

SPRING 2018

# Thrive

HADLEY INSTITUTE FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

Seeing With  
Your Heart:  
Jolene Nemeth

A Vision Within:  
Artist Terri Webb

meet hadley's  
student award winners

Determination and Inspiration





4 Seeing With Your Heart  
Building Skills and Confidence 5



6 Empowering MacKenzie

Lifelong Learning 7

8 International Student of the Year

9 Learning for Professionals



Inspiring Others to Overcome 10



11 Beloved Volunteer

A Vision Within: Artist Terri Webb 11

## Advisory Panel Will Guide Hadley's Future

In an effort to ensure we are meeting the needs of those who look to Hadley for help today and tomorrow, we have created a standing panel of advisors. Hadley Advisors come from various walks of life but all have a connection to visual impairment. Some have a visual impairment themselves, while others work in the field or have a friend or family member with vision loss.

The response to our invitation to join the advisory panel was tremendous, and panelists have been extremely responsive in sharing their insights.

We will be checking in with our Advisors frequently to help inform decisions such as the relaunch of hadley.edu and content areas for new course/video/webinar offerings. We are excited to partner with our learners in this way to co-create Hadley's future.

## Scan a QR Code on Your iPhone or iPad

**Step One:** Open the camera app on your iPhone or iPad

**Step Two:** Hold the device's camera up to the QR code

**Step Three:** No need to hit the shutter button, your iOS device will automatically recognize the QR code and provide you with an on-screen notification. (Make sure you have a mobile signal or you're connected to Wi-Fi.)

**Step Four:** Tap the notification to be taken to the destination of the QR code.





# A Letter from the President...

scan a QR code with your mobile device to connect to their videos. A quick step guide is located on page 2.

We have greatly expanded the ways in which we think about and develop our programs. We have educated ourselves in the areas of instructional design principles for adult learners and best practices in distance learning. This research led to insights that will inform and, indeed, transform the manner in which we offer our education going forward — we call this initiative Hadley 2.0.

We are no longer thinking in terms of traditional courses, webinars or videos. Rather, we are conceptualizing the idea of “learning products” whose form fits the function of the content. A learning product might be a stand-alone video; a webinar that incorporates video; a large-print or even braille booklet that contains QR codes allowing the learner to hear a message from the instructor; or it might be a four-module series. The possibilities are endless.

Meanwhile, the Hadley building is undergoing renovation starting this spring in order to create an environment that supports Hadley as a 21st century learning organization. The inside space will be designed for low vision, and to foster creativity, collaboration and efficiency as well as to improve technology and telecommunications support. In order to complete the renovation as quickly as possible, staff will relocate to a space close by in Winnetka. Check our website, [hadley.edu](http://hadley.edu), starting in mid-April for renovation updates. We look forward to keeping you apprised of the exciting growth that you, our donors, are making possible. As always, we are grateful for your involvement.

Sincerely,

Julie S. Tye  
President

**H**adley donors are key partners in our ability to provide services, free of charge, to blind and visually impaired people and their family members. We are delighted to share that individuals and families across North America stepped up their support of Hadley through their year-end giving. Contributions rose by more than 41 percent year-over-year, and 50 percent of you gave more this year than last. This is tremendous and bodes well for Hadley's future. Thank you!

In this issue of Thrive, we are pleased to introduce you to Jolene Nemeth, a rehabilitation technologist and artist who shares her experiences with Hadley courses that help her at home, at work, and in the community. Our 2017 Student Award winners are also featured, and you can

**our mission** Hadley Institute for the Blind and Visually Impaired creates personalized learning opportunities that empower people to thrive — at home, at work and in their communities.



# Seeing with Your Heart

Artist Jolene Nemeth has found a clever way to incorporate blindness tools into her artwork.

While pregnant, Jolene Nemeth's mother was unknowingly exposed to measles, causing Jolene to have cataracts and glaucoma. Jolene credits Hadley for inspiring her to do things differently after she lost what remained of her eyesight.

When a rehabilitation instructor encouraged her to take braille courses, Jolene learned about Hadley. Over the past 15 years she's enrolled in 25 courses and seminars. "Hadley inspired me to regain my skills as an artist. Losing my vision was a rough road, but the seminars reminded me that I just needed to listen to them again for information and inspiration." Jolene creates a wide variety of art including teddy bears, jewelry, puzzles, sewing projects and drawings.

