

# The Inside Track

News & Events from the Santa Barbara Unit of Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic

## Download Our Recorded Books

**W**e have exciting news to report: RFB&D members can now download books to their computers! Instead of listening to recorded textbooks on special CD players, all members of Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic can download a book directly to the computer, and then onto an MP3 (portable music player) to listen on the go. This is amazing technology that will help thousands of students learn through listening.

Our national headquarters in Princeton, New Jersey has been working on this for several years to make sure that our students would be able to get the help they need. While our special CD players were state-of-the-art five years ago, they've been replaced for most students with MP3 players, small devices that allow students to carry music with them wherever they go. More than two-thirds of our borrowers have one of these technological marvels, and virtually all of our student members in central California have a computer at home or school



Ventura resident Christine Banman says that audio books from RFB&D have helped tremendously and adds, "I love Shakespeare!" Left: Audio Access is the name for our new downloadable technology.



with an internet connection. By using computers and MP3 players, members can access books instantly, rather than waiting for a CD to come by U.S. mail.

Students will be able to save money by downloading books themselves. Our special CD players, although they allow students to move around a recorded textbook quickly, are costly, at \$260 for a home device and \$400 for one used in schools. By downloading books onto computers and MP3 players they already own, students won't have to pay for additional devices. This will allow more students to access our books at no additional cost. Students can download all or just part of a book, and technical help is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The technology requires Windows-compatible devices, including Zune, Samsung and Sony. RFB&D audio textbooks are not compatible with Apple® Macintosh computers and iPods at this time.

Our national library now has 46,000 books available to students, all recorded by volunteers. By helping students access books on their computers and MP3 players, we're helping them to learn faster, easier, and cheaper, and they can take their recorded books wherever they go.

If you know a student in need, please refer him or her to us, and help someone to learn through listening.

## Welcome Ventura!

**W**e're delighted to announce that effective July 1, 2008, the Santa Barbara Unit officially added Ventura County to its coverage territory. The County's students and schools were previously served by our Los Angeles Unit to the south with help from Santa Barbara. Now that it is our territory exclusively, we will be gearing up to serve significantly more students there with the help of volunteers and donors from Westlake Village to Ventura and

from Ojai to Oxnard.

By adding Ventura County to our service area, the Santa Barbara Unit grew in one day from serving 650 students and 38 schools and institutions to 850 students and 50 institutions.

Inside this newsletter, you'll find a list of schools and institutions we're serving. If you know of any that are not on the list, please help us reach out to them.



Grace Willson received the first Educator's Award at the annual Scholarship Luncheon. See page five for more about the event.



## Letter from the Executive Director

By Tim Owens, *Executive Director*

I saw a picture of the pyramids recently, and I thought about how the image is appropriate to our work. Each stone rests on another stone, building higher and higher.

Right now, although we're helping 850 students locally and almost 200,000 nationwide, and we've grown tremendously in the past few years, we're still not reaching enough young people who need our help. For every student we serve, there are 13 who need our services. That's where you come in.

Can you be the stone that helps us to grow higher, much like the pyramids? Can you bring in one other person to help us grow?

We need people in all aspects of our work. We need to reach more people who could benefit from our recorded textbooks. Do you know a student who is struggling in school? Or do you know a parent or grandparent of a child who is having difficulty with printed books? Perhaps you know a colleague or co-worker who would like to go back to school, except that it was so difficult for them years ago. You might know a teacher who should be aware of our services in order to better help struggling students. Or you might know an elderly person whose eyesight is failing but who would love to be able to listen to some of our recorded textbooks. Please, refer them to us. Our Educational Outreach Director, Kristen Reed, would be happy to talk to them. Contact her at [kreed@rfd.org](mailto:kreed@rfd.org) or 805-722-5761.

Do you know someone who might make a terrific volunteer, or who might be interested in donating to us? They

can attend one of our Learning Through Listening Hours, to see what we do, to hear from someone we help, and to learn about our vision for a world in which every child succeeds in school. We hold these presentations every month: a list of upcoming dates is included in this newsletter on page six. Or they can call us at 805-681-0531 for more information.

Do you know an author who might want his/her book recorded? Few people know this, but we do also record books for authors who want to have a digital recording on CD. We can use professional actors or the author can record it personally. Please refer authors to us.

