

VAVF NEWSLETTER

Visual Aid Volunteers of Florida, Inc.

BRAILLISTS

EDUCATORS

TRANSLATION TYPISTS

GRAPHIC ARTISTS

PROOFREADERS

RECORDING ARTISTS



VOLUNTEERS

Fall Edition

[VAVF](#)

July-September 2020

"Dedication Makes the Difference"

THE LATEST FROM LUCIA

by Lucia Hasty

Greetings to All! I hope this finds you and your family well during this stressful time.

I want to give you some highlights of the VAVF Board of Directors Fall meeting held September 16 and 17 via Zoom. With so many people around the world using the internet for school, work, and to communicate, we had a few technical problems, but managed to complete the meeting.

The 2021 VAVF Conference will be virtual again. President Elect Jane Thompson and Board member Lynnette Taylor have been busy working on schedules and presenters. The conference will be held on 3 consecutive Tuesday afternoons-- April 6, 13, and 20. Watch for more details coming later.

VAVF and FIMC will be establishing a mentoring program to provide support to school brailleists and TVIs, utilizing the expertise of VAVF's membership. To determine your interest in participation, we will be sending a survey to our membership. Please be sure to respond! The direct service folks in the field need our support.

Another exciting and new partnership activity being developed with FIMC is a quick turnaround service for students who are learning remotely. VAVF members could volunteer to complete worksheets, tests, short articles, or chapters for students and FIMC will pay VAVF for the work completed. If you are a member of a group, we will work through your group's assignment chair. If you are a "lone" transcriber, we will contact you directly for availability. The money could be added to our rapidly dwindling scholarship fund to help students attending college. Please remember to complete your survey as mentioned in the previous paragraph, indicating your interest in participating and your subject area interests.

A HUGE thanks to each of you for all you do to support the students in Florida with accessible materials. Without you, students would not have a successful educational opportunity.

Newsletter Information

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Important Information

Charitable provisions can be made in your estate plans to endow gifts to non-profit organizations such as VAVF. This can be done without affecting the family's financial security. Charitable bequests also provide significant tax benefits as well. Advice should be sought from legal counsel if you are considering this kind of contribution or gift.



**2021 VAVF ELECTIONS ARE GETTING CLOSER.
TIME IS RUNNING OUT FOR NOMINATIONS.**

Linda Bero, Nominations Committee Chair

In accordance with the Bylaws of VAVF, the VAVF membership will be electing the Officers and Directors of the Board of Directors in 2021. This occurs once every two years in odd numbered years. The newly elected Board will begin their responsibilities around the time of our Annual VAVF Conference or on a date chosen by the Board of Directors. The Nominating Committee members are Linda Bero, Holly Cleveland, Meg Wagner and Mariann Witengier.

Anyone who is a VAVF member is eligible to serve on the Board of Directors. Our current Board is considering and nominating VAVF members to serve on the Board. If they contact you, we hope you will give their request consideration.

You, as a member of VAVF, may also nominate VAVF members to serve on the VAVF Board of Directors. Please submit your nominations by Nov. 30, 2020, to any member of the Nominations Committee. Our contact information can be found on the VAVF Board of Directors list at the back of this newsletter. Also, feel free to contact any Board member to get more information regarding the duties of these positions.

At this time, we do not have a candidate for President Elect. When nominating for President Elect, please remember that this position requires someone who is either currently serving on the Board, has served in the past or who has served on another State or National Board of Directors. This is an opportunity for growth in the field of vision as well as a wonderful volunteer experience. Please consider who you might nominate for such an exciting role in our organization.

Your participation in the business of VAVF is what makes it a viable organization that will be able to continue to provide materials for the primary purpose of aiding those who are visually/physically impaired.

NEW EMAIL ADDRESS OR MOVING?

If so, please notify your Membership Chairman, Nancy Meinhardt, at 727-375-1368, or email NANCYMEINHARDT@msm.com so that you do not miss a single copy of the *VAVF Newsletter*.



