

Insight: The Voice of

The American Council of the Blind of New York, Inc.

Fall-Winter 2025-26

<http://www.acbny.info>

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The American Council of the Blind of New York is the largest consumer advocacy and support organization of blind and visually impaired people in the state. Your financial contributions help ACBNY's work to promote the educational, vocational and social advancement of blind and visually impaired people in New York. Send your tax-deductible donations to ACBNY Treasurer, 100 De Kruif Place, Apt. 22A, Bronx, New York, 10475-2405. Questions for our treasurer can be sent to: treasurer@acbny.info.

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Editor's Page

by Jean Mann

Greetings ACB members and friends! I hope you're all doing well and dealing with the early winter weather we're having! I hate it more every year, but at least I don't have to wait for buses and tramp through snow to get to my destinations anymore. And if it's really bad weather, I just stay inside my nice warm building!

As the saying goes at the end of the year, "out with the old and in with the new". Our old officers' terms will end on December 31. We sincerely thank Karen, Yasmin, Nancy, Richard and Rosanna for all their hard work these past three, and in some cases six years. Rodney Stanford, Jean Mann (me), Fitz Martin, Ian Foley, and Bob White are your new officers and we're excited to assume these roles on January 1. Hopefully those of you who voted for us won't be sorry you elected us!

We have quite a variety of articles for this issue. There are messages from our outgoing president, Karen Blachowicz, and our president-elect, Rodney Stanford. Our 2025 scholarship winner, Angela Rosso, has

written about her experience at our state convention in Buffalo, and Ian Foley gives you a wrap-up of convention activities. We have articles from several chapters telling us what they've been doing in 2025. Finally we have a story from Audrey Schading, describing her excitement at learning to read braille back in first grade. I went to the same school she did and was in another classroom down the hall with seven other first graders but I don't remember anything about those first few days!

I hope you enjoy this issue of Insight. If you know somebody who doesn't receive it, either because they aren't on our ACBNY List or they don't have email, please share it with them. And have a wonderful holiday season, whichever holiday you celebrate. Be well and be safe, and we'll be in touch again next year, 2026!

President's Message

By Karen Blachowicz

Happy holidays to all members, friends and family. We have come to the conclusion of my six years as your president. I have been honored and privileged to have had this role. It has been a productive and positive experience I will never forget. I've learned so much from the members, friends and family, and I have no words to express my gratitude.

I want to thank all those who participated on the board, committee chairs and participants in all we've done together.

The biggest lesson I learned was, it's not one person that runs an organization, but the organization that leads our advocacy, entertainment, and all other aspects of what we do.

It's our responsibility as leaders to seek out and build up new leadership within the organization. I believe we found a great leader in Rodney Stanford. I have all the faith in the world that as he takes over as our next president he will lead our grassroots organization in a strong, productive way and will bring new achievements. I'm proud to hand the torch over to him.

I would like to thank the outgoing executive board of directors for all their hard work and dedication; Yasmin Campbell, Nancy Murray, Rosanna Beaudrie, and Richard Fiorello. I would like to thank all of the committee chairs for everything they've done to make sure the past six years have been full of accomplishments.

Thank you all for giving me the opportunity to serve as your president, it has been my honor.

Getting Acquainted

By Rodney Stanford

By the time this is scheduled to be published, we'll be just days away from 2026. And a new leadership team will be poised to step into their respective roles, with an eye toward continuing to push this organization forward. As president-elect, I am both humbled by the trust you have put in me and excited to face the challenges ahead.

When Jean approached me about writing something for the newsletter on the eve of officially taking office, I thought it would be a great opportunity to look toward the future together.

But before I jump into that, I do want to take one more opportunity to congratulate Jean Mann, Fitz Martin, Ian Foley, and Bob White on their election to the Executive Board. And I'd also like to congratulate Jim Pulsoni, Larry McMillian, and Steve Blow on their election to the Finance Committee. I am excited about working with each one of them.

