

# REACHING OUT

## CONNECTING WITH CONNECTIONS

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### Connect with us



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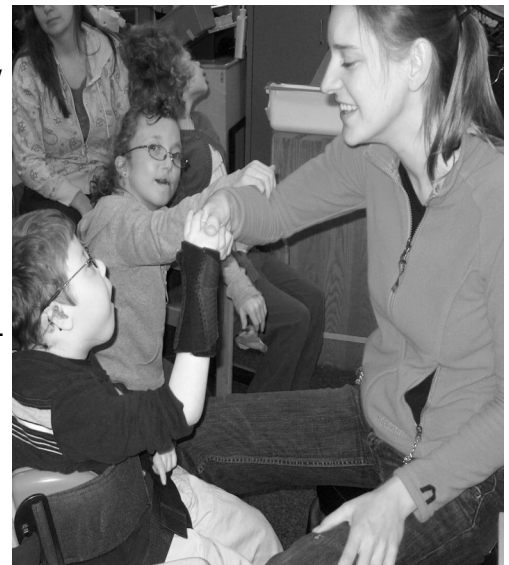
## Connections Beyond Sight and Sound: The Maryland Project Serving Children who are Deaf-blind and their Families

*Connections Beyond Sight and Sound* is a project dedicated to enhancing the lives of children who are deaf-blind and their families. Connections is funded by the federal Office of Special Education Programs and is a collaborative project between the Maryland State Department of Education and the University of Maryland at College Park. We welcome you to this edition of the tri-annual publication "Reaching Out" which focuses on the new demonstration classroom project scheduled to be initiated this month. Other news briefs will keep you up-to-date on a variety of resources and events, including our new topic-specific brochures, recent family-oriented activities, and the upcoming Summer Institute course. Please visit [www.cbss.umd.edu](http://www.cbss.umd.edu) for our latest updates.

### Deaf-blind Demonstration Classroom Project: Model Educational Strategies and Technology Coming Soon

CBSS is in the initial implementation stage of the collaborative Demonstration Classroom project for Maryland students who are deaf-blind. To be initiated this month, the project will facilitate statewide professional development in this low-incidence disability. The initiative arose from the expressed needs of teachers, paraeducators and families who wanted to "see" a model program with good instruction, effective strategies, and appropriate technology for this population. The two project classrooms will serve as a supplement to training and on-site technical assistance already offered by CBSS, and are being created with input from the 35 members of the CBSS Advisory Committee, and the collaborative efforts of MSDE, the Maryland School for the Blind, and the University of Maryland.

According to CBSS Project Director Diane Kelly, "Deaf-blindness is a low-incidence disability, but the educational impact of the unique needs of students with deaf-blindness can be significant. As the numbers of students with deaf-blindness in Local School Systems is small, teachers and related service providers have limited opportunity to develop the necessary skills in deaf-blindness, and need immediate support, training, modeling and mentoring when a student who has dual-sensory impairment is added to their caseload. The ability to observe exemplary — continued p.3



CBSS staff member Bethany Provost (right) will be providing technical assistance and training for staff in the new demonstration classrooms located at the Maryland School for the Blind.

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## 2nd Annual Elijah Jimenez Golf Tournament A Huge Success



Sixty golfers gathered last fall to raise \$5,850 for the CBSS Foundation during the *2nd Annual Elijah Jimenez Memorial Golf Tournament*. The event is organized by Ashley and Ramon Jimenez in honor of their son, Elijah, who died in 2008. Elijah, one of identical triplets born in 2004, contracted Group-B Strep Meningitis during infancy, and as a result was diagnosed as deaf-blind. According to Ashley, the services the family received from CBSS throughout Elijah's life helped them understand that "education is not limited to one's senses, but rather, to one's will." Foundation funds are overseen by a review committee and used for family needs not covered by grant funds, such as respite and training.

## CBSS Families Enjoy Annual Fantasy Flight to "North Pole"



In December, Maryn Leland and nearly three dozen other children and family members served by CBSS enjoyed the *20th Annual Fantasy Flight* sponsored by Children's Hospice International and United Airlines at Dulles Airport. Participants boarded an airplane "to the North Pole" and in less than an hour in the air (following the 'Secret Reindeer Route') landed safely at Santa's Workshop, where elves, storybook characters, and Santa and Mrs. Claus hosted a fun morning for their young visitors with various life-threatening disabilities or serious health conditions. The event offers the lasting gift of wonderful memories (and a great bag of goodies from Santa)!

## New Deaf-blind Demonstration Classrooms Being Initiated

*(continued from p.1)* instruction, evidence-based communication strategies, and current technology in practice is a powerful professional development tool, and provides opportunities for skills and techniques to be transferred back to the Local School System."

The Maryland School for the Blind, where more than two dozen students with deaf-blindness currently receive educational services, was selected as the site for this project due to the central location and relative stability of MSB's program and staff, and due to the history of collaboration between MSB and CBSS and a commitment to professional development. Kelly said that while MSB is a great site, "we will not be able to show all aspects of best practice there because it is not an inclusive education setting. However, we will be able to demonstrate the elements of good instruction and classroom management." Kelly said that she hopes this program will be available for statewide technical assistance, through classroom visits, observations and other interactions with statewide educators, paraeducators and family members beginning in March 2011.

New CBSS staff member Bethany Provost will be providing on-site technical assistance and training for the demonstration classrooms' staff. She has worked at the Perkins School for the Blind as both a teacher and a mentor. According to Kelly, "Bethany is highly skilled and enthusiastic about this project. She grew up in Maryland and became interested in the deaf-blind population while volunteering at numerous CBSS Family Learning Weekends and through her course work at the University of Maryland. She eventually earned her M.A. with a specialization in deaf-blindness at Boston College. We are thrilled to have her join the Connections team, and excited about the beginning of this new initiative!"

**For more information, contact CBSS Project Director Diane Kelly at (301)405-7915 or [dmkelly@umd.edu](mailto:dmkelly@umd.edu)**

CONNECTIONS BEYOND SIGHT AND SOUND

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## Resource Corner

Are you looking for:

- *Deaf-blind model classroom resources?*
- *Alphabet, partner assisted scanning, switch mount and communication activities?*
  - *Downloadable templates?*

**Visit the *Deaf-blind Model Classroom Resources* page on the *UNC Center for Literacy and Disability Studies* at**

**<http://www.med.unc.edu/ahs>**

Select "*Center for Literacy and Disability Studies*" on the left side of the page, then select "*Resources*"