

SUMMER 2020

Thrive

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Teaching the Professionals

While Hadley learning was always free to individuals who are blind or visually impaired and their families, professionals in the visual impairment field paid a small fee for continuing education courses. Your support is now enabling these professionals to learn free of charge as well, so they can build their own skills and better serve their clients in the future.

Eliminating the fee for professionals led to an unprecedented level of participation. Since mid-March there have been nearly 1,600 participants in Hadley's continuing education courses, compared to only nine

in the three-month period before this.

Anshuman Agarwal, senior program manager at India-based Vision-Aid, shares, "I encourage staff to learn from Hadley and take advantage of downtime due to COVID, and they are making excellent progress."

One of these professionals—Krishka Pachauri, a visually impaired instructor from Agra, India—writes, "Hadley's online education platform gave me such a remarkable opportunity to learn subjects which help me tackle the problems I face daily due to my own low vision. Beyond that, I am finding it very useful in training others."



Vision rehabilitation therapist and Hadley learner, Amanda George

In Alabama, vision rehabilitation therapist Amanda George has taken Hadley courses for her personal and professional learning. She now uses her time to participate in Hadley discussion groups, learning for the benefit of her clients. Amanda is also a valuable contributor to these forums, sharing her own ideas and resources with the group.



A Letter from Julie Tye...

The last few months have been challenging for everyone. Under the cloud of COVID-19 we have been navigating a new reality—facing uncertainty, confined to our homes and unable to visit in person with loved ones.

For many people who are visually impaired, feelings of fear and isolation are not new. Vision loss makes it dangerous to move about in the world, difficult to manage daily tasks or continue beloved hobbies. This often leads to feelings of frustration, loneliness, anxiety, and depression.

In the future, millions of Americans with age-related eye diseases will experience these challenges and emotions as they adjust to life with vision

loss. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, Hadley is here to help with this difficult transition so these individuals can continue to thrive in their homes, work and communities.

This has been Hadley's mission over the past century and our new learning platform ensures that we will be able to best serve everyone who needs our resources into the future. You may have read about our plans for this reimagined approach in previous issues. Now, I am excited to share that it has been successfully launched! See page 6 for more.

This builds on Hadley's esteemed history of distance learning. The importance of this distance learning model has been well proven with the recent pandemic as schools, institutions and organizations across the world have been ramping up their capabilities to reach those sheltered at home.

While other agencies that work with the visually impaired population were forced to close their doors due to social distancing measures, your

generosity has enabled Hadley to fill the gap with needed information, resources and learning (see page 8). The blind and visually impaired community has taken notice and we have experienced a tremendous increase in traffic to our website, participation in our forums and views of our videos. With a 100-year head start in distance learning, we have seamlessly met this demand to expand Hadley's reach and impact.

Everything Hadley does is made possible by the assistance of you, our supporters, who believe in our mission and partner with us to bring it to life. Thanks to you, Hadley is there for our learners whenever and wherever they need us—including in this time of crisis.

Stay safe and well.

Julie S. Tye
President

our mission Hadley creates personalized learning opportunities that empower adults with vision loss or blindness to thrive—
at home, at work and in their communities.



A Century of Support

Hadley Donors Make History

Hadley learning has always been free of charge to people who are blind or visually impaired and their families. While prospects for people with vision loss are brighter than they were a century ago, today many live on a fixed income or are un- or under-employed. Hadley never wants cost to be a barrier to our learners.

With this in mind, raising money to support the learning Hadley provides is integral to what we do—and you, our donors, are an essential part of our history.

STARTING LOCAL

William Hadley, founder of The Hadley Correspondence School for the Blind, lived in Winnetka, IL, a northern suburb of Chicago. Here he was surrounded by friends and neighbors who inspired and supported his efforts.

