

Include Braille Institute IN YOUR WILL



While it's natural to leave bequests to loved ones, there's another group that deserves your generosity: children and adults who are blind or visually impaired.

By including Braille Institute of America in your will or trust, you'll help **brighten the lives of the thousands of children and adults served by Braille Institute each year.**

Please designate your bequest to:

"Braille Institute of America, Inc., a California Nonprofit Corporation with principal offices currently located at 741 North Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90029-3594."

Tax Identification Number: 95-1641426. To request more information, call our Philanthropy Department at 1-800-BRAILLE (272-4553), Ext. 1256.



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Braille Institute of America, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization.
Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

LET US HELP

OUR FREE SERVICES help people of all ages with vision loss learn practical skills and techniques to help them live more fulfilling lives.

- Arts & Healthy Living Classes
- Braille Books for Children
- Daily Living Skills Training and Classes
- Library Services
- Low Vision Consultations
- National Braille Literacy Programs
- Orientation and Mobility - Safe Travel Techniques
- Services for Families with Young Children
- Technology Training
- Youth & Young Adult Programs

And Many, Many, More



Our Locations:

Anaheim, Laguna Hills, Los Angeles, Rancho Mirage, San Diego, and Santa Barbara. Plus more than 300 Community Outreach locations.

CONTACT US TODAY

Braille Institute of America
Headquarters
741 N. Vermont Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90029
1-800-BRAILLE (272-4553), Ext. 1238
www.BrailleInstitute.org

FREE SERVICES SINCE 1919 | Empowering blind and visually impaired people to live fulfilling lives

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A BRAILLE INSTITUTE MAGAZINE

FALL 2017

Life Transformed

DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH OUR NEW "TECHSPERT" PROGRAM

Nikki W., Techspert Intern

A native of Kumamoto, Japan, 48-year-old Nikki W. was born visually impaired due to optic nerve malformation. In Japan, she was educated at a school for the blind, and then went on to a two-year college. She first visited the United States as an exchange student, eventually settling in San Diego, where she worked at an information center for people with disabilities until 2013.

(Continued on next page)

LIFE TRANSFORMED *(Continued from previous page)*

Four years ago, Nikki W. began attending Braille Institute to improve her computer skills through Connection Pointe, our state-of-the-art technology discovery lab. Today, she has become one of our latest “Techsperts”—technology experts trained to share their knowledge one-on-one with people who are blind or visually impaired.

“I really enjoyed Braille Institute as a place where I could make friends, share experiences, and have fun,” she says. That feeling of community led her to volunteer the following year, first at the front desk and then in Connection Pointe.

Nikki’s enthusiasm, outgoing personality, and grasp of technology made her a natural fit for Braille Institute’s new nine-month, paid Techspert training program. “We carefully select tech savvy students who are looking for career training to teach people who are blind or visually impaired in goal-oriented one-on-one sessions,” explains Ben Pomeroy, Braille Institute’s Director of Digital Programs.

The Techspert program also has another goal: to prepare its graduates for employment beyond Braille Institute. “Of those who have entered since 2015,” says Pomeroy, “half have already completed the program, and nearly all now have full-time tech-related jobs.”

“I really enjoyed Braille Institute as a place where I could make friends, share experiences, and have fun.”

—Nikki W.

As for Nikki W., she’s enjoying the opportunity the program offers to learn and grow. “I hope,” she says, “it will turn into a greater opportunity to help more people with vision loss learn technology.” ●

HOME VISITS SPARK INSPIRATION



Greg B., Access Technology Specialist, and Helen V., student

Helen V. first called upon Braille Institute for one specific need — Orientation and Mobility training. The call opened a new world of possibilities.

She was diagnosed at age 5 with retinitis pigmentosa (RP), a congenital condition causing progressive loss of the retina’s light-sensitive cells. That didn’t prevent her from spending 5 years in the United States Marine Corps and then going on to a 30-year career in accounting. Although her eyesight started to become an issue in her

mid-twenties, it wasn’t until she retired that she became legally blind.

