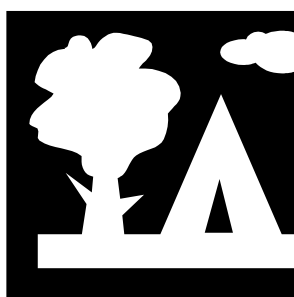
Another way to encourage your student to read is to read beyond the book! A book can come alive by incorporating songs, tactile and sensory objects, as well as doing activities, and going on field trips. Student are more likely to remember new vocabulary words, ideas, and book concepts if they have an additional experience reinforcing this information.

For younger students, sing a song about your student's favorite animal from a book about animals. Or visit a petting zoo to experience real animals! For older students, try creating a craft or put on a play based on the book. Visit a museum or art gallery to learn more about a historical period. The entire family can participate in these experiences and be part of the learning process. There are many ways to experience books beyond just reading! For more ideas, contact Mandy Gonnens.



Lastly, check out these recently added stories that are perfect for sunny summer days:

- ◆ Cows in the Kitchen by June Crebbin. A bouncy barnyard version of "Skip to My Lou." For preschool to grade 2. [WTBBL# BRJ 1349]
- ◆ Locomotive by Brian Floca. Illustrates what it was like to ride from Omaha to Sacramento on the new cross-country railroad in the mid-1800s. For grades 2-4 and older readers. 2013. [WTBBL# DB 77766]
- ◆ The House of Hades [#4, Heroes of Olympus] by Rick Riordan. As Percy and Annabeth fall endlessly toward Tartarus, Hazel and the crew of Argo II race to rescue them. For grades 5-7. 2013. [WTBBL# BR 20369; DB 77833; LP 25356]
- ◆ Legend [#1, Legend series] by Marie Lu. Two fifteen-year-olds--Day, a famous criminal, and June, a soldier prodigy sent to capture Day--discover they have a common enemy in the distant future. For junior high and older readers. 2011. [WTBBL# DB 74825; LP 25360]



## Summer Activities 2014

*Although these activities come from the Northwest Autism Center, many are available for children with a variety of disabilities.*

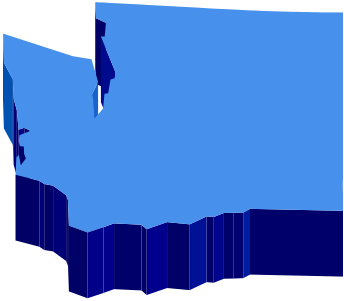
Here is the link for the Seattle Children's Camp Directory statewide-- <http://cshcn.org/resources-contacts/summer-camp-directory>. Great things are being said about Camp Dudley out of Yakima. They have a family camp for children with autism spectrum disorder and their families.

Also, there is a wonderful bike camp for individuals with disabilities called I Can Shine—coming to Spokane the week of August 11-15, 2014. For more information and/or to register, visit [www.icanshine.org](http://www.icanshine.org).

SibShops for children ages 8-13 who have a sibling with special health or developmental needs. Registration is required by calling Roz @509.328.6326 or email [rbethmann@arc-spokane.org](mailto:rbethmann@arc-spokane.org), located at the The Arc of Spokane Community Center (down the driveway) 320 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave., Spokane from 9:30 – 2 p.m.

The University of Washington is coming to Spokane on July 23<sup>rd</sup> to do workshops on behavioral issues...location to be determined...look for more information soon at [www.nwautism.org](http://www.nwautism.org) or the University of Washington website.

## Sensory Gardens and Tactile Experiences in Washington



Do you want to take an inexpensive day trip with your child and family? Here is a website listing the public gardens and parks of Washington State.

Just below the link are some highlights of parks featuring sensory gardens and influences of Blindness such as Braille and tactile exploration of the park. Where ever you travel this summer, it's important to verbalize what the visually impaired cannot see. Sensory gardens are conducive to awakening the senses other than vision.