After taking the *Raised Markers* course, Jolene started thinking

about using some of the tactile marking materials she had in the house for her artwork. "Before losing my eyesight I drew animals as cartoons. The *Raised Markers* class inspired me to invent my own way of using wax to outline my pictures and then fill them in with colored pencil or marker." Jolene also uses tape and foam to mask areas while painting.

In late 2017, Jolene was excited to move into a larger apartment with a separate space for an art studio. Jolene says that what she learned in Hadley's *Independent Living*, *Raised Markers* and *Staying Safe* courses helped her throughout her move. "I tried to use as many tips as I could during packing and unpacking. I labeled a lot of items in braille so I could put them away myself without waiting for help. Orienting to the new space took some time. The skills I learned helped me

design my living space and place my furniture. Safety tips helped me design the kitchen space, and determine where things should go." Jolene's new kitchen is safer with more counter space next to her stove, reducing the possibility of accidents.

Jolene, who is a full-time rehabilitation technologist for the state of Connecticut, is slowly pulling her art studio together. She says, "I plan to have an art table next to some storage shelves and a sewing area on the other side of the room."

At work, Jolene encourages her clients to take Hadley courses and view iFocus videos, creating CDs to hand out when they don't have access. "I remind my clients, it takes courage, lots of courage, to get out of bed and face a world you can no longer see. But when you see with your heart rather than your eyes, the world is a better place." ■



Left, Right: Colored pencil drawings. Center: Jolene Nemeth.

# Building Skills and Confidence

John Hope Singleton of Dallas, Texas, receives Hadley's 2017 Student of the Year Award.

When John was seven months old, his mother was struck by lightning while holding him in her arms. She was killed and John's eyes were burned, causing his blindness. "In Rwanda, disabilities are seen as a burden, a curse. My grandmother took me to an orphanage because she could not care for a disabled child."

Growing up, John frequently experienced people telling him he couldn't do things. Even his teachers would tell him, "If you don't know the answer, write 'impossible for the blind.'" John says, "Everyone treated me like I didn't matter. I was told 'you can't accomplish anything in life.'"

His journey to the United States began in 2012 when he met his adoptive mother, Amie Singleton, who was visiting the orphanage on a mission trip. Amie connected with John and knew there was something very special about him. Determined to bring him to the United States so that he could get the medical care he needed, she began the long process to secure a medical visa. During this time they kept in touch, strengthening their unique bond, until it became apparent that both considered her John's "mom." After two and a half years, and much legal work, Amie secured a medical visa for John and legally adopted him in 2014.

During the long wait, Amie researched and planned a life for him in the United States, and told



John about Hadley. "I was so excited to hear there was a school for the blind that was free. When I came to Hadley, I found constant encouragement."

Taking more than 30 courses since 2014, John has gained knowledge that has empowered him with new skills and confidence. He thought he would never do math because of what teachers in Rwanda had told him. "My experience after taking Hadley's abacus course taught me otherwise. I feel accomplished and proud."

When asked about memorable moments in his Hadley education, John recalls a phone call with an instructor as she guided him in reading a world map. "I had never seen a map in braille, and it was incredible to realize that, even though I cannot see, I can still read a map with my fingers and picture it in my mind."

Last year, John was honored as

Hadley's Student of the Year. "I would never have dreamed that one day I would be chosen as the student of the year. When I get discouraged, I can remember this award and be encouraged again."

In addition to being a dedicated learner, John is an accomplished musician who sings and plays the piano and guitar. He is dedicated to helping others, too. With the assistance of his mom Amie, John has started a non-profit to help other blind children in Rwanda. ■

*Photos: John and Amie during their visit in September for Hadley's Annual Student Awards presentation.*



Scan this QR code to watch John's Student Award video.

# Empowering MacKenzie

Amanda Spenner  
of Centralia, Illinois,  
receives the 2017  
Robert J. Winn Family  
Education Award.

Photo: Amanda Spenner holding  
MacKenzie, with family members  
Angel, Ron and Hailey.

When her daughter, MacKenzie, was born blind, Amanda immediately enrolled her at the Delta Gamma Center for Children with Visual Impairments in St. Louis, where a vision therapist told her about Hadley Institute.

Eager to help her daughter in any way possible, Amanda enrolled in the *Braille and Your Baby or Toddler* course at Hadley when MacKenzie was just five months old. Amanda successfully completed seven courses in just two and a half years, earning all A's. She courageously took the challenging *Abacus 1* course and was recommended by her instructor to take the more challenging *Abacus 2* course. Her instructor said, "Amanda's average of 97% on each of the abacus courses is quite impressive."



