



# In Touch

The Newsletter of the Deafblind Multihandicapped  
Association of Texas  
Summer Edition ~ June 2008

## From the President's Pen



These past few months have been filled with a lot of activity behind the scenes. We have been talking with lawmakers about the waiver changes that we need. We are working on a way for the Interveners to get specialized training with a certification. All these things take a lot of time.

The First Annual Christian Knapp Memorial Golf Tournament will be held September 25<sup>th</sup> in Friendswood, Texas (South of Houston) at Timber Creek Country Club Golf Course. A flyer is in the newsletter. David Taylor Cadillac in Houston has offered a **brand new automobile** for the golf tournament. The car will be given to the golfer that gets a "hole in one" during the day. There will be rules that go with this. This golf tournament is going to benefit DBMAT's Intervener Scholarship Program. Get out your old golf clubs and come join us for this big event!

During the entire month of June, Texas is celebrating Deaf-Blind Awareness month in celebration of Helen Keller's birthday instead of just the traditional week. We want families to try to do something in your community to make people aware of Deaf-Blindness. You can write an article in the newspaper, talk on the radio, at a school or church. We just want to create public awareness. We have worked with the Deaf-Blind Task Force of Texas, and particularly DARS to create a Texas poster celebrating Deaf-Blind awareness and use of interveners and SSP's.

We are already beginning Family Conference planning. Don't forget to mark your calendars for October 10-12<sup>th</sup>. You and your family will have a great time! Anyone that would like to participate in conference planning, legislative issues, help with the golf tournament please contact me or Steve. We welcome and appreciate all help!

Paul



## Note from Steve....

If you are like me....there is a bunch more paper in your house than you really want or need. Every day, I get piles of unwanted literature. (If I took up all the companies that offered me credit cards, I would have at least 100 by now.) Now...I know that you don't consider our amazingly informative DBMAT newsletter to be "unwanted" (although some of you might consider it to be "literature"). But if you prefer to



read it at your computer, thereby saving you from being buried in paper, just send me an email stating: "convert my DBMAT newsletter to a web-notice." Be sure to include your name, so I know for sure that we are

deleting the right snail mail address from our mailing list. When I receive your email, I will put your email address in a special file that tells me to send you a notice of our latest newsletter with a link to its web address.

My email address is: [stephenschoen@sbcglobal.net](mailto:stephenschoen@sbcglobal.net).

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# A Day of Change

By Jeff Houser

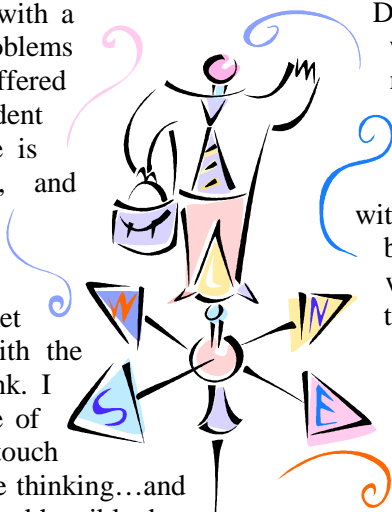
Recently I entered into a relationship with a woman who has a child with some problems that I just wasn't used to. Robin had suffered traumatic brain injuries from a car accident when she was just 7 months old. She is non-verbal, has vision impairments, and suffers from other various issues...and I love her dearly.

Robin was 9 years old when I first met her. I had never really spent time with the disabled, so I wasn't sure what to think. I guess like a lot of people I was unsure of how I should act. Is she frail, should I touch her, what is wrong with her, what is she thinking...and even can she think? I know this may sound horrible, but it was some of the first thoughts that I had. Over the first few weeks I spent a lot of time with Robin, breaking down some of my pre-misconceptions and beliefs of the disabled.

