

Wisconsin Braille
Vol. 21, Issue 1 Winter 2020

Dear Parents, Teachers, Transcribers and Other Supporters of Braille Reading,

Welcome to our Winter 2020 issue of the Wisconsin Braille newsletter. We have attempted to fill it with a variety of articles about our braille reading community. This issue contains pieces from members of our board, braille readers, transcribers and teachers of the visually impaired. In the future we hope to hear from you, our readers, about your uses, experiences, and views on the subject of braille and braille reading.

As mentioned, this edition of our newsletter has many authors. Ryley is a younger braille reader, who eagerly writes about using his electronic braille device. You will be fascinated to read about the many ways Ryley accesses the internet and more with this device. We also share with you a blog post written by Jack McPadden, a college student, who speaks about the importance of braille in his life. Erica Christie, a braille user, stay-at-home-mom and author shares with us her opinions of the importance of braille in the lives of visually impaired individuals. Of course, most of the braille that braille readers use would not be available to them without the many highly trained transcribers who spend countless hours transcribing print into braille. Kurt Pamperin at OSCI shared a "walk through" of the process of making braille available to the public via the OSCI braille program he directs. His description is quite interesting and informative!

We hope you enjoy this newsletter,

Alison McKee

How I use my braille note taker as a 6th grader



Hi, I am Ryley and I have been using a braille note since I was in 4th grade. I was happy when I had one in real life. Also I was learning about a bit of it on You Tube at home. It has been a great opportunity to check it out thanks to Mrs. T for taking the time to get a hold of

Humanware. After about 2 years of using the braille note Humanware made a little upgrade. The braille note that I am writing about is the Touch Plus. Any how I like it a

lot it has many new features that the original didn't. Now I will be going in to what I like about using my braille note.

I like using some of the applications because you can download third party apps on here and there are apps like other accessibility stuff on regular tablets but this one is a little bit better. Because it is kind of like a tablet but with a twist. It has a braille display and a accessibility voice. But what else can you do on this fancy device you might ask? Well when you need the Internet the Braille Note has got you covered. With these sources you can use Keyweb or normal Google Chrome you can use the Internet. But can it take pictures? Well the answer is yes it can take pictures there is a camera to take pictures and it can take some videos too. Now I will talk a little about ways I use my Braille Note. device.

Now here are the ways I use my Braille Note. I use my Braille Note for stuff like writing Google forms in this app called Google Classroom. My teachers send me some assignments and I fill them out using the Braille Note. I also use it for writing documents like this one for example on Keyword. But the most important thing I use it for is my project. I can find links on here then I can fill out the documents. Those are the ways I use my Braille Note.

This Braille Note is super fun once you know it. But when using it it is super fun. I would never ever forget about this Braille Note taker.

Thanks for this piece goes to CESA 12, Teacher of the Visually Impaired, Mary Theivagt

OSCI Braille, Its Functioning and How It Supports WisBri

By Kurt Pamperin

In July of 1997, as a progressive approach to inmate rehabilitation and solving a rapidly escalating need for high quality educational braille material for the blind and visually impaired community, OSCI (Oshkosh Correctional Institution) Braille was formed.

Following the structure of other prison-based braille programs, OSCI was conceived and implemented by David Hines, (retired); Judy Smith, OSCI Warden (ret.); and Mary Ann Damm and Constance Risjord, pioneering members of *WisBraille Inc.* David Hines oversaw the day-to-day running of the program at the prison. Mary Ann Damm and Constance Risjord, residents of Madison, made regular trips to Oshkosh to train the first six inmates in braille transcription. This was the pilot group. During that pilot year one book was transcribed. Since that first pilot program was launched in 1997 OSCI Braille

has become a very active and prosperous braille production program. It is now under the leadership of Kurt Pamperin.

The braillists at OSCI are certified in Literary braille, formats, music, and math (Nemeth). As such, they have produced braille, on request, for individuals, businesses and organizations across the country. On the educational front, OSCI Braille has produced textbooks for grades K-12 in all subject areas: college textbooks (advanced courses in math, economics, statistics, and biology), university class lectures and study assignments, and maps and miscellaneous tactile graphics for use in classroom settings. For the private sector, OSCI Braille has produced state proclamations, hotel directories, meeting agendas, miscellaneous forms, manuals for state agencies, business cards, and done custom embossing assignments.