Florida Instructional Materials
Center for the Visually Impaired

SERVING FLORIDA SINCE 1972

FIMC-VI UPDATES

Kathy Krempleski

Greetings from the Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired (FIMC-VI). As we start off a new school year, we are pleased

to share with you our new website. From the top of the Home page, you can access a variety of tabs including Services, Forms, Online System, Events, Resources, FAQ, and Contact. The Services tab gives a description of the services FIMC-VI provides, including eligibility information, and contains links to the necessary forms throughout. The Forms tab contains links to all forms for making requests as well as parent consent forms. The Online System tab links directly to our database for textbook orders, student registration and the Annual Census. The Events tab shows all upcoming and past events, along with links for in-service credit and evaluations. The Resources tab includes links for many resources including Florida specific resources, instructional resources, braille transcription resources, and student and family resources. The Contact tab contains a form you can submit, in addition to a complete list of all our staff with their contact information.

Although COVID-19 continues to impact how we do things, it is not slowing down what we do. The Florida Festival of Families Takes Flight on the evening of Friday, 9/25/20 and continues through Saturday, 9/26/20. This free all-day event is for parents, family members and caregivers of children with visual impairments—providing activities, networking, and educational sessions by mentors who are visually impaired, other parents and professionals in the field. Included will be 4 sessions presented in Spanish.

FIMC-VI will host the Florida Department of Education District Vision Contacts meeting virtually on 10/13/20. This meeting is designed for district Vision Contacts to network and learn from each other.

The fall Working with the Experts-Visually Impaired will be titled Braille with the Experts – Literacy for All and will be presented virtually Monday, 10/19/20 through Friday, 10/23/20. FIMC-VI staff will be presenting multiple sessions for this workshop, as well as Lucia Hasty (Rocky Mountain Braille Associates), Tessa McCarthy (University of Pittsburg), Gerald Abner (University of Kentucky), Jasamyn DeGrant (Clark County Public Schools), and Diane Wormsley (Educational Consultant). One webinar link will be used for all sessions except the daily Debriefing Sessions, which will have a separate link.

A series of four Braille Cleaning Workshops will be held virtually and recorded on 10/28/20, 11/4/20, 11/11/20 and 11/18/20 from 4:00-5:30pm EST. The Ancient City Braille Repair team will teach how to properly clean and oil a braille to keep it braille through the years. Although this is a virtual FIMC-VI workshop, participants are encouraged to get your hands dirty and follow along with a braille—using a document camera for maximum participation and to get the best support. More information about the tools needed to participate will be sent out to registered participants.

We are Reinventing the Wheel at the 2020 Florida Cane Quest®! Let's make history, again, by inventing a new way to hold an old event. Scouts, Pioneers, and Trailblazers will test their orientation and mobility skills virtually with a Florida Cane Quest Judge on Friday, 11/13/20.

Students and families are invited to a face-to-face (tentative) celebration with all the wheely cool activities, food, shopping, and prizes as in the past. Students in grades 3-12 who are cane travelers will need to be registered by 10/9/20. Registration permission forms are coming soon!

Finally, closing out the calendar year of 2020, is the webinar FIMC-VI Information and Updates 2 on 12/1/20 and the Southeastern Orientation and Mobility Association (SOMA) virtual conference on 12/14-15/20. As a sneak-peak of FIMC-VI activities for Spring 2021, the tentative dates for the Florida Regional Braille Challenges are as follows: West Florida in Tampa on 1/22/21, East Florida in Orlando on 2/5/2021, North Florida in Jacksonville on 2/19/2021 and South Florida in Ft. Lauderdale on 3/5/2021. So, check out our new website where you can register and get more information about all these FIMC-VI activities.

LEGO BRAILLE BLOCKS

Holly Cleveland

Here is an excerpt from an article Rose Reynolds forwarded to me. Kudos to the Lego Foundation for providing teachers of blind or visually impaired students with another innovative way to experience distance learning.

“The Lego Foundation designed and created a line of bricks molded with studs that correspond to numbers and letters in the braille alphabet. The foundation is sending the blocks, free of charge, to school districts across the United States, according to a news release from American Printing House, a non-profit that promotes independent living for people who are blind and visually impaired.”

Articles of Interest

[LEGO Launching Braille Bricks for Students Across the US](https://tinyurl.com/lego-students-us) (https://tinyurl.com/lego-students-us)
[LEGO Braille Bricks to Launch in Twenty Countries](https://tinyurl.com/legobraille) (https://tinyurl.com/legobraille)
[How Lego Filled the Toys 'R' Us Void](https://tinyurl.com/lego-filled-toys) (https://tinyurl.com/lego-filled-toys)

Control Capitalization within a Table

Example (BF Sample 11-17)

SCHOOL	PEOPLE	PETS	PLACES	BOOKS

To save space, this example shows only the table.

