

08 - 0409

M I N N E S O T A

# State Services for the Blind



2 0 0 7   A N N U A L   R E P O R T

# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

**W**e are pleased to present the 2007 State Services for the Blind (SSB) Annual Report celebrating the partnership with our State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRC-B), customers and other stakeholders including the Legislature.

This year brought its share of sadness. In August of this year, we lost a colleague and friend, Michael Young, who passed away all too soon. Mike was the budget director for SSB for twelve years and worked on previous years' annual reports. Mike is greatly missed and we are grateful for the opportunity we had to know him and to work with him.

This has been a most productive year for SSB as we worked towards realizing our mission. I would like to share with you some important highlights of our partnership over this past year:

- Achieved significant success at the Minnesota State Legislature: received a \$900,000 appropriation to the Communication Center replacing Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) dollars which are needed to provide services to people preparing for employment; a \$100,000 increase to match future VR federal funds; and assured SSB's participation in the study of state electronic data development and storage ("Open Document Format").
- Reinstated a major marketing effort by once again having a booth in the Education Building of the Minnesota State Fair where SSB distributed 10,000 handheld fans with a message in braille and SSB contact information, braille alphabet cards to 120 teachers, 145 volunteer application packets, and thousands of other pieces of information regarding blindness.
- Continued to monitor the Minnesota State Capitol restoration project to ensure continued and appropriate space for the Blind Enterprises Program vendor—a site SSB has had since the 1940s.
- The Workforce Development Unit served 1,054 customers and assisted 81 customers to secure employment at an average hourly wage of \$14.07.
- The Senior Services Unit served over 3,432 customers—the largest number ever.
- Donors contributed \$210,554 in support of the Communication Center, including in-kind donations valued at \$21,571 and a bequest for \$5,181. The Communication Center would find it difficult to maintain, let alone expand services, without the support of these 1,806 donors.

All of these accomplishments were possible because of the input and commitment of the SRC-B, the quality and dedication of SSB staff, the hard work of SSB customers, and the contributions of other partners—truly a "Formula for Success". Thank you! Working together we make a positive, profound and lifelong difference in the lives of blind, visually impaired and DeafBlind Minnesotans. ■■■



Charles Hamilton, Director  
State Services for the Blind



**F**ederal Fiscal Year 2007 has been a productive year for the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRC-B) and State Services for the Blind (SSB). The majority of the SRC-B's activities took place within committees and task forces.

The SRC-B listened and advised SSB staff as they looked at the pros and cons of moving to a new location. I personally sighed in relief when it was decided to stay at the current facilities at 2200 University Avenue West in St. Paul. Soon after being elected chair, I wrote letters on behalf of the SRC-B to strongly support allocation of an additional \$1 million dollars for SSB's budget. Consumer organizations of the blind joined the effort, and I am pleased and thankful to report that our request was granted.

The SRC-B added a Technology Task Force this year which will serve two purposes. First, it will assist SSB in their legislative obligation to report on the impact on blind employees and citizens regarding the possible adoption of Open Document Formatting by state government. The Technology Task Force's second purpose is to gain an understanding of access technology and training services available to SSB's customers. This task force will present a report to the SRC-B. The report will contain the essence of what was learned and any resulting recommendations to the Council.

The SRC-B also had a task force to examine and comment on the draft document called "Strategic Performance Planning" published by the Rehabilitation Services Administration. The Council is expected to receive and adopt a final report in early FFY2008.

In late July, I attended meetings of the Great Lakes Region of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation held in St. Paul. The meetings were co-hosted by SSB and Rehabilitation Services. Administrators from other states came to learn about the agencies and functioning in a one-stop system.

It is worth noting that—thanks to funding from the Department of Employment and Economic Development—FFY2007 was SSB's comeback year at the Minnesota State Fair. Council members, staff, and other volunteers worked in the SSB booth every day at the fair. Brochures about SSB were distributed. A free souvenir fan appropriately called "Braille on a Stick" was also offered. FFY2007 was a productive year, and FFY2008 holds the promise to be just as busy for the SRC-B. I look forward to committees and task forces continuing their great work throughout FFY2008. ■■■



Rebecca Kragnes, Chair



*Back row: Chuk Hamilton, Jennifer Dunnam, Jan Bailey, Jane Toleno, Elizabeth Bruber, Coralmae Stenstrom, Tom Scanlan, Judy Sanders, Fannie Primm, Michael Malver.*

*Seated: Lynnette Boyer, Steve Jacobson, Jean Martin and Rebecca Kragnes.*



**C. Stanley Potter** (1918-1988) was the visionary behind the development of the Communication Center and the Radio Talking Book. By the mid-1970s, he helped spur many other radio reading services throughout the country to greatness, advocating strongly for quality recording using current, local material. He was the first president of the Association of Radio Reading Services, and he retired as SSB Director in 1985. Community, state and national awards lined an entire wall of his St. Croix River home.



C. Stanley Potter  
1918-1988

The following reminiscence by Potter appeared in the Radio Talking Book program guide in May 1988. Frank Rarig, Jr. was the secretary of the Hamm and Wilder Foundations of St. Paul. Margaret Kelley was one of four children of William Hamm Sr. Margaret and her siblings were the first Hamm Foundation officers. After the Communication Center was first established in 1953, Joni Jonson became the director. Nancy Peabody was tape librarian. Alan Peabody, also involved in the Communication Center in its early days, was her spouse.

"I asked Frank for the sum of \$8,000 to begin a volunteer recording project. He was urged on by Margaret Kelley, and we soon had our first volunteers, who recorded a magazine called 'The Minnesotan' onto little green discs, which played back on the Library of Congress long-play reproducers. I went over to the University, to the speech department, to inquire about



students who might want a part-time job working with the recording project. Alan Peabody and Joni Jonson were recommended to me, and we hired them. I remember Alan and Joni standing here singing the Girl Scout Songbook accompanied by Nancy Peabody. A recording had been requested so that blind scouts could learn both the words and the music."

Potter shares something in common with Prince, GPS system, Hubert H. Humphrey and the 1980 Olympic Hockey Team. They all changed Minnesota.

The "MN150" exhibit at the Minnesota History Center launches the 2008 celebration of 150 years of Minnesota statehood by exploring changes wrought by powerful people, such as Potter, and by ordinary citizens—changes ranging from those that have shaken up Minnesota to those that have rocked the world. More than 2,700 nominations poured in from Minnesotans living in every corner of the state, as well as across the globe.

Today, Potter takes his place among 150 people, places and things (including Prince, GPS System and Hubert H. Humphrey) as presented in the "MN150" exhibit.

"He was a grand man, the grandest man I ever met," said Cheryl Merrill of St. Paul, who nominated Potter for the honor.

Potter had a saying he often used, 'Good enough is never good enough,' according to Merrill. "He believed people who said 'good enough' had quit before they had really demonstrated their capabilities."

MN 150 exhibit developer and author Kate Roberts described Potter in the companion book to the exhibit 'Minnesota 150':

"Reading a best seller, flipping through the pages of a magazine, scanning the headlines of a favorite newspaper—for people with impaired vision, these experiences are difficult, if not impossible. In 1969, C. Stanley Potter, an amateur radio enthusiast with impaired vision, developed a solution to this problem. With his friend Bob Watson, a former neighbor who was working for NASA as an engineer, Potter developed the Radio Reading Service, the first such service in the world, using the FM subcarriers of Minnesota Public Radio.

Stan Potter and his brother, Bill, were both legally blind. After spending time at the Minnesota School for the Blind in Faribault, Stan and Bill persuaded their parents to move to St. Cloud, where the boys were mainstreamed in public schools. Stan went on to complete bachelor's and master's degrees at public colleges; for his dissertation, he transcribed the first Braille version of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory. Potter was director of the Minnesota State Services for the Blind from 1948 until 1985. It was during this time that he and Watson introduced their radio station."