Key among these was renowned ophthalmologist, Dr. E.V.L. Brown, who worked closely with Hadley to start the school and would serve as

president of the organization's Board of Trustees until his death in 1953. Among Dr. Brown's friends and patients were two business leaders in the area—Douglas Smith, president of the Pepsodent Company; and John Scott, of Carson Pirie Scott—who wrote the first check of \$1,000 to the school in 1921.

Many others from the area were generous with their time and money, especially Hadley's Board of Trustees. In 1922, the group provided funds to move the school from William Hadley's living room to a space where it could expand operations. The board's support has been instrumental throughout the century. Thanks to the generosity of its trustees, the school survived the Depression. And, in 1951, this group raised funds to purchase the land where Hadley stands today.

THE WOMAN'S BOARD IS BORN

In the 1950s, women in the community stepped up to take a leading role by founding the

Hadley Woman's Board. In 1953, Hadley was in a precarious financial position and Nancy Brown Jones, daughter of Dr. E.V.L. Brown, got to work. She recruited "unusually capable, bright, charming and well-organized women who knew how to get right to a problem."

Today, the Woman's Board is a special partner to Hadley and its largest single donor. Since its founding 67 years ago, the group has raised more than \$5.6 million. A large percentage of these proceeds are generated through special events, including an annual gala that brings the local community together in support of Hadley. Over the years, fundraising events have included dinner dances, casino nights, Kentucky Derby parties and art sales. Highlights include Hadley's 75th anniversary gala with Barbara Bush as the Honorary Chairman.

Another longstanding Woman's Board tradition is the Braille Holiday Card sale. Started by Nancy Brown Jones in 1956, the cards include a holiday image with a message in both print and braille. A tradition for many families, the card extends Hadley's reach worldwide.



Hadley trustees raised funds for the School's headquarters



Woman's Board members selling Braille Holiday Cards



The Lion's Club promotes Hadley in the community

THE LIONS CLUB ROARS INTO ACTION

Lions Clubs International is a service organization that counts blindness-related causes among its projects. This mission was inspired by Helen Keller, the famous deaf-blind visionary, who appealed to the Lions Club to become “Knights of the blind in the crusade against darkness” at their 1925 international convention.

In 1929, the Lions Clubs’ newly formed Winnetka, IL, chapter adopted Hadley as its main project. This was fortuitous timing as the school was in great need of financial support. The Winnetka Lions’ financial contributions helped Hadley during the Depression, and their tireless efforts through the 1930s and 1940s raised awareness of Hadley across the global Lions Clubs organization.

By 1958, the Lions’ contribution comprised a significant portion of the school’s income. When it was time to expand the building in 1968, the Lions were there to help fund the renovation.

INDIVIDUALS DRIVE FUNDRAISING TODAY

Fundraising at Hadley is diversified across multiple sources. In 2019, the majority (62%) of contributions to Hadley’s operating fund were from individual donors. Like our learners, these individuals are from across the U.S. and around the world. Gifts from foundations comprised another 25% of operating fund donations. In addition, the Woman’s Board and service clubs, such as the Lions Clubs, continue to play an important role—raising money and serving as ambassadors for Hadley in their communities. ■

Nancy Jones Leaves a Lasting Legacy

Nancy Brown Jones, founder of the Hadley Woman’s Board and Hadley Trustee, died this spring at the age of 103.

Daughter of Hadley’s co-founder, Dr. E.V.L. Brown and Frieda Kirchoff Brown, Nancy grew up in Winnetka, IL, graduating from Smith College 1937. In 1940 she married Clarence Boyd “Bud” Jones. The couple lived in Winnetka, where they raised three children.



Bud and Nancy Jones

Nancy was an instrumental figure in Hadley’s survival and growth. When the school was down to its last \$500 and at risk of closing in 1953, she rallied friends and acquaintances for critical financial support. This led her to start the Hadley Woman’s Board. She also launched the Woman’s Board annual Braille Holiday Card sale from her dining room table in 1956. The first charitable fundraiser of its kind, the annual sale continues to be an important source of support to this day.