Do you have contacts in Santa Maria, or in San Luis Obispo, Kern or Ventura counties? We need people there who can help us get into schools, reach students who need us, help us raise money or volunteer, and we also need corporations and foundations who might sponsor our work or give a scholarship to a deserving student. You can refer your friends to us, or give us their names and we'll contact them.

It's been said that between any two people in the world there are no more than six degrees of separation. The people you know may be the perfect people to be involved with us. Please help us to reach out to others, so that we can serve more young people with our life-changing services. If you'd like informational materials about RFB&D that you can give to your friends, please let us know. For whatever you can do, in advance, thank you so much.



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### Record-A-Thon Volunteers Sought

The next Record-A-Thon will be held April 20-25, 2009. This is our opportunity to educate the community about what we do, and we welcome almost 300 prospective volunteers and donors into our recording studio to help produce two dozen textbooks for students. We would love to have your help. The RAT Committee (yes that's what it's called!) meets about once a month in winter and spring to plan the event, get sponsors, and reach out to celebrities to ask them to read. Please call the office at 805-681-0531 to volunteer.



## Scholarship Winners

Congratulations to our 2008 Scholarship recipients. Each of these ten children applied for a scholarship valued at \$1,000. They receive a full four-year membership to our services and a special CD player which can play our recorded textbooks. These CD players allow students to jump between pages and to 'bookmark' a page, so they can come back to any sentence and replay it.

These pictures are from the awards luncheon we held May 31 to honor these young people. 2006 scholarship winner Alexis Hulsebos spoke movingly about how much she has benefitted from our services in just two years: where she once struggled in school, she now has a 4.2 grade point average (straight A's) and is the recipient of a full four-year college scholarship!

Congratulations to: Alleigh Carey, Henry Fuelle, Kayla Hutcheson, Haley Anderson, Samuel Gutierrez, Maya Torres, Michael Rasheed, Miguel Espindola, Melissa Vasquez, and Michael Rowley. They are in grades four through ten, and their schools range from Valley View Adventist Academy in Arroyo Grande to Canelino in Carpinteria.



Top: Eight scholarship winners show off their awards. Middle: Scholarship winners Melissa Vasquez with her mom Sonja and Michael Rowley with his mom Kathy. Far right: Alexis Hulsebos encourages the new winners.

## THANK YOU

We owe a huge debt of thanks to each of our scholarship donors. We're only able to give these scholarships because of each of these donors. Every \$1,000 means another scholarship for a deserving student. On behalf of these scholarship winners, we express our sincere appreciation for helping these students learn through listening.

The Latkin Foundation  
 Santa Barbara Elks Lodge  
 The Rudi Schulte Foundation  
 June Schuerch  
 RFB&D Volunteers

We're looking for scholarship sponsors for next year. Would you consider sponsoring one or more scholarships in 2009? You can make a difference in the life of a child who right now is struggling in school. Please let us know.



## Recording at Home

So many people say to us, “I’d love to volunteer, but you’re too far away from me!” Now, recording a book for a student in need can be only as far away as your computer. RFB&D can make it possible for you to volunteer at home.

Jerry Byrd was a volunteer in the Santa Barbara studio until moving to Huntington Beach. However, he still records for us. He’s created a mini-studio in his home, thanks to numerous friends who pitched in to help buy the computer, software, headset and microphone he needs to record. Jerry says, “I record about 90 minutes a day, and I completed 15 books last year. I read somewhere that there are five activities a person can do to keep the brain young, including dancing and reading aloud. I don’t dance, that leaves reading aloud!”

Jerry added, “I picture a listener when I record. I know someone is waiting for this book. Besides, I have the easy part. Can you imagine learning about Medical Anthropology or Oceanography just by listening? Those are two of the books I recorded this year.”

Long-time volunteer and board member Eileen Yardi, who has been involved with RFB&D since 1978, says of her home recording unit, “It’s a matter of efficiency: I can read at home for half an hour, and then come back later in the day and read another half an hour. I can get a lot more done. I don’t have to drive back



Eileen Yardi recording at home.

and forth, so it saves time, and it’s better for the environment, too.”

Eileen’s specialty is computer science books. She says, “Thirty years ago, most of the books were programming books, now most of them are on computer usage. Right now, I’m reading ‘Harley Hahn’s Guide to Linux and Unix.’ This one is 900+ pages; it will take me three months to complete.”

