

Desserts in the Dark, 2020

(Music, digitally mixed)

Tori: Hi, my name is Tori.

Aviana: And I'm Aviana.

Tori: We are students at the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind. And this year our school had the opportunity of having an International Studies Club to travel to Paris, France. We would like to share a fundraising idea that we had, with you. It's called "Desserts in the Dark". To learn how this idea came about, I first talked with one of my good friends, Pablo. And then I talked with one of the club's sponsors, Jenny Pelletier

(music)

Tori: So, Pablo, where did you get the idea of Desserts in the Dark for our fundraiser?

Pablo: Well, I spent half the summer, this past summer, at the Lighthouse for the Blind in Duluth, Minnesota. And they were talking about an event they hold every year, called Dining in the Dark. And, y'know, I found out more about it, I was asking people and I just...overheard conversations from/with, like, staff and they were just talking about it. And I got curious so like I asked them about it and they told me and I guess I figured this would be a great thing that MSAB could do.

Jenny: I thought Pablo had a really good idea, and I wanted to check with the Lighthouse for the Blind, also known as Lighthouse Center for Vision Loss, up in Duluth. 'Cause I wasn't sure if we needed some sort of permission, um, if this was their original idea, or ..I guess just didn't want to overstep. So I called up Mary Junnila, the director up there, just to ask her a few questions.

(music)

Tori: So when we finally realized that this idea of desserts in the Dark was possible, the International Studies Club had a meeting to write out a script for how the event would run. So each member of the club is in charge of a certain activity.

(music)

Aviana: When the event took place, students took turns guiding the guests through the evening. So, events like cookie decorating and tasting pastries and coffee, all took place. But there was a twist to this because each guest was given a blindfold and was encouraged to put it on and do these tasks blindfolded. So...it was awesome!

(music)

Tori (recorded from a distance in a crowded room): If you would like coffee, the cups for that will be next to the thermoses. Remember, if you would like assistance, raise your hand.

(audience giggling) We encourage you to use this time to attempt this on your own. (audience laughter, a little louder)

(Over crowd chatter:) As a tip, when I am pouring a glass of any liquid I like to hook my finger over the edge of the glass so I know how far I am pouring it up to.

Soon you will smell the sweet desserts in the air. After the plate is in front of you, tap into all your senses by lightly brushing your finger along each item you find and decide the shape and textures of what is in front of you. Bon Appetit!

(crowd chatter)

(music)

Aviana: After the event, we discussed with Ms. Underdahl, who is another sponsor for the International Studies Club, how she thought the event went.

Crystal Underdahl: I think that the event went really well. I love that it was student lead, and this was our first year ever doing it, so... there were really no glitches, and it was a really good turnout despite it being very cold. Um, my favorite part was probably all the different people that it brought in. Such as: the MSAB and MSAD staff, students, alumni, parents, um, even professionals from the Twin Cities area.

(music)

Josh: Hi, I'm Josh! I'm a member of the International Studies Club with the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind. During the Desserts in the Dark fundraiser, I helped out with other members of the club: Tori, Josie, Arianna, and Rocky.

(music faintly in the background)

Josh: I hope participants were able to leave the night knowing that blind and visually impaired individuals are just like them--we just see things differently!

(music)

Music by Levi Welsh