



## KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### NEWS RELEASE

No. 17-062

May 8, 2016

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## **KENTUCKY SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND CELEBRATES 175 YEARS OF SERVICE TO STUDENTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS**

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) – The Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) in Louisville, one of the oldest such schools in the nation, is celebrating 175 years of providing comprehensive educational services to Kentucky students who are blind and visually impaired.

The school will mark its 175th anniversary on Tuesday, May 9, with a Celebration Dinner and Founder's Day Program.

During the event, KSB will announce the winners of the Countdown to 175 Essay Contest and will bestow its highest honor, the Paul J. Langan Distinguished Service Award, to a deserving recipient. The award, established in 1992, is dedicated to Paul J. Langan (KSB superintendent from 1945-56) in recognition of his outstanding service and constructive leadership. Langan's innovative approach to education established the foundation for continued improvement of the education of blind and visually impaired children at the school.

KSB serves children from birth through 21 years old and has many options for students with visual impairments such as full-time placement on campus, specialized instruction through a 1-12 week short-term program, and academic and career oriented summer programs. While on campus, students are taught the same academic standards as their sighted peers and receive instruction in an expanded curriculum on topics such as travel, independent living, visual efficiency skills and more.

The school currently has 63 residential students enrolled, and provides outreach to more than 1,600 blind and visually impaired students throughout the Commonwealth.

KSB provides Braille and large type textbooks, assistive and adaptive technology, specialized educational aids, low vision services, and assistance to all of Kentucky's 173 school districts.

In addition, students benefit from the school's role in providing professional development opportunities for teachers of the visually impaired throughout the state.

In his book, *A History of Education in Kentucky* (2011), William Ellis credits Kentucky as one of the first states to provide education for the blind. KSB was the third state-supported school for the blind established in the United States.

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The school's founder and president of the Louisville Collegiate Institute, Bryce McLellan Patten, along with his brother, Otis, began teaching a class of six blind students in the summer of 1839. The brothers later lobbied the General Assembly to fund the school, and on Feb. 5, 1842, the Kentucky Institution for the Blind was chartered with an appropriation of \$10,000.

The school opened on May 9, 1842, and moved to several buildings in its early years before moving to Broadway Avenue in 1845. The building burned in 1851 and the decision was made to move the school out of the city. A tract of land known as the Frankfort Turnpike Road (now Frankfort Avenue) was purchased and a new school built on it in 1855. In 1967, that building was razed to make way for a modern facility that would better serve students with visual impairments.

From its beginnings, KSB's mission has been to help all Kentucky students who are blind and visually impaired to develop their talents, their skills and their attitudes to become confident, competent and independent adults. That work and commitment has been its bedrock for the past 175 years and continues today.

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### **Historical and educational highlights from the KSB's history include:**

- After the Battle of Perryville, the Federal army medical director ordered the school to vacate in October 1862 and the building was used as a hospital during the Civil War. Under pressure by school trustees, the War Department forced hospital personnel out and students returned on March 17, 1863.
- The American Printing House for the Blind (chartered in 1858) began operating in the basement of the school and the first book was printed in 1869. Superintendent Bryce Patten served as superintendent of both the school and the printing house.
- The Colored School for the Blind, built on Haldeman Avenue adjacent to the Kentucky Institution for the Blind, opened in October 1884. That school merged with KSB in 1955.
- In 1910, the Kentucky Institution for the Blind formed Boy Scout Troop 10. Still active today, it is the first troop in the U.S. serving students with disabilities.
- In 1916, the name of the school changed to Kentucky School for the Blind.
- In 1917, former KSB student Gladys Knight graduated from the University of Louisville, the first blind person in Kentucky to do so.
- KSB aligned curriculum to meet state requirements in 1931 and issued Kentucky high school diplomas for the first time to 15 graduates in 1933.
- In 1946, Superintendent Paul J. Langan negotiated with public schools to allow KSB students to attend high school during their junior and senior years with sighted students. In 1950, boys went to Male High School and girls attended Halleck Hall (now duPont Manual High School).
- In 1953, the Louisville Downtown Lions Club provided a Christmas Party and dinner for KSB students, a tradition that continues today.

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- Will D. Evans, a KSB alumnus, was hired as teacher in 1967 and served as Superintendent from 1974-95. Under his leadership, KSB experienced a five-building, 20-year development on campus.
- The school established its Low Vision Program in 1990, providing low vision evaluations statewide for Kentucky students with visual impairments.
- The Short Term Program for students who are blind and visually impaired was established in 1993, allowing students to attend KSB 1-12 weeks a year for specialized instruction while staying enrolled in their home school district.
- In 1994, the schools began offering Gateways to Independence Professional Development Training to Kentucky teachers of the visually impaired.
- In 1996, the Kentucky Legislature designated KSB as the statewide educational resource center on blindness.
- In 1996, KSB revamped Outreach Services and placed consultants in regional sites to support proficient student performance by assisting local school districts in reducing barriers to learning associated with a vision loss.
- KSB established the Insight Post-Secondary Preparation Program in 2006. Held during the summer at Morehead State University, this program provides high school students who are blind and visually impaired with an opportunity to experience what it is like to enter and navigate in a postsecondary setting.

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