

# MIDWESTERN BRAILLE VOLUNTEERS



325 N. Kirkwood Road, Suite G-5, Kirkwood, MO 63122

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## SUMMER 2011

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### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



This year we commemorate the 202nd birthday of Louis Braille. Because of him, there are many sightless people who are able to enjoy the ability to read. Midwestern Braille Volunteers mission is to provide the materials to those people so that they might learn and be literate members of society. Although we produce many items in Braille, MBV's primary work is to provide textbooks to blind students nationwide.

Our dedicated volunteers use their time and talents to produce these textbooks and other materials. Because of modern marvels of communication we have volunteers in various states throughout the country who, after going through the time required to learn Braille and obtaining certification from the Library of Congress, do the initial Braille work and send their work to our office in Kirkwood. There our many volunteers perform the various additional tasks required.

Proofreaders in other states, who also have obtained the necessary certification, check the Braille work to find any errors that may have slipped by. All in all there are many hard-working and caring people who provide Braille work which benefits those who have been deprived of the sight which we take for granted. In addition, there are those who generously donate to our cause so that we may be able to keep our company operating. Without their help, we could not have survived for forty-eight years. I'm sure I speak for the beneficiaries of our work when I express my thanks to all who participate in any way for the good that they do.

### MISSION

#### ABOUT THE BOARD

Our directors are vital to the fulfillment of **our mission** ..... *to serve the visually impaired by : Transcribing printed matter into Braille, either from MBV transcriptions or from other sources. To support this mission, volunteers are recruited and trained in Braille transcription.*

*As a secondary mission, MBV seeks to further the advancement of Braille literacy and provides support, where possible, to those in need of Braille transcription and equipment.*

**We are actively seeking new board members.** If you are interested, or know someone who would like to serve on our board of directors, we would love to hear from you

## **TRAINING BRAILLE TRANSCRIBERS**

Twelve dedicated volunteer students met once a week from October 2009 to May of 2010 to learn literary Braille Transcribing from our board member and teacher at the Missouri School for the Blind, Patti Schonlau.

Several students have since submitted manuscripts for certification by the Library of Congress. Two students have successfully met the require-



ments and are now certified Braille transcribers. Congratulations to Mary Lee Beuerle and Don Moser and thank you for your continuing service to

Midwestern Braille Volunteers.

We offer an in-house class every few years when we have enough students interested. Please contact us if you would like to be put on the waiting list for our next class offering.

You can also learn to transcribe Braille by completing an on-line correspondence course offered by the National Federation of the Blind [www.nfb.org](http://www.nfb.org). Students interested in learning Braille transcribing for the purpose of volunteering are encouraged to contact us. We can provide embossing and coaching services to you as you complete the on-line course.

## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

**SCHOOL VISITS** We were pleased to be invited to speak to students at River Bend and McKelvey Elementary Schools, in the Parkway School District, during their Abilities Awareness day. On our recent visit we talked to first grade students about how blind first-graders are taught to read and write using Braille. Students were introduced to this amazing system of paper

bumps which enables the blind student to achieve the same level of literacy as they are developing.

With patterns of just 6-dots, all letters, numbers and symbols can be formed to communicate math, music and language. Students were able to “feel” a first grade book, make dots with a Perkins Braillewriter, and poke dots with a slate and stylus. Each student was given a paper with his/her own name, written in Braille, along with a message to decode using the Braille alphabet hand-outs. They also examined sample tactile graphics which are often included in the Braille textbooks to present the information contained in maps, charts and other illustrations.

The students are always intrigued by the story of the little boy from France, Louis Braille, who lost his sight at the age of 3 but went on to open up the whole world to all blind people. While still a teenager, Louis gave literacy to the blind, by inventing the system of raised dots still in use today, 202 years after his birth.

If you would like us to visit your school or organization, please call our office at 314.966.5828.

**TOURS** We offer tours of our facility to Scout troops or other groups. Please call our office at 314 966 5828 for information.



