SIGHTS & SOUNDS

THE MAGAZINE OF ALABAMA INSTITUTE FOR DEAF & BLIND FALL 2025



Winning Legacy

PAGE 4: AIDB Football has a history of building champions on and off the field.



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AIDB Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind

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SIGHTS & SOUNDS
THE MAGAZINE OF ALABAMA INSTITUTE FOR DEAF & BLIND

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ON THE COVER: ASD Quarterback Peter-Joseph "Scooby" Brownlee drops back to pass

INSIDE COVER: Asher Alvis and Lyndi Nichols learning to communicate in ASL

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From The President

The start of a new school year brings excitement and energy to our campuses. I'm always inspired by the joy and enthusiasm with which our students and staff return, ready to embrace a new year of learning and growth. As we look ahead, I also want to take a moment to reflect on some of the incredible things that have happened over the last few months.

Watching our students graduate in May was truly a moving experience. It was a privilege to see how far each student progressed, individually, and how well-prepared they are for what's next. Seeing the hope and happiness on the faces of families at graduation is the greatest measure of our success. We can't wait to hear about the next chapters in their lives.

This summer, we welcomed many visitors to our campuses for specialized summer camps. It was a fantastic opportunity to give prospective students a taste of what makes AIDB so special. In July, our Alabama School for the Blind band received a special invitation to perform in the Lions Club International event in Orlando. It was a joy accompanying them to see their excitement as they earned first place in their division and then visited the Disney World parks.

Once again our Christmas in July event at Logan Martin Lake brought together the community to raise funds for student holiday gifts. The generosity of all attendees was overwhelming as we raised a record-breaking $164,835! This will go a long way in ensuring our students have a joyful holiday season.

The return to school also means the return of football season. It has been amazing to watch our football program at the Alabama School for the Deaf, which also includes players from the Alabama School for the Blind, grow and compete. Seeing these students forge a true brotherhood, united by the game, is an incredible sight. If you haven't been to a game, I highly encourage you to attend.

After many decades of service, we are sad to announce the retirement of M. P. "Pat" Greene Jr. from the AIDB Board of Trustees. He not only made the Marianna Greene Henry Equestrian program a reality for our students but also made a lasting impact in the many roles he held on our boards. We are so grateful for everything he has given to AIDB and our students over the years.

Throughout this issue we will spotlight great work being done by AIDB across Alabama, including campus wide promotions, and our AIB Employees of the Year who are making incredible strides in their fields. You will see features on many amazing things happening at AIDB and a look at what's to come. We hope you will join us for an upcoming event to see firsthand the inspiring work of our students and staff.



AIDB Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind
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Silent But Mighty

ASD Football Defies Expectations

By Jessica Atkinson,
Coordinator, Marketing & Community Relations

In the heart of Alabama, amidst the storied traditions of Southern football, lies a unique and inspiring legacy at the Alabama School for the Deaf (ASD). For over a century, on fields where the cheers of the crowd might be felt more than heard, a remarkable program has defied expectations, forged champions, and built a brotherhood unlike any other. Through the years, the ASD Silent Warriors have never backed away from any challenge that the opposition may face. Under the leadership of Coach Paul Kulick, the Silent Warriors look to continue the rich tradition and history of one of Alabama's most historic and oldest high school football programs.

Since the 1890s the goal of every ASD football team is to be a champion. Not just to field a team or keep the game close but to display maximum effort and a championship culture every game. One of the many marks of ASD's success is the investment of the school's alums, former players, and former coaches.

Marcus Washington was a standout football player for ASD and is currently the Director of Student Life for ASD. Washington credits his involvement in football with helping shape him into the man that he is today.

"Football at ASD means so much more than just playing a sport," said Washington. "It has helped me build confidence, self-esteem, better communication, and a stronger



ASD teammates Edson Rojas (left) and Peter-Joseph "Scooby" Brownlee (right)



Coach Paul Kulick puts De'Marion Hagler through drills during practice on ASD's campus.

connection to Deaf culture. Through teamwork and communication, I've learned to trust and support others, feel supported myself, and work together toward common goals."

High school can be a complicated time for any teenager with an array of changes and the thought of life after high school. Students and student-athletes at ASD and all AIDB programs have to balance these social and physical changes while also learning to live with a disability. The life lessons that ASD football provides go far beyond the field.

"The most important qualities I've developed through football are confidence, leadership, and teamwork," said Washington. "These values have impacted my personal development and continued to guide me after graduation. They've helped me believe in myself, work hard, lead others, and succeed through strong communication and collaboration."

Michael Deuel, a former ASD football player and the son of former ASD assistant coach Alfred F. Deuel, credited his involvement in football at ASD to his long-term success as an adult. "Playing football for ASD had a profound impact on my personal development and life after graduation," said Deuel. "The lessons I learned on the field — discipline, teamwork, resilience, and leadership — have been foundational in shaping who I am today."

"Football at ASD means so much more than just playing a sport. It has helped me build confidence, self-esteem, better communication, and a stronger connection to Deaf culture."

Marcus Washington

Even though ASD's student-athletes are truly one-of-a-kind players and people, they could not reach their full potential without the proper training, wisdom, and coaching from all the school's full-time and volunteer coaches. The camaraderie and bonds developed on a high school football team are directly correlated to the leadership and direction provided by the coaching staff. ASD has cultivated a coaching staff committed to pouring into their players to create a chemistry and trust that elevate on-field success.

For Marcus Washington, former ASD coach Walter Ripley meant as much to him as much as anyone he has met along his journey–an influence he hopes to provide ASD students in his career at the school. "My football coach, Walter Ripley, played a big role in my growth as a player and person," said Washington. "He's an amazing coach who was always there to correct my mistakes and push me to improve my game and reach my maximum potential."

Young athletes can become overwhelmed with their everyday responsibilities and the grind of being a student first and then a football player second. Being a part of a football team creates an environment where positive role models abound.

"I also look up to Ricky Milford as a role model," said Washington. "He (Milford) often shares stories about his football journey, including his time playing in high school and at Gallaudet University. He even showed me his book and newspaper articles about his football days. I always enjoy listening to him and discussing the game. Ricky enjoyed watching my football games and has been very supportive. His advisor also inspired me, which helped increase my passion for football."

The results of ASD's football history and commitment to culture speak for themselves. The Silent Warriors have claimed 15 league titles and six national championships. In a state where football is described as a religion, ASD has always fielded a team of winners committed to give their best effort, despite any challenges they may face.

In Alabama, iconic football rivalries are a part of life. ASD competes in some of the longest-standing rivalries in the state and country, holding winning records over several public schools that compete in higher divisions including B.B. Comer, Hokes Bluff, Leeds, Maplesville, Mortimer Jordan, Thompson, and several others.



ASB student Christopher Weaver

ASD's longest-standing rivalry is with the Tennessee School for the Deaf and the Silent Warriors dominate their series with their foes from the Volunteer State, owning a record of 43-15-3.

Those memorable Friday night games will live with ASD's players forever. Marcus Washington's recap of one of ASD's past matchups with Coffee Springs High School is a prime example of that love and dedication for the sport and the memories it makes. "One of the most unforgettable games I've played was against our rival, Coffee Springs High School," said Washington. "It was an away game, and they were the top-ranked team with a strong lineup. Their quarterback was a star player, and they had one of the best field goal kickers. Despite that, our defense—myself included—stepped up. Though we lost by a few points, it was a tough and exciting game. After the game, the Coffee Springs players came over to show their respect and told us it was one of the most challenging and enjoyable games they'd played."

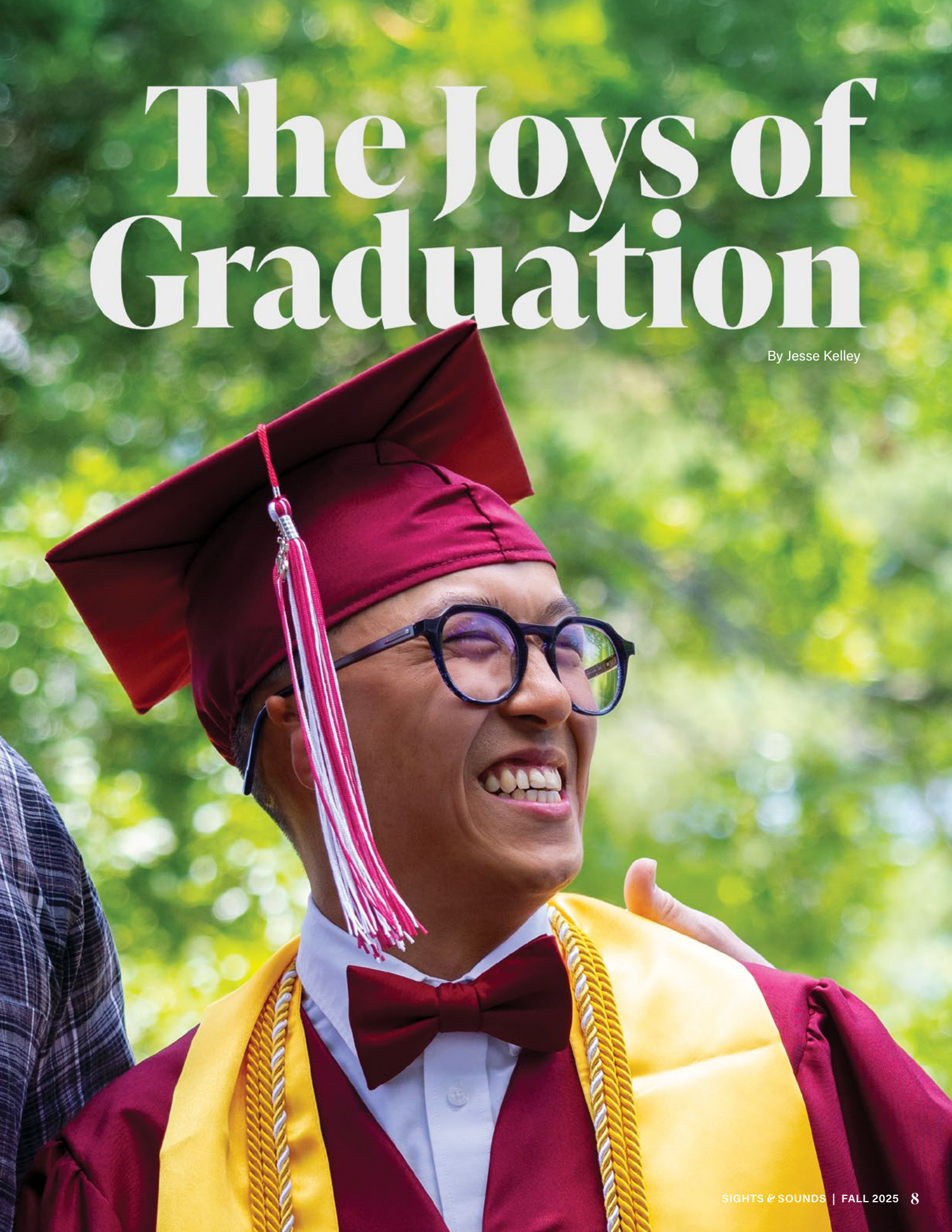
"Being part of the Silent Warriors connected me deeply to my community and culture, instilling a sense of pride and responsibility that motivates me to give back and support others," said Michael Deuel. "The confidence and perseverance I gained through the sport have empowered me to pursue my goals with determination and integrity long after graduation."

