

KEEPING UP WITH THE ACTIVITIES OF ACCESS BRAILLE



Top news from this quarter

Thank You from Vista Center for Promoting Braille Literacy for Blind and Low Vision Youth!...

In February 2023, Access Braille organized a karaoke fundraiser at Vista Center in San Jose. The afternoon was amazing. It was a musical bonanza with Karaoke, instrumental ensemble and Dance. The jewelry show, dance performance, and guest speakers added new layers of color, fun, and insight to the event. We would also like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to our featured guest for the evening Mr. T.N. Arunagiri who not only enthralled us with his music but also encouraged all the participants from kids to adults to sing along. The musical program began with joyful Karaoke renditions followed by a soulful instrumental Jugalbandhi starring many talented musicians who played the veena, sitar, tabla, and mridangam. We are extremely thankful to each and every member of our community for their attendance and generous Contributions.

Recently, Vista Center received the check for \$10,000 to support braille instruction and also to provide a stipend for potential families in need who are selected to attend the National Braille Challenge set for June in Southern California.

The impact of your donation is life changing for youth learning braille. Students require one-on-one instruction from the dedicated and talented Vista Center Teachers of the Visually Impaired, and instruction is typically up to three times per week to achieve a solid working knowledge of braille. Your donation fills the funding gap for two students for one year of braille instruction as schools have limited or no teachers of the Visually Impaired and parents often do not have the capacity to support this education.

Consider one student, we will refer to as Sarah. Sarah was not excited to learn braille, especially as her lessons occurred after a long day of studies. Sarah's Vista Center TVI discovered that Sarah was a quick learner and diligently applied herself to any challenge. Soon enough Sarah could read and write the whole alphabet.

Sarah has now been receiving virtual braille literacy lessons from Vista Center for 2 and a half years. She reads braille at 60 words per minute with 95% accuracy or higher nearly fully contracted. Vista Center's private braille lessons changed the trajectory of Sarah's literacy abilities, giving her a chance to learn at her own pace so she could have full access to her educational materials as her vision gradually diminished.

About a year in, Sarah's TVI suggested Sarah attend the Braille Challenge. Sarah loved meeting the other children who read braille and who were proud of their braille skills. Sarah left the challenge placing third in her literacy category, but more importantly, she left with pride in her heart for what she could do and a hunger for more.

" I can't wait until next year! I want to place first place!" She told her parents as she climbed into the car"

Sarah's attitude towards braille has completely changed, she frequently lists it as one of her favorite activities, eagerly attending lessons with a bright smile, and jumping at the opportunity to learn a new contraction.

A Thank you note from the Vista Centre to the attendees of the February Karaoke event...

We are profoundly grateful to Access Braille for supporting our braille literacy program as you are changing the lives of blind and low vision youth to set them up for success. In 2025, the Northern California Braille Challenge will be held at Vista Center San Jose and we, at the Vista Center, would like to extend an invite to you all to join us and see first-hand the excitement from the youth and their families as the participants apply their braille skills. We would love to include you in the program for parents and teachers and celebrate your support of the blind and low vision community.

Access Braille would like to express our gratitude as well. Thank you for all your support. You help make things like this possible!

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR INFO ON OUR NEXT EVENT!



Access Braille's Support of Sankar Nethralaya Eye Foundation



Sankar Nethralaya Photos



Donation Information

With the money that has been raised through Access Braille's various fundraisers, we have been able to supply the Sankar Nethralaya Eye Foundation with portable, handheld slit lamps! Our sincerest thanks to all of you --- who were instrumental in making this happen. But why portable split lamps?

From a public health perspective, 32 million people suffer from total blindness or severe visual impairment owing to anterior segment diseases globally, such as cataract, refractive errors, corneal opacities, infectious diseases etc.

These portable digital slit lamps are ergonomically designed and can help to decentralize screening to close-to-patient contexts such as public health centers, primary care centers, and even in the convenience of a patient's home

A Message from Dr. Veena Bhaskaran of Sankar Nethralaya

Kindly accept our gratitude for [your] donation of portable handheld slit lamps for community services.

Slit-lamp biomicroscopy is the gold standard for examining anterior segment pathologies. Slit lamps can provide a range of thin slit beams that can be used to focus specifically on optical sections like those in the cornea and lens, to understand pathologies and screen patients better.

This generous donation shall improve the quality of care and help the needy and can help in students for their academics as well.

"Our sincere thanks to Access Braille for their magnanimous support."

Dr. Veena Baskaran
Head of department
Jaslok Community Ophthalmic Centre
Senior Consultant, REH
Sankara Nethralaya
Chennai

Science Fair Awards

These science fair awards reflect our pursuit to encourage young students every year to present projects focused on aiding the visually impaired and blind.



Mr. Bhaskar Ramachandran, one of the Judges of the event recounted his experience at the Synopsys science fair.



This was the first time I had judged the Synopsys science fair. I judged about 4 projects that were done by school students from 9th to 12th grade. Each of the projects were thought of and created with great detail to attention, scalability and underwent rigorous testing on the field.

The use of AI and machine learning to make smart aids for the Visually impaired for locomotion and object detection was simply cutting edge. There were devices to help the visually impaired people to identify currency and navigate with fail safe techniques in the urban environment. The main aspect of the projects, when talking to the students, was their heartfelt desire to alleviate the standard of life of visually impaired persons in resonance with their personal experiences in the form of a relative or friend who were subject to vision impairment.

Each of the participants maintained a log of their progress and were very clear in their vision, as made apparent by their incisive answers. Overall, I was humbled to see not only the projects that I had to judge but also by the bewildering array of projects in biotech, chemistry and physics that the students had displayed. These children are the beacon of light for the future generation and I wish them the best for their future endeavors.



Feedback

We would love to hear your suggestions and feedback on what we have done and what we can do.

You can reach us at accessbraille@gmail.com. We will update any future event or news on our upcoming News Letter.

Thank you for all that you do!

Access Braille Team.