And with this changing of the guard, I want to give sincere thanks to the outgoing team, Yasmin Campbell, Nancy Murray, Richard Fiorello, Rosanna Beaudrie, and Bill Murray.

I also want to thank my predecessor, Karen Blachowicz, for all she has done for this organization, and for me, these past six years. And that includes helping with the transition, which I can only imagine as being somewhat bittersweet. I know she just embarked on another mission, again leading the Buffalo chapter. But I hope she'll have a bit of rest and be ready when I inevitably need to reach out.

With that said, I am thinking about what I'd like to share with you about who I am, how I work, and what perspective I'd like to bring to our organization.

I was happy to be able to meet (virtually) many of our members at the candidate forums in the run up to the election. It was great hearing from you and learning about what you think is important for us going forward. And I feel I covered a lot of the standard resume material about myself.

So, since we're going to be working together for the next three years, and since I am probably going to turn up regularly in your email box and on your social media, I thought I might tell you a little more of the personal stuff here.

I grew up in the Southeast, mostly Tennessee and Alabama, where I was born. I was the oldest grandchild on both sides of the family. And I started talking very early. So being a leader, for good or bad, just kinda happened to me by default.

Along with my brother and a bunch of my cousins, I inherited my grandfather's ocular Albinism, a condition that left me legally blind in my right eye, and somewhat visually impaired in my left.

I was able to have a fairly normal childhood. Driving a car was never on the table for me. And I had a big fight with my parents about using power tools in a shop class my state required in high school. But I made good grades otherwise, played varsity basketball, and made a bunch of friends I still know today.

I met my wife, Mary, online in 1995, back when the only people online were the hardcore computer geeks. She was a lifelong New Yorker. She was born in the Bronx to Irish immigrants. Her family moved to Westchester during her childhood. When we decided to tie the knot, there was simply more opportunity for me here than there was for her in Memphis, where I was living at the time. So, I packed all my belongings and got on a plane almost thirty years ago to make a life in New York.

Years later, in 2016, I had a "vascular accident" in my left eye, my "good" one. They told me the layman's term for it is an "eye stroke." And that left me legally blind in both eyes (almost no central vision).

I participated in a support group funded by the New York State Commission for the Blind. I met a great group of guys, including Martin Cahill and Dr. Joe Granderson. And Dr. Granderson led Martin and me to our local ACBNY affiliate, Westchester Council of the Blind. There is more to say where that men's group is concerned. But I think I'll save that for another time.

Martin and I joined WCBNY in 2017. A couple of other friends joined later. And as these things go, we seemed to be on a trajectory of taking on more responsibility and getting more involved. Without ever having a plan for such, we wound up in leadership in our chapter. And continuing down that road, when the need arose, I ran for president of the state organization.

I am a huge fan of college football, specifically, the University of Alabama. I love to play poker when I can get the right accommodation. I'm still a computer nerd.

I am very proud of the success we've been able to have in Westchester, building on the foundation laid by those who went before. And I want to bring that same energy to the ACBNY.

To me, the biggest component of that is a people focus. Specific policy details are important. But more important is the impact a decision or a policy is going to have on actual people. I'm interested in how we can help folks live better lives.

If you heard me speak during the campaign, you probably heard me tell the story of Lynn, a member of WCBNY who passed away this year. The quick version of that story is that, before she died, WCBNY was able to inspire her and to help her get back a measure of her independence. She spent her final days going and doing, participating, and making memories for her loved ones.

So, I always try to think about the other Lynns that are out there, and about how the things I do and the decisions I make will impact those folks. It is tricky sometimes, with the political climate that exists today. But I do feel we can have an impact if we advocate for positions that are principle-based, and if we are consistent in our messaging.

But we must also be realistic about the reach and the influence that we actually have. We can expand that by making our voice louder through membership growth and increased participation. But we must understand that the watchwords are patience, consistency, and intelligence. And of course, the good news is that, as an organization, we're actually pretty good at those things.