Robin had several behavioral troubles at the time. She spent, what seemed to be, the majority of the day screaming, hitting, banging her head, and let's not forget the biting. I have to say that after a few weeks of this I was at wits end. I began to wonder if all this was worth it just to be with Gretchen. There were so many problems other than Robin. Gretchen had recently been divorced and was in a pretty bad place herself. Bills were falling behind, overworked, tired from too little sleep, and trying to raise two kids. I had a choice to make, I could either walk away, which would have probably been easier, or I could stay and work through what had been placed in front of me. It honestly took weeks to commit myself, but I'm glad I did. It wasn't the easy way, and I knew there would be challenges, but as it turned out...it was the most rewarding, not only for them, but for me as well. I would have never considered that I had so much to learn about myself, and that it would be a 9 year old disabled girl who would teach me, but that's what happened. Over the next 2 years Robin and I learned together.

Before meeting Robin I used to think that I was a patient and understanding person. I found new levels of both. Yes there are times when I get frustrated, worried, overwhelmed discouraged, but with just a smile from her I know that things are going to be ok. Maybe it was because I was so new to having a disabled child in my life, but I did truly feel that we were alone in this. Recently I had the privilege of attending a parent conference for the first time. This was a great joy and place of inspiration. After sitting and listening to other families and the stories of

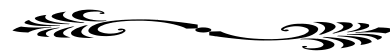
their children I felt a sense of relief. I felt as if we weren't alone, that we were part of something bigger than I could have imagined.



During that time I met the folks from DBMAT, which I knew right away I needed to join. We need people out there on the front lines fighting for the rights of our kids, fighting for programs that are needed. I have only been to one conference so far, but all journeys begin with one step. I have used a quote for many years but I found myself not applying it where it would help the most – Robin's future. And that's my story. . .

*Argue for your limitations, and sure enough they're yours.*

*~ Richard Bach*



## Blind, deaf man an entrepreneur

### ...barriers just paper-thin

By David Pittman, [david.pittman@amarillo.com](mailto:david.pittman@amarillo.com)

Preston Fansler's parents don't want him to be defined by what he can't do.

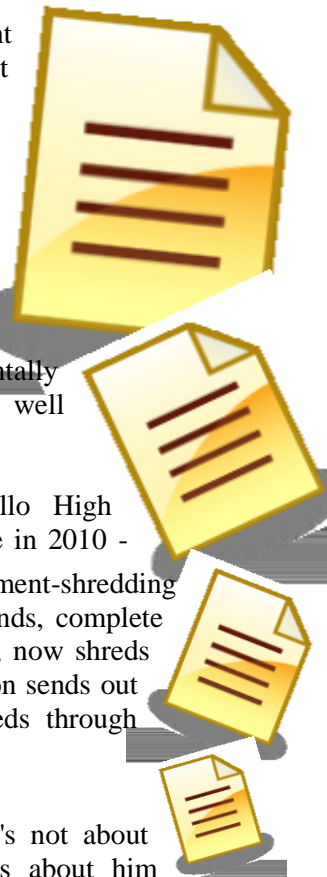
"We want to build his adult life on what he can do," mother Leslie Fansler said.

That can be a difficult task. Preston, 20, was born deaf, blind and is considered developmentally delayed. "He functions amazingly well for how disabled he is," Leslie said.

In addition to attending Amarillo High School - Preston is set to graduate in 2010 -

Preston's parents started a document-shredding business for him. Handy Able Hands, complete with Preston's own business cards, now shreds for three businesses weekly. Preston sends out monthly statements. He also shreds through one-time contracts.

"We don't charge a whole lot. It's not about making money," Leslie said. "It's about him



going out into the community."

Preston makes enough to pay his monthly dues at the Amarillo Town Club, where he swims four times a week. Most Wednesday and Thursday evenings, Preston sits at his industrial-size paper shredder in his parent's southwest Amarillo home and destroys obsolete patient records for area doctor's offices.

Leslie and Preston pick up documents from the various offices once a week. They return it to the atrium in the Fansler home - affectionately called Preston's office.



"He'll shred for quite a while without any help," Leslie said.