Amanda displayed a passion for her studies, as evidenced in her instructor's comments: "She did a wonderful job relating the information in the two *Human Eye* courses to the family's personal experiences and what was happening to her daughter at a particular time. Amanda is an extraordinary student. Her grades show how well she has mastered the material in each course. Amanda's goal was not only to learn what was needed for herself, but to encourage all family members to learn what they could to support her daughter and help her become an independent learner."

Amanda says, "I have enjoyed learning to read braille." Over the years she introduced her daughter to new things, like adding braille labels on some of her toys and in her books so MacKenzie can follow along as they read. She even sent Christmas and birthday cards with braille so family and friends could see how MacKenzie will read.

MacKenzie will turn five in July, and Amanda continues to take Hadley courses. "I didn't expect to win an award. I'm taking classes to learn as much as I can to help my daughter as she grows and begins school." ■

To hear Victor Press tell the story, he wasn't much of a student as a young man. Considering how much he has accomplished in the decades since then, it's hard to believe he ever struggled with school.

After being medically released from the army due to a retinal detachment, Victor enrolled in college which led him to a teaching profession.

In 2002, when his vision grew worse, Victor attended a program at the Hines VA Hospital's Central Blind Rehabilitation Center. The Center directed Victor to Hadley, and he has been taking courses since 2003. "Hadley has filled the missing gaps of my earlier education and gave me another opportunity to use my retirement time wisely," says Victor.

One of his instructors, Vileen Shah, says, "Mr. Press is the first student I've had that not only answers the questions well, but he also includes additional information on many of his answers. I have learned much more from him than he has from me!"

As a veteran of many Hadley courses, Victor is grateful for the English and Computer courses that improved his writing and internet skills, along with strategies for his everyday living activities. Victor says, "The diabetes course was extremely important to me because I have the disease. Every day, I use the skills taught in the course to control my diabetes and to keep my remaining eye sight."



## Lifelong Learning

Being able to take the classes at home with instructors available in a one-on-one relationship helped him persevere. Victor explains, "I've learned to use the technology I have in my home, and am a better communicator because Hadley helped me grow beyond the scope of what I had been doing."

Victor's passion for knowledge is evident in his comment, "Precious metals are just one type of wealth that can vanish in one's lifetime. But the wealth of knowledge can be lost due to brain damage or death. I have gained my vast source of knowledge from several institutions of learning, including Hadley. My learning was sometimes hindered due to my poor vision and lack of visual technology. Hadley is the only place that showed an enormous concern for both my learning and my visual handicap." ■

Victor Press of St. Louis, Missouri, receives the 2017 Donald Wing Hathaway Lifelong Learning Award from Hadley.

*Photo: Victor and Gloria Press visit the Mary Lou Hayford Sensory Garden at Hadley during the 2017 Student Awards Ceremony in September.*



Scan this QR code to watch Victor's Student Award video.



Maritess Dalida  
of Brooke's Point,  
Palawan, Philippines

An itinerant teacher, Maritess spends a year teaching her students reading and braille. Her involvement with students continues with follow-up meetings to ensure students are then mainstreamed into regular classes. "My very first student graduated in March 2018 and attended Palawan State University in the Philippines, to earn a bachelor degree in education."

## 2017 International Student of the Year

Maritess learned about Hadley from a colleague while teaching children with visual impairments through the Department of Education in the Philippines. "When I finished my first course, *Intro to Braille*, I was hooked. I enrolled over and over again." Her passion for teaching grew as Maritess continued with Hadley. "My courses helped me address the needs of my students, from birth to adulthood."

Her instructor writes, "When taking my *Intro to Low Vision and Adults* course, it was clear that she is a committed teacher, working in difficult circumstances with an impoverished population. Her academic performance has been top notch."

Maritess says, "It is my legacy to help those with visual

impairment. Dedication and patience are important and help with my client relationships and their family members." She visits regularly with a client who is blind and has mild autism, neglected by a mother who has difficulty accepting his disabilities. Maritess explains to all parents, "We must teach them to fish, not just feed them fish. We leave them a great legacy by teaching them how to live independently."

Maritess thankfully says, "Hadley has played an important role in my life. There are no courses for the visually impaired in the city near my home. Taking Hadley courses even helped me receive a promotion which is helping provide for my daily needs." ■

*Photos: Maritess with her students.*





# Learning for Professionals

Annelly Rose of Clermont, Florida, receives the 2017 Professional Student of the Year Award.