For me, it really boils down to controlling the things I can control and not stressing about the things I can't.

I can't control politics in Washington DC. But I can control being plugged in with our national organization, being a conduit of information to our members, and providing tools and opportunities for our members to speak up and speak out. And I can control my own advocacy efforts.

I can't control who will and won't join your chapter. But I can control my efforts at helping and encouraging your chapter leaders. I can control making tools, resources, and advice available.

To those on the outside looking in, the scorecard for the next three years may be based on membership numbers or financials. But to me, it comes down to doing what I said I would do and controlling what I can control.

And I need a few folks in our rank and file who will throw in on that mission. I need folks who will control the things they can control, in the corner where they are, maybe for their own version of a Lynn in their own lives.

The transition, the time between getting elected and taking office, is one of the longest, slowest periods of time in the world. But it is almost over. I am super-excited about getting started. And I hope you are too.

Convention Roundup

by Ian Foley

After months of planning, our annual ACBNY state convention has passed, and we're already looking toward our path in 2026. But before we jump ahead I'd like to reflect on this year's convention in Buffalo.

Once again, the Western New York Chapter hosted an activity-filled weekend, both for those attending in person and those joining us on Zoom. We enjoyed some great wings on Thursday night, but my Buffalo pizza bragging came to a sudden end, when the pizza was overly doctored by the restaurant, rather than serving genuine Buffalo pizza. My favorite line of the night was, "How big was the chicken that these wings came from?" Following dinner, we all shared our thoughts on ACBNY's strengths and limitations, reminding each other of our individual talents and strengths that we all bring to accomplish the mission of ACBNY.

Andrew and Danielle hosted a fabulous, lively and well-stocked hospitality room, which many of us kept open well into the night, filled with conversation, laughter, and new memories. Thanks again to both of you for hosting such a warm, inviting place to relax and unwind.

We hosted our annual Town Hall Meeting with the new York State Commission for the Blind on Friday morning, with representatives of NYSCB joining virtually on Zoom this year. The Commission shared some great outcomes related to employment across the state, sharing that many job placements were in advanced fields such as medicine, technology, education and more. Hearing the success of blind job seekers in New York State reinforced just how important and effective ACB's advocacy and education has been over the years in removing barriers and myths in regards to the employability of qualified blind people. Our members were active in the Town Hall, and were encouraged to reach out to their local office of the Commission and management, to resolve their needs and concerns.

Friday afternoon's business meeting, as always, was eventful and challenging. Elections were held, with the assistance of ACB Media staff, to assist with the counting of votes by those attending on Zoom. We reviewed and passed our 2026 budget, heard reports from our many committees, and still ended by 5

PM! Congratulations to our new officers and finance committee members as we transition into a new administration in January.

Friday night's Scholarship Fundraiser lived up to its lively, sometimes raucous, reputation! Following a superb dinner, we raised \$3670 to support blind students preparing for their careers. No surprise to most, Buffalo's own sponge candy stole the show, along with a WeWalk cane donated by Pete Andolina of Alpha-Sensory. Thank you to all who donated items for this year's auction—without you, we would not be able to celebrate this success! We then enjoyed three hours of lively music, dancing, and singing along to the sounds of "Sequins," one of Buffalo's favorite party bands. Thanks to Andrew Pieczynski for securing the band for the event, and raising funds to cover the show!

Saturday was a busy day around the hotel. We enjoyed exhibits and demonstrations, a meeting of GDUES, a craft and knitting workshop hosted by Audrey Schading, a BRLNY presentation on various games to enjoy, and the Buffalo Zoo touch and feel exhibit. WeWalk presented and demoed their AI smart cane as well, which was of great interest to many of us.

