



Working together to help the visually impaired

Literacy is vital to academic and career success, and to a more enriching quality of life. For people who are blind or visually impaired, there are many paths to becoming literate. Learning to read and write in braille can make a dramatic difference in the life of a child or adult with vision loss. And just as importantly in our modern world, learning to use computers and assistive technologies, such as magnifiers and screen readers, can open up the world of literacy for people with visual disabilities. For people who are blind or who have low vision, braille and technology literacy are the keys to success.

Through the Reading Action Program, Lions have an important opportunity to raise awareness of the braille and technology literacy needs of people with vision loss while continuing a long-standing commitment to Helen Keller’s challenge to become “knights of the blind in the crusade against darkness.” A new partnership with the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) was developed to assist Lions in their efforts to advocate for people who are blind or visually impaired. Specifically, Lions can help meet a variety of needs, including provision of braille teaching materials, access to assistive technology, training on the use of assistive technology, and special assistance to low income families in the US and abroad.

AFB is uniquely qualified to advocate for the literacy needs of people with visual disabilities. AFB has led the blindness community for over nine decades, proving that vision loss need not stand in the way of success. As a champion for access and equality, AFB stands at the forefront of new technologies. Like Helen Keller, the organization’s most famous ambassador, AFB is committed to creating a more equitable world for people with disabilities.

Lions—as a club, or as individuals, are encouraged to support braille and technology literacy for people with vision loss. There are many ways to get involved:

- **Volunteer** at a local blindness services agency.
- **Raise awareness** about the need for services for people with visual disabilities in your community and brainstorm ways to get involved.
- **Advocate for schools and teachers** to receive the resources and expertise they need to reach and educate children who are visually impaired by joining AFB’s campaign to pass the [Anne Sullivan Macy Act](#).
- **Reach out to technology companies** (through letter-writing campaigns or telephone inquiries) to let them know that making their technologies usable by people who are blind or who have low vision is not only critical for literacy, but also leads to better technology design and makes good business sense for companies and their bottom line.
- **Spread the word about NVDA** (NonVisual Desktop Access) and other appropriate free or low cost technological access solutions for people with vision loss.
- **Raise funds for local agencies** serving people with vision loss.

The American Foundation for the Blind removes barriers, creates solutions, and expands possibilities so people with vision loss can achieve their full potential. To learn more, visit the AFB Web site at www.afb.org. For questions about the partnership and project opportunities, contact the LCI Program Development Department at programs@lionsclubs.org.

