



# 2020 Annual Report



The Maryland School for the Blind

# Superintendent and Board Chair



**AS WE LOOK BACK AND REFLECT ON THE YEAR 2020**, it is doubtful that anyone could have predicted we would be faced with a global pandemic as devastating as the COVID-19 virus that would alter the lives of millions of people worldwide. It was a year we will never forget.

At The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB), like other schools across the country, 2020 was an unprecedented year, filled with challenges at every turn. Despite the obstacles we faced, the MSB students and staff rose above, showing tremendous resiliency and strength. We demonstrated the meaning of "One Team," which has become our school mantra.

As a statewide education and resource center, we continued to deliver the quality education and therapeutic services to students throughout the state of Maryland for which we are known and respected, despite the COVID-19 crisis which forced us to close our doors on March 13. We shifted gears and began virtual instruction immediately on March 16 and for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year, including hosting our annual summer programs remotely. We also found creative ways to recognize and celebrate the graduating class of 2020 with a combined individual in-person and virtual ceremony.

Throughout this unusual year, our dedicated staff remained committed to serving our students and turned virtual learning into engaging experiences for their classes. Many had to learn new skills, take on added responsibilities, or assume different roles to ensure the continuity of learning for our students. It wasn't easy, but we are proud of what our staff accomplished and that there were no layoffs or furloughs.

After extensive planning with the hope of returning to campus for the fall 2020-21 school year, we developed a comprehensive return to school plan, focusing on a tiered approach to reopen gradually with safety being the highest priority. This plan was revised multiple times as we learned about the science of COVID-19 throughout the year. To see the plan and learn about our tiered approach, go to [marylandschoolfortheblind.org/covid-19-return-to-school-plan-fall-2020](http://marylandschoolfortheblind.org/covid-19-return-to-school-plan-fall-2020).

We invested significant resources in virtual learning technology and devices for students and staff, as well as cleaning and sanitizing supplies, personal protective equipment (PPE), transparent barriers, and safety signage for our campus facilities. We also successfully advocated with the Maryland State Legislature and the Department of Health for COVID-19 testing on our campus.

We could not have done this without our community of supporters like you. Your response to our special COVID-19 relief appeals and requests for support made it possible for us to make it through a very difficult year. Thank you!

SINCERELY,

**W. ROBERT HAIR, M.ED**  
SUPERINTENDENT

**MARION MULLAUER**  
BOARD CHAIR

# 2020 Staff Awards



**Mary Einsel**, a Para-educator at MSB, received the 2020 MD/DC Chapter of the Association of the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind (AER) Friend of the Blind and Visually Impaired Community award. She is a key member of the early learning team, supporting the academic and functional curriculum through the implementation of assigned lesson plans and student IEP goals.



**Karen Frank**, Principal of the Early Learning program at MSB, received the Excellence in the Field of Blindness and Visual Impairment Award from the MD/DC Chapter of the Association of the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind (AER). She has been a pioneer in the development of early intervention and education programs for infants, toddlers, and preschool children with visual impairments on the state, national and international level for the past 40 years.



**Christie Holland**, an educator at MSB since 2007, was named the Principals of Schools for the Blind (POSB) 2020 Outstanding Teacher of Students with Multiple Disabilities. She is a respected leader in the field, providing special education and vision services for children from ages 5 -21 who have a variety of disabilities including visual impairments, autism, intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, and multiple disabilities.



**William (Bill) McGeachy**, an Orientation & Mobility Specialist at both MSB and the Department of Rehabilitative Services (DORS), received the 2020 Excellence in Direct Service in Education Award from the MD/DC Chapter of the Association of the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind (AER). For the past 35 years, he has dedicated his life to teaching and fostering independence through safe and effective travel skills to blind and visually impaired students and adults throughout the DC/MD area.



Students stand outside on social distance markers on the sidewalk.



Students use braille writers to demonstrate how to maintain six feet for social distancing.



