

Thrive



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ON THE COVER: Ribbon cutting. From left to right: Scott Myers, Village of Winnetka; Mary Nelson, Hadley; Mike Clune, Clune Construction; Louise Holland, Hadley Board of Trustees; Suzy Parks, Hadley Woman's Board; Julie Tye, Hadley; Jennifer Sobecki, Designs for Dignity.

We Asked and You Answered.

Thank you for the tremendous response to our recent survey. Your thoughts and feedback will help us provide you with the best possible communication experience. In case you're curious, here are some results of this research:

What is the *primary* reason you support Hadley?

- 45% believe in Hadley's mission
- 20% are close to someone affected by vision loss
- 16% are current or past Hadley learners
- 14% have been affected by vision loss

What content is meaningful to you?

- 74% like to read news about Hadley
- 66% enjoy features about Hadley learners
- 65% find value in articles on Hadley's resources for living with vision loss
- 26% appreciate receiving Hadley's annual report

How do you want to hear from us?

Mail is still popular, with 50% of respondents preferring this means of communication. However, 28% prefer email and 21% would like to receive a combination of email and mail.

To verify that we have your email so you can receive our upcoming electronic communications, please contact Sara at sara@hadley.edu.





From the President...

Why is Hadley different from other organizations that serve the blind and visually impaired? In a nutshell: no one provides the type of help that Hadley does through a distance-learning model. Supporters, like you, have helped make Hadley **the** learning destination for those facing vision loss: offering personalized, practical tools to maintain independence even as vision fades. Thanks to your assistance, Hadley provides unparalleled access to experts in the field and a community of peers. Free of boundaries. Free of barriers. Free of charge.

Hadley was built on this approach nearly a century ago. Now, we are enhancing this model by transforming our learning opportunities and

repackaging our existing content with best practices for adult learning and distance education. To do this, we are harnessing new technologies and possibilities available to people with visual impairments. We call this Hadley 2.0.

We have also been expanding Hadley's Discussion Groups, with exciting results. While Hadley instructors (or "learning experts" as we now call them) had hosted call-in office hours for students in the past, we are formalizing and growing these forums to make them more meaningful. This issue highlights how these groups are providing Hadley learners with valuable information, resources and connections.

You will also see how Hadley's renovated headquarters supports the collaboration and innovation that are so critical to Hadley 2.0. The Hadley staff is now home in this amazing building and our team is inspired and working diligently to create the best possible experiences and

content for our learners. Turn to page 11 to see this incredible makeover. You won't believe the difference!

For anyone who lives in or is visiting the Chicago area, please come and see it for yourself. We would be so happy to show you around. Send an email to me at jtye@hadley.edu or to katherine@hadley.edu and we will make it happen.

As you can tell, it is an eventful time at Hadley, but we believe that change is good and necessary because it allows us to provide invaluable learning to the growing population of people facing low vision, extend our offerings and make a greater impact. However, none of this would be possible without the backing of our Hadley donors. Thank you for your ongoing generosity and partnership in our mission.

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.



Hadley's Discussion Groups

Hadley Discussion Groups are free of charge and open to anyone with a visual impairment and their family members. We are excited about learners' engagement across these forums including: Tech it Out, Hadley Growers, Spanish Chat, What's Cooking, Get Up & Go, Crafting, Embracing Braille and Writers' Circle.

Hadley Discussion Groups allow our learners—who are spread out across the country and around the world—to gain knowledge, share information, connect with one another and build community.

Topics capture learners' broad range of interests and needs. Whether it's asking gardening questions, practicing Spanish, learning about assistive technologies or getting help with braille, Hadley has a discussion group for it.

vision. Read on to learn more about a selection of our growing discussion groups and how Hadley learners are benefitting from these conversations. ■

Visit hadley.edu/discussions to browse all of the discussion groups. Click 'Tune In' to view upcoming topics, times to join in and access past sessions.

YOU MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR HADLEY LEARNERS TO THRIVE AT HOME, AT WORK AND IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.

Discussion groups are an important component of Hadley 2.0. They provide a valuable avenue for 'social learning' that, our research and experience reveal, is critical to people with low

Tech it Out Takes Off

We are living in an exciting time with new possibilities. Hadley Learning Expert Ricky Enger sees technology leveling the playing field for those with visual impairment.

