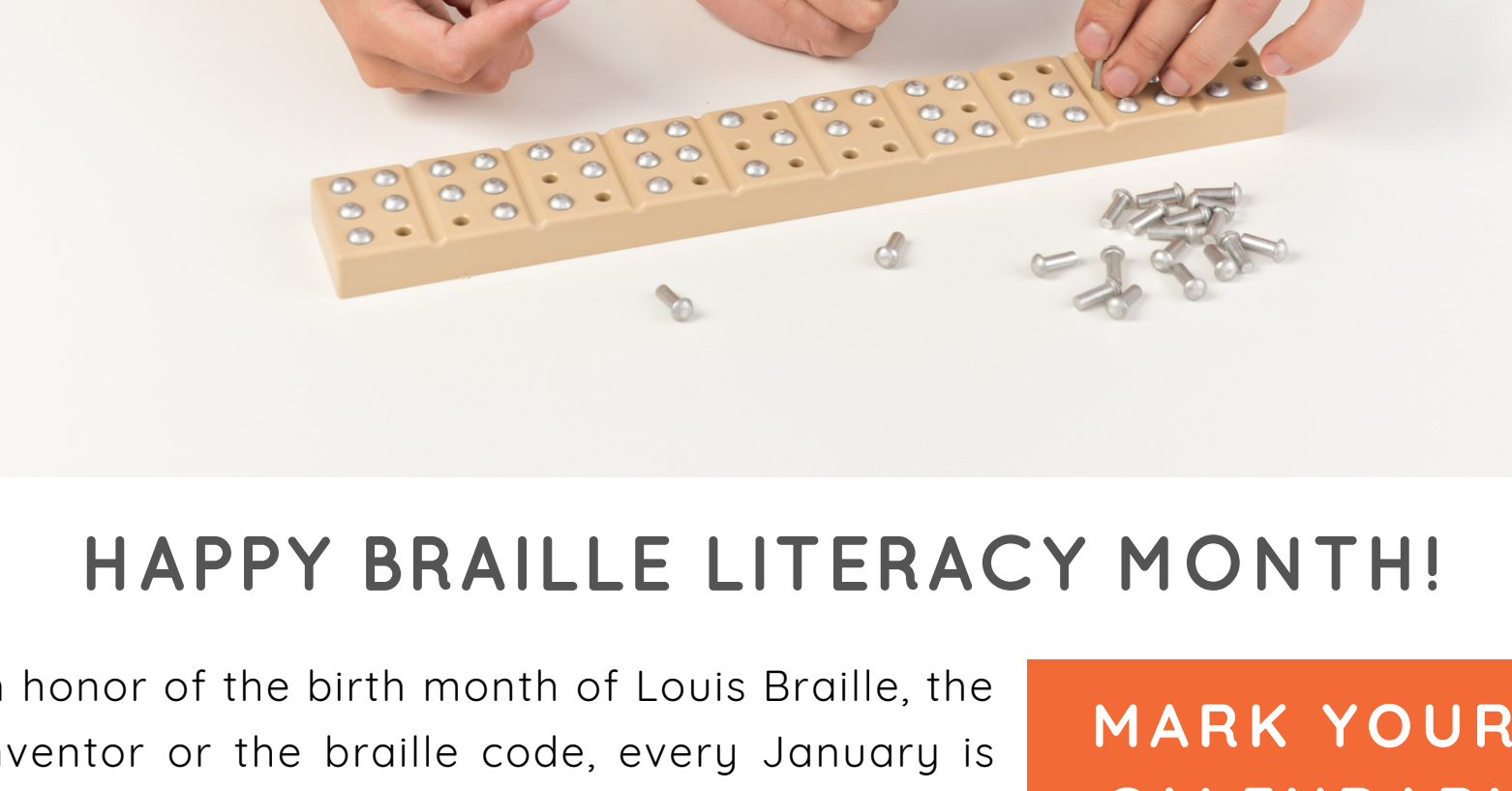


BEST NEWS

Blind Early Services TN - Newsletter for Caregivers and Providers



HAPPY BRAILLE LITERACY MONTH!