The rich history and traditions of ASD football will live on for generations to come. The players and coaches who laid the foundation and advocated for football at ASD truly embody the spirit of the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind, which is to live a truly limitless life.



The Joys of Graduation

By Jesse Kelley





Wesleigh Underwood

The educational journey from the first day of kindergarten through high school graduation consists of memories that will last a lifetime. For the 2025 graduates on the campuses across AIDB, this spring was the culmination of all things they have learned over their years at their respective schools. And now they look to their future; a future that they have been working toward during their time at AIDB.

The graduating class of 2025 at AIDB is full of young academic scholars who utilized all of the special services and resources available at AIDB to the maximum potential; to help craft their futures and prepare for their next step - whether that is college or the workforce.

WESLEIGH UNDERWOOD ASB VALEDICTORIAN

"This is a bit of a surreal experience," said Underwood. "I am proud of myself. There are a lot of people at ASB that I thought would get valedictorian. I had hoped to get it, because I have worked so hard and take my academics seriously. I am happy to be graduating with my classmates who were also deserving of this award."

One of the many success stories at the Alabama School for the Blind (ASB) is the inspirational journey of Underwood, 2025 ASB valedictorian. Her joy and excitement are almost impossible to hide as she reflects on the honor of being named valedictorian of her class. Underwood was eager and excited to walk across the stage with her classmates to receive their hard-earned diplomas.

"This is so important to me because it marks the end of my time at ASB," said Underwood. "We all made it here, so imagine what else is going to come? A lot of the time, you don't feel like you're going to get to the next step until you get to that next step. When you keep pushing forward and you keep working through those issues and you do make it to the other side, there's not another feeling like it."

Underwood credits ASB's summer camps for sparking her interest and passion for attending the school full-time. "When I was going to school in Tuscaloosa, I would come here and attend AIDB's summer camp," said Underwood. "I would attend it every summer, and this place became a home away from home for me as I began to learn from the staff, teachers, and fellow students with whom I am graduating with. I would not be the same person if I didn't have AIDB in my life."



Tusi Silas

For Underwood's next step, she will be attending college in the fall but already has plans to open a boutique one day. "I am really excited right now to start college, but for my future, I do want to start a boutique one day," said Underwood.

What AIDB and ASB aim to accomplish is to uplift students and help them discover their purpose, while learning new skills and earning an elite education. AIDB is preparing its students for the real world, including all the challenges and hardships they may face. "I have learned a lot of independent living skills," said Underwood. "I have learned how to cook; this place is more than just academics."

The skills and life lessons learned at AIDB are things that students will take with them forever and hopefully want to pass along to others some day. "This place means the world to me," said Underwood. "I know that there are so many other people who would say the same thing. A lot of the tears I have had have paid off. I've always worked hard to try and do well in school, because it's just something that has been instilled in me. My family has been so supportive and good to me, and without my family at home and at ASB, I don't think I would have gotten to where I am today. I feel like I am paying it forward to all the people who have supported me along the way."

TUSI SILAS ASD VALEDICTORIAN

"It's my family, my second family," said Tusi Silas, Alabama School for the Deaf valedictorian. "Through my bad times and my good times, they've been with me. Through storms and rainbows, they push me through the tough times."

To add to her already impressive résumé, Tusi served as the 2025 ASD class president while earning valedictorian honors. "I am just glad that I got the opportunity to stand up and represent my class as president and valedictorian," said Silas. "It's just a bonus for me to have the opportunity to show others what our class means. We have a special class."

Graduations are a time of self-reflection and remembrance, as a significant chapter in these students' lives ends. Silas credits ASD's teachers and staff for their countless hours of sacrifice and support, which helped them all reach the finish line. Still, Silas' determination and gratitude aided her in her studies and overall academic success.

"AIDB means a lot to me because they have given me so many resources," said Silas. "They've always been there when I've needed them, and they have given me good role models. If it weren't for AIDB and ASD, I wouldn't be here, as a valedictorian who served

as president for the class of 2025. I have learned so much here, and without them, I don't know if I would have been able to learn as much as I did."

AIDB instills a belief that disability has no hold on students' aspirations. The curriculum, programs, and teaching style are always encouraging yet challenging, enabling students to reach for their goals, no matter how big or small they may be. "Both AIDB and ASD give me hope and show me what the real world is going to look like," said Silas. "I have a lot of potential, I have been accepted into Rochester Institute of Technology, I am valedictorian, and I am class president. There are so many opportunities I have received because of AIDB. This place gives me hope, and it always encourages and motivates me to follow my dreams."

DAVID VADEN ASD SALUTATORIAN

"A lot has happened in my time here," said David Vaden. "AIDB and ASD have impacted my life and have helped me so much. It's hard to believe that this is it. I'm really honored to be salutatorian, and I am forever grateful to have had the opportunity to go to school here."

Vaden's journey to ASD is a testament to his courage, faith, and his family. Born in China, David lived with a foster family for the early years of his life. "Before coming to ASD, I lived in China for the entirety of my life," said Vaden. "I was born hard of hearing, and my foster family could never afford the resources needed to help me improve my hearing."

Several years later, Vaden and his sister were adopted and made the long journey from China to Huntsville, Alabama. "When I came to America, I thought, "There is nothing here to help me."

Vaden's first experience with AIDB came in 2018 at the Huntsville Regional Center where his family wanted him to continue his academic and social development. They knew that the programs and education at AIDB would do just that. "The thought of staying overnight, like a boarding school, intimidated me," said Vaden. "I came to ASD when I was in the 10th grade, and every day that I have spent here has changed my life. It's been a huge, huge blessing to be here, and I am so grateful that ASD was a part of God's plan for me. I am also thankful that my parents let me attend school here."

From his first day on campus, David was a class favorite at ASD. Now, as his class' salutatorian, he lives every day to the fullest and has never allowed his disability to stand in the way of his dreams. "AIDB is the place to be," said Vaden. "There is so much opportunity here, and anything you can do, AIDB will help you with what you need." Vaden will be continuing his academic journey at the Rochester Institute of Technology, but this young scholar will never lose sight of the role that ASD has played in his life.

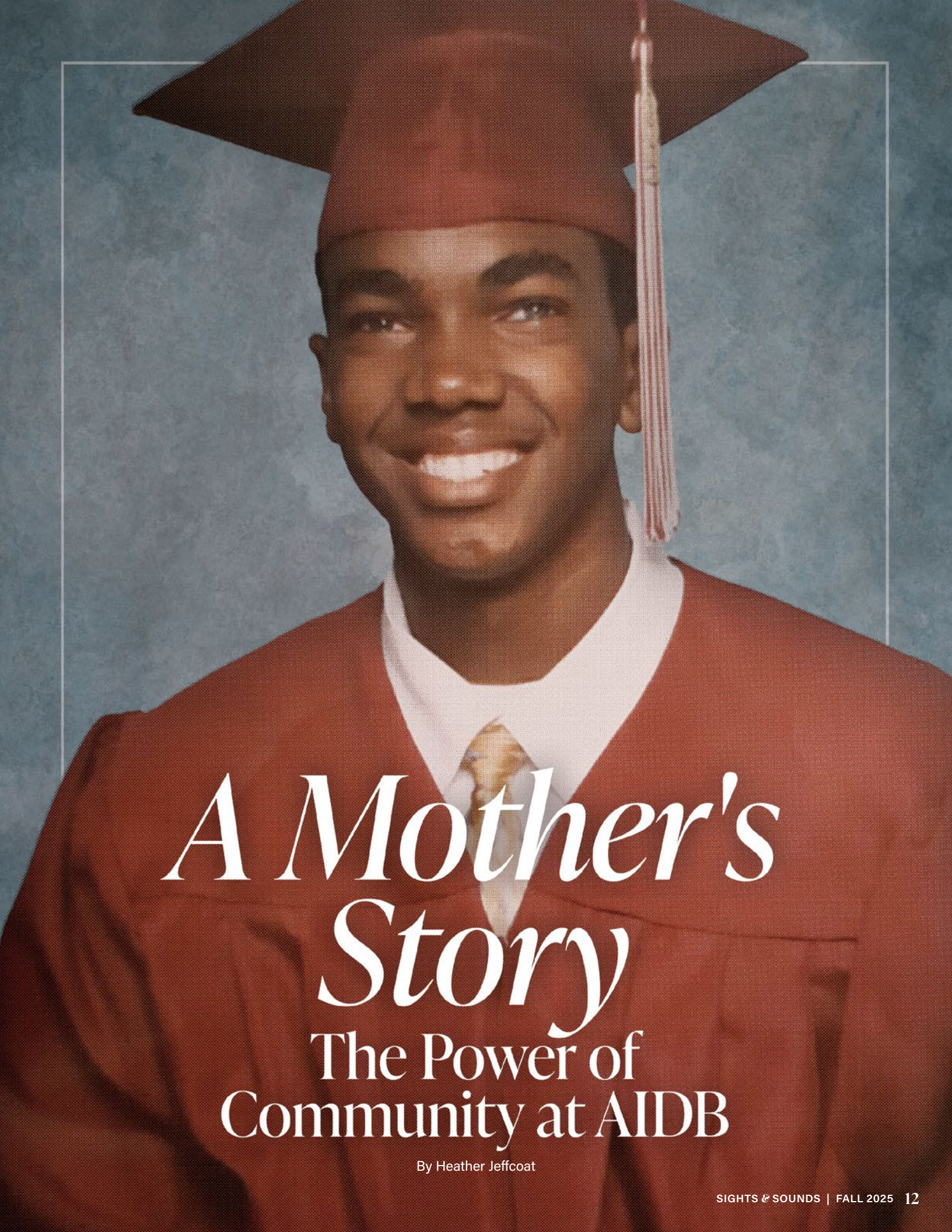


David Vaden

"AIDB and ASD have helped me a lot. They have helped me earn scholarships and prepare for life in college. I am so appreciative of that, and it's a huge blessing."

Vaden's journey to and from ASD was built on his work ethic and the positive light and joy with which he carries. Moving far away from home is a challenge that almost every student at ASD or AIDB must deal with, and in Vaden's case, his journey to Talladega started on the other side of the world. A message that Vaden was adamant about was how thankful he was to his classmates and all AIDB staff members who have helped mold and shape him into the man that he is today. "Thank you to everyone who is involved with AIDB and ASD," said Vaden. "I appreciate all that you have done for me and others, you have truly made my day, and I am going to miss you all so much."

High school graduations come and go as the years continue to roll on. The impact that David Vaden has made on ASD will truly last forever. His commitment to his academic studies, his love for his teachers and classmates, and his positive spirit have truly made AIDB a better place.



A Mother's Story

The Power of Community at AIDB

By Heather Jeffcoat



Dr. Dennis Gilliam with Erma Vaughans

For many parents of children who are Deaf, Blind, or DeafBlind finding a community that truly understands their child's needs can feel like searching for a needle in a haystack. But for Erma Vaughans, the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) wasn't just a school—it was a lifeline. It was a place where her son, Rodney, found his independence, his confidence, and a sense of belonging that changed the course of his life.

"The Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind means a lot to me because it helps me to feel comfortable," she said. "Not just me, but parents of children who are Deaf, and for the community to try to understand."

Her son, Rodney, was in ninth grade when he made the decision to attend AIDB. He was already a confident young man, but he recognized a greater opportunity at AIDB.

