

# The Spectacle

**-Dare to stand out**

**May 2024**

# ****Fun Minnesota Facts****

Did you know Minnesota has 11,842 lakes that are over 10 acres? Another fun fact, 10 acres in size can be compared to 1.5 city blocks, over two Target Supercenters, or 1,560 parking spaces. Or did you know that Minnesota spans just over 400 miles in length and varies from 200 to 350 miles wide? And in terms of miles, just over a quarter of the Mississippi River runs through Minnesota? Check out [this Explore Minnesota page](https://www.exploreminnesota.com/media/facts-figures) to learn other fun facts about Minnesota.

# Peer Ambassadors

Our dedicated Peer Ambassadors at SSB are here to support you. They are eager to connect with students through one-on-one conversations and group activities. They are planning an in-person event during the summer and are excited to connect with students virtually. If you're interested in connecting directly with them, please contact Amy or Maddy at [amyarias0508@gmail.com](mailto:amyarias0508@gmail.com) or [major.madeline7@gmail.com](mailto:major.madeline7@gmail.com).

Here is a note from them: “Hi, Students! Come join us on Thursday, May 30th, to hang out and connect! We’ll get to know each other and talk about summer plans/activities! We will meet over Zoom from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm. Hope to see you there!”

The information to join is: <https://www.zoomgov.com/j/1601909566?pwd=TVJKTkFwUkJrKzZqZmZtWG9WNWY2Zz09>. Meeting ID: 160 190 9566 Passcode: 812842.

# Upcoming and Ongoing

## Summer Opportunities

At State Services for the Blind, we are committed to making your summer in Minnesota an unforgettable experience. We offer a diverse range of training, work experiences, and recreation opportunities that are unique to our state. From specialized adjustment to blindness training to immersive summer camps, real-world work experience and work readiness opportunities, and thrilling recreation activities, we've got you covered throughout the state! Visit [this page on our website](https://mn.gov/deed/ssb/teens/news.jsp) to explore these summer activities and resources available through SSB and various community organizations. Please contact your SSB counselor or representative to discuss your interest in any available summer opportunities.

## SSB Communication Center

The Communication Center is here to put your books into accessible formats that work for you. Custom audio, e-text, DAISY markup, and Braille - we can do it! The Communication Center is Minnesota’s Accessible Reading Source – we’re here for you. Email us at [ssb.audioservices@state.mn.us](mailto:ssb.audioservices@state.mn.us)

## PACER

PACER Center “enhances the quality of life and expands opportunities for children, youth, and young adults with all disabilities and their families so each person can reach their highest potential. PACER operates on the principles of parents helping parents, supporting families, promoting a safe environment for all children, and working in collaboration with others.” For upcoming webinars and workshops, visit [Pacer's workshops website.](https://www.pacer.org/workshops/)

## ****Disability Hub MN****

“Disability Hub MN is a free statewide resource network that helps you solve problems, navigate the system, and plan for your future. We can help you create your best life your way.” This website has various resources that can guide topics such as disability benefits through the [DB101 website](https://mn.db101.org/), information on housing resources through their [HB101 website](https://mn.hb101.org/), and a plethora of employment and transition resources for individuals with disabilities. Visit the [Disability Hub website here](https://disabilityhubmn.org/) to learn more.

[Youth in Transition Toolkit](https://disabilityhubmn.org/for-professionals/youth-in-transition/) – This toolkit will introduce you to Minnesota's transition framework. Explore tools and resources you can use with youth to plan for their best lives.

## American Printing House (APH)

APH CareerConnect is “an employment information resource offered by the American Printing House for the Blind for job seekers who are blind or visually impaired. CareerConnect provides employment information, career exploration tools, and job-seeking guidance for individuals with vision loss and the professionals who work with them.” Visit their website at [aphcareerconnect.com](https://aphcareerconnect.org/) to learn more. Upcoming webinars can be found at [aphconnectcenter.org/webinars/](https://aphconnectcenter.org/webinars/). On May 16th, their Employment Connections: Achieving Employment Equity webinar will feature nationally recognized experts who will share information for active job seekers in search of tools to aid in achieving career equity. Archived APH webinars can be found on the [APH ConnectCenter YouTube page.](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLUj6DcM1nN3HCfWxJIMLPeD8roKZt8xyu)

## Blind Abilities Podcasts

Check out Blind Abilities on the web at <http://www.BlindAbilities.com>. You can also download the app from the IOS or Google Play store or use the Blind Abilities Alexa skill on your Alexa device by saying, “Alexa, enable Blind Abilities.”