Translation without Intervention

Word BANA Template Modification

Note: It is necessary to use the **Columnar w/ Column Headings** table code, otherwise the dot 5s do not appear in the first column. Use the **End Table** code as well.

`[[*htbs;r:1:0:b:n:c*]]`

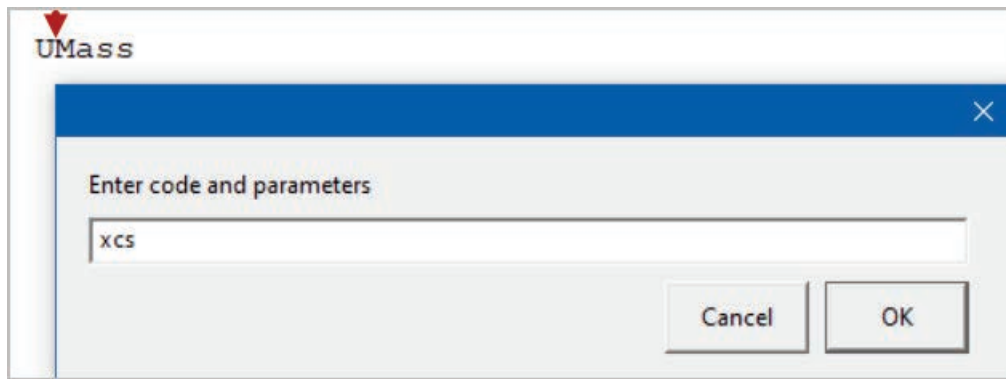
<code>[[*ucs*]]</code> SCHOOL	PEOPLE	PETS	PLACES	BOOKS <code>[[*uce*]]</code>

`[[*htbe*]][[*sk1*]]`

Controlling UEB Capitalization in DBT

DBT BANA Template Modification

Insert codes in the correct location in the .dpx file. In the UMass example, position the cursor between U and M and press **Ctrl-[** to open the **Enter code and parameters** dialog. Type **xcs** and press **Enter**. DBT adds the special code brackets automatically.



U[xcs]Mass

Another option is to use the **CapBreak** character style in the .dpx document. In the UMass example, position the cursor between the U and M, press **F8**, select the **CapBreak** style.

U<capbreak></capbreak>Mass

Note: Make sure nothing is between the start and end **CapBreak** codes.

DBT icon used with permission of Duxbury Systems, Inc.

WRITING IMAGE DESCRIPTIONS

**Katherine Padgett, Accessible Test Editor
American Printing House for the Blind**

Introduction

Visual information is unavoidable in educational materials. Image descriptions are literally just descriptions of these images and are necessary for BVI students to understand the visual information provided to their sighted peers. Whenever information is presented visually, whether it is a handout, textbook, presentation, or any other material to be provided in braille, a description might be needed.

Keep or Omit?

The first step in the image description writing process is to decide whether to omit the image or keep it. Not everything has to be described! As stated in *Braille Formats*, "The relationship of the illustration to the text is what is important."

Keep the image if it:

- **Is not just for visual appeal**

If it is just a cute, fun image to engage the sighted student, it can probably be omitted. This is true for most fiction unless the picture builds understanding of events or actions. If the story only mentions a character by name, "Detective Bark could sniff out any crime," but the image shows the character is a dog, you might want to clarify this fact at the beginning of the story.

- **Provides unique information**

What additional information can you provide in a description? If you can't add anything of substance – DON'T! You want to make sure the description isn't just more words for the student to wade through and that it flows with the rest of the material.

- **Is needed for activities**

The image might seem inconsequential, but the chapter review might include the dreaded question, "What does the picture add to the story?"

If you decide to omit the image, Braille Formats requires you to use a Transcriber's Note to explain. You can use a note on the Transcriber's Notes page if all images are treated the same way, such as "All images without captions have been omitted," or insert a transcriber's note at the point of omission if only some images are omitted. If the text says something like "as shown in the picture below," but everything in the image is described in the text, it is still acceptable to omit it. Add a transcriber's note so the student knows the referenced image is omitted, rather than waste their time repeating the information again.

