



Summer 2023

# MN DeafBlind Project News

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## Summertime Fun!



Pictured from left to right are Deanna Rothbauer, Ann Mayes, and Brandy Sebera

We are well into summer and enjoying all the sunshine we can! I hope your family has had a chance to spend time together, rest and relish the long days! Enjoy this summer newsletter with highlights of our family picnic, Save the Dates for upcoming opportunities, a wonderful advocacy story, and a few new resources to explore.

While school still feels far off, now is a great time to start thinking about what a "great school year" might look like for your child and working through a plan to get pieces in place to move in the right direction. I am available to connect with you and talk through specifics with your family. Please call, text, or email me to schedule a time to connect.

Happiest summer to all!

-Brandy  
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Find and follow us on Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube.

"Funding for this grant activity is made possible with a grant from MN Department of Education. The source of the funds is from federal award – CFDA 84.326T, Special Education - Technical Assistance and Dissemination to Improve Services and Results for Children who are DeafBlind." The contents of this publication do not necessarily represent the policy of the federal Department of Education or the state Department of Education and you should not assume endorsement by the federal or state government.

# Family & Intervener Appreciation Picnic Highlights



## Shining Stars

We had the most lovely time at our annual picnic on June 3rd. We recognized 5 outstanding individuals who have done exemplary work to support deafblind children/youth and their families. Congratulations to Danny Rothbauer, Deanna Rothbauer, Katie Jones, Elizabeth Laffen, and Kim Simshauser!

Watch for more information to come about nominating an intervener or educator for next year!

\*All families connected with the MNDBP and/or DBSM are welcome to attend our annual picnic!



Deanna Rothbauer,  
MNDBP Coordinator  
& Danny Rothbauer,  
Volunteer



Katie Jones,  
Intervener



Elizabeth Laffen,  
Intervener



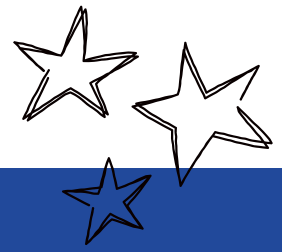
Kim Simshauser,  
Educator



Amazing group of community interveners  
with DeafBlind Services MN (DBSM)



# Family & Intervener Appreciation Picnic Highlights, cont.



## Family Fun!

In addition to celebrating our Shining Stars, we loved celebrating our families and their children! In collaboration with DeafBlind Services Minnesota, the picnic included a catered lunch, an ice cream truck, a caricature artist, a face painter, a photo booth, and other outdoor activities. It was such a fun event for families to connect with other families and for the children/youth and siblings to make new friends!

This is an annual event and always hosted on the first Saturday of June.

**Save the date for June 2, 2024!**



Beautiful face painting



Family time together



Ice Cream Truck



Body Painting



Access provided for all!  
Tactile American Sign Language shown here.



# Upcoming Events

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Understanding Deafblindness and the Role of the Intervener (virtual):

This FREE virtual training is open to families, teachers, related service providers and administrators.

Share this [flyer](#) with your child's team.

**August 16, 2023**

[Register](#)

## **Intervener Training Series (in-person):**

This 6 weekend in-person training series is developed for one-to-one paraprofessionals/ interveners working with a child who is deafblind. If your child does not have an intervener and you would like to learn more about interveners and if they may be appropriate for your child, contact [Brandy.Sebera@brightworksmn.org](mailto:Brandy.Sebera@brightworksmn.org)

## **Family Learning Community (virtual):**

Our monthly Family Learning Community meetings will return this fall! Join us for this great opportunity to connect with other Minnesota families who have children with combined hearing and vision loss. DeafBlind resources and tools will also be shared!

Meetings will take place on the 3rd Monday of each month with two opportunities to join: lunchtime from 11:30-12:30 or evening 6:30-7:30.

Interested? Want to learn more? [Register](#)

## **Mom's Retreat (in-person):**

Coming in the Fall of 2023

# FAMILY SPOTLIGHT

## Advocacy for Adult-Size Changing Tables



This is an adult size changing table available at the MN Science Museum.

### Changing Spaces Goals

- Spread Awareness...
- Advocate...
- Connect with large organizations...
- Educate and train new advocates...
- Introduce Legislation...

More info can be found at [www.changingspacescampaign.com](http://www.changingspacescampaign.com)

Check out this featured StarTribune article about the work being done through Changing Spaces, "[This is about human dignity](#)"

Tram Nguyen has a daughter named Sadie, who is a gem in this world and lights up a room with her smile. Sadie was born with a rare chromosomal anomaly causing her to have both physical and intellectual disabilities. One of her diagnoses is that she is deafblind and her family has been utilizing the MNDBP and DBSM services since she was 2 years old. Sadie's family loves to go out and do activities in the community, and Tram has found it increasingly difficult, as Sadie gets bigger, to find safe and sanitary tables to change her.