During lunch and throughout the afternoon, we heard from various speakers, sponsors, exhibitors, and others on various topics and products of interest to our members. I will add, at this time, how proud I am to be an ACB member, seeing how engaged and respectful our members were to all speakers throughout the afternoon. Our courteous, attentive and active participation was observed by our speakers, so thank you all for helping our organization shine!

Saturday night's banquet was another amazing meal, followed by awards and our banquet speaker. Congratulations again to our 2025 ACB NY Scholarship winner, Angela Rosso, and to our 2025 MJ Schmitt First-Timer Award recipient, Rina Cummings. We look forward to seeing both Angela and Rina grow within their local chapters and on the state level. After awards, we enjoyed a detailed presentation about the history of the Erie Canal, with some interesting and quirky points about Buffalo, Albany, and points in between.

We wrapped up our weekend of events with our Board of Directors meeting on Sunday. We began transitioning to our new leadership, and awarded President Karen a lifetime ACB membership, recognizing her leadership and commitment over the past six years for her role as state president.

Aside from the business aspect of convention, we all had a chance to socialize, share ideas, collaborate, and simply enjoy the company of our fellow members over the weekend. For those who have never attended a convention in person, consider attending one soon. You miss so much when only attending virtually, and that just can't be replicated on Zoom. And finally, the October weather in Buffalo provided no surprises this year—we enjoyed cool but calm weather, without even a raindrop all weekend.

My Experience at the 2025 ACB of Western New York Convention

By Angela Rosso

This fall, I had the opportunity to attend my first ACB of New York (ACBNY) convention in Buffalo, and it ended up being one of the most enjoyable events I have attended in a long time. I originally learned about the convention through the ACBNY scholarship process, and since I am currently working toward my master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling at the University at Buffalo, I was excited to get more involved with the local blind and visually impaired community.

One of the things I appreciated most was how comfortable and intimate the convention felt. I have been to large national conventions before, and while they certainly have their strengths, they can also be overwhelming with their size and pace. In contrast, ACBNY's convention felt much more personal. Conversations were easier, the environment was calmer, and I never felt lost in the crowd. It was the perfect balance of structure and friendliness.

A few highlights stood out for me. Even though I had briefly tried the Meta smart glasses once just to listen to music, this was the first time I truly learned what they could do. The speaker shared a demonstration video showing features such as object recognition, text reading, and navigation support. Seeing these tools in action helped me understand the real potential of this technology in supporting independence for blind and visually impaired users.

I also enjoyed learning about the Buffalo Zoo sensory experience. As someone who lives in Western New York, it was exciting to hear that the zoo is intentionally creating accessible, multisensory opportunities for visitors. It made me proud to see a local organization embracing inclusion in such a thoughtful and creative way.

Another session I found valuable focused on the NFB Newsline. While I was familiar with the service, I did not realize how many people rely on it daily or how widely ranging the available information is—from

newspapers and magazines to emergency alerts, job listings, and more. Hearing real examples of how it supports everyday life gave me a whole new appreciation for its impact.

Overall, my experience at the ACBNY convention was positive, welcoming, and genuinely inspiring. I left feeling more connected to the community and grateful for the chance to attend.

I want to extend a sincere thank-you to the ACBNY Scholarship Committee for selecting me as a recipient this year. Your support not only made my attendance possible, but it also encouraged me to stay engaged, learn more, and continue growing within our community. I genuinely appreciate the opportunity and look forward to staying involved in the years ahead.

Members of GNYCB Participate in the Blind Baseball Classic for White Cane Day

By Yasmin Campbell

On Saturday, October 18th 2025 the U.S. Blind Baseball Association held their final game in honor of White Cane Day. The Blind Baseball Classic was held at Queens College in New York City and members of the Greater New York Chapter played in the game and were in the audience for support.

The two teams that played were the Harlem Jazz and the Lighthouse Guild Lightning. This was my first time getting to experience an accessible sport being played. There was an announcer at the game that provided audio description.

