

# Developing Talents, Strengths and Interests to Discover a Dream for Tomorrow

Presented by-  
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Inspired by-  
Alana Scrano

In partnership with-  
University of Montana  
Montana Deaf-Blind Project  
Rural Institute Transition and  
Employment Projects

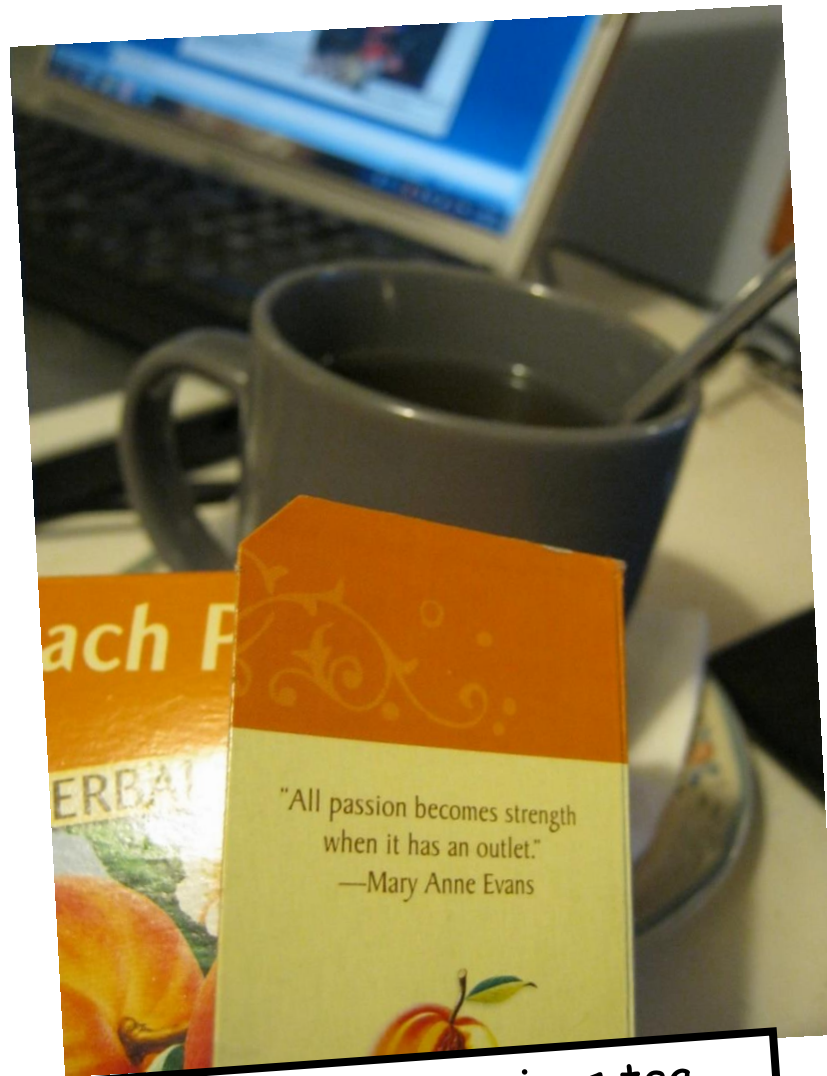
November 5, 2020



Alana threading pre-cored apples onto rods as a treat for our lambs.



Alana tossing sprouted barley into our ducks' pool.



I sipped Celestial Seasonings tea while preparing these slides. Ironically, the quote off the box read, "All passion becomes strength when it has an outlet."

## Goals for Today's Webinar-

1. Recognize the importance of preferred tasks (passions), even when they seem inconsequential.
2. Understand how the simplest of interests can open the floodgates of possibility into the vocational realm and beyond.
3. Value the development of a "Life Goal" to focus a vision and to wrap supports around that vision.
4. Empower all participants to see a bright future for youth in transition, especially those with a significant impact of disability.





Alana and her orphaned lamb.

Nearly 5 years ago, in a season of frustration, I pondered and settled on a "Life Goal" for Alana. "To live an engaged life full of joy and purpose that is rich in personal relationships," and it's been our mantra ever since. At about the same time, we started a Facebook page for her called, "Alana - A Jill of All Trades," and our hobby business and volunteering ventures began.

We're a work in progress, but here are some things we've learned along the way...