Technology is an incredible enabler for people who are visually impaired. New devices and programs are toppling obstacles and creating opportunities. Want to read an email or write a document? Screen readers are making computer use easy and accessible. Need something from the store? Chances are you can order it online and have it delivered. Interested in the weather, playing a podcast or accessing information? Just ask a digital assistant—like Siri or Amazon’s Alexa.

“It is incredibly valuable to bring people with different experiences together. Those with greater proficiency are wonderful about sharing their knowledge, which helps those with less gain confidence.” —Ricky Enger

Blind since birth, Hadley Learning Expert Ricky Enger recalls growing up when only assistive technology existed for the visually impaired. Now, she explains, “things available to the sighted population are available to the blind as well—everyone has access and it’s empowering.”

However, as anyone who has grappled with technology knows, it is often overwhelming. Figuring out the best devices and apps and how to use them

can be confusing regardless of visual acuity.

Aiming to help learners better understand and use the vast options now available to them, Hadley launched the **Tech it Out** discussion group. As Enger explains, this forum aims to “open doors to things that sound complicated, help overcome hesitation, get rid of the mystery surrounding technology and make it obtainable.”

Participants can connect easily by phone or computer

to join in. Originally planned for up to 100 attendees, the group settings were quickly increased to accommodate the sessions’ tremendous popularity. Each month, **Tech it Out** attracts approximately 250 people, with hundreds more listening later to recordings or reading transcripts available online.

Tech it Out topics focus on technology that empowers people with visual impairments such as online grocery delivery



Ricky Enger

services, digital assistants, accessing entertainment, audio identification and visual interpreter services. Enger prepares each program with the goal of providing value to all participants, whether someone is new to technology or an experienced user. It is also an excellent learning opportunity for Enger who admits, “I often come across information or suggestions that I didn’t think about. I like that.”

Feedback has been excellent—learners report they like having a single place they can go to get lots of information in just one hour.

Enger is excited about the many ways **Tech it Out** helps learners leverage technology to improve their lives, gain confidence, and then “jump in to teach others and share their knowledge.” ■

Building Confidence and Community

Angelene Rosse was born with partial vision but glaucoma took the rest of her sight when she was in her 20s. Now blind, Angelene reads with braille and applies her Hadley learning to maintain independence in her daily routine.

Hadley's Conversational Spanish has also had a lasting impact and she uses this learning to communicate with family and friends. She continues to practice her Spanish and improve her overall communication skills in the *Spanish Chat* group. She remarks, "I am more confident talking to other people—not just in Spanish. I used to hate to get up and speak in class. While I still get nervous, it is not nearly as bad."

It has also been a welcome relief following the 2017 wildfire that took her family's house. They are rebuilding, but this weekly gathering has helped Angelene manage the stress of the ordeal. Here, she can forget about the tragedy for a while and focus on improving her Spanish skills and engaging with fellow Hadley learners.



Angelene and her Pomeranian, Mia

Hadley Learners Connect in Spanish

Spanish Chat provides learners with an engaging, interactive forum where they can connect with one another, access Hadley experts and practice their language skills for real-life application.

The best way to learn a language is to speak it. That is why Hadley learners gather weekly to practice their Spanish skills, connect with one another and build confidence.

Leading the discussion is Hadley Learning Expert Debbie Good. A former high-school and college-level world language teacher, Good has been at Hadley for 25 years. She has also been a Hadley student, completing Braille for Sighted Learners so she can effectively communicate with the learners she serves.



Debbie Good

All Hadley learners are welcome to join the *Spanish Chat* and encouraged to participate at their personal degree of comfort. Good explains, this is "the best way for people to learn, find moral support and become more independent." She moderates the discussion, coaching on vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation, but the emphasis is on having participants talk and practice. This way, learners not only connect with each other but gain tools and confidence to communicate with the world. One learner shared that she was now able to communicate with Spanish-speaking in-laws. For others, Spanish is an essential job skill, with these language capabilities opening doors to employment.

Leveraging recently enhanced videoconferencing capabilities, Good aims to further engage learners through music and video tools, and plans to initiate breakout sessions for more advanced learners.

Good is also excited about the important role *Spanish Chat*—and other Hadley Discussion Groups—will play in Hadley 2.0. This dynamic learning approach gives learners the ability to go at their own pace, learn through scenario-based settings and gain the knowledge most relevant to their lives. ■



Helping Gardens and Learners Bloom

Hadley Chief Program Officer and Learning Expert Ed Haines recently took Hadley's popular Container Gardening course in an exciting new direction, creating the **Hadley Growers** discussion group. While Ed has been considering creating a garden-centered chat for a while, the transition to Hadley 2.0 provided the ideal opportunity to launch this monthly get-together.

