Marking a Remarkable Year
Commemorating Our 125th

Celebrating our 125th anniversary has provided the School an opportunity to look back at our storied past with great pride, while continuing to build on our successes for an even brighter future for the hundreds of students with visual impairment we serve annually from throughout western Pennsylvania.

This school year, the School for Blind Children infused commemorations of the anniversary throughout our educational, residential and outreach programs. From birthday celebrations and dance parties to educational symposiums and community engagement, the entire School community found ways to mark this special milestone in our history. We hope you enjoy this edition of Insights, which highlights some of these memorable moments.

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A Message from the Superintendent

Dear Friends,

If I had to describe the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children in one word, it would have to be dynamic.

For 125 years, our School has continuously evolved to meet the ever-changing needs of a special population of students who require and deserve specialized instructional services to reach their full potential. At our founding in 1887, students’ education focused on blending academics with vocational training while today our enrolled pupils are provided with a highly individualized life skills curriculum complimented by intensive therapeutic and medical services.

The School has endured and thrived, in large part, due to our ability to respond to our community’s needs. And although we are at the end of the 2011/12 school year, planning for the future is at the forefront as we begin to develop our organization’s next Strategic Plan, as well as applying for re-accreditation from the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools.

As a friend and stakeholder of the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children, I invite you to share your ideas and thoughts. You can contact me at reevest@wpsbc.org or call 412-621-0100.

Thank you. Your continued support and encouragement will help us maintain momentum into the next 125 years.

Sincerely,

Todd S. Reeves

Commemorating Our 125th Anniversary

Continued

125 Student Achievements

Our staff celebrated student achievements by collecting and sharing noteworthy accomplishments. Among the impressive feats noted was Abodi’s first time walking, despite incredible physical challenges. See a video of Abodi walking and the entire list of 125 Student Achievements under “Headlines” on our website: www.wpsbc.org

Residential 125th Winter Gala Dance

With tunes spun by a professional disc jockey, a birthday cake and refreshments, students in the residential program danced the night away at the Winter Gala Dance held in February.

125 Pounds of Food for Friends

The School has benefited from the generosity of the community for 125 years. In an effort to “pay it forward,” a food drive was started during Spring Open House to collect 125 pounds of canned goods for the Oakland Food Bank.

Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children

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Campus Banners
With creative assistance by Art Teacher Carol Kreiser, students and staff created more than 125 colorful and unique banners that are now decorating our hallways and feature words and phrases that describe our School.

125 Friends Reading 125 Books
In the spirit of promoting literacy, more than 125 friends visited our classrooms throughout the year to share their favorite stories. Thank you to all of the volunteers, many who donated copies of the books they read to our student library.

Student Walking Group
Congratulations to the members of the Student Walking Group, who combined efforts to walk more than 125 miles this school year to enhance their physical fitness, celebrate our anniversary and train to participate in the Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community.

Scavenger Hunt for 125 Words of Praise
This weekly activity had students searching for words of praise that were hidden throughout our campus. The challenge for each student, like Abby shown here to the left, was to find as many of the words as possible and bring them to a designated classroom.
Presenting the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children Class of 2012

Joseph Calla
Son of Susan Hoffman of St. Marys, Pennsylvania - Elk County and Joseph Calla, Jr. of Marienville, Pennsylvania - Forrest County

Joey, a popular student on campus, enjoys his on-campus jobs which include packaging and making deliveries for the school store. Through use of a picture card system that supplements his vocabulary, Joey has become adept at communicating his needs and preferences. His favorite hobbies include listening to oldies music, especially the Beach Boys, and dining out with his family. A residential student, Joey was an active boy scout in the Trailblazer District and benefitted from spending time in the relaxing atmosphere of the greenhouse, where he would assist with the daily watering and transplanting of the flowers and plants. After graduation, Joey will attend an adult day program and either live at home with his family or in a community living arrangement where he can meet new people.

Russell Jerome Gaskins
Son of Robin Middleton of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania - Allegheny County

Described by his instructor as a pleasant young man, Russell takes special delight in delivering towels and linens to his classroom and using a switch to relay information and announcements to his peers. He has improved his ability to employ a picture symbol communication system to request items, transition to the next activity and travel throughout campus with his orientation and mobility instructor. A music lover, Russell could often be found at the keyboard in his classroom where he liked to pick out rhythms for his class to enjoy. Russell has overcome many obstacles this year and has worked hard to regain his strength and endurance. After graduation, Russell plans to attend the Loft’s day program part time and the LAVI: Learning Adventures for the Visually Impaired adult day program operated by the Community College of Allegheny County and the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children and live at home with his family.

David Hilderbrand
Son of Linda Hilderbrand of Canonsburg, Pennsylvania - Washington County and David Hilderbrand, Sr. of Kittanning, Pennsylvania - Armstrong County

A young man on the move, David has many vocational duties at school including working as a price clerk at the Lion’s Den, delivering newspapers to staff and packaging items. In his leisure time, he loves to listen to his favorite Irish singing group, Celtic Woman, and especially cherishes spending time with his family. Focused, determined and with a great sense of humor, David enjoys playing beep baseball and choosing CD’s from the library at school. This year, David has shown significant improvement in mobility with his new walker and has increased his speed and distance walking. After he graduates, David will attend the LAVI: Learning Adventures for the Visually Impaired adult day program operated by the Community College of Allegheny County and the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children and live at home with his family.
Justin Lorenzo

Son of Anna Marie Rattay of Webster, Pennsylvania - Westmoreland County

Staff describes Justin as a real go-getter and always ready to get to work. His jobs include assisting his teachers by shredding paper, sharpening pencils and sorting items for classroom use. One of his favorite activities is using his iPad which has enhanced his visual attending. Playing his keyboard, going shopping for treats at the Lion’s Den, aquatic therapy and board games are also some of Justin’s preferred pastimes. A natural when it comes to interacting with people, Justin is a registered boy scout in the Trailblazer District and also enjoys horticulture class and spending quality time with his family. Upon graduation, Justin plans to attend the LAVI: Learning Adventures for the Visually Impaired adult day program operated by the Community College of Allegheny County and the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children and reside at home with his family.