# Strengths, Preferences and Interests Matter... A LOT!

Office of Public Instruction PO Box 202501 Helena, MT 59620-2501		Individualized Education Program					
STUDENT INFORMATION							
Student's Name:		Initials:	Birth Date:	Age:	Gender:	Meeting Date:	Grade:
District / School:		Last Re-Evaluation:					
Federal Designation:		IEP Manager and Phone Number:					
Race(s):		Disability Category:					
6 : White							
White							
GUARDIAN INFORMATION							

## STRENGTHS, EDUCATIONAL CONCERNS AND PREFERENCES/INTERESTS

Strengths, Preferences and Interests - Student's Perspective:

Student Strengths:

Parents:

School Staff:

Educational Concerns:

Parents:

School Staff:

This information is a powerful springboard into "Measurable Annual Goals," and it's a way to begin forming a vision for life after graduation.

## CONSIDERATION OF SPECIAL FACTORS

	Yes	No
Does the student's behavior impede his/her learning or that of others?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the student have communication needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the student require assistive technology devices or services?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the student been determined to be an "English Learner"?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any item above checked "Yes" must be addressed in the IEP		
For a student with blindness or visual impairment	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A
Does the student need training in orientation and mobility?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If "Yes" is checked, training must be addressed in the IEP.		
Does the student need instruction in Braille or the use of Braille?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If "No" is checked, describe below why instruction in Braille or the use of Braille is not appropriate. This decision must be based on evaluation results.		

## TRANSITION SERVICES

For ALL students beginning with the IEP to be in effect when the child is 16 and updated annually thereafter.

## STUDENT'S DESIRED POST-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES:

(In the areas of postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living or community participation)



Alana and Brother Sal  
Hysham High School  
Graduation  
May 2019



Alana tending her mealworm farm - July 2020



Beginning in Alana's sophomore year, we used her talents, strengths and interests to brainstorm vocational goals.

Pushing-Pulling Carts,  
Dollies, Wagons

### Filling, Dumping, Pouring

- 1- Maintain bird feeders around the community (including the nursing home)
- 2- Bake bread using a bread machine
- 3- Water plants around the school
- 4- Maintain a gumball machine
- 5- Make concession stand popcorn
- 6- Make dog treats

### Shredding Paper

- 1- Bag shreds to be used in the nesting boxes of backyard chickens
- 2- Recycle old newspapers by adding shreds to a compost bin
- 3- Repurpose shreds into fire starts by adding melted crayons



- 1- Serve snack to the elementary students
- 2- Offer Italian sodas to middle and high school students
- 3- Make a mail run to the Post Office
- 4- Grocery shop for cooking and baking activities
- 5- Collect and shelve library books
- 6- Help with school recycling program

## IEP Goal-

With the help and/or supervision of her aide, Alana will engage in all steps of the dog treat dough making process in 5/5 trials.

### Step-By-Step Process

1- Gather all ingredients (flours, cornmeal, oatmeal, eggs, water, canola oil, peanut butter, vanilla)

2- Gather all tools (measuring cups and spoons, stand mixer, egg cracker)

3- Add all ingredients into mixing bowl

4- Mix ingredients

5- Clean Up

### Strengths, Interests and Preferences Built Into Each Step

1- Opening and closing cabinets, opening and closing refrigerator, turning on and off water faucet

2- Opening and closing drawers, pushing cart with stand mixer on top

3- Scooping and dumping, unscrewing and screwing lids, cracking eggs

4- Turning on and off mixer, watching dough mix

5- Opening and closing cabinets, opening and closing refrigerator, turning on and off water faucet, throwing egg shells in garbage