# Maryland School for the Blind Class of 2020



**Taiye Akanni**  
District Heights, MD



**Kayla Allen**  
Hagerstown, MD



**Dante Beaty**  
Elkton, MD



**Aaron Mackall, Jr.**  
Columbia, MD



**Tyler Shallue**  
Severna Park, MD



**Matthew Shifflett**  
Pikesville, MD



**William Finn Boak**  
Annapolis, MD



**Jamal Cooper**  
Owings Mills, MD



**Qualik Ford**  
Clinton, MD



**Cassandra Shorter**  
Annapolis, MD



**Christopher Stevenson**  
Capitol Heights, MD



**Abigail Sulerzyski**  
Severna Park, MD



**Alexander Grigalus-Kern**  
Rockville, MD



**Noah Hall**  
Salisbury, MD



**Eliezer Hoffman**  
Silver Spring, MD



**Asher Sykes**  
Hampstead, MD



**Thomas White**  
Fruitland, MD

## CLASS OFFICERS

**President:**  
Qualik Ford

**Vice-President:**  
Cassandra Shorter

**Secretary:**  
Tyler Shallue



**Tyler Hoppe**  
Mount Savage, MD



**Sydney Joyce**  
Jessup, MD



**Johnathan Knight**  
Silver Spring, MD

*We're on our way. We had lots to prove.  
The Class of 2020 is on the move.*

# 2020 COVID Timeline



Two students participate in the Maryland Braille Challenge.



MSB Staff pack food boxes the day before school closes due to the pandemic.



Tech teacher Gina Fugate teaches a virtual class.

### JANUARY 2020

- The World Health Organization declares the Coronavirus a global health emergency
- The first case of COVID-19 virus is confirmed in the USA
- Schools across the US, including MSB, are operating as normal
- MSB hosts EAAB Wrestling & Cheerleading Tournament on campus featuring 5 schools for the blind

### FEBRUARY 2020

- MSB hosts 11th annual Maryland Braille Challenge on campus
- One Braille Challenge student is quarantined due to travel to another country
- The first death from the virus confirmed in the US
- Class of 2020 senior breakfast is held on campus

### MARCH 2020

- COVID-19 is declared a global pandemic
- MSDE orders all schools to close in Maryland (at least for 2 weeks) on March 13
- MSB begins virtual learning for all students on March 16
- MSB leadership staff begin to formulate COVID-19 Continuity of Learning and Return to School Plans

### APRIL 2020

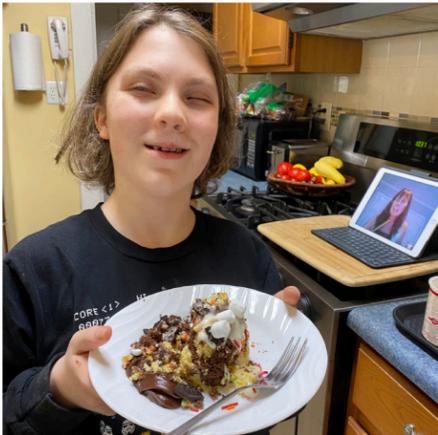
- MSB donates supply of N95 masks to Maryland first responders
- MSB opens Early Learning Center as a daycare for children of Maryland first responders
- MSB staff begin food and supply deliveries to families in need across the state

### MAY 2020

- Army Corps of Engineers surveys MSB campus for potential COVID-19 field hospital site
- Prom was held virtually for juniors and seniors
- Donor contributes \$20K to MSB Families In Need Program
- Sports Banquet was held virtually for MSB athletes
- Special COVID-19 fundraiser raises over \$60K



Graduate Asher Sykes shows off his school colors mask.



Daphne Williams shows off her cupcake creation as MSB teacher, Ms. Amy Morrell, looks on virtually.



MSB Pre-K class meets in person, wearing PPE.