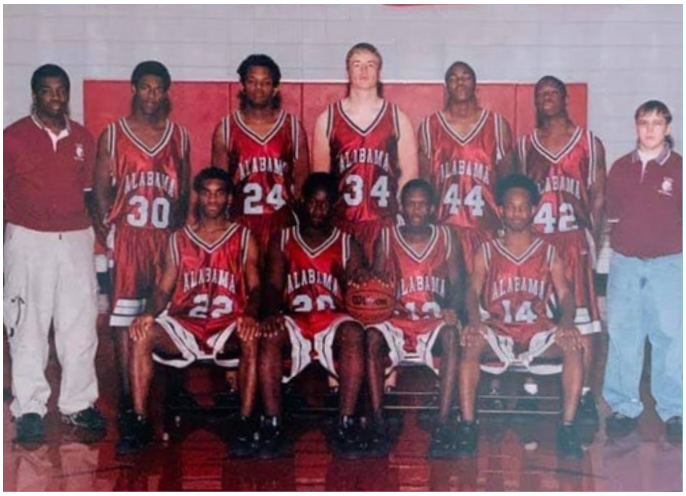
When Rodney came to her with his decision, Erma's heart was torn. She knew it was the right choice for him, but letting go was hard. It was a friend who helped her see the bigger picture. "She said, 'Erma, you should be honored and just thankful that he knows what's best for him,'" Erma shared. "And when reality kicked in, I was like, 'You're absolutely right.' It wasn't about me; it was about him."

For the next four years, AIDB became Rodney's second home. It was a place where he could thrive without feeling like he was a curiosity. Among his peers, his confidence blossomed. "The communication level, the comfort zone was there," Erma explained.

The sense of community at AIDB was so strong that Rodney quickly felt at ease. The staff, according to Erma, "put their heart and soul into making sure that these kids are well taken care of." This trust and support were what allowed Erma to rest easy. "I never had to worry about him being there," she said.

That trust was put to the test on the very first day. Erma remembers driving away from campus, tears streaming down her face as she looked in the rearview mirror. What she saw was a sight that brought her both joy and reassurance: Rodney, standing there, waving goodbye with a huge, beaming smile. "He was like, 'I'm ready,'" she said. "He felt at home."







TOP AND MIDDLE: Rodney Vaughans with his ASD classmates.
BOTTOM (L to R): Mr. Andy Keith, Wesleigh Underwood,
Dr. Dennis Gilliam, David Vaden, Tusi Silas, and Erma Vaughans

The transformation in Rodney was remarkable. He grew more independent and more resilient. "It made him persevere. It made him stronger," Erma said. "He overcame fear, and he was just ready to take on the world."

After graduating from AIDB, Rodney's journey was far from over. He was determined to work. He faced some hurdles in a world that wasn't always equipped to accommodate a person who is Deaf. But with the help of training programs and his own relentless drive, he eventually secured a job at Hyundai, where he worked for 10 years.

Rodney's success didn't stop there. He bought his own home and his own car and meticulously managed his finances. "He knew what he wanted in life, and he went for it," Erma says with immense pride. "He got it, and it was just successful."

Rodney's story is a testament to the power of a supportive community. It's what motivates Erma to continue to advocate for AIDB and encourage other parents to explore its opportunities. She wants to see a future where the schools continue to provide not just education but job training, independence, and care for students and parents alike. Rodney, who passed away five years ago, left behind a legacy that continues to inspire his family and friends.

"Rodney didn't use his deafness as a crutch," Erma said. "He shined above that."

His favorite words were faith, strength, and support, and he lived by them every day. Erma keeps Rodney's memory alive by staying in touch with his friends, attending balloon releases in his honor, and continuing to spread the word about the community he cherished.

For any parent considering AIDB, Erma's message is clear: do your research, talk to other parents, and trust the process.

"You'll find a place that will not only educate your child but will also help them build the confidence, resilience, and sense of community they need to thrive," she said.

Erma and her son's love of AIDB has come full circle with Erma giving out three $500 scholarships to AIDB graduates from the recent 2025 class. A tradition that she hopes will continue in Rodney's name.

Leader Of The Band

Jimmy Carter and the AIDB Roots That Shaped a Legacy

By Heather Jeffcoat





The Blind Boys of Alabama

A MOVEMENT BORN IN TALLADEGA

In the heart of Talladega, Alabama, the story of a gospel revolution began. In 1939, at the Alabama School for the Negro Blind—a component of the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB)—a group of young students discovered a gift that would carry them across decades and around the world: harmony. Among them was a boy named Jimmy Carter, whose powerful tenor tones would one day become the voice of a cultural institution.

In 1939, George Scott, Jimmy Carter, Clarence Fountain and several of their classmates began playing and singing together at churches and schools in the Talladega area. When not performing at churches, the group initially known as the Happy Land Jubilee Singers, began singing spirituals for pocket change at local events. In the segregated south, music became their sanctuary, their platform, and their purpose. While Carter was too young to join their first tours, he would later rejoin the group, ultimately becoming one of its most enduring leaders. For more than 40 years, his voice would carry their message of hope, faith, and perseverance into the hearts of audiences worldwide.

The Alabama School for the Negro Blind was more than just a school; it was a place where young people with disabilities could discover their capabilities in an era when society often underestimated them. Jimmy Carter arrived at the school at age seven, blind since birth, and remembers the day as a transformative moment in his life.

Within the school walls, Carter learned Braille, essential life skills, and, most importantly, music. He joined classmates in choir and informal quartets, where they discovered that singing together created something larger than themselves. It was here they first realized that music could change lives—including their own. By 1944, the group earned its first professional break: a live radio broadcast on WSGN in Birmingham. Just a few years later, a promoter in New Jersey staged an event called the "Battle of the Blind Boys," pairing them against a rival gospel group from Mississippi. The name stuck, and The Blind Boys of Alabama were born.

SINGING THROUGH STRUGGLE

The early years were marked by long tours, small audiences, and profound racial barriers. In the 1940s and '50s, the Blind Boys traveled across the South, performing spirituals to inspire hope during a turbulent time in American history. Their music became deeply tied to the emerging Civil Rights Movement, offering a soundtrack to resilience and unity.

In 1949, they recorded their first national hit, "I Can See Everybody's Mother But Mine," a song that helped cement their place in gospel history. Over the next few decades, the group became known for their traditional gospel harmonies, but it was their ability to adapt and innovate that ensured their longevity.

Jimmy Carter would eventually rejoin the group in 1982, helping to usher in a new era of visibility and influence. One of their major breakthroughs came in 1983 with The Gospel at Colonus, an experimental stage production where the Blind Boys' music became the heart of the story. The production earned critical acclaim and introduced the group to broader, mainstream audiences.

"WE WANT TO TOUCH LIVES"

For Jimmy Carter, the Blind Boys' mission went far beyond entertainment. Their calling was to inspire. "See, the Blind Boys of Alabama, we want to be able to touch lives. Let the people know that there is hope. Let the people know that as long as you live, you have a chance," Carter said.

That belief shaped every album, performance, and collaboration. Over the years, the Blind Boys have worked with some of the biggest names in music, including Peter Gabriel, Ben Harper, Tom Waits, Bonnie Raitt, and Mavis Staples. Their willingness to blend traditional gospel with modern sounds expanded their reach without losing their spiritual core.

ACCOLADES, PRESIDENTS, AND A GLOBAL STAGE

The Blind Boys' influence has spanned more than eight decades, and the accolades reflect their impact. To date, they have earned six Grammy Awards, a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award (2009), Induction into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame (2003), induction into the Alabama Music Hall of Fame (2010), and a National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts (1994). They performed at the White House for multiple U.S. presidents, including Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama. From small churches in Alabama to global stages, their journey is a testament to faith, persistence, and artistry.

AIDB'S LASTING INFLUENCE

Behind the spotlight, the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind remains central to the Blind Boys' story. What began as a segregated school became a place where young people like Jimmy Carter learned not only how to survive but how to thrive. "I learned how to get along in life, how to survive," said Carter about his time at AIDB.

The school taught discipline, faith, and music—values that became the foundation of their success. For Carter, returning to AIDB decades later was more than symbolic. In 2019, at age 87, he came "home" to the Landreth Music Center to record with AIDB students, passing on the same lessons and encouragement that once shaped his life.

For today's students at AIDB, the Blind Boys' success serves as living proof that a disability is not a limitation. Jimmy Carter's enduring career continues to inspire new generations to believe that their voices matter—and that their dreams are possible.

A FINAL CHAPTER, BUT NOT AN ENDING

In 2023, after more than 80 years of making music, Jimmy Carter announced his retirement from touring. The Blind Boys marked the moment with the release of "Echoes of the South," an album named for the Birmingham radio program that launched their career in 1944. When asked about his decision to step back, Carter's response carried the same grace and clarity that defined his life's work.

"I WILL ALWAYS BE A BLIND BOY OF ALABAMA."

Even in retirement, Carter's influence resonates. The Blind Boys continue performing with new members, carrying forward the mission of hope and perseverance that began in Talladega. And for Jimmy Carter, the school that shaped him, the faith that guided him, and the harmonies that sustained him remain his enduring legacy. From a small segregated schoolhouse in Alabama to some of the most celebrated stages in the world, Jimmy Carter's journey is more than the story of one man—it's the story of what happens when opportunity, community, and unshakable faith intersect.

AIDB gave Carter the tools to survive, but his limitless spirit turned survival into influence. Today, the Blind Boys of Alabama stand not just as gospel legends, but as cultural icons whose music continues to uplift, unify, and inspire.

Their story began in Talladega at AIDB. It echoes still.



A Legacy of Compassion and Service



For over three decades, M.P. "Pat" Greene Jr. of Talladega has been a dedicated advocate for the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB), leaving an indelible mark on the Institute. His long and impactful service, which includes roles on the AIDB Board of Trustees and the AIDB Foundation Board of Directors, culminated with his retirement from the Board of Trustees in 2025.

Greene's unwavering commitment to AIDB is most powerfully demonstrated by his creation of the Marianna Greene Henry (MGH) Special Equestrian Facility, named in memory of his late daughter, Marianna. The facility was born from her dream of using equine therapy to help children with disabilities.

The MGH program has blossomed into a world-renowned facility that serves hundreds of children each year who are Deaf, Blind, DeafBlind, and multi-disabled, offering a variety of therapeutic programs and equine-facilitated learning, which builds self-esteem and confidence.

The success of the MGH program is a testament to the Greene family's dedication and Pat's tireless efforts in advancing the facility. It stands as a beacon of hope and a place where children can truly be limitless.

"I was honored to serve with such dedicated and talented individuals on both boards who have insured a continued bright future for AIDB. I have no doubt that AIDB will continue to reach new heights under the outstanding leadership of Dr. Dennis Gilliam, President, and Ms. Frances Taylor, Chairperson Board of Trustees. AIDB is Alabama's unrecognized gem," said Greene.

As Pat Greene steps down from the AIDB Board of Trustees, his service and the life-changing impact of the Marianna Greene Henry Equestrian Facility will continue to inspire and benefit generations to come.

A New World *of Play*

By Alan Nunn
Principal, Alabama School for the Blind

ASB Students Explore Their Imagination on a New Campus Playground



Students at the Alabama School for the Blind (ASB) have been eagerly awaiting their new playground since ground was broken in the fall of 2024. Throughout the winter, they watched with excitement as the structure took shape. Their anticipation grew with each passing day, and when spring arrived, so did their brand-new playground.