Since its debut in January 2019, engagement, participation and gardens have been flourishing. Each month, **Hadley Growers** attracts attendees from across all U.S. gardening zones and around the world. It also appeals to all types of gardeners—from beginners to master gardeners with vast expertise.

The popularity of **Hadley Growers** does not surprise Ed. An avid gardener himself, he recognizes "gardeners are really

into this hobby and want to talk about it." Learners connect with the group, sharing their gardening questions, advice, frustrations and triumphs. However, gardening also creates connections beyond Hadley. As Ed points out, "Gardening is an activity that blind and sighted people can enjoy together. It's truly a community builder."

Haines is excited by the number of advanced gardeners that are gardening with a range of vision impairments. He points out, "This shows that the gardening community welcomes diversity and is inclusive."

Given the enthusiasm around this monthly discussion group, Ed is looking to build on the **Hadley Growers** community. He hopes to create a mentorship program that matches beginners with master gardeners, growing gardens as well as confidence and connections. ■

Nancy Matulis Digs Gardening and Hadley

Nancy Matulis is a lifelong gardener. She has also had low vision since birth as a result of Retinopathy of Prematurity, the leading cause of childhood vision loss.

With limited vision, contrast is key. Nancy plants bright flowers and purple beans so she can see them to pick. She also pays careful attention to raised beds, using wind chimes to help her identify them. "It's a challenge when I put a tool down and can't find it," Nancy remarks. However, this does not limit her gardening goals or success. A Master Gardener, she grows a variety of plants—including fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers.

Nancy came to Hadley 10 years ago to challenge herself to learn new things. Hadley's distance-learning model makes it possible for her to be a lifelong learner. "Hadley is a resource like no other for people who are visually impaired," she confirms.

Hadley is also a place where she can now further her love of gardening. As a participant in **Hadley Growers**, she enjoys being part of this community of fellow enthusiasts. "It's fun to listen to gardeners from all over sharing ideas."



Nancy Matulis

Braille is My Buddy

“Thank you for making these opportunities exist for our global community. It allows us to expand our independence in our homes, work and in the community as literate braille citizens.” —Michelle Boyd, Hadley Learner

Braille is more than a friend to learning expert Vileen Shah. Blind since the age of three, braille is the North Star that empowered him to overcome hardship, earn three master’s degrees and learn six languages. His dedication to braille even took him to Paris in 2009, where he was recognized for his accomplishments as a keynote speaker at the Louis Braille Bicentennial Birthday celebrations.

For the past 18 years, Shah has shared his love of braille with Hadley learners, teaching, inspiring and motivating the many who have studied with him. “Braille is my buddy. I love it,” says Vileen. Now, as the moderator of Hadley’s **Embracing Braille** weekly discussion group, he looks forward to helping more people with visual impairments “enhance their independence with braille.”



Vileen Shah

Each week, **Embracing Braille** focuses on a different topic, such as braille writers, braille displays and common errors in reading and writing braille. The last meeting of the month is saved for an open question and answer session.

Shah also aims to use this forum to empower Hadley learners by blending braille and technology, emphasizing that “they need not be seen as adversaries but should be treated as friends, as complementary, as supporting each other. Learners who combine braille skills with technology will enjoy a tremendous amount of independence.”

Embracing Braille grew from the weekly office hours hosted by longtime and beloved braille instructor, Sharon Howerton, who recently retired from Hadley. The group has been relaunched on our videoconferencing platform and publicized

across the Hadley community to encourage a wider reach. These efforts have been successful with participants joining in from as far away as the Philippines. Learners who aren’t able to attend the session can tap into the content by downloading the transcripts and audio playback on hadley.edu/discussions.

Because braille is difficult to master, learners appreciate having this opportunity to compare their braille hurdles and frustrations, and share their tips and successes. Shah also invites learners with expertise on relevant topics to present to the group because he recognizes that much can be gained from one another. ■

Where Creative Minds Meet

Writing is a personal journey, but it can also be a lonely one. For all writers, including those with visual impairments, it is often challenging to find a creative community to spark and support the writing process.

