

Seen and Heard



Volume 3, Issue 3

June 2016

Superintendent's Corner

My very first newsletter "Monthly Message" in January 2006 opened with the "rear-view mirror" analogy; noting the importance of occasionally glancing in the rear-view mirror to keep a sense of where we have been and to prevent things from sneaking up on us! However, the size of the rear-view mirror is small in comparison to the windshield ... it is critical that we devote most of our attention to the road ahead.

The analogy holds true today, as my time at APSEA draws to a close. Thinking of retirement, many of my reflections are about the past decade and how fortunate I have been to work with and get to know you, the APSEA community/family ... we are, without question, a professional family, an association of like-minded and closely-linked people focused on improving the lives of children.

The significance of support from the Executive, Board and Committees, the Auxiliary and Parents' Association cannot be stressed enough. The quality of programs and services offered through the APSEA partnership demonstrates tremendous success can be achieved when we work together! This issue of "Seen and Heard" starts with a tribute to the past, Sir Frederick Fraser's induction into the Hall of Fame. There is also Library News and a Staffing Update; however, the bulk of the items appropriately feature student activities and achievement. Thanks to students and staff for their submissions.

My work at APSEA has been exceptionally positive and professionally rewarding; there should be no real wonder that my initial commitment for three years subtly stretched into 11. I sincerely and humbly thank you for the memories, realizing it is time to divert our attention away from the rear-view to the "larger windshield" and look forward to and prepare for the future ... May it be great!

Have a wonderful summer!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bert Fulk". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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HALL of FAME

LEADERS AND LEGENDS OF THE BLINDNESS FIELD



We are pleased to announce that Sir Charles Frederick Fraser (1850 – 1925) has been inducted into the Hall of Fame for Leaders and Legends of the Blindness Field for 2016. Each year there are two nominees selected. Sir Charles Frederick Fraser is the fourth Canadian to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. The Induction Ceremony will take place on October 7, 2016 in Louisville, Kentucky.

“The Hall of Fame for Leaders and Legends of the Blindness Field is dedicated to preserving, honoring, and promoting the tradition of excellence manifested by the specific individuals inducted into the Hall of Fame through the history of outstanding services provided to people who are blind or visually impaired”. (www.aph.org/hall/about)

Sir Frederick Fraser was an inspirational, dedicated and innovative educator of the blind. His life's work involved creating educational and vocational programs and services to allow those with visual impairments to become self-supporting and contributing citizens.

In 1873, at age 22, he became the first superintendent of the "Halifax Asylum for the Blind," renamed the Halifax School for the Blind in 1884 due to his efforts. The School provided comprehensive programs in primary through high school education, physical education, music, and vocational and career skills and education to students from four Atlantic provinces.

Fraser established a provincial circulating library of braille books in 1881, and in 1898 was successful in persuading the Canadian Post Office to handle braille books postage-free, which is still in effect today. In 1883, Fraser expanded a financial assistance program for graduates embarking on careers or further training. He also founded the Canadian Printing House for the Blind which was housed at the school (1901). In June 1914 he was knighted and referred to as the “the blind Knight of Nova Scotia.”

For more information about the Hall of Fame, please visit;
www.aph.org/hall/about/

Sir Frederick Fraser was successful in persuading the Canadian Post Office to handle Braille books postage-free in 1898.

Cane Quest 2016

- by **Melissa Colwell, BVI Itinerant Teacher**

On April 16, 2016, APSEA held the very first Cane Quest event at Crandall University in Moncton, NB. It was a windy and cool but bright day and, as the students began to arrive, everyone's excitement heightened. Cane Quest, a national O&M program of the Braille Institute of America, challenges students in their skills. The theme was Dr. Seuss and students were motivated by Dr. Seuss quotes and brailled posters along the route.

Early on, as one student stood waiting while her family talked with the staff, her friend, a student from the same hometown, entered the building to her left and they promptly discovered each other's presence as their canes began tapping in sync. They found each other and began catching up.

Once all participants had arrived, students and their families were given directions to locate the room where the opening ceremonies would take place. After the opening ceremony, participants were off to demonstrate their skills.

