

# Thrive

## Presenting the 2019 Learner Award Winners



Announcing  
Hadley's New Venture  
Competition Winner

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**ON THE COVER:** Hadley learners Bob Kozel, Evin Yager, Linda Croft and Michael Gold are honored at the 2019 Edwin J. Brach and Hazel and Bertram Brodie Awards presentation.

## Charitable IRA distribution may be a great way to save...and support Hadley learners

At age 70½, you are required to withdraw your traditional IRA funds on a payment schedule based on your life expectancy. That annual required distribution is called the Required Minimum Distribution or RMD and it is entirely subject to income tax. So, this distribution may increase your income taxes, while incidentally increasing your Medicare costs (the amount you pay is based on your income).

What can you do? Help blind and visually impaired people by making a gift to Hadley through a qualified charitable distribution. This satisfies the distribution requirement and is not considered income to the taxpayer. The only trick is that the check must go directly from the IRA custodian to Hadley.



Scan this QR code or go to [hadley.edu/IRAgift](https://hadley.edu/IRAgift) to learn more. And, as always, consult with your tax advisor regarding your particular situation.





## From the President...

Recently, Hadley recognized some of our most exceptional learners with the Annual Learner Awards. We were thrilled that many of these individuals were able to join us for the awards presentation. It is always exciting to meet our learners, hear their stories and find out how Hadley has made a difference in their lives. You can read more about these inspiring people in the following pages—and see how your support is helping them thrive.

At the awards presentation, we also announced the winner of the Hadley 2019 New Venture Competition (p. 10). This annual competition, sponsored by the Forsythe Center for Employment and Entrepreneurship (FCE), encourages Hadley learners

to apply their knowledge and skills to launch their own business. This year's recipient is Darrel Kirby, a behavioral therapist who is starting a new private practice near Iowa City, IA. The courses he took through the FCE are helping him turn his dream into a reality. And, the accompanying prize money will be a significant boost in growing and accelerating the business.

Having so many learners at Hadley headquarters over the past weeks was a wonderful opportunity to see how we are helping all types of people across a wide range of needs. Vision loss is the common thread, but the experiences they bring and learning that Hadley provides are unique to the individual. They might be learning braille, starting a business, connecting with others in a discussion group, navigating technology, bolstering their professional learning, or supporting a family member. Because of you, Hadley is here for them.

Our Hadley 2.0 initiative will ensure that Hadley is there to meet the needs of people who

are blind and visually impaired well into the future (p. 9). Before long, Hadley's largest population will become older adults who are new to vision loss. Fueled by the aging baby boomer population, the National Eye Institute estimates that visual impairments will increase dramatically, affecting 8.9 million in the U.S. alone by 2050.

However, age-related vision loss is often just the tip of the iceberg. Additional challenges and dangerous complications accompany impaired sight—including safety concerns, potential malnutrition, medication mix-ups, loss of independence, isolation, depression and dependence. Hadley is focused on providing learning and resources to help mitigate these negative consequences. We so greatly appreciate your partnership in making this a reality.

Sincerely,

Julie S. Tye

**our mission** Hadley Institute for the Blind and Visually Impaired creates personalized learning opportunities that empower people to thrive—at home, at work and in their communities.



## Meet Hadley's 2019 Learner Award Winners

Since 1959, the Edwin J. Brach and Hazel and Bertram Brodie Awards have recognized Hadley's highest achieving learners—individuals whose hard work, determination and spirit serve as an inspiration to others. To date, we have presented awards to more than 200 learners.

### Continual Learning Supports a Successful Career

#### PROFESSIONAL LEARNER OF THE YEAR



Bob Kozel

majority of this time he worked in Blind Rehabilitation for the Veterans Administration in various capacities, which fit well with his own military experience. He has also taught at the Oregon School for the Blind and continues to teach as an adjunct professor at Hunter College.

those that are geared at getting people with visual impairments into the mainstream.”

However, he feels that the most valuable aspect of his Hadley education is the connection with learning experts who have helped him broaden his thinking.