In 2015, she applied for a guide dog through another organization, which first required her to have Orientation and Mobility training to make sure she was able to travel safely and effectively through her environment before she could begin training with a guide dog. A specialist from Braille Institute came to her home and provided that instruction. Today, Helen has her guide dog and credits those one-on-one visits for giving her the exact training she needed.

That initial experience with Braille Institute impressed her with our wide range of services and classes. Once she came to the campus, the welcoming students, staff, and volunteers added to the experience.

“I wanted to keep active in that inspiring community,” she says. She has begun learning braille at our Santa Barbara Center, where she’s also exploring computer technology and other classes. “Once you get involved with Braille Institute,” Helen concludes, “you realize that there is so much more that you can do to help yourself.” ●

BRAILLE INSTITUTE INSPIRES *New Chapter for a Former Social Worker*

During 21 years as a welfare and social worker, Gloria C. spent her life helping others. Now, thanks to the education and support of Braille Institute, she has found new hope and purpose.

Seventeen years ago, Gloria was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. She lost significant weight and, she thought, she had the condition under control. “So I stopped going to the doctor,” she says.

Then, in 2016, she experienced a sudden, dramatic loss of vision while driving her mother home from Texas to Southern California. “The ophthalmologist said I had late-stage proliferative diabetic retinopathy,” Gloria recalls. Since then, her sight has continued to decline, with only 5 percent remaining in her right eye and 10 percent in her left.

At her mom’s urging, Gloria visited Braille Institute’s Laguna Hills Neighborhood Center. “In the very first counseling session,” she says, “my mom and I learned so much and we left with hope that we’d be able to get



Gloria C. and her mom Judy

through this.” Gloria has gone on to take daily living skills and cooking classes, and white cane training. “I want to experience everything that Braille Institute has to offer,” Gloria adds.

Now, Gloria hopes to pay it forward, becoming an advocate and raising awareness for resources for others who are blind or visually impaired. Thanks to Braille Institute, she says, “I can stand up straight, look forward to each new day, and hold my head high. I know I can be blind and still be in control of my life story.” ●

GROWING UP WITH SIGHT LOSS *An Extraordinary Kid ...Jorge G.*



Jorge G., student

When Jorge G. graduated from middle school last year, he received an award as one of 10 “extraordinary kids” in his class of 900 students. “He’s good at everything he does,” says his mom, Fernanda. Jorge also has very limited sight, caused by a retinal detachment during his premature birth.

Throughout public school, Jorge received one-on-one in-classroom assistance. “But he was very shy,” says Fernanda. “I wanted him to start meeting others like himself.”

Jorge began attending the youth program at Braille Institute’s Los Angeles Center in 2015. Soon, the staff had him dancing, cooking, and socializing with others just like

him. “I met new people and learned I wasn’t alone,” he recalls. “It was fun.”

Braille Institute Los Angeles’ youth program instructor, Jessica Gonzalez, remembers a dramatic example of Jorge’s growth. “His dance class went to Union Station to do a flash mob,” she says, referring to a seemingly random group of people suddenly coming together in public and bursting into dance or song. “His mom, crying, told me, ‘I never thought I would see my baby dance.’”

Fernanda and her husband, Jorge Sr., have seen Jorge continue to blossom. Now in high school, he hopes to attend the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), studying video game design or, if his mom has her way, medicine. His future seems bright, thanks in part to Braille Institute. “They go out of their way,” says Fernanda, “to make kids feel comfortable with themselves and believe that they can achieve whatever they want.” ●

DR. BILL TAKESHITA KNOWS WHAT IT MEANS TO REDEFINE A DREAM

Dr. Bill Takeshita achieved his childhood dream of helping people to see better, only to find that dream suddenly snatched from him by blindness. Now, through his work with Braille Institute, he has found a fulfilling new purpose in life.