Annelly was diagnosed with glaucoma at three months of age and had multiple surgeries throughout the first 16 years of her life. In 2010, she became totally blind after contracting a staph infection in the eye that had remaining sight. Annelly says, "I believe being in the rehabilitation teaching field made my adjustment to blindness less traumatic because I already had been using the skills."

Working in the field of vision rehabilitation for 34 years, Annelly routinely uses the skills and knowledge she gained at Hadley. She is currently employed at New Vision for Independence as a daily living skills teacher and braille instructor.

"I think my first course was *Self Esteem and Adjusting with Blindness*," Annelly recalls. At that time, I was supervising

several paraprofessionals, and I encouraged them to learn more about Hadley's independent living courses."

Annelly said the courses she took gave her knowledge that she uses in both her professional and personal life. "*Transitioning to UEB* taught me the new system, and *Braille Teaching Methods* provided me with information about teaching braille to different age groups. *Using Excel* gave me the knowledge to correct a timesheet for work, and make it work smoothly. *Basic Home Maintenance* gave me the confidence to do some home repairs by myself."

One of her instructors writes, "A review of the courses she has completed shows a person who has demonstrated an interest in a wide variety of topics. Annelly has completed 24 courses and has never earned a grade lower

than an A. In addition to her conventional coursework, she has taken advantage of our seminars."

Since 2014, Annelly has participated in Hadley's *Spring into Braille Reading Program*, a two-month braille challenge. "The reading program has gotten me to use braille more and reminded me of how important braille is in my life."

Annelly says, "Hadley continues to provide me with opportunities to learn and widen my horizons with skills that translate into my work with other blind people." ■



Scan this QR code to watch Annelly's Student Award video.

# Inspiring Others to Overcome

Andrew Simpson of Copperas Cove, Texas, visits Hadley in September to receive the Braille Student of the Year Award

One day a week, Andrew Simpson uses his passion and caring for others to volunteer as a chaplain at a hospital in his community. He credits Hadley with building his confidence as he developed enhanced braille skills. "The braille skills and Spanish I learned at Hadley help me when I talk with patients at our local hospital. I encourage them to find ways to rise above their disability or ongoing medical issue."

"Because of Hadley's support, I can encourage others who see the skills I've acquired and inspire them to overcome."

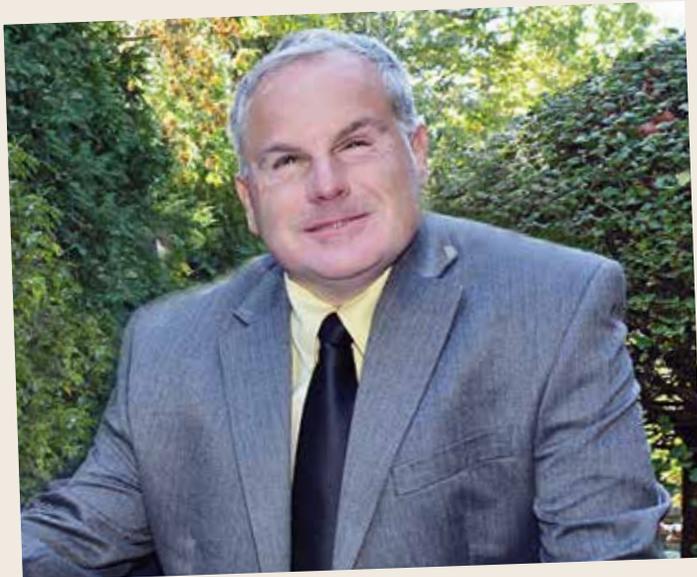
Andrew lost his sight at the age of 25 due to Diabetic retinopathy. After completing his master's degree in counseling psychology, his professor insisted he find a school to learn braille, telling him he'd need it to manage the privacy of client records without sighted help.

Andrew's instructor said, "Andrew has been involved in my weekly office hours for several years. He uses his skills in counseling to assist the group. He is a wonderful role model: encouraging, appreciative and willing to share personal experiences and frustrations."

"I'm frequently using my braille to type out notes to other Hadley alums, and braille demo-tape labels for postal packages, going to my peers, with audio cassette tape recordings from our instructor's office hour sessions."

Andrew recalls his instructor directed him through the coursework in *Braille Literacy III* and *IV*. "These were the toughest times with learning braille. My instructor's patience and consistency in tutelage came through. He caught some of the slightest errors, yet was always gracious in the way he said learning braille proficiency is ultimately in the quality of the end result of our efforts.

