

Welcome to Our Fall Newsletter!

# FOCUS on FRIENDS

The Newsletter of Friends of Tennessee School for the Blind



## FRIENDS Build TSB Adaptive Playground

An estimated six million children in the U.S. have some kind of disability that makes it hard, if not impossible, for them to play on a traditional playground. In 2003, Friends of TSB approved a project that would provide the joy and learning experiences of an accessible playground for students enrolled at this school.

Phase I and II of the new playground created a wonderful play environment, meeting current ADA standards, and featuring vibrant colors and special equipment designed for blind and low vision students. In time, however, evaluations and observations from teachers and therapists noted a need for additional equipment, designed to be fully accessible to students with multiple disabilities, and in 2007 Friends responded with a plan for the Phase III, which was completed for student use in the spring of 2008.

This area includes safety swings and adaptive swings, for students needing upper body support and stabilization, as well as special safety surfaces, access paths, and swings designed to accommodate wheelchairs. It insures that the new TSB accessible playground is truly a place where students of all abilities can come to swing, play, and have fun. 🌻



**Top:** Instructors and students enjoying the recently completed third phase of the playground expansion.  
**Bottom left:** The new adaptive swings are very special to Kalli Tucker Kinman.  
**Bottom right:** Bryant Luna is excited to be one of the first students to enjoy swings that accommodate wheel chairs.

# FRIENDS of TSB 2008 Appreciation Celebration



President of Friends of TSB, Ralph Brewer extends his gratitude to Phil Ponder for his support in the playground planning and projects to benefit TSB students.



Library project manager, Valerie Dennison demonstrates to guests how students will benefit from the new technology (L-R) Kevin Bussy, Bobby Bass, Ed Byrne, and Ida Alexander.

On a very special day on the TSB Campus, Nashville Mayor Karl Dean joined corporate donors, community leaders, families and friends at the 2008 Appreciation Celebration Event hosted by Friends of Tennessee School for the Blind.

The Celebration marked the completion of a new accessible playground and new state of the art library, both of which were multi-year projects undertaken by Friends of TSB, a charitable organization founded to enhance and enrich the lives of students enrolled at the school.

Honored in the appreciation segment of the program were those who provided financial support through grants and donations, and those dedicated volunteers and TSB employees, who gave so generously of their time and talent to make these projects possible. During visits to the playground and library, guests were able to observe the new world of opportunities these projects provided for the students, through library technology and a playground designed to provide accessibility for those of all abilities.

All funding for these projects came from generous support of grants and donations. 🌟

## FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD

When I became Superintendent of TSB in 1988, two things became quickly apparent to me. The first thing was the amount of support, both financial and administrative, from the Department of Education and the Executive and Legislative branches of the Tennessee State Government. Actually, I was already somewhat aware of the support, from my having attended and graduated from TSB and from my having worked there for some sixteen years in various capacities prior to becoming Superintendent, but I did not know the extent.

The second thing I learned was that, regardless of the amount of commitment and financial support received from the state, there was never enough money to address all the needs. Thus, it became clear to me that an organization like Friends of Tennessee School for the Blind – a 501 (c) (3) tax exempt organization that would supplement, not supplant, the considerable financial support provided by the State of Tennessee – was needed.

Little did I realize that this fledgling organization started in 1997 would become so valuable in achiev-

ing the stated purpose of the organization – "...to enhance and enrich the educational, vocational, special skills, and social development of the students enrolled in the Tennessee School for the Blind."

I would be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity in the inaugural edition of *Focus on Friends* to thank several people without whom we could not have done the things we have been able to do. Firstly, I want to express my deepest appreciation to the members of the Board of Directors who give unselfishly of their time and talents without any remuneration whatsoever. One could not ask for a more dedicated and congenial group with which to work.

Secondly, I want to thank our "Special Friends" – those organizations, groups, and individuals who have provided the financial resources and work that enabled us to accomplish the many things you will read about in this newsletter. Please know that you have made, and continue to make, a positive difference in the lives of the students at the Tennessee School for the Blind. We hope the needs you've met will serve to motivate you to continue your support in the future.

With Sincere Appreciation,  
Ralph A. Brewer, President 🌟

# FRIENDS Accomplishments

Having read the Mission Statement of Friends of TSB, we invite you to review this partial list of Friends' gifts to TSB, through the first 11 years of dedicated commitment to the challenges our mission represents.

