The Maryland School for the Blind

2024 Annual Report

A Message of Gratitude and Growth

Dear Friends and Supporters of The Maryland School for the Blind,

As we reflect on the past year, we are deeply grateful for your unwavering support. The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB) remains dedicated to empowering students who are blind or have low vision with the tools to thrive.

This year brought remarkable growth and achievements. From expanding programs to enhancing facilities, every initiative is a testament to our dedication to helping students achieve their full potential. Our staff's commitment to excellence and innovation ensures MSB remains a leader in education.

Partnerships with local organizations and support from donors have further strengthened our efforts. Together, we are building a community where every student feels valued and empowered.

As we look ahead, we invite you to join us in shaping a brighter future. Your continued involvement—whether through volunteering, advocacy, or financial support—makes a profound difference.

On behalf of the Board, staff, and students, thank you for helping us transform lives.

* 200+ On-Campus Students
* 24 Counties Reached by MSB
* 1500+ Students Served Yearly, In State & Out-of-State
* 170 Years of Blind & Low Vision Education

With gratitude,

W. Robert Hair

Superintendent

Empowering Education - MIRC

The Maryland Instructional Resource Center (MIRC) team produces braille and large print textbooks and educational materials for students throughout Maryland.

* 92 Tactile Graphics & Diagrams Produced
* 7,000 Total Textbooks in the MIRC Repository
* 6,383 Pages of Braille Produced
* 1,085 American Printing House-Eligible students Served

The MIRC is a centralized repository for braille and large print textbooks, as well as other educational materials, located on MSB’s campus. In 1996, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) partnered with The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB) and local education agencies (LEAs) to establish the Maryland Instructional Resource Center (MIRC) to support students who are blind or have low vision.

Milestones and Achievements

In 2024, The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB) achieved key milestones that reflect its commitment to empowering students who are blind or have low vision. These accomplishments highlight MSB’s focus on academic excellence, campus improvements, community partnerships, and fostering student independence in an inclusive, innovative environment.

Key highlights of MSB’s 2024 accomplishments include:

* Academic Excellence and Student Success MSB achieved a 100% graduation rate, reflecting its commitment to providing high-quality, individualized education that prepares students for success beyond the classroom.
* Innovative Program Expansion MSB launched new educational programs that foster creativity, critical thinking, and independent living skills, equipping students for real-world challenges.
* Campus Enhancements The completion of the “Bledsoe Cottages” provided modern, supportive residential spaces that promote life skills and student independence.
* Staff Professional Development MSB remains a leader in best practices for educating students who are blind or have low vision through ongoing specialized training. This year, 100% of staff completed professional development, contributing to a 60% average increase in assessment scores.
* Community Engagement and Partnerships Collaborations with local organizations and events like the Maryland Regional Braille Challenge expanded student opportunities and celebrated achievements.
* Statewide Impact Through Outreach The Maryland School for the Blind’s Outreach Department trained Maryland teachers on the APH Monarch, a 10-line, 32-cell braille display with tactile graphics, providing advanced tools to enhance education for students who are blind or have low vision.

MSB Class of 2024

Class Officers

President: Faithful Reed

Vice President: Alex DeSmith

Treasurer: Virginia Jacobs

Secretary: Marie Leocadie-Ijambo

Public Relations: Malik Britton

Alumni Award

Winner: Virginia Rose Jacobs

Recognizes exceptional improvement in personal and academic areas. Must be 16–21, in their second year at MSB, and not a previous recipient.

B. Frank Newcomer Award

Winner: Anderson Alejandro Ayala-Pacheco

For a 2024 graduate with 4+ years at MSB, active in 2+ extracurriculars, and exemplary in leadership, citizenship, and academics.

Special Staff Commendation Award

Winner: Marie-Leocadie Nyenyezi Ijambo

Awarded to a graduating senior for outstanding overall improvement.

Class Colors Silver & Gold

Class Flower Orchid

Class Motto Together We Soar, We’re the Class of 2024

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Alexander DeSmith | Cecil |
| Anderson Ayala-Pacheco | Washington |
| Jendayi Anomachi | Baltimore City |
| Julien Martin | Harford |
| Kaitlyn Marriott | Baltimore County |
| Aubrey Barkoye | Baltimore County |
| Charles Bainbridge | Baltimore County |
| Emma Wynne | Baltimore County |
| Malik Britton | Harford |
| Marie-Leocadie Ijambo | Baltimore County |
| In Memory ofSergio Garcia Ascencio |  |
| Faithful Reed | District of Columbia |
| Isaiah Morrison | Baltimore City |
| Je’Miyah Miller | Baltimore City |
| Tyreke Williams | Baltimore County |
| Victoria Eaves | Baltimore County |
| Virginia Jacobs | Baltimore County |

 **Reflection on 20 Years of Service at
The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB)**

Two Decades of Dedication and Progress
Serving the last 20 years on the board of The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB), with the last 8 years as the Board Chair, has been one of the most rewarding experiences in my career. It takes a village to serve children with multiple disabilities, and I have had the privilege of working alongside an incredible team of students’ family and friends, guardians, MSB leadership and staff, legislative advocates, donors, and fellow board members.