Here are some of the people and topics featured on Blind Abilities recently:

* By Popular Demand: [Blind Piano Lessons: With nearly 20 years of teaching through distance learning, meet Mark Miller and begin playing today!](https://blindabilities.com/?p=8244)
* Wellness Wednesday: [Unwind the Mind: Navigating Stress with Savvy!](https://blindabilities.com/?p=8233)
* Culinary Confidence: [Cooking Without Looking Exemplifies the Capabilities of Blind and Visually Impaired Cooks Throughout the World on YouTube and Podcasts](https://blindabilities.com/?p=8224)

# Tech Tidbits

Tape It is a new accessible IOS voice recording app originally targeted towards musicians but has developed a following among many blind and visually impaired users. The app has a free version and yearly and lifetime subscription options. It also includes many audio customization settings and can record in stereo. Check out this article on AppleVis, [Introducing Tape It: a high quality audio recorder](https://www.applevis.com/forum/ios-ipados/introducing-tape-it-high-quality-audio-recorder) to learn more.

Voice Dream Read Aloud (formerly Voice Dream Reader) now offers monthly and yearly subscription options as new features are added going forward. Existing users can continue using the app's current features at no additional charge. Should existing users want to take advantage of upcoming features, they may need to subscribe to a monthly or yearly plan.

AI continues to be added to more mobile apps to offer visual descriptions and answers to questions. AIRA is starting to introduce its Access AI feature in beta. If interested, users can open the AIRA Explorer app and request beta access. Envision Assistant is another AI app currently in beta; its unique feature is the ability for a user to create and customize their own AI's personality. If interested in joining future beta of this assistant app, Envision has started a forum thread on AppleVis with more information and registration information.

# In The News and Miscellaneous

* Read about an [MN blind student at Robbinsdale Cooper High School who founded a club that gives back to their community.](https://ccxmedia.org/news/standout-student-overcoming-odds-leaving-a-legacy-at-cooper/)
* Listen to the [Eye Free Sports Podcast and their latest episode, featuring Katy Boyd, founder of Twin Cities Blind Sailing.](https://eyesfreesports.podbean.com/)

## Measurable Skill Gain (MSG) Update

This is a heads-up to school staff, students, and parents: SSB will request students' transcripts and diplomas toward the end of the school year.

• Overview—At the end of each school year, SSB staff requests copies of diplomas for each graduating student they serve and transcripts or grade reports for the previous term. SSB appreciates assistance from school staff, students, and parents for helping us receive this documentation!

• Why? - The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is the federal law requiring SSB to collect grade reports for each term and final transcripts or diplomas for each high school and age 18 to 22 transition student. Collecting these helps secure funding for our program and meet our required performance measures set by the Rehabilitation Services Administration.

• Data Privacy—SSB staff obtain a signed release of information from each student (and/or parent/guardian/authorized representative, as applicable) to request this information. SSB staff will provide a copy of the release when requesting documentation.

## Building BRIDGEs

Picture of a well-built and stylish bridge.


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

# 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](https://mn.gov/deed/assets/freshman-transition-timeline_tcm1045-292477.pdf)

[Sophomore](https://mn.gov/deed/assets/sophmore-transition-timeline_tcm1045-292483.pdf)

[Junior](https://mn.gov/deed/assets/junior-transition-timeline_tcm1045-292478.pdf)

[Senior](https://mn.gov/deed/assets/senior-transition-timeline_tcm1045-292482.pdf)

# Ideas?

We are always looking for ideas you’d like to see featured in this newsletter. Please email [shane.desantis@state.mn.us](mailto:shane.desantis@state.mn.us) with any suggestions or brainstorms. ☺