Bud Jones, Nancy’s husband, served as chair of the Hadley Board of Trustees from 1953 until 1969. Nancy worked closely alongside him to promote the School, including spearheading the first building campaign and going door-to-door throughout the community to raise the \$250,000 required to build Hadley’s home at 700 Elm Street in Winnetka. Nancy was first made a Hadley Trustee in 1941 and became a Life Trustee in later years.

In addition to her good work in the community, Nancy was devoted to her family. She was beloved by her three children, six grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. Nancy was preceded in death by her husband of 54 years, Clarence Boyd Jones, in 1994.

Expanding our Reach & Impact: Hadley Reimagines Learning

One hundred years after William Hadley began serving people who were blind and visually impaired around the world through “Braille by Mail,” Hadley has improved our learning programs to better meet the needs of the visually impaired community.

As the population ages, the number of people facing vision loss is growing. Today there are an estimated 2.9 million people in the U.S. with low vision and, by 2030, this is anticipated to climb to 5 million.

Living with limited vision, these individuals need to find new ways to manage their day-to-day activities, get around in the world and continue doing the things they love. However, the impact of vision loss is not only physical, it is also emotional. Isolation, loss of independence and depression can be devastating side effects that accompany sight loss.

In a unique position to help this growing population, Hadley went to work researching specifically what people navigating life with vision loss want and need. Findings revealed they are seeking improved technology, practical help with their daily struggles, connection with others, and a community that understands their challenges. Over the past three years, Hadley staff has been planning, developing, building, and testing a solution that delivers on this. This summer it successfully launched!

WHAT'S NEW?

The innovative platform makes it easier for people to access

learning resources through online workshops, discussion groups and podcasts that can be completed at their own pace.

Registration is fast and simple so learning can begin immediately. The website is welcoming, easy to navigate and can be customized to best suit users' specific vision issues. The entire site is also screen reader compatible for those individuals without any usable vision. Content suggestions are tailored to users' interests, based upon their choices, feedback, preferences, and other interactions.

Because adults in the technology-driven 21st century prefer to learn at their own pace and in short intervals, content is organized into interactive, bite-sized modules. This information can be accessed online in videos, audio or written transcripts.

UPDATED LEARNING MATERIALS

Hadley's learning materials have also been revised to ensure offerings include information that is immediate, relevant and helpful to people managing life with vision loss. To date, Hadley has launched over 220



workshops on the new platform, which fall under the areas of daily living, adjusting to vision loss, recreation, technology, braille, and working. Here, learners can find information across a wide range of topics—from personal care and safety basics to smartphone low vision features and orientation and mobility skills. More workshops will be added in the coming months.

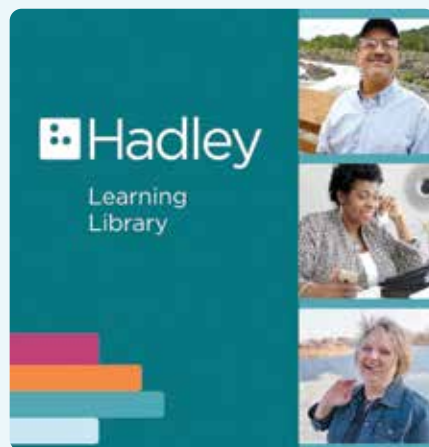
Hadley President Julie Tye is energized by the launch of this reimagined approach. “For the past century, Hadley has adapted to stay relevant and useful to those who need our assistance. Hadley’s new innovative platform is the next leap in this direction. We stand ready to help the millions of people who will be facing vision loss over the coming years. Wherever and whenever they need us, Hadley will be by their side.” Tye continues, “Bringing this to life was truly a team effort made possible by the dedication, expertise and generosity of Hadley’s learning experts, staff, trustees, learners, and you—our donors. Thank you to everyone who supported this important initiative.”