FROM THE EDITOR: OSCI Braille has played a key role in helping *WisBraille* achieve one of its missions: to promote braille literacy in Wisconsin. *WisBraille Inc.*, supported by a generous grant from the Glen Stacey Fund, annually provides a select list of free braille books to Wisconsin blind children. OSCI Braille provides the transcription, embossing and other production services for this annual offering. Over 6,000 copies of 304 titles have been distributed since the *WisBraille* book project began. Without the services of OSCI Braille, *WisBrl* would not be able to complete its mission of promoting braille literacy here within the state.

Introducing Erica Christie

Hello there!!

My name is Erica Christie! I am a twenty-six-year-old Wisconsin resident, and I am honored to be able to share my opinions, experiences and concerns about braille with our readers. I am a UW-Whitewater graduate with a degree in Spanish Education and a double-minor in French Education and speech pathology. After college I worked as a speech therapy aid but now I am a stay-at-home mom working on raising my family and finishing writing a novel. Braille has made my dream of being an author possible and I am grateful for the time and privilege I am able to dedicate towards writing.

In my spare time (when I have any) I love watching movies, going for walks and spending time with family and friends. I am a social butterfly by nature and enjoy helping people, hanging out and having a tall glass of wine on a Saturday night. One day I hope my novel will be published and prosperous, so that I may take my family on book tours and travel to see the world.

Thank you again for the opportunity to express myself in this newsletter. I look forward to you all getting to know me better as my thoughts, beliefs and ideas shine through in articles and writing.

Bless it be, and stay wise.

Braille, the Gift of Independence

By Erica Christie

In this modern, twenty-first century world, technology is everything. Computers entertain our children, run our lives and foster 80% of our social interactions. Cell phones host our calendars, provide applications for banking, and enable our youth to be crippled by instant gratification. When a person wants to break away from the screen, feel a paperback book's pages turning in their hands, they are questioned, berated, and judged.

The evolution of technology isn't all bad, however. Modern advancements have allowed the disabled citizens of the first world a better chance of succeeding. Electronic implants have helped the deaf to hear. Powered wheelchairs have given mobility to those who cannot walk. High quality cameras, artificial intelligence, and electronically accessible materials have granted the blind with information and resources far beyond anyone's wildest dreams.

Braille in and of itself has evolved with the times. A new braille code has been instated to include symbols and language of the ever-growing internet. Electronic tablets have been constructed to allow braille books to be downloaded and translated with ease.

These same tablets can transcribe websites into braille, providing the blind youth equal access to social media, intellectual research and leisurely perusable web pages.

Yet, braille is fading. Braille users are becoming as rare as the people who prefer hard cover books. Some people attribute this to laziness. Some attribute it to flaws in our education programs. Some blame the parents of our blind youth for not electing to teach their children braille. Learning braille takes discipline, time and energy most people in this fast-paced society are not willing to give.

Perhaps it is a combination of all those things. Perhaps braille is fading out because people don't understand it's importance. Parents of children in school are thrilled and expectant that their sighted children learn to read independently. Yet, parents don't wish the same of their blind sons and daughters. They think technology will save them. They believe their children don't need to learn such an archaic form of communication, but they are wrong.

Braille gives us independence. It gives us a form of self-expression. It allows us to read classic literature, communicate on the world wide web, and maintain normalcy in a world not so normal. Braille allows us to sort our mail and order food in restaurants. Braille will be there in paperback books and on cardstock pages when technology finally fails us. Audio books, voice over software and the eyes of others foster a false sense of security, manipulating our community to believe braille is not important or useful. This way of thinking is detrimental to how far we have come as successful blind people of the world.

I implore you to teach braille to your children. I beg you to save the legacy of Louis Braille and all he stood for. Teaching our children braille will unleash their inner strength. Teaching them braille is the first, and most crucial step to showing them they can do anything they set their minds too. Give your children the gift of braille, and you will give them the gift of life, independence, and the world.

Wisconsin Braille Welcomes New Board Member David Grulke

David Grulke was born in Madison, Wisconsin in 1968. He grew up on a farm 5 miles east of Sun Prairie. During 7th-12th grade David attended the Wisconsin School for the Visually Handicapped (WSVH), now known as the Wisconsin Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (WCBVI) in Janesville. David has multiple disabilities, but lives in his own apartment, independently, with the help of his wonderful caregivers who make it all possible and does volunteer work when he is able to fit it into his busy life. David attends board meetings in person and remotely, via speaker phone. He has been a Wisconsin Braille Board member since April 2019.

Welcome, David. We greatly appreciate your service.

Braille Corner



Article Correction

In our last issue of Wisconsin Braille (Vol. 20, Issue 3: Fall 2019) The Braille

Corner article ***TEST YOUR BACK TRANSLATOR*** had an error.

