



Audio & Braille Literacy Enhancement, Inc.
 Providing alternative ways for people with print disabilities to read
 Central Library Building 803 W. Wells St. Milwaukee, WI 53233
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Fall 2021

The Advocators Comic Book

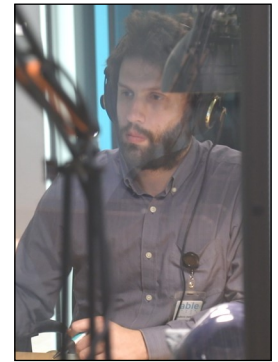


We're excited about a project that we completed in the autumn of 2020 in both the audio and braille departments. We had the privilege of narrating and brailleing *The Advocators* comic book, the first in a series of stories advocating for the rights of youth who are disabled, focusing on the abilities of individuals with disabilities.

Through AccessAbility Inc., in Charleston, South Carolina, fifty copies were made available, produced in braille by ABLE. An audio recording is available on their website, <https://www.abilitysc.org/theadvocators/>, read aloud by our

The Advocators first issue!

very own Audio Manager Andrew Jambura. Check it out! We're eager to see what happens next in *The Advocators, Issue II*!



Andrew Jambura narrating "The Advocators" in the ABLE Sound Center

When Some Doors Close, Other Doors Open

After many years of great service as our audio coordinator and network administrator, Richard Robbins retired this year. Our deepest gratitude to Richard for helping us bring the dream of the Audio Sound Center into reality. Replacing Richard as our IT consultant is Rich Pine. With much expertise in helping organizations work virtually, Rich has already proved to be a tremendous asset for ABLE. Welcome, Rich!

Dylan Shanahan was hired in 2019 to replace Richard as audio specialist, and Andrew Jambura, at ABLE since 2014, replaced Richard in audio management. Our audio team is well situated to continue offering quality audio materials to ABLE recipients.

After being with ABLE since June 3, 2002, Kathy Bruening, our braille specialist and EBAE/UEB certified braille transcriber, retired. The good news is she will stay on as a volunteer braille transcriber! Kathy's legacy lives on in the thousands of brailled documents that have her name on them as the transcriber.

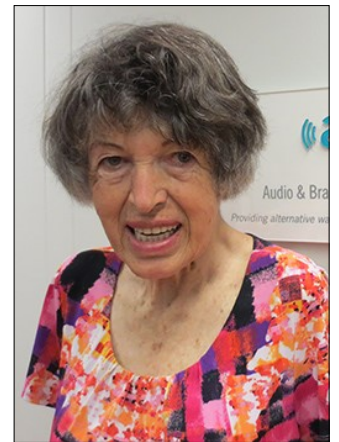
With Kathy's retirement, we have a new braille production manager on staff. We're delighted to introduce you all to our new staff person Meghan Swanson. Meghan comes to us with excellent organizational skills, a strong passion for braille, a winning personality, and an eagerness to learn. I asked her to share with you a little bit about herself. Meet Meghan on Page 3. Welcome, Meghan!

Celebrating our Passionate and Committed Volunteers

Audio & Braille Literacy Enhancement thrives because of our amazing volunteers. In 2020, this awesome team gave a total of 6,796 hours. We are disappointed that for two years in a row we have not been able to acknowledge our volunteer award winners at our ABLE luncheon because of the pandemic. Help us celebrate here! Along with our sincerest thanks, our 2020 volunteer awards go to:

Sue Roberts	2,500 hours	Certified Braille Transcriber
Janet Kiekhofer	1,500 hours	Certified Braille Transcriber & Office Assistant
Carol Hioki	1,000 hours	Tactile Graphic Artist
Tom Littellmann	1,000 hours	Audio Narrator
Kathy Kerrigan	750 hours	Audio Narrator
Tony Szymborski	750 hours	Braille Transcriber
Mary Ann Hand	250 hours	Audio Reviewer
Adam Koebel	250 hours	Audio Narrator
Carol Paulson	250 hours	Optical Character Recognition
Scott Paulson	250 hours	Optical Character Recognition
Craig Pierce	250 hours	Audio Narrator
Janet Zoltan	250 hours	Audio Narrator

A special highlight this year goes to Barbara Althoen, who has been with us since 1997. Barbara received her National Library Service Braille Certification after learning braille in the late 90's and hasn't looked back since. Barbara has transcribed nearly 25,000 pages of braille, giving ABLE 23,307 hours of volunteer time! She was also on ABLE's Board of Directors for eleven years, including two years as board president, representing the needs of those for whom braille is their primary medium for reading. She was instrumental in creating a fee-for-service policy for individuals, charging braille readers no more than it would cost them to purchase the same material in print.