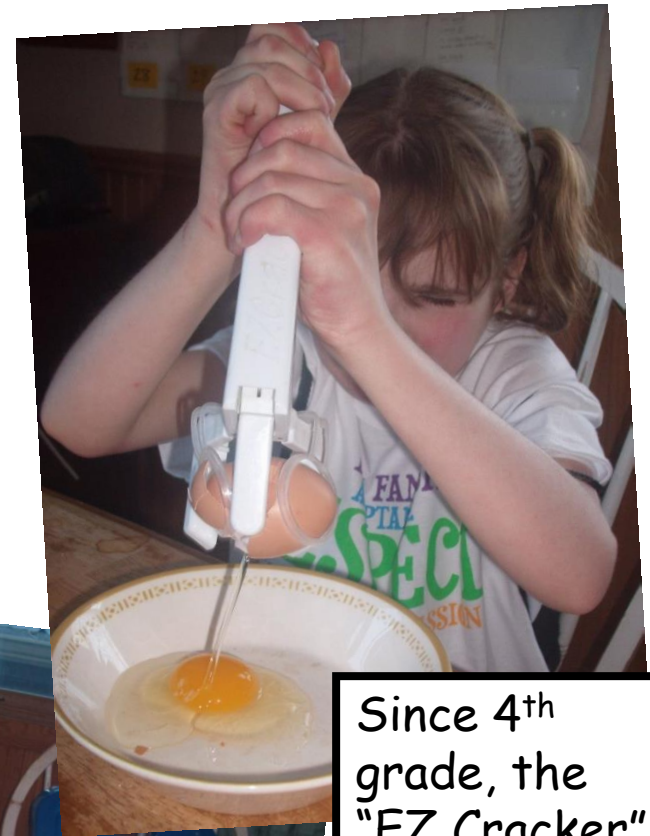
When the task itself is the reward, there is engagement, joy and purpose... In other words, Alana is living her life goal!



Alana loves pushing buttons and watching ingredients mix!



Alana enjoys peeling stickers, zipping, un-zipping and filling plastic baggies.



Since 4<sup>th</sup> grade, the "EZ Cracker" has been Alana's favorite kitchen gadget!



As Alana neared graduation, we continued to create opportunities for Alana to engage in her preferred tasks at school, in volunteer settings and at home. Now, with the challenges of COVID-19, we've been working harder than ever to give her more outlets for her passions at home.



We ❤️ making KONGS so much. So, we wanted to share all our tricks of the trade!

Do you sup

about 9 months ago · 327 views



34

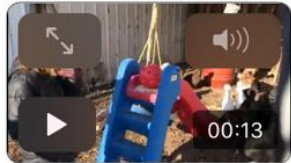


Just Mom & me at home tonight, so we worked on some outstanding orders. Although not one o

about 10 months ago · 283 views



31



Bowling 🎳 with the Birds 🐔

A plastic bowling set, drilled & filled with cracked corn, just

about 10 months ago · 175 views



46

Our Facebook page, "Alana - A Jill of All Trades," has a collection of videos that show Alana doing what she loves in activities and settings crafted for her success!



A Green Thumb, Orange Wheelbarrow and White Ducklings!!

We've been growing barley for our f

about 3 months ago · 115 views



26



Bottle feeding our lambs was starting to feel more like a rugby 🐏 match!! (The lambs

about 5 months ago · 204 views



39



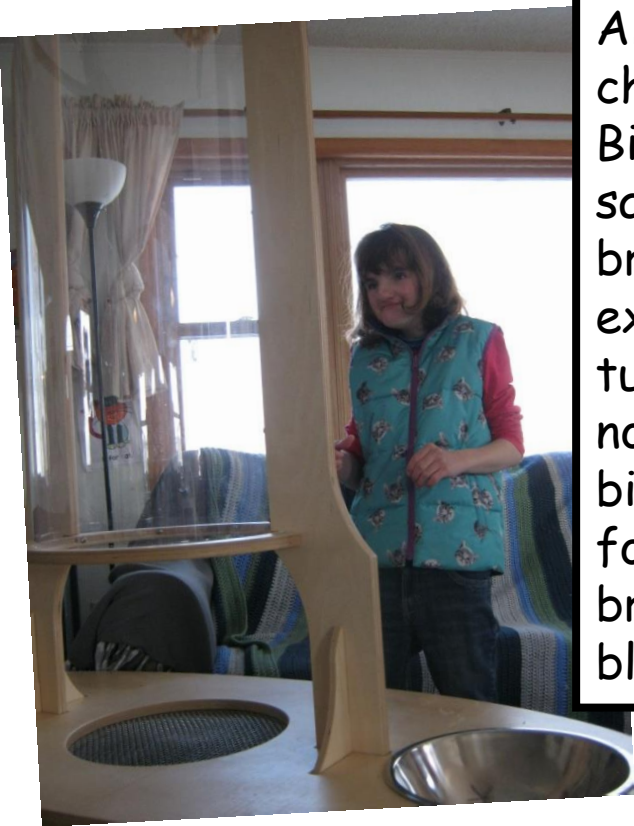
Hair Bands and Empty Cream Soda Bottles??

about 6 months ago · 210 views



30





Alana loves the children's museum in Billings, but now she's safer at home. So, we brought her favorite exhibit, the wind tunnel, to her! Alana now "throws clay birds" (paper plates) for her 10 year old brother and his NERF blaster.

