

# The Inside Track

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

## 2008 Record-A-Thon A Great Success

By Esther Tran-Le

**T**he 2008 Record-A-Thon was a tremendous success! We had 277 guests visit our studios, in addition to the help of 200 current volunteers. We succeeded in raising \$60,997!

A range of people came to read for RFB&D's 2008 Record-A-Thon. For example, veteran journalist Sander Vanocur returned to RFB&D, having previously read from *GoodNight and GoodLuck* for RFB&D in 2006. He "thinks the world of RFB&D" as he read *Boom* by Tom Brokaw for this year's Record-A-Thon. Sander speaks of RFB&D as an important organization that reassures people by telling them: "Let me take your hand."

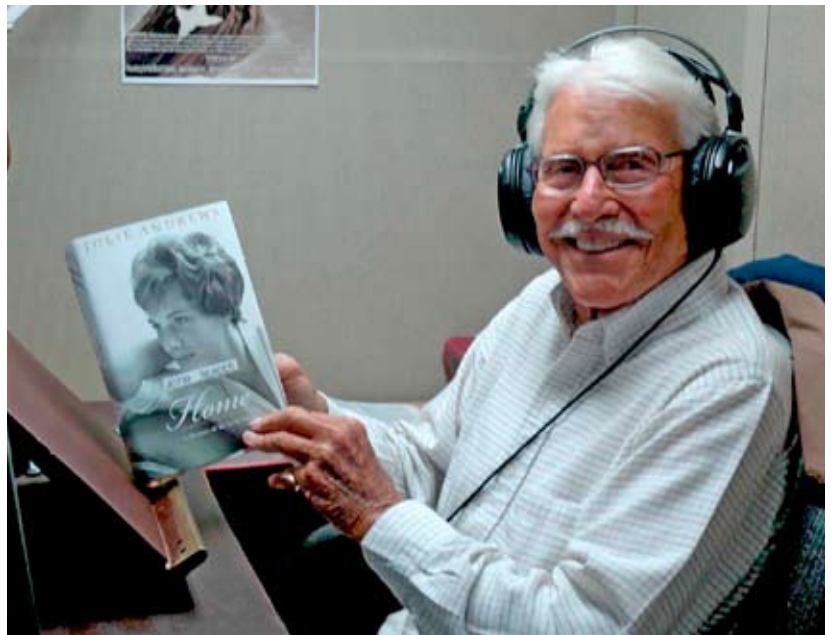
Muffett Kaufman was another attendee of the Record-A-Thon. She has been a board member for six years now and became involved with RFB&D 10 years ago. Muffet was an active participant of the 2008 Record-A-Thon and supports RFB&D's work with great passion: "Record-A-Thon is a great idea and certainly a good way to introduce the public to what we do." She hopes there will be more publicity in the future for Record-A-Thon to help spread the word to Santa Barbara of RFB&D's benefits.

This year we had four studio sponsors: Cox Communications, the Ann Jackson Family Foundation, the Towbes Foundation, and the Roehrig Family Foundation. There were five booth sponsors: Santa Barbara Bank & Trust, The Frederic E. Steck Family Foundation, Rabobank, Venoco, and the Students & Parents of Laguna Blanca School. With all our volunteers, we recorded 24 new books for our headquarter library in Princeton, New Jersey, with several by Santa Barbara authors, including Steve Martin's *Born Standing Up*, Barnaby Conrad's *Matador*, Max Schott's *Keeping Warm*, Chumash Indian author Ernestine Ygnacio-De Soto's *The Sugar Bear Story*, and Lou Cannon's *Reagan's Disciple*.

We are very grateful for all the new volunteers and ongoing ones who came to help us out and let the community know about RFB&D. It was a very exiting week for everyone.

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*Esther Tran-Le is 16 years old and a Junior at Laguna Blanca School, where she founded the RFB&D Club. She has been volunteering for RFB&D since she was 14.*



Clockwise from top: Guest reader Adam Pirozzi gives the thumbs up; actress and Oscar-nominated screenwriter Fannie Flagg with Executive Director Tim Owens; actor Efreem Zimbalist, Jr. reads Julie Andrews biography "Home: A Memoir of My Early Years"; Audi Duarte (with guest) spoke to Record-A-Thon guests about using audio books from RFB&D to get her nursing degree from Santa Barbara City College.