The colorful new playground at the Alabama School for the Blind (ASB) is a vibrant and imaginative space. It features three covered towers, connected by multilevel platforms, bridges, and steps, all of which are accessible from the ground. The towers are surrounded by various activity areas, including climbing structures, monkey bars, and a spinning element for students to hold onto. Two swings and a pole with a circular top offer more opportunities for fun and building arm strength.

To ensure safety, a soft, rubberized ground cover is installed under about a third of the playground, while the remaining area is covered in lush sod. Volunteers from Honda's Alabama Auto Plant in Lincoln dedicated a Saturday to help build the playground and landscape the surrounding campus.

Since its completion in May, students have spent countless hours exploring their new "island." Their adventures and imaginations have already worn a path under the swings—a testament to the joy and entertainment this playground will provide for years to come.



"ASB's new playground is not just a place for fun; it's an outdoor classroom," commented Brook Beecham, M.Ed., Academic Director, ASB. "The playground serves as an essential outdoor environment that actively engages students in physical exertion through activities such as climbing, running, swinging, and collaborative problem-solving. This engagement also cultivates social skills, which are part of the Expanded Core Curriculum for the Visually Impaired. The benefits of exercise enhance student engagement in the classroom and reduce stress levels, both of which are critical for improving learning outcomes. By promoting active play, we are fostering healthy lifestyles and promoting more active participation in academic settings."

The ASB staff and students want to say a big thank you to the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind Foundation for its support of our program and for the beautiful new playground. We would also like to thank Honda for the work that went into the landscaping around the playground and the new flowers in the fragrance garden.





LEFT: ASB student Brook'Cyn Hill
ABOVE: ASB student Hayden Tippett
TOP RIGHT: ASB student Landen Valencia
BOTTOM RIGHT: ASB student Zi'Mir Howard

Where Access Meets Adventure



Inside AIDB's Summer Camps

By Mandy Griffin, Director of Admissions
and Cara Wilmot, Academic & Transition Specialist, STEM Academy Coordinator, NTID Regional STEM Center

Summer camps are all about new adventures—trying fresh activities, building friendships, and learning in ways that do not feel like school. At the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB), summer also means creating inclusive, exciting experiences for students with sensory differences. These camps go beyond fun—they offer a chance to connect with peers and adults who share similar experiences, all in a fully accessible environment.

The first week of June was bustling in Talladega as eight different week-long camps took place at once! The Alabama School for the Deaf (ASD) and the Alabama School for the Blind (ASB) hosted enrichment camps for students ages 6 to 16 from across Alabama who are not currently enrolled at AIDB. From creative arts and recreation to horseback riding and field trips, students experienced a well-rounded week. ASD campers built their American Sign Language (ASL) skills while ASB students focused on developing and strengthening their independence skills. "Camp was an amazing opportunity for students to kick-start their summers and ignite new friendships, interests, and skills," said teacher Myriah Dixon. For many students—often the only one in their class who is Deaf, Hard of



ABOVE: Noah Jimmerson gets hands on instruction at the Helen Keller School's Summer Camp

Hearing, Blind, or Visually Impaired—it was a rare chance to spend time with peers who truly understand them. One camper, Morgan McKinney, summed it up after sliding down the water slide: "This is the best camp ever!"

Young learners entering Pre-K and Kindergarten enjoyed a language-rich week through two specialized programs: one for Listening and Spoken Language and another for ASL Bilingual instruction. Designed for current or potential ASD students, the camps blended hands-on play with communication development. The week concluded with a visit to the Marianna Greene Henry Special Equestrian Program Arena.

For rising 7th–12th graders, Anton Jackson of Adroit Bucket led a high-energy basketball camp for students from Alabama, Florida, Georgia and Mississippi. Delivered entirely in ASL, the camp focused on skill-building, teamwork and confidence. As a Deaf role model, Jackson provided an inspiring example of leadership within the Deaf community.

High schoolers entering grades 9–12 also had the chance to dive into a weeklong coding camp, hosted in partnership with the federal Center for Assistive Technology Training program. In a tech-filled, accessible environment, campers programmed Code & Go Mice, raced RC Rovers, used inclusive tools like Code Jumper and explored the Quorum programming language. Evening enrichment activities rounded out each day with fun and connection.

At Helen Keller School of Alabama, potential students with sensory differences and who are multi-disabled participated in a specialized Summer Assessment Week. Professional teams provided high-quality evaluations, while students enjoyed creative arts, social events like a luau and outdoor movie night, and a field trip. Recreation aide Corlis Pope described it best: "Where every day is an adventure waiting to be discovered."

The National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) Regional STEM Center (NRSC), in collaboration with ASD, hosted a hands-on robotics camp for rising 9th–12th graders from across the Southeast. Campers designed, built and programmed robotic hands while learning about engineering and 3D printing. "We were building robots, learning new things about robots, engineering, and 3D printing," shared camper Zella Traver. A favorite activity was watching their custom 3D designs come to life.

Following the Talladega programs, NRSC's STEM Academy offered a three-week immersive experience for rising 10th graders through recent high school graduates who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Held at AIDB-North Campus in Decatur, Alabama, and later at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville, Florida, the program blended academics, STEM projects, transition planning and community building. A standout moment was a performance by guest presenter Justin Perez, who introduced students to Visual Vernacular, a powerful storytelling technique in ASL. "My favorite part of STEM Academy is meeting new people and learning how to do Visual Vernacular," shared participant Roland Cardoza, reflecting the excitement and personal growth so many students experienced during the program.

Across all programs, AIDB's summer camps fostered growth, connection, and joy, offering students of all ages a place to learn, belong, and thrive.





TOP (L to R): Alyson Tucker, Tobias Allen and Justin Perez at AIDB's STEM Academy
BOTTOM (L to R): Rachel Givens, Demaris Parker, Axel Benitez, Zella Traver, and Steven Forney at AIDB's Robotics Camp

Two AIB Workers Named Blind Employees Of The Year

By Jessica Love, Administrative Assistant to the Executive Director, Alabama Industries for the Blind

DAVE TALLEY JR. – A PILLAR OF EXCELLENCE AT THE BASE SUPPLY CENTER

Dave Talley Jr. serves as the Lead Clerk at the Moody Base Supply Center (BSC), where his commitment to excellence and team-first mindset play a vital role in day-to-day operations. From organizing front inventory to ensuring seamless coordination with management, Dave's contributions help maintain an efficient, customer-focused environment.

Known for his proactive support of leadership, Dave mentors his colleagues daily, fostering a workplace culture grounded in knowledge-sharing, positivity, and professionalism. He also works closely with management to ensure customer billing is accurate and up to date—helping to guarantee timely payments and prevent discrepancies.

Dave's expertise spans across all BSC operations. Whether assisting with deliveries, supporting sales and marketing initiatives, or facilitating the monthly Government Purchase Card (GPC) training, he approaches every task with enthusiasm and precision. His outstanding customer service skills, reliability, and signature big smile make him an irreplaceable asset to the team. He instinctively steps in wherever needed, always ready to support both colleagues and customers.

Dave's deep-rooted connection to Moody Air Force Base adds an extra layer of passion to his work. As the son of a retired Master Sergeant who served 24 years in the U.S. Air Force and another 20 years in Civil Service Logistics and Transportation, Dave grew up immersed in a culture of service and discipline. His mother also served 20 years in Civil Service, working at the base's Child Development Center.

Growing up with two brothers and a beloved family dog, Dave experienced life in multiple states and even abroad in Germany, thanks to his father's military career. These experiences nurtured his adaptability, resilience, and independence—traits that define his professional approach today.

In addition to taking general college courses, Dave plans to pursue a degree in Logistics. Outside of work, he enjoys old-school hip-hop and R&B, collecting Nike Air Jordans, and staying active with regular workouts.

A devoted member of New Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church, Dave attends services faithfully and participates in various community outreach programs. His dedication to service extends beyond his job—mentoring colleagues and inspiring others to grow in their roles.

Looking ahead, Dave aspires to follow in his father's footsteps by transitioning into a Civil Service position in Logistics and Transportation. With a clear vision and an impressive track record, he is well on his way to building a long-term career serving the community and supporting mission-critical operations.



Dave Talley Jr.

JOSEPH HEDUM – A LEADER WITH PURPOSE AND PASSION IN THE AIB PAPER DEPARTMENT

Joseph (Joe) Hedum serves as the Line Leader for the Alabama Industries for the Blind (AIB) Paper Department, where he consistently goes above and beyond to ensure his team is supported both professionally and personally. He actively assists leadership to ensure the department meets critical production deadlines while maintaining a work environment that is inclusive, respectful, and empowering.

A strong advocate for accessibility, Joe actively seeks ways to make the Paper Department more VI-friendly—whether through the implementation of assistive technology or by improving existing processes. His forward-thinking approach and commitment to inclusion make him a standout example of leadership in action. It's no surprise that Joe is consistently highlighted during tours of the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB); his pride in his work and his passion for the mission of AIB leave a lasting impression on every visitor.

Joe is also a graduate of the NSITE Effective Supervision course, a credential that underscores his commitment to professional development and effective team leadership.

Originally from Orlando, Florida, Joe moved to Alabama after graduating high school in 2004. Through the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, he was connected with AIDB and enrolled in the adult education program at the E.H. Gentry Technical Facility. It was there that he gained the skills and confidence that led to his hiring at AIB in October 2005.

Joe's personal journey is a testament to hard work, perseverance, and growth. He purchased his first home in 2010 and, in 2016, met the love of his life. They married in 2019, and in 2021, Joe legally adopted his two stepchildren. Their family grew again with the birth of their third child in January 2024, and just a few months later, Joe purchased their second home—complete with acreage. Alongside his family, Joe enjoys life with their two dogs and finds joy in quality time, fishing, and watching football and basketball.

Beyond the workplace, Joe is a daily mentor to his co-workers. He encourages them to see their potential as limitless and leads by example, fostering a culture of growth, confidence, and mutual support. He also gives back to the community through active participation in his church and his children's extracurricular activities.



Joseph Hedum

Joe's dedication to continuous learning drives him to constantly improve his expertise—whether in supervising his team, maintaining equipment, or managing work orders with precision. His ultimate career goal is to become the Supervisor of the Paper Department, a role for which he is already demonstrating natural aptitude and readiness.

Joe's story reflects a powerful combination of leadership, resilience, and heart. He embodies the values of AIB and inspires those around him to strive for excellence.

Planting Change

Inclusive Beginnings, Limitless Possibilities!

By Jessica Atkinson, Coordinator, Marketing and Community Relations



Honda volunteers spent the day helping to beautify AIDB's campus.

On a sunny spring Saturday in late April, a team of volunteers from Honda's Alabama Auto Plant in Lincoln arrived at the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind's (AIDB) Talladega Campus with one goal: to make a lasting impact through volunteerism. With gloves on and shovels in hand, they rolled up their sleeves, ready to work and left behind more than just fresh sod and blooming flowers.

Their mission was simple yet meaningful: to help cultivate a more beautiful and inclusive environment for AIDB students, faculty and staff. From planting shrubs and installing mulch to laying down sod, Honda associates brought energy, teamwork and heart to every corner of campus.