Description or Tactile?

Once you have decided to keep the image, the next step is to decide if the information in the image should be presented as a description or a tactile graphic. The Decision Tree in the *Guidelines and Standards for Tactile Graphics, 2010* is helpful in this process. There are additional factors to consider:

The Student

Consider the grade level of the subject matter. Will a student be more familiar and comfortable with tactile graphics or descriptions of this type of image? More importantly, what is the concept being taught? If this is math assignment about reading a graph, the student will be expected to explore a tactile version, not simply read a description.

The Customer

Some customers may have certain expectations or a preference between graphics and descriptions. Ask for clarification if this hasn't been established.

Timeliness

Consider your deadlines and your skill set. If you have to rely on someone else for tactile graphics or if you know you will struggle to create a tactile version, maybe lean towards a description. Or if you know it will take you longer to describe everything going on in the image, maybe a tactile graphic will be better.

Information Overload

The student is the most important factor. Whichever method of presentation you chose, be sure it will not overwhelm them. A description that is too lengthy to follow or a tactile with too many point symbols will not help the student. Likewise, a description of complex spatial relationships is not going to help them understand how close two objects are. Always keep the student in mind.

The Basics of Good Descriptions

Once you've decided to write a description of an image, there are some basics to keep in mind.

1. Consider the Context

Read the surrounding text, including the captions and nearby paragraphs. This will help you understand what you're looking at and the type of language used. Determine what information is unique to the image that isn't already included in the text. Ensure the student has the information needed for any tasks, like answering questions or writing an essay. Sometimes these tasks could be in a sidebar or later in a chapter review, so take a moment to look for key words in these assignments, like picture, image, diagram, or illustration. What might have seemed like a decorative image or a frivolous detail in the image could be more important if the student has to interpret what is happening. Add a description with enough information so they can complete the task.

2. Be Concise

Even though Braille Formats states "picture descriptions are not limited to seven or fewer words," try to use as few words as possible. You do not want to overwhelm the student with information overload or repeat what they've already read in the text. Describe the important details. You can usually skip describing things in the background or the clothing someone is wearing, depending on the context (see #1). Sometimes a longer description is necessary, but in a textbook that is already several volumes long, do you really want to add extra pages of useless description?

3. Focus on the Data

Describe only what is in the image, and do not interpret or analyze the material. This can be challenging, especially if there are questions that require the student to understand emotions. Factually convey what is happening at that moment but leave it for the student to make the final interpretation. Describe someone as smiling, or frowning with their arms crossed, rather than assume the person in the image is happy or mad. Do not censor. There may also be controversial or uncomfortable material that needs a description. Whether it is a photo of protestors or detailed images of human anatomy, the student has a right to access the same information as their sighted peers. Do not omit this material just because of your personal feelings on the subject.

4. Create Clarity

The student should read the description once and understand what it is describing. Read the description aloud to yourself or someone else. If the response is, "Wait, what?" the description will not make sense for the student either. The description should be concise and use grade-appropriate language, mimicking the surrounding context. Sometimes there is a single word for several words or a specific term that could be more descriptive. Don't be afraid of a thesaurus!

5. Consistent Organization

Presenting the information from general to specific allows the student to understand the initial concept and continue reading for more details if they want. For descriptions of processes

or comparisons, word them similarly so the student can easily comprehend the differences. Be sure to present the information logically in the direction it is read, even if it means moving through the graphic in an unconventional direction (counterclockwise, bottom to top, right to left).

Formatting

Remember that image descriptions don't always have to be lengthy sentences. There are many formatting options available.

Narrative

Using narrative text is the most common way to write a description. Simple sentences within transcriber's note indicators using 7-5 margins can supplement the caption and surrounding text. This works well for younger grades and non-complex images, like drawings, photographs, and paintings. Introduce the image by stating what type of image it is (like "Photograph," or just "Image" if you aren't certain). Even if you do not add a transcriber-generated description, follow *Braille Formats* and remember to add what type of image it is in a transcriber's note before the caption if the text does not identify it.