## Letter from the Executive Director

By Tim Owens, *Executive Director*

As the Santa Barbara Unit of RFB&D closes out this fiscal year (ending June 30, 2008), I wanted to take this opportunity to review our year and tell you about the exciting plans we have for the coming one.

First, I wish to thank everyone who participated in our very successful Record-A-Thon (April 28 - May 3): our volunteers, sponsors and donors, board of directors, and staff. You were wonderful! We had 277 guests reading from among 24 books, and 154 of them expressed interest in returning to us as regular volunteers. At publication time, we had met our financial goal of \$60,000 and were still counting.

As our regular volunteers know, I challenged them to raise \$10,000 for our studio operations and audio book production. If they did so, the Ann Jackson Foundation would kick in another \$5,000. Not only did they meet the challenge, but also raised an additional \$11,082. Total volunteer dollars with the match: \$26,082. In this newsletter, you will read about the creative efforts of some of these volunteers to help us reach our financial goals.

This has been a very active fiscal year. We launched our Educational Outreach Program and hired Kristen Reed as our Educational Outreach Director. We dramatically increased the number of students we serve by adding six new schools or school districts. We are on track to produce the most books ever with our six recording booths and portable "at-home" recorders. We added three new Board members (see article in this newsletter). In fact, I could say things were close to perfect if it were not for a shortfall in financial contributions, down about \$100,000 from what we budgeted. However, I think we can turn this around because of the ongoing generosity of people like you and because of our many new friends who are learning about the important work we do.

That's one reason why I feel good about the coming fiscal year. What also

makes me feel good is that we plan to intensify our outreach efforts to reach more students by hiring a part-time educational outreach coordinator to cover North Santa Barbara County and San Luis Obispo County. We are also building advisory committees for these locations, composed of individuals with a passion for our mission. They are on board to help us create greater awareness of RFB&D, increase the number of students served and help us generate the money to support this effort in their community. Our collective goal is to close the big gap that exists between those served by us and those who aren't – we currently assist only one out of every thirteen students who could use our help.

Over the summer we will be rolling out a new Adopt-A-School program, giving businesses, corporations, foundations, community organizations and individuals an opportunity to sponsor our service in schools. With all the serious budget cuts that have been taking place in our educational system locally and statewide, we want to make sure that our assistance continues to be available for the thousands of students who benefit. Our Adopt-A-School program is a multi-year commitment – we like to think of it as an investment – that ensures that a school or school district has access to RFB&D's book service, special playback equipment, lesson plans, and customer support. Please call me at 805-681-0580 if you would like to find out more.

Throughout the year, we hold monthly presentations open to the community, where we talk about our vision for students, show what we do, and invite someone to speak about their experience using our recorded books. I hope you will consider bringing a friend: it's just one hour, there's no obligation and no request for funds. The dates for these "Learning Through Listening Hours" are listed on page 6 under "Upcoming Events." Please help us introduce our work to more people.

Finally, as the school year begins, we expect to have our audio books available for downloading to computers and MP3 players. With easier access to RFB&D books, we expect more students to be using them. What can be better than to have more disabled individuals achieving more in school and being better equipped for the challenges in life? Thank you for your faith in us and our efforts.



## Borrower Profile: Kirsten Amling

Each year, the national headquarters of RFB&D runs a National Achievement Awards program for its members in recognition of their extraordinary leadership, scholarship, enterprise and service to others. The Marion Huber Learning Through Listening Award is presented to six students who are high school seniors with learning disabilities, chosen from more than 200 applicants. We're proud that a student from Santa Barbara, Kirsten Amling, was one of the top three winners who were celebrated at two events, one in Washington, DC, in February when they met the first lady, Laura Bush; and the second at a gala event in New York City.

Kirsten, like many RFB&D members, spent many of her early years longing to be considered "normal." She says she developed a passion for ballet dancing as a way to express herself freely without "being encumbered by words."

"My silent struggle to hide my slow learning made me feel inferior and stupid," she says. In school, memorizing things to pretend comprehension was only a temporary mask for hiding her learning problems. Specialists later diagnosed Kirsten with dyslexia, but told her parents she would outgrow it. Her father, who also has dyslexia, knew differently, and when Kirsten's school offered limited tutoring as an accommodation, her parents chose home schooling instead.