It was interesting to experience all of the techniques that are used to make this sport accessible. An example of this is the clapping sound that you hear after the player has hit the ball. The clapping noise is an assistive tool used to help keep the player headed toward the bases. I really enjoyed myself and was very happy to be there to support my chapter members as they participated in something they love to do.

GNYCB Honored Jill Rothstein and the Andrew Heiskell Library for Their Exemplary Services by Karen Mongiello

The text of the plaque given to Jill reads:

Greater New York Council of the Blind

GNYCB recognizes with deep appreciation the

Andrew Heiskell Braille and Talking Book Library,

Jill Rothstein, Chief Librarian, and her exemplary staff

for their continuing support and advocacy
of the blind and visually impaired community.
2024.

On Friday, December 20, 2024, GNYCB recognized Jill Rothstein and the staff of the Andrew Heiskell Braille and Talking Book Library. The Greater New York Council of the Blind said thank you to Ms. Rothstein as she moves on to her new position at the Jewish Braille Institute and wished her well. GNYCB President Terence Page and GNYCB Board Member Victor Andrews presented the plaque and a donation of \$250 for the library to Ms. Jill Rothstein.

We want to take this opportunity to also acknowledge and express our gratitude to [Touch Graphics Inc.](#) for the design and creation of the print/braille plaque.

Ray-Ban Meta Smart Glasses

By Victor Andrews

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those solely of the author and not necessarily representative of, nor an endorsement by, the Greater New York Council of the Blind.

I am a totally blind user of the Ray-Ban Meta Smart Glasses. I love these glasses because they allow you to read many things, such as the instructions on a food package, brochures, signs on a wall, street signs, and license plates. They can alert you to parked vehicles, approaching cars and buses. The phrase / “wake words” are “Hey, Meta”. I also love the Meta glasses because when you’re in a room and say, “Hey, Meta, what do you see?”, they will tell you what they see and have even helped me when I had no one around to read an item. These glasses keep getting smarter every day. They also work with the Be My Eyes app, as well as with Aira, but they still have some work to do to connect with Aira. I have used Ray-Ban Meta Smart Glasses at my job to take a picture of a box and was able to find out where it came from and where the label is located. In addition, you can record a video with them and share your photos on social media.

You need to have an account to set up the Meta glasses. I recommend setting up the Meta glasses app prior to owning a pair. You can order Meta glasses from a Ray-Ban store or at [their website](#). Their phone number is [\(855\) 592-2237](tel:8555922237). I ordered my Meta glasses from Amazon. When you order your glasses, please remember to get the glasses and the case; you do not get a charging cable. The charging cable is type C. I have used Meta glasses for almost nine months and I love them.

WCBNY's Year in Review

By Rodney Stanford

Westchester Council of the Blind of New York (WCBNY) began 2025 basking in the glow of an outstanding holiday gathering in December of 2024.

In recent years, our leadership has come to believe in the power of socialization in our organization, and in the necessity of bringing our group together from time to time, not just to conduct our business, but also just to be together. So, we were happy to receive a gift that helped to enable us to do something extraordinary to that end.

Waymo, the company that specializes in autonomous cars for hire, and the company that is now also sponsoring activities for ACB's national organization, made a generous donation, conditional on us only using the money to advance our program of providing social outlets for blind folks.

By the time this is published, we may already have completed yet another holiday party using that donation to subsidize the cost for our members. It will be our third major event with significant sponsorship from Waymo. During the year, we also held our traditional summer picnic. This time we did it in the "backyard" area of a local Irish pub. They gave us a special menu of burgers, wraps, and other picnic-type food. And a good time was had by all.

Some time ago, we decided to stop hosting our monthly gatherings in person, and to scrap the hybrid format. We do all those via Zoom these days. Then we look for or create opportunities to get folks out and about, and for us to gather as a group.