The sentence that was incorrectly published was:

the Second World War² 1939—1945.³



It should have been:

the Second World War² 1939—1945.³



A Perspective On Being a Young Braille Reader

*The following story was first posted by Jack McPadden on the **Inside NBP** blog on December 12, 2019. This story was written as a fund-raising tool for National Braille Press's Children's Book Club, and we believe it speaks well to experiences we hope all braille-reading children are privy to by way of being connected to the Wisconsin Braille free braille book project. For more information about our free braille book offerings please visit: wisbrl.org and click on the "book project" link. Here is Jack's story:*

My Life as a Braille Reader By

Jack McPadden

When I was two years old, my mother and my Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) acquainted me with braille by placing embossed braille in front of me. By age three, I learned how to read and write short words in braille. One of the first words that I ever wrote on the braille writer was "cab." Slowly, as my TVI instructed me as to which dots to press, I understood how to produce for myself the very same braille that I had learned to read. To this day, my family still keeps and treasures the half sheet of braille paper with that one word, "cab," which I brailled sixteen years ago.

Throughout preschool and kindergarten, my braille instruction progressed to encompass reading and writing my name and larger words. Just as children with sight began to open and read aloud their first print books, I too got to select a braille children's book from NBP's catalogue and, with care, trail my fingers across the pages. "I can do it," I would read aloud to my mother from an uplifting, beginners children's book. "You can do it too," I would continue. I particularly enjoyed reading aloud the books from National Braille Press's Children's Braille Book Club, among them *Green Eggs and Ham*, by Dr. Seuss; the Froggy series, including *Froggy Goes to Bed* and *Froggy Eats Out; Noodle*, a story about a long dachshund; and books from the Curious George series. Braille afforded me the same access to literature and opportunities for success as

my peers. Your donations to NBP have helped shape my education and love of reading; thank you!

In the classroom, textbooks produced by National Braille Press ensured that I had the same materials as my peers and could engage in the day's lessons independently. That independence carried on outside the classroom, where braille has proved integral in my enjoyment of activities such as reading news articles, accessing social media applications, and volunteering to organize fundraisers for dog rescue organizations. Just as it has been in the past, braille will undoubtedly prove essential to me in the future. Currently, National Braille Press is converting into braille a statistics textbook that I will require in the fall. Without this textbook, I could not succeed in this course, which is required for my major in psychology, and thus my future career. I can honestly attest that your generosity helps our future by providing access to the printed word. Thank you for making this equality possible for me and thousands of children, students, and adults who are blind. I hope you can continue to help pave the path for literacy.

Please Join Us For Our Next Board Meeting on March 21, 2020 Braille

Library and Transcription Services

6501 Watts Rd., Suite 149, Madison

(Take the Gammon Rd. exit ramp on Hwy. 14/18)

10:00-12:30 (Business Meeting)

1:00-2:30 (Annual General Membership Meeting) Our

meetings are always open to the public.

Wisconsin Braille Board of Directors Nomination Slate 2020-2022

Officers

President:

Sandy Adams (2020-2022)

Secretary:

Cindy Collins (2019-2021)

Vice-President:

Leanne Dieck (2019-2021)

Treasurer:

Linda Bailey (2020-2022)

Directors

David Grulke (2019-2021)

Faith Kelly (2019-2021)

Kurt Pamperin (2019-2021)

Connie Risjord (2019-2021)

Alison McKee (2020-2022)

Kevin Jones (2020-2022)

Judith Sherry (2020-2022)

The election of these nominees will occur during the afternoon general Membership meeting, starting at 1:00. Nominations are still open for an additional three directors.

Contributors to this issue are: Sandy Adams, Erica Christie, Cindy Collins, David Grulke, Jack McPadden, Kurt Pamperin, Ryley and Mary Theivagt

Membership Form

Indicate your membership level below

Regular membership, annual dues \$10 _____

Sustaining membership annual dues \$30 _____

Lifetime membership \$200 _____

Additional donation \$30 _____

Total amount enclosed

Check () cash () money order ()

Donations to *WisBrl* are tax exempt.

Personal Information

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

2020: () New member () Renewal

Make checks or money orders payable to **WISCONSIN BRAILLE INC.**

Online registration available at WisBrl.org

Newsletter format requested (choose one)

Regular type _____

E-mail _____ Braille

What is your affiliation with the braille reading community? (Check all that apply.)

Teacher _____ Producer _____ Ed. Assist. _____

Transcriber _____ Proofreader _____ Parent _____

Administrator _____ User _____

Other (specify) _____

Return application payment to:

Membership Chair

557 Milky Way

Madison, WI 53718