### JUNE 2020

- MSB holds combined live individual and group zoom graduation ceremonies for the Class of 2020
- Staff trainings begin for virtual summer programs

### JULY 2020

- MSB hosts 4-week virtual summer program
- Work on official Return to School Plan continues

### AUGUST 2020

- MSB staff undergo extensive trainings on safety and PPE in preparation for possible return to school

### SEPTEMBER 2020

- MSB's tiered approach Return to School Plan is published
- MSB begins new school year virtually on September 8; limited one-on-one instruction begins

### OCTOBER 2020

- Pre-K and Kindergarten students return to in-person learning on campus
- MSB opens on-campus learning center for children of MSB staff returning to campus

### NOVEMBER 2020

- 1st – 3rd grade students return to in-person learning on campus
- MSB raises \$60K for Bring Students Back to Campus fundraising campaign

### DECEMBER 2020

- MSB returns to virtual learning for all students prior to the holidays due to spike in COVID19 disease.
- MSB staff continue to deliver basic needs to families in need (March-December)
- MSB is approved for on-campus COVID-19 testing



## In Awe of Paul



Paul in Ghana

**PAUL WALES IS A TYPICAL AMERICAN TEENAGER WHO** enjoys sports, trivia, television, and video games. He has his own YouTube Channel where he explains how to use tech devices so his friends have dubbed him “Mr. Technology.” He is also very interested in social justice and environmental issues. He is active in the Black Lives Matter movement and is writing a book focusing on the life of a young black girl in America. It is clear that Paul has a bright future and wants to make a difference in the world, just as others have done for him.

He has come a long way from his childhood as an orphan in Ghana, Africa.

Paul was born with Neurofibromatosis 1 (NF1), a genetic disorder characterized by the development of multiple benign tumors of the nerves and skin (neurofibromas) and areas of abnormal skin pigmentation. In Paul’s case, the enlarged facial tumors cover his eyes, leaving him completely blind.

Despite his circumstances, Paul was a happy child and the staff at the orphanage in Ghana took very good care of him. However due to a lack of resources, he had not received any formal education during his formative years and had limited access to medical care in his home country.

Rosie Watts, a young lady from England, took a special interest in Paul after visiting the orphanage on several occasions and made it her mission to help him. She started the Helping Paul Project in 2013. Through her tireless efforts, she was able to arrange medical care, including surgical procedures for Paul in Ghana, enrolled him in a deaf blind school, and made connections with people all over the world from the NF1 community. This led to a connection with Jane Osburn and Scott Wales, a couple from the United States, who also took an interest in Paul.

After many visits to Ghana and a long and complicated process, Scott, who also has NF1, and Jane were able to adopt Paul and bring him to the US in 2017. Paul began his new life with his new parents in America. He started attending a public middle school in Silver Spring, Maryland and working with a tutor on the weekends.

Although he was progressing academically by leaps and bounds, he was missing one important element in a teen’s life, great friends. That summer Paul attended a summer program at MSB and instantly found his community. The next fall they enrolled him full time.

Paul was a natural fit at MSB and quickly stole the hearts of the staff and built enduring friendships with fellow students. He was making great strides both academically and socially when the COVID-19 pandemic hit forcing MSB to close and convert to virtual learning. Remote learning is not ideal and is especially difficult for blind or low vision students who rely on tactile materials and hands-on instruction. Paul not only attends academic classes on-line, but he also receives one-on-one services including Braille instruction, orientation and mobility lessons, career education and

independent living skills. He also has a dedicated social worker and participates in many of MSB’s recreational activities.

Although Paul has strong technical skills and is keeping up with his lessons, he has found virtual learning to be challenging and prefers in person learning. He also misses his teachers, therapy staff and his friends. Like many of our students who are medically fragile, Paul is at a higher risk of a deadly COVID-19 infection. Until Paul is vaccinated, he will continue online instruction. Fortunately, Paul is a whiz with technology and will make the best of the rest of the virtual school year.

“The MSB staff are doing an incredible job with virtual instruction and they have been a tremendous source of support for Paul and our family,” according to Scott. “They are a team of caring and dedicated people and we are so grateful to be a part of this community.”



Paul gives a high five to his friend from MSB’s summer program.



Paul suits up for a Judo class at MSB Camp Abilities.

*MSB is a team of caring and dedicated people, and we are so grateful to be a part of this community.*

# The Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Foundation

**THE MARYLAND SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND (MSB) RECEIVED A MAJOR GRANT FROM THE HARRY & JEANETTE WEINBERG FOUNDATION** to construct and furnish the state-of-the-art library for students who are blind or visually impaired and their families on the school's campus. The open-space design features colorful wall art, student reading areas, a parent's corner, a technology center, and an outdoor patio. Resources include print, brailled, tactile materials, audio books, and videos.

