



**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  
(414) 286-3039 www.ablenow.org

Spring 2023

## Celebrating ABLE Volunteers

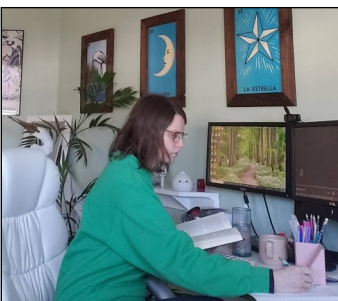
To honor and celebrate our volunteers during International Volunteer Month, this newsletter is dedicated to the amazing group of people who make a difference in the lives of blind and print disabled individuals every day. ABLE started in 1965 with a strong team of volunteers and is *still* going strong because of the dedicated hearts and hands of these extraordinary individuals. Volunteers work anywhere from four to thirty hours a week, putting materials into audio, braille or tactile formats. In 2022, our volunteers gave a total of 9,256 hours of dedicated service. Have you ever wondered what goes on behind the scenes at ABLE? Read on!

### Audio

There are three volunteer roles in the audio department: at-home reader, in-office narrator and at-home audio reviewer. At-home readers use their own computer and a microphone to read individual requests for print materials to be transcribed into audio. Such requests might be for a manual, or a motivational, spiritual or self-help book. In-office narrators read a book in the ABLE Sound Center, assigned to them by a staff member. These volunteers first must read the book at home to become familiar with it, its characters, and any unusual words. They then come to the ABLE Sound Center to read into a microphone in one of our sound booths while a member of our staff edits their work on the spot.



*Kathy Kerrigan narrating in  
ABLE Sound Center*



*Ellie Bradish reviewing audio  
files at home*

At-home audio reviewers receive a thumb drive and hard copy of the book to review. They read the book alongside listening to the recording of the book in order to note any changes that need to be made. Any corrections needed are then made by an audio narrator and a member of our audio staff.

Our audio volunteers gave 2,122 hours in 2022. This team produced seventy books for the Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library. For the second year in a row, books recorded in our studio circulated close to 12,000 times. More than 5,200 individuals in Wisconsin, and more than 310,000 individuals throughout the whole country, are eligible to receive these books.

Books that circulated include two children's books featuring blind protagonists: *Two Canes on the Tundra* and *Blooming Besties* by Mary Tellefson. These books, which circulated 547 times in the final quarter of 2022, provide blind children with a protagonist they can relate to. Our team also recorded twenty-eight periodicals and newsletters, seven organizational requests including Summerfest, Irish Fest and State Fair schedules, and ten individual requests.

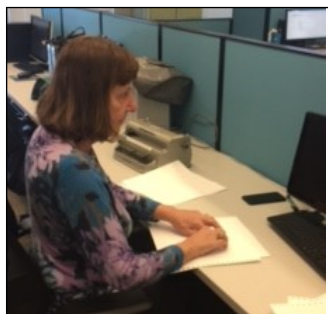
## Braille

Our braille process starts with volunteers using Optical Character Recognition software to convert the image of print into editable text in a Microsoft Word document. The creation of the Word document



*Karen Riccobono at the ABLE scanner*

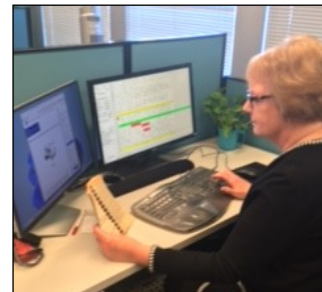
introduces occasional errors of substitution, omission or reading order, which then need to be fixed. Volunteers use OCR software to edit the Word document to match the original text.



*Kris Drollinger proof reading*

Next a certified braille transcriber works on the document to create a formatted braille file. These files are submitted to our Nemeth mathematics braille staff person, our literary braille staff person, or a volunteer for proofing.

The end product is embossed on our braille embosser, then stapled or bound into a book.



*Janet Kieckhofer creating formatted braille file*



*Photo on left: Lenore Tesch binding a book.*

*Photo on right: Braille embosser*



## Tactiles

A tactile graphic artist transforms print images into raised-line drawings that can be felt and understood with the fingers. The computer illustration software, Microsoft Visio, is used to create tactile



*Dale Kuehn, tactile graphic artist*

adaptations of a variety of print graphics, such as mathematical diagrams, maps and floor plans, bar graphs, biological illustrations, flow charts and chemical diagrams.

## ABLE Volunteers in 2022

Our sincerest thanks to each of these remarkable individuals who gave of their time, energy, skill and talent to help us fulfill our mission of providing alternative ways for people with print disabilities to read. We never could have done it without you!

<b>Name</b>	<b>Volunteer Position</b>	<b>Cumulative Hours</b>	<b>Year Started as Volunteer</b>
Barbara Althoen	Braillist	26,213	1998
Celeste Baldassare	Studio Reader	182	2018
Bob Balderson	At-Home Reader	600	2004
Janice Beaton	Studio Reader	153	2021
Emily Blaser	Studio Reader	132	2021
Ellie Bradish	Audiobook Reviewer	292	2018
Sue Bronson	Office Volunteer	50	2010
Michael Browne	Studio Reader	18	2022
Kathleen Bruening	Braillist	1,142	2003, 2021
Mary Callen	ABLE Braille Games Volunteer	39	2018
Emily Carter	Braillist	117	2021
Lea Cazares	ABLE Braille Games Volunteer	6	2022
Israel Cazares-Zurita	ABLE Braille Games Volunteer	26	2015
Sandra Christensen	ABLE Braille Games Volunteer	46	2013
Robin Christiansen	Studio Reader	230	2016
Guadalupe Creapeau	ABLE Braille Games Volunteer	36	2008
Kris Drollinger	Braille Production	1,539	2001
Cheryl Esquilin	Braillist	5,540	2011
Carlos Garcia	Board Member	116	2014
Lisa Gatewood Szocik	Audiobook Reviewer	40	2022
Frank Gedelman	Board Member	76	2006
Vidya Girish	Braillist	537	2021
Jodi Goell	Audiobook Reviewer	100	2022
Michelle Gran	Board Member	90	2016
Carolann Grzybowski	Audiobook Reviewer	8	2022
Mary Ann Hand	Audiobook Reviewer	431	2016
Sarah Heesen	Board Member & ABLE Braille Games Volunteer	62	2017
Steve Heesen	ABLE Braille Games Volunteer	25	2010
Audrey Hemmer	Braillist	24,660	1981
Kathy Herbst	Studio Reader	222	2016
Megan Hindman	Studio Reader	587	2016
Neil Jaehnert	Studio Reader	24	2021
Dan Jambura	Studio Reader	312	2016