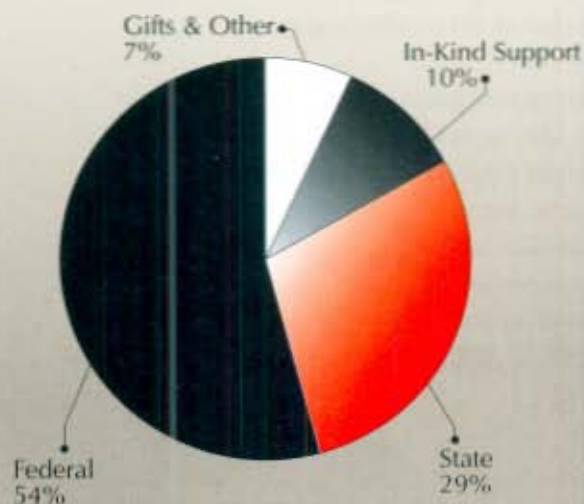
In her nomination, Cheryl Merrill writes: "His idea to establish a radio station for the sight impaired was complete genius. Since its inception, more than 160 stations worldwide have been established. The daily newspaper and current best sellers are two types of written words read on these stations each day." ■■■



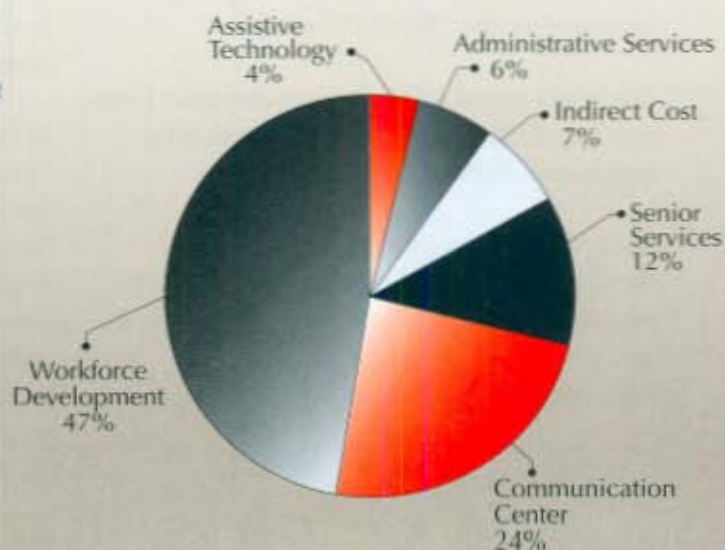
# STATE SERVICES FOR THE BLIND — 2007 Budget Breakout

Federal Funds		Percentage of Funds to Total Funding
Basic VR	\$8,268,000	
Supported Employment	\$16,000	
Training Grant	\$75,000	
Independent Living (IL)	\$54,000	
IL — Older Blind	\$510,000	
Special Education Agreement	\$475,000	
<b>Total Federal Funds</b>	<b>\$9,398,000</b>	<b>54%</b>
<b>Total State Funds</b>	<b>4,940,000</b>	<b>29%</b>
<b>Other Funds</b>		
Gift/Bequest	\$237,000	
Special Revenue		
Communication Center	\$302,000	
Business Enterprises	\$664,000	
<b>Total Other Funds</b>	<b>\$1,203,000</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Total In-Kind Support from Volunteers</b>	<b>\$1,738,000</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Total All Funds</b>	<b>\$16,804,000</b>	<b>100%</b>

**SSB Funding Streams —  
Fiscal Year 2007**



**SSB Funding Distribution —  
Fiscal Year 2007**



**F**or customers such as Deanna Langton, Theresa Taylor, Jesse Anderson and Mohammed Abdel-Magid, the Workforce Development Unit of SSB ensures delivery of rehabilitation services individuals need to prepare for, seek, gain or retain employment. Services take many forms and may include:

- vocational assessment and counseling;
- training in adjustment to blindness, braille, use of assistive technology, job seeking skills, and vocational skills;
- job placement assistance; and
- job adaptation assistance.

It's all about the customer. The customer and counselor work together to include the right mix of services into an 'employment plan.' A newly blind customer, for example, may need the full spectrum of services, including assessment, cane travel, braille, and adjustment to blindness training, before enrolling in an educational program that will lead to employment. A future baker may need to develop vocational skills, perhaps through the Minnesota State

## Workforce Development Unit Statistics —

	FFY 2007	FFY 2006	FFY 2005
Number of Paid Closures	81	96	125
Weekly Salary Change Application—Closure	\$202.00	\$159.88	\$208.27
Average Wage per Hour	\$14.07	\$14.86	\$13.38
Number Served	1,054	1,140	1,219
BEP Sales Volume	\$7,801,636	\$7,925,910	\$8,337,949
BEP Average Net Profit	\$38,454	\$38,317	\$38,139

Colleges and University System, and learn about professional food-related organizations. Yet another customer may need the assistance of a human reader to facilitate test-taking at school. All services a customer may require to reach a specific career goal are reflected in their employment plan.

Rehabilitation counselors in 12 field offices, including 11 WorkForce Centers, as well as a network of private vendors across Minnesota, provide these services.

Also included in the Workforce Development Unit is the Business Enterprises Program (BEP).

BEP provides training and support to blind Minnesotans so they can become self-employed. These small businesses include operating snack bars and counter operations, providing vending machine services in multiple locations and combinations of vending and counter operations. BEP blind vendors operate businesses at the Capitol, in state buildings, at rest areas and travel information centers statewide, on multiple MnSCU campuses and in some private industry locations. Professional, technical and clerical staff provide training, management assistance and technical support to these legally blind vendors. ■ ■ ■



## spotlight

### Deanna Langton

*Experience in braille, a computer and a summer crash course in a popular screen reader used by individuals who are blind and visually impaired, JAWS, helped Deanna Langton land the job. Today she's teaching others the same skills her rehab counselor taught her.*



**E**ach morning 25-year-old Deanna Langton boards the first of three buses that will take her to Minneapolis' inner city location of the Project for Pride in Living (PPL) Learning Center where she works as a project coordinator for the Health Careers Partnership.

The Health Careers Partnership, a PPL employment and job training program, partners with Abbot Northwestern, Children's Minneapolis, North Memorial and Hennepin County Medical Center to help their current workers move up the ladder in the healthcare profession through Adult Basic Education classes and personal development counseling. Last August a dozen graduates of the program completed the twelve-week course.

Part of Deanna's job will be to work on recruiting individuals for this class while providing follow-up to the first-session

grads and marketing the program in hospital newsletters. She also talks it up with hospital human resources representatives and relies on word-of-mouth within the community. In between are calls to students urging them to take their college entrance exams.

For this University of St. Thomas graduate, her first job is a dream job.

Legally blind since birth, Deanna is a Minnesota native, born in West St. Paul. She learned braille and received orientation and mobility training with an itinerant teacher in pre-school and grade school. State Services for the Blind brailled all of her textbooks from kindergarten through her senior year at Henry Sibley High School in Mendota Heights.

"I remember SSB provided me with a Perkins brailier in elementary school and a braille note taker in junior high,"

Deanna says. "I was exposed to JAWS from my itinerant braille teacher in high school."

Her need for SSB services, assistive devices, and guidance from former counselor Al Wasserman all increased when she began college at the University of St. Thomas.

"The Communication Center was great," she said. "They would record or braille any textbook or article I needed for class, and the turnaround time was great!"

In conjunction with Communication Center services, Deanna also used the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS), a free library program of braille and audio materials circulated to eligible borrowers in the United States by postage-free mail. This service is delivered locally through the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library.

*Deanna Langton continued on page 9.*



*Deanna Langton continued from page 8.*

In the summer of 2004, prior to graduate school Deanna took a much-needed crash course on JAWS and Kurzweil, a software product in which scanned printed documents and digital files, including email and electronic books are converted from text to speech and read aloud. "I stuck with what worked for me, and up to that time it was the Perkins braille," she said of SSB-provided computer training and assistive devices. SSB provided her with JAWS, which she continues to rely on for work.

Once Deanna was equipped with two degrees—a bachelor's degree in psychology and minors in sociology and English and a master's in counseling psychology—that didn't signal the end of her relationship with SSB. "SSB also connected me with

job leads and the Business Leadership Network, and helped with mock interviews," she said.

Counselor Jannae Hanson-Parkes kept her apprised of other career opportunities and alternative career directions to consider. She also worked with the Dakota County WorkForce Center and the University of St. Thomas' Career Development Center.

