

DEAR PEARL

October 2026 Volume LV- Number 2

Answering the Reading Needs of the Blind and Visually Impaired since 1971

President's Report October 2026



It has been a busy summer with our volunteers going about the activities which help us provide the services which are our mission to the blind and visually impaired.

In April we held our Annual Meeting at Imperial Gardens and had a great turnout. You can read all about that in the article on page 3.

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Sue Danz, our Braille Coordinator has been busy this summer with requests from government agencies, businesses, schools, and individual people. Our Columbia tactile embosser (purchased with a grant from Delta Gamma Foundation) has been producing lots of quality diagrams, charts, and graphs for several blind students studying geometry.

This year we provided braille books for a summer reading program through the Madison Reading Project and are getting braille books ready for several school students.

Our class for new transcribers is coming to a close and they will be soon be sending their manuscripts for certification from the Library of Congress. We look forward to adding them to our BLTS roster of braille transcribers.

We are planning a lunch get-together on Tuesday October 13th so please **SAVE THE DATE** (details on page 2). I hope to see everyone then!

That's all the news for now. Please stop into the office anytime for a visit. We love to see our members face to face.

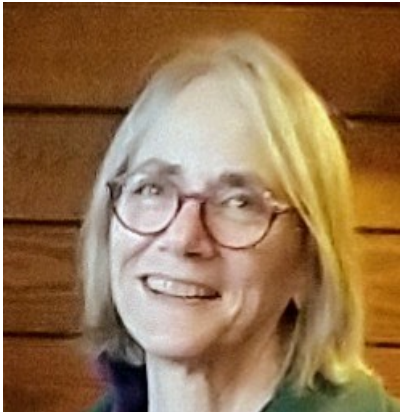
Patricia Herrling,
BLTS President, Librarian, and Teacher

BLTS FALL LUNCHEON

Join us for a BLTS fall lunch get-together. We will be meeting for lunch on **Tuesday, October 13th** at **11:00am** at **Tanner's Bar & Grill** in **Middleton**. We look forward to having everyone together before the start of the busy holiday season to celebrate all of your hard work and service during 2026. Please RSVP to office@bltsinc.org by **Thursday, October 8th**.



If you want to check out the menu it is on their [website](#).



Brailist Spotlight—Lindy Walton

by Office Manager Aaron Konkol

The 2nd edition of this new feature, which highlights the incredible people behind the scenes at BLTS.

Last year Lindy Walton—former president—received the Founder's Award in recognition of her tireless work and dedication to sustaining the 55-year legacy of BLTS & advancing braille literacy. Just this year she has announced her retirement from the popular monthly "Braille Conversations," conducted over Zoom, which she has hosted since 2020 during the pandemic.

I sent her a few questions and these were her answers. Thank you, Lindy!

Did you have a career before BLTS/VBTI?

Before I was bitten by the braille bug, I was a private piano teacher and piano tuner/technician. Also, my first real-world job was in a typing pool at a large law firm in Rochester, New York, when word processing software was just beginning to take off. I also wrote some training modules for a Xerox word processor.

What are your other hobbies?

Walking outdoors, playing various musical instruments, watching footage on YouTube from the early days of jazz, doing jigsaw puzzles while listening to music or podcasts, solving the NYT Sunday crossword puzzle and Kenken.

How did you get involved with braille?

I heard an ad on the radio for the braille class and thought it would be interesting. Little did I know where it would lead!

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Annual Meeting & Connie's Retirement

This May, BLTS held its Annual Meeting at Imperial Gardens. During the business portion of the meeting, elections were held, with the following officers and board members elected unanimously: Vice-President: Melody Moore, 2026–2028, Treasurer: Lori Hanson, 2026–2028, and Board Members: Sandy Adams, 2026–2028; Dorothy Brar, 2026–2028; Sue Nelson, 2026–2028; & new member Elizabeth Kanne, 2026–2028. Welcome Elizabeth!



We were pleased to welcome Jim Denham, Technology Specialist at the Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired, who gave a fascinating presentation on new braille technology, pictured above.



This year's meeting was also a special opportunity to honor one of BLTS's longest-serving volunteers, Connie Risjord, as she retires from the BLTS Board of Directors.

Our president and fellow braille teacher, Patricia Herrling, gave a heartfelt tribute to Connie (see page 6), recognizing her many years of hard work and dedication to BLTS and to the braille community as a whole. Connie's wisdom, extensive braille knowledge, and commitment to high standards have been invaluable to our organization. Her influence will be felt at BLTS and throughout the braille community long after her departure from the board.

Thank you, Connie, for your extraordinary dedication and significant service to BLTS across six decades!



TITLES DONE SINCE APRIL 2026

THANK YOU, BRAILLISTS!

