



Audio & Braille Literacy Enhancement, Inc.

Providing alternative ways for people with print disabilities to read

Spring 2017

Central Library Building 803 W. Wells St. Milwaukee, WI 53233
(414) 286-3039 www.ablenow.org

Going Strong, After All These Years!

ABLE has been providing alternative ways for people with print disabilities to read for over 52 years. We began our services in 1965 for two schools making braille available to blind children in Wisconsin. We soon broadened our services to offer audio recordings and we have been offering braille and audio production ever since. I was one of those first blind students back in the 60's getting my braille books at the same time as my sighted peers.

I know just how important our work is because I was that student who needed brailled assignments. ABLE gave me the tools I needed to succeed academically in a sighted world, eventually leading me to run the very organization that served my educational needs for so many years. I feel so privileged and honored to lead this organization into the future.



Cheryl Orgas, one of the first student recipients of our brailled materials; Executive Director of ABLE since 2007

We Couldn't Do It Without Our Generous Donors



Sujatha Aswath and Bob Norman from Eppstein Uhen Architects presenting the first \$5K installment of our grant

We are very grateful to the many donors that make our work possible. Without you, our doors would be closed. We would like to highlight one business in particular.

In November of 2015, ABLE was nominated for a grant from the Eppstein Uhen Foundation. Part of their mission is "to provide help where it is needed most with an emphasis on our youth, developing the skills or experiences that foster long-term growth beyond the life of the help we give." This community-minded business gives one Community Impact grant to a Milwaukee nonprofit and one to a Madison nonprofit, payable over three years. We received a site visit in late March of 2016 and were notified in April that we were chosen. We were delighted to welcome Sujatha Aswath and Bob Norman to our luncheon where they awarded our first year's grant. Thank you for helping us put braille and tactile graphics into the hands of blind children.

ABLE's Annual Luncheon, May 10, 2017

You won't want to miss the 2017 ABLE Annual Awards Luncheon & Benefit! Together we will celebrate 52 years of serving the audio and braille needs of blind and visually impaired people in our community and beyond. Join us in honoring and acknowledging our dedicated and loyal volunteers.

When? Wednesday, May 10, 2017
11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Where? Italian Conference Center, Milwaukee
Signature sponsor, Industries for the Blind

Please contact our office at (414) 286-3039 no later than May 3rd for more information and reservations.

At the 2016 luncheon, ABLE board member and Milwaukee Public Museum partner, Dawn Koceja, shared a video featuring our collaboration to make the Crossroads of Civilization exhibit accessible for blind and visually impaired individuals. Be among the first to see the video about our continued collaborative work, which will be shown at this year's annual luncheon.



*Dawn Koceja, ABLE Board Member and
Milwaukee Public Museum Accessibility Coordinator*

It's never too late to learn new things!!

Our volunteer braille team has been working hard the last few years not only producing professional braille for our recipients but also continuing braille transcription while having to learn a new code, Unified English Braille and Formats 2016. It's been a challenging few years. Our team is committed and passionate about braille. They have risen to the occasion!



*ABLE braille team learning
Unified English Braille*

Our organization was created by a dedicated team of volunteers in 1965 and our volunteers are still the heart of our organization. Our braille, tactile and audio volunteers gave over 9,000 hours of time in 2016. The Independent Sector calculates the in-kind dollar value of this work at \$214,207.52. However, the value of the work ABLE does is best understood through the words of our recipients:

"I can personally say that ABLE has helped not only me, but all of the students in Milwaukee Public Schools with braille needs. Our braille is always delivered in a timely fashion, so that we can all do our work in class along with the other students. We are not left behind—because we have our braille."

—Carlos Garcia, a student at Rufus King High School

Do volunteers have to live locally?

Absolutely not!

Cheryl Esquilin has been brailleing for ABLE since 2011 after taking a rigorous braille course. For a while Cheryl would volunteer at the office late May through early November and then braille the other half of the year from St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. Well, now she brailles from St. Thomas all year round! Cheryl is one of our award winners for 2017 giving over 2,000 hours.