NEW APPROACHES AND CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO BRAILLE

Tye highlights several innovative aspects such as the ability to control text and background settings to best suit the individual’s vision needs, easy site navigation and feedback channels. She also underscores how the site “is reinventing the way to teach braille to sighted learners,” explaining, “The mystery that has surrounded

braille doesn’t need to be there. Learning braille is now fun, interactive, immediate, and accessible to everyone.” Users agree, as one commented, “Wish I had something like this when I first started learning braille more than 25 years ago.”

Of course, teaching tactile braille online is not feasible and Hadley will continue to provide this instruction by mail—as it has done for the past century. Hadley is the largest educator of braille worldwide and remains committed to this essential learning. In addition, materials for the new Hadley workshops will be available in the format that works best for each learner, including braille, large print and audio.



HELP AND CONNECTIONS

When Hadley learners have questions or need assistance, help is close at hand. Knowledgeable instructors are readily available to chat online or by phone weekdays from 8am to 6pm Central Time. On weekends, learners can reach out for assistance by email.

Connections and community are also found in Hadley’s

Discussion Groups which are integrated into the new site. Learners gather in these forums to talk about a wide range of interests such as gardening, cooking, staying active, crafting, technology, Spanish, and braille. Replays and transcripts are available for those not able to join live.

STARTING AND STAYING STRONG

Learners are encouraged to share their feedback—both positive and negative—throughout the learning experience. These user insights will be readily applied to improve the site and content.

There has been a tremendous positive response from site users, who include visually impaired individuals and professionals in the field.

Here’s some of the feedback we have received:

“It is the best, most accessible website I have ever seen. I am so looking forward to engaging in its awesome content. Thank you for caring enough to create this new website experience.”

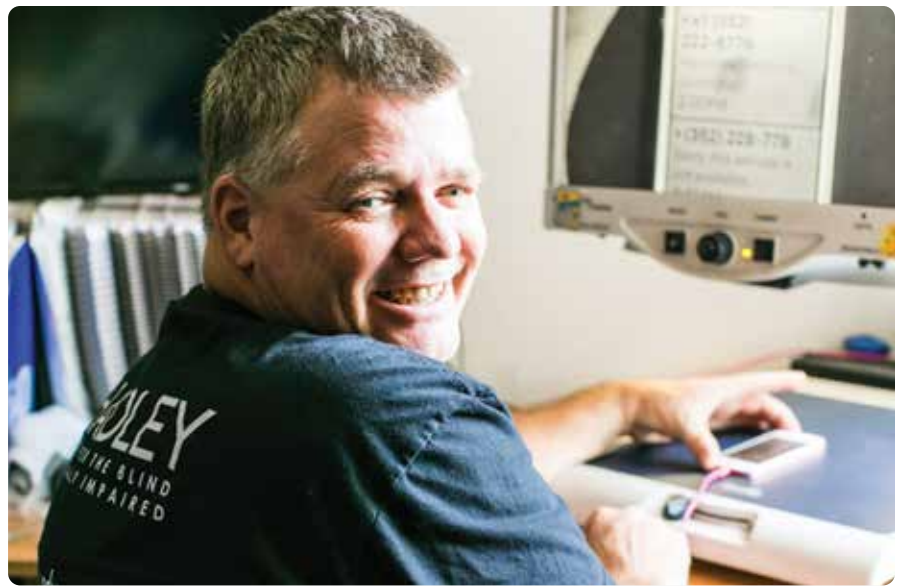
“I found the site easy to access and the content is great. It’s all informative, relevant and covers a broad range of topics”

“I teach technology to our older adults who have vision loss and refer them to your site daily. I also use it as a teaching tool for myself.”

Experience Hadley’s new learning platform for yourself. Just visit hadley.edu to get started.

Hadley and COVID-19

People who are blind or visually impaired are already at serious risk for isolation. Thanks to your generosity, Hadley can provide critical resources, learning and community to help in this difficult time.



