

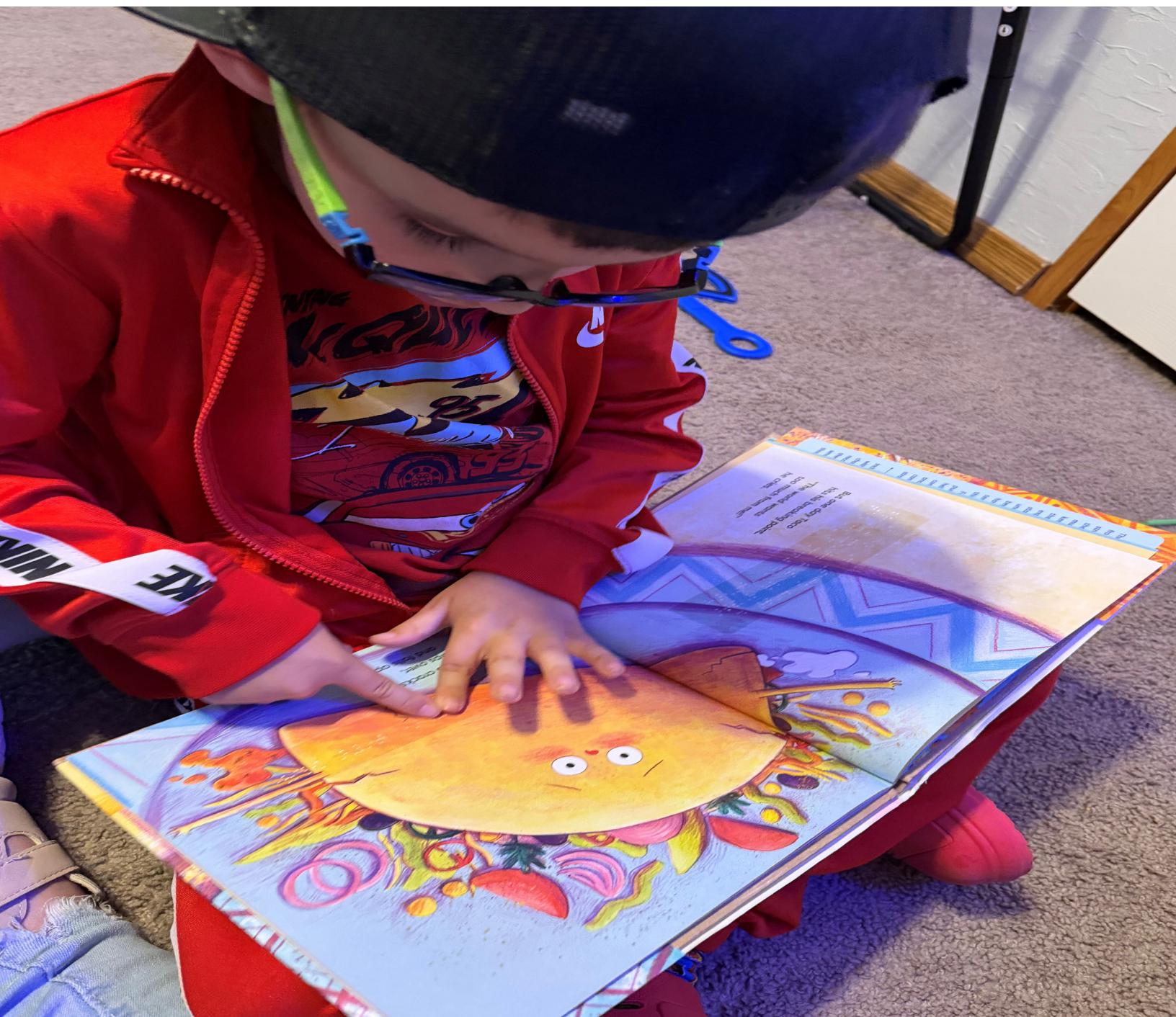
Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped



BRIGHT FUTURE

SHARE OUR VISION, THAT ALL MAY READ.

