

Dear Friend,



Welcome to the refreshed SCENE newsletter. In this edition you’ll find tips, insight, and gain new appreciation for our organization.

As we continue through 2021, our online offerings to those with low or no vision will continue to increase. Visit our website to learn more!

All the best,

Peter A. Mindnich
President

Contact Information

Would you like to speak to someone about making a gift or do you have further questions?

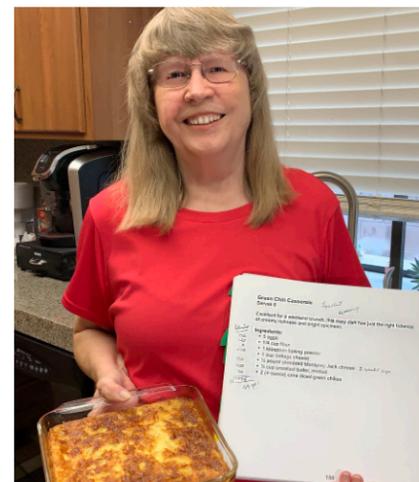
Phone	1-800-BRAILLE (272-4553) Ext. 1238
Fax	323-663-1428
Email	givetobia@brailleinstitute.org
Donate by Mail	ATTN: Development 741 N. Vermont Ave. Los Angeles, CA 90029
Donate online	brailleinstitute.org/donate

To make a gift of stock, IRA assets, estates, or other specialized gifts, please contact:

Phone	323-210-2607
Email	plangift@brailleinstitute.org
Hours	Monday through Friday 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM

Longtime Braille Student Knows “What’s Cooking”

You could say Joy R., a longtime student and financial supporter of Braille Institute, is a “top chef” when it comes to Braille’s classes and workshops. A lifelong resident of Los Angeles with her husband Hal, Joy has had a positive journey despite vision loss, and stays active and independent – and this includes her love of cooking. From an early age to young adulthood, Joy struggled as her vision diminished to the point where she knew she needed help.



“Listening to books on BARD during the pandemic, it’s been my hideaway, my getaway, my uplift.”

— Joy R., Braille Institute Student

It wasn’t until her thirties that she was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa—a condition that would shrink her vision as she aged.

Wanting more guidance than just a diagnosis, Joy sought out Braille Institute in 2003 for assistance with foundational skills such as white cane training. Braille’s instructors and classes helped her learn many “tips and tricks” of living with vision loss and helped reacquaint her with daily living skills. *(cont. on page 2)*

How to Connect Online to Braille Institute Services

Phillip Reeves is the Director of Client Experience at Braille Institute. We sat down with Phillip to discuss the specifics of how new and existing students can best access our online services.



How can someone new to Braille Institute (BIA) get started?

BIA works for anyone who has any type of vision loss, from mild to extreme – if you’ve just started having vision problems or you’re only losing your vision slightly. Give us a call at 1-800-BRAILLE (272-4553) and our team will get you started.

We offer a great workshop called *Understanding Vision Loss* that describes what vision loss is. It’s a great one to bring your friends and family to because it will really give them a better idea of what you’ve been experiencing. From there, you can start to enroll in our classes and work with our team at Connection Pointe, Braille Institute’s state-of-the-art technology center that offers free instruction on all of the latest mainstream adaptive technology devices that help blind and visually impaired students connect to the world around them.

All we really ask for when you call to register is a referral from your ophthalmologist or optometrist so can we understand what you’re experiencing. If you have questions about how to get a referral, call 1-800-BRAILLE and you’ll be connected to someone who can help you. *(cont. on page 3)*

“What’s Cooking” (cont.)

Joy has cooked a lot over the years and embraced Braille’s Centennial Cookbook, learning 10 recipes from it. And her favorite? The Green Chili Casserole – “It’s really an egg bake. You can cut into servings and freeze them. It’s a good, quick breakfast.” She also learned to make a great BLT pasta salad and a delicious corn chowder.

As a longtime attendee of Braille Institute classes and workshops, Joy also learned many other skills. She has worked with the instructors at Connection Pointe, Braille’s technology hub, and learned how to use the accessibility features available on her iPad and how to access YouTube. “The iPad has little technology hints that help you access apps and get around. I was able to enjoy the Braille children’s choir!”