Karen Day, owner of Specialized Therapy Services, one of the

companies Preston sheds for, said having a job gives disabled individuals a purpose. "Even though he has those handicapping conditions, it gives him a job and a purpose and thus limiting those handicapping conditions," Day said.

When Preston turned 17, Leslie considered possible vocations. She landed on document shredding. "We started thinking this was something he could do for a living," Leslie said.

"I think we made a good decision for him because it's a growing business," Leslie said. Medical offices - a growing sector of Amarillo - must comply with patient privacy laws and destroy documents. Those Preston works with knows he will maintain privacy because of his dedication.

"Preston loves shredding," said Shannon Timberlake, office manager of Specialized Therapy Services. "So, he is not going to miss shredding one paper."

*This article originally appeared in the Amarillo Globe-News on April 28, 2008.*

## ***My Brother Caleb***

*By Dugan Thompson*

My name is Dugan Thompson and I am fourteen years old. My younger brother, Caleb, who is thirteen years old, was diagnosed with Leukemia when he was two and a half years old. Chemo caused severe brain damage and the

doctors said that he wouldn't live but a couple of months. Today he is thirteen, multi-handicapped, can't talk, and he has a G-tube in his stomach to be able to eat. Caleb is a very unique brother and I love him very much! We are very close, being only thirteen months apart.

I also have another younger brother, Kevin, who is eleven. He's a bit crazy and thinks he knows everything, but he also loves Caleb very much. Our parents, Wayne and Diedra, are amazing, strong, and well informed. Without them, no telling what it would be like.

With Caleb in our lives, we enjoy going to different places and meeting wonderful people and families like Caleb and us. I have met a lot of people and love going to these camps! Of course, I wish that Caleb was able to do everything that other kids do, but thanks to him, I have met a lot of wonderful people in my life. I am more mature. I have been going to these camps since I was a little girl and because of him I want to work with kids in physical therapy, or blind kids, and learn sign language when I get older. Caleb has made a major impact in my life, and I'm sure he has made an impact in all our friend's lives. Thanks to all the people who have helped us through everything.



## ***Ya Gotta Have Vision: The Power of Family Leaders With Dreams, Tenacity and Passion***

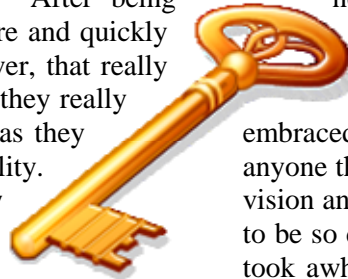
*By Edgenie Bellah, Family Support, Texas Deafblind Project*

Anyone who has ever tried to change anything – whether it be a personal habit, someone else's quirky tendencies, or something as big as an entire system – knows it isn't easy. It takes a lot of commitment, passion and tenacity. Most importantly, it takes having a vision. A picture of what you want the future to look like. A picture so inspiring that it keeps you working towards making it a reality long after most people would have given in to the temptation to quit. Having a vision gives you a way to express your dreams and hopes in such a way that others can't help but catch onto the excitement.

In recent years, capturing a vision in Vision Statements has caught on in popularity. They can be used to help organizations keep on track



with their business and often are the hidden key to initiatives that seek to change entire systems. It seems everyone is writing Vision Statements. After being written, many of them are hung somewhere and quickly become wall art. There are a few, however, that really capture the magic of Vision Statements – they really do inspire and keep the group on course as they go about making the dream a reality. DBMAT, consider yourself one of the few who has not only caught onto that magic but has used your vision to propel this state and (dare I say it) nation towards the toughest of dream chasers: systems change.



Let me share with you the view from where I am: the inspired dust eater.

When I was in school many moons ago, I remember reading about systems change from an historical vantage point and thinking, “I wonder what it was like to be a part of that...” Some of it I lived through without being directly involved or even realizing what was happening. For example, while in college, I remember feeling that Special Education had been around forever, when it really was in its infancy. I also remember attending my very first DBMAT conference in the late 1980’s as a very young, very green O&M Specialist not realizing at the time that



families I was meeting then were trailblazers. These were people who forged uncharted territory in the pursuit of making their dream for services and supports a reality. Today, we have grown used to having services available within our deafblind community and it is hard to imagine a time when it was hard for people to grasp.