Vol. 41, No. 2, Summer 2026



OKLAHOMA
Rehabilitation Services
Oklahoma Library for the Blind and
Physically Handicapped

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Letter from the Director

Sixteen years, 13 as Director, with this fine institution has come and gone, and what a great ride it has been.

I first arrived at the library in January of 2010 as an Administrative Programs Officer, or what Director Paul Adams, my predecessor, called Special Projects Manager. One of my “special projects” was to clear out space for a new digital book cartridge collection. While we still maintained a cassette collection, the digital era was upon us.

Once movable storage units were in place, we began to build the digital cartridge collection. For a time, we maintained both a cassette and a digital cartridge service, which included the



two different playback machines. Library staff did an awesome job making service migration possible. Of special note were the librarians working with our patrons to make them comfortable with the change.

For a decade, we built a digital cartridge book collection peaking at over 30,000 titles and 230,000 copies. This was step one in ushering in the digital era. Step two was the Duplication on Demand program enabling multiple titles of the patron's choosing to be on one cartridge. Nowadays, all patrons benefit from digital downloading, whether they download books themselves or we do it for them. That's accessibility!

And from a business perspective, we no longer maintain a physical collection, a quarter million-piece physical collection,

which makes sense when you have a digitally deliverable product. Speaking of inventory control, hundreds of thousands of obsolete cassettes and digital cartridges with mailing containers and associated equipment had to be shipped out for reclamation. Today, we face the issue of what to do with empty shelving. It's crazy to think about all the changes navigated in the last 15 years. Where does it all go from here, right?

The arms that reach out from the library and agency make for a glorious network statewide which I have had the pleasure of traveling and visiting for mission outreach. We are blessed with a wide realm of stakeholders with whom we work. The National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS), the mothership if you will, continues to provide the resources and support needed for us and all the regional libraries to carry the mantra "Share Our Vision...That All May Read." To our NLS partners that read this column, cheers to y'all from Oklahoma.

As I reflect and reminisce, I've seen many dedicated library employees traverse these hallowed hallways taking great care of their area of responsibility and always pitching in to help others when challenges arise. Even for an institution where employees come to stay and call the library their work home, lives and careers happen, and people move about. Also, people retire from here. The most recent here, to be yours truly. Part of staffing involves my being a hiring manager. I've had to say no more times to excellent candidates than those that got the nod yes. That's tough. Fortunately, the library interview panels formed to assist me with hiring always did their due diligence. I can walk away from here knowing all is in very good hands, fully staffed, minus me of course. All the best to whomever succeeds me.

This life chapter culminates two 20+ year careers for me. It's both humbling and honoring having served our country and Oklahoma. Life indeed is a journey. The road to where I presently abode, one can't just make up. Blessings, y'all!

- Kevin Treese

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Bright Future Staff

Kevin Treese, OLBPH Director; Lacey Downs, Braille Editor; Kat Jensen, Audio Editor, Matt Thurber, Editor in Chief

Contributors

Erin Byrne, Kat Jensen, Kevin Treese, Lacey Downs

Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services

Tracy Brigham, Division Administrator - Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Oklahoma Commission for Rehabilitation Services

Dr. Janet Barresi, Theresa Flannery, Lindsay Hanna, Kelsey Lee, Lance Roberson, Noel Taylor, and Kevin Wallace