The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, one of the largest private charitable foundations in the United States, is dedicated to meeting the basic needs of people experiencing poverty. The Foundation supports nonprofits, primarily in the US and Israel, which provide direct services in the areas of Housing, Health, Jobs, Education, and Community Services. Grants support organizations that serve a range of populations, including older adults, women at risk and their children, people with disabilities, and veterans, as well as the Jewish community.

As a Weinberg Foundation grant recipient, MSB is eligible to participate in the organization's community initiatives and partnerships, including the Maryland Food Bank and Operation Warm.

The library was scheduled to officially open for the start of the 2020-21 school year, but due to the COVID pandemic, an official ribbon cutting and dedication ceremony has been postponed to a later date in 2021.



A Helen Keller quote on the library front desk reads in braille and large print, "More than at any other time, when I hold a beloved book in my hand my limitations fall from me, my spirit is free."



The new library features colorful wall art designed for students with low vision, a fanciful installation of original art depicting migrating butterflies (designed by Lea de Wit), tactile elements, student reading areas, a parent's corner, a technology center, and an outdoor patio.

# The Maryland Society for Sight

**THE MARYLAND SOCIETY FOR SIGHT LOW VISION CLINIC AT THE MARYLAND SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND WAS DEDICATED ON JANUARY 27, 2021.** MSB is grateful to the Board of Directors of the former Maryland Society for Sight (MSFS) for their very generous gift of \$414,000, which will be used to help fund our statewide outreach programs and services, as well as expand and enhance the low vision clinic on the school's campus. In honor of this major gift, we have renamed our low vision clinic, located in the Early Learning and Outreach Center, as The Maryland Society for Sight Low Vision Clinic at MSB.

MSFS, a community-funded organization that was dedicated to preserving the vision of all Marylanders, closed its doors in early 2020. Staff and volunteers of the organization performed eye screenings and educated over 30,000 Marylanders in the course of its 110 year history. Through their advocacy efforts, they were responsible for securing the passage of substantially every Maryland state law and Baltimore City ordinance aimed at conserving sight and preventing blindness. This included legislation banning BB Guns and Air Rifles, making fireworks illegal, and requiring shatterproof auto glass in vehicles and public buses.

The board of directors unanimously voted to donate all of the organization's remaining funds to MSB when it ceased operations and dissolved in 2020. We are honored to carry on their legacy through our outreach and low-vision services and programs.

MSB has dedicated a page on our website to honor the history of Maryland Society for Sight: [marylandschoolfortheblind.org/maryland-society-for-sight-low-vision-clinic-at-msb](http://marylandschoolfortheblind.org/maryland-society-for-sight-low-vision-clinic-at-msb)



Marion Mullauer, MSB Board Chair, Ruth Ann Hynson, MSB Director of Statewide Services, Robert Hair, MSB Superintendent, Sharon Whited, MSB Low Vision Specialist and Dr. Joanne Waeltermann, MSFS Board of Directors cut the ribbon and unveil the plaque dedicated to The Maryland Society for Sight.

## Jana Goshen-McGeachy Memorial Fund



Jana Goshen-McGeachy

**THE JANA GOSHEN-MCGEACHY MEMORIAL FUND WAS ESTABLISHED IN 2005 BY WILLIAM MCGEACHY**, an Orientation and Mobility instructor at MSB, to honor the memory of his late wife, Jana Goshen-McGeachy, a residential specialist, who worked at the school from 1977 until her untimely death in 2005.

Jana Goshen-McGeachy held many positions in MSB's residential program over her 28-year career, including child care worker, houseparent, and eventually supervisor of the school's on-campus apartment program, residential night care staff, and the Skills for Independence summer camp. A champion for the importance of residential programs in the education of students with disabilities, she was responsible for creating and executing structured daily living programs and taking students off-campus for educational purposes, rather than just for leisure. She advocated for families to be actively involved in student programs and invited them to campus to participate in cooking, shopping, and other important life-skills experiences.