Lists

Using a simple or nested list can be more effective to describe steps, processes, and relational diagrams. Be sure to describe the change in format so the student understands the difference between print and braille. *Braille Formats* section 6 provides details for the braille presentation of different types of illustrations, like graphic organizers, timelines, ancestral charts, and organizational charts. One thing to keep in mind when describing diagrams is that arrows can have different meanings, like "leads to," "yields," or "absorbs energy from." Depending on the grade level, using braille arrows might be better so the student must interpret the meaning.

Tables

Some graphics might contain too much repetitive text to be a narrative description, or related information that doesn't work as a simple list. You can take the data from each category of the image and use it to populate a table. For example, you can use the x- and y-axes on a graph to get your table and row headings. Or, if a map shows election results by state, you can create a table with rows for each state and the percentages for political parties or candidates in columns. So long as the concept being taught isn't reading a bar graph or map, presenting the data in related columns can be a concise way to share all the information within certain types of graphic.

Cartoons & Comics

Braille Formats provides guidance for formatting braille versions of cartoons, graphic novels, and comics, which includes political cartoons. Descriptions of these types of images go beyond the dialogue, so that the student can understand the setting and intent of the cartoon. No one enjoys hearing a joke and not getting it. It might not seem as funny when you have to explain it, but your description might be the only way the student will understand what is happening in the image.

When You're Stumped

It happens. You might encounter something in your material that leaves you dumbstruck, trying to figure out what it is you are even looking at. Stay calm. Take a deep breath. There are many resources available that can help you can figure it out.

Check the Surrounding Context

Be a bit more thorough and double-check the surrounding context again. Skim the paragraphs before and after, read titles and headings, and look for keywords in the caption. This takes time, but it will be worth it. While this might not give you everything you need to write a description, it can at least provide a starting point so you can search for more information.

Ask the Internet

Use the keywords you found and conduct a search using trustworthy sources. Wikipedia might not be the most trustworthy source, but it could provide more clues to continue your search. Websites ending in .edu (education), .gov (government), and .org (non-profit organizations) are usually reliable. [Khan Academy](http://www.khanacademy.org) (www.khanacademy.org) is great for breaking down concepts into easily understandable videos, images and articles, especially for math and science. The [Smithsonian Institute](http://www.si.edu) (www.si.edu) has lots of information on art and history topics. Research databases and real encyclopedias are also accurate sources you can typically access remotely through your local public library's website. You can also try to find the original source of the image, if the copyright information leads to another source. The [Library of Congress](http://www.loc.gov) (www.loc.gov) has many pictures, photographs, and political cartoons, often with short descriptions provided, which are regularly featured in history textbooks.

Ask for Help

Someone out there already knows the answer or knows how to help you find it. Don't be bashful. Ask a knowledgeable human, like one of your VAVF colleagues! There are years of experience among braille transcribers, and there is a strong chance someone has already encountered something similar. An educator might have encountered this material before and could be helpful. A teacher, a school media specialist, or a public librarian might know the answer or be able to direct you to another source. Even if you don't already know an educator, it would be to your benefit to get to know one!

Use a Description AND a Tactile Graphic

When words fall short, consider using both methods to convey the needed information to the student. Tactile graphics won't work for every type of image, like photographs, paintings, or cartoons. Remember the audience, grade level, and the context to determine if using both is appropriate. It might seem like double the work, but remember, the most important thing is to make sure the student gets the information they need. Print continues to find new, graphic ways to share information. Your duty as a transcriber is to find the best way to present all of these oddities into a form that is useable for BVI students.

Good luck!

Add or subtract as indicated below.

$$\begin{array}{r} 17 \\ + 9 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

Braille representation of the addition problem above, showing the numbers 17 and 9, the plus sign, and the result 26. The numbers are represented using the Nemeth Code with appropriate indicators and terminators.

However, as is demonstrated above, the Nemeth terminator should never be placed on the same line as any spatial material. It should always be placed in cell 1 after the spatial material. Also note the terminator does not take the place of the required blank line after spatial material and thus must have a blank line preceding it.

If no print text precedes the spatial material, both the opening Nemeth Code switch indicator and the Nemeth Code terminator should be placed in cell 1, with a blank line separating them from the spatial material.