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Book Corner

For the Birds

Other Birds by Sarah Addison Allen

DB110243

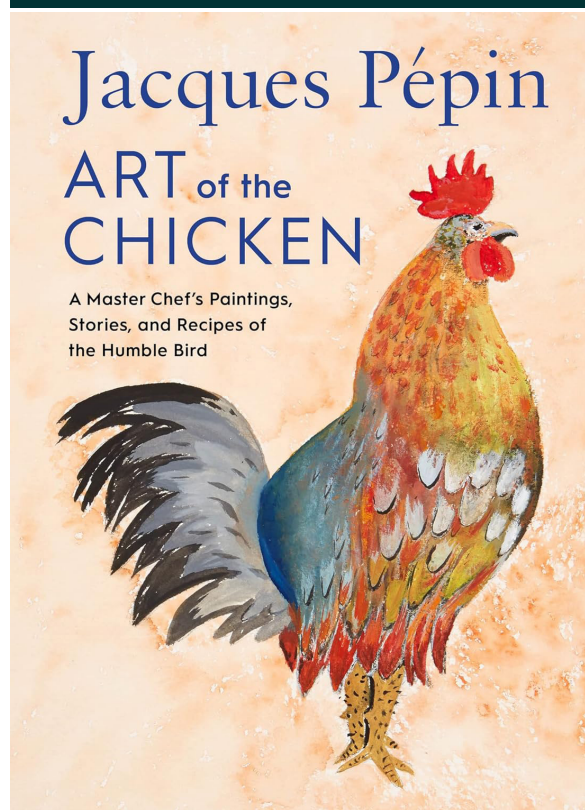
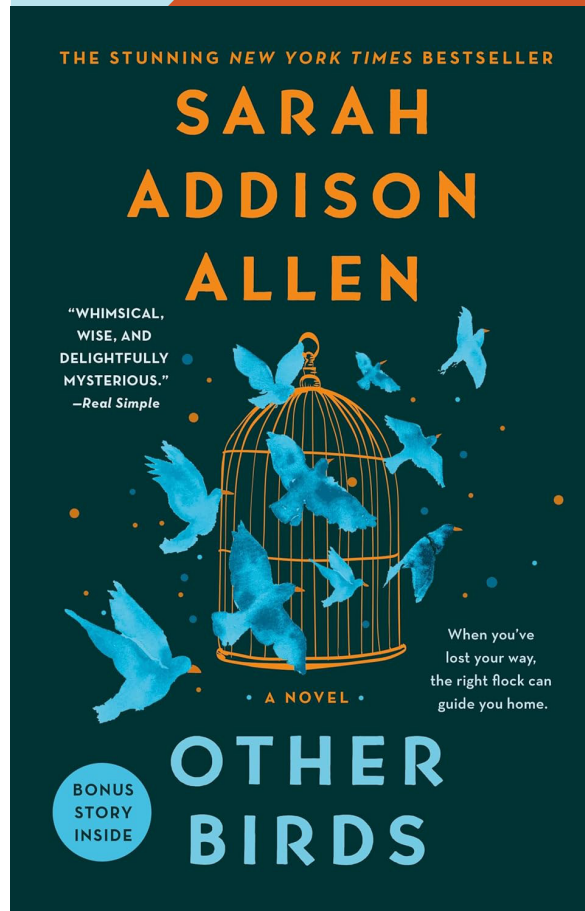
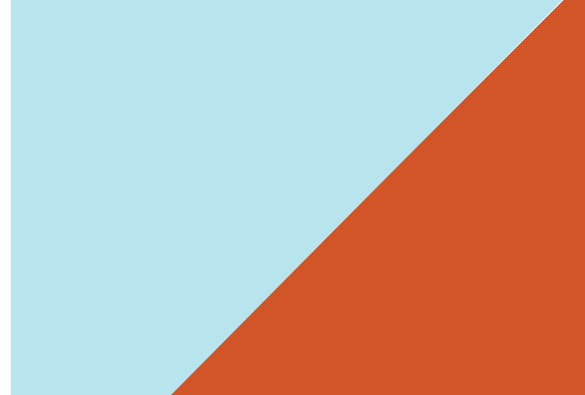
“Down a narrow alley in the small coastal town of Mallow Island, South Carolina, lies a stunning cobblestone building comprised of five apartments. It’s called The Dellawisp and it is named after the tiny turquoise birds who, alongside its human tenants, inhabit an air of magical secrecy. When Zoey Hennessey comes to claim her deceased mother’s apartment at The Dellawisp, she meets her quirky, enigmatic neighbors including a girl on the run, a grieving chef whose comfort food does not comfort him, two estranged middle-aged sisters, and three ghosts. Each with their own story. Each with their own longings. Each whose ending isn’t yet written. -- Provided by publisher. Some strong language.