Several years ago, Tram stumbled across another parent in Minnesota who was working towards legislative change for public buildings to have adult sized changing tables installed and was seeking others to testify at the MN Senate/House of Republican committees about the need for these tables. While the field of advocacy work at this level was new to Tram, she could see the impact that adult sized changing tables could have for not only her daughter, but also other family members and decided to jump in and learn as she went.

In the past year, Tram discovered the [Changing Spaces Campaign Website](#). This is a national movement to advocate for adjustable adult-sized/universal changing tables. It made sense to take advantage of the work already being done and Tram worked with fellow parent, Sara St. Louis to start a [Minnesota Chapter](#).

Governor Walz just signed into law the bill that mandates that NEW or LARGER SCALE RENOVATED buildings that are open to the public must have an adjustable adult-size table. It was an "expedited rulemaking" that will have the Department of Labor write up the guidelines of this new building code.

# Advocacy for Adult-Size Changing Tables, cont.

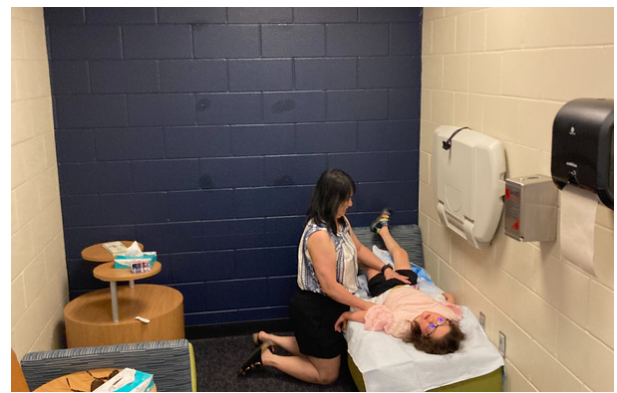
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cont., The details are still being vetted out by a committee and will be enforced in January 2024. Examples of the details still to be determined are what size or max load occupancy of the building will mandate putting a table. (i.e., no small formats like a Subway or Jimmy John's, but larger buildings that can hold 300+ people).

You may be wondering, “What can I do?”, “I want to help, but life is incredibly busy right now!”. As the parent of a child who needs 24-hour care, Tram gets it. She understands that people are coming to this advocacy work from different places in their lives, with different levels of experience in advocacy, and different time constraints. Contact Tram ([changingspacesminnesota@gmail.com](mailto:changingspacesminnesota@gmail.com)) if you wish to help advocate for buildings (parks, stadiums/event spaces, community pools, or small businesses) that you would like to advocate to put in an adjustable table. She will share the advocacy toolkit and tips that she has learned.

## Ways to help:

- Follow [Changing Spaces Minnesota](#) on Facebook and notify them if you know of a building that has an existing adult-size changing table so it can be input on the national map.
- Write letters to share your experience of not having accessible changing areas for your child to your MN State Legislator as they continue to do more advocacy work for the retrofits of existing structures.
- Consider testifying about how this impacts your family as more advocacy work is still in the pipeline.



This photo is from Target Field. While they do not yet have an adult-sized changing table, they did provide this private room for personal cares.

## Exciting News Update!!

Thanks to Tram's advocacy work, the MN State Fair will now have a universally designed changing space!

[Read More Here!](#)

## Everyday Tips and Tricks from Tram!

- Most larger venues (stadiums, zoos, etc.) have First Aid rooms. Ask guest services if you can use their tables or a private comfortable spot to change a soiled diaper. Then denote that there is a movement to put one in if they can raise this up to management.
- The family brought their own zero gravity chair and was able to have a private space stay off the ground.
- Use this tool when traveling: [Universal Changing Table Map, USA](#). This interactive map shows locations across the country with access to a universal changing table.



# RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT

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"The National Family Association for DeafBlind (NFADB) believes that individuals who are deafblind are valued members of their communities and should have the same opportunities and choices as others in the community."

"Their work includes: Supporting families to ADVOCATE for services, Helping families CONNECT for support, and Providing information and training to TEACH families and professionals.

To learn more, visit [their website](#), or consider [Becoming a Member](#) for even more benefits.

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MN Wild Blind Hockey is a great opportunity for children, youth and adults who have low vision or are blind to experience a fun team sport!

While this is focused towards individuals with vision loss, DeafBlind adults and youth are also invited to join! Here are a few highlights:

- Includes persons of all ages
- Paid for through fundraising (little to no cost to families)
- No skating or hockey experience needed
- Coaching staff is experienced in visual impairments and some have experience working with children/youth/adults who are DeafBlind. Players have participated with an FM system and/or an interpreter in the past (these costs currently would not be covered by MN Wild Blind Hockey).
- Fall season starts mid September.
- Practice is at the National Sports Center in Blaine on most Sunday evenings.
- Visit their website for more information, and you can contact their team manager Nick Hadfield (Teacher of the Blind/Visually Impaired and Orientation & Mobility teacher) with questions at:
  - [nhadfiel@916schools.org](mailto:nhadfiel@916schools.org)