PPL has provided her with a desktop computer containing JAWS. Her employer also brailled labels on her students' files and oriented her to the office. "Basically I've been the trainer on blindness to PPL and staff," she said. The Communication Center remains in the picture. "If I need materials for a PPL meeting, the Communication Center will turn them around," she said.

After work, Deanna boards Metro Mobility for the ride back to West St. Paul. In her unscheduled time, she enjoys listening to music and attending musical performances.

What was the most important skill or service that SSB provided Deanna? "The computer," she said.

The SSB services she received were solidly behind her choice of career. "The rehabilitation and vocational services I received throughout my life, and my ability to set and reach goals and make decisions are skills I now teach to students in the Health Careers program. I love to guide people to the best resources." ■■■

## ■ spotlight

## ■ Theresa Taylor

*Despite a dual-sensory loss, she's completing a Ph.D. with technology customized by SSB staff.*

**P**eople with a hearing loss can lose vision; people with a vision loss can lose hearing. In any event, individuals have to learn to access their world differently than a person who has solely a vision or hearing loss.

People who first have a vision loss and know braille who then experience a hearing loss have the advantage of being able to retrieve written information via braille. And people with a dual-sensory loss who know both



braille and sign language—such as Theresa Taylor—have more options for communication than a person who only knows braille or only knows sign language.

*Theresa Taylor continued on page 10.*



# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT UNIT — spotlight

*Theresa Taylor continued from page 9.*

Theresa Taylor 'just wanted to be a number' and experience four seasons when she left her rural Vermont home and moved to Minnesota more than twenty years ago. Today, she is a number, although maybe not the number she had in mind. Taylor is the first person in Minnesota and the country to have used braille CART—Communication Access Realtime Translation—as she pursues her Doctor of Ministry studies at Bethel University with technology provided by SSB.

CART, similar to closed captioning on television, is one way people who are blind and have a hearing loss can 'hear' a lecture but only if they know braille. For individuals who are deaf, the words are projected onto a screen which they can read.

While sitting in the classroom, Taylor uses her braille display to 'hear' the lecture with the aid of Lisa Richardson, CART transcriber, Paradigm Reporting & Captioning. Taylor's Swiss and South African professors were amazed at the technology—and promised to take news of the new braille CART back to their respective countries, Richardson said.

She lost her vision over time as a child of 7 and 10 and worked with SSB in the early 1990s.

As an adult, Theresa experienced a dual sensory loss; she lost her

hearing in her left ear six years ago as a complication of Stickler syndrome. Roselee Siegler, SSB counselor, then helped her with independent living skills and job goals, and DeafBlind Services Minnesota also provided Taylor with assistance.

"Individuals who are DeafBlind cannot be placed in a single category," she said. Taylor has minimal hearing in her right ear and describes herself as 'profoundly deaf' in her left ear.

"Roselee made me feel affirmed despite my sensory loss and always has the time to take note of what I'm feeling," Taylor said.

In part, Taylor's confidence and personal and professional success may be attributed to losing her vision and learning braille early in life, before she experienced a hearing loss. Chronologically, she is considered blind and deaf, said Pam Brown, SSB's Workforce Development Unit Director. Frequently, there's a resistance to learning braille among individuals who are deaf then lose their vision; or if they do learn it, they achieve a limited level of proficiency.

Taylor, an ordained pastor with International Ministerial Fellowship, speaks to church groups and pastoral associations about ministering to the needs of congregants who have disabilities. Through her ministry, Seek the Son ([www.seektheson.org](http://www.seektheson.org)), she helps church personnel navigate

their way through ADA, offers conflict-handling skills training for those with disabilities, and works with local hospitals in attending to the spiritual needs of patients with disabilities and their families.

SSB's biggest impact on Taylor's personal and professional life may be in technology. SSB provided a Braille Note, a portable notetaker which uses braille to document and retrieve information; a braille display; and a cell phone, which provides another way for the various pieces of technology to communicate with each other and with Theresa. Siegler and Dave Tanner, SSB Assistive Technology Specialist, helped put the technology together.

Her home is equipped with a pager system, bed shaker (in case of fire and when Ken, her spouse, is out of town), alarm and doorbell. People who are deaf and also blind can read sign language through tactile signing, or by feeling the other person's fingers. For the last year, Taylor has been taking tactile sign language twice a week. In tactile signing you have to be close to the other person, she says. Her small hands are dwarfed by Ken's, as they demonstrate how tactile signers communicate emotion.

"Theresa is truly an exceptional woman with an exceptional family," said Siegler. ■■■



## spotlight

## Jesse Anderson

*"You have to lead many people to water and then teach them to swim, but with Jesse, all I had to do was point in a direction and he was off and swimming half way across the lake by the next time I talked with him."*

—Joyce Libra, SSB counselor, Brainerd



**S**afe bet that Joyce Libra, SSB counselor in Brainerd, had no idea how insightful her words would be.

Libra met Jesse Anderson in August 2005; less than three months later, he had moved to the Twin Cities for an internship. By the summer of 2006, he was hired as an assistive technology specialist in Daytona Beach, Florida.

The journey from Fessenden, North Dakota to Daytona Beach contains a lifetime of tall decisions and a bump or two along the way, but today Anderson's career journey shows no sign of stopping.

Anderson, who grew up with a brother and sister on a farm, has always been legally blind. He was

mainstreamed through the public school system; read large-print illustrated books ("You almost have to put them on the floor"); and in 7th grade attended the North Dakota School for the Blind for a year.

"I had a teacher's aide in third and fourth grades and took math, science and physics," Anderson said. "I played Goalball for the North Dakota School for the Blind for a few years and basketball for a Special Olympics team for two years. I was totally mainstreamed."

By the time Anderson was a third-year University of North Dakota student and receiving

vocational rehabilitation services from the North Dakota Department of Human Services, he was mulling over his options. The University of Minnesota Crookston had a better academic program, he felt, so he transferred there and graduated in 2003 with a bachelor's degree in Information Technology Management and a minor in technical communication.

Then life took over. "I was having a heck of a time finding a job," Anderson said.

For the next two and a half years, Anderson bounced around, attending career fairs and looking for a job by submitting resumes online. He put his goal of attending graduate school on hold to pay off undergraduate school loans.

*"Minnesota is better. Their services are stronger and better."*

—Jesse Anderson, computer whiz, former SSB customer now living in Florida

*Jesse Anderson continued on page 12.*



*Jesse Anderson continued from page 11.*

Then in August 2005, through a roommate, he met Libra and applied for services with SSB in Minnesota. He and Libra had been emailing on a daily basis for a few weeks when Libra sent him a notice about an assistive technology opening for an AmeriCorps volunteer.

Anderson learned about an AmeriCorps opportunity called CTEP, or Community Technology Empowerment Project. "Joyce was very instrumental in getting travel costs covered when I went out on interviews," he said. All it took was that one lead, and that led to the Saint Paul Public Library. "In addition, since she had lived in the Cities, she gave me some suggestions on relocating and areas to live."

By November 2005, Anderson found himself working with assistive technology at the former Lexington and Dayton's Bluff branches of the Saint Paul Public Library. Anderson did outreach—created signage, spoke to community organizations, and scheduled demonstrations for individuals—on assistive technology, software, and adjustable desk features. He wrote curriculum to make assistive technology understandable for library staff. He demonstrated Dragon NaturallySpeaking and Magic, voice recognition software, and

Kurzweil, which is used to scan and read documents.

"No one had really used it," Anderson said of the technology-equipped computer. "The computer was just sitting with a sheet over it, and everyone wanted to know about the 'computer behind the cloth.' I was able to generate interest and understanding during my AmeriCorps post," he said.

Anderson enjoyed his job, but he knew it wouldn't last for more than two years, and he was in no mind to be without a job again for an extended period of time. In the spring of 2006 Anderson was job hunting, interviewing and taking distance-learning classes, in addition to his AmeriCorps job.

Now Anderson is a computer instructor on the campus of the nonprofit Center for the Visually Impaired (CVI) in Daytona Beach, Florida, serving multiple Florida counties. His responsibilities include teaching braille, offering one-on-one computer classes, and evaluating hardware and software.