About a year ago, I realized that I was no longer a far removed historical observer but actually caught up in such an experience. This systems change actually

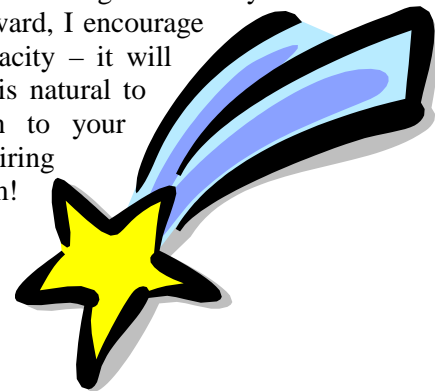
began over 15 years ago when a small group of teachers brought a new concept to Texas that they had picked up from our neighbors to the north. They began introducing it to others in the state and because the concept appeared to be so different than anything being done at that time, it took awhile before people got comfortable enough with it that they could even call it by name. These teachers had a vision along with a healthy dose of tenacity and passion so they kept “working the plan” until others started catching on too. As with most systems change, the momentum

picked up speed when families got involved. Several years passed and this new concept in Texas no longer felt new but began to be generally supported. And just when everyone was losing sight that this concept actually had great potential for systems change, a group of families came together and embraced a vision for it to be something much larger than anyone thought possible. They spent time figuring out the vision and they built a plan. Because the concept appeared to be so different than anything being done at that time, it took awhile before people were comfortable enough that the model was given a name—intervener services.

It is hard to believe but it was only two summers ago when DBMAT leadership came together for some training with a workday tagged on. During that time together, Melanie and Gary shared Christian’s Vision and everyone grabbed hold of the dream. A Vision Statement was written and embraced, a plan was developed and workgroups were formed to make the vision a reality. The passion within the group was palpable and the momentum created propelled DBMAT parents into becoming leaders on every level.

Not only is DBMAT pushing forward with expanding the intervener model but it is also enlarging the deafblind community and teaching others about deafblindness. At each DBMAT Family Conference, there are many new families being welcomed into the DBMAT. This June, Texas will celebrate its first Deafblind Awareness month – not just the traditional week but a whole month. DBMAT is a strong and respected voice helping shape services within state agencies and through the legislative process. DBMAT is not limiting its influence to within the Texas borders but its leadership is appreciated on national levels as well.

Having the privilege of watching DBMAT grab hold of a vision and use it to inspire, push and advocate for it to become a reality has been one of the most rewarding things I’ve had the privilege of being part of. And the pace you are setting as you lead everyone forward is so fast that the rest of the deafblind community is doing their best just trying to keep up. From my view (and I’m sure many others), I wouldn’t want it any other way. Kudos to DBMAT for being such a strong family organization that people across the country are striving to be like you. As you continue to lead us forward, I encourage you to hold on to your tenacity – it will carry you forward when it is natural to become weary. Hold on to your passion – it is what is inspiring everyone to share your dream!



# CHRIS'S JOB

By Sheryl Palasota

Chris Palasota is 34 years old and born with Congenital Rubella Syndrome. Chris started working in September 2002 at Central Texas Orthotics and Prosthetics (CTOP) around ten hours a week. I am his job coach. They make artificial limbs, prosthetics and arm and leg braces.



They have a **“Mr. Chris’s Daily Duties”** list on the wall of what he is to do each day and he checks it off as he does it. He takes out the trash, sweeps, shreds papers, stocks the refrigerator, cleans counters, vacuums

and does the Sam’s and Wal-Mart runs.

Chris’ boss and co-workers have accepted Chris wholeheartedly and they focus on what he *can do*, not on what he *cannot do*.