Eileen says that there are three things that someone needs in order to feel comfortable recording at home, “The ability and desire to work alone, knowledge of the subject matter, and to be able to catch and correct their own mistakes.”

Both Jerry and Eileen commented that

nearby noises aren’t recorded. Jerry said, “Don (Sillings, who also records for us) can play the clarinet in the next room and it isn’t picked up.” Eileen said, “You don’t need a special environment, just a quiet room. Because it’s a unidirectional mike, it doesn’t pick up anything more than a few feet away. Even the noise of the computer doesn’t come through, and it’s right next to the computer.”

Eileen is retiring from the RFB&D board but will continue to volunteer as a reader. We’re very grateful for her long service. Thank you, Jerry and Eileen, for helping students learn through listening.

## What Does It Take to Record at Home?

A home recording unit consists of a dedicated computer, software, a headset and microphone, and a portable hard drive or two, which captures the book and allows it to be sent back to the studio. Most importantly, it requires individuals who are very dedicated to recording books!

The cost of a home recording unit is about \$2,000, in part because a dedicated laptop computer is required – it must be exclusively for RFB&D recording because of the danger of viruses. There is special software for recording, similar to what we use in the studio. Changes and corrections in the recording are made using a mouse; there’s no additional hardware. If you’re interested, you can buy a home recording unit for yourself or to donate to someone who would like to record from home. You could also get

some of your friends involved and set up a home recording unit that would allow you to record textbooks from home together – an RFB&D home recording group!

If you want to volunteer at home, there are also other options besides recording. Home-based volunteers mark up books for readers; for example putting in notations to direct readers to where tables and illustrations should be read in the text. Other home-based volunteers contact our student borrowers, especially new ones, to check if they need assistance or have questions. There are lots of opportunities to volunteer at home: please contact us if you’re interested or if you want to refer us to someone who might be.

## The Schools We Serve

Here's a list of schools and institutions we serve. If your local school isn't on this list, please call Kristen Reed at 805-722-5761, or urge your school to become a member. If your school is on this list, they may need assistance to buy equipment or to continue their membership: please consider helping them serve more students in need.

### MEMBER INSTITUTIONS

#### KERN COUNTY

Taft College • Kern County Schools • Bakersfield College • Ridgeview High School • Bakersfield Christian High School • Tehachapi Unified School District

#### SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

San Luis Coastal Unified School District • Cuesta College • San Luis Obispo County Office of Education • Lucia Mar Unified School District • North County-Cuesta College

#### SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

Girls Inc. of Carpinteria • Carpinteria Unified Schools • Santa Barbara School District • Franklin Elementary School • Brooks Institute of Photography • Westmont College • Santa Barbara City College • Bishop Garcia Diego High School • Hope School District • St. Raphael School • Goleta Union School District Special Services • Isla Vista Elementary School • Buellton Union School District • Santa Barbara County Education Office • Dunn School • Allan Hancock College • Solvang Elementary School

#### VENTURA COUNTY SCHOOLS

California Lutheran University • Conejo Valley Unified School District • Oak Park High School • Oak Park Unified School District • Brookside Elementary School • Ventura Unified School District • Ventura College • Fillmore Community High School • Mountain Vista Elementary • Fillmore Middle School • Sespe Elementary • San Cayetano Elementary • Fillmore High School • Moorpark College • Ojai Valley School • Thacher School • Oxnard Union High School District • Oxnard College • McAuliffe Elementary School • Piru Elementary • Simi Valley Unified School District

## Novo Nordisk Visits Santa Barbara

*Representatives from Novo Nordisk, a pharmaceutical firm, held a meeting in Santa Barbara and chose to visit RFB&D. Here's what one man wrote about their experience:*

By Jim Redquest, R.N.

As a father of three children I have witnessed firsthand the power and joy of reading with my children and listening to them read an entire book on their own for the first time. Listening to them read seems to be almost magical. What a proud day that is for a parent – after reading hundreds of books to a child, they finally read to the parent. Walt Disney loved literature and once stated that he believed “There is more treasure in books than in all the pirate's loot on Treasure Island.” Yet, reading is challenging for some and impossible for others. The magical and empowering act of reading the printed word cannot be accomplished by persons who are blind, have dyslexia (difficulty with processing written communication) or who have physical challenges. During a triple bottom line\* activity in May, the West Region participated in a day of reading and recording textbooks so all people can have access to the treasures in books.

