Braille Across International Boundaries

Taking shelter from the sun, a hundred blind people clustered under an enormous tree at the Addo Garden Centre in South Africa. They came to mark the occasion of Louis Braille’s birth 200 years ago.

Perhaps the most powerful speaker that day was Stafie Pelser, a retired physiotherapist and life-long braille reader, who described Braille as the greatest well-doer in the lives of blind people. “Louis Braille and his parents made important choices to be creators of their circumstances rather than victims.”

This is precisely why National Braille Press has been focusing on braille literacy for blind children and original braille publications for adults. The media and general public sometimes question the meaning of braille. Some even saying that technology surpasses the need for braille. In fact, technology has not replaced print for sighted people, and will never replace braille.

At the event in South Africa, Pelser concluded “May the life of this great role model inspire us to do something for others that will improve their quality of life.”

National Braille Press Around The Globe

Center for Braille Innovation

President Brian MacDonald has assembled a team of engineers, inventors, and entrepreneurs from around the world to focus on affordable braille technology that will help kids learn braille and keep braille alive in this digital age (see page 2 for more on Team CBI).

Public Service Announcement with the World Champion Boston Celtics

Managing Partner and Governor Wyc Grousbeck, starting center Kendrick Perkins, and legendary former Celtic John Havlicek star in a National Braille Press PSA that promotes braille literacy. To view the PSA, visit www.nbp.org and click on the photo of the young braille reader, Jack, on our homepage.

Louis on Tour

National Braille Press’s traveling panel exhibit, in honor of the bicentennial of Louis Braille’s birthday, has begun its journey around the country. Louis on Tour can be seen in San Francisco, Denver, Atlanta, and Boston, among other places. To check if Louis will be coming to a city near you, visit www.louisbraillebicentennial.com
The recent turmoil and uncertainty in the economy can easily overshadow the 200th anniversary birth year of Louis Braille, Charles Darwin, and Abraham Lincoln. At NBP, we have been sharpening our budget pencils to launch our new fiscal year beginning April 1. Fiscal Year 2010 budget is conservative and focused on expanding earned operating revenue, tightening operating expenses, and still investing in new opportunities for our strategic plan and mission. We will focus on innovation, scientific technology, and our determination to continue to serve our braille readers better.

Our Center for Braille Innovation (CBI) is the focal point for these key elements, because we are continually looking for ways to reduce labor costs and to increase output, quality and efficiencies in our braille production process. CBI will also be looking strategically at our workflow and labor needs, which began with our first certification course in braille transcription. Another key part of the Center is the desire to identify new technologies and methods to provide affordable products for braille literacy, tactile graphics, and life-long learning.

This past February 11th and 12th another milestone began with our Center. A number of engineers, inventors and entrepreneurs flew into Boston for a summit meeting that became the founding meeting of Team CBI. The purpose of this team is to research and develop affordable products that support braille, and braille literacy. One of the initial assignments is to create an affordable braille display for children, utilizing improved production technologies. Louis Braille would be smiling if he had been in attendance at these meetings, to see the brain power, energy, and ingenuity that these people possess. The synergy when this team gets together is exciting and infectious.

While we continue to celebrate Louis Braille’s birth year and innovation, we also remember Abe Lincoln’s. Many people don’t realize that before he became president, Abe had lost eight elections, failed in business, and became bankrupt, but he never gave up. His persistence is what made him ultimately succeed, and his compassion for equality among all people was his driving force. National Braille Press is also forging ahead, steadfast in our goals. We will adapt to the global challenges in the world, perform our due diligence, and make bold decisions when necessary to achieve our objectives. My first year on the job has been full of new ideas and new challenges, which we are facing energetically as a team. Stay tuned for more updates!

Best wishes,

Brian A. MacDonald
President

National Braille Press has been offered a challenge grant from Reader's Digest Partners for Sight Foundation to support our Center for Braille Innovation. This means your support can make even more of a difference to blind children and adults. In order for us to receive $25,000 from Reader’s Digest Partners for Sight Foundation, we must raise $25,000 from new donors or increased donations from existing donors. Please use the envelope enclosed to make a new donation today and know every dollar you give will be helping raise double for our literacy efforts!
The Vision 5K: Change the Way You See Things

Summer in the City of Boston is bustling with sports-related activity, ranging from Red Sox games to kid's soccer games to road races; the city is constantly on the move. So what makes the Vision 5K Run & Walk stand out?