(page counts follow names)



For children

101 Favorite Stories from the Bible (Sue Danz, 290), Katie's Search for a New Home (Elizabeth Kanne, 282), Follow My Leader (Sue Danz, 274)

For adults

Sharing Too Much (Debbie Hanson, 280), Best of Readers Digest Vol 5 (Debbie Hanson, 421), When Life Falls Apart (Sue Nelson, 258), The Homestyle Amish Kitchen Cookbook (Sue Nelson, 421), Peppermint Throw and Pillow (Crochet) (Vicki Holm, 38), Vegetarian Sandwiches (Debbie Hanson, 286), Roughneck Grace (Elizabeth Kanne, 378), Falling Upward (Debbie Hanson, 336), One Big Happy Family (Debbie Hanson, 546), Lifemark (Dorothy Brar, 538), Good Night Owl (Latchhook) (Barb Schlinkert, 30), A Lesson in Hope (Bev Pfister, 385), A Place Called Hope (Lynn Mack, 354), the Murder Mystery Race (Jo Gustavson, 474), Murder Mystery Book Club (Sue Nelson, 289), The Big Over Easy (Angel Green, 688), The Exchange (Bev Pfister, 532), Everyday Gluten-Free (Barb Schlinkert, 218), The Widow (Debbie Hanson, 713)

For schools, non-profits and businesses

The Adventures of Whitefoot the Mouse (Barb Schlinkert, 118), Little Pillows (Sue Nelson, 94), The Adventures of Mr. Mocker (Sue Danz, 95), MGE (Kathy Dorn, 35), KC Water (Kathy Dorn, 48), The Adventures of Paddy the Beaver (Debbie Hanson, 92), The Adventures of Jimmy Skunk (Barb Schlinkert, 95), The Adventures of Old Mr. Toad (Debbie Hanson, 95), The Adventures of Buster Bears Twins (Barb Schlinkert, 133), The Adventures of Mother West Wind's Children (Debbie Hanson, 176), Mother West Wind's Neighbors (Bev Pfister, 151), Mother West Wind's "How" Stories (Bev Pfister, 147), MGE (Kathy Dorn, 27) KC Water (Kathy Dorn, 32), 5 print/braille book (Barb Schlinkert, 37), ADRC Spanish Resource Guide (Bev Pfister, 494), The Adv of Ole' Mistah Buzzard (Jo Gustavson, 95), ADRC Resource Guide (Vicki Holm, 458), City of Madison Arts (Sue Danz, 16), Learning to Spell Grade Six (Bev Pfister, 278), Learning to Spell Gr 4 Workbook (Barb Schlinkert, 99), English Grammar 5 (Barb Schlinkert, 431), Learning to Spell Gr 4 (Sue Danz, 237), The Body's Bldg. Blocks Gr 5 & 6 Books 1 & 2 Barb Schlinkert, 129), Helping With English Grade 6 (Bev Pfister, 399), MGE (Kathy Dorn, 34), KC Water (Kathy Dorn, 32), MGE (Kathy Dorn, 26), KC Water (Kathy Dorn, 34), MGE (Kathy Dorn, 24), KC Water (Kathy Dorn, 32), The Body's Building Blocks (Julie Schoepp, 549)

Special Projects

LSS Vol 21, Iss 3, March 2026 (Joan Sholdt, 92), LSS Vol 21, Iss 4, April 2026 (Joan Sholdt, 95), For God So Loved (Sue Danz, 48), Our Daily Bread (Sue Danz, 209), LSS Vol 21, Iss 5, May 2026 (Joan Sholdt, 100), Crochet Animal Friends (Vicki Holm, 71), Courageous (Debbie Hanson, 578), How To Crochet Animals Pets (Debbie Hanson, 103), Strauss Instructional Brochure (Sue Danz, 12), LSS Vol 21, Iss 6, June 2026 (Joan Sholdt, 96), The Tao of Later Life (Barb Schlinkert, 273), Sony Stereo Cassette Deck (Bev Pfister, 55), Translations from the Lust-Gartlein Prayer Book (Barb Schlinkert, 104), LSS Vol 21, Iss 7, Jul-Aug 2026 (Joan Sholdt, 91), Vaccine Information Sheet (Shingles) (Sue Danz, 12), 7 P/B books (Barb Schlinkert, 23), 3 card games (Sue Danz, 3)

LISTS OF COMMUNITY DONORS

Member donations not listed. See [annual report](#) for complete donor list.

Individuals:

Norman & Stella Berven	Juliana Brandt	Lana Hanlon
David Hernandez	Barbara Kehrein	Burton Kushner
Bettine Lipman	Abigail Loomis	Richard Miller
Mary Nelson	Jamie Taylor	Stanford Weisberger

Organizations:

The Blackbaud Giving Fund	Claremont S. Jackman Fdn	Delta Gamma Foundation
Epic Systems Corp	The Evjue Foundation	Faircrest Association Health Fund Drive
Glen Stacey Memorial Fund	Jack DeLoss Taylor Charitable Trust	Madison Community Fdn
McFarland Lioness/Lions Club	McFarland Lions Club Fdn, Inc.	MGE Foundation
Middleton Lions Club	Pleasant T Rowland Fdn	Severson-Cairns American Legion
Stafford Rosenbaum LLP	Stark Family Fund	Strand Associates
Summit Credit Union	Thrivent	Xantusi Design, LLC

Brailist Spotlight—Lindy Walton

(continued from page 2)

Do you have a favorite volunteer memory?