SSB helped cover some moving expenses and figure out places to live. "CVI staff helped me with this, too," he said. He lives about a mile from campus, walks to work frequently, and gets rides from co-workers on

those days when "it's hotter than sin." After work, the twenty-something Anderson describes himself as pretty open to bowling, PC console games, and working on his computer. "I like to do a lot of things," he said.

While Anderson works for CVI, he'll also be studying for a rehabilitation teaching certification, through a nine-month New York Lighthouse for the Blind online program. "It will be good to get this credential," he said. "Technology and braille is where I want to be."

Anderson can speak with some authority on differences in services among states: "Minnesota is better. Their services are stronger and better," he said.

After less than a year and a half of providing Anderson with job leads and creative job search assistance; technology, including a talking PDA/cell phone; relocation advice and expenses, Libra has closed his case. And Anderson considered the most important service he received:

"Access to technology was most helpful," he said. "Technology is not cheap, when a single piece of software could cost anywhere from \$500 to \$1,000. I would not be able to afford half of what I have without Joyce and SSB." ■■■



## spotlight

## Mohamed Abdel-Magid

*Text messaging, cane traveling WSU student hits the right notes.*



**L**ike most college students, Mohamed Abdel-Magid is heavy into multi-tasking. The Winona State University (WSU) junior can juggle a part-time job, socialize with friends, talk on his cell, and bookmark his spot in the latest environmental tome.

Originally from a small village in Sudan, Abdel-Magid was the oldest of four children. He is legally blind as a result of retinitis pigmentosa, a general term given to inherited eye diseases that affect the retina and cause the degeneration of the retina's photoreceptor cells. He attended a school for the blind in Sudan—and was treated like everyone else. "I didn't feel like I had a disability," he said. He went to Russia for treatment; ultimately, that didn't work.

Encouraged by his uncle, a WSU professor in the Composite Materials Engineering Program,

Abdel-Magid came more than 6,000 miles to Winona to study computer programming and management information systems—and was introduced to State Services for the Blind and Jan Bailey, SSB counselor in Rochester.

"Mohamed is really bright," Bailey says.

Abdel-Magid needed mobility and skills training, and once he settled on BLIND Inc., an adjustment to blindness learning center in Minneapolis, he completed the entire program in five months. Typically, the full-time comprehensive training program takes six to nine months. His curriculum included mobility, technology, home

management and industrial arts, where he made a desk.

Being a student and blind, he finds having life organized matters. He instant messages his friends and listens to Powerpoint presentations and email using JAWS; works with his teachers and technology to be as independent as possible; and is doubly careful to keep his belongings in place. He is an expert cane-traveler.

For relaxation, Abdel-Magid socializes with newfound friends in Winona—he has a lot, he says—and takes piano lessons a couple times a week, playing by ear. Reading is also important; he prefers books on science, chemistry, biology and the environment.

Abdel-Magid is preparing to find a job, and the names of Mayo and IBM come up in conversation. "It really all depends," he says, "but I try not to rely on others." ■■■

*Being a student and blind, Mohamed finds having life organized matters.*



**B**lind, visually impaired or DeafBlind Minnesotans age 55 or older wishing to regain or maintain their personal independence—as Roy E. Carter, Jr., Beryl Pettigrew and Sheila Peck did—are served by Senior Services. Staff of this unit provide three levels of services, according to the needs of the customer:

- general information;
- direct provision of needed services exclusively by SSB staff; and
- more extensive training and other services by SSB staff and/or external vendors.

In the more intensive services, the customer receives help via a plan for needs ranging from braille and cane travel instruction to money and household management skill development. SSB staff and private contract vendors provide services to individuals or groups. SSB uses a number of locations, or “hubs,” across the state where citizens can visit to receive services and try various aids and devices available to them. ■■■

## Senior Services Unit Statistics —

	FFY 2007	FFY 2006	FFY 2005
Number Served	3,432	3,199	2,896

## SSB's INCREASED BASE BUDGET RESULTS IN WIN-WIN

**G**overnor Tim Pawlenty's administration successfully advocated for an increase of \$1 million for SSB's base budget during the 2007 Legislative Session. The specifics of the request included \$900,000 to maintain Communication Center services and \$100,000 to maintain the required state match for federal vocational rehabilitation (VR) services dollars.

SSB had experienced increased costs over the years to provide a “public library” to blind, visually impaired and print handicapped Minnesotans—much like the increased costs individuals face for gas, food, and heating.

Similarly, costs for individual vocational rehabilitation plans had risen 24 percent from 2001-2005, and continue to rise.

Since the Communication Center had no line item appropriation in the state budget, over time, it relied more and more on federal dollars, whose primary use is to pay for individual vocational rehabilitation plans leading to employment. This created a budget dilemma. In the absence of resources and sufficient efficiencies, what would have to be cut? If there were insufficient dollars to serve all VR customers, an order of selection would have to be implemented. This means a rationing of services. Or, should Communication Center services be cut? Or both?

By approving the budget increase, the Legislature has determined that both of these important service areas need to continue providing a full-service menu. Equal access to the printed word by all Minnesotans is a foundation of SSB's mission to provide customers the ability to be independent through employment or community engagement, and vocational rehabilitation assists blind and visually impaired Minnesotans to become working and tax-paying citizens. This was a “win” for all Minnesotans! ■■■



## spotlight

## Professor Roy E. Carter, Jr.

*Traveler, educational television pioneer, stays connected with the world of ideas.*



It's been a good fifteen years since Roy E. Carter, Jr. retired from the University of Minnesota and many more since his editorial-writing days on the former *Minneapolis Star* and *Idaho Statesman*.

Yet, you can't take the journalist out of Carter, who taught journalism and sociology at the U for more than 30 years and scouted out open positions in Latin American academia back in the days when the university ran on the quarter system.

In his view, one of the more interesting services SSB offers is National Federation of the Blind NEWSLINE® (NFB-NEWSLINE®), a service supported, in part, by funds from the Minnesota Department of Commerce's Telecommunications Access Minnesota Fund. Using synthesized speech, the NFB-NEWSLINE® provides hundreds of participating newspapers such as the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*,

*Duluth News Tribune*, *USA Today*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal* over a touch-tone phone. Users of the NFB-NEWSLINE® can choose which newspaper, section, and article to read for that day, the previous day's, and the previous Sunday's issue of each newspaper. A menu allows the user to change the speed and voice quality, spell out, or search for words.

Carter, who is legally blind ("I see some, but not much"), connected with SSB on the advice of his physician, who suggested he make the call. SSB supplied him with a CCTV, magnifying devices, a special keyboard and a phone. "SSB has been very helpful and a godsend

to me," he said. "Without these devices, I'd be lost."

The Kansas-born Carter has traveled extensively in the U.S. and Latin America, where he often spent winter quarters teaching and doing research. After retiring, he lived in Uruguay for 12 years but returned to the U.S. for health reasons in 2005. Today, the father of three—a statistician, a lawyer, and a researcher—lives in a Roseville senior residence and teaches distance-learning journalism school courses for the University part-time. He calls a van service for transportation to the U for faculty programs and dinners twice a year.

Carter's residence also serves as a polling location, and he has used AutoMARK effectively several times to vote privately and independently.

*"I am extremely grateful for SSB. They revolutionized my life in several ways."*

—Professor Roy E. Carter, Jr., traveler, educational television pioneer

"I am extremely grateful for SSB," he says. "They revolutionized my life in several ways." ■■■



## FEATURE: RED LAKE AND WHITE EARTH MEETINGS

**R**ehabilitation counselors who work with American Indian customers know how professional demeanor can make a difference:

- A gentle handshake is considered respectful;
- Using professional jargon and wearing formal attire could create a division between counselor and customer;
- American Indian customers may be reluctant to sign informed consent forms, due to the history of misuse of signed documents. When it comes to service planning, verbal agreements may be preferable.

Linda Lingen, Administrative Services Unit, SSB, believes understanding these and other culturally-sensitive behaviors will become part of future training opportunities for counselors on and off the Red Lake and White Earth Reservations in the coming years.