Sixteen stations were set up throughout the University. Participants progressed from station to station, where they were given directions on the various skills they were required to demonstrate. Participants could earn a maximum of four coins, based on how many criteria were met at each station.

Students very proudly collected their coins in a pouch, getting more excited the heavier their pouch became; knowing there were prizes waiting to be bought at the end of their quest.

The closing ceremony was a proud moment for the participants and their families. They all received certificates and a brailled copy of the book "Oh the Places You'll Go." All had the pleasure of hearing former APSEA student, Rilind Dragoshi, speak about his struggles and successes with his white cane skills. Rilind infused humour and experience in his speech which he directed toward the students, their parents and the APSEA staff present.

It was wonderful to see Rilind and Ashley Hache (also a former APSEA student) participate as Cane Quest volunteers. Consensus overall was that the day was a success. All students spoke about their favourite parts of the day which included lunch, the craft table, and stations led by Nancy Bradley.



*With brains in their heads and feet in their shoes
(and a cane in their hand); these students are
going great, amazing places!*

CI Buddies

- by Phyllis Anne Blanche, DHH Itinerant Teacher, with Rachel Cameron and Emi Morse, Students

CI Buddies is a program that started this year at Coldbrook and District School in the Annapolis Valley with students Emi Morse and Rachel Cameron who are both bilateral cochlear implant users. On a weekly basis, Emi, Rachel and I meet to discuss issues around hearing loss, amplification and communication. We chat (a lot), play games and have a lot of laughs. There is a three year difference in age between the girls, but they were able to focus on their common experiences and interests to make the program a great success.

We were having so much fun, we decided to expand a little and in a stroke of luck, itinerant teacher Susan MacLean had two sisters of similar age on her caseload. We were able to expand our Buddies to include sisters Shelby MacLeod (Grade 7 at Sherwood Park Education Centre) and Olivia MacLeod (Grade 5 at Cusack Elementary) in Sydney. Olivia and Shelby were very interested in becoming penpals with the "Valley Girls".

It has been amazing to us how well the personalities and interests of the girls have matched up. Olivia even used the topic of penpals for her class speech assignment. Her opening line, "...I will be talking about my discovery of letter writing, **by hand!**" Another highlight of our CI Buddies program was our visit from APSEA Interpreter Consultant Amy Parsons. Emi and Rachel conducted an interview with Amy which you will also find in this issue. The success of the program has been a reminder to me of the importance of our students

having the opportunity to spend time with other children with a shared experience of hearing loss.

Hi, my name is Rachel Cameron and I am in grade 7 at Coldbrook and District School. I have a bilateral profound hearing loss, so I have cochlear implants. CI Buddies is where Emi, Phyllis Anne and I get together at lunchtime every Tuesday and talk about hearing loss and we do some fun activities! I enjoy CI Buddies because it is really fun. It is nice

to talk about my hearing loss with other people and learn more about it. I would love for CI Buddies to continue next year because I like spending time with Emi and Phyllis Anne. It has helped me learn more about my hearing loss and other people's hearing loss. I don't mean to brag, but I recently received the Advocacy Award from the Deaf Youth Association of NS.

Hi, my name is Emi Morse and I am in grade 4 at Coldbrook and District School. I have a bilateral profound hearing loss, same as Rachel and I have two

Nucleus 6 cochlear implants. I like Karate, baking, swimming, camping and hanging out with my friends. I have really enjoyed CI Buddies because I hang out with Phyllis Anne and Rachel and learn about hearing loss. Now I know that other people have to face some of the same challenges I do. What I liked the most about CI Buddies is that Rachel and I became good friends. Oh yeah shhh – don't tell anyone but sometimes Phyllis Anne gives us Icy Squares! Yes, yes, yes, yes, I really want CI Buddies to continue next year!!!!!!



Emi Morse and Rachel Cameron creating artwork in CI Buddies.