Developing Alana's talents, strengths and interests has not only given her opportunity in the vocational realm, but it's given her an overall greater quality of life!



Alana also helps socialize our foster kittens by flinging cat toys using her wind tunnel.



Alana plays with our foster kittens in other ways, too. She enjoys shooting NERF blasters. So, attaching feathers, ribbon and a bell to the tip of a dart makes the perfect cat toy!

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, filling Alana's days with opportunity for engagement, joy and purpose is absolutely worth the effort!!

Alana's favorite job throughout her school years was raising and lowering the Flag. So, we found another way to use a pulley in a similar fashion...



Alana drops the empty bowls down and fills them.

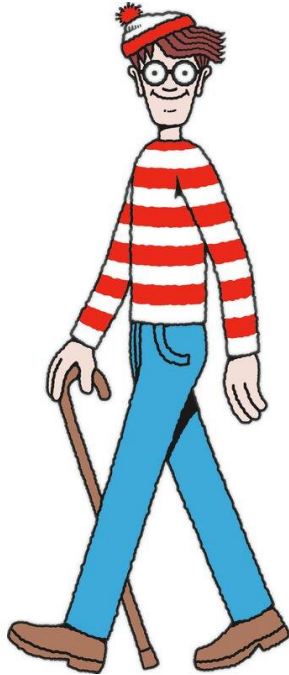


Our barn cat waiting patiently for breakfast.

After pulling the bowls back up and wrapping the rope, both Alana and the barn cats are pleased! (In the barn rafters, the bowls are accessible to the cats yet safe from the sheep, ducks and chickens.)

