



Giving the Gift of Reading

In this issue you will discover how ABLE is making a difference in children's lives, giving literacy and information through braille and digital audio reading. Find out about what is happening in the classroom and at the theater. Learn about the new ways we are teaching our digital audio volunteers. Celebrate with us our amazing donors and board of directors, men and women who create the framework for our volunteers to make a difference in recipients' lives.

In 2010, we produced over 150,000 pages in alternative format for over 2,000 recipients throughout Milwaukee, in Wisconsin and nationally as well. Here's a snapshot of some of our work. We can't wait to share with you our 2011 accomplishments in our spring 2012 newsletter.

Thank you, Mary!



After her internship at ABLE through Adonai Employment, Inc. in 2007, Mary Kellison has volunteered with a loyal and passionate dedication to ABLE, putting in over 600 hours from 2008 to the present. She is seen here receiving a service award from Matt Scholtes, ABLE's Office Manager.

"I was brought up to believe that the only thing worth doing was to add to the sum of accurate information in the world."
 ~Margaret Mead

Save the Date!

The 2012 Annual Awards Luncheon & Benefit
 will be held on **Wednesday, May 16th, 2012**

On May 19th, 2011, our local blind students gave a fantastic braille fashion show wearing clothes decorated with tactile objects meant to represent braille dots. They can't wait to perform at our 2012 luncheon!



Several major donors were recognized at our 2011 luncheon:

**Industries for the Blind, Chuck Lange,
 Outstanding Leadership Award**

Thank you, Chuck, for your tremendous leadership and incredible financial support!

Certificate of Acknowledgement for major donors:

Greater Milwaukee Foundation, Spirit Gifts Fund
 Your strong belief in literacy and access to information and your ongoing financial support means so much!

**Forest County Potawatomi Community
 Foundation**

Thank you for giving the gift of reading!

Do Fairy Tales Come True? Ask Lenore Tesch!

I'm going to tell you a story, a fairy tale. You will have to use your imagination because the princess was a young divorced mother of two, the cottage was really a two bedroom apartment, the castle was a tall office building, the dwarfs were really Patent Attorneys. You will note there is no Prince Charming because the princess found out the prince was not so charming after all.

Here goes:

Once upon a time, there was a princess who lived in a cute little cottage with her two lovely daughters. As time passed, the princess realized that she had to get a job, so she called upon her Fairy Godmother, who waved her magic wand and got her a job working in a castle for 16 very tall dwarfs.

“I’m going to tell you a story, a fairy tale. You will have to use your imagination because the princess was...”

The princess loved working for the dwarfs. They were very good to her. She didn't think she could ever leave them. She wanted to work there forever. Well, forever turned out to be only 45 years.

Now here comes the scary part—the fire breathing dragon. The fire-breathing dragon in this story was called “retirement.” Oh no! The princess didn't want to retire!

She was too young! She was only 67 years old. She didn't know what to do. She had no plans for the future.

Once again she called upon her Fairy Godmother who whispered one word into the princess' ear and that word was “brailist.”

Brailist. Well, the princess thought about it and thought about it. She thought about it for about two years and then said “why not?” So she left the dwarfs and took a course in Literary Braille which magically lead her on a path directly to ABLE where she lives happily ever after brailleing and volunteering.

Believe it or not, that's my story! I am a living Fairy Tale.



Lenore and her grandson, A.J., hard at work at ABLE!

A word of thanks to Lenore from Jane Moran, Teacher of the Visually Impaired:

I would like to pass on our many thanks for all the books you brailled for my student. He is able to fully participate in all the activities in the class and loves to have his own little books.

Thank you to you all for all your hard work!

Audrey and Kira Featured on “Making Milwaukee Great!”

In September, Milwaukee’s CBS 58 featured ABLE brailist Audrey Hemmer and Milwaukee Public Schools student Kira on their “Making Milwaukee Great” segment. You won’t want to miss the recorded program! Go to <http://www.ablenow.org/press.html>

The article from their website follows:

As Kira heads back to school, she'll be able to read the same books as the rest of her classmates, thanks to Audrey Hemmer.