I am like his eyes and ears (Intervener) and help him relate to the other people and his surroundings. They say he **“brightens up”** the work force.

They are amazed at his calendar skills. By this I mean that when Chris is given a Birthday with the year born, he can tell them what day of the week they were born. We celebrate birthdays with cake and or meals and Chris and I have attended many weddings and parties from the co-workers.

Chris likes to get a paycheck and knows he can use it for eating out, bowling, day trips or travel, movies, etc.

He really enjoys baking desserts weekly and carrying it in to share with all of his “friends” with the “biggest” smile on his face. (A picture worth a thousand words.)

The guys in the back usually drop what they are doing and rush to Chris to get a share of his “enticing dessert.” The Deafblind waiver makes this all so possible, by having an Intervener with Chris one-on-one out in the community. Chris has many blessings in his life, and we are so grateful for each and every one.



## My Student Deserved More

By Gloria Authement

When I first started working with my deafblind student, I felt like the blind leading the blind. I began to research everything I could on deafblindness and became like a sponge soaking it all up. I heard about the intervener program in Canada and the courses in Utah, but I live in Houston and just couldn’t take off and leave my family for two years. I still needed more than what “Google” could offer me; and my student deserved more.

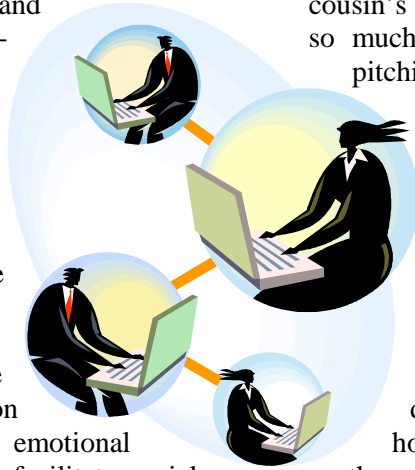
A friend told me about a deafblind training program completely on-line through Utah State University in Salt Lake City, Utah. I received a scholarship from DBMAT to take two courses, Introduction to Deafblindness and Communication and Interaction. Each course is worth four semester hours of university credit. I recently finished the first course, Introduction to Deafblindness.

My student went from being in a wheel chair, wearing diapers, and being very tactually defensive to walking everywhere, even going up and down stairs with assistance, using the potty, and reaching out to explore the world.



A friend asked me, “How can you learn the process of intervention strictly on-line and not hands-on?” Well, the class is “hands-on.” The assignments are geared toward the student you are working with. We study the auditory and visual development and

research our students' specific ear and eye condition. We also engage in on-line discussion and interact with the instructor online. These courses offer knowledge of deafblindness and its impact on learning and development. The courses demonstrate knowledge of the process of intervention and the role of the intervener, and have the ability to facilitate that process. It demonstrates the knowledge of the impact of deafblindness on psychological, social, and emotional development, and has the ability to facilitate social and emotional well-being. The courses demonstrate knowledge of the sensory systems and issues, covering all five senses, and have the ability to facilitate the effective use of those senses. We are required to participate in online discussions, quizzes, case study assignments and submit reflection papers on assigned readings.



cousin's he only takes out the trash, but here he gets to do so much more. Everyone helps out so he likes just pitching in and being a part of it all. He likes to see the changes in Christopher over time.

Clint says Christopher definitely knows right from wrong. He also knows one person from another.

He specifically commented in how Christopher has improved and that he only pinched once today instead of every 5 minutes! (Yeah ☺) He says he does more on his own, like pour his drink or gets snacks. He thinks its interesting how Christopher knows who everyone is even though he can not see. Pretty much just by touching your hands he knows who it is. For example, if his sister did something to upset him (like take a cucumber away from him at the grocery store) he would get upset and push her away, but if his Dad touched him he would smile – Clint thinks that's pretty cool.