Throughout these years, we have achieved remarkable milestones that have significantly

transformed the landscape of MSB. Some of the key accomplishments include:

Transformation of the Campus

The campus has undergone a significant transformation to better serve the needs of today’s

students. Modernized facilities, state-of-the-art classrooms, and accessible spaces now provide an environment conducive to learning and growth for every student.

Elimination of Financial Risk

Through strategic planning and sound financial management, we have successfully eliminated financial risks, ensuring the sustainability and stability of MSB for future generations.

Formalizing Fundraising

We have formalized our fundraising efforts, creating robust mechanisms to garner support from donors and benefactors. This has allowed us to secure vital resources necessary for the school’s continued success.

Innovative Programs

MSB staff have introduced innovative programs that enhance teaching and learning.

These initiatives have provided our students with unique opportunities to explore, discover, and reach their full potential.

Staff Training

Investing in our dedicated and caring staff has been a priority. Comprehensive training programs are equipping our educators and support staff with the skills and knowledge needed to deliver exceptional education to our students.

Bringing Technology Up to Date

Technology is being brought up to date, integrating cutting-edge tools and resources into our curriculum. This advancement has empowered our students to engage with the world in new and meaningful ways.

Over the past 20 years, I have been humbled by the patience, creativity, and love extended to our students. Observing the dedication of everyone involved has shown me the incredible power of working together to achieve great results. Each challenge faced and overcome has highlighted the resilience and strength within our MSB community.

As I step away from my role, I will always hold MSB close to my heart and thoughts. I am confident in the school’s direction and the expertise within the board to keep improvement continuous. The future of MSB is bright, and I am thankful for the privilege of serving with you on this meaningful journey.

Thank you for your unwavering support and commitment to making a difference in the lives of our students. Together, we have created a legacy of excellence that will continue to thrive.

Marion L. Mullauer

Chair, Board of Directors

The Maryland School for the Blind

2024 Highlights

Outreach Services
**In 2024, The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB) expanded its Outreach Services to support students who are blind or have low vision, their families, and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) across Maryland.**

Key Services

Assessments: Functional Vision Screenings, Learning Media Assessments, Orientation & Mobility Evaluations, and Technology Skill Assessments.

Special Events: Hosted Family Engagement Days, student workshops, and awareness campaigns.

Low Vision Clinic: Offered device trials, environmental adaptations, and collaborative planning.

Summer Programs: Focused on academic enrichment, life skills, and adaptive recreation.

LEA Partnerships: Provided consultation, educator training, and specialized student support.

Parent Education: Delivered workshops, resources, and family networking opportunities.

Short Courses: Offered training in assistive technology, daily living skills, and Orientation and Mobility.
Community Resources: Connected families with advocacy groups and assistive technology.

521 students in 20 counties and 4 states benefited from all the above services.

Contract Services: Provided 10 counties with TVI and O&M IEP direct services

(approx 150 students).

MSB Outreach Services: Impact in 2024

In 2024, MSB’s Outreach Services assisted more students and families with specialized resources, innovative programs, and statewide support for lifelong success.

By providing personalized education, assistive technology, and community connections, MSB continues to break barriers and foster independence and growth. Your support drives this impact.

Program Highlights & Student Achievements:

* Howard County Teen Group (2023–2024): Engaged students through various activities and group initiatives.
* Abacus Bee: Three students represented MSB at the Abacus Bee Nationals last year, showcasing their skills.
* Make48 Experience: Three students were selected to travel to Kansas to showcase their creativity and talent at the event.
* LEGO Braille Bricks Partnership: Outreach established the partnership by bringing LEGO and the Braille Bricks to our annual regional Braille Challenge. One of our Outreach students advanced to the finals, showcasing their skills.
* White House Tours & Experiences: Cultural and educational exposure.

Future Goals

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Inclusive Summer Programming:Partner with camp providers like Elev8 and YMCA to offer customized, inclusive summer experiences. | Expanding LEAPartnerships:Develop tailored extracurricular activities and enhance statewide support for teachers and specialists to improve student outcomes. | Low VisionClinic Access:Collaborate withAbil-I-See to host regular low vision clinics on campus and statewide, increasing accessibility for students. |

Virginia Jacobs’ Story
Strength, Faith, and Opportunity

Born in Thailand on March 17, 2003, Virginia Jacobs was adopted and moved to the U.S. in 2007. Adjusting to a new culture, language, and changes in her vision brought significant challenges in public school. Her life transformed when she joined The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB), where she found the support and confidence to thrive.

At MSB, Virginia discovered a passion for music, coding, and entrepreneurship. She developed her love and skill for playing the piano, learned braille, launched a successful knitting business, and gained the confidence to advocate for herself. Her performance at the See Beyond Festival in 2024 marked a milestone in her musical journey.

Virginia’s music, deeply rooted in her faith, spreads messages of hope and love. Despite being born with Peter’s Anomaly and losing her left eye in 2021, she continues to pursue her dreams with unwavering determination.