A third-generation Japanese-American, Dr. Bill—as he likes to be known—discovered his calling at the age of 6. “My first pair of glasses changed my life. Suddenly, I could see the blackboard in school. I could hit the baseball. I wanted to be an eye doctor.”

He earned his Doctor of Optometry degree in 1987, then went on to work at the Center for the Partially Sighted in Los Angeles, primarily treating children. That’s where he first learned about Braille Institute. “Many patients stated that they had been there and received different kinds of low-vision aids.”

In 1989, Dr. Bill became more involved with Braille Institute’s youth and child development programs. “Eventually, and together with the staff, I designed a program to teach parents how to use games and other tools to help enhance what remaining vision their children had.”

He found his career immensely satisfying. “I worked seven days a week,” he says. “It gave me so much pleasure.”

Then, in a challenging twist of fate, in 2003, Dr. Bill began losing his own sight due to retinal degeneration and he had to retire. “It was a very difficult time,” he says. “I became isolated and very depressed because I was afraid there was nothing for me to do.”

That’s when Braille Institute contacted him again. We asked Dr. Bill to help enhance service quality for our students.

Since then, Dr. Bill has served as Consulting Director of our Low Vision Program, helping to train staff and other consultants at our centers. He has also created a free, telephone education series for the Child Development Program, providing information on pediatric eye conditions for parents, teachers, and other professionals throughout the country.

He has been a Braille Institute student as well. “I learned how to read and write braille, how to cook, and do household repairs. Braille Institute has given me the understanding that you don’t need perfect vision to enjoy life.”

As both consultant and student, Dr. Bill Takeshita feels Braille Institute has taught him an important lesson. “It’s not fun to hear that your vision is poor,” he says. “But anything you want to do, you can still do. You just need a teacher to show you how.” ●



Dr. Bill Takeshita

A JOYOUS CONTRIBUTION *A Charitable Gift Annuity Honors the Memory of a Talented and Generous Wife*

“My wife’s name, Joyce, was so fitting,” says Paul Christopher. “For she brought joy to everything she created throughout her long life.”

“We had a very special partnership,” says Paul of their 56-year marriage.

They met at The Claremont Colleges in Southern California, where Joyce majored in sculpture and Paul in history. In addition to extraordinarily versatile fine art sculpture, paintings and drawings, Joyce created some of the most famous commercial dolls of the twentieth century as a freelance doll sculptor, including Barbie, Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley. Paul, meanwhile, became a tenured professor at the University of Southern California (USC) as its first full-time university archivist after a brief college teaching career in history.

Joyce’s love of the arts and nature, as well as her and her mother’s lifelong devotion to strong religious beliefs, led her to contribute regularly to Braille Institute. “She tacitly viewed her artistic gifts as divinely-inspired, yet shared them with the world with such modesty and generosity,” adds Paul.

In memory of his late wife, who died in April 2015, Paul recently made a generous contribution through a charitable gift annuity to Braille Institute.



Joyce Christopher

“Her dolls and toys made millions of children of all ages happy, and I hope this donation will help the many children Braille Institute serves,” Paul concludes. ●

ROLLOVER YOUR IRA *to Help Braille Institute*

Don’t miss this opportunity to support Braille Institute and enjoy a significant tax benefit at the same time—take advantage of the **IRA Charitable Rollover**. Here’s how it works:

- Donors age 70½ or older rollover assets from their IRAs to Braille Institute.
- Funds must be transferred directly from the donor’s financial institution to Braille Institute.
- Gift can be in any amount, up to \$100,000 per person per calendar year.
- Gift counts toward your annual Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) requirement.
- You pay no income taxes on the IRA distribution.
- Much better than taking an IRA distribution yourself and then making the gift.

For more information, call our Philanthropy Department at 1-800-BRAILLE (272-4553), Ext. 1256.