This summer we are participating in the Girl Scouts of Eastern Missouri Summer Lark Program:

Tuesday, June 14, 2011 9:00am-11:00am

wait list date Thursday June 16

Limit 12 scouts

Grades K - 12 in 2010-2011 school year

A first look at written Braille and all you see (or feel) is a jumble of dots. Learn about the simple six-dot system of raised bumps that enables the blind to read and write. Learn about the job of a

Braille transcriber. Learn how material of various textures are used to create "Tactile Graphics" to present the information in maps and charts by touch. You will have an opportunity to create Braille text using a variety of methods and to make a simple tactile graphic map.

**LETTER FROM AFRICA** Our reach is world-wide. We received this letter from a blind man in Central Africa to whom we have donated Braille material.

*Dear Midwestern Braille Volunteers:*

*I am Posman Chigamba, of Box 48; Monkey-Bay, Malawi; Central Africa.*

*Thank you very, very much for the sheets of Braille paper and your letter. I am not using the paper you sent me; I am using the Braille paper I received from Service Club for the Blind, for this letter. I am glad that you would like to know about me.*

*I was born on November 11, 1944, at Cape Mac'lear, my mother's home, 20 kilometers from Monkey-Bay. My father's home is M'biza Village, in Mulanje District. I grew up at M'biza Village, my father's home. I did my schooling at two residential schools for the blind: Lulwe School for the Blind, from Grade One to Grade Five; and Magwero [p. 2] School for the Blind, from Grade Six to Grade Eight. I started school in 1953, and finished in 1961. I was working as a telephone operator from 1965 to 1973. I worked in Blantyre from 1965 to 1972, and in Zomba from 1972 to early 1973. In 1973, I worked at Mulanje Vocational Training Center for the Blind, as a Braille Instructor, teaching blind adults and adolescents who never learned Braille before. I retired in 1999. From 1999 to this time, I am not doing any work. My interests are reading, singing, and listening to the radio.*

*English is not my native language; I learned it in school. My native language is Chewa. I learned Braille in school.*

*Midwestern Braille Volunteers have helped me very*

*much by sending me Braille books of varied topics; science, health, history, women's affairs, cooking. They have sent my address to Braille Transcription Project, who sent me Braille calendars and a Braille book. In the future, you can help me by sending me more reading materials, introduce me to other agencies for the blind, and send me more Braille paper.*

*Here are some of my needs; nonfat milk, plastic yard bags, plastic sheets for roofing my grass-thatched house, a large razor-handle and some razors, various food items. Your supporters may not have all the items I have mentioned but they can send me anything. I do not want money, but you can send me as many used audiotapes as you can and I will sell most of them, and use the money to buy soap, sugar, relish, shoe-polish, and other items.*

*I am sending you my picture with this letter. I hope your supporters will like your coverage of my life story. If they have any questions, they are free to ask me through you .*



*I have enjoyed writing this letter. I will write again next time. One thing I forgot; a pocket or wrist watch; Braille or talker watch—a talking watch with a male voice if possible.*

## **VOLUNTEERING**

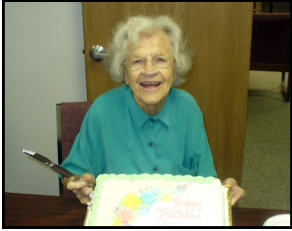
### **VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION LUNCHEON**

Although we appreciate every one of our wonderful volunteers every day of the year, we set aside one special day to honor them at our annual Volunteer luncheon. This year we enjoyed a delicious lunch at Greenbriar Country Club. Many local merchants donated products and gift certificates to help us say



“Thank You” to the people who fulfill our mission of making literacy a reality for the blind.

**VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT** Meet our beloved “Senior” volunteer, 95-year-old Lilian Lawrence, pictured here celebrating her birthday with her fellow volunteers in July. Lilian resides here in Kirkwood and WALKS to and from our office to volunteer whenever she is called upon to bind books or help out wherever needed. Lilian has become so proficient at binding books that she now instructs our new volunteers in the binding process.