Braille representation of the addition problem above, demonstrating the correct placement of the opening Nemeth Code switch indicator and the terminator. The terminator is placed in cell 1 of a new line, preceded by a blank line, to ensure it does not overlap with the spatial material.

A final note to remember for both displayed and spatial technical material: If the opening Nemeth indicator will not fit on the preceding text line, it should be placed in the runover position of the braille text on the following line.

Solve the following equation. Show your steps.

$$x^2+6y+12xy-9 = x^2-y+19xy+7$$

Braille representation of the equation above, showing the variables x and y, the coefficients, and the equals sign. The equation is presented in a clear, readable format using appropriate Braille symbols for mathematical notation.

Within spatial materials, as with the Nemeth terminator, this placement does *not* replace the required blank line:

Add or subtract as indicated. Show your work.

$$\begin{array}{r} 17 \\ + 9 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

Braille representation of the addition problem above, including a blank line for the student's work.



BOARD MEMBERS

Visual Aid Volunteers of Florida, Inc.

If you have specific questions about VAVF's purpose or membership, email postmaster@vavf.org. If you need to contact a skills consultant with a question about that topic, please email them directly.

President:	Lucia Hasty, Colorado Springs, CO, lucia@tactilegraphics.org
Past-President:	Linda Bero, Parrish, FL, lindadb3828@gmail.com
President Elect:	Jane Thompson, Louisville, KY jthompson@aph.org
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Liaison: FIMC-VI:	Liaison: FIMC-VI: Kay Ratzlaff (Supervisor), Liz Anderson (Program Coordinator) and Kathy Krempleski (Braille and Accessible Assessments Specialist), Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired, 4210 West Bay Villa Ave., Tampa, FL 33611-1206; 800-282-9193; kratzlaff@fimcvi.org , eanderson@fimcvi.org and kkrempleski@fimcvi.org



VAVF SKILLS CONSULTANTS

Our Skills Consultants volunteer their time and knowledge to assist with your questions. If you need to contact a skills consultant with a question about that topic, please email them directly, with the TOPIC in the SUBJECT line of your email in ALL CAPS. Yelling? Yes, but we would like the subject to make us notice it among all of our many emails.

ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORT:

Susan Christensen, The Villages, FL, chn3292@gmail.com

BRAILLE2000:

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DIGITAL RECORDING:

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Bettie Downing, Niceville, FL, bnbdowning70@embarqmail.com

NEMETH:

Would you like to volunteer? Contact VAVF.

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TACTILE GRAPHICS:

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UEB:

Candy Richardson, Jacksonville, FL, candyrichardson@hotmail.com

UEB TECHNICAL:

Randy Davis, Dallas, GA, alohabraille@gmail.com



CONTRIBUTION (MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND)

Name:

Address:

City/State/Zip:

Amount: \$ **payable to VAVF, Inc.**

In memory/honor of:

Send to: Euniz Lochte, Treasurer, 8840 Great Cove Dr., Orlando, FL 32819-4100.

If there is a special occasion, such as a birthday or anniversary, or if the contribution is in memory/honor of, please fill in the information below and a card will be sent to the family of/honoree, with your brief message.

Family/Honoree Name:

Address:

City/State/Zip:

Occasion/Brief Message:

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL

Membership in VAVF is based on the calendar year—January-December. If you wish to join the statewide organization, please fill in the categories shown below on the membership application form and send it to **Euniz Lochte, Treasurer, 8840 Great Cove Dr., Orlando, FL 32819-4100.**

Name:

Address:

City/State/Zip:

E-mail:

Phone:

Braille Certifications & Year (If still studying for certification or working without certification, ✓ [check] appropriate box.):

Literary (EBAE)

Literary (UEB)

Textbook Formats

Nemeth

Music

Proofreading

Other Visual Aid Specialties:

Foreign Language

Recording

Tactile Graphics

Large Print

Other

The VAVF newsletter and other correspondence are sent via email. If you need a different format, please indicate by selecting one of the following options:

Regular Print

Large Print

Braille

FEES: \$15.00 Regular Membership

\$20.00 Booster Membership

\$5.00 Associate Membership (spouse or other family members who accompany brailleists/tapists/other media users to conferences)

\$150.00 Lifetime Membership (may be paid in installments over 3 years)

Indicate total amount paid: \$ payable to VAVF, Inc.