Our group visited Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFB&D), a non-profit, volunteer driven organization that provides a “learning through listening” service of audio textbooks to students who are visually impaired, learning disabled (e.g. dyslexia), or physically challenged. Their mission is to create opportunities for individual success. Their vision is to give ALL people equal access to the printed word. RFB&D is available to anyone who has difficulty reading because of a disability.

I was surprised to learn how widespread dyslexia is. Dyslexia affects as many as one in seven people. That is a pretty extraordinary figure. Seventy percent (70%) of those being served by RFB&D are dyslexic. RFB&D estimates that 35% of students with learning disabilities in the U.S. will drop out of high school, and 31% will get in trouble with the law. The learning disabled commonly

exhibit lowered self-esteem, high-risk behavior, and reduced productivity in their lives. Independent studies show that RFB&D's learning through listening service increases reading accuracy, speed and comprehension. Student test scores rise and so do grades, resulting in greater self-confidence, self-esteem and independence.

RFB&D is a nationwide organization, with headquarters in Princeton, NJ. They have a lending library of over 45,000 digitally recorded audio texts.

Our team was amazed by the amount of work that goes into recording a textbook and how important it is to record every detail. Imagine being given a textbook on influenza, for example, and being placed in a recording studio while two people read to themselves what you are reading aloud, looking for imperfections so the information recorded is exact. Recording your own reading sounds pretty easy, but it is more difficult than one thinks. In our group we found that some had an easy time with the process, while others had more difficulty. Our minds do funny things when we read print. There may be a word on the page such as “arm,” but in the context you are reading it, your brain wants to say “hand” to fit the scenario. However, the print clearly says “arm.” Staying focused while reading textbooks aloud is also not an easy task. Our team gained a new appreciation for our ability to read and a respect for all of the volunteers nationwide who have recorded for thousands of hours.

There are more than 7,000 nationwide volunteers that make up the RFB&D network and their audio textbooks serve some 185,000 people nationwide. The thought of becoming a member crossed more than one of our minds. The office we visited serves about 600 students locally, but Tim Owens says the number of students that could potentially use this service is approximately 2 million.

What does RFB&D provide? It provides audio books for students with a desire to learn despite their inability to read. It provides self-esteem and confidence. It provides treasures.

**For more information, please visit the Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic Website at [www.rfbd.org](http://www.rfbd.org).**

*\*Triple Bottom Line refers to activities that are good financially, socially and environmentally. Every activity they do – like a group sales meeting – includes an activity to benefit the community. –Ed.*

## IN MEMORIAM

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It is with deep regret that we announce the passing of two key volunteers. Margaret Maledy was one of our original founders in 1976, helping us to raise money and create the Santa Barbara organization. Irene Wilton was a 20-year volunteer and always willing to pitch in and help. They will be much missed.

Friends of our volunteers graciously chose to give gifts in their memory. As of August 15, these are the donors:

### In Memory of Margaret Maledy:

Thomas Brashears  
Margaret Brown  
Vivian Charters  
Hal Dunham  
Krystal & Garry Ganaway  
Marjorie Harner  
Mary Jacqmin  
Diana S. Lowell  
Jane Maddalon  
Helen Miller  
Joseph Patarak  
Kay Peterson  
Loisgail Pischel  
Laurette Rames  
Tomiko Sasaki  
Elizabeth Whitney

### In Memory of Irene Wilton:

Margaret Brown  
Jane Maddalon  
Patti Richards  
Jean Scheibe

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### In Memory of Mark Russell:

Mrs. Joseph M. Darche

### In Memory of Harry Chanson:

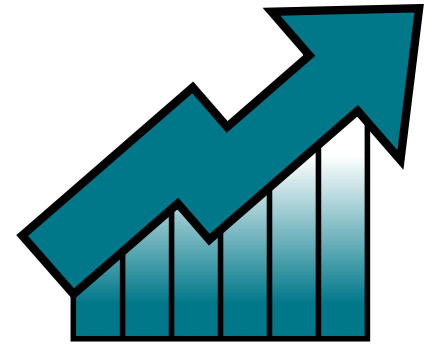
Jane Maddalon

## How Stock Donations Work

You have probably read newsletters from other organizations that have said, "Please consider a donation of appreciated stock." But do you know why that's a good thing for you? Here's how a stock donation works from your point of view.