<http://www.ilovegardens.com/Washington%20Gardens.htm>

Near Bellingham in Ferndale, WA: Adjacent to the Tennant Lake Interpretive Center is the award winning Fragrance Garden. Visitors are encouraged to touch, smell and enjoy the beauty of plants. The raised beds are wheelchair accessible and have a unique Braille system that provides plant identification for the blind. 5975 Lake Terrell Road, Ferndale WA

North of Seattle in Edmonds WA: Sierra Park was designed by Jim Brown, a blind landscape architect. It is unique in that there are Braille signs for the blind along the path identifying some of the plant materials. The concept was developed, and funded by, the Edmonds Lions Club. Sierra Park features Braille interpretive signs, play area, baseball, basketball, picnic tables, restrooms, loop trail. 19020 82nd Ave. W, Edmonds WA

Southwest Washington: Mt. St. Helens National Park is visited by more than 500,000 visitors a year. Volcano-watching and photographing America's volcano is the top past-time at the National Park followed by touring the exhibits and movies at these two Main Mount St. Helens National Park Visitor Centers. Mt. Saint Helen's educational center had all exhibits Brailled and sponsored by the Boy Scouts. Located off I-5 approximately 2.5 hours south of Seattle and 1.5 hours north of Portland.

Downtown Seattle: The Seattle Aquarium has a "touchy feely tank". Ready to get your hands wet? This is the exhibit for you. Life on the Edge is your chance to get up close and personal with the many fascinating creatures that dwell in the tide pools of Washington State's outer coast and Puget Sound's inland sea. Step up, lean over and reach in – watch what happens when you gently stroke a sea cucumber. Test your fingertips against the prickly spines of a sea urchin. Follow the scuttling steps of a hermit crab. Notice how, even though they seem to be completely still, sea stars are always moving. Inhale the rich scent of seawater. Naturalists are always nearby to identify the animals in the exhibit, answer questions and deepen your knowledge about Puget Sound. Even if you opt not to get your hands wet, you'll still be enriched by the beautiful sights, smells and sounds of this exhibit. 1483 Alaskan Way Pier 59, Seattle WA



Tacoma: Point Defiance Zoo--a tide pool replication in education center. PT. Defiance Zoo and Aquarium had a free day for people with disabilities and escorts; the third Tuesday of each month. 5400 N. Pearl St, Tacoma WA



Bellingham: Big Rock Park is small and easy to access. A father had this small bit of land created for his son with autism to enjoy nature and art. There is a garden area where you can pick the berries and eat them when ripe (strawberries, raspberries, etc.). The park has outdoor sculpture art that you can touch as much as needed. One piece is an interpretation of 3 women singing.

Seattle: Seattle Lighthouse sensory garden, the Ethel Dupar Fragrant Garden. Tours are free. Donations are appreciated. If people are coming with groups of more than five, please contact Helen Weber at 206-281-7870. 2501 S. Plum Street, Seattle WA

## PARENTS CORNER

*This article was submitted by one of our readers to share her experiences with other parents. If you have a story that you would like to share, please let us know*



### **5 Reasons Why Recreation is SO Important for Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired**

*By: Emily Coleman, Parent & Teacher of the Visually Impaired*

Summertime is approaching and for many children that means trying new sports or a new activity, hanging out at the park, going camping, and simply having adventures. Children who are blind or visually impaired can often be left out. The following are

5 reasons why it's so important to include these children in recreational activities.

