What’s Buzzing with the National Federation of the Blind?

March is a time for members of the National Federation of the Blind to share their personal stories of the many ways being involved with this organization helps them live the lives they want. Please consider searching for the hashtag #whyImafederationst on Facebook or Twitter. You will find inspiring, heartfelt, and fun stories from Federationists all around the country. Has the National Federation of the Blind helped your family? If so, please consider sharing your own story. Be sure to use the hashtag #whyImafederationist so others can find your story easily. Not sure how to get involved or what being a member of the National Federation of the Blind is all about? Want to learn more? Please contact the president of your state affiliate and/or the president of your state parents’ division. You can also contact the National Organization of Parents of Blind Children. The National Federation of the Blind is here to support you, your child, and your family. We know blindness is not the characteristic that defines your child or his or her future. Every day we work to raise the expectations of blind children and their families because it is these low expectations that come between blind people and our dreams. Your child can live the life he or she wants; blindness need not hold your child back.

Literacy Hints from the Hive

Let’s sit down in a cozy nook. It’s time for us to read a book. Put your fingers on the page. Touch that braille; it’s all the rage!

Okay, so Dr. Seuss does it better, but I could not resist writing some text in rhyme because March 2 is Read Across America Day! Of course, if you miss the chance to read your favorite Dr. Seuss book on March 2, you can celebrate your own reading day any time during March.

Reading stories or poems that rhyme are wonderful ways to engage children of all ages. Very small children enjoy the rhythm of rhyming text. As you read, remember to let your young child explore the dots on each Braille page. Older children can be encouraged to finish certain sentences with the correct rhyming word. When children are older still, they can read a sentence or page of a book, and you can read the next sentence or page. Or, perhaps you have a child who is old enough to enjoy reading an entire book to you.

Another fun reading activity for children of all ages is to Braille familiar nursery rhymes or poems. Have your child read these out loud, or you can read them while your child says them with you. Encourage your child to run his or her hands over the Braille while you are reciting the rhymes. Even if your child is not reading the text, this is still a wonderful way to get Braille under your child’s fingers, to help him or her connect the feeling of running their hands over Braille while saying words, and feel pride in “reading” something out loud. This is exactly the same as having a sighted child turn pages in a book while repeating a story they have heard a million times before.

Travel Tales

What was that green flash? Oh, I think it was a leprechaun leaving a pot of gold somewhere in your house or yard! St. Patrick’s Day can be a fun time for a treasure hunt. This will encourage movement, following directions, and could even include Braille depending on the age of your child. For young children, this treasure hunt could be as simple as someone standing or sitting across the room and shaking keys, a musical instrument, or anything else you can pretend is gold. Your child can be encouraged to follow the sound and find out where the noise is coming from and what is making the noise. Older children can be told there is a pot of gold hidden somewhere in the house, yard, or, for a bigger challenge, perhaps a local park. You can give verbal directions; play the “hot and cold” game, or any other way you can think of to help your child find the pot of gold. If you play this game outside, this can be a wonderful time to use cane skills to find objects and to practice walking confidently. If your child is learning or reading Braille, you can Braille clues for your child to follow in order to find the gold. This can be a fun way to involve family members. Older and younger siblings can help solve clues, but your blind child will be the star of the show because he or she will have to read the next clue in Braille before the hunt can continue.

A Taste of Honey

Consider creating a green snacks platter for St. Patrick’s Day. First, purchase a green platter. Of course you can use any type of platter you already own as well, but if you could find a green platter, especially one shaped like a shamrock or something else Irish, it will add to the fun. Then, talk with your child about what he or she would like to put on the platter. There is only one rule—whatever is put on the platter must be green! See how many green foods your child can come up with. If your child is stumped, give a little help. A child might be unsure what color certain foods are, so this can be a wonderful way to talk about colors.

Once you have come up with a list of foods, have your child help you prepare the platter. You can have your child go with you to the grocery store to pick out items, or you can just have your child use items you have on hand. There are things even very young children can help prepare. For instance, your child could wash fruits and vegetables, break grapes off their stems, and pull apart “little trees” of broccoli and place them on the platter. Older children can learn to cut green apples or cucumbers.

Help your child learn about presentation. Of course your platter does not have to look Martha Stewart perfect, but snacks should be placed in small piles, the platter should not be overflowing, it should have snacks covering it entirely, unless you plan to put a bowl of dip or something in the middle.

If possible, have your child serve this platter to others—either family or friends. Your child will feel proud of this creation, and sharing snacks with others always makes snacks taste a little sweeter.