"My visual acuity hasn't changed over the years, but my need to live purposefully has truly expanded. Now that I have some modest proficiency in braille, I can better plan how to coordinate my home office as I consider a future venture into professional counseling. Hadley has given me the resolve and adaptive skills I need to bring more personal and professional fulfillment to my life." ■



Scan this QR code to watch Andrew's Student Award video.

## Beloved Volunteer



Since 2007, the Hadley President's Award has been given in recognition of an individual or group demonstrating exceptional spirit in raising awareness of the needs of individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Our 2017 President's Award recipient is Rose Donnell.

Rose and Ed Donnell moved to Mexico City in 1948 where Ed was President of Montgomery Ward — Mexico. Rose worked as a transcriber for the National School for the Blind. She helped establish programs for blind children and pioneered a *Guias de Mexico* troop (similar to Girl Scouts) for blind girls. Helen Keller visited her troop and acknowledged Rose for her leadership. These activities sparked a lifetime passion for helping people who are blind.

When Ed was promoted, they relocated to Winnetka and Rose joined the Hadley Woman's Board. In 1968, she initiated album holiday cards to supplement the income from the Woman's Board holiday card sale. *University of Courage*, a history of Hadley, chronicles Rose's contribution: "Besides the financial importance of this project, the flow of customers into the Hadley building helped make the school better known to people in the community." Chris Myers, Rose's friend and fellow Woman's Board member, recalls, "When Rose took on a project, she made things happen."

Rose and Ed joined the Hadley Board of Trustees in 1970, and in 1976 Rose was elected the first female Board Chair. "Rose was a favorite of everyone at Hadley," says former Hadley President Chuck Young.

Through her decades of service, Rose helped tens of thousands of visually impaired people. Rose's work at Hadley will leave a legacy for future generations.

## A Vision Within: Artist Terri Webb

Terri Webb, a professional artist, was diagnosed with an autoimmune disease twelve years ago and began to lose her sight. Knowing that she was likely to continue to have vision loss, she proactively reached out to Hadley to learn braille to help her prepare to navigate her new world. Today she has no sight at all in one eye and has about half of the visual field in the other.

With a fighting spirit, Terri is determined to continue to live her life the way she wants. She shifted artistic gears and has retrained to become a web designer.

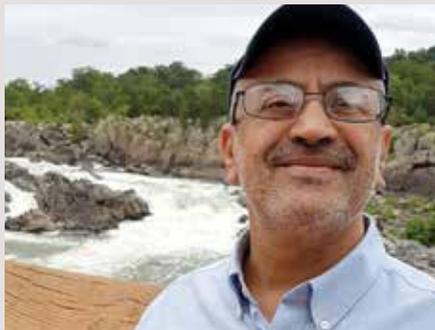
In the summer of 2016, Terri decided to take Hadley's *Bird Songs* course. "Through this course, my mind has opened up to nature in ways I never imagined," Terri reports. Even though that year had been challenging, the course helped her tremendously. In addition to the challenges with her health and its effect on her eyesight, Terri experienced the devastating impact of two hurricanes and a tornado — all within a year's time.

Terri realizes she had an empty space in her heart from all the loss. "Learning how to tune into nature has filled that space with the songs of birds." Terri enjoys a vision within — a vision that will never grow dim.

See more of Terri's artwork at [terriwebb.com](http://terriwebb.com).

Photos, Below: Terri and a piece of her artwork.





## *Your Legacy Gift...*

...will greatly improve the lives of blind and visually impaired people, like those profiled in this newsletter. By including Hadley in your estate planning you will help to empower future generations of visually impaired people thrive — at home, at work and in their communities. Many of the 140,000 people who benefit from Hadley's educational offerings each year are older individuals who are experiencing age-related vision loss. As people live longer, that number is expected to continue to grow significantly.

Please consider designating Hadley as a beneficiary of an IRA or insurance policy, or including Hadley in your will or trust.

- Suggested wording to share with your attorney: I give \_\_\_% or \$\_\_\_ to Hadley Institute for the Blind and Visually Impaired, an Illinois non-profit corporation located at 700 Elm Street, Winnetka, IL 60093, EIN #36-2183809.
- If you have previously included Hadley in your will or trust using our former name, "The Hadley School for the Blind," there is no need to change your documents.

You can assist us in encouraging others to do the same by letting us know of your decision. We look forward to thanking you and welcoming you to the Clarence Boyd Jones Society!

**Please contact Brooke Voss at 847.784.2774 or [Brooke@hadley.edu](mailto:Brooke@hadley.edu).**