The first course Understanding Deafblindness covered: Understanding Deafblindness, Brain Development and Sensory Loss, The Ear and Auditory system, Auditory Development, The Eye and Visual System, Visual Development, Touch, Concept Development, Intervention and the Intervener, Intervention Strategies and Behavior. The biggest thing I learned is that my student is my best teacher. I'm looking forward to the next course. These courses and DBMAT gave me that *something* more.

Thank you,  
Gloria Authement

*Gloria is a recipient of a DBMAT Scholarship to take the on-line classes at Utah State University. She works in the Houston area with a student in a classroom setting*



## Having a Relative with Special Needs

By Vivecca Hartman

Per Clint, a cousin of Christopher's, he likes coming over to visit because he thinks it is fun to help out. At his other

Clint says he realizes he is lucky to have the health that he has. He says it's not like Christopher doesn't get to do anything. He gets everything that he pretty much wants; not in a spoiled kind of way, but that he can get to it or he can express his needs and desires, even if he does need a little help. (Oh, if only he knew how much we have done and hard we have worked to get to this point – *sigh*, but at least the work has paid off for our visitor to perceive it this way ☺)

So it is no big deal having a cousin that is deafblind.

As the mom of a deafblind child – I think this is pretty cool! I just appreciate that we have family members that are not intimidated by our child's special needs and are willing to come around and be a part of our lives. We as much as Christopher need these relationships. Too often we can feel segregated and alone. It is nice to have family and hopefully for some of you friends that help build relationships with your children.



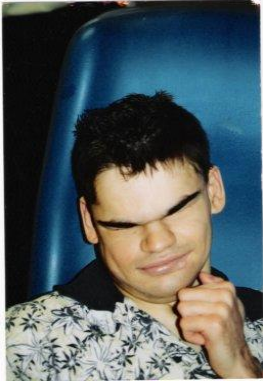


**THE CHRISTIAN KNAPP MEMORIAL GOLF TOURNAMENT  
TO BENEFIT  
THE DEAFBLIND MULTIHANDICAPPED ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS  
SEPTEMBER 25, 2008**

Generously Underwritten By **To Be Announced**

The Deafblind Multihandicapped Association of Texas (DBMAT) is a Texas wide non-profit organization made up of families and professionals close to and/or concerned for the well being of deafblind individuals. One of the primary goals of DBMAT is to advocate for deafblind individuals to have people around them that can relate and correspond with them to help improve their quality of life on a daily basis. In an effort to make this available, DBMAT has been granting scholarships for the special people that are working with deafblind individuals, who want to learn more about deafblindness and how to help the people they are working with. **These special people are referred to as Interveners.**

Currently the only available college level coursework in the USA are two courses out of Utah State University, via the internet. DBMAT has granted scholarships to 6 Interveners. With over 800 deafblind individuals throughout Texas, there is so much more education and awareness to be done. So, DBMAT is hosting our first ever Golf Tournament to raise money to bring awareness to the community, support the families that have a child with deafblindness, assist with deafblind education, and continue to award scholarships for training to the Interveners who are working with children and adults that are deafblind.



We hope you will come out to play with us and help improve life for deafblind people!

DBMAT wants to honor the memory of Christian Knapp (1980-2005), who was able to impress upon us all what a difference a quality Intervener can make! Here are a few words from Christian's family:

Christian was deafblind. It is what he taught us about being deafblind that has given us the determination to help other deafblind children and adults. It was also our promise to Christian after his death in November of 2005 to do whatever we could so other deafblind individuals might have the same opportunities he had.

Deafblindness is a unique disability. An individual that is deafblind has great difficulty getting information from their environment, resulting in other difficulties such as the lack of connecting with and understanding the world around them. This can often lead to the individual feeling isolated, which leads to other health problems.

Due to deafblindness having a lower incidence than deafness or blindness alone, it is even more rare to find people that know how to communicate and work with a deafblind person. Education about deafblindness is a key component to helping serve deafblind people

In June of 2006, DBMAT recognized as our primary vision "that people who are deaf and blind will benefit from the provision of quality Intervener services lifelong. When Intervener services are provided from the age of diagnosis, the person who is deafblind is most likely to develop to their full potential. As the person who is deafblind grows, his/her needs will change, but quality Intervener services will always be required" (DBMAT website).