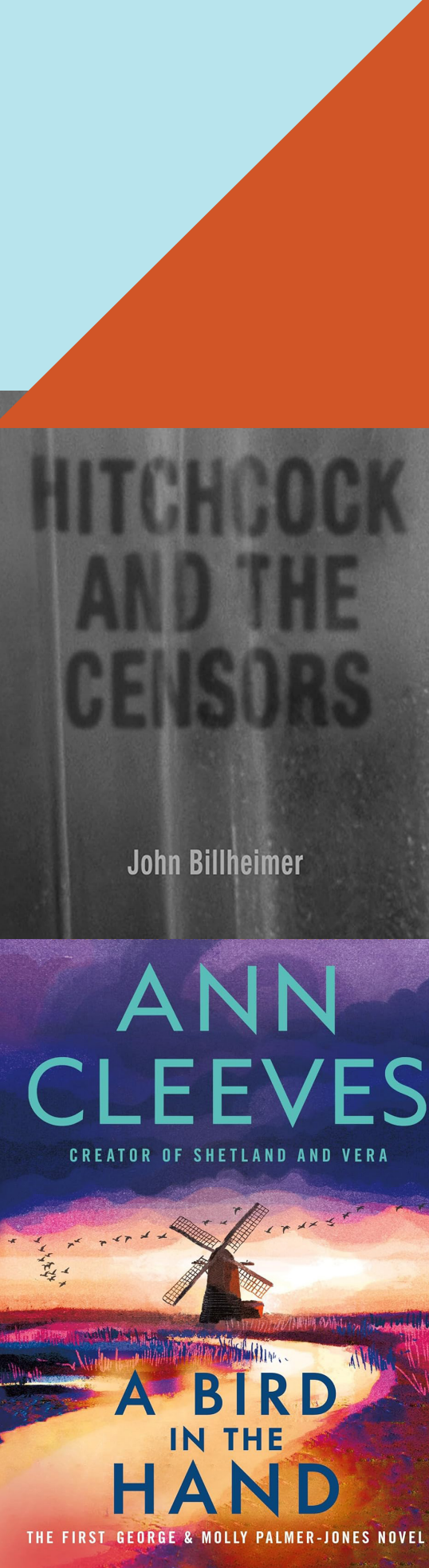
Art of the Chicken: A Master Chef’s Paintings, Stories, and Recipes of the Humble Bird by Jacques Pépin DB112702

Chicken may not be an extravagant ingredient, but for master chef Jacques Pépin, it is the one he turns to most frequently-to cook and to paint...This unique book is the next best thing to a visit to Jacques’ home, which would include a tour of his art studio, captivating conversation as he cooks, and a toast with a glass of wine over a simple meal of perfect roast chicken.”

-- Provided by publisher.

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**Hitchcock and the Censors by John W. Billheimer
DB108613**

By examining Hitchcock's priorities in dealing with the censors, this work highlights the director's theories of suspense as well as his magician-like touch when negotiating with code officials.

Provided by publisher.

Some strong language. Edgar Award. 2019

**Under a Wild Sky: John James Audubon and the Making of the Birds of America by William Souder
DB130030**

In this dazzling work of biography, Souder charts the life of a driven man who, despite all odds, became the historical figure we know today.

From publisher. Unrated. Commercial audiobook.

**The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle by Haruki Murakami,
DB046636**

In Tokyo in 1984, Toru Okada's ordinary life begins to unravel when he quits his job. His wife, Kumiko, sends him to consult a psychic about their lost cat. After complaining that Toru does not really know her, Kumiko disappears. Toru is determined to find her despite her brother's opposition. Strong language.