Kirsten excelled because her parents provided the additional accommodations she needed. In high school, when friends

enrolled in a college-level class offered at a local university, Kirsten decided to try it also. Asking her parents for outside assistance, they sought the help of a doctor specializing in learning disabilities who introduced Kirsten to RFB&D.

Listening to RFB&D's audio textbooks has given Kirsten a whole new sense of independence and success, which, in turn, gave her the confidence to apply and get accepted to Bryan College in Tennessee, where she is now freshman class vice president and a Communication Studies major.

In addition to Kirsten's academic pursuits, she provided a home for a guide dog puppy for 18 months, assisted in organizing and placing 500 children on soccer teams through the American Youth Soccer Organization, and, through her church, participated in a mission trip to Fiji, where she helped organize and run a basketball clinic, distributed wheelchairs, and visited hospitals and retirement homes.

*Congratulations to our real hometown hero!*



## Harry Chanson

We're saddened by the loss of Harry Chanson, who died in April after a short illness at the age of 94. Harry was a 25-year volunteer with us, coming in to monitor each week. He was always the life of any event, offering, for example, to give out door prizes at the annual volunteer party and adding his witty comments. Harry Chanson: accordionist, band leader, entertainer, union president, creator of the Santa Barbara marina, businessman, international traveler, father, grandfather, raconteur and volunteer. Rest In Peace, dear friend, we'll miss you.

**RFB&D**   
learning through listening

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### The Inside Track

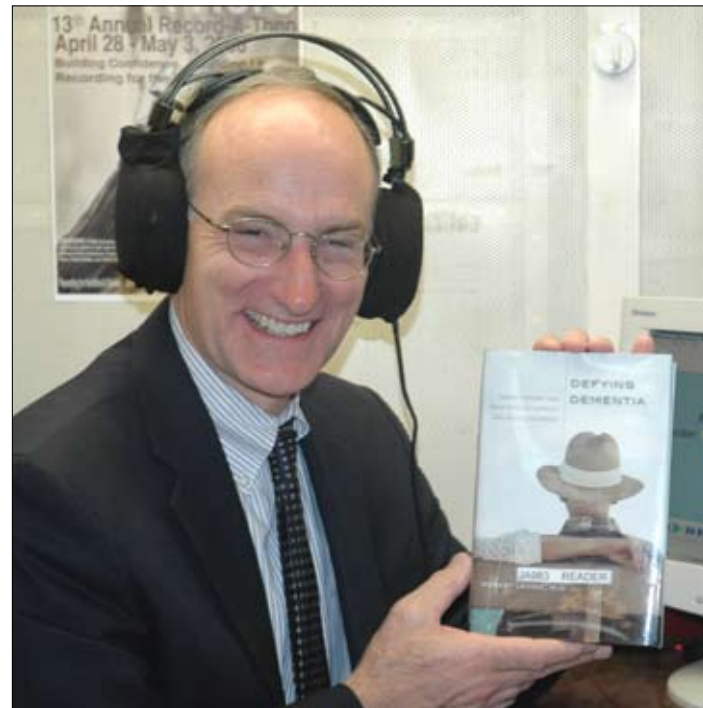
News & Events from the Santa Barbara Unit of Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic  
Photos: Gary Lambert, Eric Isaacs, Tim Owens, RFB&D National Headquarters  
Editor: Kathy Wertheim  
Proofreaders: Eileen Yardi, Ron Rowe

Our collective goal is to close the big gap that exists between those served by us and those who aren't – we currently assist only one out of every thirteen students who could use our help.

# Record-A-Thon

Right: Mary and John Romo enjoy a good laugh at the Record-A-Thon reception in their honor: he's retiring as SBCC President and she uses our audio books for her personal and professional reading. Below: Chumash author Ernestine Ygnacio-De Soto reads from her book, "The Sugar Bear Story"; RFB&D National Headquarters President John Kelly with "Defying Dementia". Bottom: Author Barnaby Conrad reads from his book, "Matador"; volunteer Bill Redding, Santa Barbara Lions; and Harley Hahn, million-copy best-selling author, reads from his book, "Harley Hahn's Guide to Unix and Linux."

Opposite page, clockwise from left: Journalist Sander Vanocur; volunteer, Lion and KJEE morning DJ Spencer Fischer; a guest observes volunteer Peter Abbey, right.