Last summer, State Services for the Blind staff attended meetings with the vocational rehabilitation programs on the Red Lake and White Earth Indian Reservations—discussing common interests, scheduling training sessions, and signing cooperative agreements.

The cooperative agreements between the agency and the Native American tribes have been in place since the 1990s, according to Lingen. Agreements are typically re-signed when there are major personnel changes, such as an incoming SSB director or tribal chair. Per the agreements: Each organization will work cooperatively to promote the services offered by both entities; provide staff with access to training and development; and work together to deliver high quality rehabilitation services to American Indians in a culturally sensitive environment.

Five SSB staff members—Chuk Hamilton, Director, SSB; Pam Brown, Director, WorkForce Development Unit; Gina Geller, Support, Bemidji SSB office; Lingen; and Steve Pesola, Rehabilitation Counselor, Hibbing SSB office, met and spoke with the Red Lakes Tribal Council during the meeting with the Red Lake Rehabilitation Program.

Hamilton gave a brief presentation to the Council about SSB and the services offered through each unit. Floyd Jourdain, Chairman of the Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians, Connie Lee Berg, Director of the Division of Rehabilitation Services of the



Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians, and Hamilton exchanged personal greetings at the end of the presentation.

SSB staff also met with the White Earth Vocational Rehabilitation Program staff. During this meeting, they heard presentations from other partners providing services on the White Earth Reservation such as the Independent Living Center serving that area—Options and the Shooting Star Casino human resource staff.

Erma Vizenor, White Earth Tribal Council Chairperson, said she believed the collaboration between the State of Minnesota and the White Earth Vocational Rehabilitation Program was critical to providing services to American Indians with disabilities both on and off the Reservation.

Both SSB staff and Tribal representatives acknowledged their many years of collaboration. That collaboration sets the stage for a productive and beneficial future for the customers served by all three of these vocational rehabilitation programs. ■■■



## spotlight

**Beryl Pettigrew**

*No curbing his enthusiasm for teaching strings, making music in the Northland.*

**I**n the same breath in which 78-year-old Beryl Pettigrew spells his name, he mentions Peter Pettigrew, cast as a Death Eater in the fictional world of Harry Potter. Pettigrew admits to not reading the series himself, but his 92-year-old sister, an avid reader, has kept her brother up to speed.

The youngest of seven—and all living—Pettigrew moved to Duluth from Ottumwa, Iowa in 1957, to play in the Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra, where he stayed for 47 years. Pettigrew's orchestra programs and teaching career at West Junior and Duluth East High School made performing in the symphony possible, he says. "I was very fortunate to be able to make a living in this way," he says.

Pettigrew still teaches violin and viola Tuesday afternoons at his Lakeside neighborhood home and at the University of Minnesota-Duluth on Saturdays—with no plans to quit. "I'll teach as long as I have customers," he says.

"If I could see and not hear, it wouldn't be a bit of good to me."

Although his glaucoma was initially detected about 40 years ago, Pettigrew is a relative newcomer to SSB. His left eye is "dead," although he is still able to see some things from his right eye. Pettigrew hasn't driven in years.

He began receiving services about three or four years ago, after learning about the agency from a friend of his wife's. Vision aids—including magnifying glasses—large-print books and audio books from Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library in Faribault and National Library for the Blind

*"SSB has been very, very good. It's nice to live in a state where people are looking out for you if you have problems."*

—Beryl Pettigrew,  
Duluth, violin and viola  
teacher, jazz enthusiast



and Physically Handicapped, and white cane travel—all serve to enhance his quality of life and ability to teach.

"SSB has been good. They've been very, very good," he said. "It's nice to live in a state where people are looking out for you if you have problems."

Other than reading and attending concerts, Saturday afternoons will find him playing claves and keeping a Latin beat at the Club Saratoga, a strip bar, in Canal Park. "We have a jam session and nobody takes their clothes off."

His ability to travel with a cane keeps him in good stead; he and his wife have three grown children living in St. Paul, Boulder, and San Francisco. "We do lots of traveling for old people." ■■■



## Sheila Peck

*"At first, I was resistant to everything. But I could not live here alone without their help."*

**W**hen 68-year-old Sheila Peck first lost her vision in her right eye 15 years ago, her husband was a big help with reading, driving, and doing household tasks. In December 1999, her situation changed overnight: She found she couldn't read her hymnal during a church Christmas program.

First came the 'rickrack' and floaters—small specks in her field of vision—and visits to Phillips Eye Institute in Minneapolis. She couldn't read or sew. Then her husband died in 2005. A home visit by rehabilitation counselor Kay Dahlke changed the course of her life.

Dahlke, who covers southwest Minnesota and works out of the Marshall WorkForce Center, gave her a portable video magnifier, magnifying glasses and sunglasses, offered cooking tips ("I only need a tablespoon and a teaspoon"), a device to help individuals with low vision thread a needle, talking

calculator, stencil and felt-tipped pen for check-writing, and perhaps most valued, her mobility. Learning to travel by cane, Peck says, has been a godsend.

Today, she uses her well-practiced cane traveling skills to negotiate uneven pavement on her daily walks, workouts at the gym, and morning coffee with two 80-year-old women. Highway 212 runs through the middle of Renville, and Peck lives on the north side. The local kids look out for her and help her cross to the south side. "They watch the traffic and say, 'OK, Sheila, it's OK to go.' " "I'm the town project," she said. Yet, she is sensitive to being over-cared for by people who don't know she's legally blind. "I can take care of myself, I can see the big stuff, but there are dead spots."

Peck flew to Germany in 2006 to visit her daughter and stayed for several months. She credits cane travel with helping her walk the cobblestone streets of Bavarian towns.



Now this mother of three and grandmother of five, who scouts out other travel opportunities, is not home long enough to listen to books on tape.

Home to Peck is her grandmother's house, heavily decorated for the holidays and containing diverse collections: 14 sets of dishes, 15 casserole holders, 20 strainers, 100 brass candlestick holders. "I cook a lot and decorate tables at church with oil lamps," she said. She can tell her many tablecloths apart by feeling the texture of the fabric.

She also uses her sense of touch to garden. She couldn't tell between flowers and weeds at first, but eventually tackled this work at dusk, feeling the difference and counting more on other senses.

"Losing sight is very minute in the scheme of life," she says. "It's mind over matter. There isn't anything I can't do." ■■■



## *Honored by STAR*

**I**n April 2007, SSB's Assistive and Adaptive Technology staff members were honored with a Minnesota STAR



*Left to right: Charles Hamilton, Richard Gieschen, Shawn Wallin, Carl Andor, David Tanner, David Andrews, Greg Hunder.*

(A System of Technology to Achieve Results) Excellence in Assistive Technology Award. Carl Andor, Rich Gieschen, Greg Hunder, David Tanner, and Shawn Wallin were recognized at an awards presentation at the Capitol Rotunda.

"We have always known they do an outstanding job working with blind, visually impaired, and DeafBlind customers," said SSB Chief Technology Officer David Andrews, who nominated them for the award. "It is wonderful to see the public recognition for their work."

"Your dedication in promoting, teaching and using assistive technology has made a difference in the lives of many Minnesotans with disabilities," said Chuck Rassbach, executive director of the Minnesota STAR Program.

technology, system, and software evaluation and reevaluation, determining technology, training needs and other solutions, making recommendations, and related activities. The unit has been involved in a wide variety of projects of national interest such as collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Education that provides K-12 students the loan of assistive technology.

"Over the past 27-plus years, I have worked with and supervised a wide range of information access and assistive technology facilities and projects," said Andrews. "None of them have had a staff as knowledgeable and as committed as this group."

*"Over the past 27-plus years, I have worked with and supervised a wide range of information access and assistive technology facilities and projects. None of them have had a staff as knowledgeable and as committed as this group."*

—David Andrews,  
SSB Chief Technology Officer

STAR's mission is to help all Minnesotans with disabilities gain access to and acquire the assistive technology they need to live, learn, work and play. ■■■



# COMMUNICATION CENTER

**I**magine a public library where the collection and services are customized exclusively for blind, visually impaired, DeafBlind and print handicapped Minnesotans. The State of Minnesota already has one. It's called the Communication Center, and it's located at State Services for the Blind's Saint Paul Midway office. Through transcription and reading services, customers have access to the same print media as sighted Minnesotans.