"It was a great day of service to AIDB," commented Becky Watson, Chief Institutional Advancement Officer, AIDB and Executive Director, AIDB Foundation. "Much like AIDB, Honda believes in applying innovation, influence and initiative to make communities a more inclusive place to live and work. We are thankful for Honda's longtime partnership, support, and dedication to the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind."

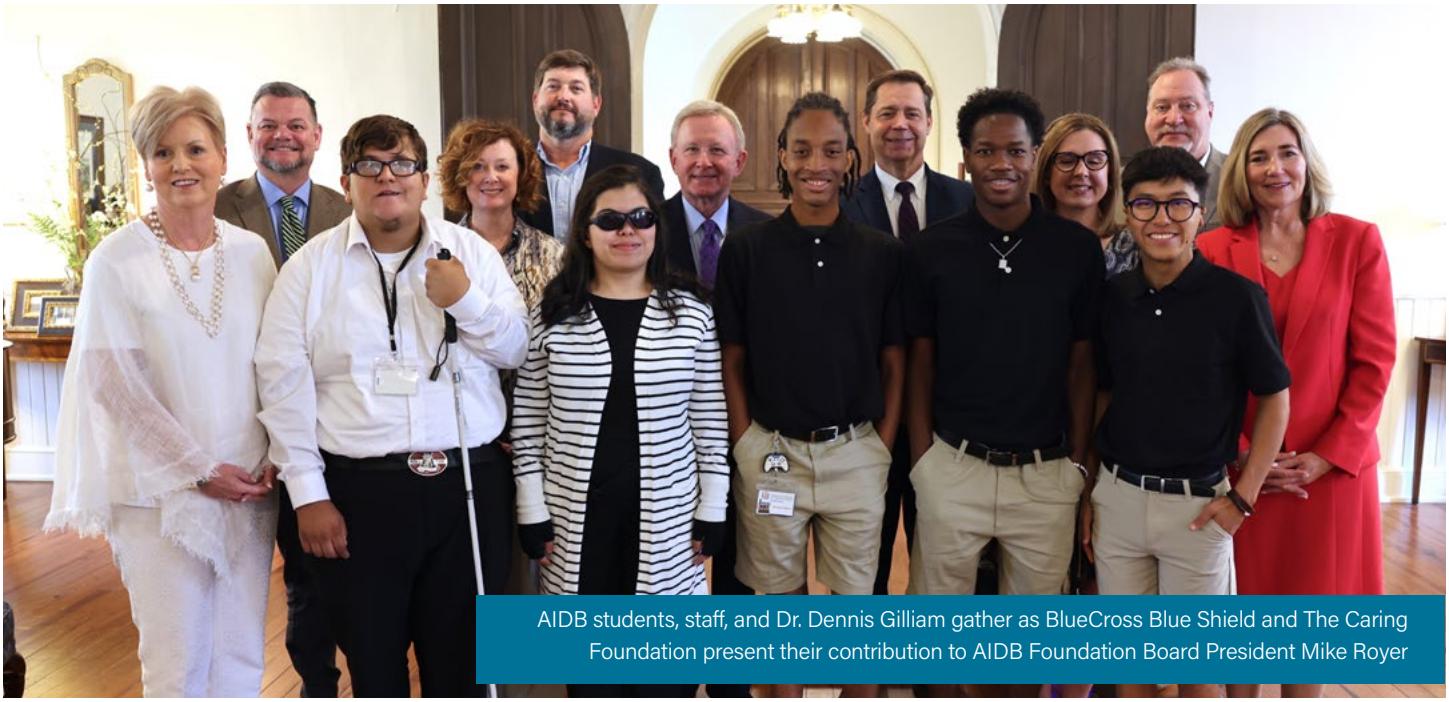
The team's efforts were spread across several locations. At the brand-new Alabama School for the Blind (ASB) playground, volunteers laid fresh sod, creating a safe and inviting space for students to enjoy outdoor play. Nearby, they also revitalized ASB's sensory garden by clearing overgrowth, refreshing pathways and planting fragrant herbs and colorful blooms designed to engage the senses and provide a calming, accessible space for students. Elsewhere, the grounds of the Alabama School for the Deaf were revitalized with vibrant new landscaping that now greets students and staff alike.

For many Honda associates, the day was more than just a volunteer project. It was a chance to give back to a community that inspires.

"At Honda, we are dedicated to inspiring our associates to create meaningful and lasting change," said Bobbie Trittschuh, manager of Charitable Giving at Honda and executive director of the Honda USA Foundation. "We deeply value our partnership with AIDB and this collaboration that will help members of the AIDB community to realize their full potential."

AIDB and Honda have a longstanding relationship rooted in shared values: inclusion, innovation, and a commitment to making a difference. Over the years, Honda has supported AIDB through funding, service projects, and volunteerism. This latest effort is just one example of how corporate partnerships can sow real, lasting change.

Thanks to Honda's continued support, AIDB's Talladega Campus is more beautiful. It is more welcoming, accessible, and full of life.



AIDB students, staff, and Dr. Dennis Gilliam gather as BlueCross Blue Shield and The Caring Foundation present their contribution to AIDB Foundation Board President Mike Royer

Cultivating Opportunity

By Jessica Atkinson, Coordinator, Marketing and Community Relations

At the heart of Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind's (AIDB) Joe Tom Armbrester Agricultural Center, a new initiative is taking root thanks to the generosity of the BlueCross BlueShield's Caring Foundation.

The Greenhouse Project at the Joe Tom Armbrester Agricultural Center will not only grow plants but nurture curiosity, independence and connection by offering students from across AIDB a hands-on learning experience in sustainable agriculture. Designed with education in mind, the project brings together students from the Alabama School for the Blind, Alabama School for the Deaf, E. H. Gentry Facility and Helen Keller School of Alabama.

Students engage in every step of the growing process: planting, watering, maintaining, and eventually harvesting a variety of produce and flowers. And students are gaining more than just gardening skills. They are discovering where their food comes from and the impact of their own hard work.

"The greenhouse will be such an advantage to have on site. Students will be able to plant seeds, watch them grow and harvest the produce," commented Matt Armbrester, Program Manager, Agricultural, Horticultural and Biotechnology. "When our students come to the Ag Center, they often do not know anything about how to grow plants. But they learn and grow with it. We have had so many students who are initially nervous about holding a chicken, seeing the sheep or getting their hands dirty. But by the time they complete the program, they have flourished, and they have grown with the seed they have planted."

None of this would be possible without the generosity of donors who have believed in the vision from the start. Their contributions have helped fund materials, equipment, and greenhouse infrastructure that will serve generations of learners to come.

The Caring Foundation contributed $75,000 to the project. "One of our corporate values at BlueCross BlueShield (BCBS) is to give back to the community," said Sophie Martin, Community Relations Director, Corporate Communications BCBS. "I cannot think of a better way to give back to the community and make a difference in our state than to support AIDB."

"AIDB is so grateful for our ongoing partnership with The Caring Foundation and all of the ways in which they continue to support our students," said Becky Watson, Chief Institutional Advancement Officer, AIDB and Executive Director, AIDB Foundation.

Looking to the future, there is excitement about the potential for the Greenhouse Project to expand into a larger sustainability or entrepreneurship initiative, possibly incorporating farmers' market sales, seedling starts, or seasonal community events.

Connecting Communities Changing Lives

An Overview of AIDB's Office of Field Services

By Marquitta Riggins, Senior Services Director, Office of Field Services



Rob Langford sings the National Anthem as AIDB Birmingham Regional Center Case Manager for the Deaf LaShawn Washington provides ASL for the audience.

Across Alabama, thousands of individuals who are Deaf, Blind, DeafBlind, multi-disabled or experiencing age-related hearing or vision loss rely on trusted support to live, work, and thrive. At the center of this work is the Office of Field Services (OFS) within the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB), a statewide network dedicated to advancing access, independence, and empowerment for people of all ages.

A UNIFIED STATEWIDE NETWORK

OFS is comprised of ten Regional Centers, strategically located across Alabama, and the Senior Services Department, which extends specialized services to older adults with sensory loss and age-related changes. Together, this unified network delivers direct support to individuals in all 67 counties of Alabama, servicing urban and rural communities with high-impact services.

What sets Field Services apart is its lifespan approach. From early intervention to aging in place, OFS meets individuals where they are, ensuring that services are accessible, relevant, and rooted in community needs.

"To say that Early Intervention has been a blessing to our family is an understatement. They addressed all my concerns with Payton and were a phone call away if we had any questions. They went above and beyond each time. Every therapist that walked into our house was professional and personal to what Payton needed. Our Service Coordinator was the best, and she was a step ahead of every concern that I may have had or thought of before it had a chance to be a concern." Laura Wood, Parent of an Early Intervention Child who is Deaf.

STATEWIDE REACH, PERSONAL IMPACT

Each OFS Regional Center is staffed by a dedicated team that includes a regional director, an administrative professional, service coordinators, case managers, interpreters, job developers, transportation specialists, sign language instructors, and assistive technology professionals. The

Senior Services Department works alongside these teams to extend age-specific services and collaborations with healthcare providers, aging agencies, and community partners.

OFS works with schools, families, employers, and community agencies to create a circle of support and services that reinforce independence, opportunity, and lifelong success for thousands of Alabamians.

"Our team is made up of passionate professionals who genuinely care about the people we serve," said Jenny Savage, Executive Director of the Office of Field Services. "Whether we're supporting a toddler and their family or helping a senior maintain their independence, our goal is always the same - to make sure every person has what they need to thrive in their own community."

SERVICES THAT EMPOWER

AIDB's Office of Field Services offers a wide range of no-to low-cost supports designed to empower both consumers and the community. Services are accessible and personalized and include:

Early Intervention Support: Collaborative services for families with infants and toddlers who are Deaf, hard of hearing, Blind, low vision, or DeafBlind focusing on early sensory development, family coaching, and transition planning.

Case Management: One-on-one support to set goals, coordinate services, and navigate life transitions.

Job Development & Employment Services: Career exploration, resume and interview support, job coaching, and employer education.

Assistive Technology Services: Training and access to tools that promote communication, navigation, and independence.

Interpreter Services: Providing access to staff, consumers and the community to ensure effective communication.

Transportation: Reliable and safe transportation for medical appointments, recreation and community engagement at no or low cost.

Community Education & Outreach: Public presentations, events, and resources that raise awareness and promote inclusion.

Community ASL Classes: Free or low-cost American Sign Language classes open to the public to promote communication access and Deaf awareness. Also offered at no cost to employers who hire individuals who are Deaf.

"AIDB helped me see that I still had a future and I wasn't alone. They gave me the skills, encouragement and belief that carried me through some of the hardest seasons of my life." Tristen Broadnax, Student/ Adult Consumer who is Blind

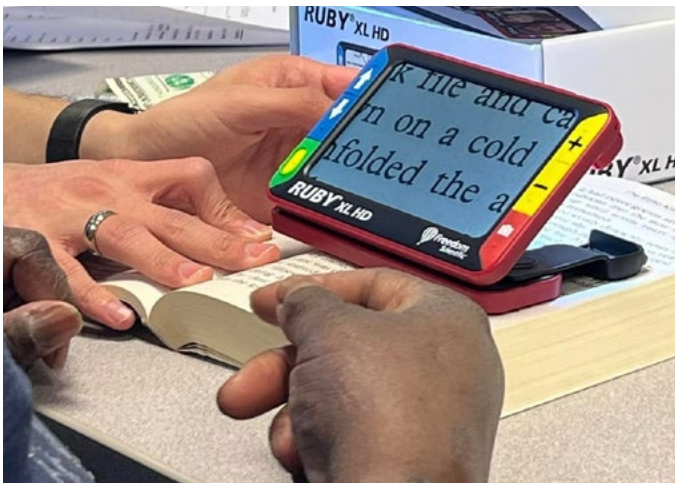
This integrated approach ensures that everyone, whether a young adult entering the workforce or a senior adjusting to new challenges, receives support that is tailored, timely, and empowering.