May we join you on your balcony in St. Thomas, Cheryl?

Sue Roberts, another brailist from afar, brailled from Tennessee for a long time but recently relocated with her husband to Florida and yet she continues to braille for us. We are very grateful to Sue not only for her generosity in giving over 1,000 hours in braille transcription since 2011 but also for her efforts in procuring a \$2,000 community grant from her past employer, IBM, in recognition of her volunteerism with ABLE.



Sue Roberts, continuing her commitment to braille transcription from Florida

But Many Volunteers Do Live Locally

Besides keeping our studio and long-distance readers busy, we still keep our home readers busy with requests from individuals locally and throughout the country as well. Many of our home audio readers will be getting an award this year.



Audio volunteer Dave Raasch recording at home

Our studio reader, Tom Littellmann, comes in twice a week, has read over sixteen books and is the first studio reader to receive a service award.

Here is Betsy Comstock's comment about one of the books Tom read:



Tom Littellmann

"To the man who recorded *Ill Met by Moonlight* for me: Thank you so much. What a wonderful gift. I stayed up until 4:00 a.m. listening. I relived the experiences

described in the book and my own experiences as an archaeologist in Crete. I climbed Mt. Ida in the daytime, without German patrols nearby, only a few shepherds. Thank you for your brave efforts with all of the Greek names for people and places in the book."

Pictures Are for Blind People, Too!

Tactiles are raised line drawings that are especially critical in STEM classes (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). Thanks to the Forest County Potawatomi Foundation we were able to purchase a tactile embosser that produces tactiles more than three times faster than our previous embosser. In 2016, ABLE produced 1,781 tactile pages, a 33% increase over the previous year! ABLE is ensuring that these students have equal access to meaningful learning materials that allow them to understand concepts such as mathematical graphs, molecular structures, or other technical depictions that are difficult, if not impossible, to explain in words alone. Creating tactiles is time-consuming and challenging, and yet we produced six times as many in 2015 as in the previous year and another third more in 2016.

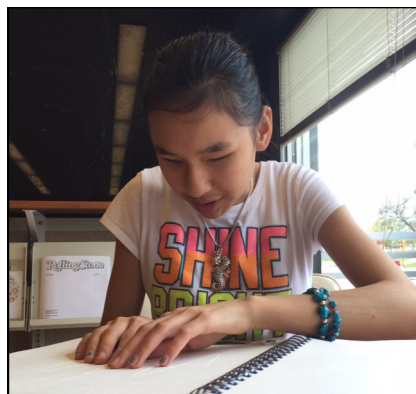
To keep up with this growing demand for our services, ABLE needs to recruit, train, and mentor a new group of volunteers—both tactile artists and braillists.

John (Kacz) Kaczmarowski has been a tactile artist with ABLE for over 15 years. He uses all kinds of tools and supplies to make tactiles by hand. This is still a very meaningful way of creating tactiles.



Volunteer Kacz, applying his skill and experience, and using the tools of the art

“ABLE saved me! Diagrams of molecular structures, the Pythagorean theorem, the digestive



Xin Ju Hippe, now a freshman at Rufus King High School, reading a tactile graph

tract of a worm, tests and worksheets in Spanish—these are just a few of the things ABLE prepares for me. It means so much to me, because I know what it feels like *not* to have what I need. ABLE has supported me so much.”

We now have also begun making tactiles digitally. With the help of creative volunteers and staff and great software programs, we are able to produce tactiles more quickly. It must be said, however, that quickly is a relative term. It can take 8 to 10 hours to produce a complex tactile map. Now with the continued increase in demand we are working with new volunteers who are creating tactiles from home. Antonio Fernandez Gonzalez, who joined our volunteer team in 2016, is particularly good at making maps.



Welcome to the team, Antonio