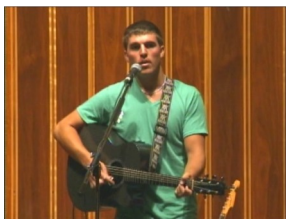


Lilian was trained as a librarian and has worked for the St Louis City and St. Louis County libraries and for Monsanto where she met her dear friend, the late, Dale Hill. It was Dale who recruited Lilian as a Midwestern Braille Volunteer nearly 14 years ago.

Lilian still enjoys traveling, most recently to England, to visit her daughter. She also has children in New Mexico, Rhode Island and St. Louis and she has many grandchildren and great grand children. Our office is always brighter on the days when Lilian’s warm smile and cheerful disposition is present.

## **FUNDRAISING**

**BENEFIT CONCERT** On July 12, 2009, MBV hosted our first ever benefit concert at the Ethical Society of Missouri. Our own Margaret Smith, Braille transcriber, was the creator of this event, literally, since her enormously talented children Austin Smith and Corrie Marks were the musical performers. Also



solo.

appearing on stage, our Braille Transcribing teacher and Board of Directors member, Patti Schonlau, welcomed our guests with a song. Mort Melman, music teacher of Austin, also played a guitar

Corrie and Austin are Margaret’s oldest and youngest children (out of 5). Corrie is a graduate of University of Kentucky and is currently a very busy stay-at-home mother of 3 darling sons! She sings for weddings and funerals and in the choir at Webster Groves Presbyterian Church in her “spare” time. Austin is a junior at Belmont University in Nashville, where he is majoring in Music Business and Song-writing. In addition to his musical interests, he was a Missouri State Champion wrestler at Whitfield School.

The concert was attended by more than 250 people and raised over \$10,000 dollars. We had so many requests to make this an annual event that we held our second concert July 18<sup>th</sup> 2010. In addition to Corrie and Austin, we were treated to original works of Ginny Owens, a three-time Dove Award winner, including the Gospel Music Association’s 2000 New Artist of the Year recipient, and multiple ASCAP Award winner. Ginny Owens has sold nearly one million albums. A degenerative eye condition left Owens completely blind since the age of three. She was happy to help us raise funds since Braille has meant so much to her.

Audio CDs and Video DVDs of the concerts are available for \$15.00 each by sending a check made payable to Midwestern Braille Volunteers to 325 No. Kirkwood Road, Kirkwood, MO 63122.

**FREE MONEY FOR MBV** You can help earn donation funding for Midwestern Braille Volunteers with NO OUT-OF-POCKET COST to you.

MBV has partnered with Schnuck’s eScript Community Card Program that pays us up to 3% of your register receipts.



All you need to do is ask the checker to swipe your eScript card (key-ring tab or wallet card) every time you make a purchase at Schnucks Markets.

Please call our office 314.966.5828 to get signed up.

**TRIVIA NIGHT** On February 12, 2011, MBV hosted our first ever Trivia Night at Two Hearts Banquet Center on South Lindbergh Blvd. The Event was attended by more than 180 people and we raised \$5,800.

We received many generous donations from area businesses and individuals allowing us to offer 50 silent auction baskets. We also offered a live auction and other drawings and games in addition to trivia.

We will be making this an annual event

## PRODUCTION

**PRODUCTION STATS** The 30 plus volunteers provide high-quality Braille material to blind school children and adults throughout the United States.

In 2010 they have:

- Created 200 new Braille volumes containing 14000 pages of new Braille text and over 700 Tactile Graphics to enhance the value of the text book to the blind student.
- Reprinted over 1,500 volumes of Braille containing more than 110,000 text pages and over 1,500 Tactile graphics.

Volunteered more than 9,000 hours of service in scanning, brailleing, building graphic masters, embossing and binding with only 1 ½ paid employees.