1. Physical activity. Children who have a visual impairment sometimes don't get many opportunities to exercise. We all know that exercising is important to stay healthy, so this reason is obvious.
2. Hands-on learning. Sometimes, children with visual impairments simply don't know how to play any sports or participate in activities. They've never been taught, or haven't been exposed to recreation designed specifically for them. By including them in a variety of recreational activities, they can learn how to play, which leads to reason number three.
3. Finding their preference. Only after learning about a sport, or an activity, can a person truly decide if they like it or not. By providing children who are visually impaired with lots of recreational opportunities, they can decide for themselves what things they'd like to try again...and what things they'd rather not.
4. Socialization. It can be difficult for some children to make friends. Recreation provides a common activity that can start friendships, and maintain them through a shared interest or hobby. Try to see every recreational activity as a chance to meet a new friend, and to be a new friend to somebody else.
5. Self-esteem. Children who are visually impaired should be treated like their peers. They are just as capable, and expecting them to participate in recreational activities will build their self-esteem. If they are told that they "can" instead of that they "can't" they'll also expect more of themselves. Through every accomplishment, their self-esteem will improve, leading to greater independence.

For all children who are blind or visually impaired, independence is the greatest goal. This is worked on during the school year through academics, but sometimes ignored during the summer. For the

reasons listed above, I suggest you continue teaching independence throughout the warmer months by promoting recreation. Not only will it benefit your child this summer, but also for many summers to come.

To read more from Emily Coleman please visit [Familyconnect.org](http://Familyconnect.org) where Mrs. Coleman is a contributing author. She is also the facilitator for the Facebook page, "Blindsided in WA", for families with blind/visually impaired children.

## What Fun Summer Can Be!

By: Diane McCutchen

What fun summer can be....but wait we live in the Northwest. It can still be fun for our little ones. When I think of summer I think of water whether it is falling from the sky or in a swimming pool. There is room for both. Exploration is the name of the game.



Hmmm. So it's raining....but it's still warm outside. Let's go out and stomp in puddles, play in the mud, catch rain drops with our mouth or let it bounce off our face. Stomping in puddles to determine when we are in a puddle and when we are out of a puddle. Repetition is the name of this game. Playing in mud lets us feel different textures. Helps us understand that dirt and water make mud. We can fill containers with mud. We can find objects mom or dad has hidden in the mud.

Oh, no the rain stopped! Where did the water go? Oh here it is in the wading pool. Measuring cups are great fun in the pool. Fill and pour, pour and fill. Find all the floating toys and put them in the basket before we get out. A first experience in a wading pool in the backyard may involve mom or dad getting in the pool with the child with low vision or no vision in order to allow them the time to accept where they are and that it can be a safe place before they can truly enjoy the fun of playing in the water. Putting the bath chair typically used in the tub in the wading pool initially may help with the transition.

Helping plant a garden. Uh-oh, was that a weed or a flower. Guess I better ask mom. She said find all the rocks in the garden and put them in a bucket before we can plant. I get to dig the holes with my own trowel or spoon. Then we put the flowers in. Now we water them. I think I just made mud.

You know we could go to the park. Walk on the sidewalk then step into the grass, and then back on the walk. Time to explore the swing before swinging helps lessen the fear. Going down the slide sitting in mom or dad's lap is much more acceptable.

There are hundreds of concepts little ones learn when enjoying the outdoors getting dirty. Listening to the outside sounds. Searching for natural objects in the yard....rocks, leaves, sticks. Make a book of the finds by putting each in a zip lock bag and fastening them together. Then when your child feels each bag (page) they can name what they are by touch. Don't forget the concept of cleaning up....Putting muddy shoes in the outside basket, washing hands using soap, water, towel to dry.

It can all be a fun learning experience.



**Saturday, June 14, 2014**

**11am-2pm**

**at WTBBL: 2021 9th Avenue, Seattle 98121**

Featuring two science workshops presented by the  
*Pacific Science Center at 11:45am & 1:00pm*

# **WTBBL Summer Reading Program Launch Party**

Uncover the mysteries of science through hands-on experiments, stories, and STEAM activities (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math)!

Meet other WTBBL families and explore the library. Stay for all or part.

For kids and families of all ages!

**RSVP by June 12th to**

**mandy.gonnsen@sos.wa.gov or 206-615-0400**

Register for the Summer Reading Program:

[www.wtbbl.org/youth.aspx](http://www.wtbbl.org/youth.aspx)