The endowed fund has been used to support special student projects at MSB, at the discretion of Mr. McGeachy, over the past 15 years. In May 2020, in response to the COVID19 pandemic, he directed the use of \$20,000 from the fund, to be used to support MSB's Families In Need fund, which assists students and families who are experiencing financial difficulties and struggling with access to basic needs as a result of the COVID19 crisis.

As a result of the gift, MSB social work staff and staff from various departments were able to provide emergency delivery of basic personal care items and non-perishable food or gift cards to 35 – 41 families from March through December 2020.

According to Mr. McGeachy, "Jana's life was spent in service to others. A life spent in service to others is a wonderful thing that never dies. The rewards of such an endeavor live on in the lives of the others that we touch. The fund was set up to be used in the service of others as Jana would do if still physically here. Everything for Jana came from the heart and now at a time when so many hearts are breaking this would be the time to use the funds to nurture those hearts in need."

*A life spent in service to others is a wonderful thing that never dies.*

## How To Make Your Permanent Mark On The Future

**NOW IS THE TIME TO MAKE A MARK ON THE FUTURE.** More and more friends of The Maryland School for the Blind are choosing to leave a lasting legacy by making a gift through their will or estate. Some of the largest gifts we've received—the kind that really make a difference for future generations—come from planned gifts.

### HOW TO BECOME A FUTURIST

It's easy to become one of these farsighted, influential individuals. If you already have a will, you can add a gift to us through a very simple amendment called a codicil. We can give you sample codicil language you can send to your attorney to make the process smooth and simple.

### IF YOU DON'T HAVE A WILL, WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

Without a valid will in place, you leave it up to the courts to decide how to distribute your assets. But you've worked hard to achieve what you have, whether it's a little or a lot, and you deserve the right to say what happens to it. A will gives you the control you deserve. Writing a will isn't difficult and it's well worth the time. It's also a great opportunity to leave a legacy gift to organizations you care about, like The Maryland School for the Blind.

### WHAT COUNTS AS A BEQUEST?

You can give ("bequeath") many different kinds of assets—in whole or in part—in your will, including:

- A paid-up life insurance policy
- Cash
- Securities
- CDs
- U.S. Savings Bonds
- A percentage of your estate's value
- The "leftovers" after all debts are paid and your loved ones are cared for

### TO RESTRICT OR NOT TO RESTRICT?

Some friends choose to designate their bequest to a certain aspect of our mission. Others leave their gift unrestricted. Either type of bequest is welcome and appreciated. However, since it's impossible to know what the future holds, it's usually recommended to make your bequest unrestricted so that it can be used where the need is greatest when the time comes.

### DON'T BE SHY

Please let us know if you decide to make a bequest to The Maryland School for the Blind. We realize many donors wish to remain anonymous, and if this is your wish, we will absolutely guard your

*continued on page 14*

privacy. However, knowing about your plans really helps us plan better for the future. It also enables us to thank you in the way you deserve. It's especially important to contact us in advance if:

- you would like to make a bequest of something other than cash or appreciated marketable securities; or
- you wish to designate your bequest to a specific purpose.

### BEQUEST LINGO

Many people think a bequest is complicated. Not so! It really couldn't be easier. Simply fill in the blanks and pass along this language to your attorney to include in your will or living trust.

I give, devise and bequeath to The Maryland School for the Blind located in 3501 Taylor Ave, Baltimore, MD or its successor, the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_ (or a description of the specific asset) to be used for such charitable purpose(s) as the governing body of The Maryland School for the Blind or its successor, may decide in its discretion (or for the support of a specific fund or program).

We can also give you language if you're interested in making a residual bequest (the "leftovers" of your estate) or a contingent gift (where The Maryland School for the Blind gets the gift if certain circumstances occur.)

### GET IN TOUCH!

If you believe in our mission and want to help carry it forward to the future, please contact us. We would be pleased to work with you and your advisor(s) to determine the gift that best suits your situation and interests. Contact: Marlo Jacobson, Director of Development, [marloj@mdschblind.org](mailto:marloj@mdschblind.org), 410-444-500 ext 1728.

## 2020 Community Support

**Thank you** to the following businesses, corporations and community organizations for their generous support of MSB in 2020.