**LIFE CHANGING CONTRIBUTION LEVELS**

- **Platinum - \$2,500** Eight Golf playing spots, hole sponsor sign, recognition on DBMAT Contribution Board both on the Website and Showcased at the event.
- **Gold - \$1,500** Four Golf Playing spots, hole sponsor sign, recognition on DBMAT Contribution Board both on the Website and Showcased at the event.
- **Foursome - \$500** Four Golf Playing Spots.
- **Individual Player - \$150** One Golf Playing Spot.
- **Lunch Only - \$40** For any non-players that want to join us for the Texas BBQ Lunch buffet and raffle drawing.

All Players get to have a Lone Star Breakfast, a Texas BBQ Lunch Buffet, a raffle ticket, and will be eligible to win the Player's Prize Giveaways!

**Tournament Schedule**

7:30 AM Registration & Breakfast  
8:30 AM Shotgun Start  
Lunch and Raffle are after players finish.  
Held at the  
[Timber Creek Golf Club](#)

**Players Prize Giveaways go to:**

- 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> overall scores
- Longest Drive
- Closest to the Pin

**Did you Know:** DBMAT has provided advisory support for the Department of Aging and Disability (DADS); legislative advocacy with our Texas Government; and educational advocacy with local school systems as well as nationally.

For the child/adult who is deafblind, an Intervener provides a bridge to the world. By definition, an Intervener is a one-to-one service provider with specialized training and skills in deafblindness, who does with, not for, the deafblind individual.

Christian was "lucky" to have a gifted Intervener working with him. Gary and I fought our personal battle for many years to make it happen for him. Christian was 21 years old when he and his Intervener, Ann Bielert met. Ann and Christian's story can be read on the DBMAT website: [www.dbmat-tx.org](http://www.dbmat-tx.org)  
Please help us realize our vision....and Christian's vision.



**THE CHRISTIAN KNAPP MEMORIAL GOLF TOURNAMENT  
TO BENEFIT  
THE DEAFBLIND MULTIHANDICAPPED ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS  
SEPTEMBER 25, 2008**

**Send this Registration Form to:** DBMAT, 16 Grants Lake Circle, Sugarland, TX 77479  
**Deadline:** September 1, 2008 if preferred, fax to 713-981-9227 (for credit card or online payment)

Generously Underwritten by **To Be Announced**

**Player Registration Information**

Note: Player #1 will be considered the primary contact. Other players only need to complete their names (unless interested in being notified for a potential future Tournament, at least one year away.)

**Player #1** \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

**Player #2** \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

**Player #3** \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

**Player #4** \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

**For more information call: 281-302-5454**

**SEPTEMBER 25, 2008**

At the [Timber Creek Golf Club](#)

**Christian Knapp Memorial  
Golf Tournament**



**Benefiting  
The Deafblind  
Multihandicapped  
Association  
of Texas (DBMAT)**

Yes! SIGN US UP! *We want to Help & Have fun!*

- Platinum - \$2,500
- Gold - \$1,500
- Foursome - \$500
- Individual - \$150

The above includes: Lone Star Breakfast, Texas BBQ Lunch Buffet, a raffle ticket, and be eligible for a Players PRIZE Giveaway!!!

- Contest Package - \$50 (No. wanted \_\_\_\_\_)  
(Includes 4 Mulligans and 4 Raffle Tickets)
- Lunch - \$40
- I am unable to attend, but please accept my donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_

**How Do You Wish To Pay?**

- Online :** <http://www.dbmat-tx.org/PayforDBMATGolfRegistration.html>
- By Check**, send with registration form.
- By Credit Card**  
\_\_\_ Visa \_\_\_ MC \_\_\_ Disc \_\_\_ AmEx

Card No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Exp. \_\_\_\_\_ CVV2# \_\_\_\_\_

CVV2 is the three digit verification code on the back (or four digits on front of AmEx).