To that end, our calendar regularly features social gatherings, like meeting for coffee, walking the mall, attending advocacy functions, or going out for dinner together. This year alone, we had two evenings out at Buffalo Wild Wings. We had a mall walking program, which will be starting again soon, including meeting afterward for coffee. We participated in other disability rights advocacy, supported other local organizations, celebrated White Cane Day, and the anniversary of the ADA. We also restarted our book club, which means a lot to many of our members.

And when we do meet by phone on the third Saturday of every month, we often feature special guest speakers. Some notable meetings this year included Cindy Hollis from ACB National. We held an ACBNY candidates forum. One session focused on local resources available to blind, visually impaired, and disabled people. We took a month to mourn the passing of one of our members. We talked about smart glasses, and about podcasts. We heard from a young high school student who had asked for our help on

her project, accessible pedestrian signals. And we had a presentation on a yoga program we are trying to start.

We also take great pride in our social media presence on Facebook. Followers and interactions are growing. And we can verify our reach because people are contacting us because of content we post. We are proud of our membership growth, and the growth we have seen in participation too.

And as I write this, WCBNY is hard at work trying to work things out to host the ACBNY convention next year. Maybe we'll be welcoming you to Westchester soon.

(Editor's Note): The Board accepted a convention bid from Westchester at their meeting on December 6. I'm sure Rodney will be posting more details as they become available.)

What's Going On in Western New York

By Ian Foley

Our Western New York chapter enjoyed a deep breath following a successful convention in October. We hope you all had a great time, enjoyed the meals, hospitality, camaraderie and the bounty of information and resources the convention provided. Thanks to members from Western New York and across the state who helped us secure exhibitors, speakers, and more, to make the convention such a great event!

As we draw near to the end of 2025, our chapter held elections, as our president and vice president termed out after two 3-year terms. As the president of ACB Western New York for the past six years, it was somewhat surreal as I pondered the upcoming meeting, while traveling by bus to our meeting that evening. I was reminded how we navigated through a pandemic, learned how to conduct virtual and hybrid meetings, and kept the ship on course through challenging times. I would like to thank my outgoing vice president, Kathy Lyons, for sharing her years of ACB history and knowledge, passion for advocacy, and commitment to ACB and the blind community. Kathy and I will continue to serve on the ACB WNY board of directors, along with Marie Lyons and Paul Jerge.

Our newly elected officers for 2026 are:

President: Karen Blachowicz

Vice president: Karlene Fiorello

Secretary: Richard Fiorello

Treasurer: Patrick Olson.

Our heartfelt thanks to all who accepted these important roles, and volunteer your talents in service to ACB.

I'm also happy to share that our 2025 Scholarship winner, Angela Rosso, along with her husband, Erick, have joined ACB of WNY. We look forward to their energy, ideas, and insights as our newest members.

Over the last year, our WNY chapter has also been busy performing outreach in the community. Marie Lyons has had several letters to the editor published in the Buffalo News, offering thoughtful points for the sighted world to ponder as they encounter us in the community. Kathy Lyons has been advocating for accessible traffic signals throughout the Buffalo and surrounding areas. Andrew Pieczynski and Karlene Fiorello have been representing us at the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). Ian hosted a table at a family health fair in July, with hundreds of people in attendance, sharing resources about vision loss and ACB, of course.

Our chapter will be enjoying a Christmas party in December, as we look forward to another year of advocacy, outreach, education, and socializing as a group.

To all our ACB friends and family across the state, we wish you a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Heri za Kwanzaa, and Happy New Year! May the holidays be filled with warmth, love and laughter with family and friends, and the joy of the season.

MORE PEGS!

By Audrey Schading

"More pegs! More pegs!" Our teacher Miss Lustig heard this from us all day long! We 3 first graders were busily at our desks, making braille letters by eagerly filling up our 4-lined, 10-cell peg boards. Although the attached tray where we kept our pegs was secure, we were always inadvertently dropping pegs onto the floor, constantly running out of them, and asking for more!