## The Center:

- transcribes textbooks for hundreds of Minnesota students of all ages, and leisure reading books (braille or tape);
  - lends and repairs special radio receivers;
  - lends and repairs cassette players through the Library of Congress Talking Book Program and
- broadcasts a 24-hour radio reading service—the Radio Talking Book (RTB)—through a closed-circuit radio network that includes six Greater Minnesota outreach sites:
    - Fergus Falls
    - Mankato
    - Duluth
    - Rochester
    - St. Cloud
    - Grand Rapids

These outreach sites allow the Center to broadcast local news from publications such as the *Fergus Falls Daily Journal*, *Mankato Free Press*, *Duluth News Tribune*, *Rochester Post-Bulletin*, *St. Cloud Times*, *Grand Rapids Herald-Review* and others. RTB is also streamed on the Internet with a password.

The complete program schedule for the RTB is available online at the State Services for the Blind's website: [www.mnssb.org](http://www.mnssb.org).

Communication Center customers can choose their time to get their news through two 24-hour audio newspaper reading services accessed with a telephone: Dial-In News for metro-area newspapers and NFB-NEWSLINE® for some local Minnesota and over 250 national newspapers. This particular service is supported, in part, by funds from the Minnesota Department of Commerce's Telecommunications Access Minnesota fund.

The Center provides all of these audio, braille, print and digital communication services through SSB staff and a network of over 650 volunteers. Volunteers—highly valued for their contributions to the Center and blind Minnesotans—are honored each year with recognition events held at a variety of venues, the last being held at the Depot in downtown Minneapolis. ■ ■ ■

## Communication Center Statistics —

	FFY 2007	FFY 2006	FFY 2005
Braille Pages Provided	899,795	765,313	756,904
Radio Talking Book Receivers Placed	6,311	6,459	6,611
Audio Equipment Maintained and Circulated	20,596	20,488	21,011
Number of Customers Accessing Audio Services	14,219	13,965	14,190



## BRAILLIST DARLENE PLANTE RECEIVES DISABILITY COUNCIL'S HIGHEST HONOR

**F**ew outside the Communication Center's tightly-knit group of two staff brailleists, three braille technicians, support staff, and 50 volunteer brailleists may know Darlene Plante spent 13 years as a volunteer, then a contract brailleist before becoming a full-time staff member at the Communication Center in 1988.

During her volunteer days, she earned the distinction of being the first Minnesotan certified in the Nemeth code (mathematic and science braille) by the Library of Congress in 1983 after 16 lessons and four years of study.

More recently, Plante has also been honored by the Minnesota State Council on Disability (MSCOD) with the Chair's Award, one of its highest honors, in recognition of her extraordinary service for persons with disabilities: providing thousands of pages of educational and vocational material in braille for hundreds of blind students and employees in the U.S.



Plante "has demonstrated extraordinary service while advancing both opportunities and the quality of life for blind individuals throughout Minnesota, the United States, and the English speaking world," according to her nomination, submitted by Communication Center Director Richard Strong.

Plante is well known by her brailleist peers: She served on the Computer Braille Code Committee of the National Braille Association for three

years. Computerized translation programs have increased the output of the Communication Center's Braille unit, says Plante. While there are now various methods for accessing print material in audio form, the demand for braille remains high for educational, work-related and leisure materials.

"We have more work than we can keep up with," she said. Technology also keeps brailleists connected: A brailleist from Florida transcribes music and files are sent via email, for example.

Being a visual reader of braille, Plante has added the knowledge of additional codes to her portfolio, including chemistry, computers, flow charts and raised line drawings.

"Certifications tell employers that you know braille, although the employment outlook for brailleists is slim," says Plante. Some school districts hire brailleists—and call them clerks—for a fast turnaround of materials, yet they do so many more tasks. ■■■

*"Because of Darlene's outstanding and extraordinary service over more than three decades, more and more persons who are blind are able to compete with their sighted peers in educational pursuits and in the world of work."*

—Richard Strong,  
Communication Center Director



## spotlight

## Wayne Hansen

*Sharpens saw by hand for cutting wood on his Canby land.*

**W**ayne Hansen calls Canby—populated by just over 1,900 southwestern Minnesotans, within driving distance of three state parks, in hammer-shaped Yellow Medicine County—home.

Cutting an abundance of wood, sharpening saws, enjoying bonfires on his acreage, caring for his two dogs and five cats, fixing up his house, he's the very essence of an active, solid, hard-working Minnesotan.

Hansen taught himself to sharpen saws with the help of brailled saw manuals—*Simonds Saws and Knives* (1919); *Simonds Catalog of Saws and Knives*, a 1994 reproduction of an earlier catalog; and *Crosscut Saw Manual*, a 1988 publication from the USDA Forest Service—provided by the Communication Center's Braille unit. He became familiar with descriptions of saws and knives, what they were used for, the angle of the teeth, and details of saw composition required for sharpening through the brailled material.

Hansen has been blind since the age of 1, learning braille in first and second grades.

His work experience and interests in 'a little bit of everything' followed a typical education for children who are blind or visually impaired: For a couple years, he attended Osseo public schools followed by residency at the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind in Faribault, where he recalls studying history, English, home economics, mobility and cane travel, and going home to Canby for holidays.

He went to a vo-tech, took up machining and worked in a factory. But after teaching himself to use a bow saw during summer camping trips, wood cutting became his calling. Hansen spends all year cutting wood in his backyard for bonfires—lighting at least one a week—and sitting by the fire, drinking coffee. "I have a suntan that sticks with me all year," he said.

He also cuts cottonwoods with an ax for his sister, and at one time cut wood for sale. For hauling wood and dirt, he uses a custom-made, five-foot long, 130 lb. wagon with a tail gate that plops down. He stores his smaller tools and collection of 4½-foot cross-cut saws—he



owns four and may purchase two more—in a storage shed, an old 1930s schoolhouse.

Out of the woods, he's visited by friends and family. His parents, siblings, three nephews and three nieces all live in Minnesota. And the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library keeps him well stocked with history, westerns and science fiction books. "I have a big enough family and plenty of books," he said.

Early Wednesday mornings will find him listening to the Radio Talking Book's 'Tech Wire,' a program that features news from the computer world, and the news broadcast by Chris Colestock. "Colestock is good to listen to in the mornings with a cup of coffee," he says.

Not a big TV watcher, Hansen acknowledges watching football, and doing a little weight lifting to keep in shape. But those pastimes take a back seat to dashing outside and cutting wood, but not without the gloves. "It's no fun to try to cut wood without gloves." ■■■



## spotlight

**Hans-Peter de Ruiter**

*Hans-Peter de Ruiter says the Communication Center changed his life. Now de Ruiter can enjoy the international childhood classics he was read to as a boy in the Netherlands with his own young son here in Minneapolis.*



**"B**eing able to use the Communication Center has made me totally independent and has opened doors for me that have never opened before," said Hans-Peter de Ruiter, Minneapolis resident, who has been using the services of State Services for the Blind's Communication Center for four years.

"I always had a hard time reading and white-knuckled my way through school," said de Ruiter, who came to Minnesota's door 15 years ago from the Netherlands. After being diagnosed with dyslexia, he learned about the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library (MBTBL) in Faribault and relied heavily on their services and collections.

Today—another open door—de Ruiter is a doctoral student at the University of Minnesota. And recently, he joined the

faculty at the University of Minnesota's School of Nursing, where he teaches ethics and research in the Leadership, Systems, Informatics and Policy Cooperative area. De Ruiter also keeps his professional skills in order as a hospice nurse at Allina Hospitals and Clinics. The Communication Center records supporting materials he needs for his ethics and research class that are not available from the MBTBL or anywhere else. "It seems I've read more in the last six months than in my entire life," he said.

Not all his requests from the Communication Center support his vocation. When de Ruiter was a boy, his parents read to him the tear-jerking tale of 19th century French writer Hector Malot, "Sans Famille," or "Nobody's Boy," about the travels of orphan boy Remi, sold to a street musician. Other family favorites were the Karl

May books, set in the American West. May was a popular German writer whose main characters were the wise Apache chief Winnetou and his blood brother Old Shatterhand.