Writers' Circle has become a source of inspiration, encouragement and advice for Hadley learners who like to write. More than 60 participants join in the discussion each month. All are welcome and the group draws a diverse range of writers, which includes individuals just starting the writing process, those writing for themselves, aspiring professional writers and

published authors. Participants also practice their craft across a variety of genres—including memoirs, fiction, science-fiction, non-fiction and poetry. Regardless of achievement or interest, everyone is encouraged to share their experiences and learn from one another on subjects such as getting started, getting published, finding inspiration and overcoming writer's block.

The forum was started by Learning Expert Debbie Worman and Learning Designer Diane O'Neill who recognized that Hadley has a large number of learners interested in writing.

Writers themselves, Worman and O'Neill understand the

value this community brings to visually impaired learners. As O'Neill explains, "What is great about this group is that people can share different things and resources that they can't find in a group of sighted writers." Perhaps most importantly, she continues, "**Writers' Circle** is an opportunity for learners to connect with, support and encourage one another."

Worman has been thrilled with the group's enthusiasm and says participants "are gaining renewed energy, confidence and motivation for writing." She credits this to the fact that "learners are sharing ideas, experiences and knowledge with one another. There's such power in that." ■

Hadley Helps Learner Write a New Chapter

Frank Strong, 68, has always had a passion for music and was recently inducted into the Iowa Blues Hall of Fame. Known as "Freight Train Frank Strong," he performs blues, folk, country and Americana music in all kinds of venues including schools, coffeehouses, and music festivals.

Juvenile macular degeneration compromised Frank's sight as a youth and he has been legally blind since age 18. As his vision deteriorated through the years, he turned to Hadley to learn to read and write braille, and took courses on braille music.

A Hadley learner for more than 30 years, Strong recognizes the "profound impact Hadley has on blind people because it helps us to live independently."

While Strong did some writing during his career in the disability services field, he never considered himself a serious writer. Recently retired, he is taking his interest in railroad lore to the printed page and writing articles for a state history magazine.

"I want to learn to be more comfortable with my writing, and **Writers' Circle** is a great place to start," he explains. "It is such an interesting cross-section of writers and



Frank Strong

wonderful to learn from and have the support of this group of people that have successfully written things that have been published."

Hadley Past, Present and Future

The original Hadley building was state of the art when completed in 1957. However, it was time to update our mechanical infrastructure, make the building ADA compliant and reimagine spaces to support our current and future needs. Our recent remodel is within the same footprint as the original structure, but with innovative solutions to add space, increase light and improve the work environment.



The site of Hadley headquarters in 1956



Hadley staff, trustees, volunteers and community members officially open the remodeled building, April 17, 2019



Workers put finishing touches on the building in 1957



Hadley exterior today

Before:



After:



Extreme Makeover

Take a look at this incredible transformation. Hadley is now prepared for its next 100 years—ready to extend our platform to better serve visually impaired learners and increase our impact.



1. Before: The old reception area was set back from the main entrance
2. After: Visitors find a warm welcome in the redesigned reception area
3. Before: Filming in the video studio used to require ironing the “green screen” before shots
4. After: The updated AV studio enables high-quality content delivery
5. Before: Hadley’s only conference room was outdated
6. After: Hadley’s new conference rooms allow for flexible configurations
7. Before: Crowded common areas
8. After: Functional work spaces encourage collaboration
9. Before: The dark, enclosed entranceway before the remodel
10. After: Bright and inspiring spaces, including the main entrance

Thank You

Hadley’s renovation was a successful team effort. We are so thankful for all of our partners, including Fitzgerald Architecture Planning Design, Clune Construction, JLL, BMO Harris Bank, Business Office Systems, Inc., AIS, Inc., Designs for Dignity, Divine Flooring, Perry & Associates, BTR Engineers and EVA Engineering.



Hadley Volunteers

Hadley volunteers were very busy this spring. The Hadley Woman's Board's Kentucky Derby Party was a fun way to watch the horses come in and raise funds for Hadley. The Hadley Teen Board focused on dogs, raising money at their annual Memorial Day Dog Wash.



Photos: 1. Attendees in festive Derby spirit 2. Derby Party Co-chairs Jennifer Wainwright and Mindy Rendell 3. The crowd is captivated by the exciting finish 4. The Teen Board gathers for the Memorial Day Dog Wash 5. A group of Teen Board members in action