GOOD THINGS HAPPEN
WHEN YOU ROLLOVER!



A BEQUEST OF LOVING KINDNESS



Charles and Gail Lucky with their dog Pixel

Maurice Charles Lucky—or Charles, as his wife Gail called him—always had a tender spot for others. His particular concern for those with vision loss began when he was a child.

At the age of 11 in his hometown of Houston, Texas, Charles and his best friend won a trip to Washington, DC as a prize for selling magazine subscriptions door-to-door. On the drive home from visiting the nation's capital, a tragic accident resulted in his friend's death; and Charles lost sight in his left eye.

A decade later, while he was studying engineering in graduate school at Cornell University, an infection led to the removal of the same eye. "Charles wore a prosthetic for the rest of his life, and always identified with people who had visual handicaps," says Gail.

He overcame that challenge to build a successful career as an international mechanical and industrial engineering consultant based in Santa Barbara. "Charles was not one to brag about his accomplishments," says Gail. "Instead, he was a man who counted his blessings."

"If you contribute to Braille Institute, you'll gain back much more than you ever give."

—Gail Lucky

Both widowed, Gail and Charles were introduced by mutual friends, and they married in 1997. A supervisor of student teachers in local schools, Gail had been a longtime member of the Braille Institute Auxiliary of Santa Barbara, actively participating in its fundraising efforts. She introduced Charles to the good work being done there, "and he was truly impressed with the loving kindness they show to people who come for help," says Gail.

Struck by what the organization could accomplish, Charles began volunteering alongside Gail at Auxiliary events. And, he also decided he wanted to help even more by making Braille Institute a beneficiary of his estate.

Gail and Charles moved to a retirement community in Scottsdale, Arizona, in 2004. But they never lost touch with their Braille Institute connection. In fact, Gail remains a member of the Santa Barbara Auxiliary.

Sadly, Charles passed away last December. But Charles' significant bequest attests to the devotion the couple felt for Braille Institute.

Gail credits their commitment to the deep empathy and upbeat attitude of the staff and volunteers, and the good work they do for people on a daily basis. "If you contribute to Braille Institute," says Gail, "you'll gain back much more than you ever give." ●



ANNUAL REPORT 2017

(July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2017)

Your Generosity is Creating Opportunities

Dear Friend,

Throughout life we see dramatic transformations occur in many different ways. Caterpillars transform into elegant butterflies; people transform their lives by learning new skills; and high-performing organizations renew their work in partnership with stakeholders.

We understand and respect the power of transformation. Thanks to our staff, volunteers, and donors, we have offered free programs and services for nearly 100 years so people with no or low vision can develop the skills and sense of community they need for a life of independence, purpose and joy.

Over the past year, we have made significant progress in Programs, Fundraising, Facilities and Leadership. First, thanks to significant demand from students, strong donor support, and the creative program skills of our staff, we expanded and upgraded the Connection Pointe Technology Center in Los Angeles. We are now bringing this innovative curriculum and teaching methodology to our other regional centers.

We are also profoundly grateful to the AS&F Foundation for its \$5 million endowment gift. This is the largest foundation gift in our history, and will support our vital Low Vision Program for decades to come.

While we introduced a Neighborhood Center in Laguna Hills last year to better support students living in south Orange County, this year we announced plans for a new \$10 million Regional Center at our current Anaheim site. With more than half of the funds raised and the construction process underway, the new center will blend state-of-the-art technology with our hallmark personal services to meet the needs of people of all ages with vision loss. The new center is expected to open in the Fall of 2018.

Finally, we strengthened our leadership team at the board and staff levels. We are thrilled with the addition of three new, dynamic board members: Mr. Thomas Miller, Mr. Delbert White, and Dr. Linda Lam. Together, they bring immense passion for our mission, new skill sets, and additional diversity that accelerates our ongoing renewal. In April, we also added depth and diversity to our executive leadership team with the promotion of Gloria Coulston, Janice Herzberg and Nancy Niebrugge to Vice President positions.

