



Blossom Rolls Out the Red Carpet

Inside this issue:

<i>Red Carpet Visit</i>	1
<i>Disney Volunteers</i>	2
<i>"Wicked" Fun</i>	2
<i>Speech Winners</i>	2
<i>"Reddest Kid"</i>	3
<i>Family Night</i>	3
<i>Heart for Arts</i>	3

January 25 marked a milestone in the history of Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf with a visit by members of the Johnson Scholarship Foundation, led by their CEO, Malcolm Macleod, and Johnson board member and world-renowned deaf advocate, Dr. I. King Jordan.

The visit began with a tour of the school, conducted by Kaitlyn Pool, one of our middle school student ambassadors. Preschool students were then treated to Dr. I. King Jordan's very own rendition of



Tommy the Train.



Malcolm Macleod (l) and Dr. I King Jordan visit with Blossom students

Each class rolled out the red carpet for our distinguished guests, culminating with Dr. Jordan's discussion with Blossom 12-15 year olds about his storied history as the first deaf president of Gallaudet University. His message to Blossom's students was, "There is nothing in this world you can't do, so dream big."

leaders including Florida State Representative Bill Heller joined Dr. Jordan, Mr. Macleod and their team for a roundtable luncheon discussion about Blossom's history, successes, and plans for the future.

According to Blossom President, Rich Engwall, "The visit was recognition by this team, led by Malcolm Macleod and Dr. I. King Jordan, that Blossom is making a significant impact that is being felt well beyond the walls of our school. I could not be more proud of our students, our staff, and our parents for the very positive impression they made on our guests. It was a remarkable day for Blossom."



Upper class students, several Blossom parents and graduates, Blossom board members, staff and community

Photos courtesy of David Downing.

Did you know?

- Tampa Bay is home to the 4th largest deaf and hard-of-hearing population in the United States.
- 85% of deaf children reach the age of 18 reading at only a 3rd or 4th grade level.
- You can make a difference in the life of a child by sponsoring a Blossom scholarship.

What Do Blossom & Disney Have in Common?



Blossom volunteers, the Cook family, invest some "sweat equity" in getting the playground ready for spring

What do Blossom and Disney have in common?

The answer is more than 70 volunteers who spent a chilly Saturday in February cleaning, painting, raking, and organizing Blossom. The work day was part of the "Give a Day, Get a Disney Day" program created by Disney and the Hands On Network to reward volunteers for service to their communities. For their service, volunteers received a voucher for a

free day at a Disney park.

According to Julie Rutenberg, who joined volunteers scrubbing and painting walls, "The volunteers spent more than 240 hours working to get Blossom ready for spring. We can't thank them enough for their hard work and we're grateful to the folks at Disney for helping us thank them in this way. And my hat's off to Colette Derks for pulling the entire day together for us."

We're Off to See the Wizard...

The long-running smash Broadway musical "Wicked" returned to a packed house at the Straz Center (formerly Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center) in Tampa and Blossom students were there to enjoy the show, thanks to the generosity of the Straz Center and their Open Doors program.

As the lights dimmed in the theater, a spotlight to the right of the stage illuminated sign language interpreters who were brought in so our Blossom students could enjoy the show. "I can't thank the Straz Center enough for making this opportunity available to our students," said Blossom President

Rich Engwall.

Blossom's students staged their own performance of "The Wizard of Oz" in 2007, so "Wicked", which is a prequel to that story, was of particular interest. "Cool show," said student Erika Cook.



Blossom's 2010 2nd & 3rd Place Speech Winners!



Two Blossom middle school students, Edward Fountain and Kaitlyn Pool, took 2nd and 3rd place respectively in the Optimist International Communication for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CCDHH) contest January 29 at Pinellas Park High School. The theme this year was

"Cyber Communication: Progress or Problem?"

Edward and Kaitlyn each presented a speech 4 – 5 minutes in length before their peers, teachers, judges and several members of the local Optimist clubs, competing against five deaf students from Morgan Fitzgerald Middle School.

Out of the three medals given during the competition, Blossom brought two home. It was a great day for our Blossom Middle School students and a well-deserved reward for some very hard work. Way to go Edward and Kaitlyn!

A New Spin on Valentine's Day... "Reddest Kid"

How red can you be? That's the question for the students of Clearwater's Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf as they competed on February 12 to see who was the "Reddest Kid" and who had the "Reddest Lunch".

According to Blossom Director Julie Rutenberg, the "Reddest Kid" and "Reddest Lunch" competition has become a much-anticipated annual tradition at Blossom. "We all remember the traditional exchange of cards and

candy that we all did in school on Valentine's Day. We put a new spin on the celebration by inviting our students to come to school as red as they can get and compete to see who is the "Reddest Kid" and who has the "Reddest Lunch". Students dress in red, often color their hair and skin red for the day, and even use food coloring to dye the sandwich bread in their red lunches.

Judges deliberated and prizes were given to all of the "red" winners.



Elan and Nico (l to r) demonstrate just how creative they can be as they compete in the annual "Reddest Kid" competition at Blossom.

Everyone Gets into the Act at Family Night



Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf is a family affair. Never is that more apparent as at our regular Family Nights.

"Because Blossom is a small school, our Family Nights are an opportunity for parents to meet other parents and become involved in the education of their children. Family Nights help us to enhance that

'family feel' of our school," says Carol Downing, Blossom's Associate Director.

Recently, Blossom parents, students and staff got together after school to create Valentine's Day take-home crafts including candy necklaces, love pins, and custom-decorated cookies.

"Our greatest natural resource is the minds of our children."

Walt Disney

Mark Your Calendars for "Heart for Art"

Now is the time to mark your calendars for one of the most talked-about and eagerly-anticipated Blossom events of the year. The date has been set for the annual "Heart for Art" wine pairing dinner at the Parkshore Grill in St. Petersburg.

On Tuesday, September 21,

2010, Parkshore's team of Steve Westphal and Chef Tyson Grant will open their doors to Blossom's friends to enjoy an evening of some of the finest foods and wines available anywhere in the United States. Proceeds from the evening will benefit the programs at Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf.

"We look forward to this wonderful evening each year. Our students are grateful to Steve, Tyson and their entire organization for their continued generosity and support of our programs here at Blossom," says Rich Engwall. "Mark your calendars now and more information will be available soon."



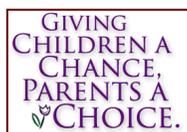


MONTESSORI SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

14088 Icot Blvd.
Clearwater, FL 33760

Non Profit Org
U.S. Postage Paid
Tampa FL
Permit 1648

Voice/TTY: 727-539-7879
Fax: 727-539-7627
www.blossomschool.org



OUR MISSION

To be the premier education and communication center for families with deaf and hard of hearing children in the state of Florida.

How Can You Help a Student Like Mikie?



As a non-profit, Blossom is continually seeking financial support for:

- Scholarships for students in need.
- Enrichment activities for our students.
- Professional development scholarships for teacher training.
- Technology to enhance student learning and achievement.
- Volunteer support.
- In-kind contributions.

To become a partner of Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf and help give children like Mikie a chance, please contact Rich Engwall at 727-539-7879 or by e-mail at rengwall@blossomschool.org.

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