Cardholder Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Card Billing Address \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**For Information on the day of the event:**

Timber Creek Golf Club Pro Shop:  
281-993-1140

***Inclement Weather?***

*In the event inclement weather forces cancellation of the Golf Tournament, the Texas BBQ Lunch Buffet and Raffle will still be held for fun to be had by ALL!!!*





# WE CAN SOAR!

By Wayne Thompson

Recently I watched a documentary about eagles. One segment in particular piqued my interest.

At the appropriate age, the mother eagle would push the eaglet off the safe spot where the nest was built. The eaglet, frantically flapping its fledgling wings, fell for some distance. Just before the eaglet hit the ground, the mother would swoop down and catch the frightened eaglet and take it safely back to the nest.

Over time, she would repeat the procedure again and again. Each time she would catch the eaglet just in the "nick of time" to save her offspring from sudden death.

Then, one day when pushed off the cliff, the eaglet began to fly. It was awkward and made some rough landings at first, but soon the young eaglet had become very adept and graceful in flight.

When my son, Caleb, became ill I felt like I was pushed from the comfort of my nest. I was frightened and flailing every bit as much as the eaglet pushed from the cliff. The only difference was the fall seemed to be in slow motion.

During the course of Caleb's treatment, we spent a lot of time in the Midland hospital. A mother eagle named Molly came to visit Caleb and me at the hospital. She continued to come almost nightly to encourage us and try to lift our spirits. Many of the things she shared with me made no sense at the time. Sometimes she angered me beyond words, and when I was about to hit the ground, she swooped down to pick me up and put me in a safe place. You see, Molly had recently lost her lovely daughter at the age of three to leukemia. It was then that I realized when I was feeling sorry for myself all I had to do was look around. I usually do not have to look very far so see someone who has it worse than I do.

As I said before, some of the things Molly said made no sense at the time, but over the years, her words ring in my head and give me strength and the ability to fly freely until I can find another safe place to land.

I still get pushed off the cliff quite frequently when conditions change in Caleb's health or I encounter difficulties with the services he receives, or the school environment becomes more difficult, etc., but each and

every time there is someone to swoop out of nowhere and lift me up.

I have found that I get a lift from being involved in local support groups which serve other families like mine. I also get a tremendous lift from being able to serve and be involved with DBMAT.

In conclusion, we families who have loved ones with multiple impairments can be there for one another and for the younger families (eaglets) when they are pushed from the cliff! Being involved and organized, we can soar to new heights and enjoy a view only experienced by the mighty eagle. Often they appear as a speck in the sky and suddenly swoop down and catch a large trout from the rushing river.

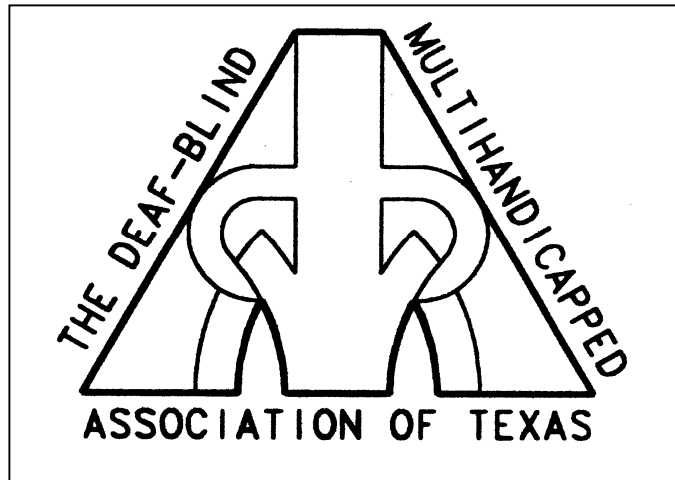
**Mark Your Calendar**

**Family Conference**  
**October 10<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup>**

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

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