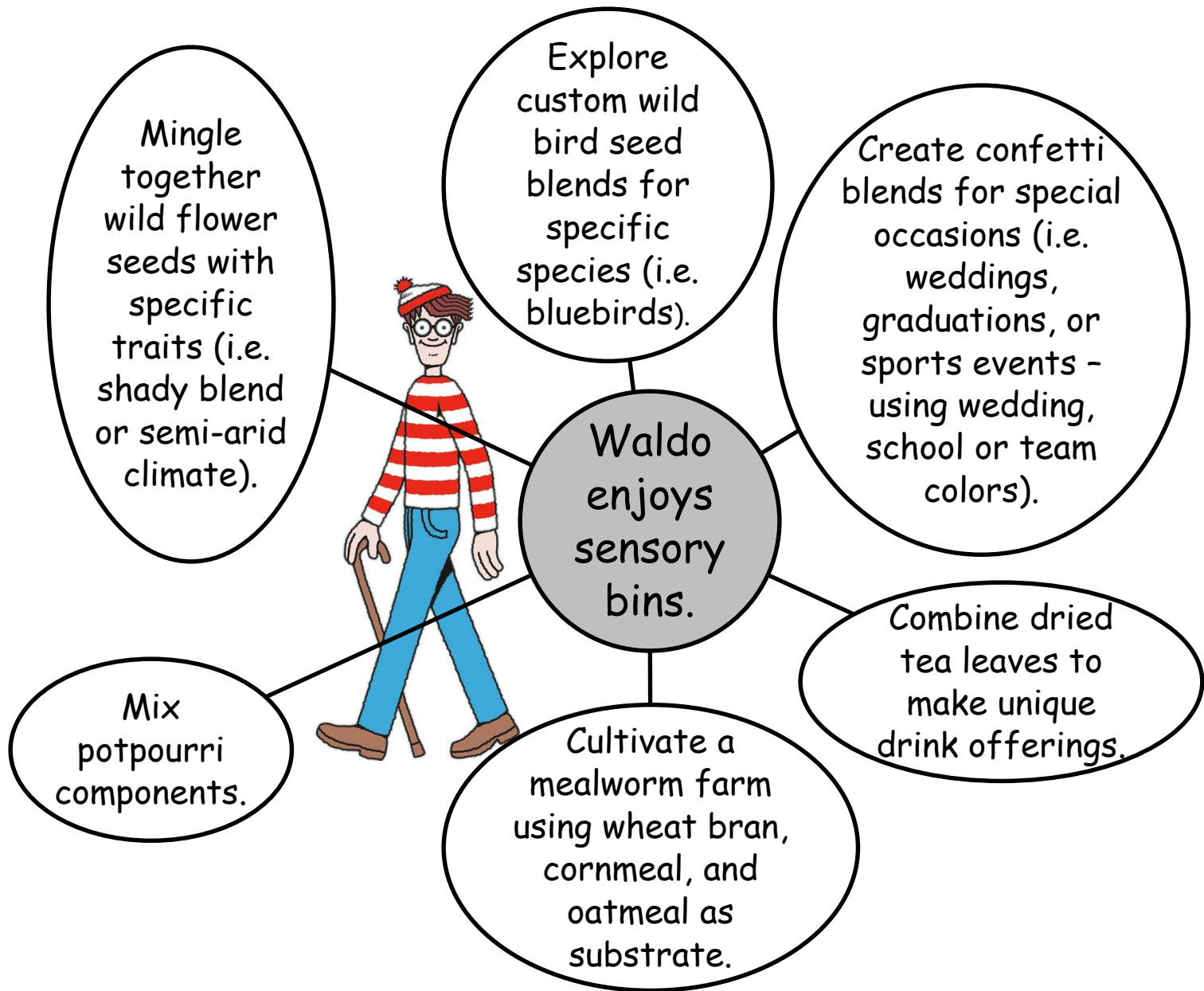


Although Alana is unique, applying the method of identifying and developing passions for another youth in transition is a similar process.



Meet Waldo! Waldo is a 16-year old male in his sophomore year of high school. Waldo has a non-verbal communication style. Waldo's free choice activity is almost always sensory bins containing dry materials (i.e. beans, rice, popcorn seeds, sand, or oatmeal). Waldo enjoys gentle rocking, swinging and bouncing on yoga balls. At home, Waldo sleeps with a weighted blanket in a hammock, and he is seldom without his dog, Rascal.

Understanding Waldo's preference for activities with high sensory input, which interests could his IEP team develop into vocational goals?







When making a custom bird seed blend for backyard chickens, Waldo used a blender with an adaptive switch to grind dried corn kernels. In this process, Waldo placed his cheek next to the blender, and he seemed to quite enjoy the vibrations!

Waldo's adaptive switch he's borrowing from...

**MonTECH**

<https://montech.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/>

So, his team began thinking of other activities Waldo may like that encompassed the sense of vibration. Since they were brainstorming, the team didn't want to analyze their ideas quite yet. So, they avoided questions like, "Is this practical?" "But how would we \_\_\_\_\_?" "What about transportation, cost and liability?" They didn't want to stifle the creative flow, because they knew they'd look at these details later on.

Using free association, Waldo's team listed the following ideas relating to vibration!

- Maintain a mealworm farm using an electric sifter to remove frass and eggs
- Polish rocks with a vibrating tumbler
- Grind coffee beans with an electric grinder

- Do laundry (agitating and spinning loads may be of particular interest)
- Prepare purées using an electric blender
- Assist in wood refinishing with an electric sander

- Mix paint colors with an electric paint shaker
- Deliver mail on a rural route with gravel roads!
- Refinish rink ice with a Zamboni
- Polish floors with a riding buffer

- Clean dirt from roads with a street sweeper
- Groom dogs with electric clippers
- Mop with an oscillating floor mop
- Sharpen pencils with an electric sharpener



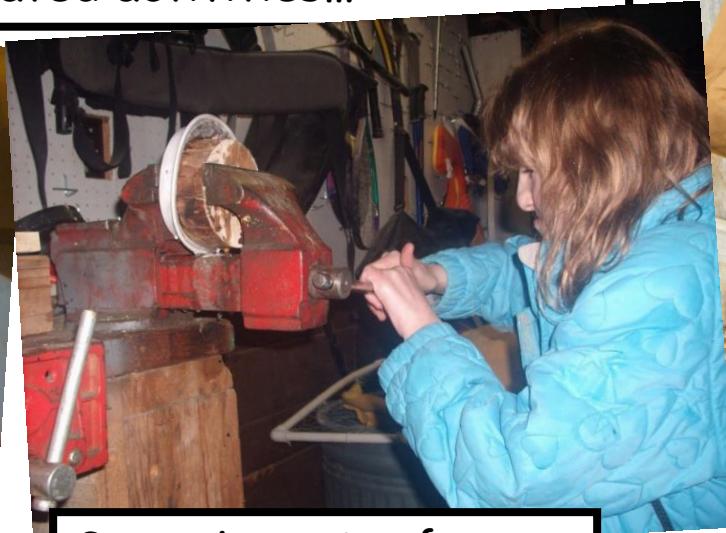


When identifying talents, strengths and interests, looking at MUCH older IEPs, IFSPs (Individual Family Service Plans), and evaluations (and notes) from private therapies may be helpful. We found that many of Alana's current preferred activities were actually identified back in early intervention!