For example, years ago you bought Boffo stock at \$40 a share, and now it is \$100 a share. (Boffo is a made-up name for this example.) Perhaps you pay 28% a year in federal taxes. You decide to donate 10 shares. For our organization, that's \$1,000. For you, it's an initial cost of about \$400 (\$40 a share x 10 shares). The tax deduction is \$280 (28% x \$1,000). Therefore, your cost to donate \$1,000 is only \$120 (\$400 cost - \$280 tax deduction). Isn't it amazing that you can give so much at so little cost?

From your point of view, this may be money that you spent years ago and you might lose something like \$3 a share a year in dividends, so donating it so that others can be helped may be more meaningful to you than keeping it. Also, if you don't remember how much you paid for it, by donating it you avoid having



to guess the cost basis if you want to sell it. If the stock has appreciated enough, you might even make money from the deduction!

This only works if the stock has gone up. If the stock has gone down, you would do better to sell it, take the tax loss as a deduction and donate the money for the charity deduction.

Of course, we're not lawyers or accountants, this isn't meant as financial advice, and you should consult your tax advisor for details. We hope that you'll consider making a donation to RFB&D this holiday season. Your gift means we can provide more recorded books to more students who need to learn through listening. An investment in our work for these young people can pay dividends for years to come.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

An event like no other! On Thursday, November 13, RFB&D will hold our fourth **Learning Through Listening Free Fundraising Luncheon** in Santa Barbara at Fess Parker's DoubleTree Resort from 12-1 p.m. We will feature a borrower who has benefited from our work. It's free to attend but we will be asking for money: there's no minimum or maximum gift requested. (We're refuting author Robert Heinlein, who said "TANSTAAFL: There Ain't No Such Thing as a Free Lunch.") Please call 805-681-0531 to RSVP or to request more details.

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We host regular one-hour presentations, our **Learning Through Listening Hour**, so people can visit our studios, learn more about us and meet the students we help. Upcoming dates are Tuesdays, October 7 and 21 and Wednesday, December 10, both from 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. Please RSVP for one of our Learning Through Listening Hours at 805-681-0531, and please let your friends and colleagues know. We're looking for potential audio book borrowers, donors, volunteers and ambassadors for our work. There's no obligation, no cost and no request for money.

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Our annual **Volunteer Appreciation Party** will be held on Sunday, December 7 from 5-7 p.m. It's open to all volunteers and their guests. Please come!

# A Thank You Note from a Borrower

Hello Tim!

I hope you and all the RFB&D staff and volunteers are doing well. I just wanted to let you know that I got my grades and in the class whose course reader you guys specially recorded for me, I got an A! My other class was a major struggle but I still pulled through with a B. That is, after way too many strenuous hours staring at my computer screen following the Kurzweil [it scans books and reads them in a computer voice –Ed.]. I stressed and cried so much over that class because I couldn't understand the two textbooks for it. You guys make a night and day difference! If it weren't for you recording that text for me I probably would have had to drop the class. Thank you so much again. I can't thank you enough!

oxox

Marisa Maiani



## Welcome Ada Conner

We're glad to welcome aboard our new Development Director, Ada Conner. She is currently the Chairperson of the Parks and Recreation Commission, where she has been a commissioner since 1995. Her career includes being the Area Director of Santa Barbara Special Olympics and working with the aging and developmentally disabled populations for ARC and the Santa Barbara Parks and Recreation Department. Ada has served on more than 20 boards and committees in Santa Barbara and she is the past president of both the Education Foundation and the Parent Child Workshop.

Ada has been in Santa Barbara since 1987, and now lives on the Mesa with her two daughters who both attend San Marcos. She identifies with our work because she has family members with dyslexia ranging from mild to very severe. Next to her children, she is most proud of running the Olympic torch down State Street before the 2002 Utah Olympics. Welcome Ada, glad you're here.

## WISH LIST

Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic is seeking:

- 150 Individuals, corporations or community organizations to sponsor a textbook at \$1,200 each.
- Volunteers to help with book production: readers, monitors, bookmarkers, checkers, etc.
- Six in-home portable recording systems to allow readers to work from home.
- Community leaders to serve on our board of directors or committees.
- Five businesses to join us with a three-year Adopt-A-School Sponsorship to support our services in a local school.
- 3,500 square feet of donated office space with parking in downtown Santa Barbara.
- 20 special playback devices to add to our lending library for students and schools.
- Six new computer processors for our six recording booths at our Goleta studios.