“I never expected to win this award. It has been a wonderful experience to be involved with Hadley. I am grateful for what it’s done for me and what it’s done for people who I’ve known.” —Bob Kozel, San Antonio, TX

Bob Kozel's best friend suddenly lost his sight as an adult. When Bob accompanied him to a mobility lesson, he was amazed as the instructor helped a blind person travel independently. Inspired, he enrolled at Boston College a few years later where he earned master's degrees in Orientation and Mobility and as a Teacher of the Visually Impaired. “I have never regretted my decision,” he affirms.

Recently retired, Bob is now at the tail end of an accomplished career in this field. For the

Throughout his career, Bob made it to a priority to be a “lifelong learner.” He knew he could best serve his visually impaired clients by keeping his skills and knowledge fresh. Hadley has been a critical resource in this effort.

Over the past 18 years, Bob has taken over 20 Hadley courses—on topics ranging from braille and guide dogs, to finding employment to self-esteem. He praises Hadley for offering a wide selection of excellent course materials, “especially

He explains, “The instructors go out of their way to create an experience that goes beyond the course material. They are willing to help you stretch your thought process and share their personal experiences.”

Based on his positive experiences, Bob recommends Hadley to his clients and colleagues in the field. He has been pleased with the results, “I know from their feedback that they feel good about their accomplishments, and I can see a difference in them.” ■

# Sharing the Love of Learning

Linda Croft was born prematurely, weighing just over three pounds. She survived thanks to new medical advances and antibiotics of the day but was also affected by Retinopathy of Prematurity that left her with 20/400 vision in one eye.

As a child, Linda did not know she was legally blind. Her parents wanted her to have a normal childhood and develop healthy self-esteem, so they didn't divulge this until she was in high school. In recent years, her vision declined further: "My eyes are aging, and the one that sees does not see as well as it did, so I am adjusting with blindness," she says.

Hadley was first suggested to Linda in 1965 by a vocational rehab counselor, but she would not enroll for another 40 years. In 2005, after she lost part of her hearing and had to leave her job as a speech therapist, she reached out to the Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired for assistance, and they recommended Hadley.

Linda's first Hadley learning was Bird Songs, which she loved and continues to enjoy in her everyday life. Soon after taking this course, Linda was asked to lead her local peer support group for the visually impaired and the blind. She recalls, "I'd never done anything like that, but I had read the Hadley catalog and there were two courses on support groups, and

## LIFELONG LEARNING AWARD



Linda Croft with her daughter and granddaughter

"This award has been one of the most special events that has happened to me. It means a great deal because I have always loved learning, and I still continue to learn, and use it." —Dr. Linda Croft, Heyburn, ID

I took them." This gave her the confidence to lead the group which, 13 years later, is still going strong.

As Linda explains, the group is a big part of her life: "It provided what I lost when I had to stop working with my speech students. I can still serve people who are dealing with disabilities like myself, and we work together to better our lives, have a little fun and help each other solve vision problems. That has been a real blessing to me."

Hadley learning has benefitted both Linda and the group. She calls out courses such as gardening, cooking and Spanish for helping her function better and enjoy life more. In addition, she believes that Hadley "has helped me be a better advisor to my people in my support group. I think every one of the courses has added something to make me stronger emotionally and mentally so that I can better function in my community, in my support group, in my church, in my family, and just as an individual. I want to keep learning." ■

# Braille Restores Independence

“This award means a lot because of my struggle with blindness. It makes a lot of what you go through worth it when you get some recognition for your efforts like this.” —Evin Yager, Fort Worth, TX

Until about ten years ago, Evin Yager could manage her vision problems with corrective lenses. Extremely nearsighted since she was a child, she recalls that she was “able to drive and do pretty much anything.” This included earning a B.S. in Foreign Service at Georgetown University, a J.D. at Case Western Reserve School of Law and four years of doctoral study in Clinical Psychology at University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center.

However, over time, myopic degeneration continued to deteriorate her retinas and compromise cells in the optic nerve, leading to vision loss. Now “when someone turns on the light I can tell, but that’s pretty much all I can see,” Evin explains.



The Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services helped her adjust to blindness with lessons on how to use the cane and make her home more accessible. They also taught her the braille alphabet and told her about Hadley’s braille courses but, because she still had some vision at that time, she didn’t pursue this. Then, in 2018, Evin’s vision reached the point that she wanted to learn braille to read and write, so she contacted Hadley.

Learning braille had its challenges, such as learning to use the slate and stylus for writing, but Evin embraced these: “I was surprised by how much fun it was, and how I looked forward to sitting down and learning the next thing.” Now, she is focused on increasing the speed of her reading which she recognizes “comes with time and lots of practice.”

For Evin, the work has been worth it; “Braille is now an integral part of my life. I could never go back to not using braille. I can’t imagine it.” Evin describes herself as “fiercely independent” and learning braille has enabled her to remain so. Looking ahead she declares, “having that facility is going to help me in so many ways. If I get really, really good, I’d even consider possibly going back to a previous career.”

She would also recommend Hadley to others who want to learn braille; “I know a good course when I see it. These Hadley courses are so well thought out, so well organized. I know a lot of work and thought went into it. I think it’s perfect.” ■



FAMILY LEARNER OF THE YEAR



## A Father's Devotion Leads to Greater Awareness

Illness struck Michael Gold's daughter, Marissa, at the age of 33, leaving her without her vision and with partial hearing. Following three months in the hospital, she spent a year at the Helen Keller Institute in Long Island, "relearning life," her father explains.

As he traveled with her to conferences, he became interested in learning braille as a way to support and motivate her. "I knew she was studying braille, but I wanted her to advance and I saw how complicated contracted braille was," so he thought, "if I can do it, perhaps she will follow." This was also a way to be part of her life and better understand her new reality.

Last year, Michael started learning Braille with Hadley. While he finished *Introduction to Braille* quickly, *Contracted Braille* has been more of a challenge. However, he has felt supported by Hadley learning experts throughout the process and would tell others the same. "It's not easy and you need to do your homework and take it seriously, but you're going to get the support from Hadley that you need."

Michael shares that he is "so flattered and so thrilled" to be

"I think there has to be recognition in America of this community. We have to be more mindful, and more respectful, and do what we can to help because we're all in this together." —Michael Gold, Niagara Falls, NY

winning this award, "It is just absolutely amazing." And, Hadley has made a big impression on Michael as well. He explains, "taking the courses from Hadley has made all the difference in the world. It has just been a great eye-opening experience for me to see what a wonderful program this is, and how much they provide to people all over the United States. I think it's just an amazing institution."

By trade, Michael is an attorney dedicated to helping seniors, so learning about vision loss has helped him better serve his clients with visual impairments. It has also given him "great appreciation for the accomplishments of people with visual disabilities. To see them rise up and overcome is just amazing. I have so much more understanding and I'm just in awe of what others have accomplished."

This includes his daughter who resumed her career as a high school counselor just a couple of years after her illness and continues to live independently. A proud father, Michael shares, "my daughter takes things in stride." He recognizes that Hadley plays an important role helping others in similar situations: "If it wasn't for organizations like this, people would not have independence. That's key for people with disabilities." ■

## Building Skills and Confidence

**M**ark Yendes was attacked on the schoolyard when he was five years old. The injury damaged the back portion of his brain, including the vision center. Surgery saved some of his sight, but his vision continued to deteriorate with age.

Growing up, Mark's family was in denial about his vision loss and discouraged him from learning braille. However, the strain of reading print gave him headaches. He became frustrated and rebellious. Over the next few years he bounced between group homes and, because each move disrupted his education, never obtained his high school diploma.

Once Mark was married with his own child, he realized he needed to be able to protect and care for himself and his daughter. So, he reached out to local vision rehabilitation services—and they referred him to Hadley to learn braille.

"When I first learned braille, I realized that a larger world was opening up," he remembers, "I was getting more

### CHALLENGE OF LIVING AWARD



Mark Yendes

"The skills that I've learned through all the courses have given me confidence, confidence I did not have."

—Mark Yendes, Jacksonville, FL

information and I was getting it at a faster rate, and that was life changing."

An enthusiastic learner, Mark moved quickly through the courses. However, it was not without challenges. Mark recalls times he wanted to quit, but Hadley learning experts "helped me push forward to make myself learn more and do better."

