



What's That Beeping Sound?

Do you love baseball? Imagine playing it wearing a blindfold!

Beep baseball (or Beepball for short) is an adapted version of traditional baseball designed for people who are blind or visually impaired. The ball beeps and the bases buzz. And in case you think it's not a serious sport, think again. Teams compete in local, regional, and even world championships.

For Scott Berube, it is a chance to feed his competitive spirit. "Before I lost my vision, I was into motorcycles," he said. "I used to race in Florida and California, and I even won a motocross championship."

Although he hadn't played baseball seriously since he was a pitcher in Little League at age 12, it all came back to him pretty easily. He loves the game. "I would never have believed I'd be playing baseball at 52," he said, "And certainly not blind."

Beep ball is not a sport for the timid. Participants who are sighted or have partial vision must wear blindfolds. The idea of doing something without using vision can be jarring at first. But, like anything else, practice improves performance. "If you're sighted, you can watch a few games and you kind of get the arc of the ball and the timing," he said. "It's fun. It's inclusive. A sighted

person can play and try it out." It's also a great way to encourage teamwork.

But for Scott, it is an opportunity to enjoy a sport he used to love. "It felt good to swing a bat and hit a ball again," he said.

He explained that the beeping of the ball is mostly for the outfielders. "The fielding's different because we're listening to the ball coming at us instead of seeing it."

Another big difference is that the pitcher and batter are on the same team. "When you're batting behind the plate, you don't have time to

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Message from the President



In keeping with the theme of our cover story:

Life, for all of us, is a series of runs, hits, and errors. We do the best we can, and sometimes we get to test our resilience by overcoming challenges. PAB member agencies offer essential services that offer Pennsylvanians the opportunity to overcome the challenges associated with vision loss. We begin by meeting clients in their homes to determine their needs and set up a program to teach them some fundamental skills. That includes marking their stoves and microwaves with tactile labels and showing them safety techniques. We help them learn how to label medicine and canned goods. We will provide a check writing guide and help them obtain large print checks from their bank. We can also show them how to fold money for easy identification. These are just some basic survival skills. Then we help them to acquire the additional skills they need to maintain a happy, independent life. That's different for everyone, and sometimes we have to try several different techniques to find the one that works best for each individual. But no matter what we do as professionals, the one thing that will always determine success is the attitude of the person with whom we are working. Every blind person I

know that is living the life they want has one thing in common – what they were willing to bring to the game.

Babe Ruth said:

“Never allow the fear of striking out keep you from playing the game!”

That's what defines a successful life. It's been my privilege for over 34 years to have met thousands of talented, intelligent, and resilient people who flourished despite the challenges of vision loss. Thank you for that valuable life lesson.

Sincerely,

Elaine Welch
President/CEO



AUGUST is Children's Eye Health and Safety Month!

Most children have healthy eyes. But there are conditions that can threaten good vision. Because you can't always "look" into your child's eyes to tell if they have eye health problems, set up some time today for an eye exam:

- Your child's eyes should be examined during regular pediatric appointments and vision testing should be conducted around age three.
- Parents should be aware of signs that may indicate their child has vision problems, including:
 - Wandering or crossed eyes
 - A family history of childhood vision problems
 - Disinterest in reading or viewing distant objects
 - Squinting or turning the head in an unusual manner while watching television

Talk to your child's pediatrician if you suspect your child has any of the eye diseases below:

- Amblyopia (lazy eye)
- Strabismus (crossed eyes)
- Ptosis (drooping of the eyelid)
- Color deficiency (color blindness)

Use this month to discuss the importance of eye safety with your children.

More than 12 million children suffer from vision impairment, and eye injuries are one of the leading causes of vision loss in children. There are an estimated 42,000 sports-related eye injuries each year and the majority of them happen to children.

Children should:

- Wear protective eyewear while participating in sports or recreational activities
- Play with age-appropriate toys. Avoid toys with sharp or protruding parts

One of the best ways to ensure your child keeps his/her good vision throughout life is to set a good health example.

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gauge the location of the ball from the sound. The batter just has to go by feel. The pitcher is not your enemy, though. The pitcher is your friend. You work together.” Pitchers call out before they pitch so the batter can be ready to swing.

