

White Cane Day October 2018

(Upbeat background music)

Josie: Hi my name is Josie, and I am a student at the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind. This fall, our school celebrated White Cane Day in several ways. Not only did we visit the capital to raise awareness of the White Cane Day Law, but we led some interviews and even wrote a song about the White Cane Day. We want to share with you what we learned. First, we asked a few MSAB students and staff what it was like the first time they used a white cane. Here is what they said.

Ann Godwin: I think I just, I think I felt at ease with it almost right away, and I just wanted to get the techniques right.

Maddie: Um, I like it, but sometimes it can get in the way, if like, it gets jammed in cracks and stuff in the sidewalk.

Betsy Shallbetter: I was 17. I was quite frightened about using a cane, and uh, I can honestly say it took me a while to feel successful in traveling in my area.

Ashley: I wanted to use a cane.

Faith: Really good, I like it!

Ken Trebelhorn: I may be running into things and things like that, so I needed a white cane. Uh, In unfamiliar areas, as I normally don't carry a white cane (most people don't see me with one because I'm always in a familiar area), but when I do carry it, and when I did carry it for the, for the first time, of course I was very conscious of it; and, I thought people were looking at me and staring at me. Oh, they still do, but that's okay.

Ann Godwin: I don't think I had this epiphany of, "Oh my goodness, this is going to make me quote unquote independent," as much as I was impressed by how it let me know before I encountered an object. And also, I realized early on how tapping the cane enabled me to hear echoes of different objects and thereby just helped with general orientation and my sense of self in space.

(music)

Kadence: Hi, my name is Kadence, and next in our podcast we interviewed Holly Nordmeyer, our Orientation and Mobility instructor. She shared a lot about her work and the history of White Cane Day.

Kadence: How has MSAB celebrated White Cane Day in the past?

Holly Nordmeyer: Well, in the past, um, the way past, we did things like hung up signs in Faribault. They made a huge sign to remember the White Cane Day, and they hung it on Central Avenue, which is our downtown area where all the businesses are, just to get exposure there. And then, they also did articles, like in the newspaper, and radio interviews and things like that just to draw awareness to the White Cane Law.

(music)

Holly: And then, after that, we started with the White Cane walk, which was kind of (person's) instigation. She started it, and we all got together and thought it was a great idea, and we started in Faribault, um, with a proclamation. We requested a proclamation to commemorate the day in Minnesota, and then, um, we read that and we read the law, and we'd have singing, and we'd sometimes have speakers on what the law meant to them, and so that was in Faribault. And then we had a few more people get involved in it, and we started going to the capitol, and we alternated back and forth, and we, um, so right now the White Cane Day has become an event that is put together by the Minnesota Department of Education, and um, Minnesota State Academies, and then Blind Incorporated (which is in the Cities). And then the Lions Club, they are *huge* sponsors of it. And the National Federation for the Blind are huge sponsors of it. They help us pay for t-shirts and, and just multiple expenses that go along with white cane day. And um, yeah, so it's just, it's been a really good experience.

Kadence: That sounds like a long history!

Holly: That is quite a lot of history (both laughing) and here we are today (Holly laughs) going up to the capitol!

(music)

Kadence: So, um, I wanted to ask: what does White Cane Day mean to you personally?

Holly: Um, for me, I feel like it's an opportunity to create an awareness about a law that not too many people have to be concerned about because blindness and visual impairments are only, like, I don't really don't know the numbers. My point is, it's a very small percentage, and so people are kind of isolated, people don't quite understand--know how to react or know how to be around people with blindness and visual impairments--and, and they don't know how to respond to a cane when they see it. They don't always stop, and I just think it's a good opportunity to educate.

(music)

Holly: You were at the White Cane today. Did you meet a lot of people that you didn't know?

Kadence: Quite a bit.

Holly: Did you realize that there were so many people in Minnesota that use white canes?

Kadence: (brightly) No!

Holly: (reaffirms) No. So, I just think it's an opportunity to collaborate and to get together and to, um, yeah, celebrate the day and celebrate each other.

(music)

Kadence: Since you are an Orientation and Mobility Specialist, what exactly is an Orientation and Mobility Specialist?