### SPECIAL CAMPAIGN DONORS

First Financial Credit Union • Jana Goshen-McGeachy Memorial Fund • Kitchens To Go Built By Carlin • Knights of Columbus – Fr. Burggraff Council • Lewis Contractors, Inc • Mass Mutual • Maury Donnelly & Parr, Inc • MSB Alumni Association • Silberstein Insurance Group

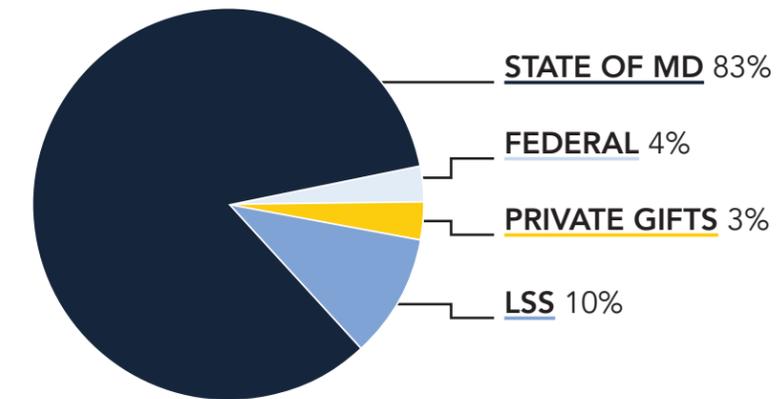
### BRILLE CHALLENGE SPONSORS

Absolute Investigative Services, Inc. • Friends of the Library of the Blind & Print Disabled • G.E. Tignall & Co., Inc. • Leonard A. Kraus and Company • Lord Baltimore Uniform Rental • Marshall Craft Associates • Maryland Parents of Blind Children • Maryland State Department of Education • Ruff Roofing & Sheet Metal, Inc. • Sons of the American Legion, Detachment of Maryland • TCSAccess

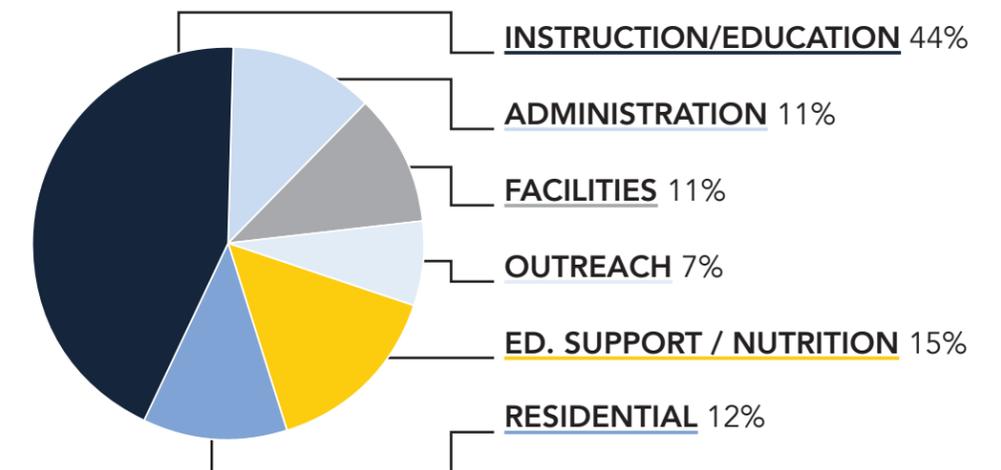
## 2020 Financial Information

**THE MARYLAND SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND** is a private, 501 (c)(3) school under Internal Revenue Service regulations. The school's fiscal year ends on June 30th. Funding is provided primarily through grants from the Maryland State Department of Education and payments from local school districts. Contributions are received from individuals, corporations, foundations, and community groups. Total expenses approximated \$33.4 million.

### 2020 REVENUES



### 2020 EXPENSES



**THE MSB ANNUAL REPORT IS PRODUCED BY THE DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

**Marlo Jacobson**, Director of Development • **Dotty Raynor**, Communications Specialist • **Anna Carolina Pelaes**, Administrative Specialist • Design by Kapowza

JULY 1, 2019 TO JUNE 30, 2020

# Board of Directors, Fiscal Year 2020

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**The Maryland School for the Blind**

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# See beyond