



News and Information from State Services for the Blind

A division of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

The Spectacle

-Dare to stand out

May 2018

Just for Fun

Summer brings an array of activities and opportunities. In addition to the activities we've previously highlighted in this newsletter, we offer the following suggestions if you are still looking for new adventures.

- 2018 Summer Camp Guide-Kids can learn how to program robots, play chess, speak Chinese or dance hip-hop style, among other enrichment options.

<http://www.startribune.com/2018-summer-camp-guide/474068733/>

- Summer recreation, sports, and camps -There are many sports, social and recreation opportunities available in the community for children and young adults with disabilities and their families. These are some of the programs available but there are many more that are not listed here. Please contact individual sources for the most current information.

<http://www.pacer.org/students/recreation-and-sports.asp>

- Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/activities_events/youth_programs/

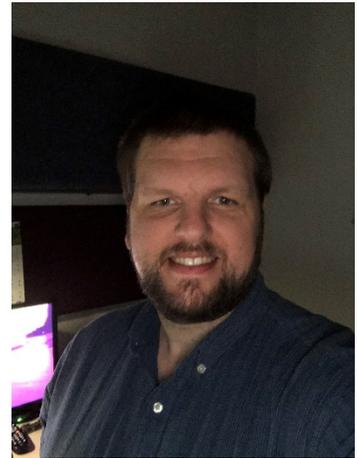
- 2018 iREAD Summer Reading

<https://www.ireadprogram.org/>

Upcoming and ongoing

Welcome Ryan Odland

Hello, I would like to take a moment to introduce myself. I recently joined the team of fabulous staff at SSB this past March in my new position as a rehabilitation counselor with a specialty in working with consumers who are DeafBlind. Prior to my joining, I worked for Helen Keller National Center in my former position as a regional representative, working closely with individuals who are DeafBlind, including youth adults, and families in more than eleven states and territories. I also worked with professionals to provide consultation and technical assistance towards building capacity for DeafBlind youth and adults to thrive. I hold a master's degree in deaf education from Gallaudet University and I am in the process of enrolling in the rehabilitation counseling program at the University of Wisconsin at Stout for my second master's degree. I am a Minnesota native, I am DeafBlind and a proud husband and father of a three-year old daughter with a second one on the way! One last thing, I take pride in being a former customer with SSB which led to my successes. All in all, I look forward to meeting many of you!



Summer Conferences

During the summer, two organizations of blind people hold their national conventions. These can be great places for students to connect with other students, find resources for employment and independent living, and learn about issues that matter to people who are blind, low vision, or DeafBlind. Below is information for this year's conventions:

American Council of the Blind June 29-July 6 St. Louis, Missouri. <https://acbconvention.org/>

National Federation of the Blind July 3-8 Orlando, Florida <https://nfb.org/convention>

Blind & Socially Savvy

"Blind & Socially Savvy" is a training offered through the International School of Protocol. It focuses on training students with a vision loss in "soft skills" like professional image, nonverbal communication, networking, and employer expectations. Often people learn such soft skills by observing others, but people who are blind or low vision do not have visual access to learning these skills. "Blind & Socially Savvy" weaves the principals and strategies used in International School of Protocol workshops for corporate executives, government officials, and professional athletes into workshops designed specifically for students with a vision loss.

A few spaces are still open for our August event.

August 5-10 "Blind & Socially Savvy" will be offered for **new** participants. This program will be hosted by the Duluth Center for Vision Loss.

Email sheila.koenig@state.mn.us with questions or to register. There is no fee for these programs. Space is limited to 12 students for the August training.

PACER Partnership

PACER Center is delighted to be a partner with SSB in a project to support transition-aged students and their families. In this month's *Transition Tips & Tools* email we are focusing on the topic of **Understanding Measureable Postsecondary Goals in the IEP**. Once the student is in 9th grade, transition planning should be guided by the student's long-range goals for living, learning and working in the community. Youth need support in the development, refinement and ownership of their post-school goals from all members of their team.