If you can help with any of these items, or know someone who can, please call us at 805-681-0531.

**RFB&D**   
learning through listening

### BOARD AND STAFF

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### The Inside Track

News & Events from the Santa Barbara Unit of Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic  
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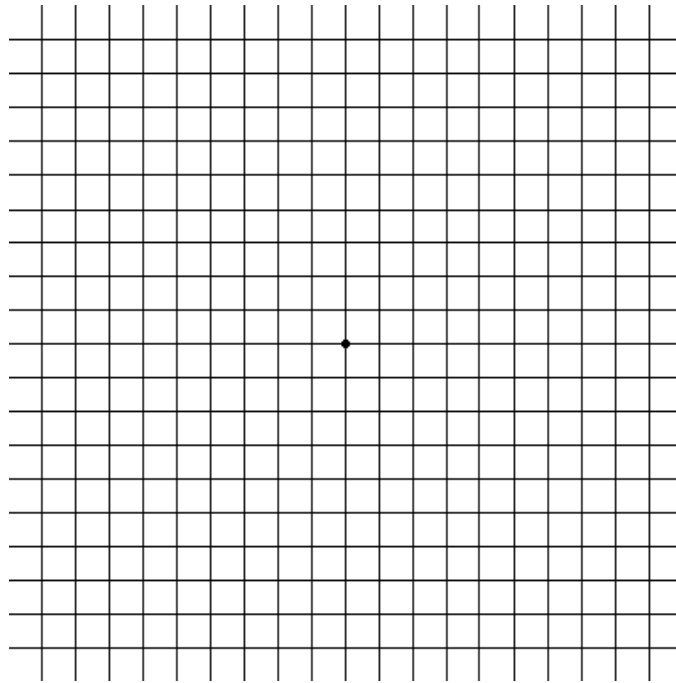
# Blindness in Later Years

**B**oard member and DreamBuilder Mike Nissenson tells a common story of an older friend who is losing his sight to macular degeneration. This condition happens to about 10% of people ages 66-74 and 30% of those who are 75-85. A person begins losing sight in the center of their vision. This makes reading difficult or impossible, because it's almost impossible to read using only peripheral vision. (Try it: focus your eyes on the left margin of this page. You can still see that there are letters, you just can't read them.)

It's a good idea to see an eye doctor regularly whether or not you're experiencing problems, because eye doctors can see other problems that show up first in your eyes, such as diabetes.

What can you do to fight macular degeneration? First, know your risk. If you have a relative with macular degeneration, your risk rises from 12% to 50%, since there seems to be a gene for it.

Then, maintain a healthy diet, and with the advice of your physician, consider adding a multi-vitamin and antioxidants such as lutein and zeaxanthin, which have been shown to help certain cases of macular degeneration. Reducing consumption of red meats, eating cold-water fish like salmon twice a week, and eating nuts, have been shown to help some patients as well. You can wear



A common test for macular degeneration is the grid test.

When looking at the dot in the grid with just one eye, can you see the corners and sides of the square? Do you see any wavy lines? Are there any holes or missing areas? If the lines don't appear straight, you should see an eye doctor immediately.

sunglasses designed to block HEV – high energy visible light in the blue-violet spectrum – which has been implicated in macular degeneration.

You can also receive books through Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic. Although we commonly refer to our audio book borrowers as students, you don't need to be in school to become a member. We have members in their seventies and beyond who still use our books to learn through listening. This year, we have added many more political biographies, novels and classics to our national library, including: Inside Hamas: the Untold Story of the Militant

Islamic Movement; Memoirs of a Geisha; and Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol. Anyone, member or not, who wants to see the books we offer, can view them at [www.rfb.org](http://www.rfb.org). (Of course, our site is accessible to blind people, so you can also hear what we offer there, too.)

An active mind in your later years has also been shown to combat Alzheimer's disease. If you know someone who has macular degeneration, we hope you will talk to them about the services we offer and refer them to us. If they live outside the California central coast area, they can call our national headquarters toll-free at 866-RFBD-585 (866-732-3585).

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