The comradery of VBTI/BLTS members brings back many happy memories, but the one that comes to mind first is the wonderful fall picnics. They are the best pot lucks I've ever experienced. Braillists are good cooks!

Proudest moment?

I guess my proudest braille moment was getting hired to transcribe materials for the Madison Public Schools. I had an office in Memorial High School for 17 years and produced a wide variety of interesting things. I also became certified in math (Nemeth Braille) and Music Braille in order to serve my students better. Being right there with those kids was very meaningful to me.

My family is very important to me. I'm not sure that is interesting, but I want to mention it.

Tribute to Connie Risjord

By Patricia Herrling (speech from Annual Meeting)

Today we want to take this opportunity to acknowledge Connie Risjord for all her contributions to our organization. I am going to read from this paper because she has so many accomplishments I want to make sure I make note of them all!

Transcriber:

Connie became a certified braille transcriber in 1976 after training with our volunteer organization Volunteer Braillists (now BLTS). In 1997 she received her NBA Certification in Braille Formats.

Braille Instructor:

Connie became a **braille teacher for BLTS** and mentored many students throughout their certification process. She has always been dedicated to making sure braille transcribers understand and apply the rules and formats of braille transcription, with the concerns and interests of the blind reader always uppermost.

She authored the **Literary Braille Refresher Course for Teachers and Transcribers** in 1995.

Connie was one of the first people to organize a program to **train prison inmates in braille transcription**. Oshkosh Correctional Institution, in Oshkosh, WI began its Braille transcription program in 1997. The program started with 6 inmates and has since expanded to an average of 20 participants and in 2017 they produced just short of two million pages of braille. One inmate was quoted as saying "It's a good positive feeling to know that I have a chance to give back to the community, and people in need really can benefit from the work we do here."

Over the years Connie's support of braille instruction can be seen in the many editions of The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS), Library of Congress publication, *Instruction Manual for Braille Transcribing*. This important instruction manual, used by braille teachers across the U.S., was developed under the leadership of Constance Risjord in the 4th (2000), 5th (2009) and 6th editions (2013).

When the United States officially adopted the Unified English Braille code Connie was one of the leaders in helping current braille transcribers make the transition from EBAE to UEB with her authorship of *ABCs of UEB by Constance Risjord: A comparison of the essential differences between EBAE and UEB*.

<http://brailleauthority.org/ueb.html#resources>



(continued on next page)

Connie was one of the **co-founders of Wisconsin Braille**, whose mission is to advance communication and coordinate the efforts of all persons concerned with the availability, quality, and distribution of brailled materials in the state of Wisconsin. One of their projects is to provide free children's braille books for students, families, teachers and school libraries.

Some of the **awards** Connie has received from BLTS include:

1992 Distinguished Service Diamond award for 5,000 hours of braille and service. Just think how many hours she has racked up to date!

1993 The Founding Mothers Award to a volunteer who has given at least ten years of service, who has exhibited a high degree of professionalism, and who has provided leadership to our organization.

Board contributions: 1989-1991, 2007-2011, President of the BLTS Board, Vice-President 2019-2025, Board member 2026.

She is now stepping down from our Board, but we are not letting all her expertise go! She will get many calls for her valuable experience and knowledge, and we look forward to seeing her around the office and our social events throughout the coming years.

Volunteers are the only human beings on the face of the earth who reflect this nation's compassion, unselfish caring, patience, and just plain loving one another.

—Erma Bombeck

Madison Public Market

BLTS recently had the opportunity to make the artwork at the Madison Public Market more accessible by creating braille labels for the exhibits.

A visitor who is visually impaired stopped by the market to ask about accommodations for people who are blind or visually impaired. She was delighted to discover that a braille art guide was available and was very impressed by the effort to make the artwork accessible to her.

We're proud to help make cultural experiences like this more inclusive and accessible to everyone. It's another example of how BLTS helps people experience the joys of reading and engage more fully with the world around them.

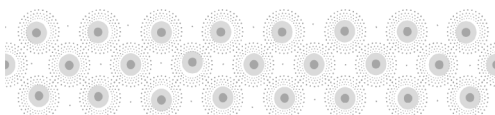
If you'd like to visit the Madison Public Market, it is located at **202 N. First Street, at the corner of First Street and E. Johnson Street**. You can also learn more about the artwork and other activities at their website: www.madisonpublicmarket.org

Because the artwork rotates, we're not sure how long these particular pieces and their braille labels will be on display. If you're interested, we encourage you to stop by and see them while they're there!

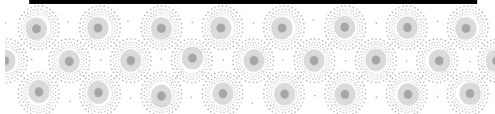


DEAR PEARL

Newsletter of the Braille Library & Transcribing Services, Inc.



We're on the web:
bltsinc.org



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Answering the Reading Needs of the Blind and Visually Impaired since 1971



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