Name	Volunteer Position	Cumulative Hours	Year Started as Volunteer
Cindy Kaczmarowski	Brailist	2,950	2002
Kathy Kerrigan	Studio Reader & Board Member	987	1998
Janet Kiekhofer	Brailist	2,745	2013
Amelia King	ABLE Braille Games Volunteer	45	2018
Elliott King	Board Member	11	2020
Roger Kissinger	At-Home Reader	1,815	2004
Susan Knorr	Studio Reader	560	2011
Dawn Koceja	Board Member	54	2016
Adam Koebel	Studio Reader	358	2016
William Koebel	Studio Reader	58	2021
Dale Kuehn	Tactile Graphics Artist & Board Member	1,166	2017
Tom Littelman	Studio Reader	1,346	2015
John Lonsdale	At-Home Reader	728	2008
Barbara Luepke	OCR Text Editor	181	2021
Paula Lund	OCR Text Editor	1,645	2003, 2021
Brian Mason	Board Member	45	2020
Bill Meeker	ABLE Braille Games Volunteer	84	2009
Zarina Mohd-Shah	Board Member	24	2018
Merete Mohs	Studio Reader	334	2019
Barbara Nevers	Audiobook Reviewer	3,171	1990
Carol Paulson	OCR Text Editor	407	2018
Jean Peerenboom	At-Home Reader	1,579	2011
Craig Pierce	Studio Reader	467	1992, 2018
Diana Pine	Audiobook Reviewer	1,418	2005
David Raasch	Studio Reader	2,698	2005
Erica Reib	Board Member	73	2015
Karen Riccobono	Braille Production	536	1998, 2018
Christina Riedel	OCR Text Editor	185	2021
Sue Roberts	Brailist	4,549	2011
Brittany Sterling	ABLE Braille Games Volunteer	43	2015
Lenore Tesch	Brailist	11,323	2004
Tiffany Tinsey	Studio Reader	172	2021
Kelly Trudeau	ABLE Braille Games Volunteer	58	2009
Nghi Vo	Studio Reader	101	2022
Jean Wagemann	Office Volunteer	10	2015
Elizabeth Waterfall	Office Volunteer	142	2002
Bob Watson	Board Member	148	2011
Leonard Zaworski	Brailist	2,035	2011
Janet Zoltan	Studio Reader	447	2017

## Braille and Tactiles, continued

Our braille and tactile team gave over 7,000 hours of time and talent in 2022. That year alone ABLE produced 16,546 pages of braille learning materials, including 2,540 tactile diagrams. The materials included elementary and high school mathematics, reading curriculum and scholastic magazines, and over 300 braille books given out free of charge with a print copy for family members. Our volunteers also worked on many other materials including Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra and Marcus Performing Arts Center programs, braille election ballots and many other projects for the Milwaukee community and beyond. Total pages circulated in 2022: 68,000.

## And There's More!

### Braille Games



*Volunteer assisting student at 2022 Braille Games*

ABLE volunteers are critical to the success of Braille Games, an annual event that provides activities emphasizing the importance and relevance of braille for blind children. In collaboration with the Milwaukee Public Museum, Vision Forward, the Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library, and with assistance from staff from Beyond Vision as mentors and blind role models, our 2022 Braille Games returned to an in-person event at the Milwaukee Public Museum, with a theme of cultures around the world. As in the past, blind students enjoyed this special day of fun and learning that was geared just for them.



*Volunteer assisting student at 2022 Braille Games*

### Board of Directors

Our ABLE Board of Directors are unsung heroes, volunteers who guide this organization in the background. Board members helped put on our delightful and entertaining Awards Luncheon in October of 2022, the first in-person luncheon in three years. They've led in the creation of a comprehensive strategic plan and have fulfilled their fiduciary role confidently.

Join us in honoring our volunteers at this year's ABLE Awards Luncheon on Thursday, October 26, 2023. Save the date!



*Dawn Kocuja speaking at 2022 Awards Luncheon*

## Honoring our Retiring Volunteers

Audrey Hemmer, a certified braille volunteer serving many roles at ABLE over the last forty years, is retiring from ABLE. She's been the director, a board member, and brailist producing nearly 25,000 pages of braille through her years of service. Audrey took on many complex assignments, including those in engineering and German and Spanish. She deserves—and receives—our deepest respect. Thank you, Audrey, for all you've done to make the lives of blind people better.

We also give many thanks to retiring volunteer Sue Roberts, who became a certified brailist in 2011 under the tutelage of Barbara Althoen. Sue focused primarily on Nemeth Braille Code for Mathematics, a very complex code, producing nearly 5,000 pages of braille. Thank you, Sue!



*Audrey Hemmer, ABLE  
volunteer since 1981*

In closing, we extend our deepest gratitude to *all* our current and past volunteers, without whom ABLE would not exist and the needs of people with print disabilities would not be met.

