



# Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired

## Outreach Programs

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### After Graduation Happenings

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In the Life of a DeafBlind Young Lady and Her Mom,

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*Abstract: Becky Harmon shares her experiences of building a good life for her daughter who is young adult.*

We are hanging in there! That's what I say when anyone asks about us since Kersten's graduation. This first year after graduation has been challenging but I figured it would be, especially since I retired from teaching (wow-31 years) at the same time to be able to take care of my daughter. Kersten has liked being at home with me, but it has been really frustrating to wait for her to do things since her last year of school. I just think of it as "Kersten time" instead of "Deafblind time." She was really ready for school to be over! However, now she thinks that staying home is really cool and we really don't need to do or go anywhere! NOT! We have places to go and people to see. But an occasional afternoon nap is really very nice. Just sayin'...

I do think this year would have been better if I had someone who could help out. So far, I have not been able to find anyone to work with her. Usually I find someone from Camp Summit but this year it didn't work out. I just need someone for about 3 days a week and I can work with their schedule. I just haven't found the connection yet. I wish more signers were around our area. This is one of if not THE biggest concern and hurdle for parents: finding good help, AKA INTERVENERS!

I have signed her up for every available Camp Summit. I know she loves it, she's safe, and I get a little break from being with her...or maybe I should say she gets a little break from being with me.

She spent spring break at Camp Summit. I think she may have had withdrawal from not having her iPad for the week because of her focus (obsession) with Olympic ice skating, and of course she loves Mako Mermaids videos.

We are going to Heather's Old Skool Village in Lake Worth two days a week. It is a really unique Day Hab. She gets to hang out with kids her age and older. She plays Wii Frisbee golf and bowling and usually is the best at both. It's pretty funny when she beats the boys! We work on crafts together, eat lunch, and enjoy dancing to music. Most of the activity is outside. They always have something going on! I stay with her since they don't have anyone that signs. I think they feel comfortable with her now so I may start leaving her for a short time and run an errand

or two since there are several places around there to shop. She signs “school” when we talk about it.

We use an app, FTVS HD (First Then Visual Schedule HD), for her daily calendar routine. She also looks at the larger calendar on her iPad. I have marked off when we have appointments and when she goes to her Dad’s. For some reason she doesn’t want to use the very large paper calendar from TSBVI. That’s okay since the iPad is so much more portable.

I never thought about going to a day hab (habilitation) after retiring but I feel blessed to be there with Kersten. I still get to help out as a teacher by helping the others learn how to communicate and interact with her.

In the Fall I was very busy finishing my intervener practicum at Utah State with Linda Alsop. Documenting each of the many standards was challenging for me since I am not assigned to a specific school/teacher. I finally submitted the required portfolio so I’m just praying I pass! The day hab helped with providing some activities I could use for my practicum. I wish I could have done this when she was younger. I learned so much!

I want to get a better exercise program going so we have a gym membership in the works. If enough people sign up from Heather’s Old Skool Village, the gym will set up a program for them. I’m looking forward to seeing what they have since Kersten is probably getting tired of jumping on the little trampoline. This has been a good routine because there is a counter that helps challenge her to increase her jumps each time.

Well, I hope you got a little taste of what we have experienced since graduation. Setting routines, no matter how small, with lots of “deafblind time” has helped us survive without killing each other!



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