De Ruiter's young son has exhibited several of the same dyslexic symptoms he had when he was a boy. The Communication Center has been able to record English translations of these international children's classics, so he can share these same tales and fictional characters with his son.

Different volunteer readers at the Communication Center record materials for his and his son's use, he said, but over time he gets to know them by their voices and is impressed by their high quality of delivery. "They need to be able to read in a way that absorbs them in the material," he said.

*Hans-Peter de Ruiter continued on page 24.*



# COMMUNICATION CENTER — spotlight

*Hans-Peter de Ruiter continued from page 23.*

By de Ruiter's account, about 80 percent of the titles he needs come from the MBTBL and 20 percent are customized recordings from the Communication Center. His leisure-bordering-on-professional reading includes philosophy and sociology titles provided by the Communication Center. Having access to both sources has increased his opportunities for vocational and personal growth.

*"Being able to use the Communication Center has made me totally independent and has opened doors for me that have never opened before."*

—Hans-Peter de Ruiter  
Communication Center Customer

De Ruiter has completed his doctoral-level coursework and is in the process of completing his dissertation: How hospital policies and procedures, including electronic medical records, impact patients and nurses when delivering everyday care.

As the medical community begins to move toward electronic patient records, medical professionals need a common understanding of medical terminology, he says. For example, if a nurse records 'anxiety' on a patient's record, and another documents 'nervousness', do both words have the same meaning?

Thanks to the books he has been able to read through the MBTBL and the Communication Center he has been able to study the linguistic contributions from such people as Noam Chomsky. This has allowed him to deepen his understanding and love for language and expand his work in the area of the computerized patient chart. ■■■

## MINNESOTA BRAILLE AND TALKING BOOK LIBRARY

**K**nown as the Minnesota Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped since 1933, the recently renamed Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library (MBTBL) has more than 345,000 items, in multiple formats, available to the public. Library patrons, like Hans-Peter de Ruiter, can select from recorded cassettes, braille, large print and descriptive videos. The range of material is diverse: patrons may select from novels, history, biographies, cook books, children's classics, and foreign language materials.

Last year, more than 11,000 Minnesotans with visual impairments or reading difficulties ranging from 1 year in age to 100 years plus read over 287,000 items, according to Catherine A. Durivage, Library Program Director. The library mails materials to homes, nursing homes, other public libraries, hospitals and prisons. If a customer goes to a warmer climate for the winter, MBTBL will send materials to their temporary residence. The MBTBL also has customers who have undergone surgery and are unable to read or handle standard print materials for a limited time. ■■■

For more information on MBTBL, see: [www.msab.state.mn.us/support/library/MLB.htm](http://www.msab.state.mn.us/support/library/MLB.htm)



## spotlight

**Ella Manley**

*With the Radio Talking Book playing in the background and a full-grown cat sleeping on her lap, 91-year-old Ella Manley talked about her favorite radio reading service and the books she has listened to over the years.*

**M**anley is well known to St. Paul's Communication Center staff. She is a frequent, eloquent letter writer to the Communication Center and RTB, saying that she is now more informed about the world than at any time in her life.

In one of her letters, she writes: "Thank you for the print copy of the book review of the religion of founding fathers. Here, all in one place, are answers to so many of my questions...I do depend upon your organization for a lot."

From another: "Thank you all for making *RELIGION AND VIOLENCE* and *THOMAS JEFFERSON AND THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE* 'readable' for me."

And a third: "I had no idea that there were so many news magazines published...Moving from TV to Talking Books Radio was like opening the window onto the whole world...I can't think of any selection that I have listened to in full or in part that hasn't added something to my understanding of an issue or situation.

"I have fallen way behind in my thank-yous," she said.

Manley, who hails from North Dakota, graduated from high school in St. Cloud. "I wanted to go into journalism, but this was during the Depression and there was no money for that," she says.

Instead she went to St. Cloud Teachers College and wound up

teaching for three years. During World War II, Manley was a radio operator in the U.S. Navy, serving on Bainbridge Island, Washington, where she met a Marine who became her husband.

If people are either cat people or dog people, Manley definitely falls on the cat side. Her daughter, employment-free after working for the State of Minnesota for more than 30 years, is involved in a feline rescue organization, and Manley had 26 cats with her at one time. Today, Manley has one cat, who also listens to the RTB most of the day and half the night with her.

Usually, Manley has two or three books checked out from the Minnesota Braille and

*"The Radio Talking Book is the most wonderful thing I could ever ask for."*

—Ella Manley, 91, Communication Center customer and avid listener of the Radio Talking Book

*Ella Manley continued on page 26.*



*Ella Manley continued from page 25.*

Talking Book Library (MBTBL) in Faribault. MBTBL—formerly the Minnesota Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped—provides direct library service to

eligible Minnesotans like Manley who are legally blind or visually impaired, physically disabled (unable to use standard printed material as a result of physical limitations), or reading disabled.

John Shelby Spong, an Anglican prelate with more than 50 titles to his name, is one of Manley's most-requested authors. She likes the flexibility listening to books on tape brings: "I can easily go back if I miss something." ■■■

## spotlight

### **Penny Hachten** *At home and school, highly accessible technology keeps her highly busy.*

**L**ike most young parents, 35-year-old Penny Hachten is a busy woman. She is the president of the Sunday school program for 18-month to 11-year-old children who attend her church. She is a stay-at-home mom who spends time with her two grade-school-aged sons, goes bowling ("I don't use rails. We're bowling for fun, and I let the guys beat me.") and takes Arrowhead Transit to the Aitkin Public Library. Dr. Seuss and the Berenstain bear series are favorites in the Hachten household, she says.

Hachten grew up in Crosby and has lived in Aitkin since her early 20s, about the time she became blind due to medical problems. Her household health care worker, who helped administer IVs and searched for other services Hachten would be eligible for, told her about SSB.

A four-day-a-week, in-residence independent living skills program through Lighthouse for the Blind in Duluth helped Hachten with the vital skills she needed to maintain her life and home. On those intense four days, she studied mobility,

technology, JAWS, ironing, sewing, cooking, woodworking, communication and braille. On Thursdays, she'd be picked up for the 70-mile drive back to Aitkin. The program ran January through May which she remembers distinctly because they bracket the birthdays of her husband, who's retired from the Air Force, and son.

The Communication Center allows her to keep up with her sons' school progress by brailleing the report cards for her 2nd grade and 7th grade sons. The local school system—her 7th grade son's school is on

*Penny Hachten continued on page 27.*



*Penny Hachten continued from page 26.*

trimesters, and her 2nd grade son's school, quarters—sends multiple sets of report cards a year to the Communication Center where the braille takes place, and then they're returned to Hachten.

She also has a computer at home to scan her Sunday school program lesson manuals. Tapes and adaptive materials are also available to her at the church, she says.

One result of her blindness is that it has taught her sons, especially her oldest son, to be helpful. "Now my son is very helpful," she said. "He also helps other people without asking, he just does it." ■■■

## spotlight

### Karen Malver

*Connecting cooks and consumers across Minnesota.*

**W**hen winter is at its coldest, Minnesotans want warm-your-tummy meals that take the chill out of a long, dreary day. Summer weather calls for picnic food, and during holidays, everyone wants dishes that are extra special. After nearly two years as host of Minnesota Radio Talking Book's "In the Kitchen," volunteer reader Karen Malver knows what people want—and she delivers.

"I try to make my programs as timely as possible," said Karen, who is host of both "In the Kitchen," which airs Mondays

at noon, and "Consumer's Advocate," heard Thursdays at noon. It takes about four to five hours a week to tape the shows—not including the prep time she spends each week reading and choosing appropriate articles and recipes.

Communication Center staff provides Karen with background material to review for each week's programs. For "In the Kitchen," that includes copies of the *Star Tribune* and *Pioneer Press* food sections, as well as cooking magazines such as *Bon Appetit* and *Cook's Country*. For "Consumer's Advocate," she



pours through copies of *Consumer's Digest*, *Consumer Reports* and consumer-focused newspaper articles. Karen is responsible for choosing which articles and recipes to read and for timing her program to fit each show's allotted time.

