



**Wisconsin Council of the  
Blind & Visually Impaired**

754 Williamson Street, Madison, WI 53703  
608-255-1166  
WCBlind.org  
info@WCBlind.org

For immediate release

Contact: Bob Jacobson  
(608) 237-8111  
bjacobson@wcblind.org

### **January 4 is World Braille Day**

WCBVI Celebrates the Power of Braille Literacy to Change the  
Lives of Children and Adults

World Braille Day, celebrated on Louis Braille's January 4 birthday each year, recognizes the importance of Braille's revolutionary raised dot system that allows people who are blind to read through touch. First proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2019, World Braille Day also kicks off Braille Literacy Month, observed throughout January.

This year, the Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired is using World Braille Day as an opportunity to promote braille literacy among adults.

"Sighted people who don't have much contact with those who are visually impaired generally don't realize that most skilled braille users learned it in school as children," said Executive Director Denise Jess. "It's uncommon for folks who lose their vision as adults to become fluent enough to read an entire braille book."

But Jess notes that braille can be immensely helpful to adults in many ways that don't require that level of proficiency.

"Even with the availability of magnifiers, screen readers, audiobooks and other kinds of access technology, braille can be a powerful tool for everyday living," Jess said. "For example, using it to label medications, food packages, and other household items can make ordinary tasks much easier."

Jess says some progress has been made in recent years on making government documents, healthcare forms and other key publications more accessible by offering them in multiple formats, including braille. For example, the Internal Revenue Service will provide tax forms in accessible formats on request. But according to Jess, it's not nearly enough.

"Obviously much, much more needs to be done — for example, voting independently remains problematic because accessible ballots are not widely available — but the ability to take advantage of these new formats can go a long way in improving equity for people who are visually impaired," Jess said.

The Council encourages adults experiencing vision loss to consult with a vision services professional to explore whether learning braille is a good option for them.

Jess also urges people to continually tell the institutions they interact with that equity for people with impaired vision matters.

"One of the most meaningful ways government agencies, health care providers, schools and other establishments can contribute to a more equitable society is to offer all their materials in accessible formats, like braille and large print.

For more information about accessibility for people who are visually impaired, visit the Council website at [www.wcblind.org](http://www.wcblind.org).

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*The Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired is a statewide organization that promotes the dignity and empowerment of the people of Wisconsin who live with vision loss through advocacy, education and vision services.*