

First Place Winner, Ciara Peterson

by Anthony Victor Reyes



Second-grader Ciara Peterson of Senita Valley Elementary School won first place in the Apprentice Category at the National Braille Challenge in Los Angeles on June 21st.

This competition hosted by the Braille Institute of America took the top 60 blind and visually impaired students in the United States and Canada. They were tested in braille literacy and composition.

"We were sitting at the table and Ciara just finished her dessert," said her mother, Kiana Peterson, recalling her experience when the winners were announced. "They gave a drumroll for the first place of Apprentice and they said her name. She said 'What? What? I won! What?' So we were all surprised and screaming and hollering."

Blind since birth, the 8-year-old received home visits at an early age from the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and the Blind, where they helped develop her motor skills until she entered preschool in the Vail



School District.

Since then, both schools have developed her academic skills, including braille, and along the way, got to know her as a person.

"She is extremely articulate and has a high vocabulary. She is very quick-witted. She has a sense of humor that outmatches her peers. I do

have to say she is definitely a little girl of character," said Elba Herd, SVE second grade teacher. "Ciara is highly motivated to do well. She has always put forth her best effort. She is always on task. She is very social and very artistic... If you hear her sing, it will give you Goosebumps. It will bring you to tears."

With high grades, not missing a question on the AIMS assessment and her recent success as the first Arizonan in the National Braille Challenge, VSD staff members believe that Ciara is paving a brighter future for all Vail students, visually impaired or not.

"It is a wonderful example to the students around her of the benefit of hard work and the benefit of achievement," said VSD Superintendent Calvin Baker. "Other students get to see and experience that reality - The reality that Ciara does have value; that she is a real person who can achieve really amazing things."

Many close to Ciara attribute her success to the support of the community.

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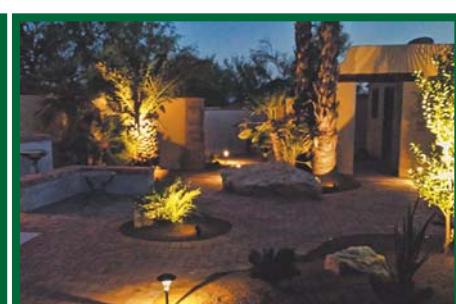
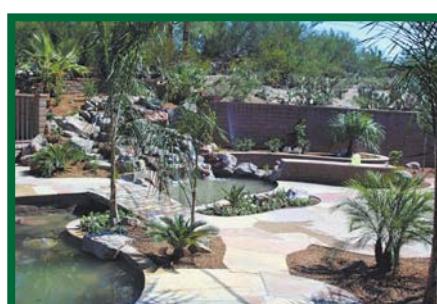
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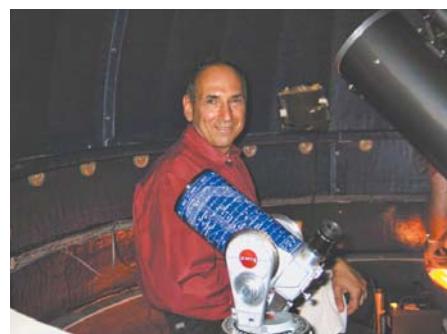


Not long ago, Wendee and David observed a bright flare in the North Eastern evening sky. The flare, from an Iridium satellite passing by, was briefly the brightest object in the sky

Most of us who have relocated to southern Arizona from other spots in the world have done so because of our state's magnificent climate. For most of the year the weather is mild; it is very hot and rainy during the summer, but even then, Arizona's climate is inviting. That climate for which we came includes the night sky. If the sky is clear, the evening begins with a lovely sunset with blues and pinks juxtaposing for leadership in the sky. The pinks vanish, leaving a deep blue darkening sky. Toward the east the sky seems much darker. This is the shadow of the Earth rising in the east. If you have come here from the northern states or Canada, you might notice that the twilight is considerably shorter here than what you're used to. The reason for the shorter twilight is that we are further south; the closer you get to the equator the shorter twilight gets. In Canadian cities like Edmonton at this time of year, twilight never ends; it lasts all night long. The twilight glow shifts from northwest to north to northeast, and then brightens into an early sunrise. Further north still, the Sun just doesn't set at all in summer. As twilight deepens here, you might possibly notice a soft teepee-shaped glow in the west called the zodiacal light. The English poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote of "her wild hollow hoarligh hung to the height" that in a rich line in his poem Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves could well refer to the zodiacal light, which Hopkins observed many times during his lifetime. The zodiacal light might have been easier to see in the nineteenth century

than it is today, but we can still see it, especially from the good sky that Vail usually has. Later this summer it will be visible in the east before dawn.

For now, as the sky gets dark, Mars will be visible as a brightish "star" in the southwest, and Saturn is another bright "star" in the south. The Big Dipper hangs high in the west. The two "pointer stars" at the end of the Dipper's bowl point to Polaris, the North star. If you draw an imaginary line to join the three stars of the Dipper's handle and extend it towards the south, you will "arc to Arcturus," a bright reddish star, and then continue in the same direction to "speed to Spica," a bright bluish-white star. Then toward the east, you may spot an isosceles triangle of bright stars. This is the Summer Triangle, with Vega the farthest west, Deneb towards the north, and Altair toward the south. Enjoy the dark sky from Vail!



Levy lives in Vail with his wife Wendee who helps him run the Jarnac Observatory located directly behind their home. He spends his days writing, editing, and giving speeches, but his nights staring up at the sky

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