#### *Family connections*

Becoming a Radio Talking Book volunteer was an easy

*Karen Malver continued on page 28.*



# COMMUNICATION CENTER VOLUNTEER — spotlight

*Karen Malver continued from page 27.*

decision for Karen when she retired from her school librarian job two years ago. "I've been aware of the Communication Center's services for more than 30 years," said Karen. "My son Michael was born without sight in 1972 and we started getting taped books for him when he was about three. That inspired my mother to start volunteering as a reader up in Duluth, where she lived. She learned that the sisterhood at her synagogue used to tape materials for the Communication Center, so she revived that practice. Now I feel privileged to carry on her tradition."

Michael later learned to read braille and the Communication Center would put his school books and other materials into braille. "It was a wonderful resource for him," said Karen. "He always tried to be as active as possible and do things with his friends, but there were certain limitations in what he could do. One of

the things he could always do, with the assistance of the Communication Center, was read. He became an avid reader, which continues to this day." Michael, now 35, still uses the Center's services, according to Karen. "He listens to Radio Talking Book occasionally, borrows taped materials, and also uses the Center when he needs something put into braille."

## *Finding a good fit*

When Michael was younger, Karen became a certified brailist to help transcribe materials for him, but when the time came to volunteer, she felt she was better suited to being a volunteer reader than a braille transcriber. "A braille transcriber needs to be very exacting and patient—and that's not my temperament!" she said with a laugh. "I thought reading would be a better match for me, and still allow me to provide a service to Minnesotans who are blind or vision impaired." Recently,

she was delighted to find out that a colleague of her son is a frequent listener of her cooking show.

Her other joy has been the people she's met while volunteering as a reader, and more recently, as a member of the Radio Talking Book 40th Anniversary Committee. "I feel so honored to be serving with such experienced, talented people!" she exclaimed of her committee colleagues. "There are some wonderful plans being developed to celebrate this valuable service."

Karen also has high praise for the Communication Center staff. "They are not only incredibly knowledgeable, they are such warm, caring people, and extremely dedicated to what they are doing. My family has benefited tremendously from the services they provide and I feel fortunate to be able to give back as a volunteer."





## MORE STATE FAIR VISITORS THAN YOU CAN SHAKE A (BRAILLE) STICK AT

**A**fter a three-year hiatus, SSB returned to Minnesota's Great Get-Together, hosting an exhibit to spread the word about its services to the public, especially seniors and their caregivers, as well as draw new Communication Center volunteers.

The exhibit featured aids and devices such as a large closed-circuit TV that displays magnified print, helping visually impaired people access the printed word. Programming from the Radio Talking Book was broadcast; and about 5,500 "braille secret messages" and 10,000 "braille on a stick" fans were passed out to fairgoers.

"We reached our goals," said Laurie Kalland, who coordinated SSB's State Fair exhibit. "About 120 teachers requested cards that have the braille alphabet for use in their classrooms and about 150 people expressed interest in becoming a volunteer."

More seniors are receiving services from SSB as a result of the exhibit. About 100 senior service brochures were given out plus packets containing agency information about services for seniors.

Dan McElroy, Commissioner of the Department of Employment and Economic Development, joined SSB staff and Communication Center volunteers in answering questions about SSB resources.

They'll be back in 2008 for a repeat run. ■■■



*Above: Dan McElroy, Stuart Holland and Judy Sanders visit with State Fair attendees.*



*Left to right: Dan McElroy, Stuart Holland, Judy Sanders.*





## Mission

To facilitate the achievement of vocational and personal independence by Minnesotans who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind.



## Philosophy

- Blindness is a natural part of the human experience, a characteristic, like the hundreds of others which, taken together, mold each of us into a unique human being.
- People who are blind are a cross-section of society as a whole, mirroring society in every way with the same hopes, interests and desires, the same dreams, abilities and potential as everyone else.
- Most all the physical limitations associated with blindness can be overcome by learning and using alternative techniques for doing without sight what you would do with sight.
- With appropriate education, training and opportunity, persons who are blind can achieve in the world of work, can be independent in their home and community, can have and take care of a family, can be a tax paying and participating citizen and can be in every way a contributing member of society who can compete equally with his or her sighted neighbors.
- Everyone has different dreams and expectations, attitudes and aptitudes, potential and possibilities—so an important ingredient to our programs is customer choice.
- Our job is to encourage high expectations and independence and provide the services needed to achieve customer goals while respecting customer choice. Success depends greatly on the effort and commitment by the customer.



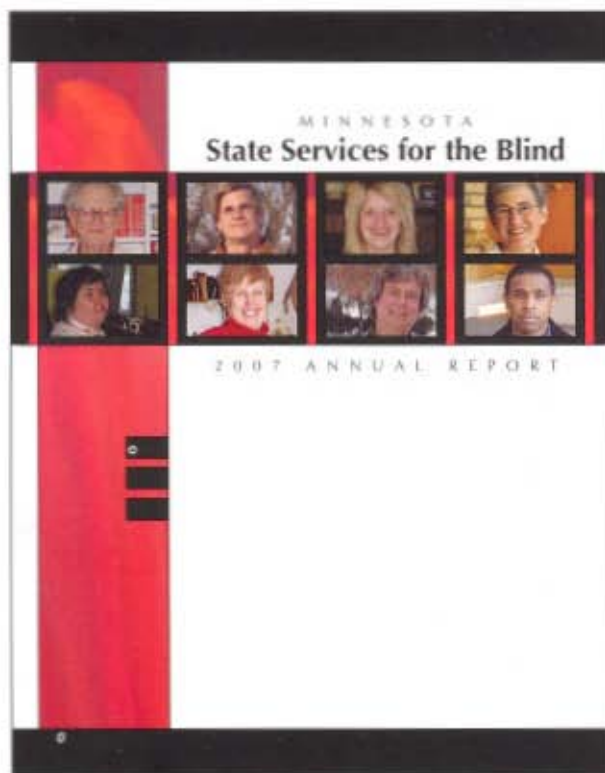
## *Greater Minnesota*

<b>Bemidji</b>	218.333.8206	<b>Hutchinson</b>	320.234.0384	<b>Moorhead</b>	218.236.2422
Toll Free	888.234.1257	Toll Free	888.234.7832	Toll Free	800.657.3755
TTY	218.755.4422	TTY	320.587.4740	TTY	218.236.2206
<b>Brainerd</b>	218.828.2490	<b>Mankato</b>	507.389.6070	<b>Rochester</b>	507.285.7282
Toll Free	800.657.3779	Toll Free	800.657.3821	Toll Free	800.366.2715
TTY	218.828.2734	TTY	507.389.3257	TTY	507.280.2886
<b>Duluth</b>	218.723.4600	<b>Marshall</b>	507.537.7114	<b>St. Cloud</b>	320.308.4800
Toll Free	800.657.3752	Toll Free	800.366.4813	Toll Free	800.366.5420
TTY	218.725.7759	TTY	507.537.6061	TTY	320.308.6401
<b>Hibbing</b>	218.262.6754	<b>Monticello</b>	763.271.3777		
Toll Free	800.657.3824	Toll Free	888.737.6237		
TTY	218.263.2962	TTY	763.271.3745		

## *Metropolitan Area*

<b>Blaine</b>	763.792.3900
TTY	763.785.5987
<b>St. Paul/Minneapolis</b>	651.642.0500
Toll Free	800.652.9000
TTY	651.642.0506
Toll Free TTY	888.665.3276
<b>West St. Paul</b>	651.554.6246
TTY	651.554.5914





State Services for the Blind is a program  
of the Minnesota Department of  
Employment and Economic Development.

**[www.mnssb.org](http://www.mnssb.org)**

2200 University Ave. W. #240  
St. Paul, MN 55114  
651.642.0500

**positively** Department of Employment  
and Economic Development  
*Minnesota*

This information is available in alternative formats such as braille, large print, audio tape and computer disk by calling

■ 651.642.0500 ■ TTY 1.651.642.0506 ■ Toll Free: 800.652.9000 ■ Toll Free TTY: 888.665.3276 ■