



Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired
Outreach Programs

www.tsbvi.edu | 512-454-8631 | 1100 W. 45th St. | Austin, TX 78756

Touch That Cake!

Heather Withrow, DBMAT Board Member & Blogger, Austin

Abstract: The author shares how she partnered with a cake artist to make her son's birthday cake a meaningful and accessible experience.

Editor's Note: We are thankful that Heather has given us permission to share another of her blog postings where she shares her insights and deafblind geekiness. If you haven't had the pleasure of reading Heather's blog, we invite you to visit her at <http://hexwit.blogspot.com>



Figure 1 Photo of Orion enjoying a chocolate ball from his name

Orion had one of the most unique and deafblind-intriguing birthday cakes ever to celebrate his 6th birthday! This special cake was created by Tina and Amy with "that. specialty cake company," located in Austin, Texas. It had beautiful marbled blue and purple fondant, Orion's name was spelled in braille with white chocolate balls, and you can see and feel a few candied constellations along the cake's side. Inside was the chocolatiest triple chocolate I've ever tasted, so yummy that there were none left over after the party.



Figure 2 Photo of a flat, round blue marbled fondant covered cake has "o r i o n" spelled in braille chocolate balls on top. Constellations are visible on the sides- Orion and the Big Dipper. Yellow balls are strung around the entire bottom circumference of the cake

Amy and I talked about doing a special tactile and interactive cake for Orion's 6th birthday, a great idea right from the start! I've always included candles for his birthday even though it was so awkward, perhaps a tactile oxymoron, that I wanted him to touch but then didn't want him touch when they were lit. The chocolate balls were on top of toothpicks that were inserted on top of the cake for Orion himself to remove and enjoy thoroughly on his terms, instead of candles.



Figure 2 Orion and his siblings pose with the cake after Orion started picking off the chocolate balls

He was already fussing when we were about to present the cake to him. To let him know that we were going to have cake, I gave him a cupcake wrapper to help clue him in on what's going to happen. He's always had cupcakes for his birthday so this one was going to be a surprise in two ways, it's not cupcakes and it's awesome! The wrapper calmed him down as he crunched it in his hands. We set the cake down in front of him sitting in his red wagon, he touched the cake, picked and pulled at the fondant and once he discovered the Orion braille in

chocolate balls, he committed to eating them. He totally touched that cake! Each slice a guest had was blessed by Orion's fingerprints.

Amy has a special place in Orion and our family's life. She was Orion's first teacher, even though she trained as a teacher of the deaf, when we moved to Austin just in time for the 2012-2013 school year. Amy dove in head first, learning how to work with our precious deafblind 2-year-old son. We immediately saw her on the floor with him, putting herself in his skin (I'd say "his shoes" but Orion doesn't like wearing them) as well as going to workshops, taking intervener courses and geeking out on deafblind strategies. Orion was so very fortunate to have her on his team early on! Now the same Amy we know is in a different setting and is not a stranger to Orion. She's in the kitchen now, creating eye-catching specialty cakes with her business partner, Tina. She still does intervener work with Orion.



Figure 4 Amy holds chocolate-mouthed Orion



Figure 5 Two tiers of cake and edible art!

Little did I know, she and my husband, Thomas, schemed up yet another awesome surprise cake to celebrate my 40th birthday. "that. specialty cake company" also made my birthday cake!



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