Bryan Sen

Son of Mey Ling and Kalyan Sen of Monroeville, Pennsylvania - Allegheny County

With a remarkable memory and a great sense of humor, Bryan enjoys challenges and stimulating his mind. He has developed several vocational skills while at school include shredding paper, vacuuming and making deliveries throughout campus. Bryan takes pleasure listening to music on his mp3 player, playing games on his iPad and independently preparing his favorite treat, hot cocoa. This year, Bryan has excelled at riding the adapted bicycle to improve his balance, learning to fold and identify money in his wallet and taking letters to the mailbox. When Bryan graduates, he plans on attending an adult training program operated by Northwestern Human Services and will live at home with his family.

Kayla Weller

Daughter of Michelle Wolfe of Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania - Beaver County

A young lady with a great smile, Kayla contributes to our school community by working as a price clerk at the Lion’s Den, helping to assemble first aid kits and delivering daily snacks to her peers. An active participant in the Residential Program’s Girls’ Club and Book Club, Kayla loves hearing stories and listening to music by her favorite artist, Michael Jackson. An avid swimmer, bowler and beep baseball player, Kayla also enjoys going out on mobility trips to shop at local stores where she knows the sales clerks by name. Affectionately called “Precious” by her mother, Kayla has made great progress using her cane while traveling on campus. After graduation, Kayla will attend the HAP Training Center’s day program and reside at home with her family.
Help Pave the Way for Our Students: Support The Urban Trail Project

As the cornerstone project in celebration of the 125th anniversary, the School is constructing an Urban Trail on its Oakland campus that will provide a safe, supported and stimulating environment for our students to learn and practice important life skills.

Our Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS) conceived of the Urban Trail to maximize on-campus instruction before embarking on the less-protected realm of O&M instruction on Pittsburgh’s streets and sidewalks.

For our students, the Urban Trail will be an exploratory classroom to learn vital life skills, a source of sensory stimulation and place to enjoy the outdoors.

The School is conducting a special fundraising effort to raise funds for the Urban Trail. We hope you will consider making a special gift for this project, to not only commemorate our 125th anniversary but to smooth the future paths of our current pupils and generations of students to come. For more details on the Urban Trail, visit our website at www.wpsbc.org.

Thank you to the following organizations that have made significant gifts for the Urban Trail:

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<td>The Pittsburgh Foundation</td>
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You can make your gift using the enclosed envelope, by visiting our website: www.wpsbc.org, or by contacting the Office of Institutional Advancement at 412.621.0100 or prittsj@wpsbc.org.

Follow the development of the Urban Trail at www.facebook.com/WPASchoolforBlindChildren

Two Members Added to the Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is pleased to announce the appointment of new members, Joseph C. Wassermann & Gabrielle R. Bonhomme, M.D.

Mr. Joseph C. Wassermann is an alumnus of the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children and the University of Pittsburgh. In September of 1960, he began his employment at the School for Blind Children where he taught an array of academic courses to generations of our students for 31 years. Mr. Wassermann is also adjunct professor at the University of Pittsburgh, serves on the City/County Task Force on Disabilities and is chair of the Advisory Council for the Blind of Pennsylvania.

Dr. Gabrielle R. Bonhomme is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Ophthalmology at UPMC Eye Center. She received her baccalaureate degree from the George Washington University and her Doctor of Medicine from the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. Named the 2011 University of Pittsburgh Medical School Clinical Educator of the Year, Dr. Bonhomme is Board Certified by the American Board of Ophthalmology and is a member of both the American Academy of Ophthalmology and the North American Neuro-Ophthalmology Society.
From Our Perspective
Snapshots of School Life
Captured by Our Staff Members

PTO President Lisa Richardson presents a large parachute to a class as part of its "classroom wish" event.

Participants in the School’s SewShop Program for siblings of students with special needs pose with the banner they made.

We might need a bigger boat! Students enjoy a ride in the School’s recreational pool.

Horticulture therapy brings a great big smile to Stasia’s face.

Early Childhood Department students get a kick out of an adapted soccer game.

Isaiah finds the beat on an electronic drum set during leisure time.
Are you looking for child care for your visually impaired infant or toddler?

Little Learners Early Childhood Center, located on the campus of the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children, provides comprehensive blended child care for typically developing children and those with visual impairments ages 6 weeks to 5 years. Features include onsite professional therapists, innovative outdoor children’s garden and availability for full/part time care.

For more information, visit www.wpsbc.org, call 412-621-0100 or email orsefskiew@wpsbc.org

Upcoming Events Calendar 2012

**JUNE**
- 7: Senior Recognition
- 8: Last Day of the 2011/12 School Year

**JULY**
- 16-27: Extended School Year
- 22: Family Day
- 13, 20 & 27: PALS Play Group for Toddlers with Visual Impairment

**AUGUST**
- 3: PALS Play Group for Toddlers with Visual Impairment
- 5-10: Expanding Visions Camp for Teens with Visual Impairment
- 27: First Day of 2012/13 School Year

The Mission of the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children is to be a leading institution for providing quality special education services that foster maximum independence for children and young adults with visual impairment and multiple disabilities. Furthermore, the School’s Outreach efforts are designed to assist all western Pennsylvania youth with visual impairments to reach their full potential by delivering programs and services to them and their families.