Her connection with MSB music teacher, Miss Lynnie, was a turning point, helping Virginia overcome personal loss and depression during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now, Virginia shares her music on social media, inspiring others to overcome obstacles
and follow their dreams.

MSB’s 3rd Annual See Beyond Festival
Highlighted Accessibility, Inclusion, and Adaptation

The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB) hosted its 3rd Annual See Beyond Festival on April 27, 2024, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the MSB campus in Baltimore, Maryland.

The festival attracted approximately 1,500 attendees, reflecting a growing interest in accessibility and inclusivity within the community.

One standout aspect of the festival invited participants to wear light-blocking eyeshades during select activities, allowing them to experience firsthand the accessibility adaptations designed for individuals with vision loss. This immersive experience highlighted the impact of inclusive design and the importance of creating accessible environments for all.

* **Volunteer Highlights - 160 Volunteers, Including 27 Staff Members**
* **Over 7,000 - Over the past 3 years the festival has attracted over 7,000 participants**
* **45,024,000 Million - Impressions through media coverage**

***Festival attendees shared what they learned in a post—event survey.***

* 5% Blindness and low vision
* 10% Braille
* 10% Various vision conditions
* 17% Understood their own adaptability
* 21% Accessibility
* 35% Adaptation in sports

The success of the 2024 See Beyond Festival was made possible through the generous support of sponsors, including Presenting Sponsor Lewis Contractors, along with major sponsors Giant Landover, Marshall Craft Architecture, Maury Donnelly & Parr, Penney Design Group, and media sponsors Baltimore Fishbowl, Baltimore Banner, and WTMD/WYPR. Their contributions ensured that all activities and experiences at the festival were free for attendees.

2024 Athletics Highlights

At The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB), athletics are more than just sports—they are a foundation for building confidence, fostering teamwork, and creating a strong sense of belonging for all students. These programs empower students who are blind or have low vision to embrace challenges, achieve personal milestones, and experience the joy of camaraderie.

Through adaptive and accessible sports, MSB provides opportunities for students to explore their potential and showcase their abilities. Whether participating in track and field, goalball, or other athletic programs, students develop resilience and celebrate their achievements alongside their peers.

In 2024, MSB continued its tradition of excellence in athletics, inspiring students to push boundaries and shine both on and off the field. These programs underscore MSB’s commitment to inclusivity, personal growth, and empowering every student to succeed.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Track and Field**16 athletesM - 9F - 7 | **Beep Baseball:** Featured as part of the See Beyond Festival, offering participants a hands-on experience with this adaptive sport. |
| **Soccer**15 athletesM - 9F - 6 | **Cheerleading**19 athletesM - 2F - 17 |
| **Goalball:** A Unique Sport Designed for Blind Athletes18 athletesM - 9F - 9 | **Wrestling**13 athletesM - 7F - 6 |

Financial Overview:
Sustaining Our Mission Through Diverse Funding

The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB) operates as a private, nonprofit 501(c) (3) organization in accordance with Internal Revenue Service regulations. Our fiscal year concludes on June 30th each year.

MSB’s primary funding comes from the State of Maryland as well as grants provided by the Maryland State Department of Education and reimbursements from School Districts and Local Educational Agencies. Additional financial support is generously contributed by individuals, corporations, foundations, and community organizations.

For the 2023–2024 fiscal year, total expenses were approximately $37,775,219 million, reflecting our continued commitment to delivering high-quality, accessible education and support services for students who are blind or have low vision.

**Revenue**

86% State of Maryland

 3% Federal

 9% Local Education Agencies (LEAs)

 2% Private

Expenses

48% Instruction & Education

11% Residential

14% Educational Support and Nutrition

 5% Outreach

 9% Physical Facilities

11% General Administration

 1% Fundraising

1853 Society and Major Supporters

* Alera Group, Inc.
* American Legion Caroline Post #29
* The American Legion Department of Maryland, Inc.
* Mr. Craig F. Ballew
* The Baltimore Eastside Athletic Club
* John and Sarah Barpoulis
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Legacy Society

* Estate of Mary Carl
* Estate of Beatrice J. Dunphy
* Estate of Ms. Catherine E. Etchison
* Estate of Wayne N. Gallatin
* John and Dorothy Guidera Living Trust
* Estate of Elaine T. Mcdonald
* Estate of Victor J. Schenk

Major Vehicle Donors

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* **Breanna M. Yencha**
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* **Frank Ziegler**
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MSB Board and Leadership

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2nd Vice-Chair: Karen Malinowski

Treasurer: Kati Penney

Secretary: Renee Winsky

Ex-Officio Member:
W. Robert Hair, MSB Superintendent

**Senior Leadership**

W. Robert Hair - Superintendent

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Diane Colburn - Director of Statewide Outreach Services

Dr. Joshua Irzyk - Director of Education

Marlo Jacobson - Director of Advancement

Bill McCubbin Jr. - Director of Campus Operations

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Kibian Vazquez - Chief Financial Officer

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Dr. Joanne Waeltermann

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Robin Zimelman

\*\*Governor Appointed

**Emeritus Members**

James J. Datovech

In memory of
Edward J. Veilleux, whose contributions continue to inspire us