Hemmer is a volunteer brailist with ABLE, Audio Braille Literacy Enhancement. For the last 30 years, she's spent her retirement brailleing more than 60,000 pages.

“It's been great and rewarding,” said Hemmer. “It keeps me happy and keeps me going.”

The brailist learned the skill because she was looking for something to do in retirement. It's as if she's made another career out of it: working 20 to 30 hours a week to make sure the children get their brailled books in time.

“Audrey is making sure that children and adults can participate along with their sighted peers so we have the

independence that others have,” said ABLE Executive Director Cheryl Orgas.

Visually impaired [blind] herself, Orgas was a recipient of ABLE's services before becoming executive director and she says the organization and Hemmer are vital to the community.

“Audrey has been an amazing volunteer,” said Orgas. “She is there for whatever we need. Whether it be brailleing or mentoring.”

There are a number of volunteer opportunities at ABLE and Hemmer points out it's a team effort that gets all the work done. She says she brailles the material, someone sorts it, and someone puts the books together.

“I would be sad if Audrey wasn't brailleing for me,” said fourth grader, Kira.

Hemmer is Kira's transcriber and the two were able to meet and read a story together recently.

“Audrey, thank you for transcribing my books,” said Kira.

“It was my pleasure. I enjoy reading the books,” said Hemmer.

ABLE is always looking for volunteers to help out. For more information on the organization, log onto www.ablenow.org.



ABLE wouldn't be ABLE without our volunteers!

We are very excited to welcome our fall 2011 class of audio readers who are using new digital methods such as Rode NT1a, shock mount, pop filter and microphone cable, and Blue Icicle analog to digital converter. Does that pique your interest? If so, give us a call! Special thanks to the Greater Milwaukee Foundation Sunrise Foundation Fund for financial support of this effort.

Our group is quite diverse including several librarians with read-aloud skills, one reader from Chicago and one returning experienced cassette reader.

Thank you to *all* our audio program volunteers!

Leslie Armstrong – 2004
 Bob Balderson – 2004
 Tom Brotton – 2011
 Lisa Christopherson – 2011
 Linda Cieslik – 2011
 Paulina de Haan – 2010
 Ann Diliberti – 2010
 Martha Donovan – 2011
 Judith Ebel – 2005
 Bill Fudge – 2008
 Eunice Gauger – 1995
 Nancy Gill – 1995
 Kristie Hayes – 2011
 Megan Hindman – 2011
 Eleanor Hoehn – before 1975
 Patricia Jipson – 1997
 Kathy Kerrigan – 2011
 Roger Kissinger – 2005
 Susan Knorr – 2011
 James Kuehn – 1988
 John Lonsdale – 2007
 Jennifer Lopeman – 2011
 Kathleen Luglio – 2004
 Shirley Miller – 1990
 Phyllis Mittelstadt – 1991
 Barbara Nevers – 1989
 Cynthia Otto – 2011
 Jean Peerenboom – 2009
 Diana Pine – 2005
 Margaret Plevak – 2003
 David Raasch – 2005
 Phyllis Ravel – 2010

Audio Volunteers, continued:

Lorie Rieden – 1985
 Barbara Siebecker – 2006
 Arlene Smicja – 1988
 Lisa Stackpole – 1995
 Lenore Tesch – 2004
 Bret Tuveson – 2010

Welcome, too, to our braillists in training, and heartfelt thanks to all who have given so much over the years!

Braille Program Volunteers

Barbara Althoen – 1998
 Joanne Braun – 2011
 Sin Leng Chan – 2010
 Giles Daeger – 1993
 Patricia Diel – 1998
 Kris Drollinger – 2009
 Kay Effinger – 1979-1995 and 2007-Present
 Claire Egan – 2011
 Audrey Hemmer – 1981
 Cindy Kaczmarowski – 2001
 John Kaczmarowski – 2003
 Cheri McGrath – 1997
 Karyl Price – 1998
 Edna Proeber – 1987
 Angela Scherbarth – 2010
 Lenore Tesch – 2005
 Becky Williams – 2009

In Training:

Elizabeth Hanson – 2011
 Jeanne Jordan – 2011
 Bernice Norman – 2011
 Christine Pruitt – 2011
 John Roberts – 2011
 Susan Roberts – 2011

And we would *never* forget our invaluable office volunteers!