MEETING THE MOMENT AND THE NEED

Whether it is in a rural town or a busy city, OFS meets people where they are. A shining example of that impact is the Alabama Telecommunications Access Program (ATAP). Administered through OFS, ATAP ensures that individuals with hearing or vision loss can remain connected to family, services, and the world around them. Through ATAP, consumers receive equipment like amplified phones, smartphones, iPads, and emergency alert devices, paired with training to use accessibility features like speech-to-text, screen magnifiers, and other accessible apps. For many, it's a lifeline, and there is no cost. Please contact your closest Regional Center for more information (www.aidb.org).

"The iPhone that I received through ATAP is helping me to live so much better. It does what it's supposed to with the captions and that works so well for me to be able to call loved ones. Thank you!" Eunice Mixon, Adult/Senior Consumer who is DeafBlind.

From the youngest to the oldest community members, the Office of Field Services stands as a bridge to access, connection, and independence. Through its wide reach and individualized approach, OFS is not just changing outcomes, it is changing lives.



ABOVE: AIDB Dothan Regional Consumer Sherry Warren uses assistive technology to read.

Join the Club... The "AIDB" Club

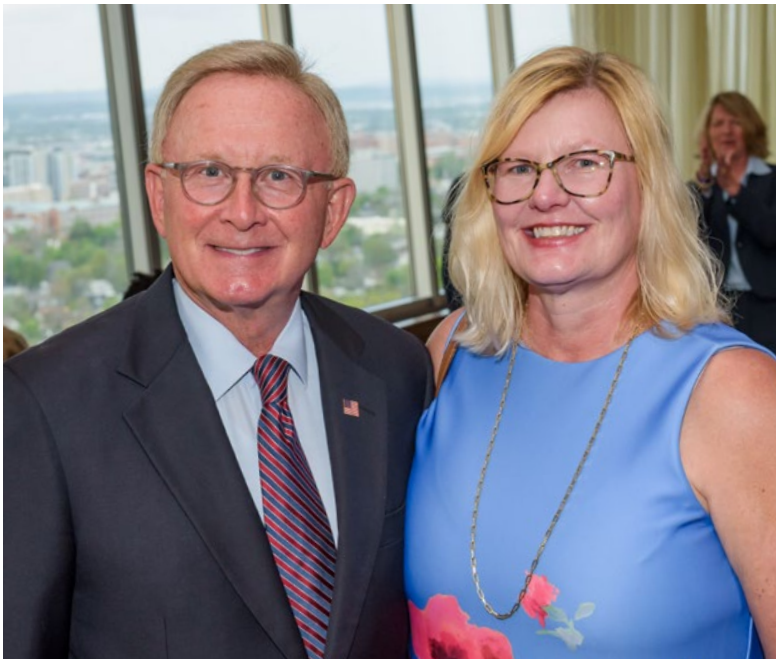
By Jessica Atkinson, Coordinator, Marketing and Community Relations

On a sparkling spring evening atop Red Mountain, Join the Club. The "AIDB" Club welcomed guests to The Club, Inc. in Birmingham for a night of elegance, generosity, and purpose. Hosted by the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) Foundation, this stunning event raised over $182,000 to support AIDB's mission of preparing individuals to reach their limitless potential.

"I have been part of the AIDB Foundation Board of Directors for quite some time and it has been incredibly rewarding to witness the amazing impact that is made when our philanthropic partners come together," commented Mike Royer, President of the AIDB Foundation Board of Directors. "AIDB is able to make the seemingly impossible possible by delivering hope, building self-esteem and fostering confidence and independence within every individual. Across AIDB's campuses in Talladega, our ten Regional Centers throughout the state and AIDB-North Campus in Decatur, AIDB Foundation-funded projects have changed the lives of countless students and adults across Alabama."

The event included a special performance by Alie B. Gorrie, vocalist, and The Eric Essix Trio. Students from Alabama School for the Blind, Alabama School for the Deaf, and Helen Keller School of Alabama also took to the stage. The event also featured a live auction of artwork painted during the event by AIDB students and renowned artists Eddie Crim of Vestavia Hills, Alabama; David Garrett of Birmingham, Alabama; Elizabeth Allen Jones of Talladega, Alabama; Susanne Lambert of Springville, Alabama; Rhonda Sims of Wetumpka, Alabama; and Kelly Williams of Tupelo, Mississippi.

"This event would not happen without our amazing sponsors who believe in AIDB's mission to prepare individuals to reach their limitless potential. It was a wonderful night for our students to share their talents with the Birmingham community and for the community to learn more about the AIDB story," added Becky Watson, Chief Institutional Advancement Officer, AIDB and Executive Director, AIDB Foundation. "Thank you to The Club, Inc. for collaborating with us on this fundraiser. It was the perfect venue for a beautiful evening. The funds raised from this event will be used to support AIDB's mission as we work to prepare individuals to reach their limitless potential."



AIDB Foundation Board President Mike Royer and his wife, Amy

This event was made possible through the support of these generous sponsors. Title Sponsor: Honda; Gold Sponsors: AIDB Foundation; Barganier, Davis, Williams Architects Associated; Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama; The Caring Foundation; The John Watson Foundation; Silver Sponsors: AlaCOMP; Alabama Power Foundation; The Collat and Goedecke Families; Bailey-Harris Construction Company; Boardman, Carr, Petelos, Watkins, Ogle, & Howard, P.C.; Brasfield & Gorrie, LLC; Champ Creative; Comer Companies, LLC; Diversified Supply, Inc.; First Bank of Alabama; Hutto Construction; Margaret and Bill Ingram; Osborne & Associates; PNC Bank; PowerSouth Energy Cooperative; Jeannie and Steve Rice; Floral Sponsor: The Anderson Group with Lake Homes Realty; Entertainment Sponsors: Whispering Oaks, Engineered Cooling Services; Wine Sponsor: Thomas Ritchie; Friends: Coca-Cola Bottling Company; Essendant; Fite Building Company; A Good Name Foundation









TOP LEFT: Charles Hutton and Kelly Williams, TOP MIDDLE: Susanne Lambert and Jose Ramirez Garcia, TOP RIGHT: Lauryn Silman, MIDDLE (L to R): Aluera Hughes, Korbin Pate, Zuriya Foster, Davis Brakefield, Erick Alba Rodriquez, Hayden Tippett, Keidrayah Maddox, Alie B. Gorrie, and David Vaden, BOTTOM LEFT: Chad Jones and Elana Jones, BOTTOM MIDDLE (L to R): Tim King, Sharon King, Emily Benson, and Brandon Burns, BOTTOM RIGHT: Allen Cope and Laura Cope

Christmas In July

Event raises over $164,835 for AIDB

By Jessica Atkinson, Coordinator, Marketing and Community Relations

Each summer, as Alabama's heat hits its peak, the Logan Martin Lake comes alive with the unexpected sounds of holiday cheer. The 16th Annual Christmas in July was held on July 19, 2025, at Pier 59 in Vincent, Alabama. Funds raised by Christmas in July will ensure that students at Alabama School for the Blind, Alabama School for the Deaf and Helen Keller School of Alabama have a wonderful Christmas, full of gifts and holiday cheer.

The day began with a Boat Poker Run with a record number of 256 hands being sold and that was just the start of an amazing day that also ran a Cash and Carry Room filled with items for supporters to purchase that had been donated; a 50/50 Raffle; delicious smoked Boston Butts were available for purchase as were event t-shirts. The evening ended with a live auction that featured items donated from supporters all over the state as well as many that were custom made by the AIDB Physical Plant team that were of exceptional quality. This year the event raised $164,835 for the students at Alabama School for the Blind, Alabama School for the Deaf and the Helen Keller School of Alabama.

"The students are sure to have a magical Christmas due to the hard work and generosity of many – thank you to all the volunteers and donors that support this wonderful event each year and continue to bring the joy of Christmas to our children. We are very appreciative of you and your resources that you give to make sure that this event is successful on behalf of our students," said Becky Watson, Chief Institutional Advancement Officer for Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) and Executive Director, AIDB Foundation.

A core group of volunteers led by Tim and Rita Chiasson and Janet Swann, owner of Pier 59, begin preparations in January each year for the spirited summertime event. By July, they are ready to host several hundred people at Pier 59 who are ready to celebrate the spirit of Santa and raise funds so that no student goes without Christmas. The event has grown each year, expanding its impact to help more AIDB students.



Dr. Dennis Gilliam and his wife Debbie enjoyed the festivities

This year's Christmas in July Volunteer Committee included Rita and Tim Chiasson, Magan and Mitch Cline, Susan and Billy Cook, Claire and Billy Keel, Jacob Harper, B.J. and Rick Johnson, Kendra and Kyle Stallings, Don Blackwood, Mark Smith, Scott Knepper and Janice Swann along with staff from the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) Foundation. Additionally, many community volunteers and AIDB staff came out on the day of the event to lend support to the event to make sure that more than 600 attendees were taken care of throughout the day.













TOP LEFT: Miki White, Zach White, and Collin White
TOP RIGHT: Tim Chiasson
MIDDLE RIGHT: Magan and Mitchell Cline
BOTTOM RIGHT: Susan Morrow and Dr. Mike Kulovitz
BOTTOM LEFT: Drew Cargill, Andrew Cargill, and Katherine Cargill
MIDDLE LEFT (L to R): April Womack, Jennifer Dowdy, Chanda Tucker, an dChristy Bell

ASD Football Scores Big with Birmingham Stallions

By Jason Roop, Principal, Alabama School for the Deaf and Cedric Tyson, Athletic Director

On a sunny Saturday in May, the Alabama School for the Deaf (ASD) football team traded their own cleats for fan gear as they traveled to Protective Stadium in Birmingham to watch the United Football League's Birmingham Stallions take the field. For many of the players, it was their first time attending a professional football game. This unforgettable experience combined the thrill of high-level play with a sense of pride and belonging in the wider sports community.

The trip was more than just a reward for the hard work and dedication of the ASD Silent Warriors; it was an opportunity to bond as a team, witness elite athleticism, and engage with the broader Deaf and hearing sports world. As soon as the players arrived at the stadium, they were swept up in the excitement, cheering with thousands of fans, analyzing plays from the stands, and taking in the fast pace and strategy of professional football.

For ASD staff and coaches, the event was a culmination of months of planning and a chance to give students an enriching and inspirational experience outside the classroom. The team not only enjoyed the game itself but also had an opportunity to meet with members of the Stallions organization, including a brief sideline visit that left many of the players beaming.

"Watching our players light up during the game and connect with the Stallions' athletes really showed how powerful these kinds of experiences can be," said Paul Kulick, Head Coach of the ASD football team. "It reinforces why we do what we do."

The trip also gave students a glimpse into what's possible beyond high school athletics. The athletes had discussions on the bus ride home about sports careers both on and off the field, and how their time at ASD is shaping their goals for the future. For many, seeing the Stallions play ignited dreams of competing at the next level or supporting athletic programs in their communities.