In this report, we have included key statistics and financial highlights for your information. We also encourage you to read the inspiring personal stories of our students and donors. Each story is a reminder that thanks to your generosity, people with no or low vision will always have the support of Braille Institute to learn new ways of doing the things they love.

In closing, we extend our heartfelt appreciation for the dedication, support and generosity of our donors, volunteers and staff. Our work would not be possible without each one of you.



George E. Thomas
Chair



Peter A. Mindnich
President



"I feel so confident. I am happy that I've learned so much. It makes me feel so much better about myself. Without Braille Institute I'd be very isolated. At Braille Institute, I get to learn braille, communicate with others and enjoy a community."

— John M., Deaf/Blind Student



KEY PROGRAM STATISTICS

Library Services	Totals	Child Development: Birth to age 6	Totals
Registered Library Patrons	30,597	Families/Children Served	273
Books Circulated	864,768	Hours of Service	5,647
Depositories at Partner Locations	1,426		
Adult: Group Instruction		Youth Services: Ages 6 to 18	
Classes - Onsite		Youths Served	209
Students Served	2,200	Contact Hours	7,177
Contact Hours	159,864		
Classes - Offsite*		National Programs	
Students Served	2,677	The Braille Challenge®	
Contact Hours	17,542	Number of Participants	1,125
Onsite Student Registration by Class Type*		U.S. States & Canadian Provinces Represented	40
Daily Living	48%	Braille Special Collection	
Arts & Healthy Living	52%	Active Subscribers	5,890
		Children's Books & Story Kits Distributed	6,242
Adult: One-on-One Instruction		Cane Quest®	
Students Served by Location		Number of Participants	175
Onsite	2,643	Community Training Programs	
In-home	547	Professionals Trained	965
Mobile Solutions	443	Eye Disease Seminar Attendees	1,613
Other	1,081	Volunteer Services	
Orientation & Mobility		Center Volunteers	1,103
Students Served	878	Service Hours	94,869
Consultations	5,144	Special Event Volunteers	1,356
Low Vision Services		Service Hours	6,081
Students Served	2,476		
Consultations	2,765		
Connection Pointe			
Students Served	1,140		
Consultations	3,933		
Adult Counseling Sessions			
Students Served	169		
Consultations	582		
Personal Connection			
Students Served	400		
Consultations	624		

*All Offsite Classes Focus on Daily Living Skills.

Statistics provided here are based on both actual data collected and estimations.

HOW WE HELP

At Braille Institute, we demonstrate vision loss is not the end of independence, but the beginning of a new way of living.

Our **FREE SERVICES** help people of all ages learn practical skills and techniques.

WHO WE SERVE

Gender

Male	35%
Female	65%

Age

Up to 19	6%
20 to 64	28%
65 and Over	59%
Unknown	7%

Primary Known Causes of Visual Impairment

Macular Degeneration	36%
Cataracts	12%
Glaucoma	16%
Diabetes Related	13%
Retinitis Pigmentosa	5%
Other	18%

OUR MISSION:

Braille Institute is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to eliminate barriers to a fulfilling life caused by blindness and severe sight loss.

LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS – FISCAL YEAR 2016-2017

Chair - George E. Thomas

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 Rohit Varma, M.D., M.P.H., *Dean of the USC Keck School of Medicine; Chair, Department of Ophthalmology; Director of the USC Gayle and Edward Roski Eye Institute*

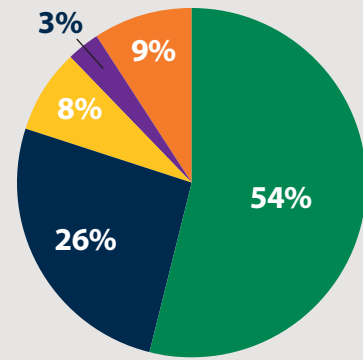
BRaille INSTITUTE OFFICERS

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 Reza Rahman, *Chief Financial Officer and Vice President, Finance*
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FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Income (\$000)