Its ability to...
  * **unite** the blind, visually impaired, and sighted;
  * **attract** world class blind athletes from all over the world, and the runner or walker in us all;
  * **bring together** those of all fitness levels;
  * and
  * **prove** that fear is the only disability.

The Vision 5K is the only race that does all of these things and more. National Braille Press collaborates with The Carroll Center for the Blind, MAB Community Services, and Perkins School for the Blind to produce this unique race to achieve the mission of education, access, and equality for blind people.

The highlight of the Vision 5K is the Blindfold Challenge. Participants run or walk the entire 5k course wearing a blindfold, led by a tethered guide. In addition to being a fun time, the Blindfold Challenge helps create awareness and foster critical support for the blind and visually impaired community.

Join us on Sunday, June 7th at Boston College to make the Vision 5K Run & Walk part of your summer plans! For more information, visit www.Vision5K.org.

Help National Braille Press be self-sufficient as we move into the future

At National Braille Press, we believe that literacy is a profound joy as well as an invaluable life tool. When we produce books, we create lifelong experiences: reading together as a family, blind child and sighted parent; sharing in the adventures of Harry Potter at the same time as friends at school; cooking dinner from one's own braille cookbook; even learning to surf the Internet, or to use an iPod.

How do we ensure that National Braille Press continues to be vital? In a word, endowment. Endowment generates income to support operations, filling critical needs. When the stock market is volatile or current income is lessened because of tough times, income from endowment sustains, enabling us to maintain the services on which so many have come to rely.

In our 82-year history, National Braille Press has been fortunate to receive many gifts to endowment from estates and trusts. Since 2002, alone, $1,476,785 has been added to endowment to support our mission of lifelong literacy. The impact has been enormous.

The trustees of National Braille Press have decided to recognize those individuals whose commitment to our work and whose foresight has prompted them to remember the Press in their estate plans by creating the **Braille for Life Alliance**, an honorary society. Anyone who has made a provision for the Press—by bequest, by naming us as a beneficiary of a retirement plan or life insurance policy—is automatically a member. Individuals who have entered into a life income gift, such as a charitable gift annuity or charitable remainder trust, are also welcomed as members of the Alliance, as are those who have created an income stream through the use of a charitable lead trust.

Have you remembered National Braille Press in your will? Would you like to discuss, in confidence, the creative ways in which you can meet the needs of family even as you explore your legacy to our shared mission? If so, please contact Tanya M. Holton at 617-266-6160, ext. 15, or tholton@nbp.org. She looks forward to helping you and your advisors.
partner (noun) - a person who shares or is associated with another in some action or endeavor; sharer; associate.

Verizon’s commitment to people with disabilities is clear in its many business and foundation activities. National Braille Press has been the recipient of Verizon’s generosity for numerous years in the form of grant funding, volunteer support, and employee donations with company matches. Our constituents also benefit from Verizon’s expert services for people with visual, hearing, cognitive, and physical disabilities.

The Center for Customers with Disabilities is the hub of Verizon’s services for people who need adaptive telephone equipment and specialized services. Each year they distribute thousands of phones with large buttons, amplified ringers, and other adaptations. In addition, Verizon’s blind customers can request talking caller ID systems and opt to receive their bills in alternate formats such as braille and large print.

For the past two years, under the leadership of the Center for Customers with Disabilities, Verizon has been a strong supporter of the Vision 5K. Verizon has sponsored the event, recruited a corporate team, and supplied volunteers to several agencies that serve blind and visually impaired people.

The Vision 5K recently presented Verizon with the Uncommon Vision Award for leadership and service to the community, and for their support of the Vision 5K Run and Walk. Stephanie Lee, Regional Director of Public Affairs, and Susan Santosuosso, Manager at the Center for Customers with Disabilities, received the award on behalf of Verizon at the Vision 5K Kickoff event in February.

“Verizon is greatly honored to be recognized for its leadership for people with disabilities, especially the blindness community. We applaud the Vision 5K effort and our employees are delighted to participate.” Lee said after receiving the award.

National Braille Press extends its thanks to the whole Verizon team. We deeply appreciate the unique vision of this organization to ensure that its resources are available to assist all members of the community.

SAVE THESE DATES!

Vision 5K Run & Walk
June 7, 2009
Boston College

Hands On! Gala
October 16, 2009
Boston Renaissance Hotel
Howie Mandel, Host