



In Touch

Spring Edition ~ 2006

News from the President



Since the last newsletter your organization has participated in the following events:

We have had a busy time since the last newsletter. DBMAT's president attended a DARS training for Rehabilitation Caseworkers in Kerrville. I met quite a few new caseworkers and gave them information on DBMAT and what we do. This will enable them to tell the new families just starting out about DBMAT being out there for the families.

In February, I attended the Deaf Blind Task Force in Austin. I have also been attending AVIT meetings quarterly in Austin at TSBVI.

In March, Jaceson, Susie and I attended the West Texas Cluster Family Conference in Lubbock. We had a great time and met several new families just starting out. We distributed information on DBMAT at the conference.

We lost a long-time friend and one of the original founding families of DBMAT – Everett Bryan. In 1973, Everett and Jackie Bryan and four other families with deaf-blind children started a support group, which later became DBMAT. He served as DBMAT's treasurer for over eleven years. Everett - we will miss you!

Plans are being made for us to attend the Texas Focus in June. DBMAT officers and regional coordinators will receive leadership training on Saturday after the conference. On Sunday, we will have a board meeting and do conference planning for the Family Conference coming up in October. We still have several logistical challenges to be addressed for the family conference.

DBMAT has several work groups. Anyone interested in participating in one of the work groups please contact me. We can also use help with the conference planning. Please give me a call on the DBMAT Positive Connection line @ 432-264-6780 if you are interested.

The week of June 25 – July 1 is set aside as Deaf-Blind Awareness week in celebration of Helen Keller's birthday. The

focus for this year is *Achieving Exceptional Careers*. Please try to do some kind of activity to do with deaf-blindness in your community. It's very important that we educate the public on deaf-blindness. You could do an article for your local newspaper, announce on the radio or television.

Don't forget to mark your calendars for the Family Conference October 13-15. See you there!

Thanks, Paul Welch

My Brother ~ Caleb

by Dugan Thompson

My name is Dugan Thompson and I'm twelve years old. My brother, Caleb, was diagnosed with cancer at age three. Chemo caused severe brain damage. The doctors said he wouldn't live another month but it has been about nine years! Today, he is eleven years old and is handicapped, can't talk, and has home health nurses that work and take care of him. We help him do everything we do like go to school or fish or even go camping! Having a brother like him has taught me a lesson in life. This girl that goes to my school is made fun of a lot. One day I saw someone teasing my brother and I got all over them! My brother and I are only one year apart and no one messes with my brother except me! I don't make fun of anyone because I just imagine that day when they made fun of my brother and it hurt me a lot! Caleb is a wonderful brother and I love him very much. I hope he gets better and I think he will but I love him just the way he is!



THE QUIET MAN (Fond Reflections On Everett Bryan)

by Pat McCallum

I feel I've known the Bryan Family all my life. I've certainly known their smiling faces, encouraging words and gentle support for all of my DBMAT life. In the early 70's, we began this unique journey together along with several other families of children who are deafblind.

Everett was treasurer during my tenure as president, and for several of my years as executive director of DBMAT. I felt Everett had a "John Wayne" persona with his strength of character, willingness to assist, and determination of effort...the quiet man who got the job done.

One of my fondest memories of Everett is, when at my request, he donned a Superman type costume to become "Superparent" for a skit during one of DBMAT's annual conferences. He was a hit and saved the damsel in distress.



I feel sure that everyone who had the opportunity to know Everett has wonderful memories of this gentle man, not only to share but also to keep in their heart.



My Hero

by Keristine Thompson

I've heard that the disabled are angels on the front line in the battle against God and Lucifer. I believe that they are people beyond the most courageous. I found that out when I met one of the biggest influences in my life.

My mom quit her job to stay home with my sister and me when we were younger. It was a great idea at first, but soon we started falling into financial problems. My mom was having a really hard time trying to decide what to do about it. My aunt thought that she might have the perfect one for her! I never told my mom, but I was so angry with her when I found out that she was going to accept the job. When I found out when her first day was, I was beyond furious! It was my birthday!! She wouldn't be there to tell me happy birthday first, like always. He walked into the door, and I was completely amazed. I was so fascinated by him. I completely forgot all of my anger.

"His name is Jaceson," my mom said as I was walking up to him. He was the same height as me, but yet he was a man. I said "hello," but he didn't reply. He didn't even seem to know I was there. My mom explained to me that he was mentally challenged, blind and deaf. I circled him observantly. I was so curious. I had never seen anyone like him. My mom was so happy that she didn't have to leave us, and could still work.

The more time I spent with Jaceson, the more interested I became in him. As I got older I got more curious as to why Jaceson was the way he was. I found out that when he was born he had a tumor attached to his eye, and the only way the doctors could get rid of it was to remove his left eye. The doctors said that he would only live to be thirteen months old. The radiation and chemotherapy when he was young caused him to lose a lot of his hearing and did some brain damage, making him incapable of being "normal." The loss of eyesight was due to the cancer. He doesn't know sign language so he can sometimes be difficult to communicate with. Through the years it has become much easier to communicate with him because he has his own way of communication. My mom has been working with Jaceson for five years. He is now twenty-seven years old.

Jaceson is the happiest person I have ever met. He always seems to have a smile on his face. I never thought that one person could have such a huge impact on my life...Jaceson is my angel!