Watch or listen to this 5-minute video to learn more about the purpose, process and importance of developing and documenting the student's post-secondary goals and the supportive role families can play: <http://www.pacer.org/transition/learning-center/planning/>

Families of SSB customers (or young adult SSB customers themselves) can receive information and support about special education, transition planning, and related topics by calling PACER's main number: 800-537-2237. You can learn more about PACER and sign up for their news and events at http://www.pacer.org/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI3fWkl8qW2AIVQ7bACh10cAFPEAAAYASAAEgl2dfD_BwE

SSB's Communication Center, Minnesota's Accessible Reading Source

The Communication Center is here to put your books into accessible formats that work for you. Custom audio, e-text, DAISY markup, human voice—we can do it! Just give us a call 651-539-1422.

We've compiled a list of books for young readers to enjoy this summer. Scroll down to the end of this newsletter to find the annotated list.

Tech Tidbits

Looking for ways to stay current on tech news? Check out the following sources to catch all the latest.

Blind tech <http://www.coolblindtech.com>

Phone Scoop <http://www.phonescoop.com>

Mac rumors <http://www.macrumors.com>

Top Tech Tidbits http://www.flying-blind.com/ttt_enews_archive.html

Blind Abilities

The Blind Abilities team has been busy this spring, and we want to share the excitement with you!

- We have launched a new series called Job Insights, which focuses on employment, careers, and innovations in vocational rehabilitation.
- We have continued with our Success Stories series. Recent episodes include: an interview with Tony Giles, a blind backpacker who travels around the world; a discussion of *Defiant Lives*, a documentary about disability rights activism over 4 decades; and another demonstration of tips and tricks for using an iPhone
- We continue to add text transcriptions to the podcasts to make sure everybody has access

You can now listen to the Blind Abilities podcast using the new Alexa Skill. Just say, "Enable Blind Abilities"

The Blind Abilities app is available on the App Store for Apple devices and is also available on Android in the Google Play Store. You can also check us out on the web at www.BlindAbilities.com

Fast Forward: Possibilities and Potential

Lisa Larges

At present, I have two jobs. My full-time work is as the outreach coordinator here at State Services for the Blind. In my second, part-time job, I am the Associate Pastor for Congregational Care at a small church in Minneapolis. Both jobs provide me with a lot of variety, and I love this.



I started working here at SSB five years ago. Until then, I probably had never imagined working at a state agency. But, working here has given me an inside look at all that goes on here, and all the ways we work to promote equity and independence for Minnesotans who are blind, DeafBlind, or visually impaired. As a kid and a young adult, I benefitted directly from State Services for the Blind, and especially from the Communication Center, and I am grateful to have a job that gives me the chance to pay it forward – letting other folks know about the work we do and the difference it can make.

As a blind person, I rely on a lot of the standard assistive technology that you might expect. I use JAWS as my screen reader, and increasingly rely on my iPhone and Voiceover to do a lot of work tasks. One surprising piece of assistive tech that I use is the Optacon – a device that was invented more than thirty years ago. The Optacon, which stands for optical tactile converter, has a handheld camera and a finger pad for the tactile images. Whatever is under the camera is converted into a vibrating pattern on the finger pad. What I love about the Optacon is that I can use it to get a sense of the layout of a page. I can check formatting, evaluate fonts, and check other details that I can't access as well through other means. It's not perfect, but it's helped me a lot over the years.

I've held a lot of different jobs over the course of my working life, and I've also spent a lot of time looking for work and applying for jobs. In no particular order, here's the advice I would give to blind or DeafBlind young adults who are heading out into the world of work.

1. Give potential employers an opportunity to ask about your eye condition. During a job interview, I will find an opportunity, usually toward the end, to say something like, "I applied for this position, because I know I could do it well, but I'm wondering if you have any questions about how I would do this job as a blind person, or if you have any other questions or concerns about my being blind." This gets it out on the table, and lets me take charge of the conversation.
2. When appropriate, give a demonstration of how you would do the work. Related to the above, for several interviews, I brought out my phone and/or my laptop, to do a little demo of how assistive tech works. Sometimes, for sighted employers, it's hard to imagine how someone would do a job without being able to see. I found that it was really helpful to open up a Word doc or an Excel spreadsheet and show how I navigate the screen and get work done. If nothing else, it helps build awareness about accessibility.
3. Practice doing interviews. The job interviews that went the best for me – including almost every interview that resulted in a job offer – were interviews that I practiced ahead of time. I would send the job description to friends or relatives who had agreed to help me, and then they

would come up with interview questions, and we would go through a mock interview. It always helped me think about responses to questions that would not have occurred to me, and it helped me to be not quite so nervous for the actual interview.

