



BEST NEWS

Blind Early Services TN - Newsletter for Caregivers and Providers



The BEST Together Podcast is Live!

After receiving requests for support from families around the globe, BEST has decided to supplement our webinar series with a new podcast platform! A podcast allows us to offer insights from professionals, parents, caregivers and those with lived experience in the blind and low vision community to anyone, anywhere at anytime! Our first episode is now live and available at all major podcast outlets such as Spotify, Apple and Google Podcasts. Please follow and listen as we share what we've learned, and are learning every day, with all of you! We also welcome ideas for future guests at info@blindearlyservices.org!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

JUNE RELEASE

BEST TOGETHER PODCAST: JP WILLIAMS

STARTING JUNE 2021

NFB BELL ACADEMY SUMMER BRAILLE ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

JULY 2021

MUSIC THERAPY SUMMER PROGRAM IN NASHVILLE

STARTING JULY 2021

CERTIFIED VIISA TRAINING FOR TN PROVIDERS

Donate to BEST! Blind Early Services TN is a registered 501(c)(3) organization. All donations made through our website are tax-deductible. Donations are used to directly impact families of children who are blind or low vision through parent training, direct resources and advocacy efforts.

Announcing the BEST Wishlist



Do you want to support our families in another way? At Blind Early Services TN, we operate a lending library for our client families, giving them access to a variety of age- and developmentally- appropriate toys carefully curated by our team of TVIs, Developmental Therapists and both children and adults who are blind or low vision. A great way to support our mission is to purchase a toy from our wishlist to be added to our lending library. Check it out at MyRegistry.com or at the link below.

Meet JP Williams



We're so excited about our June podcast guest, JP Williams! JP is a life coach, songwriter, singer, and public speaker. Blind since the age of 10, JP brings a unique perspective to his work as a life coach and musician. He has performed on the stage of the Grande Ole Opry, written a no. 1 hit single and has his own publishing company. Recently he has turned his focus to his work as a life coach.

"Without knowing it, I've been a life coach my whole life. It started way back when I was a child. People would ask me, as a person who happens to be blind, "how do you do it?" It might sound crazy but, down the road leading to acceptance, I've always chosen to see my situation as an opportunity. I'm not saying it's been easy; I'm just saying I've learned to change my thinking. Once I learned how to do that, I started to change how I was feeling. Coaching others is not something I'm striving for; It's who I am. Best part of becoming a Life Coach is that I've learned how to coach myself." Stay tuned for the release of our conversation with JP next month!

Staff Spotlight: LeeAnn McWhorter

LeeAnn is a licensed special education teacher and CTVI who joins BEST with decades of experience. She worked for Metro Nashville Public Schools for over 20 years and has taught in every type of special education classroom, though most of her career has focused on teaching young children with disabilities in inclusive settings. As an early childhood itinerant teacher, LeeAnn has had the opportunity to travel to many different settings to empower teachers and families to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities. LeeAnn received a bachelor's degree and a Master of Science degree from the University of Tennessee in Special Education. She also completed MTSU's master's program in Special Education with an emphasis on teaching the blind and visually impaired. We are thrilled to have her on our team!



BEST Featured in the Tennessean!

In case you missed our announcement earlier this month, we are thrilled to share that an op-Ed written by BEST co-founders, Alison and Stacy, was featured in the Tennessean! We are beyond grateful to David Plazas, the Tennessean's Opinion and Engagement Director, for providing us the opportunity for this much-needed attention and recognition of the importance of specialized early intervention for families of children who are blind and visually disabled in our state. Receiving coverage in such a well-known and influential publication is a tremendous boost for our efforts and mission. We've linked the article below -- please share with your contacts to continue spreading the word about BEST!

Support Project PAVE!

As of July 1, 2021, the Tennessee Department of Education will no longer fund Project PAVE (Providing Access to the Visual Environment). Project PAVE had been continually funded since 1995 and serves low vision students ages 3-21. Now under new leadership, the department has made the decision to direct the funds previously allocated for low vision to interventions for other student populations. We, at BEST, are devastated to think of the effect this will have on children with low vision across our state. Project PAVE, led by Dr. Lori Ann Kehler, needs your support. Please express your concerns about this decision by emailing the Commissioner at Commissioner.Schwinn@tn.gov. Linked below is a recent news feature that demonstrates the important work Project PAVE has done for so many years.

WHAT WE'RE LOVING THIS MONTH!



Excellerations Touch and Match Sensory Board features ten different textured cylinders that match with a corresponding texture. This toy is a great way to encourage texture perception while also encouraging problem solving skills.

**Note: as an Amazon Associate, BEST receives a portion of qualifying purchases made by our curated list of books and toys found on our website. Thank you for supporting BEST by shopping our page!*