COVID-19 has kept people in their homes over the past months. For most, this is the first time they have not been able to go do ordinary, everyday things like go out with friends, dine in a restaurant or shop in a store. For many people who are blind or visually impaired, this was already their everyday reality.

Blindness and vision loss are isolating conditions. This is especially true for older individuals facing age-related vision problems caused by diseases such as macular degeneration, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy. Many live on their own and lack the assistance and resources needed to cope with compromised sight and the resulting loss of independence.

HADLEY IS HERE TO HELP

For a century, we have been providing distance learning so people who are blind or visually impaired can learn in the convenience and comfort of their home. While the rest of the world is catching on to this approach, there is no other organization in the world as prepared as Hadley to assist this very vulnerable population.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for Hadley is greater than ever. Your financial support allows us to fill an important void left by vision rehab facilities, senior centers and other social service organizations forced to close during our time of sheltering at home. This has increased demand for Hadley's services as people come to us to find the assistance they need to manage life with vision loss. At Hadley, they can also find the connections they crave, with access to a community of peers to encourage them in their journey.

Hadley is prepared for this time of crisis. We have scaled up our operations to meet the needs of this growing population.

Hadley learning and resources are provided free of charge to people who are blind and visually impaired, their families and educators in the field. You make this possible by donating to Hadley. Thank you. ■

YOU MAKE IT
POSSIBLE FOR HADLEY
LEARNERS TO THRIVE AT
HOME, AT WORK AND IN
THE COMMUNITY.

**Due to COVID-19,
Hadley has
experienced:**

59%

*increase
in website users*

76%

*increase in visits
to our Practical Help
for Low Vision
website section*

98%

*increase in views
of our instructional
videos*

1,500

*listens to our special
COVID-19 and
Vision Loss podcast
episodes*

Hadley Learner Finds Reassurance in Crisis

Rebeca Valladares of Anaheim, CA, has been visually impaired since birth as a result of retinopathy of prematurity. Four years ago, Rebeca came to Hadley to learn Unified English Braille, a standardized code that allows for uniform transcription of a wide variety of materials in English-speaking countries.

As the mother of four, including a four-month-old infant, Rebeca is extremely busy. However, she makes time to participate in Hadley Discussion Groups. She is a regular participant in the Writers' Circle and also tunes in loyally to the Resource Roundtable for the valuable information specific to the needs of people with visual impairment and its upbeat and inspiring approach.

Finding useful resources is especially critical for people who are blind or visually impaired during the COVID-19 pandemic, so Rebeca was thankful for Hadley's recent podcasts on COVID-19 and Visual Impairment. "People are so frightened," she shares. "It was especially reassuring to listen and know there is support out there." ■



Rebeca Valladares with her children



Sri Lankan Learner Aspires to Inspire Others

Applying Hadley learning to empower those with vision loss

Sankha Hasintha Liyanaarachchige Don lives in the city of Matara, on the southern coast of Sri Lanka, where he teaches English in a government secondary school.

During school holidays, he voluntarily organizes educational workshops for students with visual impairments. Sankha understands the need for such programs because he lacked this type of assistance when he began to lose his sight to retinitis pigmentosa at the age of 16.

Due to his vision problems, Sankha struggled and had difficulty passing the university entrance exams. Determined to succeed, he ultimately entered the University of Colombo in 2010, at the age of 24.

Around this time, his vision deteriorated to the point that he could no longer read print, and he worried about continuing his education. He tried learning braille but admits, “I was very poor at reading it.” Once a blind instructor taught him about screen reading software,

“things became easier related to my studies,” he shares. At the university he also met his wife, Silani, who recorded books and notes for him.

In 2015, Sankha graduated Summa Cum Laude with a bachelor’s degree in education. He continued his education abroad at the Duskin Leadership Training Program in Japan and with computer training courses in Malaysia.

Today, with very poor remaining vision, he continues to educate himself on the disability field through the internet, e-books and audio books—and Hadley.

“Hadley donors are helping people with visual impairment see the world.”