Coaches were especially proud of how the students represented ASD throughout the trip, with professionalism, school spirit, and gratitude. From navigating the stadium crowds to engaging with fellow fans and staff, the Silent Warriors showed what it means to lead with character.

"This trip wasn't just about football. It was about giving our students a chance to bond, to be inspired, and to feel seen in a bigger community," said Cedric Tyson, Athletic Director, who helped coordinate the trip. "These shared experiences have lasting impacts on confidence, motivation, and team unity."

ASD's administration strongly supports these kinds of experiential learning opportunities, believing that off-campus trips like this one can deepen school pride and broaden students' worldviews. "Opportunities like this support our mission of building strong character and lifelong memories for our students," said Jason Roop, principal at ASD. "We are proud to support activities that strengthen the sense of belonging and excellence at ASD."

As the Silent Warriors prepare for the upcoming fall season, the memories of their time at Protective Stadium continue to energize them. Whether on the practice field or in the classroom, the spirit of teamwork, resilience, and pride that they saw in the Birmingham Stallions is now reflected in how they approach their own goals.

And if you ask any of the players what their favorite part of the trip was, the answers vary; some recall the roar of the crowd, others the perfect spiral passes, or powerful tackles. But the one thing they all agree on? It was a game and a day they'll never forget.

TOP: ASD and ASB student-athletes meet the Stallions
MIDDLE LEFT (L to R): Dominick Jefferson, De'Marion Hagler, and Coach Paul Kulick
MIDDLE RIGHT (L to R): Rafael Gapud, Nathan Wilson, and Tyler Wilson
BOTTOM LEFT: Cedric Caver
BOTTOM RIGHT: Andarius Fitten






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WILSON JR.
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ALABAMA

Campus Updates

Dr. Dennis Gilliam announced several promotions to key director positions across campus



Kyle Gregg

CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

Kyle Gregg has been promoted to AIDB's Chief Information Officer. Gregg joined AIDB in 2021 as Executive Director of Alabama Industries for the Blind, where he led a diverse portfolio of operations, including two manufacturing facilities, six retail locations, and seven service-based federal contracts with the Department of Defense and the Internal Revenue Service, representing over $45 million in annual revenue. In 2023, he was named Director of Information Technology at AIDB. In this capacity, he provided strategic leadership and oversight for the Institute's Information Technology Department.

Traci Morrow, CRNP

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF HEALTH AND CLINICAL SERVICES



Traci Morrow, CRNP, has been promoted to Executive Director of AIDB's Health and Clinical Services. Morrow brings over two decades of clinical experience and a deep understanding of AIDB's mission and community. Her journey with AIDB began in 2001 when she served as a substitute nurse at the Helen Keller School of Alabama. Morrow previously served AIDB for 14 years as Director of Nursing and Dental Services, where she managed medical and dental care for more than 400 children and adults. Since stepping into the position earlier this spring, Morrow has been working closely with teams across AIDB to enhance clinical services and strengthen collaboration.



Mark Richenderfer

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Mark Richenderfer has been appointed as AIDB's Chief Financial Officer. Richenderfer brings more than 25 years of diverse leadership experience in finance, supply chain, operations, and strategic planning across both domestic and international markets. Throughout his career, he has built a reputation for driving organizational transformation, streamlining operations, and leading high-performing teams to achieve outstanding results.

Marquitta Riggins

DIRECTOR OF SENIOR SERVICES



Marquitta Riggins has been appointed as AIDB's Director of Senior Services. Riggins joined AIDB in 2018 as Assistant Director of Development within the Office of Institutional Advancement and most recently served as Director of the Opelika Regional Center, a position she has held since 2021. As the inaugural Director of the Opelika Regional Center, Riggins made an immediate and significant impact, expanding AIDB's reach and strengthening services for the Deaf, Blind, and DeafBlind communities across East Alabama.



Jason Roop

PRINCIPAL OF ALABAMA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

Jason Roop has been appointed Principal of Alabama School for the Deaf (ASD) following a successful year serving as Interim Academic Director. A longtime educator and leader within the AIDB community, Roop brings more than 20 years of combined experience in Deaf education and technology to this key leadership role. Most recently, Roop served as Director of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) Regional STEM Center (NRSC) at AIDB, where he oversaw national programs in robotics, engineering, and postsecondary transition support for students who were Deaf and hard of hearing. His experience in both classroom instruction and program leadership uniquely positions him to guide ASD into its next chapter.

Jonathan Sherbert

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ALABAMA INDUSTRIES FOR THE BLIND



Jonathan Sherbert has been named Executive Director of Alabama Industries for the Blind. With more than 20 years of experience in finance and management, Sherbert brings a wealth of knowledge and leadership to this role. His distinguished career includes serving as a senior accountant for Cahaba Government Benefit Administrators, an audit manager for Yeager and Boyd CPA, and an accounting manager for Melior, Inc. Since joining AIDB in 2012, Sherbert has held multiple key leadership positions, including Director of Purchasing, Accounting Manager, Director of Finance and Accounting, and most recently, Chief Financial Officer (CFO). Since October 2024, he has also served as Interim Executive Director of AIB, providing steadfast leadership and continuity to the organization.



Patrick Smith

DIRECTOR OF IT

Patrick Smith has been promoted to Director of Information Technology. Since joining AIDB in 2016 as a Computer Technology Technician, Smith has demonstrated exceptional technical expertise, leadership, and a deep commitment to advancing AIDB's mission through innovative technology solutions. Over the years, Smith has steadily progressed through the IT department, earning increasingly complex and strategic roles. He has led initiatives in information systems, system administration, and IT infrastructure, playing a critical role in modernizing AIDB's technology environment. In 2023, he was promoted to Assistant Director of Information Technology, where he continued to drive efficiency, enhance cybersecurity, and lead cross-functional teams with excellence.

Sue Kay Kneifel

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL PROJECTS AND AIDB-NORTH CAMPUS AT ALABAMA INSTITUTE FOR DEAF AND BLIND



Sue Kay Kneifel brings over 25 years in counseling and case management, and more than 20 years in leadership positions to her new role. Her career has spanned a wide range of services for individuals who are Deaf, Blind, and DeafBlind, with a strong emphasis on vocational rehabilitation, accessibility, and inclusion. Kneifel has served as Director of Business Operations for the Arizona Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Statewide Coordinator for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services. She has also held leadership roles with the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Arizona State School for the Deaf and Blind, and several national and state advisory boards.



Campus Snapshot

ASB student Brook'Cyn Hill works with her hands during class.

'AT's Just Right for You!

The E. H. Gentry Facility is a national leader in assistive technology (AT) for individuals with vision, hearing and neurological differences.

By Donte' Little, Assistant Director, E. H. Gentry Technical Facility

The State of Alabama is known for its Southern hospitality, the Civil Rights Movement, college football and a plethora of colloquialisms such as "bless your heart," "y'all," "reckon" and "yeah, 'at's right". However, E. H. Gentry Facility (EHG) is leading the way in making Alabama also known for connecting individuals with vision, hearing and neurological differences to assistive technology (AT) - 'at's' just right for them.

According to the Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATIA), AT is any item, piece of equipment, software program, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities. Oftentimes, the misconception is that AT is limited to expensive equipment or devices. However, for individuals with vision, hearing and/or neurological differences, this can range from do-it-yourself picture communication cards, to low-tech items such as bold-lined paper and a felt-tip pen, to high-tech software like a smartphone app. Regardless of the cost or technical aspects, any item that enables a person to better participate in education, work, and daily life activities is a worthwhile AT tool.

"My favorite assistive technology software is Fusion. It combines screen magnification with screen reading capabilities, and I particularly appreciate the ability to invert screen colors, which significantly improves my visual comfort and readability," said Stevie Hendricks of Montgomery, a client served by EHG DeafBlind Services.
Through an existing partnership with AIRA, which provides visual interpretation to individuals who are blind across the state, EHG is expanding its AT services for individuals with hearing differences. Using a smartphone, individuals who use American Sign Language (ASL) to communicate can access something similar to 'fancy FaceTime' to connect with skilled interpreters for a wide range of tasks. "I used AIRA ASL to communicate with a clerk at the courthouse to get my passport," said Eyerusalem "Rue" Ruppel of Beaufort, SC, a client served by EHG Deaf Services. "I even use it to order food inside restaurants or in a drive-thru."

"The equipment and technology I received changed my life. I use it every day. I'm able to connect with my friends and family, and run my business successfully," says Tyler Barnes, Jr. of Rainbow City, a client served by EHG DeafBlind Services and the iCanConnect - National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program. "There is nothing like helping a person discover that they can maintain or improve their quality of life–AT provides our consumers just that," stated Sybil Garrett, Coordinator of DeafBlind Programs.

Although most individuals are somewhat familiar with technology such as computers, the internet and smartphones, using 'assistive technology' can seem daunting at times for those who are completely new to it. Adam Sasserville of Birmingham, a client served by EHG Services for Blind advises new users to, "..stay persistent. It might take some time to fully appreciate the benefits of assistive technology, but rest assured, they are well worth the effort. Patience and practice will lead to greater independence and ease as you adapt."

Through a team of assistive technology professionals, EHG provides unique services and training to Alabamians across the entire state through EHG and AIDB's network of ten (10) Regional Centers. This team of professionals is skilled with devices and techniques to support individuals who are Deaf, Blind, DeafBlind and/or neurodivergent. With access to an impressive AT equipment lab in Talladega, and labs across the state, this team uses evaluations, demonstrations, and hands-on training to find the right AT to meet an individual's employment or independent living needs. "Our goal as service providers in the Assistive Technology department is to level the playing field through individualized services and support to help people with vision impairments reach their full potential," stated Doug Nixon, EHG Computer Specialist and Assistive Technology Field Services Manager. Nixon also stated, "For the past 23 years, when I wake up in the morning, I can't wait to get here!"

Providing over 10,893 services to more than 256 Alabamians in a year, EHG is well-respected as an expert in the field of AT. For nearly two decades, the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) has recognized EHG's AT services as the best in the nation. Above all, EHG humbly looks forward to helping Alabamians know 'AT's just right for you!'

Where Purpose Meets Planet

By Amy Shelly, Principal, Helen Keller School of Alabama

Helen Keller School of Alabama Earns Green Ribbon Honor

In the 2024-25 school year, the Helen Keller School of Alabama (HKS) was honored as an Alabama Green Ribbon School, a prestigious award that recognizes schools for their commitment to sustainability, environmental education, and health and wellness. This state-level recognition, modeled after the U.S. Department of Education's program, celebrates schools that have significantly reduced their environmental impact, improved the well-being of their community, and integrated sustainability into their curriculum.

As our leadership team went through the application process, we gained a new appreciation for the intentional efforts both HKS and the entire Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) make to reduce their carbon footprint. The program's pillars gave us a fantastic opportunity to showcase and celebrate the many positive initiatives already in place. This award is a true honor, as it highlights how the very programs we use to prepare our students for future jobs also help create a healthier, more sustainable community.

Pillar I: Reducing Environmental Impact
We were proud to highlight our new recycling program, which creates meaningful job opportunities for our students while benefiting the environment. This inclusive program allows students of all abilities to participate, whether they are collecting materials from bins or crushing cans. Through these hands-on activities, we foster environmental responsibility and demonstrate that every student has purpose and potential. We hope our program inspires the wider community to embrace inclusivity and environmental stewardship.