## 13<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL RECORD-A-THON SPONSORS

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### Record-A-Thon Committee

Special thanks to members of the Record-A-Thon Committee, who solicited donations, arranged for celebrities to come, organized volunteers, and made the 13<sup>th</sup> annual Record-A-Thon such a success!

- |                 |                  |                |
|-----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Diane Carroll   | Jackie Langley   | Michael Rhodes |
| Jo Duffy        | Irene Macias     | Ethan Saxton   |
| Tammy Frazier   | Molly McDonough  | Bob Shapiro    |
| Betty Johnson   | Mo McFadden      | Dee Sorich     |
| Muffett Kaufman | Lee Moldaver     | Esther Tran-Le |
| Terry Keramaris | Tim Owens        | Kathy Wertheim |
| Fred Klein      | Victoria Pointer | Diane Zonana   |
|                 | Kristen Reed     |                |

## NEW BOARD MEMBERS

### Welcome to Our New Board Members: Brynn Crowe, Lach Hough and Dr. Dan Secord



**Brynn Crowe** came to us when her daughter, Allison, who is dyslexic, began using our services to get through high school. Today, Allison is on the dean's list at Boulder University. Brynn, who also has dyslexia, is a founder of the Kirby-Jones Foundation, and led them to make their first gift to RFB&D.



**Lach Hough** is a former international banker with Security Pacific and American Express. Currently he is a partner of a private equity business based in Hong Kong. After twenty years living and working in Asia, he relocated to his home in Carpinteria and has been volunteering for RFB&D for the past year.



**Dr. Dan Secord** is a retired physician and an RFB&D volunteer. He also serves on the California Coastal Commission and has been a member of the Santa Barbara City Council.

Welcome to each of you!

#### Leaving a Legacy

Have you considered making a gift that lasts beyond your life? RFB&D is forming a Legacy Task Force: we would love your help in creating a plan and brainstorming a name for a society of donors who make planned gifts or bequests. Please call us and join in.

If you've already made a bequest or other planned gift, please let us know. We'll be posting these gifts on a plaque in our studio, and we'll be creating special events for planned giving donors.

If you wish to name RFB&D in your will, the following language can be used: "I give, devise, bequeath to the Santa Barbara Unit of Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic, Inc., 5638 Hollister Avenue, Suite 210, Goleta, California, 93117, the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_% of my estate."

For additional information about supporting the Santa Barbara Unit of RFB&D, or to serve on the Legacy Task Force, contact Tim Owens, at 805-681-0580, or by email at [towens@rfd.org](mailto:towens@rfd.org).

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

##### SAVE THE DATE!

Our **fall fundraising luncheon** will be held on Thursday, November 13, 2008 from noon to 1 p.m. at Fess Parker's DoubleTree Resort. Space is limited, so please RSVP now if you plan to come. Would you like to put together a table of friends to hear what we're about? Call the office at (805) 681-0531: we're still seeking five more table captains.

##### Upcoming Learning Through Listening Dates

Every month, we hold our **Learning Through Listening Hour** presentation to tell the community about our work. Please feel free to invite your friends, colleagues, and anyone you know who might be a potential book borrower, volunteer, donor, parent of a struggling student, or who could be an ambassador for our work. The next **Learning Through Listening Hours** are Monday, July 14; Thursday, August 7; Tuesday, September 9; and Tuesday, October 21; all from 5:30-6:30 p.m. You're welcome to come, too, if you would like to hear our vision for the future and meet someone who borrows our recorded textbooks.

##### Volunteer Appreciation Party

Our Volunteer Appreciation Party will be held on Sunday, December 7 from 5-7 p.m. Please save the date and plan on coming.



Candice Coll is surrounded by Laguna Blanca students buying baked goods as she raises money to help RFB&D students learn through listening.

### Four Very Special Volunteers

**T**here were so many wonderful volunteers who helped during the 2008 Record-A-Thon, it's hard to feature just a few, but these very special volunteers were especially proactive in helping us raise money and we wanted to let you know about their efforts.

**Petra Lowen** once again went door to door in her community, asking for money to support Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic and educating people about what we do. So many people say it's hard to ask for money: you can imagine how hard it would be to risk getting doors slammed in your face. We salute Petra for coming up with this idea and doing it for the past three years.