4. Your best asset will always be your own sense of confidence and integrity. Probably the one thing that has helped me the most, in work and in life, is simply overcoming my own sense of insecurity. Many times, I've been turned down for jobs that I really wanted, and knew I would be great at. It took a while to learn to feel the disappointment without letting it eat into my sense of self-worth. It's helped me to become more resilient, and a lot happier!
5. Make a list of all of the skills and strengths that are yours because you are blind, DeafBlind, or visually impaired. For me, I know that being blind has helped me become more creative, more flexible, and more persistent. These are assets I draw on that make me a better employee, and, sometimes, a better person too.
6. Cultivate compassion. At times, finding a job, like going to school, can be really hard. When I can be nice to myself, and kind to other people, it has made the process a lot easier, and sometimes a lot more fun too!

Tou's Tip

Finding a Summer Job, Strategically

There is a universal truth: In order to achieve any goal, you must make it a priority in your life and devote the time and energy to obtain it.

Want to lose weight? Devote more time and energy towards diet and exercise. Want to find a summer job? Devote more time and energy into job search. At the same time, time and energy spent towards fad diets and tacky workouts can only mean so much. Similarly time and energy spent in a half-hearted and no-direction job search probably won't take you very far.

There are two ways to strategically job search that will make the most out of your time and energy!

- A. Numbers Game
- B. One-Shot

A. Numbers Game

The Numbers Game is the concept that more and faster is better. The more applications and the more quickly you're able to submit them, the greater chance you will have in receiving an interview and a job. To maximize on this idea, we recommend keeping an application data sheet handy.

An application data sheet is a form where you keep information upfront so you won't have to remember the tedious information asked for on a typical application. For example, some job applications ask for your school's address. Do you know your school's address off the top of their head? Applications might also ask for your former supervisor's last name and email address. By keeping all this information on a data sheet, you don't have to look up the information each time you complete an application.

Using the numbers game method and a filled out data sheet, you will be able to:

- Fill out and submit job applications much more quickly
- Be able to submit more job applications

- Spend less time thinking and looking for information
- Be less frustrated on the job search process

If you would like to see what an ideal application data sheet looks like, shoot me an email message at tou.yang@state.mn.us.

B. One-Shot

Think of One-Shot as the complete opposite of Numbers Game.

It's based on the idea that by investing all of your time and energy into one or two job applications, you will almost always hear back with an interview invitation.

There are two important parts to this process:

1. Look for a job that most closely resembles your interest, skills, and experience
2. Make sure to actually "relate" to the employer during the application process

On the application, you will be asked to provide information on your background, and this is your opportunity to justify why you are a good fit. Share how the things you've done in the past directly relate or transfer to the job that you're applying for.

Ask yourself, "What did I do as an outdoor worker that will matter in this computer job?" On the surface maybe not a whole lot, but in actuality perhaps more than you think. For your past outdoor work you may have learned to operate a complex machine, troubleshoot equipment in case of malfunction, performed tasks in a particular order, or you may have had to keep track of details and observations.

Your job is to convince the employer that the things you've done are transferable to the job, and that you are the person they're looking for. You do that by comparing and aligning your experiences with the job in a compelling, relatable way.

One-Shot is hard work and requires some major critical thinking, but by choosing this method you will:

- Apply to fewer jobs but will more than likely receive the call back for those few jobs applied to
- Spend significantly more time trying to convince/relate to an employer or job
- Be noticed by the person who's reviewing applications for standing out and being unique

The most important thing is staying committed, keeping job search a priority, and spending the time and energy necessary for job searching. Perhaps the best strategy in job search is to treat job search as though it is your real job.

Best of luck!

WON Tou

Building BRIDGEs



As students navigate the world of high school and begin thinking about the future, we offer services and resources that provide a foundation for success. Each of the core areas of our **BRIDGE** framework highlights an essential component that teenagers need in order to succeed after high school:

- **B**asic Skills
- **R**ole Models
- **I**nitiative
- **D**iscovery
- **G**oal Setting
- **E**xperiences

In this same framework, we offer resources for parents and educators.