Our agri-science department also played a key role in our recognition. Students learn to collect and create compost from daily cafeteria scraps like coffee grounds, vegetable peels, and eggshells. This compost is then used to fertilize our raised garden beds, which were made possible through a grant from the Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities and a partnership with Auburn University. These accessible raised beds allow students who use walkers or wheelchairs to participate in growing and harvesting various plants and foods. Our agricultural program was recently awarded a new grant from the Coosa Valley RC&D Council to further its mission of making farming activities accessible to everyone.

Pillar II: Fostering Health and Wellness
For this pillar, we showcased the many ways HKS and AIDB support the health of our students and staff. From our Agriculture Center to the physical and occupational therapy services provided in the MGH Arena, every department at AIDB contributes to the well-being of our community.

A major highlight was our students' involvement in the Alabama Special Olympics, which promotes healthy lifestyles and positive fitness habits. HKS has a proud history of athletic achievement, with 39 state championship titles in sports like basketball, track and field, powerlifting, and golf. Our students have even brought home gold medals from the Special Olympics National Games. We currently participate in basketball, golf, powerlifting, and volleyball, and we are excited to explore new opportunities like bocce and pickleball, which will soon be introduced to the Alabama Special Olympics.

Receiving this award is a testament to the incredible programs at AIDB and the hard work of our students. It not only celebrates our accomplishments but also solidifies our commitment to building an environmentally responsible and healthy community for everyone we serve.

RIGHT: Helen Keller School student Faith Swain, with teacher, Madison Harris



E. H. Gentry Facility Fitness Room Receives New Fitness Equipment

The AIDB Foundation recently purchased new fitness equipment for the E. H. Gentry Facility Fitness Room. "The students are really enjoying the equipment and the fitness room is constantly being used now," said Connie Johnson, Extended Day Director. "The Fitness Room is the place that shows where there is more that connects us than separates us and brings us together. The students enjoy one another through fitness activities and social development. The fitness room has become a hub of daily activity for all of the students, Deaf, Blind, DeafBlind to enjoy." Together we are limitless!







TOP LEFT: James Carter
TOP RIGHT: Autumn Harvey
BOTTOM (L to R): Shakeria Burrell, Chandler Smith, James Carter, MacKenzie Thrash, and Connie Johnson

AIDB At A Glance

Upcoming Events Across AIDB



OCTOBER 4: HOMECOMING 2025

It's HOCO at AIDB! Come out and support as our mighty Silent Warriors take on the Florida School for the Deaf at 5 PM, October 4 at the ASD Kiwanis Football Field.



OCTOBER 9-11: MASON-DIXON VOLLEYBALL TOURNAMENT

Cheer on the Silent Warriors as we host the Mason-Dixon Volleyball Tournament. Opening ceremony kicks off on October 9, 5 to 6 PM at the ASD Kiwanis Football Field. Games begin on October 10 from 8 AM at the Hackney and McBride Gymnasiums.



NOVEMBER 16: AIDB FOUNDATION TALENT EXTRAVAGANZA FUNDRAISER

Watch our students shine in their talents at the Talent Extravaganza, beginning at 6 PM at the President's House (300 South Street East).



JANUARY 22-24: SCASB TOURNAMENT

Championship wrestling at ASB has a long and storied history. Let's cheer the ASB Red Wolves in the South Central Association for Schools for the Blind Wrestling Tournament hosted on the ASB campus at Asbury Hall.



JANUARY 31: WARRIOR DASH 5K

Get your running shoes on and race with heart, purpose and spirit supporting the Alabama Warriors, the adult goalball team based at E. H. Gentry Facility. For registration and more information:
https://runsignup.com/Race/AL/Talladega/WarriorDash5K



APRIL 2: AIDB FOUNDATION SPRING FUNDRAISER

Mark your calendars. You won't want to miss this exciting event that puts the spotlight on our students and opportunities at AIDB. Tickets and sponsorship available soon. Event is at The Club – 1 Robert S Smith Drive, Birmingham, AL

Momentum

Updates from the AIDB President's Staff



Jessica Edmiston

For Kim's entire testimony, visit www.aidb.org/AFC

JESSICA EDMISTON

CHIEF ADULT PROGRAMS OFFICER

Nothing exemplifies *momentum* more than student success; the highlight of a recent Alabama Freedom Center for the Blind student that follows is one of many annually within AIDB.

"I may have lost my sight, but not my vision or my life," notes Kim Chichester. Just months ago, Kim was a student from Georgia within the Alabama Freedom Center for the Blind (AFCB), a nine-month program teaching non-visual techniques in braille, assistive technology, travel, home management, employment and adjustment to blindness using Structured Discovery. As of June 16, 2025, Kim is now the AFCB Residential Manager.

"Through my training, I gained independence, skills and confidence to live the life that I wanted as a blind adult. I found myself wanting to become a part of the AIDB family. I have never been part of an organization that treats blind people truly as a whole person and with the utmost respect. I now have the opportunity to lead by example: Be safe, have no fear, and live life limitless!"



Amanda Fuller

AMANDA FULLER

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT

Oh my, it is that time of year when I spend time reminiscing. When staff return to begin a new school year, I will be starting my 65th year at this grand ole Institute where so many lives have been touched, educated, enriched and loved.

I have literally grown up at AIDB. I made the comment recently that I was once the youngest among those with whom I worked and now I am the oldest. Where did the years go?

I look forward to a great start to the 2025-2026 school year and a successful year for our students and clients. I am thankful to have the opportunity to be a small part in enriching the lives of those served by Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind.



Andy Keith

ANDY KEITH

CHIEF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS OFFICER

Momentum is everything, and AIDB is moving full speed ahead! Summer may signal a break for some, but for us, it's one of the busiest and most exciting times of the year. From back-to-back STEM camps to planning for a new school year, the energy never stops. In the year ahead, we're launching a second RISE Together Preschool classroom, a new Modern Manufacturing Program, and an Assistive Technology Lab, while welcoming new leadership at ASD and pursuing national accreditation at HKS. The momentum and opportunities continue!



Kelley Park

KELLEY PARK

CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER

Human Resources (HR) has had a very busy first half of 2025! Nicholas Barnes has joined our team as the Development and Training Coordinator. Aletheia "Lele" Webb has come on board as an HR Clerk, and most recently, Reginald Leonard has joined our team as the Talent Acquisition Partner. Reggie and Lele hosted a table at the Alabama State Department of Education's MEGA Conference in Mobile. This summer, we held our first Summer Leadership Caucus in Opelika, Alabama, where all of AIDB's Directors had the opportunity to share updates and ideas!



Jonathan Sherbert

JONATHAN SHERBERT

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Alabama Industries for the Blind (AIB) is proud to announce progress on several exciting new initiatives. We are currently preparing to open a new Base Supply Center at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, with a planned launch by the end of the year. The production of neckties for all branches of the United States Military is a long-standing and proud tradition at AIB. In July 2025, we expanded this legacy by beginning production of neckties for the United States Space Force—a first for our organization. In addition, AIB is reinstating production of Military Helmet Covers, further reinforcing our commitment to delivering high-quality, mission-critical products in support of our nation's armed forces. These initiatives reflect AIB's ongoing dedication to innovation, excellence, and service.



Becky Watson

BECKY WATSON

CHIEF INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT OFFICER
AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR AIDB FOUNDATION

The staff with the Office of Institutional Advancement and the AIDB Foundation have been busy raising dollars and making limitless possibilities come true for the students and adults we serve. We are delighted to share a few examples of the Foundation's good work. We were delighted to see Alabama School for the Blind's new accessible playground installed that was supported by countless donors as well as a Chipping and Putting Green for the Helen Keller School was made possible by a Foundation grant from the Monday Morning Quarterback Club. The Foundation has purchased new Robotics and Agriculture equipment for students at Alabama School for the Deaf. Additionally, new workout equipment was purchased for the E. H. Gentry students' fitness room.

This past year's fundraisers brought in over $400,000 to support the AIDB mission and we are so appreciative of all the donors, friends and partners who support the AIDB Foundation. Upcoming fundraising events for the Foundation include a Fall Talent Extravaganza on November 16th showcasing our K-12 students and the Spring Fundraiser in Birmingham to be hosted at The Club on April 2, 2026. For more information, please call 256-761-3468.



Joey Hutto

JOEY HUTTO

CHIEF FACILITIES AND CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT OFFICER

The Physical Plant Department has been busy the previous months with multiple campus projects improving our facilities for our students and staff.

At our AIDB-North Campus we continue working toward opening day for our Student Activity Center. Ground was broken in December for this facility which will house a regulation basketball court, a stage for performances, full cafeteria and kitchen, as well as two large meeting rooms which will also serve as a FEMA rated storm shelter that will accommodate students and staff for our entire campus in the event inclement weather. The contractor is currently ahead of schedule with hope of reaching an opening day milestone in January 2026.

At our Talladega Campus work continues on the ASD Taylor Hall Dorm Renovation. This dorm is being renovated to act as an independent living dorm where our residential students reside and are taught life skills they can apply when they graduate and begin college and/or enter the work force. Also, at our ASB campus here in Talladega, we have completed upgrades to the central concourse walkway. This upgrade includes all new tactile borders as well as new landscaping and ADA accessibility upgrades.

AIDB is proud of our Helen Keller Golf Team and this past quarter we were able to construct a golf practice tee and green for our students thanks to funds raised by OIA and a grant given by The Monday Morning Quarterback Club.

MARK RICHENDERFER

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

I joined AIDB on July 1st as the Chief Financial Officer (CFO). I have had the opportunity over the first two months to spend time learning about the wonderful mission of AIDB, learning about the great Finance department, and all of the other team members dedicated to the mission of AIDB over the last 167 years! I am honored and excited to be part of the AIDB family!



Mark Richenderfer



Kyle Gregg

KYLE GREGG

CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

Summer 2025 has been a season of change for AIDB's Information Technology Department! We're excited about the launch of our new website platform, which features enhanced accessibility tools. In our continuous effort to strengthen security, we've implemented new security tools and rolled out new AI platforms. Additionally, we are in the process of deploying new endpoint technology to all our users. These upgrades will help ensure a more secure and efficient digital experience for everyone at AIDB.

In The News

By Heather Jeffcoat

Just some of AIDB's Many Headline-Making Moments

Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) is in the news! Across Alabama, media outlets are sharing stories of the Institute's successes, from farm visits to clothing assistance for students. These reports highlight the dedication of our staff and the achievements of our students in all our programs.



1 - ABC 33/40 welcomed AIDB Foundation President Mike Royer into the studio to talk about the upcoming Christmas In July event on July 16 at Pier 59 on Logan Martin Lake.



2 – FOX aired a segment about the ASD Football team attending the Stallions game. **ESPN** provided more national news covering a Stallions' player and his visit with the ASD football team.



3 - WBRC 6, CBS 42 AND ABC 33/40 made their way out to Pier 59 on Logan Martin Lake to cover AIDB's Christmas In July and report on all the funds raised for AIDB students.



4 – Previewing a summer full of activities, **CBS 42** spotlighted AIDB's many camp offerings for young people across the state of Alabama.

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Talladega, AL 35161

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Congratulations to all the 2025 AIDB Graduates!



Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind
Deaf. Blind. Limitless.

The Joys of Graduation | 8

AIDB's new grads reflect on their past and look ahead to their future.