Years Ended June 30	2017	2016
Public Support		
Bequests and Trusts	17,013	9,383
Contributions and Foundations	8,138	10,900
Total Public Support	25,151	20,283
Other Revenue		
Royalties	2,380	2,507
State Library and Grants	802	844
Investment Income	2,991	2,491
Total Other Revenue	6,173	5,842
Total Income	31,324	26,125

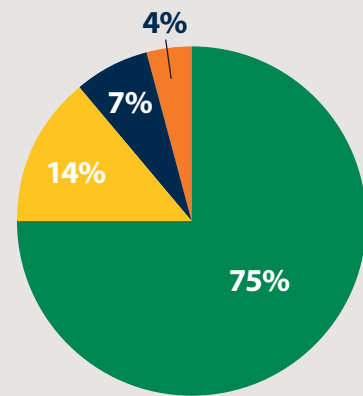


Income Sources

- Bequests and Trusts
- Contributions and Foundations
- Royalties
- State Library and Grants
- Investment Income

Expenditures (\$000)

Years Ended June 30	2017	2016
Program Services		
Los Angeles Center	3,843	3,699
Child Development	795	888
Rancho Mirage Center	1,613	1,681
Orange County Centers	2,128	2,054
San Diego Center	1,586	1,877
Santa Barbara Center	1,682	1,790
Braille Publishing	752	926
Library Services	2,790	3,013
Volunteer Services	372	401
Marketing and Public Relations	756	939
Total Program Services	16,317	17,268
Administration	897	801
Philanthropy	3,325	3,682
Support Services	1,511	1,685
Total Operating Expenditures Before Depreciation	22,050	23,436
Capital Expenditures	908	873
Allocation to General Fund	8,366	1,816
Total Expenditures	31,324	26,125
Total Net Assets	169,314	145,397



Operating Expenditures*

- Program Services
- Philanthropy
- Support Services
- Administration

* Including Depreciation of \$1,367

For complete financial results, prepared in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles in the USA, refer to the Report on Audited Consolidated Financial Statements for Braille Institute, which is available on our website: www.BrailleInstitute.org.