[“Workplace note-taking skills”](#) One tool that is essential to student success is the ability to take notes effectively. In this AFB Blog post, Steve Cardenas discusses several note-taking options and illustrates how to develop the critical skill.

[“Eight Powerful Ways to Mold Children into Leaders”](#) We all want our students to develop initiative and problem-solving skills. This article offers ideas on how to help children and young people develop EQ and other leadership skills.

In [“The Eggert Sisters Take on the Super Bowl”](#), Jessica and Rachel illustrate their pride and confidence in being a part of Crew 52. It’s a fantastic message that vision loss does not limit what is possible.

[College Scorecard](#) From the web site students can search for colleges by degree programs, type of college, size, location, and advanced options like religious affiliation. There are also tools on the web site to help look into financial aid options

[“Are You a Planner or Spontaneous?”](#) Unlike chronic planners, spontaneous workers value the freedom in their days. But in the business world, some semblance of structure needs to be maintained for a good (and timely) product. So which one are you? And what are some tips you can use to cultivate both your planning and spontaneous sides?

[“Completely Blind Backpacker Traveling around the World”](#) Completely blind and severely deaf backpacker Tony Giles wants to visit every country in the world independently - so far he has visited more than 120 countries. He shows one is only limited by the expectations from others or themselves. And he reinforces the importance of helping students embrace opportunities and adventures.

Summer Reads!

Tim Tingle. House of Purple Cedar. Cinco Puntos Press, 2014. AILA Youth Literature Award Winner in young adult category. Oklahoma, 1896. Rose, a young Choctaw, witnesses the burning of her school, the New Hope Academy for Girls, on New Year's Eve. In the devastating months that follow, the townspeople search for the arsonists and try to come to terms with the tragedy--including the death of Rose's friend. Audio available from the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library and on BARD.

Joseph Bruchec. Killer of Enemies. Tu Books, 2013. Dystopia, Science Fiction AILA Youth Literature Award Winner - Young Adult 2014, Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers 2014. In a distant future, Native American girl Lozen hunts genetically modified monsters for the tyrants who are holding her mother, sister Ana, and little brother Victor hostage. With each kill Lozen's unique powers grow. Violence and some strong language. For senior high and older readers. 2013. Contracted braille and audio from BARD and the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library. BR020462 and DB07816. Second book in series, Trail of the Dead, available in audio DB08093.

Melissa Fleming, A hope more powerful than the sea: one refugee's incredible story of love, loss, and survival. Flatiron Books, 2017. Non-fiction. Alex award winner. The author shares the story of young Syrian refugee Doaa Al Zamel. She recounts how Doaa and her family left war-torn Syria for Egypt, her relationship with a former Free Syrian Army fighter named Bassem, and Doaa and Bassem's harrowing flight from Egypt across the Mediterranean Sea. Available from the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library and BARD in audio (DB087867) and in braille in download from BARD (BR021957).

Thomas, Angie. The Hate U Give. Balzer + Bray, 2017. Morris Award Winner. Fiction. When sixteen-year-old Starr Carter witnesses the fatal shooting by a police officer of her childhood best friend, Khalil, she is afraid to speak out. But remaining quiet and safe is difficult with rising tensions between the police and the community. Violence and strong language. For senior high and older readers. Digital audio from BARD and the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library (DB087441), Braille, both hard copy and downloadable from BARD (BR021874) and, in large type from the Minnesota braille and Talking Book Library (LP007982).

Calla Devlin. Tell me Something Real. Atheneum, 2016. Set in 1976. Three Babcock sisters travel to a Mexican clinic across the border so their mother, ill with leukemia, can receive alternative treatments. Their world is shattered when they discover an illness far more insidious than cancer poisons their home. Strong language. For senior high and older readers. Fiction. Morris award finalist. Human voiced audio available from Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library and downloadable on BARD (DB086125).

Lacour, Nina. We are Okay, Random House, 2017. After leaving her life behind to go to college in New York, Marin must face the truth about a tragedy that occurred in the final weeks of summer when her friend Mabel came to visit. Unrated. Commercial audiobook. For senior high and older readers. 2017. Printz award winner. Available in digital audio from the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library and downloadable from BARD (DB087287).