Since starting with Hadley’s Basic English course in 2018, Sankha has focused on building his professional skills and improving his life. He has also returned to the study of braille because, “Hadley courses are very convenient, organized and user friendly. So, I am motivated to finish.”

When not working or studying, Sankha enjoys riding tandem bicycles, swimming and reading books. However, much of his free time is devoted to helping others. He declares, “Today I am very happy as a visually impaired person. But most of my friends with vision loss struggle a lot. So, I am determined to share my knowledge and experiences to assist them and uplift their life.”

With very few vision rehab facilities in Sri Lanka, Sankha knows most people with vision loss encounter many of the same challenges he did.

He is determined to improve their social and educational opportunities and has organized and conducted more than 20 workshops toward this goal.

Looking to the future, Sankha would like to continue in the disability field, both training others in special education and motivating visually impaired students to achieve higher levels of education. He also aims to continue his own education and become the first blind person in Sri Lanka to earn a Ph.D.

For Sankha, Hadley is “the silver lining in the darkness” of COVID-19. With more time to dedicate to learning and no charge for Hadley courses, he is determined to make the most of this opportunity. He has already completed 15 Continuing Education courses and is currently taking more.

“In Sri Lanka, we have lots of barriers,” Sankha acknowledges. He sees Hadley’s free-of-charge distance learning approach as an effective means to overcome many of these, “not only in the present situation, but in the future as well, because students with visual impairment can study by themselves at home, at their own speed and can select the best time to learn.”

Sankha hopes that families who are home together due to COVID-19 also take this time to learn through Hadley. “People with visual impairment become isolated from family, sighted peers and society. The best way to minimize this knowledge gap is to educate family members about blindness related subjects,” he declares.

Sankha is an enthusiastic advocate for Hadley and sends his “heartiest thanks to this Hadley family for helping people with visual impairment live happy and independent lives.” He also appreciates your support: “For some reason, a considerable number of people in the world do not get healthy eyes, but this does not mean that they cannot see the beauty of the world. The golden key is education. Education is the third eye for everyone. Hadley donors are helping people with visual impairment to see the world.” ■



Sankha with workshop students

BECAUSE **YOU** CARE,
HADLEY LEARNERS THRIVE
IN THE COMMUNITY

YOU MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR HADLEY LEARNERS TO THRIVE
AT HOME, AT WORK AND IN THE COMMUNITY.

Hadley Helps Vision Support Groups Zoom into the Future

It has not been business as usual for many organizations that serve people who are blind or visually impaired.

Low vision support groups regularly meet in senior and community centers. However, these centers have closed during the pandemic, temporarily eliminating spaces for social interaction. As these agencies have had to find other ways to reach out to those who rely on them, Hadley has been there to help by hosting virtual groups—spanning from Oregon to North Carolina—to bring connection and practical information to visually impaired individuals across the country.

“It has been a lifeline,” declares Lynndah Lahey, leader of the Wheeling Township Low Vision Support Group in Wheeling, IL.

This active group, with about 45 members between the ages of 40 and 94, meets monthly. “As someone who works with the group, I know how much members enjoy getting together with others who understand them,” Lahey explains.

Because the group was unable to congregate in person, Marc Arneson, Hadley director of



Hadley director of community,
Marc Arneson

community, offered to extend Hadley’s Zoom capabilities. “We needed to reach people in a way that is comfortable for them,” Lahey says, “Hadley’s support allowed us to continue meeting.”

Marc is now an honorary member of the group, although, thanks to Hadley’s help, Lahey now has the know-how and technology to facilitate meetings herself.

Hadley has played similar roles for other agencies, including the American Council of the Blind in Texas (ACBT). Leveraging Hadley’s Zoom expertise, ACBT conducted a series of three Lunch and Learn workshops this spring. “We highly appreciate the work of Hadley to enhance the quality of life for all who are blind or visually impaired, says Facilitator Kenneth Semien Sr.” ■