Alana enjoyed playing with a Jack-in-the-Box as a toddler. With practice, she was even able to manipulate the hand crank! As a young adult, she still likes using a hand crank, and she likes these associated activities...

Rolling out dog treat dough with a pasta maker.



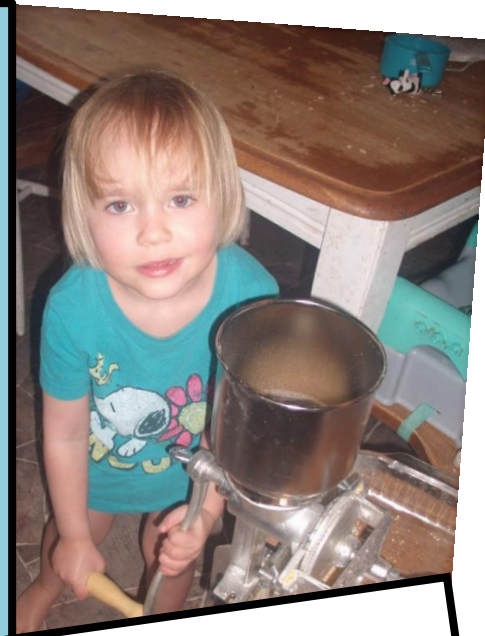
Squeezing water from pulp rounds using a vice (to make fire starts).



Tumbling yard waste and food scraps to make compost.

Not every idea was a hit with Alana. We found the hand-cranked grain mill was too difficult to turn. However, Alana's younger sister, Serena, jumped into help! We haven't completely abandoned the idea, and we have thoughts on attaching a longer crank to give Alana more leverage.

Because we're never quite sure if a new idea will work, we try our best to start small. Searching 2<sup>nd</sup> hand stores, yard sales, networking with family and friends or posting on local "ISO" pages is a good way to keep costs down in the exploring phases.



Serena, Alana's sister  
cracking corn for our chickens

What if you're having a mental block? Try typing the preferred activity into an online search engine, and go down those rabbit holes!! You'll be amazed at what you'll find!



What uses a hand crank?



- Butter churn
- Egg beater
- Coffee mill
- Meat grinder
- Salad spinner
- Clothes wringer
- Pencil sharpener
- Emergency AM/FM radio
- Emergency flashlight
- Apple peeler/slice/corer
- Antique sewing machine!



And, YES, antique sewing machines  
can be found for purchase online!

A "Life Goal" brings all systems and team members together to work for the same outcome. It also brings clarity and proper division of resources across those systems to support the goal.

DD  
(Developmental  
Disabilities)  
Adult Case  
Management's  
PSP (Personal  
Support Plan)

Use the goals in each  
of these 'separate'  
plans to support the  
LIFE GOAL!

To live an  
engaged life  
full of joy  
and purpose  
that is rich  
in personal  
relationships.

Voc-Rehab's  
IPE (Individual  
Plan for  
Employment)

School's IEP  
(Individual  
Education  
Plan)





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4. Empower all participants to see a bright future for youth in transition, especially those with a significant impact of disability.

Coming in February...  
How we turned our dream of a hobby business into a reality by seizing opportunity and building a community.



Questions? Thoughts? Did we miss anything?... Please reach out to us!  
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406.697.2083  
Facebook "Alana - A Jill of All Trades"



**Rural Institute**  
For Inclusive Communities



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For Inclusive Communities

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## MT Deaf-Blind Project

**HOME** ABOUT MTDB WHAT IS DEAF-BLINDNESS? PROJECT INITIATIVES  
RESOURCES EVENTS & TRAINING

EARLY IDENTIFICATION & REFERRAL FAMILY ENGAGEMENT ASSESSMENT, PLANNING & INSTRUCTION TRANSITION  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NATIONAL CHILD COUNT

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