Hot Off the Press: NBP’s new blog, “Inside NBP”

Here’s a portion of a recent blog post written by NBP Publisher, Diane Croft:

Braille: Still a Revolutionary Idea

Three revolutionary boys were born in the dawn of 1809: Abraham Lincoln, Charles Darwin, and Louis Braille.

Who’s to judge their relative achievements? Each faced strong opposition to their points of view; each persevered with a fierce resolve and quiet strength. Most people are aware of the fortitude shown by both Lincoln and Darwin in the face of withering opposition, but few know [about] Braille’s trailblazing approach to reading and writing for his “fellows in misfortune…”

Fast-forward to a call this week from a customer, a sweet lady, from San Antonio, Texas. “I have an iPhone,” she begins the conversation. She heard NBP has a book to teach her how to use it. We do, I say, would you like the book in braille... its three volumes. No, she’s a slow braille reader, she admits, what other way can she read it? I offer eBraille. No, she doesn’t have a refreshable braille display. Word? No, she doesn’t have a computer. ePub? Doesn’t know how to use her iPhone yet. DAISY? No, no DAISY player. “I just have an iPhone,” she sighs.

Well, it looks like braille is your best bet, I say. Take it slow. A few pages a day and you’ll learn to use your iPhone. I hear her smile on the other end. Despite all these newfangled ways to read, only braille is going to teach her to use an iPhone in the 21st century. What a revolutionary idea.

About “Inside NBP”
At National Braille Press, we are often asked questions about how things are done or the story behind a particular publication. Our weekly “Inside NBP” blog aims to share those stories with you – our friends, followers, customers, and supporters.

www.nationalbraillepress.wordpress.com/
Literacy Champions: Parents Honor the Memory of a Beloved Son

At NBP, supporters who give on a monthly basis, either online or through more traditional methods, are called Literacy Champions because their steady support helps to keep braille alive. Randy and Kathy Allen are Literacy Champions whose support honors the loving memories they have of their son, Chandler. At the age of 7, Chandler was enrolled in NBP’s Children’s Braille Book Club. His love of braille and voracious appetite for learning spurred the Allens to drive over 300 miles to make sure he had textbooks. “He was the only one of our children who would come home and say ‘I can’t wait to do my home work,’” remembers Mrs. Allen. “We drove to Raleigh to get his books because we wanted him to be able to read braille and succeed, which he did,” says Mr. Allen with pride. Chandler earned all A’s in school but was also known for his humor. One April Fools’ Day, “He called our friends,” recount the Allens, “and told them that he could see. They all came over and he had the biggest laugh.” In his 16 years, Chandler Allen filled his life with love, music, braille books, and laughter – bringing joy to those around him.

The Renegades: A Beep Ball Story

On April 11th, NBP, in partnership with the Association of Blind Citizens, premiered the documentary, The Renegades: A Beep Ball Story.

This movie is about the awe-inspiring sport of beep ball nicknamed “baseball for the blind,” that features blind athletes hitting baseballs and diving headlong into the bases. Mix in a fierce New York/Boston rivalry, an international World Series, and a coach whose style can only be described as ‘tough love’ and you have an award-winning film. Beyond the games, it’s about the people and their stories, like the player who lost his sight when he got hit in the head with a baseball bat as a child. The premiere was attended by nearly 200 supporters of NBP and the Renegades team.

“Our story isn’t one you hear every day. Team sports in which blind people can excel and compete are few, and all the desire in the world will never make any of us left fielder for the Boston Red Sox. But, with this innovative sport, we are on equal ground - with each other and our competitors.” - KaeAnn Rausch

Read Across America

Congratulations!
Today is your day.
You’re off to Great Places!
You’re off and away!

On March 1st, NBP celebrated the joy of reading with Madeleine Babcock, a visually impaired 3rd grader, and her classmates, at the Wellington Elementary School in Belmont, MA. NBP staffer and braille reader, Wynter Pingel, read Oh, The Places You’ll Go by Dr. Seuss in honor of Read Across America Day.
Touch of Genius Prize for Innovation: Calling All App Developers

At NBP’s Annual Meeting on June 18, 2013, NBP will award the Touch of Genius Prize for Innovation to Emily Wharton for Code Master, a unique braille instruction system for adults. Honorable Mentions will be awarded to two teams - Michael Coleman, Michael Rosen, and Joshua Coffee for inTACT™, a system for interactive tactile graphics, and Cagatay Concu, Kim Marriott, and John Hurst for GraVVITAS, a graphics viewer using vibration, interactive touch, audio, and speech. In past years, the Prize committee, through support of The Gibney Family Foundation, broadly accepted all innovations related to tactile literacy. In 2014, the Prize will focus on the development of Android applications and other software that promote braille literacy and tactile learning. Visit www.touchofgeniusprize.org to learn more.

Run With Your Feet, See With Your Heart

“NBP is a first class organization that does amazing work. My family is in love with NBP and its mission.” These sentiments are why Erin Connors was one of four runners who signed up to run the Boston Marathon on April 15th as part of Team NBP through the John Hancock Non-Profit Program.

As if 26.2 miles wasn’t challenging enough, Connors pledged to run it blindfolded, following in the footsteps of 2012 NBP Boston Marathoner, Chris Cavallerano. A former Division I hockey player for Brown University, Connors has found a passion for running and the blindness community through her work at the Visual Neuroplasticity Lab at Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary. When asked why she wanted to run the Boston Marathon blindfolded, Connors’ answer was clear:

Running on behalf of NBP is an incredible opportunity to combine two of my greatest passions. Running blindfolded is a bonus. I brag about having 20-10 vision, but working with the blindness community, that has less importance for me now. I have met so many extremely intelligent, hard working, and talented individuals who happen to be blind. I am honored to have taken on this challenge and hopefully opened some eyes in the general public to the potential and talents the blind community has. I think it is sometimes us, those who don’t have vision impairments, who have tunnel vision and place false limitations on the blind community.

Don’t forget to sign up for NBP’s eNewsletter on www.nbp.org for monthly updates!
John Hancock, one of the largest life insurers in the United States, is committed to the nonprofit community through its corporate responsibility initiatives. Generous support for braille literacy is part of its philanthropic legacy.

As a core sponsor of NBP’s annual gala, A Million Laughs for Literacy, John Hancock employees are a familiar presence at the event, having filled a table with support and laughter for almost ten years.

John Hancock also champions NBP’s mission through its non-profit marathon program. Despite the steamy weather on marathon day 2012, two NBP supporters posted impressive times while raising almost $25,000. Four runners trained diligently throughout the New England winter to prepare for the 2013 marathon and raise funds for braille literacy.

A few months after the 2012 marathon, a team of John Hancock volunteers spent an afternoon at NBP collating a print/braille version of the Dr. Seuss classic, Hop on Pop. NBP produced this book to allow blind children to share the fun of Read Across America Day, which celebrates the joy of reading.

NBP is also connected on a personal level to John Hancock employees who are blind or have blind family members. These individuals have inspired new programming and helped to raise public awareness about NBP’s resources.

Through its rich history in Boston’s business community and passion for philanthropy, John Hancock has impacted countless people in need, including braille readers of all ages.