Instead of the traditional diamond: three bases and home plate, beep ball uses two bases (first and third). Bases are tall foam columns. They emit a solid tone, different from the beeping ball. “When the ball is pitched, the sound of the base you need to run to is turned on. It’s 100 feet away, rather than the traditional 90. You’ve got to get to that base before the fielder gets the ball. We run full bore and hit that base. Sometimes we just go right through it and knock them over,” Scott said. “Once, I ran so hard, I took out a spectator,” he laughed.

It is that opportunity to “just go for it and charge the base with all



Scott Berube(R) and sighted teammate

you’ve got” that appeals to Scott. “We play even if it’s raining. As long as there’s no thunder, we play right through. We go slipping and sliding

through the mud. Sometimes, you miss the base entirely — you go right by it and slip and end up on your butt. It’s fun; it really is!”

Scott plays for ForSight Vision’s team, the Thunder Sticks, out of York. The team has competed with teams from Lancaster, Philadelphia, New Jersey, and even Boston. “You play some of the better teams — they come in on a bus and start doing jumping jacks to warm up and we say, ‘Oh, geez!’ These are teams that have been around a long time. But we’ve scored against them.”

“We let everybody play on our team,” Scott said. “We even have women on our team. But we play to win.”

It’s been raining a lot in York lately. But that doesn’t matter to Scott. Practice starts next week, and he’s ready.



Have You Heard Anything Yet?

People keep asking Arletta Shenfeld, “Have you heard, anything yet?” She responds, “Not yet, but I’m patient.” She is, however, checking her emails for news that she passed her course in braille transcribing and her Certificate of Proficiency from the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped of the Library of Congress is on its way. It will mark the end of a rigorous course that included 19 lessons and the final project — transcribing 35 pages of a book. No small feat.

Braille is a tactile writing system used to communicate words, math, science, and music. Each letter, number, or punctuation mark is made by an arrangement of dots in six cells, traditionally embossed on paper. The raised combinations are read by touch. Braille transcribers are people who have learned how to convert and format text, tables, and other information into braille.

Arletta feels fortunate to have sight, and she believes every blind child and adult should have the opportunity to learn braille. “There are some things you just might want to read for yourself. I would value being able to read my own medical reports from my doctor and my own bank statements,” she said. “And I’d love to still be able to read for pleasure. I love reading, but my mind wanders with audiobooks.”

She doesn’t read braille by touch, but she often gets children’s books in braille to practice her skills. “The embossed white dots against the white paper are really hard to see. I go over them with a highlighter so the dots stand out.”

Arletta works along with Sandy Marsiglia who is blind. Arletta

transcribes text into braille and formats it, using transcribing software on the computer. She then sends it through the embossing printer and hands it off to Sandy for proofreading to ensure there are no errors.

Sandy understands the importance of braille. As an adult, she attended a board meeting for the Pennsylvania Council of the Blind. The materials were provided in braille and large print. “I couldn’t access either of them!” she said. “I was tired of being left behind.” So she decided to learn to read braille, and it turned into a job.

In January of this year, the United States began using a slightly modified form of braille — Unified English Braille (UEB) — to eliminate confusion by being more in line with what other countries are using. Arletta and Sandy had to update their skills.

Together, they make a great team. “We take pride in creating a professional product,” said Arletta. “We have done work for a variety of organizations and individuals. We’ve produced medical forms, Medicare policy statements and insurance membership information, bank statements and correspondence, restaurant menus, and even water bills. You name it!”

As PAB’s Executive Assistant, Arletta works part-time on braille, but it is a part of her job she

really enjoys. “I would love it if braille kept me busy all the time,” she said. “I would have never thought it would be so complex going into it. But once you figure out how to do a project, it makes the next one easier.” She enjoys the challenge and has a vision for growing the function. “It would be great to have a Department of Braille Production,” she said. She has her “dream” embossing machine all picked out. It would need its own office. “Even if we had a second small embosser, we could then go out and actively seek new clients. We would be able to do more than one job at a time.”

One of the important functions of PAB is to improve the quality of life for individuals who are blind or vision impaired by making information accessible. PAB’s Braille Embossing Service offers a convenient way for businesses, individuals, and organizations to have their materials translated into braille for their customers, clients, and students. Everyone benefits.



Congratulations in advance, Arletta. Your enthusiasm and determination are inspiring!