

BELL Program



June 18-July 1, 2015

Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning

The National Federation of the Blind has developed an amazing curriculum that enriches braille literacy. It is a core belief that literacy means reading, not listening, and braille allows for this interaction with text.

On June 18, 2015, ten children, ages 4-13, started a braille adventure.



Participating in the NFB BELL Program means that the children were given instruction and

enrichment opportunities to improve their braille reading and writing skills. Safe travel skills and excursions were also included in our two week adventure.

In our first few days, teachers Samantha Voll and Amy Lund got to know our new participants. It is so nice to see returning kids to the NFB BELL Program and having them welcome the new ones! Knowing where the participants were starting with their braille skills was essential to plan the rest of their program. Braille lessons were specifically chosen for the children to improve their tracking, discrimination, letter identification and reading skills. We also

explored some physical activities such as what Beep Kickball is and how it is played. The children were able to learn some of the basic rules and techniques of the sport. Everyone had a great time hearing the beeper in the ball and seeing if they could locate it using their auditory skills.



Our family component was a great time at Lincoln Park Zoo. Several of our participants and their families joined us. This was

a great way for the families to meet each other. We gave a few pointers on walking and letting the kids shoreline against the edge of a path. We then had a great multi-sensory experience lead by Mark, through the African Journey exhibit. We finished with a very delicious lunch.



We traveled to many different parts of the city this year. Our trips included going to a local park, taking a Metra train to a suburb for ice cream, riding on the ‘EL’ for a sit down family style lunch and transferring on buses to Navy Pier’s Children’s Museum. All of our trips combine a fun experience with specific travel skills to employ.

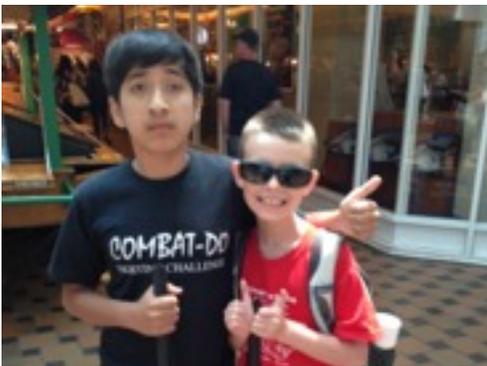
Working on kitchen tasks such as spreading peanut butter, placing meat on bread and completing a sandwich were very important this year as we made several of our lunches. Some of our participants even made sandwiches for the teachers and mentors. We also used money skills to ‘buy’ items for a delicious snack mix. But, the favorite of the group must be the smoothies! So simple to measure and we all used a blender!



We have been SO lucky to have incredible volunteers and blind mentors. I would like to thank: Chaquita, Brianna, Sara, Debbie P., Debbie S., Marco, Janna, Dave, Robert, and Mary Kate for their contributions to the program.

We also were very fortunate to have money donated for the Chicago BELL Program from the Naperville Noon Lion’s Club. The participants brailled letters and tactile bells for us to send off to the Lion’s Club. If any families would also like to express their appreciation, let Amy know and she will give you the contact information.

Each day we celebrate our new achievements and excitement for the day by ringing bells. Everyday, the children add their own celebrations about new literacy successes, things that they enjoyed from the day, or celebrating a peer’s success. During bell ringing, the volunteers expressed their excitement pertaining to the work the children were doing and the growth they made in just a single day!



Resources

National Federation of the Blind of Illinois- www.nfbofillinois.org

National Family Conference July 10-12, 2015. Free for Lighthouse Friends. Contact Rana Marks 312.997.3651 to register.

Seedlings Braille Books-www.seedlings.org Seedlings has generously given all of the BELL Programs braille books.

Play For All @ Chicago Children’s Museum-Free early admission for children with disabilities. Explore the museum with less people an hour before the museum opens. This occurs on the second Saturday of the month except in July. www.ChicagoChildrensMuseum.org