Lewis, John. March Trilogy. Top Shelf, 2016. Graphic novel trilogy, written between 2013 and 2016, traces Congressman John Lewis's firsthand account of the civil rights movement, from his first meeting with Martin Luther King Jr. to his commitment to nonviolent demonstrations in order to end

segregation. Coretta Scott King Award. For junior and senior high and older readers. National Book Award Winner, Young People's Literature, 2016; #1 New York Times and Washington Post Bestseller; First graphic novel to receive a Robert F. Kennedy Book Award; Winner of the Eisner Award; A Coretta Scott King Honor Book; One of YALSA's Outstanding Books for the College Bound; One of Reader's Digest's Graphic Novels Every Grown-Up Should Read. Human voiced digital audio from Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library and downloadable from BARD (DB087098).

Yoon, Nicola. The Sun is Also a Star. Penguin Random House, 2016. Fiction. Natasha, a girl of science and facts, and Daniel, a good son and student, meet by chance at the worst possible time, but they believe there is something extraordinary in store for both of them. Contains strong language and some descriptions of sex. For senior high and older readers. Downloadable from BARD in both braille and audio. Available in braille and audio from the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library. (DB086028 and BR021806).

Myers, Walter Dean. Monster. HarperCollins, 1999. Fiction. Sixteen-year-old Steve Harmon sits in jail accused of being a lookout in a deadly robbery. An aspiring filmmaker, Steve reviews his time in jail as a movie script. He wonders if he has become the monster that the prosecutor has made him out to be. For senior high readers. National Book Award finalist. Michael Printz award winner. Coretta Scott King Honor award. Contracted braille and digital audio available from the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library (DB056569 and BR012515). Downloadable in braille and audio through BARD.

Ruby, Laura. Bone Gap. HarperCollins, 2015. Fiction. Michael L. Printz Award winner. Eighteen-year-old Finn, an outsider in his quiet Midwestern town, is the only witness to the abduction of town favorite Roza. His inability to distinguish between faces, however, makes it difficult for him to help with the investigation. Some strong language. For senior high and older readers. Available in both braille and digital audio from the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library. (BR021373 and DB081401). Downloadable from BARD.

Perez, Ashley Hope. Out of Darkness. Penguin Random House, 2016. Set in New London, Texas, 1937. Against the background of an actual deadly school explosion, Mexican American Naomi and African American Wash deal with race, segregation, love, and the forces that destroy people. Unrated. Commercial audiobook. For senior high and older readers. Available in Digital audio from the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library and from BARD (DB084432).

Draper, Sharon M. Copper Sun. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2006. Amari is taken from her African village when she is fifteen and sold to a southern plantation owner in America. Amari and Polly, a white indentured servant, risk everything to escape. Descriptions of sex and violence. For senior high and older readers. Coretta Scott King Award. 2006. Available in downloadable refreshable and hardcopy contracted braille from BARD and the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library (BR017067). Also available in human voiced audio from BARD and the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library.

Meyer, Marissa. Cinder. The first book of the Lunar Chronicles series. Feiwel and Friends, 2012. Cinder, a teen cyborg and the best mechanic in New Beijing, labors to support her stepmother--and owner--Adri and Adri's two daughters. But after Cinder's only human friend, her stepsister Peony, is infected with the plague letumosis, Adri volunteers Cinder's body for plague research. For senior high and older readers. Available in Large type (LP005963), braille (BR021348) and human voiced audio (DB075631) from the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library. Subsequent volumes 2, 3, 3.5, 4 and 5 also available. Best Fiction for Young Adults, 2013.

Bennett, Jenn. Alex, Approximately. Simon Pulse, 2017. Seventeen-year-old Bailey moves to California to live with her father and, perhaps, finally meet an online friend and fellow classic film buff.

But she soon finds herself attracted to an annoying coworker, Porter. Descriptions of sex and some strong language. For senior high and older readers. Human voiced audio from BARD and the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library DB088258.

