

APRIL 2026

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Blind Early Services TN - Newsletter for Caregivers and Providers

## April Awareness: Occupational Therapy, Autism Acceptance, and CVI Literacy in Practice

April is **Occupational Therapy Month**, and at BEST we're grateful for the role OT plays in helping children build independence, participate in daily routines, and engage more fully in the world around them. We're proud to have two full-time occupational therapists on staff, and each spring we also welcome two doctoral OT interns from Belmont University—expanding our ability to support families while helping train the next generation of clinicians.

Want to learn more about OT's role in Early Intervention? [Click here!](#)

In our work, we often see how closely development, sensory processing, and visual access are connected. April also brings Autism Acceptance Month and CVI Literacy Month, and with them an important reminder: many children experience overlapping needs that aren't always easy to untangle. Autism and cortical visual impairment (CVI) can present in similar ways, which can sometimes make it challenging to understand what is influencing a child's behavior or how they are making sense of their environment. This can be challenging, but it

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR

April 22 (10:00 AM - 12:00 PM)

Community Giveaway- Free Essentials for Families  
by McNeilly Center for Children & Mother to Mother (See flyer here)

100 Meridian Street

April 27 (3:00 PM - 4:00 PM)

Perkins: Understanding CVI in co-existing conditions  
(Join the Zoom here)

May 1 (10:00 AM - 2:00 PM)

Accessibility Day 2026 at the Tennessee Library for Accessible Books and Media (See flyer here)

1001 Rep. John Lewis Way North

May 21 (1:00 PM - 2:00 PM)

Perkins: Equitable Access to Literacy for Students with CVI (Join the Zoom here)

also underscores the importance of looking at the whole child and responding with a wide variety of tools, perspectives, and learning opportunities rather than a single approach.

With that in mind, we're also sharing a collection of free literacy programs for very young children with vision loss—including opportunities to receive books with braille, tactile storyboxes, and other accessible materials designed to support early connection to stories and learning.

May 22

TN Early Intervention System Lunch & Learn (more information to come)

Access more Perkins resources about CVI &  
Autism

## Dots for Tots Storybook Kits Now Available

A new cycle of *Dots for Tots* storybook kits from the Braille Institute is now available, offering families and providers a meaningful way to introduce braille and early literacy skills from the start.

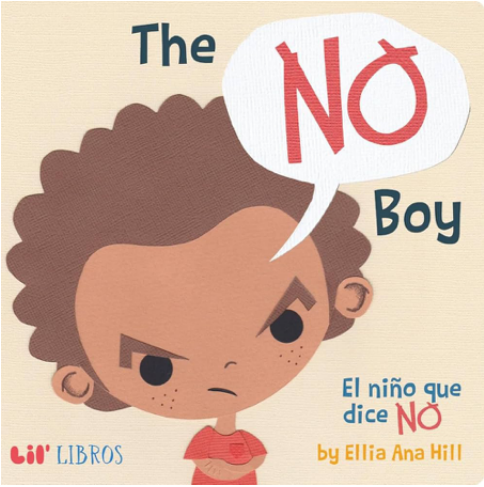
This year's selections—*Hello, Bugs!* by Smriti Prasad-Halls and *The No Boy: El niño que dice No* by Ellia Ana Hill—are designed to support shared reading through engaging, accessible formats.

Each kit includes a multi-sensory storybook with a board book adapted with uncontracted braille overlays, a tactile learning item connected to the story, and audio versions to support listening and language development.

Together, these elements create a more interactive reading experience while building early familiarity with braille.



Subscribe here!



## Seedlings Book Angel Program: Free Braille Books

The Book Angel Program from Seedlings Braille Books for Children helps ensure that children who are blind or have low vision can keep building their own braille libraries at home, with no cost to families. Each year, children in the U.S. and Canada can receive a selection of free braille books of their choice from the Seedlings catalog, keeping reading accessible and present in everyday family life beyond school and intervention services.

Families simply place an annual order and select their preferred titles, which are then shipped directly to the child’s home at no charge—making it easy to bring consistent, meaningful braille reading into daily routines and shared moments.

Seedlings also offers a dedicated program for Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs), allowing educators to request free braille books for instructional use with students, helping extend literacy access into classrooms and early intervention settings.

[Learn more about their programs and instructions on ordering books here!](#)



## A Spotlight on a BEST Graduate's First Day of School

We are so proud of our BEST kiddos as they take big steps into school-based services and new learning environments.

These transitions are meaningful milestones, and we feel honored to celebrate alongside families as children move forward in their journeys



with growing confidence and independence.

This April, join us in celebrating Jojo's first day at preschool!

Leeann McWhorter, Jojo's BEST Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) shared,

*It's, of course, bittersweet as Jojo heads off to preschool. I won't get to see them as often, but mostly I'm just so happy for them.*

*This is a next step I knew Jojo was ready for. I'm so grateful for families like Jojo's mom who share photos and videos of these milestones. It lets us keep cheering them on as they grow and take on new adventures.*



## What We're Loving This Month

At BEST, we believe every child deserves access to experiences that help them grow and thrive—including the arts. From music and movement to tactile art and creative play, the arts play a vital role in early development for children who are blind or have low vision. That's why statewide arts advocacy matters to the families we serve across Tennessee.

TN4Arts is Tennessee's statewide arts advocacy organization, led by individuals who believe deeply in the civic and personal value of the arts. Nearly 80% of Tennessee Arts Grants are funded through the purchase of state specialty license plates.

Learn More About Getting a TN Arts  
Speciality Plate Here!



### About Us

*BEST ensures that families are empowered and equipped to provide children with blindness or low vision their BEST start.*

### Links

- The Best Story
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### Let's be BEST friends



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