In honor of the birth month of Louis Braille, the inventor of the braille code, every January is braille literacy month. Why is having a dedicated month for braille literacy so important?

- To spread awareness about the importance of the braille code and how it changes the lives of those living with blindness by offering them the same access to literacy as individuals with sight
- To advocate for the inclusion of and access to braille in all public places such as schools, libraries, restaurants and more
- To support organizations that provide braille resources to individuals and families who need access by donating money, braille books or transcription services

Below are ten organizations that provide braille books to children and adults across the country. Visit their sites to order books, or to donate:

1. National Braille Press (www.nbp.org)
2. Seedlings Braille Books (www.seedlings.org)
3. Beulah Reimer Legacy (www.beulahreimerlegacy.com)
4. National Library Service (www.loc.gov/nls/)
5. Braille Institute (www.brailleinstitute.org)
6. Braille Superstore (www.braillebookstore.com)
7. APH & Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (www.aph.org)
8. American Action Fund (www.actionfund.org)
9. Read How You Want (www.readhowyouwant.com)
10. Bookshare (www.bookshare.org)

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

COMING SOON
VICTORIA WATTS
 CYR.U.S. SYSTEM
 BEST TOGETHER
 PODCAST

FEBRUARY 1
 6:30PM-7:30PM CT
 PARENT CONNECT
 VIRTUAL SUPPORT
 GROUP MONTHLY
 MEETING

FEBRUARY 7
 7:00PM CT
 NFB TN PARENT
 DIVISION MEETING

FEBRUARY 8
 6:00PM CT
 APH FAMILY CONNECT
 PROCEDURAL
 SAFEGUARDS AND
 PARENTAL RIGHTS
 SERIES



2023 NFB Bell Academy Now Open for Applications

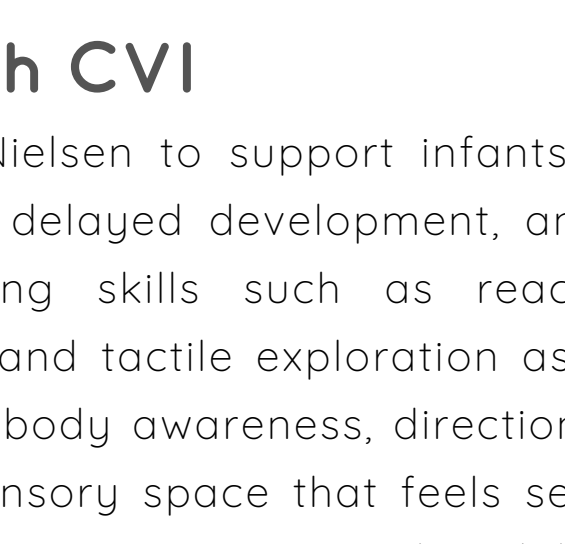


NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND

The National Federation of the Blind is offering a three-week virtual program as part of its Bell Academy again this year. Bell Academy is a summer program aimed at helping blind and low vision children enhance their education in the summer months. This is an annual summer program for any blind or low vision student age 4-12 who may need extra braille support or exposure, and who would enjoy connecting with other blind students and adult role models. In-person locations will be held as well in three state locations: Idaho, Louisiana and Tennessee. Limited spaces are available. Apply now at the link below or visit nfb.org for more information. Options are available for beginner, intermediate and advanced students and the program will run from July 24th to August 11th, 2023.

National Braille Press Valentines Now Available

This year's NBP braille valentine features a rocket blasting into space with fire and hearts coming out of the engine. Above the rocket are the words, "You're out of this world, Valentine!" and a smattering of stars on a blue-gray background. The rocket has a pink tip, a white body, two pink fins, and a round window. On the back of the card is a "braille decoder" to help friends and family read the message in braille. Order yours now at the link below before it's too late!