A Bird in the Hand by Anne Cleeves DB134714

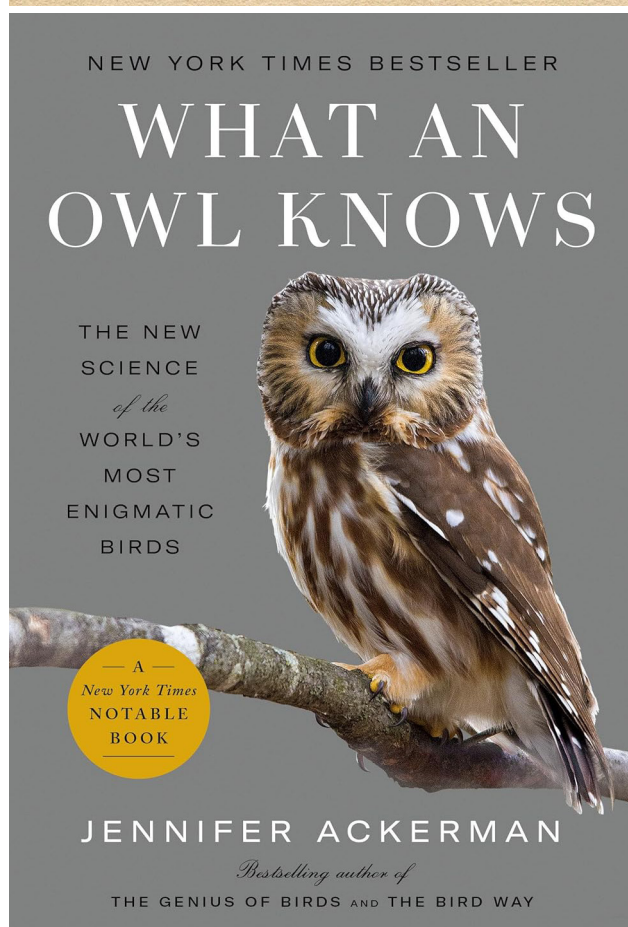
In England's birdwatching paradise, a new breed has been sighted...a murderer. Young Tom French was found dead, lying in a marsh on the Norfolk coast, with his head bashed in and his binoculars still around his neck. One of the best birders in England, Tom had put the village of Rushy on the birdwatching map. Everyone liked him. Or did they? From publisher. Unrated.

Freebird: A Novel DBC19663

The Singer family is about to lose everything. Each, in his or her own way, is grappling with loss of their ideals, when Ben, a Navy SEAL struggling with PTSD, commits a radical act of violence, changing the course of the Singer family forever. The expanding crises of three generations of Singers come to a head revealing how the fates of our families are irrevocably tied to the currents of history. Unrated.

What an Owl Knows: The New Science of the World's Most Enigmatic Birds by Jennifer Ackerman, DB116470

From the New York Times bestselling author of "The Genius of Birds" and "The Bird Way", a brilliant scientific exploration of owls, the most elusive group of birds, and an investigation into why these remarkable and yet mysterious animals exert such a hold on human imagination. For centuries, owls have captivated and intrigued us... An extraordinary glimpse into the mind of these brilliant animals, "What an Owl Knows" pulls back the curtain on the hidden and still undiscovered realities of our shared world. Provided by publisher. Unrated. Commercial audiobook. Bestseller.



Skylar's Story

AIM Center Helps 6-year-old Student

If there's one thing Skylar picked up from his parents and older siblings, it's a love of books and learning new things. Skylar's will to read is strong; however his vision is not. He's legally blind.

Shortly after his birth, Skylar's parents noticed his left eye would turn inward or outward toward his nose and get stuck. It would take his parents wiggling underneath the eye to get it unstuck and back to normal. It wasn't long, at just two months of age, when Skylar received his first set of glasses.

In the months and years that would follow, Skylar has become a regular patient at the Dean McGee Eye Institute in Oklahoma City where he was diagnosed with several eye conditions including amblyopia, estropia, and astigmatism.

One of the biggest life changes for Skylar came at age three when he became a student at the Oklahoma School for the Blind (OSB) in Muskogee, a far drive from his family's home near Woodward, OK. Finally, the boy was at a school specifically designed to meet his needs and where he could be among other blind and visually impaired students.

These days Skylar's education continues at home and his access to braille books and specialized educational aids is made possible with help from Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) Center.

"Skylar loves getting his books and card games sent through the mail," said the boy's mother, Breanna. "Pepper [AIM Center Director] is so good at checking in with me to see what Skylar needs and how the AIM Center can help."