Holly: Well, an orientation and mobility specialist is someone who's, um, in I believe most situations, it's a master's degree. I'm not sure if there's any programs that are not master's degree. And it's, and we've studied for, um, to understand vision loss, and we've studied to understand blindness. And then what it means: anywhere from someone who has been blind since birth to someone who loses their sight as an older person, and how to help them accomodate for their vision loss, um, when it comes to travel. And travel starts from crawling when you're born, right?

Kadence: Mhmm

Holly: And then...and then maybe when you are walking two or three years old, but you miss out on a lot of information because you don't see, so then you have to learn to pay attention to your other senses. So we start out there with understanding senses and understanding concepts, and then going on to travel within the home, travel within the community, travel within your school, right?

Kadence: (answers) Mhmm

Holly: So what are some places you guys have been for O and M?

Kadence: Um, we went to McDonalds that one time.

Holly: Yeah, we walked all the way. That was a long..almost a mile and a half. (Kadence laughs) And what kind of skills did you need to do that?

Kadence: Um, we needed to learn how to cross the road properly and to figure out where our position is by knowing what street we are on and what buildings we pass.

Holly: And sometimes you even wear a-

Kadence: ...a like...

Holly: Blind-

Kadence: yeah

Holly: Blindfold.

Kadence: Yep. Um, We wear blindfolds, and we went to Kwik Trip.

Holly: Mhmm. How was that different for you?

Ladence: Um, I couldn't see at all. I am visually impaired, but it's weird for me because I can still kind of see.

(music)

Kadence: Since you do, um, determine which cane is best for a student, for the students here, most of them at least. How do you do that?

Holly: Well, the way I do it okay so canes are generally measured anywhere from the sternum and some people go so far as up above the head, um, and so the length basically is determined by how long it takes you to recognize information and how fast of a walker you are gives you more response time and lets you check more a further distance away. A shorter one, you are less likely to trip or trip other people if maybe you are not as fast of a walker and you don't need as long of a cane. There's quite a few techniques that go with it. You have to do all these things like stay in step, and so you just want to clear what's in front of you, and so you want a cane length that's going to do it for you--to check and see where your feet are going to step next.

Kadence: What else would you like to share with us today?

Well, I guess I would just like to share, you know, being today was a day that we went to the capital and celebrated white cane day, I just want to say how incredible it was to have so many people that either have a vision loss or hearing loss (and a vision loss) or are totally blind or you know whatever their situation might be; or they know someone, or they're friends with someone, or they work with someone, but all together in one area: the rotunda, the capitol, and celebrating the same thing and recognizing the White Cane Law, and, um, just drawing attention to it. I just felt like there was so much energy there, and it was just a neat experience. So, if I could say anything I just really feel like all those people are amazing that were there today for coming to celebrate and recognize the law.

(music)

Josie: In the last part of our podcast, we would like to share a song that we wrote for the White Cane Day in 2018. The melody, lyrics, and production, was all driven by our students and guided by Jenny, music therapist and music therapy intern, Callie. Thank you for Kadence, Maddie, Riley, and Josie for putting this all together in our studio. To all of you, thanks for listening.

(Song)

Three drumstick clicks to signal the start of the song

12 beats drum set intro plus guitar

Group of students singing:

Stop (clap) when you see the white cane
Slow down, (clap) and stay in your lane
Wait (clap) 'til I cross the street
My white cane follows this beat.

(canes tap and hands clap the rhythm)



Some canes are metallic or white
Made of plastic or graphite
Tips can roll or tap or sweep
My white cane follows this beat

(canes tap and hands clap the rhythm)



All sing: *Stop (clap) when you see the white cane*
Slow down, (clap) and stay in your lane
Wait (clap) till I cross the street

My white cane follows this beat

(canes tap and hands clap the rhythm)



*Guide dogs help navigate
At crosswalks that means "please wait"
"Right of way!" I must repeat
My white cane follows this beat.*

(canes tap and hands clap the rhythm)



All sing: *Stop (clap) when you see the white cane
Slow down, (clap) and stay in your lane
Wait (clap) till I cross the street
My white cane follows this beat*

(canes tap and hands clap the rhythm)



Transcribed by: Mikayla Bohner