Barbara Althoen

Barbara is one of our go-to braille transcribers when we need something quickly. She goes above and beyond whenever she takes on complex projects. In the last seven years she has learned the new braille code, Unified English Braille, and has taken a great liking to the special braille code for math: Nemeth. And, she has even taken on UEB with Nemeth, and stays well ahead of her students. In fact, our braille manager consults with Barbara whenever they are working on a complex math project. Our manager sees Barbara as a volunteer partner in UEB with Nemeth math production. Barbara has done a wide range of assignments, from many complex math and science books and handouts, to the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra program and the libretto for the Florentine Opera.

When asked what she thought about being a brailist Barbara replied, "Braille is in my soul. My favorite day of the week is my volunteer day at ABLE, even better than my weekends in Door County."

Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library Celebrates 60 Years of Service



Cheryl Orgas & Zarina Mohd Shah proudly display proclamations

The Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library (WTBBL) is celebrating 60 years of service this year. In recognition of their anniversary, WTBBL received commendations from Governor Tony Evers and Mayor Tom Barrett, the latter declaring Friday, October 8th, as Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library Day.

Videographer Andrew Feller spent the day on October 6th filming a promotional video for the service. Library Services Manager Zarina Mohd Shah and Outreach Librarian Katie Saldutte will appear in the video alongside Audio & Braille Literacy Enhancement's Executive Director and WTBBL patron Cheryl Orgas. When completed, the video will be added to the Library's YouTube page and the Accessibility Services page of mpl.org, as well as to ABLE's website.

A few words from Cheryl Orgas: "As a patron of WTBBL since October of 1968, I am so grateful for this service. I've read thousands of books

through audio and braille means for 53 years. From mystery series, to nonfiction books, to books in braille we read to our sighted son, this accessible library has had a great impact in my life. As the executive director of ABLE, I am proud to be the nonprofit organization providing braille and audio recordings for WTBBL. I am especially proud to have volunteers now working in our ABLE Sound Center, with editing staff creating books that can be put on BARD, the National Library Service's braille and audio download site, for thousands of people to read in Wisconsin and throughout the country."

Welcome, Meghan!

Hello! My name is Meghan Swanson and I'm the new braille production manager at ABLE. A Milwaukee area native, I received my bachelor's degree at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, in 2018. My journey with ABLE began in September, 2019, when I came for a visit after connecting through VolunteerMatch. I really enjoyed my visit and beginning to learn the braille alphabet. When COVID hit, I had some extra time on my hands. I began taking the Literary Braille Transcription course through the Library of Congress. I have been lucky enough to work on some OCR and braille projects with ABLE.

I have a BA in Creative Writing from Northwestern and an MA in English from Mount Mary, so you might be able to tell that I'm a reader and that literacy for all is important to me! I'm excited to help provide accessible materials to our community and to explore an area of work that has really engaged me intellectually and fulfilled me thus far. I'm looking forward to communicating (and hopefully meeting) with as many of you as I can!



*Meghan Swanson,
Certified Braille
Transcriber,
Unified English Braille*

Thank You, Tom Gauthier



Tom Gauthier

Tom Gauthier, who served on ABLE's Board of Directors for ten years and was an active committee member for another three years, planned ahead for ABLE's long-term success. More than ten years ago, Tom made ABLE the beneficiary of a life insurance policy and later added ABLE to a second life insurance policy. This wonderful man, generous in many ways, died on January 13, 2021, leaving ABLE this long-term gift of nearly \$25,000. As deeply saddened as I am not to have Tom in my life, I am reminded how important ABLE's future was to Tom. He truly believed in our mission to make the printed word available to all. Please share in Tom's legacy by making ABLE the beneficiary of one of your life

insurance policies or by donating at www.ablenow.org. You may also make an IRA rollover gift by simply contacting your IRA custodian and requesting that an amount be transferred to ABLE by wire or check. I know Tom would be proud to be leading the charge of creating a legacy for ABLE. We are so very grateful for *all* of his contributions to ABLE.

-Cheryl Orgas, Executive Director

Thriving in the Pandemic



Studio reader Adam Koebel

As with most of the world, the COVID-19 pandemic was a shock to the ABLE team. On our last day in the office, March 17, 2020, some thought we'd be back in two weeks; I said a month. Little did we all know that 18 months later ABLE would still be operating differently.

As with so many other nonprofit organizations in our community, ABLE adapted our services in order to keep our staff and volunteer team safe while getting our blind and print disabled recipients the

braille, tactile and audio materials desperately needed. We took actions to reduce the potential for exposure to the virus for our staff, volunteers, and those we serve. During the shutdown we were able to work virtually, thanks to a highly skilled IT team, and we can now work efficiently from our homes as necessary. We currently have a hybrid model, with some of the staff working both at home and in the office, some working from home, and others regularly in the office.



Dylan Shanahan using an embosser

I am so grateful for the resilience and dedication of all our staff and volunteers!

-Cheryl Orgas