Penpals Hit the Write Spot

- by Students Rachel Cameron, Emi Morse,
Shelby and Olivia MacLeod

This past school year, Emi and Rachel from Coldbrook School became penpals with sisters Shelby and Olivia in Cape Breton. It was a great success and the girls share their comments below:

Rachel Cameron "I enjoyed having a penpal because it was cool getting to know somebody that you have never actually met. I got a new friend out of having a penpal. I met someone who has the same interests as me and the same hearing loss. I hope to meet my penpal some day.

Shelby MacLeod "I think everyone should try writing to a penpal. It's better than texting because it is better for developing a friendship. It's cool because I don't have any friends that are deaf like me."

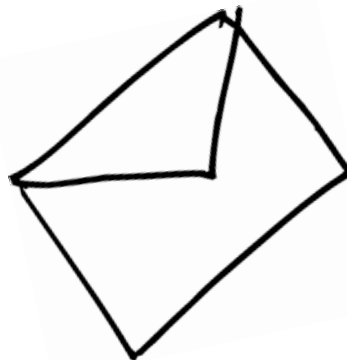


Shelby MacLeod is shown holding a letter from penpal Rachel Cameron.

Olivia MacLeod "Do I like writing letters? Well, yes I do! My hand gets sore though, by the time I get to the end of the second page, but it's worth it. It's better than getting a stiff neck or a headache from staring at a screen too long!

I love to use pretty stickers to make my letter pop with colour. I like to reread my letters from Emi too because it makes me feel happy that I have a new friend five hours away. So my advice would be to - don't keep sitting there. Pick up a pen and a piece of paper and send a letter to a friend. You'll be amazed how good it feels."

Emi Morse "I like having a penpal because you get all these amazing letters that are made just for you! We discovered that Olivia and I are a perfect match for penpals because we are both crazy! I always look forward to getting letters from Olivia and I even like writing letters to her!"



Sisters Shelby and Olivia MacLeod

"I got a new friend out of having a penpal."

- Rachel Cameron

It All Starts With an Idea

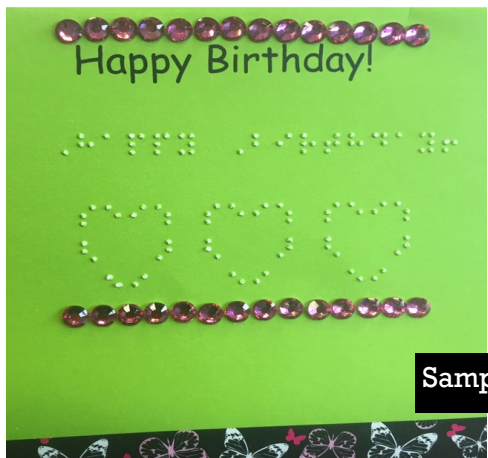
- by Beth Button, BVI Itinerant Teacher

Sidney Neilson, a grade 8 student at St. Stephen Middle School in NB had two problems to solve this winter. She had to come up with a way to raise money to go to Space Camp for Interested Visually Impaired Students in September in Huntsville Alabama and she had to come up with an idea for her grade 8 class entrepreneurship project. Having been a braille user since she was very young, Sidney decided that one idea could solve these two problems and started a business making braille greeting cards.

Sidney began by making greeting cards to sell in her local community and at the entrepreneurship fair put on by her class. She also spent a day with her Perkins braille making and selling cards at Something's Brewing, an independent coffee shop in St. Stephen. She took orders and sold them to different itinerant teachers through the VI Listserv. Currently, she has raised approximately \$500 for Space Camp.

Josh Cheney, Sidney's grade 8 Social Studies/Language Arts teacher, recognized her success and suggested she apply for the Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge, an annual competition held in New Brunswick. Sidney was keen and quickly found herself pitching her business plan at the Anglophone South regional competition. Finding herself a winner, she arrived at the provincial competition in Moncton on May 18. She competed with 9 other student business ventures with students between grades 7 and 12 presenting their 90-second pitch. Sidney, one of the youngest students, won 3rd place with a \$500 prize!

Congratulations Sidney—we are all very proud of your great idea, hard work, commitment and your business savvy.



Sidney and her itinerant teacher, Beth Button at the Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge Gala.

To find out more, check out the links below.