Once he mastered braille, Mark set out to accomplish his next goal—earning his high school diploma. "Not being able to complete high school left a big scar on me," Mark explains, "It left me wondering what I could do and feeling useless because I didn't have a diploma." Four years of hard work and 26 Hadley courses later, he completed the requirements.

"I don't know where I would have been without Hadley being there," Mark shares. "I didn't have this kind of confidence before. I always walked around looking at the ground...but I never looked people in the eyes before." Mark's learning has also motivated him to set new goals for the future; he is considering pursuing a bachelor's degree and possibly a master's degree in sociology or psychology.

The fact that Hadley learning is free of charge was critical to Mark who did not have a job or any way to afford classes when he first enrolled. For this, he is grateful: "I don't know how Hadley does it except by the grace of God and the grace and donations of people that are able to continue funding it. It's great. My heart goes to them." ■



## Why Hadley 2.0?

There will soon be a flood of older Americans facing vision loss.

Age-related eye diseases such as macular degeneration, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy are leading to a dramatic increase in the population of people with low vision. The National Eye Institute estimates this number will rise from 2.9 million in 2010, to 5 million in 2030, to 8.9 million in 2050. The vast majority are over 60 years of age and, because this generation will live longer, many will strive for years to live independently with poor visual acuity.

Not only is this number growing, but the secondary health risks associated with vision loss are huge. Living independently becomes challenging and dangerous. Older individuals with low vision are 2.5 times more likely to fall, 2 times more likely to have depression and are at 9.5 times greater risk of Alzheimer's disease. (Source: *Global Coalition on Aging*)

### There is an urgent need to support the millions of older Americans new to vision loss.

Given the constraints of the health care system and vision rehabilitation services, it is often challenging to get the help needed to navigate this transition. As the leading provider of distance education for people who are blind or visually impaired, Hadley is in a unique position to fill this gap.

**Enter Hadley 2.0.** Scheduled to launch in early 2020, Hadley 2.0 will feature tailored curriculum to meet the needs of older adults new to vision loss. Workshops will be dynamic and engaging, portioned into digestible, interactive experiences that allow learners to go at their own pace, practice their knowledge and learn through scenario-based settings with real-life applications.

Help will be immediate and accessible so learning can begin right away. Resources will be available 24/7 from the comfort and convenience of the learner's home. When assistance is needed, Hadley learning experts will be there to provide coaching that is friendly, competent, relevant and helpful. And, as throughout Hadley's 100-year history, learning will be free of charge to people with vision loss and their families.

While we are expanding our focus to assist the growing population of older adults new to vision loss, Hadley 2.0 will also enhance the learning experience for all of the people we have been serving for the past century. It will improve our ability to meet our learners where they live and where they are—with applicable knowledge and practical solutions to help them thrive at work, at home and in their communities.

Making these important changes does require additional financial support from our donors. However, we are confident that this investment will pay off by empowering the growing population of people facing vision loss to successfully meet the challenges that lie ahead. ■



# Winner of the 2019 New Venture Competition



Darrel Kirby and friends

These were positive and rewarding experiences, but Darrel aimed to move into private practice because it allows for greater schedule flexibility, improved financial prospects, and the opportunity to work with clients long-term, across a wider range of experiences. In addition, he recognized that Iowa City needs more therapists that are experienced working with college students, have expertise handling issues such as substance abuse and eating disorders, and have diverse identities and backgrounds. So, Darrel joined forces with a colleague, whose experience and expertise complements his own, to start Thrive Behavioral Health, LLC.

Their vision behind Thrive is to build a practice of highly talented therapists who share the values of “hard work, ethical and compassionate care, respect and dignity of clients.” Darrel emphasizes, “We’re going to be a team. I want the culture to be kind, respectful, loving, and understanding.” In addition, “I like the idea that as an entrepreneur developing the team, they will see my skills and not that blindness is some deficit or something to walk gingerly around.”