One of the more popular learning aids Skylar received from the AIM Center is a BrailleBuzz. The device has a mechanism to feed paper with embossed braille characters through a machine which then in turn

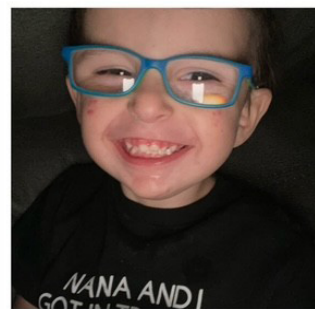
produces the words into audio. Breanna says her son thinks his BrailleBuzz is “magic” and one of the coolest things as he loves listening to stories.

While being visually impaired comes with many challenges, his parents are working hard to raise Skylar on a foundation of love and always looking for new ways to help their son grow.

“We want Skylar to be independent and comfortable at home and not to be scared of his surroundings,” said Breanna.”

One way the family works on the boy’s independence is with weekly visits to Walmart, McDonald’s or Five Below where Skylar can use his vision to work on overall balance and hand strength. While his mother notes the routine exercises are sometimes hard work, it’s worth it if it helps Skylar become more aware of his environment and confident in community settings.

To learn more about the AIM Center and the services it provides to students like Skylar throughout Oklahoma, please visit: <https://oklahoma.gov/olbph/aim-center.html>.



Top photo: Skylar with a BrailleBuzz instructional learning tool from the AIM Center.

Bottom photo collage: An assortment of glasses worn by Skylar through the years.

Strengthening Our Communities

Library Day at the Capitol Highlights

On April 29, AIM Center and Oklahoma Library for the Blind representatives gathered for the first ever Library Day at the Capitol.

The special event featured Oklahoma library staff from all corners of the state. Each library system had the opportunity to exhibit in the Supreme Court hallway and interact with elected officials, Capitol visitors, and other library supporters and staff.

“The inaugural Library Day at the Capitol exceeded our expectations. We saw strong representation from libraries of all sizes across Oklahoma, from major metro systems to small community, school, and college libraries,” said Rep. Michelle McCane, who helped organize and host the event

with the Oklahoma Library Association (OLA) and the Oklahoma Department of Libraries. “One of the most encouraging parts was seeing so many librarians eager to participate, even when we initially worried smaller libraries might not be able to step away from their day-to-day responsibilities.”



The event was a great chance for Library for the Blind employees to educate people about the services we provide to patrons unable to read the written word due to visual impairments or other physical disabilities. While some visitors had heard of the library, others had not and were able to see a hands-on demos of the talking book player and to also learn more about how the AIM Center helps eligible children up to age 18 throughout the state.

In addition to the library event, there were several other special events going on at the Capitol which led to even more foot traffic for library exhibitors which also included Metropolitan Library System, Pioneer Library System, Tulsa City-County Library System, as well as college libraries from Oklahoma State University and University of Oklahoma.

“The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Many visitors and legislators were surprised by the breadth of programs and services libraries provide beyond books, from hands-on learning and creative programming to community resources and reader advisory services,” said Rep. Michelle McCane. “It was especially meaningful to see legislators connect with librarians from their own hometowns. The excitement and enthusiasm we’ve heard already has us looking forward to making next year’s event even bigger.”

Special thanks to all the library systems who made it out to the 2026 Library Day at the Capitol. We look forward to reconnecting in 2027 to share our stories that illustrate how essential libraries are to the communities where we work and live.



Photo, left: OLBPH Studio Director Kat Jensen (left) and AIM Center Library Technician Jack Fox (right) tabling at Library Day at the Capitol. Photo, right: AIM Center Library Technician Cynthia Stokes talks with attendees including many children who were able to see braille books and other developmental tools to assist visually impaired students statewide.



Summer Reading 2026

The OLBPH will have another Summer Reading Program in 2026! We invite patrons to “Unearth a Story” with us as we explore the stories surrounding us.