Space Camp for Interested Visually Impaired Students <http://www.tsbvi.edu/space/>
Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge www.entrepreneurshipnb.ca

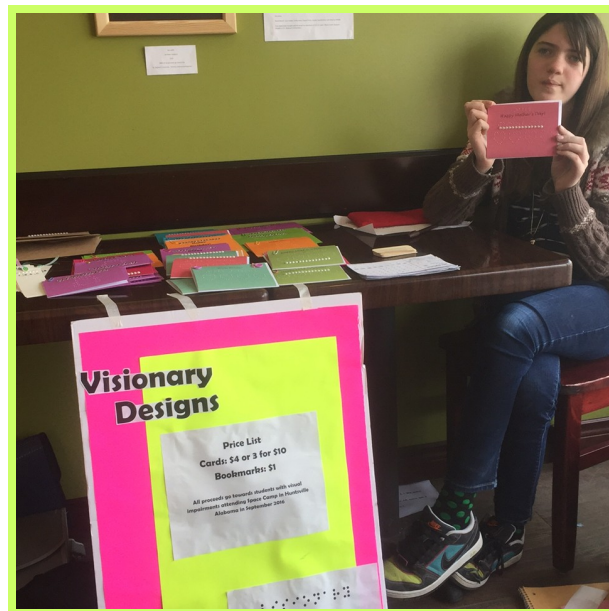
It All Starts With an Idea (continued)

Here is Sidney's award winning 90-second pitch:

Hi, my name is Sidney Neilson and I am here to present my company Visionary Designs. I was born with a genetic visual condition called optic nerve atrophy. I have been a braille reader since I was in kindergarten.

Greeting cards are a normal part of society but have you ever seen braille greeting cards in a store? I haven't either. My business, Visionary Designs, offers that to people that can't read the print cards and they are cool enough so even print readers would buy them. In Canada, there are approximately over half a million people that are visually impaired or blind and in New Brunswick alone there are approximately ten thousand three hundred and eight. Even though it is a small population, they still deserve a greeting card they can read. But since it is such a small population from a business point of view, they would have to be appealing to both sighted and visually impaired people. Visionary Designs solves this problem. I have created a business that not only creates awareness and educates people about braille, but also gives braille users another resource to use.

-Sidney Neilson



Sidney making and selling her cards at local coffee shop Something's Brewing.

Library News

- Core curriculum, including supplemental materials, from the Nova Scotia Book Bureau may be available in various formats from the library – search the database!
- If you can't find what you are looking for on the database, send an email to: library@apsea.ca with the details of the item including title, author, and ISBN and we'll search for you.
- There are over 800 unified braille files available for download from the database covering all grade levels. If you want a hard copy, just request one.
- All library items, with the exception of NSR material and student supplies are *due back before* the end of the school year.

Becoming “The Boss” of Her Hearing Loss

- by Jennifer Gillis, DHH Itinerant Teacher

On June 2, Willow Keith, a Grade 3 student in Nova Scotia, gave a presentation about hearing and hearing loss to her entire school.

The presentation came to light after Willow had a tough appointment with her audiologist where she found out her hearing had worsened. This news sparked questions about hearing, why she has hearing loss, and how to fix it. It was decided the best way to help her understand her hearing loss was to have her explain it in a presentation to her class. Over the next couple of months, we worked very hard on teaching her about her hearing and choosing what to put in the presentation. Willow decided on five topics she felt were the most important: the ear and how hearing works, her hearing loss, tubes, her technology, and how others can help her.