Nancy Burneske – 2010
 Mary Kellison – 2008
 A.J. Meinig – 2009
 Melissa Panzer – 2011

ABLE Director Accepts Award

Cheryl Orgas, Executive Director of Audio & Braille Literacy Enhancement, 2007 to present, was given the George B. Walter '36 Service to Society Award by her alma mater, Lawrence University. This award is presented to recognize alumni of Lawrence University or Milwaukee-Downer College who best exemplify the ideals of a liberal education through socially useful service in their community, the nation, and/or the world.

At the Reunion Convocation on June 11, 2011, Lawrence University President Jill Beck read the following:

Cheryl, following the high expectations of your professors at Lawrence University, you have been a role model to the blind and an inspiration to those with sight.

Your tireless efforts to increase awareness of ABLE's services has given visually impaired people the ability to enjoy some of the things most of us take for granted — textbooks, magazines, menus, and even concert and wedding programs.

You've made it your mission to change people's misconceptions about blindness and to help those with visual impairments lead fulfilling lives. You have succeeded time and time again.

Cheryl was acknowledged for her passionate leadership of ABLE, her work with Wisconsin Braille and for her efforts in changing misconceptions about blindness. She has also been a tireless advocate for blind people with The National Federation of the Blind since 1982 and is very involved in her community.



Cheryl Orgas stands between the Lawrence University President Jill Beck (left), and the president of the Lawrence Alumni Association, Cathy Statz.

The Big Read Milwaukee



The Milwaukee Repertory Theater will be working with community partners to host events to promote and support The Big Read Milwaukee between September, 2011 and March, 2012. The events will include dramatic readings, book discussions, movie screenings, panel discussions, a keynote address, an art contest and The Rep's production of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

We, too, are taking part in The Big Read Milwaukee. Linda Vincent, Management Librarian for The Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library (WTBBL) and ABLE Executive Director, Cheryl Orgas, along with other blind adults, will lead discussions about the book with blind and visually impaired students at Roosevelt Middle School of the Arts and Rufus King High School. Students will be using their digital audio or braille book from WTBBL in order to participate in this experience.



Mayor Tom Barrett told us at the kick-off event to “get the book, read the book!” Our blind children at Milwaukee Public Schools will be getting the book and reading the book along with many other Milwaukeeans. We all hope to see the audio-described performance of *To Kill a Mockingbird* at the Milwaukee Repertory theater in February. We're excited that we're able to participate in this community-wide initiative!

Contact Us

Our office is open to the public Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m. till 4 p.m. ABLE is closed on days that the Central Library is closed. You may reach us by phone at **414-286-3039**, or visit our Website at: **www.ablenow.org**, or email us at **info@ablenow.org**.

We couldn't provide our services without the generosity of our donors,
March, 2011 – September, 2011. Thank you!!

Marilyn J. Wise

ABLE (formerly VSVH) Executive Director, 1988 – 1992

ABLE (VSVH) Administrative Assistant, 1986 – 1988

Died, May 14, 2011

Marilyn brought this organization from an informal group to a legal 501(c)(3) organization. She was a tremendous leader. I feel proud to be following her in this job as executive director. She will be remembered fondly by many.

-Cheryl Orgas

In Memory of Marilyn J. Wise

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\$10,000 and up

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Eppstein Uhen, Architects: In-Kind donation of 7 Dell Computers
 Lenore Tesch: In-kind donations of office supplies, baked goods, parking, a book purchase, etc.

ABLE participates in United Way's Community Campaign Donor Choice program. Thank you to our United Way donors.

We also thank those who made their online purchases or did web searches using GoodSearch and GoodShop. For more information, please see our website: www.ablenow.org.

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ABLE is so very fortunate to have a board of directors that is engaged, involved and committed to our mission.
Thank you, each of you!

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