Thank You

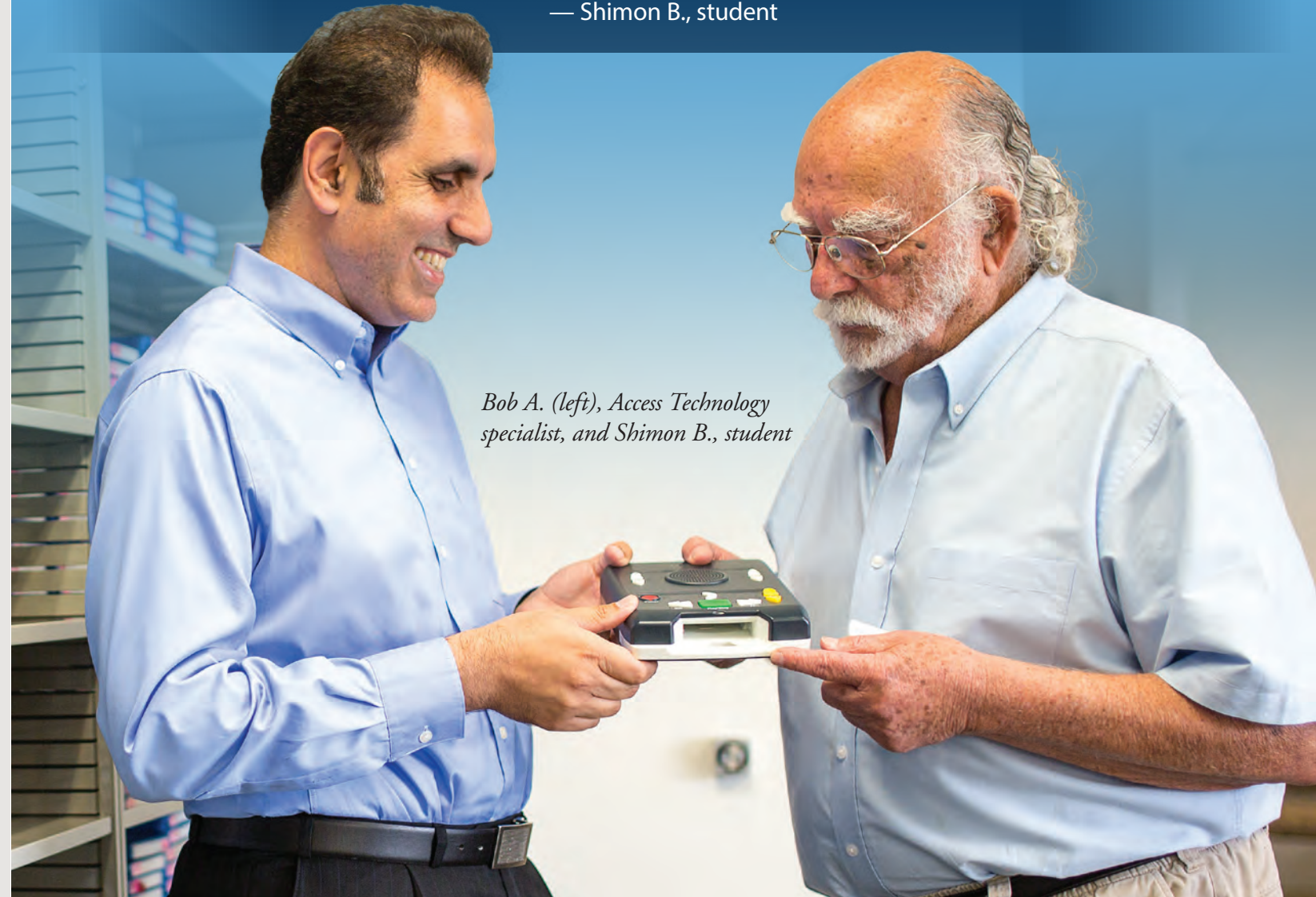
Donors are the key to providing Braille Institute's free, life-changing help for people who are blind or visually impaired.

You are the foundation our students rely on to transform their lives and communities.

To view a list of major donors from calendar year 2016, please visit our website at www.BrailleInstitute.org/donor-recognition, or call 1-800-BRAILLE (272-4553), Ext 1238 and we'll be happy to send you the list.

"Since I was six years old, I always had a book in my hand. But recently, due to macular degeneration, I had to stop reading. When I made my first visit to Braille Institute, it was like walking into a magic store. Being able to listen to books has been a life-changer - but it's not just one thing that Braille Institute does, its the positive, helpful attitude of everyone there that is the biggest gift of all."

— Shimon B., student



Bob A. (left), Access Technology specialist, and Shimon B., student

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BRaille INSTITUTE
741 North Vermont Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90029



Life Transformed

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Life Transformed



*Empowering visually impaired
people to live fulfilling lives*

741 North Vermont Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90029



You are cordially invited
to our Braille Institute of America

2017 *President's Luncheon*

Celebrate Lives Transformed

Lives Transformed



In appreciation of your support, the Braille Institute Board of Directors cordially invites you and a guest to celebrate Lives Transformed at our annual President's Luncheon.



Wednesday, September 27, 2017

11:30AM Reception

12:15PM Luncheon and Program

Braille Institute - Weingart Conference Center

741 N. Vermont Avenue

Los Angeles, CA 90029



Please **RSVP** by September 13, 2017. Limited seating available.
Call (323) 663-1111, Ext. 1238.

Business attire please.