My First Wheelchair

by Norbert Dasilva

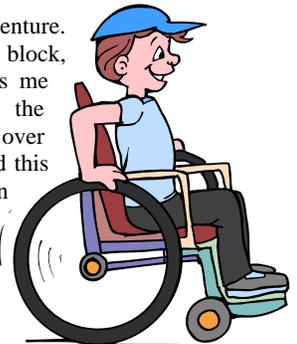
On December 28, 2003, I was fortunate to survive an automobile accident. As a result, I was hospitalized for eleven days and then transferred to a rehabilitation hospital for forty days. My injuries included a broken femur, shattered femur, fractured tibia, broken right ankle, and damage to the neck and spine. During this hospitalization, I had a weight loss of forty pounds and lost muscle mass because of constant bed confinement. At the end of February I was released from the rehabilitation hospital into outpatient physical therapy.

Many wonderful family members and friends came to my aide during this transition. My house needed to be wheelchair accessible. Doors were measured for the width of the wheelchair, furniture was rearranged/removed, and ramps were built for my access into and around my house. Therefore, the design of my house required four ramps to be built. Compassionate neighbors made all the ramps prior to my arrival. Three of the ramps were donated to me from a steel company that was built professionally. A well-designed ramp is imperative to get around easily. One of the ramps is too steep and unmanageable without assistance.

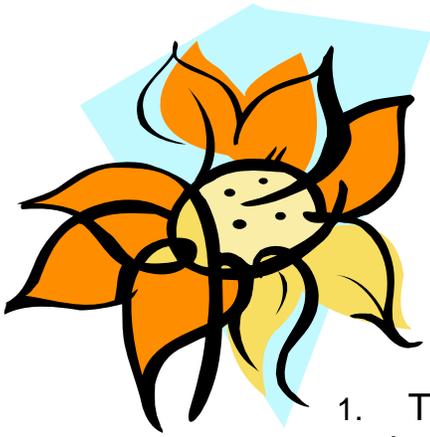
Upper body strength is important for moving your wheelchair around. Your hands, arms and shoulders soon become sore from moving yourself around hard surfaces especially maneuvering on the carpet. It is like pushing a semi-truck instead of a wheel chair. As a result, busted knuckles from going through a doorway and misjudging the clearing.

Venturing out of the house is always an adventure.

As you get the nerve to wheel around the block, ominous weather begins to appear. It takes me awhile to wheel back home because of the concrete expansion joints are very hard to go over and the driveways are slanted downwards and this immediately causes my wheelchair to turn toward the street. On the other hand, if you decide to take a trip in a vehicle, you will need a trunk that can fit a wheelchair. You also need a strong assistant that can lift the wheelchair without damaging the vehicle. Once you arrive at your location, finding a parking spot can be tricky at times. If there is only one handicap parking spot and it is occupied you are in trouble. You must have space on your side to fit your wheelchair by the passenger door. When I pulled into stores and saw all the handicap parking spaces, I didn't understand why there were so many. Now I fully appreciate those parking spaces that give me easy accessibility in and out of the car. While I have been handicapped due to auto injuries I begin to understand the many trials that a person who is deaf-blind must face trying to get around in their environment, learning to do things without really seeing an example, and learning how to communicate in a world that everyone speaks and you can't hear or understand. I have made it through my injuries with the help of family and friends, thus, so do all the deaf-blind children and adults need help, support, and guidance so that they can reach their full potential in life.



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The Ten Commandments for Parents of Children With Disabilities

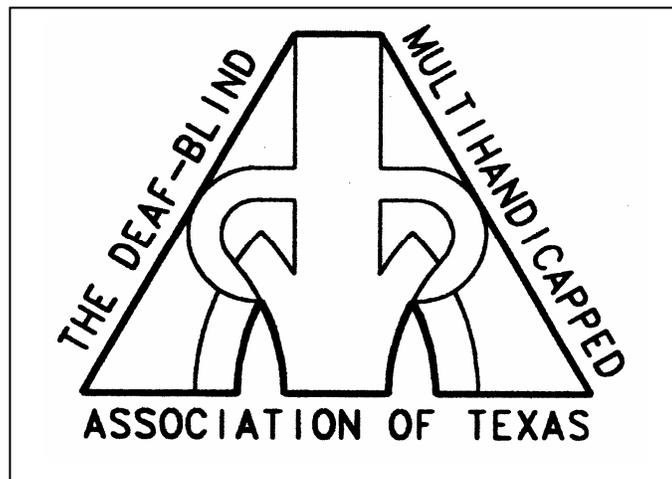
1. Take one day at a time and take that day positively. You don't have control over the future, over today, or over any other day, and neither does anyone else. Other people just think they do.
2. Never underestimate your child's potential. Allow him/her, encourage him/her, and expect him/her to develop to the best of his/her abilities.
3. Find and allow positive mentors: parents, professionals who can share their experience, advice and support.
4. Provide and be involved with the most appropriate educational and learning environments for you child from infancy on.
5. Keep in mind the feelings and needs of your spouse and your other children. Remind them that this child does not get more of your love just because he/she gets more of your time.
6. Answer only to your conscience: then you'll be able to answer to your child. You need not justify your actions to your friends or the public.
7. Be honest with your feelings. You can't be super parent 24 hours a day. Allow yourself jealousy, anger, pity, frustration and depression in small amounts whenever necessary.
8. Be kind to yourself. Don't focus continually on what needs to be done.
9. Stop and smell the roses. Take advantage of the fact that you have gained a special appreciation for the little miracles in life that others take for granted.
10. Keep and use a sense of humor. Cracking up with laughter can keep you from cracking up from stress.

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The Deaf-Blind Multihandicapped
Association of Texas (DBMAT)
909 Mountain Park Drive
Big Spring, TX. 79720

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If you would like to be dropped from DBMAT mailing list or have a change of address
please contact: Paul Welch – Big Spring, TX.