Black, Holly. The Darkest Part of the Forest. Hatchette Audio, 2015. In the town of Fairfold, where humans and fae coexist, a boy with horns and sharp ears awakes after generations of sleep. And Hazel is swept up in new love, shifts her loyalties, and feels the sting of betrayal. Unrated. Commercial audiobook. For senior high and older readers. Digital audio from BARD and the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library (DB080479).

All annotations taken from the catalog of the Minnesota Talking Book Library, April 2018.

2018 Summer Opportunities for Teens

Learning skills related to blindness, low vision, and DeafBlindness

The programs listed below are of varying lengths during the summer. They offer training in independent living and job readiness skills. The program descriptions that follow are taken from each organization's website. If you'd like to pursue any of these opportunities, please speak with your SSB counselor:

BLIND Incorporated (Blindness: Learning in New Dimensions) offers an 8-week Post-secondary, Readiness, Empowerment Program (**PREP**) designed to prepare students for academic, employment, and social success. The PREP curriculum is designed to empower blind youth with the alternative techniques of blindness they will need to be successful in the college and the career fields they choose, and to give them the confidence and belief in themselves they need to find and keep a job. **Additionally there are three one-week summer programs** focusing on independent living, post-secondary success, and navigating the world of work.

Career Ventures, Inc. offers resources in: Job Seeking Skills training, Volunteer opportunities, Paid-work experiences, Job Shadows, Internships (on a case by case basis), Job Placement, and Job Coaching. Contact Wendy DeVore at wdevore@careerventuresinc.com for more information.

Courage Kenny SHARE Program is a resource that provides people of all ages and abilities the opportunity to achieve physical and emotional fitness - and just have some fun. SHARE is a service of Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute, part of Allina Health, but our list of services includes those offered by other organizations. It's a one-stop shop for activity listings and registration details in Minnesota and western Wisconsin.

Duluth Center for Vision Loss offers summer camps designed to sharpen skills needed for success, including Workforce Readiness, College Readiness, Self-advocacy, Mobility, Technology, Independent living, and much more. Students will learn core workforce readiness and adjustment to blindness skills. They will also be given the opportunity to socialize with peers from across the state and to participate in a wide array of recreational activities. The Lighthouse Transition Program is built on the understanding that "now is the time" that youth need to be developing certain core skills that are essential for their future

Helen Keller National Center offers programs to students who are DeafBlind which enable each person who is deaf-blind to live and work in his or her community of choice. HKNC offers individualized evaluation and training which will assist students in achieving their own definition of success. The emphasis for the student in the program is to participate in learning opportunities which

will lead to successful employment and a full, enriched and independent life in the community. The philosophy of the Center is one of self-determination for all.

[Minnesota State Academy for the Blind \(MSAB\)](#) offers Summer School programming for elementary, Middle school and high school age students. Elementary School programs focus on elementary level academics as well as individual goals identified in student IEP's. Middle and High school students will participate in activities encompassing the three areas of transition (postsecondary, employment, and independent living).

National Federation of the Blind offers a variety of local and national opportunities. **The NFB BELL Academy** is designed to provide intensive Braille instruction to blind and low-vision children during the summer months. EQ is a week-long learning opportunity that gets blind students excited about STEM by offering hands-on learning experiences. Visit www.nfb.org and www.nfbmn.org for more information.

Stone Arch Employment Solutions, Inc.

Email Cori Giles at cori.giles@comcast.net for information.

Summer Transition Program (STP) provides experiences to address the specific transition needs of students who are Blind, Visually impaired or DeafBlind.

STP complements each student's core curriculum at their local school by providing individualized opportunities in the three transition areas identified in their Individualized Education Program (IEP). These unique transition activities, as part of the Expanded Core Curriculum, give each student the opportunity to increase independence in their school, home, community and work environments. Dates for 2018 are June 13-25.

Email Julie Kochevar at julie.kochevar@ahschools.us for information.

Looking Ahead in High School

Thinking about what comes after high school is an important skill. The links below offer steps to take to prepare and plan for life after graduation.

[Freshman](#)

[Sophomore](#)

[Junior](#)

[Senior](#)

Ideas?

We are always looking for ideas you'd like to see featured in this newsletter. Please email Sheila.Koenig@state.mn.us with any suggestions or brainstorm. ☺