Miss Lustig dutifully gave us more, as she checked our alphabet work, all the while retrieving the pegs from the floor with a magnet attached to a very long stick. (I wonder if that was her invention, or if she learned it from another braille teacher?)

Writing braille letters with pegs was such an exciting adventure for me, as I knew it would lead to actually

Learning how to read! "But," I kept wondering and wondering, "How did a person learn to read?"

How did it work? Would I be able to read stories like my dad read to me, such as "The City Mouse and the Country Mouse" or books like my mom had read such as "Mr. Popper's Penguin?"

I kept thinking of this, as I boarded the school bus for the very first time, on Wednesday, September 9, 1959. After changing buses, I finally arrived at my destination, School 71!

As I walked into the school, I was met by my teacher who introduced herself to me. I said in the best voice I knew how, "Audrey Bardotz, first grade!" "Yes, I know!" replied Miss Lustig, as she guided me to

my classroom. She showed me the room including my very own desk with my name Scotch taped on it in braille. I could open it, put things inside it and marvel at the open circle on the left-hand side, an inkwell, which of course, we did not need to use.

There were three of us in that first grade class, and directly across from us were four second graders, who immediately began our morning by reading a story! I sat there mesmerized, listening and pondering. Of course, I was listening, because I wanted to hear the story! However, I was also earnestly pondering, as I had absolutely no idea of how they were reading! How did this work? How, how, how?

How indeed! I wanted to read so so so much!

We mastered a-b the first day which happened to be a half day. That evening, all I could talk about to my dad and my brother Paul was learning braille and wanting to read. I took a pencil and made holes in a piece of paper, hoping I could somehow recreate the braille that I had touched that day!

The next day, another half day, we learned c-h, and on Friday, a full day, we were introduced to i-x.

By that time, I'd acquired my own peg board at home. My dad, a Wonderbread deliverman, happened to deliver bread to Batavia, New York, which is approximately one hour outside of Buffalo, where I grew up. Batavia is also the home of the NEW York State School for the Blind, and my dad purposely got to know the principal, Mr. Paul Ruhland. Over that first year, Mr. Ruhland happily provided me with a peg board and a 6-inch paper ruler to keep, as well as many braille reading books to borrow.

My dad had acquired a braille alphabet card, and over the weekend, he taught me the letters y and z, so that when I got back to school, and showed my teacher what I had learned, she said: "How did you know that?"

Thus, the journey of reading began during the second week, as we were given large alphabet books, lovingly hand copied and put together by my teacher! Thus, my reading adventures began, as my question was clearly answered, and I began to understand that words were made by putting these wonderful letters together! My imagination soared! It became fun, natural and so easy to read braille! I loved taking my turn reading out loud! Soon we were reading about marvelous happenings, with Alice and Jerry, Mr. Carl, the little monkey and the organ grinder, and mischievous David from "Anything Can Happen!"

I could never (and still can't) get enough books! I'd take out a book for the summer, and have it finished in two days!

So, let's keep carrying and passing this torch, and never put it down, not ever!

Final Remarks

By Jean Mann

Before I close the book on this newsletter, let me remind you of a couple things. We have a new Executive Board, that being our officers and past president, but we need to know who has been appointed or elected to be your chapter director. Remember, directors serve on the board; delegates represent your chapter at business meetings and cast your chapter's votes. Directors serve for a year at a time; delegates can be changed as necessary. Let Rodney or one of us officers know who your directors are so they can be added to the board list.

Also, I'll be contacting each chapter shortly after the first of the year to update your membership lists for my records and the national database. So after you've celebrated and watched the ball drop, drunk a glass of champagne to welcome in the New Year, or gone to bed before midnight on the 31st and let January 1, 2026 just slide in, please begin gathering your members' information and collecting dues. I'd like it by February 15 if possible.

Again, enjoy your holidays and have a Happy New Year!