

Wyoming Department of Education
Special Services Unit /Deaf-Blind Project
Services for the Visually Impaired

Hearts & Hands Newsletter

UPDATES – Summer Happenings / Mark your Calendar for
Fall!

It is that time again, school is wrapping up and coming to a close. As the summer approaches we are getting ready for the next school year. We are planning a series of Literacy programs. The first one will be this summer followed by one in September and in October of 2007 hope to see you there!

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Up Dates

Technical Assistance (TA): The Project Director and the Parent Consultant are available to provide consultative assistance free to families and school personnel in the home and at the school. In addition to actual site visits, information can be provided through email, phone calls, letters or viewing video questions. For request please contact Joanne Whitson at 877.875.9467 or jwhits@educ.state.wy.us

Summer Program: The Wyoming Department of Education, Services for the Visually Impaired announces the dates for the Summer School Program – the Allen H. Stewart Lions Camp for the Blind. This program is for students who are visually impaired and between the ages of 9 – 16. The summer program offers courses in Orientation and Mobility, Computer training, Independent Living Skills, Braille, recreational activities, provides exposure to new hobby and leisure activities. The camp provides a wonderful opportunity for the students to meet others who also have visual impairments. The dates are July 15 through Saturday July 21, 2007. For more information contact your local consultant or Gary Olson at 307.754.2033.

Wyoming Council for the Blind (WCB) – Annual Summer Convention: The WCB is having their annual convention in Sheridan on June 16, 2007. This is a great opportunity to meet with adults, who are visually impaired, learn out about self-advocacy. The agenda will cover topics on "Laughter," "Independent Living," Vendor

Displays and an ophthalmologist will cover new options for macular degeneration. For more information on the WCB contact Jerry Baker at 307.672.6129.



Mark your Calendars!!!

"Emergent Literacy for Students: A project-Based Approach"
June 11 – 12, 2007 Jeffery Memorial Center, Rawlins, WY

Dr. Caroline Ramsey Musselwhite Presenter

Recognizing the need to improve the literacy of your students is the first step! This workshop addresses the needs of upper elementary through high school students with significant cognitive impairments. A primary focus will be locating and developing appropriate reading materials, helping students access them through a Project Based approach. For each project, activities will involve "layers" of learning, including: Learn About It – Read about it – Write about it!

This workshop will include hands-on activities, brainstorming, and computer activities. If you have a lap top, you may want to bring it as there will be limited laptops available. This workshop is designed for educators, therapists, speech language pathologists and those interested in addressing the literacy needs of their students.

To continue our workshops on Literacy and communication, the next workshop will be on ***"Receptive Language."*** This conference will be held in Cody at the Holiday Inn on October 10, 2007, a flyer will be sent to the districts when the time gets closer or you can contact Joanne Whitson. This workshop will be held in conjunction with the Association of Education and Rehabilitation for the Blind, (AER) Conference; ***"Blindness and Visual Impairment, A Challenge for All Ages"*** – Northern Rockies AER Conference. The other breakout sessions will address a wide variety of issues for toddlers, students and adults who have low vision needs or who are blind. For more information on this conference contact Leslie Bechtel Van Orman at 307.777.2567 or email at lvanor@educ.state.wy.us.

Do not let the name fool you! This conference is for teachers as well as therapists. The presenter is going to discuss optimum seating for students to access classroom materials and learning media. ***"Seating in Pediatric Practice; Current Assessment, and Application Strategies as Well as Equipment Needed for Increased Function in Multiple Environments for Children Challenged with Delays or Disabilities"*** This conference is hosted by the Wyoming Occupational Therapy Association (WYOTA) and is for any teacher or therapist who is working with a student who is wheelchair bound. The main focus of this workshop will be to determine the position that the student needs to be in to optimize educational opportunities. It will be held in Lander at that Best Western Inn of Lander on September 20 – 22, 2007.

Wyoming First Step Diagnostic Clinic: A transdisciplinary Approach to providing strategies and recommendations to educators and families. The fall clinic is scheduled for October 26, 2007 in Lander. The clinic provides both educational and medical recommendations for any student in Wyoming. For more information on the clinic please go to our website, www.k12.wy.us/svi/index.html.

For more information on these workshops or any other upcoming event, please contact Joanne Whitson at 877.875.9467, email at jwhits@educ.state.wy.us or check out the website, www.k12.wy.us/svi/index.html and go to upcoming events.

NIMAS:

What it is and How it will Affect the Schools and the Students

The 2004 Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was signed into law in December of 2004. IDEA is the main federal program authorizing state and local aid for special education and related services for children with disabilities. The reauthorization included the addition of sections defining the provision of textbooks and instructional materials in accessible formats for students who are blind or print disabled.

The law established a digital format in which books must be provided by publishers, the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS). It also established a national central repository for these files (NIMAC).

Each state is responsible for establishing a way for schools to access these files for their students. In Wyoming, the Wyoming Department of Education has contracted with the Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (WIND) to set up a resource center to access the central repository, help districts work with these files, and access state and nation wide resources for adapting these files. This system should allow students who are blind, have low vision or another print disability get their instructional materials in the appropriate medium, i.e. Braille, digital, audio, or large print, in a timely manner.

If you have questions about the NIMAS/NIMAC provisions of IDEA or the development of the Wyoming system, please contact Leslie Bechtel-Van Orman at the Wyoming Department of Education – Services for the Visually Impaired (307) 777-2567 or lvanor@educ.state.wy.us.

An Introduction to Hands and Voices – A grass roots organization for families of students who are deaf / hard of hearing

“Communication is at the heart of everything human beings do; it defines and gives meaning to our emotions, beliefs, hopes, creativity and life experiences. Without

communication, a child is lost. The effective development, understanding, and expression of language are fundamental to any educational experience and are particularly crucial for deaf and hard-of hearing children" (The CA Deaf Education Report, 1999).

We are Wyoming Families for Hands & Voices; we provide information and support services statewide to families, service providers and policy makers about deafness and hearing loss through outreach events, educational seminars, a website, advocacy training and support, lobbying efforts, and a Hands & Voices National newspaper. Our purpose is to help parents to connect to the information necessary to ensure optimum potential for their children who are deaf and hard-of-hearing. We are committed to a philosophy that facilitates families' ability to access information and support about all communication options (American Sign Language, Signing Exact English, Cued Speech, Total Communication, Auditory/Verbal, or any combination), and related topics of interest without bias towards mode or methodology. For more information please contact: Wyoming Families for Hands & Voices P.O. Box 114 Robertson, WY 82944 Co-Directors: Deb Hovde at (307)782-3228, hovde@union-tel.com Wendy Hewitt at (307) 782-3276, wendyhewitt@yahoo.com or www.WyHandsAndVoices.org.