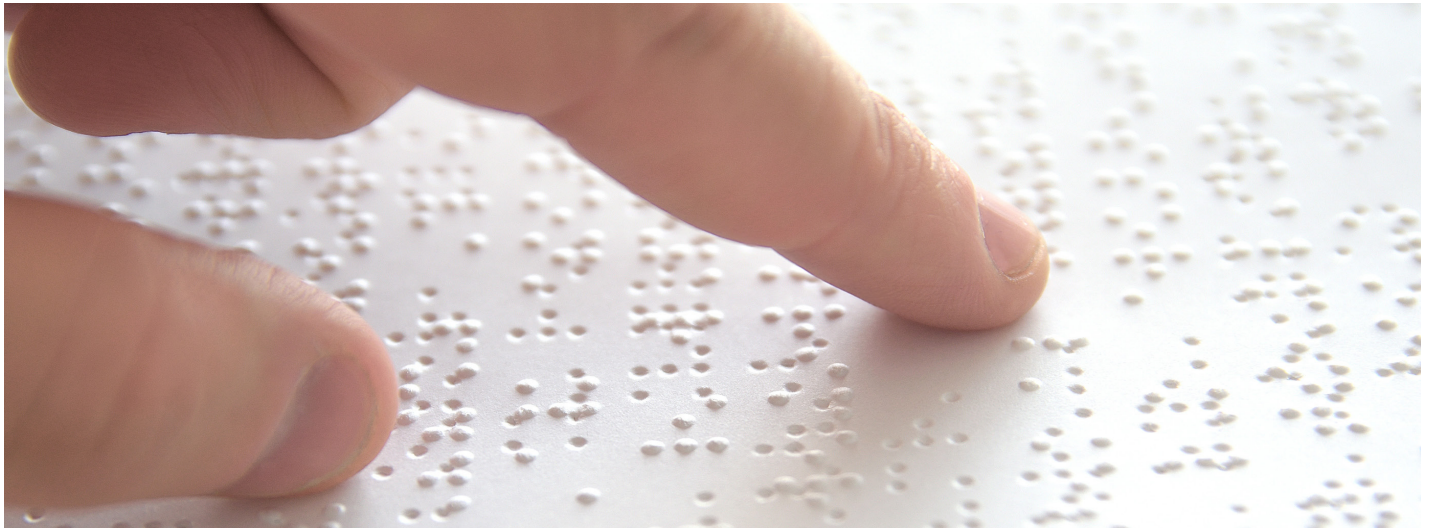
For the first time ever, the Summer Reading Program is open to adults, so all our patrons can participate in author talks, themed booklists, and other events. Age ranges for participant groups are: Children: 0-7 years old, Middle grade: 8-11 years old, Teens: 12-17 years old (or will be in 12th grade in Fall 2026), Adults: 18+.

Registration is open now. To register, call the library at 405-521-3514 or email at olbph@okdrs.gov. Everyone who registers will receive a T-shirt with a design specially created for the OLBPH.

Prizes this year by category include: Children: A sensory and manipulative grab bag, Middles: a complete game from 64 Ounce Games, Bigs: bone-conduction headphones, Adults: \$100 Amazon gift card.

The program starts June 15, 2026 and runs through August 15, 2026. In addition to programs created by the OLBPH, the Braille Institute of America generously opened its events to all NLS libraries.

Funding for prizes, T-shirts, and items for OLBPH programming is generously provided by Oklahomans for Special Library Services. Donell Jensen kindly created and donated the artwork for the T-shirts. Many thanks to OSLS and Donell for their support!



The 2026 Oklahoma Regional Braille Challenge

I volunteered at the Oklahoma School for the Blind's annual preliminary Braille Challenge this year. Since I read braille and am a certified transcriber, I volunteer in the Score Room. Every year I score the Varsity level Speed and Accuracy tests, which is the highest level in the challenge. Varsity-level participants are usually proficient braille readers and can braille with a manual braille writer over 40 words per minute. I also scored some Junior Varsity Speed and Accuracy tests as well as tests for Charts and Graphs and Reading Comprehension.

For me, it's rewarding to see the students build their braille skills year in and year out. I started at the Library in the AIM Center 15 years ago, providing educational materials for students, including braille pre-literacy items. Now, some of those very young students who knew absolutely no braille years ago have gone on to compete at the national level of Braille Challenge.

Braille Challenge reminds me of how important the services the OLBPH and the AIM Center provide are and how rewarding it is to see the effect of what we do.