Like many, Joy has felt the disconnection the COVID-19 shutdown has brought us all. Yet she still found ways to stay in touch. She is a frequent user of BARD (Braille and Audio Reading Download) digital books from the Braille Library. “Listening to books on BARD during the pandemic,” Joy says – “It’s

been my hideaway, my getaway, my uplift.”

She has also been able to attend an orientation and mobility (O & M) class online and recommends participating. “It’s one of the pandemic ‘positives’—that we’re meeting online and there’s safe distance.” She has even started to master Microsoft Teams, the video conferencing software used for online classes.

Given Joy’s activity level and her connection to Braille, it’s no surprise that she and her husband are proud and generous supporters – and in many wonderful ways. They give annually through their IRA account and they have elected to send monies derived from a mutual fund. Braille Institute is also included in their family trust. “I won’t give to just any organization. I’m very particular of who I give to, and I want my money to be put to good use. I really believe in Braille.”

The Braille Institute Centennial Cookbook, *Pleasures of the Kitchen*, retails for \$10 at the Vistas Store. Available in both large print and braille formats, call (323) 906-3124 for purchase.

“How to Connect Online” (cont.)

If someone has taken classes in person at Braille, how can they start with remote learning?

If you have attended classes in the past year, there’s no need to re-register with us. Visit our newly revamped “Classes & Workshops” section on our website (brailleinstitute.org/classes-events). Review the class schedule and select those that interest you. And call Braille to sign up! If you haven’t used our services for over a year, we do ask for a new doctor referral form because your vision may have changed.

BIA offers free instruction on all of the latest mainstream adaptive technology devices that help blind and visually impaired students connect to the world around them.

Security is important to Braille Institute. MS Teams gives us the most privacy and protection over other video conferencing systems and it’s the best platform to connect us to our students. It’s built for an educational environment and has more features when setting up classes and workshops. When getting started, we ask new students if they have used MS Teams. If users are not comfortable on video, MS Teams also has the option to be used via phone, an easy way for people to call in to workshops and classes.

The good news is there are many ways to receive Braille’s services and find support for vision loss.

Using BIA’s Remote Services

Braille Institute uses the “Microsoft Teams” (MS Teams) platform to deliver online classes and services, allowing students to talk with the instructor and additional class or workshop participants; one-on-one consultations are also available. For a MS Teams guide as well as an introduction to Braille Remote Services, visit: brailleinstitute.org/remote-services

A New Resource to Protect What You Love Most

Braille Institute serves to better the future of our community – and that starts with you. We are excited to introduce a new resource that will support you and your loved ones’ future: a free estate planning tool.

FREEWILL

We’ve partnered with FreeWill to help you write a legal will or trust for free. Nearly 70% of Americans don’t have an updated estate plan, despite it being a powerful way to protect the people you love. This resource makes the process simple, quick, and free. And you can complete the process in the comfort of your home.

Get started at FreeWill.com/Braille to create your free plan and get peace of mind for the future.

Register to use BARD Library

To receive BARD (Braille and Audio Reading Download) digital books from the Braille Library, please register for a FREE account:

Online

www.brailleinstitute.org/books-for-visually-impaired/individual-patrons

Phone

323-660-3880 ext. 1296

Email

SAytayan@brailleinstitute.org



Green Chili Casserole

Ingredients

- 5 eggs
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 cup cottage cheese
- 1/2 pound shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- 1/4 cup unsalted butter, melted
- 2 (4-ounce) cans diced green chilies

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease an 8-by-8 inch baking pan
2. In a mixing bowl, beat the eggs until well blended. In a separate bowl, stir together the flour and baking powder and stir them into the eggs along with the cottage cheese, Jack cheese, melted butter, and diced chilies. Pour into the baking pan. Bake until the top is well browned, and a small, sharp knife inserted into the center comes out clean, 30 to 35 minutes.
3. Remove from the oven to a wire rack to cool briefly before using a large serving spoon to scoop the mixture from the pan onto individual plates.