**Esther Tran-Le** just turned 16 in February, but she has been volunteering for us for three years. She created an RFB&D Club at Laguna Blanca School, where she is now a junior, coordinating other students to help us, too. This year, she raised \$2,035, bringing her total raised to more than \$8,000 over three years. We're grateful that Esther educates others about our efforts to help students who best learn through listening.

**Candice Coll** is a new volunteer for us. She coordinated three bake sales at Laguna Blanca, where she's in junior high, which raised \$350. (See picture.) Welcome, Candice, and thank you.

**Michael Rhodes** is a retired Hollywood producer. Now living in Montecito, he wrote a number of his friends to request money for Record-A-Thon, has raised more than \$3,000, and also invited a number of celebrities to Record-A-Thon to read. He says, "It's very gratifying to have my friends respond, because I think it's a great organization and because I've never done any fundraising before. Being involved in Record-A-Thon makes me want to get more involved throughout the year." Thank you, Michael, for being willing to introduce RFB&D to so many others.

Thank you to all our volunteers. Collectively you raised \$21,082, more than double the \$10,000 goal.

### Helen Irlen

*Continued from back cover*

In education, we don't ask people what it's like, we tell them!

"Together, they helped me understand. There was a group of individuals that weren't seeing the printed page as other people, but they thought it was normal. Many had physical symptoms, headaches, tiredness, sleepiness, which they thought everyone did. That was the beginning to identifying a problem."

The problem that Helen Irlen identified is that some students struggle to see a white page, especially under fluorescent lights. She named this Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome or Irlen Syndrome. She realized that, by providing a coated transparent sheet at a cost of just \$4, many of these students could be helped. Later, these students could get glasses with colored lenses to help them read more clearly. She says, "The change can be immediate, and it lasts."

Asked why it works, Irlen stated, "All visual information has to be read, interpreted and processed by the brain. We forget that information is converted into light and color. Certain colors and wavelengths are processed differently. For the person for whom it works, they don't care why it works." There have been 62 studies in peer-reviewed journals, of which 56 report positive findings.

If you suspect that you or someone you know may have this problem, you can go to Helen Irlen's website at [www.irilen.com](http://www.irilen.com). On that site, you can change the background color on the screen and take a simple test to see if using color transparencies might help. The Santa Barbara school district and other programs offer screening nationwide as well. Please call us at 805-681-0531 for information.

*Kathy Wertheim grew up in Santa Barbara and was a 20-year volunteer with the Washington DC unit of RFB&D. She now serves as our development consultant.*

By providing a coated transparent sheet at a cost of just \$4, many of these students could be helped.



# Helen Irlen: Reading By The Colors

By Katherine Wertheim

*(In this newsletter, we're featuring an interview with Helen Irlen, author of Reading By The Colors, in the hope that our readers will pass this information on to anyone who struggles to read. We hope it's helpful.)*

What if a simple colored transparent sheet could help 46% of people with reading problems?

RFB&D borrower David Artuso wrote a poem that included the line, "The page is bright. It hurts my eyes." Many people who struggle to read – adults and children – report that looking at a white page gives them headaches. Some say that the letters on the page seem to jump around. For some parents, home-schooling their child helps just by getting the child away from the fluorescent lights in schools that worsens his or her ability to see.

In an interview, Helen Irlen, MA, LMFT, the author of Reading by the Colors, spoke about

Many people who struggle to read – adults and children – report that looking at a white page gives them headaches.

how she first realized that some people had difficulty looking at information on a white sheet of paper. She said, "Many parents and teachers would agree that there are many children who are suffering and struggling in school, and it's not due to lack of trying, laziness, or lack of motivation. Many of these children can never be identified as having a specific learning disability. Many others – even with special interventions, mediation and tutoring – never seem to get better. They may develop strategies, but they always feel like they're cheating, that they can't learn in the same way as other people."

Many children are suffering and struggling in school, and it's not due to lack of trying, laziness, or lack of motivation.

"As a school psychologist, and later a learning specialist, I said, 'What questions aren't we asking, what problems aren't we identifying?' This led, in 1980, to a research project of working with adults who were in a university program but struggling. Rather than doing the testing that I was trained to do as a school psychologist, I did something unique in the educational system, I asked the people who had the problem to explain it to me."

*Continued on preceding page*

Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic, Inc.  
Santa Barbara Unit  
5638 Hollister Avenue, Suite 210  
Goleta, CA 93117  
[www.rfb.org/sb](http://www.rfb.org/sb)



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