Darrel states that all of Hadley’s FCE classes were “immensely helpful” to starting Thrive. As he

**H**adley Learner Darrel Kirby won the Hadley New Venture Competition awarded by the Forsythe Center for Employment and Entrepreneurship (FCE) for the business plan he developed for a new multidisciplinary behavioral healthcare practice, Thrive Behavioral Health, LLC. This is the fourth year of this award that encourages Hadley learners to apply their knowledge and skills to launch their own business.

Darrel was studying to be a psychology major at the University of Iowa when he unexpectedly began losing his sight. Within a few months, he would be completely blind. The exact cause for this is still unknown, though diabetic retinopathy likely played a part.

Understandably, adjusting to blindness was difficult. Darrel left school and returned home hoping for answers but became isolated and depressed. He explains, “I lost friends, lost my identity and went into a dark, depressing and hopeless place.” Eventually, he found help and inspiration from others in the blindness community, giving him the motivation to return to school and reimagine his life.

Once back at the University of Iowa, Darrel earned his master’s degree in social work in 2008 and became a licensed independent social worker and certified drug and alcohol counselor. Over the next eleven years, he worked as a counselor at agencies in the Iowa City area, including the University of Iowa and the Veterans Health Administration.

## Eagle Scout Project is a Family Affair

This past summer, high school junior Clark Kinney chose Hadley as the site for his Eagle Scout project. Clark was joined by several fellow scouts and the group spent the day making repairs in the yard behind Hadley's Winnetka, IL headquarters.

This is a wonderful accomplishment in itself, but there is much more to the story. Clark is the grandson of Dr. Richard Kinney, a beloved Hadley teacher and administrator from 1954 until 1975, and Hadley president from 1975 until his passing in 1979.

Born in 1923, Dr. Kinney lost his sight at the age of seven. He attended Ohio's Mount Union College until 1944, when he lost all of his hearing. To continue his education, he enrolled in home study courses with Hadley School for the Blind, where his instructors recognized his exceptional promise and urged him to return to college. In 1954 he graduated summa cum laude from Mount Union College—making him the third blind and deaf person to graduate from an American university, among the first two being Helen Keller. After graduation he came to Hadley as a teacher and administrator, ultimately serving as president for four years.

Clark's father, also named Clark, was only 15 when his father died, so the younger Clark never knew his grandfather. However, he explains, "As I was looking for an Eagle Scout project, the opportunity to help Hadley came to light and it just made sense to try and accomplish something at a place that was so near and dear to my dad's dad. I know how important Hadley was to him and vice versa."

describes it, "My vision and this dream were the outline and it was like someone gave me crayons, and I was coloring it in, and it was coming to life." In particular, "The courses that really stick out are the financial piece. I am so much better prepared to pay my bills and have a sense of where we are going because of the detail and direction that the courses demanded of me."

Darrel and his business partner recently opened Thrive with their own funding. Now, Kirby will apply the \$30,000 award to prepare additional office space and purchase needed equipment to grow the business. "The money will speed up the process and help us to hire the qualified therapists we want to attract. It will help Thrive come to fruition and be the business that I really want it to be," he states.

However, this experience goes beyond the prize money. Darrel shares, "I had made up my mind that, no matter what happened with the competition, discovering Hadley and completing the classes and having the business plan was an enormous gift." Now that he has won, he sees it as a vote of confidence "that I have the capability to run a great, a thriving, business, and that I can trust myself in the decisions I make." ■



Clark Kinney, grandson of beloved Hadley educator, administrator and president Dr. Richard Kinney, chose Hadley as the site for his Eagle Scout project.





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new possibilities

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Presenting the  
Hadley Woman's Board  
*2019 Braille  
Holiday Card*

**B**raille holiday cards make unique gifts and support Hadley's mission to create personalized learning opportunities that empower people with vision loss to thrive at home, at work and in their communities.

The 2019 Braille Holiday Card carries the interior greeting "Wishing you peace, happiness and the spirit of the season" in both print and braille. This year's artwork was created by Hadley learner and professional artist Terri B. Webb.

**Order holiday cards online at [hadley.edu/holidaycard](http://hadley.edu/holidaycard) or call 800.323.4238 to place your order by phone.** Card sales are open until December 11.