We produced enough Braille pages in 2010:

- If laid end-to-end would stretch more than 22 miles
- If stacked would be taller than a 16 story building

## SPECIAL INTEREST

**DEKE EDWARDS** Our board members are a diverse group of wonderful people. Deke Edwards, for instance, has a fascinating and inspirational history, which we had to coax him to share with us at our recent volunteer appreciation luncheon.

Deke has been blind since a hunting accident at the age of 12. He enrolled in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade at The Missouri School for the Blind in January, just months after his accident, and was so determined to keep up with his

original class back home that he learned Braille at lightening speed prior to summer break that June.

As a high school student, Deke's mentor and coach, Al Eberhardt, persuaded him to come out for the newly formed wrestling team. By his sophomore year, 2nd year of wrestling, he came in second place in the state, losing the title match by referee decision.

It was after that match that the school superintendent told him "as a blind person you can't be just *as good* you have to be *better* to be successful", and better is what Deke always strives to be. In Deke's junior and senior years he personally won the Missouri State High School Wrestling Title and his 1957 team came in 2<sup>nd</sup> in the state, a remarkable accomplishment for a team of only 8 wrestlers, all blind, from a school of only 40 students.

In college at SIU, Deke continued to win wrestling titles and his team always ranked in the national top 10. He majored in Social Studies and Math, Deke went on to teach math at Missouri School for the Blind for 32 years. When you can persuade the modest Deke to tell you about himself his face lights up when he describes his early experience coaching wrestling along side his beloved coach, Mr. Eberhardt. Deke has been the wrestling coach at The Missouri School for the Blind for the past 47 years, and as head coach since Eberhardt's retirement in 1975. When asked how you coach if you can't see, Deke replied "I have wrested every kid every day since 1962". He shows them a move and has them try it on him. He says he can *hear* a move done correctly. He smiled and told us "if I hear the other kid hit the mat and the air goes out of him..... you did it right".

In addition to leading his students to many wrestling championships as a coach, he also holds many personal wrestling honors Deke was inducted into the Missouri High School Wrestling Hall of Fame in 1980, the Greater St. Louis Area Athletic Association Hall of Fame in 1994 and to the National Wrestling Hall of Fame in 2005.

Thirty years ago Deke's wife, Joanne, worked with a lady who wanted to get rid of a tandem bicycle. Deke laughs as he explains that the only thing worse than a husband and wife trying to canoe together is a husband and wife on a tandem bike. He says

“the canoe is at least 16 feet long so they can’t reach each other”. Deke bought the bike and started riding with his then 10-year-old son at the helm. He still enjoys riding with his son or a friend and he has participated in some grueling races, once riding 280 miles in 24 hours. As recently as three summers ago he rode from Sante Fe New Mexico to Kansas City.



The subject we found Deke most enjoyed talking about was his family. He is married 50 years to Joanne and has a son and a daughter. Of course he will tell you all about his darling 5-year-old grandson, if you ask. After retiring from coaching this year Deke hopes to volunteer as a coach, spend time with his family and is always looking for bike riding partners.

It is a great privilege for us to have Deke Edwards serve on our board of directors.

### **Hospital Plane**

The flying Eye Hospital By Lilian Lawrence

An ad in an English magazine introduced me to ORBIS. It is a favorite charity of a charitable people, commended by “the Royals” and winner of service

awards.

ORBIS sponsors the Flying Eye Hospital which travels to developing countries which lack eye care. The giant plane is furnished with state-of-the-art eye surgery equipment. It has a trained, dedicated team of volunteer doctors and nurses.

Its primary mission is to treat avoidable blindness in children and adults. Of equal importance is the training of local doctors and medical workers who will carry on the service.

The success stories and pictures in ORBIS publicity are inspiring and heart-warming. So worthy an enterprise deserves support and imitation. One speculates on what our country could do for underserved areas where avoidable blindness is prevalent.

### **ORBIS**

Fourth Floor, Fergusson House,  
124-128 City Road  
London EC1V 2NJ, England  
[www.orbis.org](http://www.orbis.org)

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