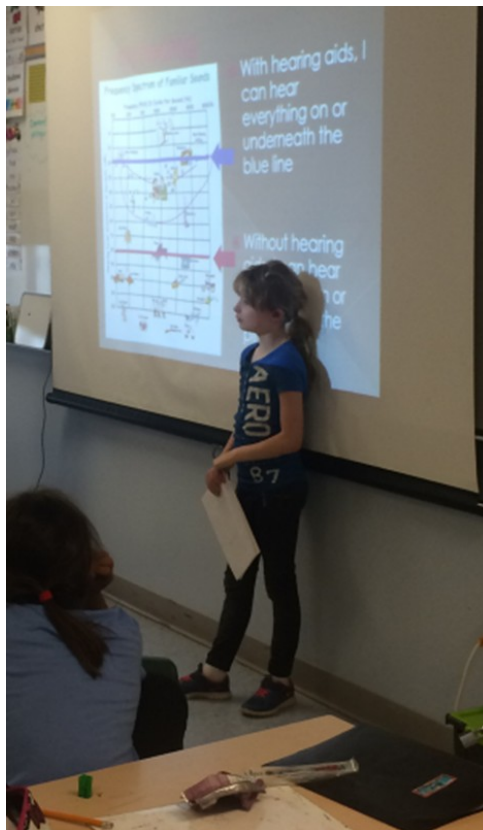
One afternoon, while diligently putting together our slides, Willow said “I wish my whole school could see this, I want everyone to understand.” What? Did my shy, quiet student just ask to do a presentation in front of approximately 450 students and staff? Before she had the chance to take it back, I was talking with her classroom teacher to set it up. The date was picked and now came what I thought would be the tough part, helping Willow gain the confidence to get up and present. Boy, was I wrong!

On the day of the practice presentation with just her class, Willow stood in front of 20+ peers with a quiet voice and shaky hands.

She held the paper and began to read. Before our eyes, she morphed from a frightened, nervous girl to one filled with knowledge and confidence. She not only gave a stellar presentation, but also opened the floor for questions. Hands were shooting up all over the classroom asking Willow everything from “when did you get hearing aids?” to “can you explain what’s happened to your hearing?” Willow didn’t bat an eye. She took the questions and answered like a pro.

Then, a young girl in her class asked a pivotal question; “how long will you have to wear hearing aids?” Although the presentation was intended to help Willow understand her hearing loss, a deeper reason was to help her accept it. Willow was having difficulty accepting her hearing loss as something she will always live with. In that moment, when the unsuspecting classmate asked such a loaded question, Willow proved why we were there. With a smile on her face, she replied “you can’t fix my hearing, I will always wear hearing aids but that’s OK, I like my hearing aids.” Success!

A few days later, Willow stood in front of 450+ people including students, staff, her mom, grandmother, audiologist, and myself and delivered the same presentation with the same level of confidence. As the audience applauded, she looked at me with tears in her eyes and said “I’m so lucky to have you”. Choking back the tears, I simply replied “no, I’m the lucky one”. I am proud to say Willow can now boldly call herself the “boss of her hearing loss.”





Staffing Update

While the staffing process continues, the update below notes staff who are new to APSEA and those who are changing location or position for the 2016-17 school year.

Michelle Taylor—DHH Provincial Supervisor (NB)

Jeremy Foster—Web Application Developer (APSEA)

Louise MacGillivray—Administrative Assistant (to the Superintendent) (APSEA)

Sheree Larade—BVI Itinerant Teacher (Halifax, NS)

Michael McLaughlin—BVI Itinerant Teacher (Sydney, NS)

Kelly McKeage—BVI Itinerant Teacher (Halifax, NS)

Morganne West—BVI STP and Assessment Teacher (APSEA)

Brenda Temple—DHH Itinerant Teacher (Saint John, NB)

Jennifer Paterson—DHH Itinerant Teacher (Perth-Andover, NB)

Lisa Jenkins—DHH Itinerant Teacher (Halifax, NS)

Samantha Harrison—DHH STP Teacher (APSEA)

Patrick Daley—DHH Student & Family Counsellor (NB)

Nellie Van Klei—BVI STP and Assessment Teacher (APSEA)

Jennifer Gillis—DHH Itinerant Teacher (Truro, NS)

Robbie Hollohan—DHH Itinerant Teacher (Moncton, NB)

Sabrina de Jong—BVI Family & Child Counsellor/School to Community Transition Consultant (NB)

Melissa Byrne—BVI Itinerant Teacher (Halifax, NS)

Paula Green—BVI STP and Assessment Teacher (APSEA)

Kathleen Monahan—DHH Itinerant Teacher (Coldbrook, NS)

Rachel Perrier—Administrative Assistant (DHH Programs) (APSEA)

Special appreciation is extended to our retirees (Valerie Furge, Frank Murphy, Jim Parsons, Sharon Robertson, Leslie Soulsby and Bert Tulk) as they embark on a new phase and all that it entails.