-- Lacey Downs, Administrative Programs Officer II

Volunteer Spotlight

Shelba Stanford

For this issue, we would like to introduce you to Shelba Stanford. Shelba started volunteering with us about a year ago. She reads for us each Monday morning from the Oklahoman daily newspaper.

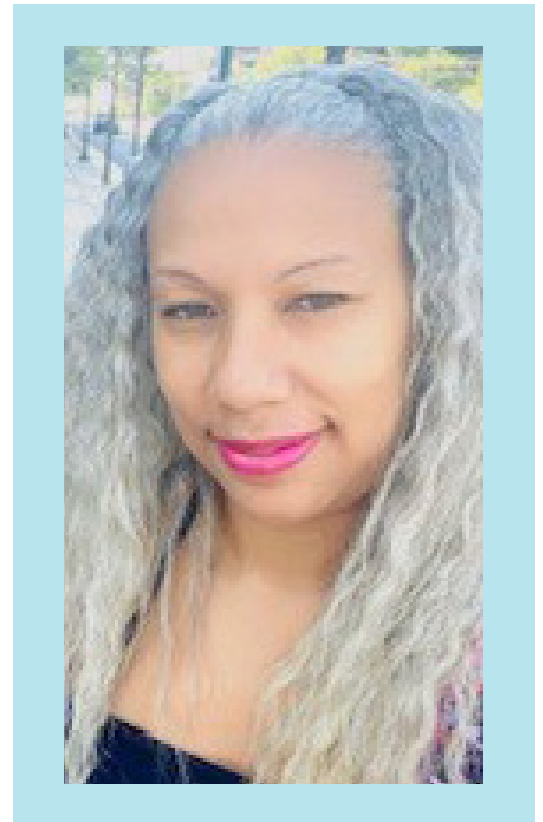
Shelba got started with us to see if she could get into voice acting, and thought volunteering with the Oklahoma Telephone Reader would be a chance to see if she was a good fit.

When asked what she liked about reading books, magazines, and newspapers, she says, “They are very nostalgic, and I enjoy the physical nature of them all!” She says her favorite thing to read is “Vogue [magazine], I love the fashion.”

Shelba’s hobbies include reading, traveling, and enjoying nature. She is also one of our volunteers who is not always calling in from Oklahoma. Sometimes Shelba records newspaper articles from Maryland. This is one of the great things about the Oklahoma Telephone Reader System. It is always just a phone call away, so it doesn’t matter where you are in the world; we are still happy to have people volunteer with us.

When asked about what she enjoys most about volunteering with us, Shelba said, “It is the opportunity to give back, in a way that makes me feel like I am paying it forward.”

- Kat Jensen, Recording Studio Director



Employee Recognition

Kat Jensen

Congratulations to Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped Studio Director Kat Jensen for recently receiving her Certified Public Manager designation.

The Certified Public Manager designation is awarded to public sector middle managers who have completed the required 300 hours of study through a CPM program accredited by the National Certified Public Manager Consortium. CPM programs are sponsored and operated by a public sector agency or university in a state or other political jurisdiction.

The program's primary goal is to improve the performance of public sector managers and the organizational performance of state, local and federal governments. The program is a comprehensive course of study by which public managers can acquire and apply best practices and theory to their management behaviors and strategies using prescribed sets of professional competencies.

Kat said going through the program was a challenging experience which she has grown from professionally.

Way to go, Kat!



New OLPBH Podcast Out Now!



Check out the first episode of our Many A Page book club podcast. During this conversation, we discuss “The Physicists’ Daughter” by Oklahoma author Mary Anna Evans. We are joined by library volunteer Alyssa Payne who narrated this book in the Oklahoma for the Blind recording studio. The podcast is available on Podbean, Spotify, Apple Podcasts, YouTube, and on cartridge.

Our next episode will feature an in-depth discussion of “Risk” by author Dick Francis (DB12932). We welcome Oklahoma Today Magazine Editor in Chief Nate Gunter to the studio for a deep-dive into this classic msytery novel.

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300 N.E. 18th St.
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

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FOR THE BLIND**