The BEST Sensory Space Is a Great Tool for Children with CVI

The "Little Room" was designed by Lilli Nielsen to support infants and young children with blindness, low vision, delayed development, and/or combinations of disabilities in developing skills such as reaching, grabbing, exploring, sensory engagement and tactile exploration as well as the understanding of concepts such as body awareness, directionality and space. It is important to provide a sensory space that feels secure, blocks out external distractions and that is motivating to the child. At BEST, we create sensory spaces modeled after the Little Room, built in a size that best fits each child and outfitted with objects of various sizes, shapes, textures and colors which are hung from the overhead bars and/or on the sides.

BEST provided a custom sensory space for Ameen, a two-year old who has been diagnosed with a brain-based visual impairment, or CVI. Ameen is working on using his central vision and his "little room" has helped to block out peripheral distractions and draw his visual attention to one desired object at a time. Ameen is drawn to the color red and bright light, as many children with CVI are. In these photos you can see him hard at work on strengthening his brain-to-eye connection as he visually attends to the objects. His family and TVI make sure to swap out items often to keep him interested and engaged without creating visual clutter. Ameen's developmental therapist helps position him outside the sensory space to allow him to work on both gross motor goals and visual goals at the same time. Way to go, Ameen and team!



Learn More About Becoming a TVI!

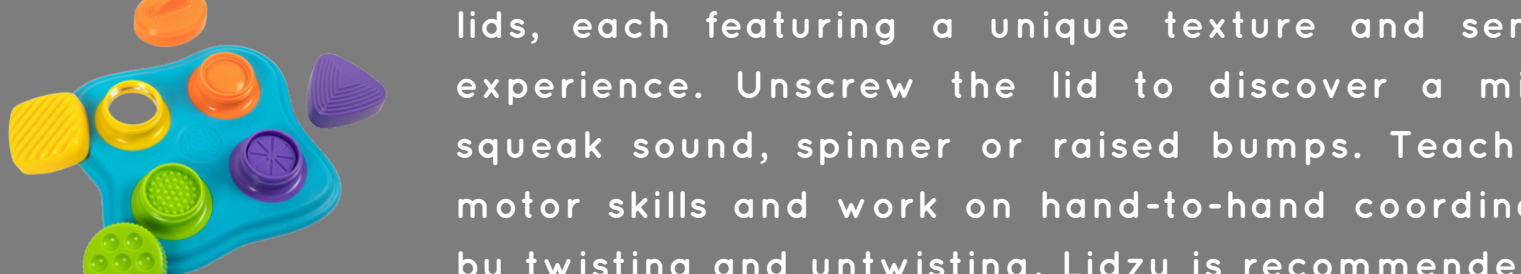
Have you ever thought about becoming a Teacher of the Visually Impaired? With shortages in the profession across the country, the time to do it is now -- we need you in our field and as part of our mission to support children with visual disabilities!

Vanderbilt University's Department of Special Education offers a master's degree in Visual Disabilities in Nashville. Learn more about the program and this rewarding career by joining one of two information sessions being offered over the next few months. The first session is this Tuesday, January 31st at 4:30pm CT. The second session will be held on Tuesday, March 28th at 5:00pm CT. Links to register are below.



Pre-Order the BrailleDoodle Now!

The TouchPad Pro Foundation, led by President and CEO Daniel Lubiner, has developed the BrailleDoodle, a simple, high-quality device made to expose those who are blind or low vision to tactile art, braille literacy, technology, and other educational opportunities. The BrailleDoodle is about the size of an iPad and made in durable plastic. There is an array of hundreds of holes, placed tightly together, covering the surface. Each hole contains a tiny element that can be pulled to the surface by a magnetic stylus and locked into place to create a touchable effect. The user erases a creation by pushing the elements back down with a satisfying "pop." One side of the BrailleDoodle is an open canvas for creating, while the other side features the braille alphabet, numbers and contractions for teaching and practicing the braille code. If you are interested in purchasing a BrailleDoodle visit the link below for more information.



WHAT WE'RE LOVING THIS MONTH!



Lidzy is a sensory and tactile toy with various shaped lids, each featuring a unique texture and sensory experience. Unscrew the lid to discover a mirror, squeak sound, spinner or raised bumps. Teach fine motor skills and work on hand-to-hand coordination by twisting and untwisting. Lidzy is recommended for ages 12 months and up.