Celebrating 30 Years of the Children’s Braille Book Club

2014 marks a special anniversary for our Children’s Braille Book Club (CBBC)

This first-of-its-kind club has sparked a love of reading for 30 years—from children who have learned braille through the Club, to adults who have read these print/braille books to their children and grandchildren, to the parents of children who may one day learn braille.

Thirty years ago, the Children’s Braille Book Club was conceived at the request of a young blind mother of three sighted sons. At the time, braille books were hard to find and expensive, so this young mother was borrowing children’s books from the library to read to her children. Her children loved this bedtime ritual and wanted the stories read to them over and over again. Tired of returning these books after a few weeks, she asked if there was a way that NBP could produce print/braille children’s books that were affordable to purchase.

This inspired NBP publisher, Diane Croft, to develop the Children’s Braille Book Club and provide a new braille book each month in a print/braille format that blind children, or sighted children of blind parents, could share with their family and friends.

From Good Night Moon to Curious George, few moments in life can match the joy of sharing a good book together. In our 30th anniversary year, we want to make this experience even more meaningful for blind children.

During 2014, NBP will initiate a new program called, Great Expectations, which will feature songs, play activities, audio picture descriptions, and a host of other imaginative ways to bring selected titles to life for the whole family.

This is how memories are built. When children love reading, they build a foundation of literacy that lasts a lifetime.

NBP will launch the Great Expectations program on our website, www.nbp.org, in the summer of 2014, so stay tuned for more information!

The Children’s Braille Book Club is made possible through the donation of print books by major publishers, as well as an annual gift from the Daymarc Foundation.

We want to hear from you! Send us a short video of yourself telling us what the Children’s Braille Book Club has meant to you. Get creative and share your story!
A Champion for Braille

What does it mean to be a Literacy Champion? The NBP definition is an individual who makes a monthly donation to NBP. No matter the size of your monthly contribution, you can ensure that braille books are available throughout the year.

That’s the simple meaning, but to Jill O’Connell, a lifelong braille reader, it means so much more. “I learned braille as a young child. Every blind child should learn how to read braille,” she says. “My monthly donation makes it possible for one copy of a braille book to be made. That is one book in the hands of a young blind child every month.”

As a champion for braille, Jill has supported many NBP publications. “Whether it is reading to my grand or great grand children, or teaching a young person, braille has brought me tremendous pleasure and satisfaction.” From reading with her family to going to plays and reading the program in her hands, braille is an important part of Jill’s life. “National Braille Press is my favorite, and that is why I am a Literacy Champion and have also included NBP in my estate. They have excellent braille and make a difference in the lives of so many. I want others to benefit from NBP’s work as I have.”

To become a Literacy Champion or to learn more about National Braille Press’s legacy program, The Braille for Life Alliance, contact Joseph Quintanilla at jquintanilla@nbp.org or at 617-266-6160 x415.

Must-See Video – NBP’s You Tube Page

Did you know NBP has a page on You Tube that features all of our videos—from Juna Gjata’s speech about how she used to hate braille to Sabriye Tenberken’s appearance on Oprah being celebrated for founding Braille Without Borders, a school for the blind in Tibet.

Check it out at www.nbp.org and click the You Tube icon.

Saluting Our Volunteers

NBP will honor members of our volunteer community at our Annual Meeting whose dedication has made a tremendous impact. The recipients of this year’s Volunteer Awards are Peter Altschul, Norman Lang and Liberty Mutual.

Peter Altschul, MS, speaks and consults to groups and organizations around managing diversity, conflict resolution, and employee motivation. He has worked closely with Diane Croft as a volunteer contributor to NBP’s weekly newspaper for over seven years. Through Peter’s help, SCW continues to receive high praise from customers for its substantive and diverse articles each week.

Norman Lang has been a longtime donor, leader, and champion of NBP. He has volunteered his talents as a photographer and videographer for numerous NBP events including the gala. Norman also serves as chair of the Blindfold Challenge, formerly the Vision 5K, and has introduced many to the mission of NBP through these events. His enthusiasm for NBP is boundless, his humor infectious, and his support immeasurable.

Our corporate recipient, Liberty Mutual, has donated countless hours to NBP over the past few years. As a company, they have done great work during Service Days and children’s braille book projects. Beyond group visits organized by their company, Liberty Mutual employees have individually returned to volunteer with our collating department demonstrating their commitment to braille literacy.
One Day at the Apple Store:
A Story of Blind iPhone Empowerment
An excerpt from our blog, Inside NBP, by Barry Scheuer

I bought my first iPhone 4S only after downloading the first of NBP’s great books on the subject in 2011. When visiting my youngest son, David, in New York City we decided to trek to the big Apple store in Grand Central Station so I could finally consider an upgrade to the iPhone 5S. I really wasn’t sure I wanted to upgrade just yet, but having a really experienced user with me to perhaps interpret anything that the salesperson was doing would be a help.

Upon entering the store, David says, “There’s a blind guy with a guide dog working the sales counter.” So naturally, we walked up to him and I began talking to him about the pros and cons of upgrading my phone. Finding Kyle at work ready to knowledgeably upgrade my phone made the decision really easy. For the next 45 minutes, we talked about the most useful blind friendly apps, what we liked and didn’t, and he gave me some pointers on using the 5S from our shared unique perspective.

Nothing really unusual, right? Just a customer and a knowledgeable salesperson engaging in a transaction. Or, a great example of blind empowerment.

Partners in Philanthropy
Liberty Mutual

Liberty Mutual Insurance is a provider of auto, home, and life insurance for consumers as well as risk and disability products and services for businesses. Because responsibility is a core value, they support many community organizations through grants, volunteerism, and information on topics ranging from education to green living.

NBP has partnered with Liberty Mutual for over a decade and they have sponsored several braille books, like NBP’s Safe Without Sight: Crime Prevention and Self-Defense Strategies, an original publication written expressly for blind people. Liberty Mutual employees have volunteered their time and treasure from placing braille labels on books for blind toddlers to assembling print/braille children’s storybooks that the whole family can enjoy. Employees can also be seen at NBP’s annual gala, A Million Laughs for Literacy, showing support and enthusiasm for our mission of literacy for all, blind or sighted.

Liberty Mutual promises to work hard to do the right thing and to take responsibility for positively impacting their community. NBP would like to salute Liberty Mutual for achieving these admirable goals.
Feeling the Power of Braille Literacy

In the last few months with the support of Trustees, Chris Babcock and Sue Ammeter, NBP has hosted several luncheons—in Boston, Pittsburgh, and Seattle—and has been elated with the enthusiasm for our work and braille literacy.

A 57 year old woman shared with us that she bought our Noah’s Ark book with tactile graphics, “Even though that book was for kids, it was great for me because I finally was able to fully understand the story. The tactiles gave me additional understanding of what it was like to have all of those animals on the ark.”

A young man spoke about how he was reluctant to learn braille when he was a kid. However, as he rode the bus to school every day, he noticed that everyone around him was reading. This motivated him to learn braille. Soon enough he was reading his first braille book, *The Mediterranean Caper*, alongside his fellow commuters.

We host these luncheons to update our braille readers and supporters on our new publications, projects, and our work to strengthen the future of braille literacy. More importantly, this is our opportunity to get feedback on what role NBP can play in the future of braille.

We are looking to arrange gatherings in a few cities across the country: Washington D.C. in May, and possibly Chicago, San Francisco, St. Louis, New York and Philadelphia later on in the year. Who knows, maybe NBP will be coming to a city near you.