May your retirement be all that you want and more!



An Interview with Amy Parsons

- by Rachel Cameron and Emi Morse, Students

A highlight for Rachel Cameron and Emi Morse of the CI Buddies Program at Coldbrook and District School was a special visit from APSEA Educational Interpreter Consultant, Amy Parsons. On one of her visits to the Valley, we asked her to join us for a CI Buddy session and then stay for lunch.

Rachel: “What kind of school did you go to – Deaf School or Public School?”

Amy: “Both. I was in a dayclass for Deaf students at Harbourview School in Dartmouth from Primary to grade 4. Then I went to public school with an interpreter from grade 5 to graduating. In those days, the only interpreters were used in high school. My mom really advocated for me to get an interpreter in elementary school. It was great because now, we have interpreters at all ages. Some of the teachers I had when I was young, I worked with in my job at APSEA.”

Rachel: “What exactly is your job at APSEA? Do you spend a lot of time at the Centre? What is the best part of your job?”

Amy: “In my job, I check on students and interpreters and make sure they’re a good fit for each other. I support the interpreters so they have the skills and information to do their job. At the beginning and end of the school year, I spend a lot of time out of the Centre visiting students. The best part of my job is when I get to sit and talk to students. I like sharing my experiences because I know it would have helped me to talk to a Deaf adult when I was younger. Also, I LOVE Deaf camp. I have been going since I was little and I always have so much fun there.”

Emi: “What is everyday life like for you as a Deaf woman?”

Amy: “Well, I am very lucky at work because I work with people who I can communicate with quite easily. In my personal life, some days are easy and some are hard, but recently I have finally figured out how to deal with the hard times. I am 34 and I figured out that I can ask for what I need.”

Rachel: “Is it ever frustrating or hard when you meet hearing people and they don’t know anything about Deaf people?”

Amy: “It really depends. Some people are easy and it’s very easy to communicate with them. Other times it can be more frustrating, especially if there is something I really need to know or something I need to get done. You might not always have the time to explain to someone what you need, so yes it can be frustrating.”

Emi: “What was your college/university experience like?”

Amy: “I went to Acadia and I loved it. It was perfect for me because it was small. Most universities are very large but Acadia only had 3000 people so it was really great. Back then, it was very accessible. It was the beginning of everyone using email and Acadia gave everyone a laptop, which made communication really easy for me. I could talk to my professors and get extra help if I needed it. After Acadia, I worked for a while and then I went back to school to NSCC and now I’m back at school again doing a Masters in Education in Counseling at Acadia. I love it.”

An Interview with Amy Parsons (continued)

Rachel: “When did your parents discover you were Deaf?”

Amy “For sure they knew when I was 3 months old but they were suspicious all along. My mother worked with a Deaf woman so she learned a lot of information early on about sign language, lipreading and communication.”

Emi: “What do you do more of---signing or lipreading?”

Amy “I sign and speechread equally. It depends on who I’m with. If I’m out with hearing people I can just speechread and speak. If I’m with other Deaf friends, I can sign. I really have a lot of options.”

Emi: “What are your favourite hobbies or pastimes?”

Amy: “I love Geocaching. One time, I was in the Magdalen Islands geocaching and they were filming the Amazing Race in the same place that we were looking for a cache! It was very cool. I also love doing pottery. I am always learning more and pottery taught me something about myself and how to communicate what I need. My newest passion is felting. I love working with wool. I am a camper and I love wool. I have wool hats, wool socks, wool blankets—everything made of wool. Felting helps me when I have had a bad day and I’m frustrated. I just come home and start poking and I start thinking about my day and maybe how I could have handled things differently. It’s so important to have something you do for yourself because if you have a bad day, you have something that is yours that you can go to and enjoy.”

We would like to thank Amy for visiting and sharing her experiences with us!



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