*“Making a difference in the lives of special children”*

## The TSB Music Department

Presentation to the TSB Music Department of new band instruments; band and chorus uniforms & accessories; 5 new practice and performance pianos; and a portable digital piano for off campus choral performances.



## TSB Library Electronic Catalog and Upgrades

Funding multiple upgrades necessary for the TSB Library to meet current standards, including the purchase and implementation of an electronic system, which required cataloging of the library's more than 20,000 holdings into a database accessible to TSB students through special adaptive equipment.

## The Family Consumer Science Building (Home Ec Cottage)

Undertaking a 2 year project to update and make needed improvements including: lighting, flooring, special custom window shades, television, refrigerator and kitchen upgrades.

## Friends of Tennessee School for the Blind Mission Statement

The Tennessee School for the Blind has served Tennessee's blind and visually impaired citizens since 1844. Because its students have unique needs, the school often needs special equipment, supplies and opportunities for enrichment in addition to what can be provided by the state through normal appropriations. The purpose of Friends of Tennessee School for the Blind is to supplement those state appropriations by enhancing and enriching the educational, vocational, special skills, and social development of students enrolled in the

Tennessee School for the Blind. Examples of ways in which the organization assists the students include: Purchase of disability specific educational materials and supplies; Pay for special educational enrichment activities; Purchase of recreational equipment; Pay for special training for students; Purchase of access technology, etc. Friends of Tennessee School for the Blind, Inc., is a chartered, non-profit organization that has been recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501 (c) (3) Federal Income Tax Exempt Organization.



## The TSB Wonder Room

Addition of a multi-sensory room, designed to bring the “outside world” into a safe and stimulating environment for sensory deprived children.



For the nearly \$400,000 this list represents in benefits to TSB students, we express our deepest appreciation to community organizations, business leaders, corporate foundations, and generous individuals who support and are an integral part of the charitable efforts of Friends of TSB.

## TSB Accessible Playground

Phase I, II and III. (Please refer to cover story)

## Other Benefits to TSB

### Technology

- Braille-N-Speak units (10)
- Portable Audio Devices
- Victor Readers (13)
- CCTV's (11)
- Braille Mobile Managers (13)
- SARAs

### Teacher Mini-Grants & Special Programs (12)

- Children's Theater Performances & Instruction

- Cottage Art Supply Center

- TSB Sensory Garden


- TSB Tiger Shop

- Student Activity Fund Donations

- Bus Transportation

- Ham Radio Equipment

- Goalball Flooring

- Audible Books (for Bookport) 

# TSB Student Earns International Award

**T**SB student Brittney Luna recently earned a prestigious award from the Council for Exceptional Children, as one of just 27 students from around the world to be chosen for the *Yes I Can Award*, which recognizes a student's achievement despite a disability.




She must memorize every song she sings. Ms. Seay, her voice instructor, and Ms. Denning, TSB's choral director, have been instrumental in helping Brittney develop her talents, and she has performed at such events as Governor Bredesen's Inauguration Ceremony, the TN Capitol Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremonies, and as part of the youth program with the Tennessee Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra.

The awards are given in nine categories, and Ms. Luna, who was honored in the Arts category, is a talented singer and member of the Tennessee School for the Blind celebrated Choral Ensemble.

Education Commissioner Lana Seivers praised the dedicated ensemble vocalists, and said "I commend Brittney on her well-deserved award."

Seventeen year old Brittney is blind and has multiple disabilities.

Friends of TSB has strongly supported the school's outstanding Music Department. It was with great pride in Ms. Luna's major accomplishments, that a Friends' grant was established, in her honor, to help fund a special trip she and her family took to Boston, Mass. There, Brittney accepted the 2008 International Award for Exceptional Children. 

## MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS Friends of Tennessee School for the Blind, Inc.

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The Board of Directors of Friends of Tennessee School for the Blind, Inc., would like to thank all persons and organizations that have assisted in the efforts to enrich the lives of students at the Tennessee School for the Blind.

**If you would like to make a donation to the Foundation or desire more information, please contact:**



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Friends of Tennessee School for the Blind, Inc., is eligible for designations through the United Way of Metropolitan Nashville (UWMN) campaign, designation code 1038.

**Important:** Your gift may be doubled if your employer has a matching gift program. Please see your Human Resources Department today.

## TSB GALLERY



Friends of TSB enhance the lives of students through their support in many areas including technology, sports, student activities and the performing arts.