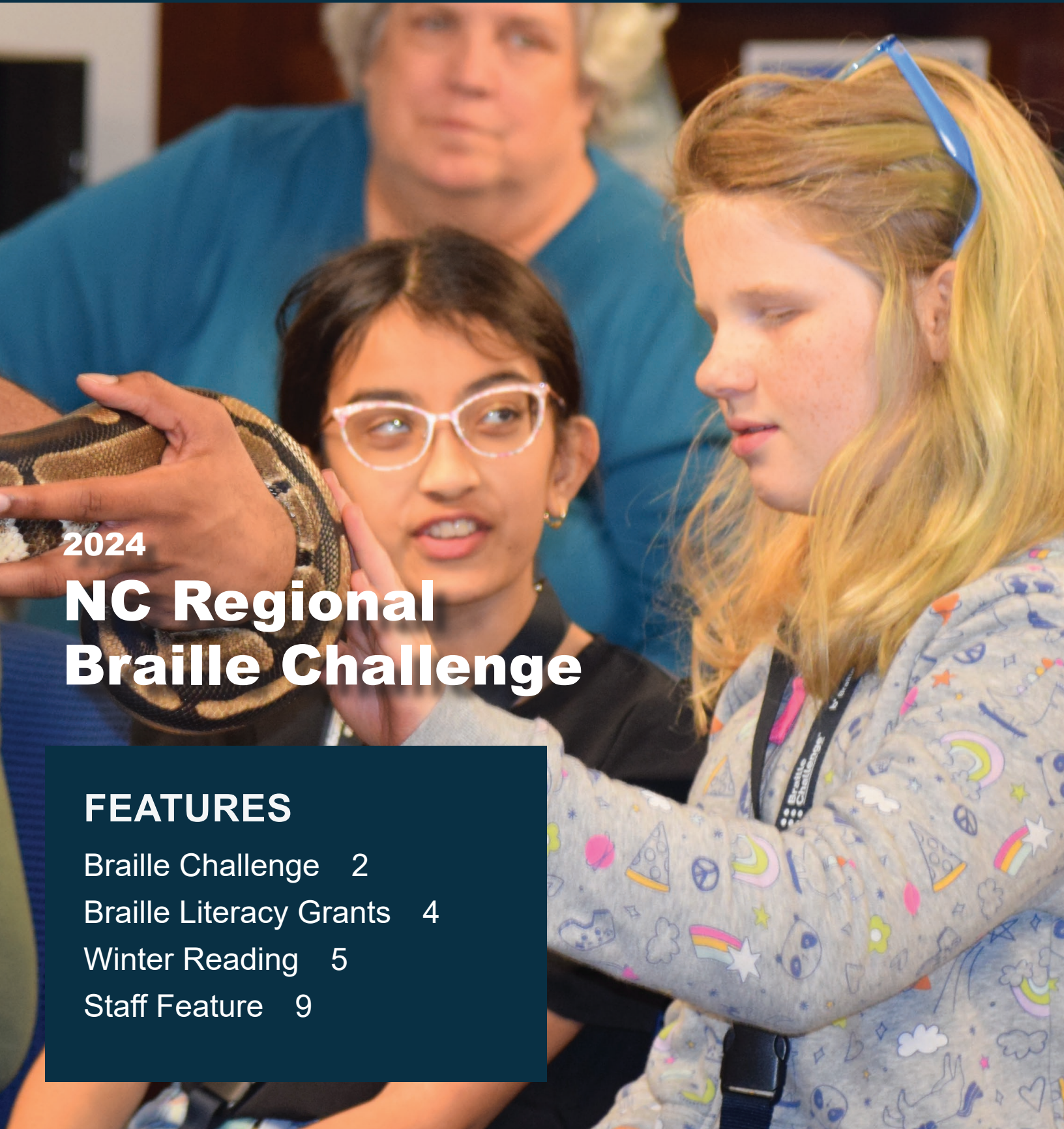


TAR HEEL TALK



2024

NC Regional Braille Challenge

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BRAILLE CHALLENGE



Eastern North Carolina Regional Braille Challenge

This past February, our library had the privilege of hosting the 2023 Eastern North Carolina Regional Braille Challenge. The event was held at the State Library of North Carolina and drew competitors, their parents, and volunteers from far and wide.

For those who are new to the Braille Challenge, it is an annual academic competition for the

purposes of promoting braille literacy among blind and visually impaired students. The competition is divided into five distinct testing levels: Apprentice, Freshman, Sophomore, Junior Varsity, and Varsity. Depending on the testing level, the students are testing on various aspects of braille literacy such as reading comprehension, spelling, speed and accuracy, proofreading, and charts and graphs.

The Braille Challenge offers more than striving for academ-

ic excellence, it also serves as a platform fostering a sense of community among blind and visually impaired students as well as their families. While the students are engaged in friendly competition, the families of the participants have a chance to engage with one another sharing their life experiences, both the highlights and the challenges, uniting families who have had similar journeys. Additionally, experts in the field of visual impairments join the gathering to share invaluable resources to empower their children.

You can see what the Braille Challenge is all about and what it means to the people involved in this video: <https://slnc.info/ENCBC2023>

Our library staff is currently making preparations for the 2024 Braille Challenge. We invite

our young patrons, as well as any visually impaired students who may be learning braille, to participate in the Eastern North Carolina Regional Braille Challenge or the Western North Carolina Regional Braille Challenge depending on your location.

Whether you are interested in participating in the challenge this year as a participant or a volunteer, please reach out to us via email at ncabls@dncr.nc.gov or call 1-888-388-2460 and ask how you can be a part of making the 2024 Braille Challenge possible!



2023 BRAILLE LITERACY GRANT

Award Recipients

In June 2023, the **Friends of the NC Accessible Books and Library Services Board** approved the recipients for the Braille Literacy grants.

The children's grant was awarded to IFB Solutions to support braille literacy by funding the purchase of braille books with tactile graphics. Housed at Tracy's Little Red SchoolHouse, the books will be part of the year-round, after school Student Enrichment Experience (SEE) individualized curriculum.

Bradley Blair received the adult grant to host a one-day braille literacy fair in Charlotte, NC.

Held at the South Park Regional Library on October 7, the fair was open to the public and showcased day-to-day uses of braille in the blind community. The grant supported exhibits, speakers, and giveaways all focused on Braille Literacy.

The Friends' board is committed to the advancement of braille literacy throughout North Carolina. Updates regarding future Friends' initiatives can be found at: <https://slnc.info/BLGI>

Friends of the North Carolina Accessible Books and Library Services.

WINTER READING 2023



Get Ready for Our 2023 Winter Reading Challenge!

Our library is gearing up for our exciting state-wide reading challenge. This year's challenge kicks off on December 1st and wraps up on February 28th. Registration for patrons is open from November 15th to January 15th.

Here's the scoop: If you read five or more books, you win a prize! But wait, there's more! Our top three readers in each category get to choose between a gift

card to Walmart or Amazon as their prize.

Like last year, we have two categories for our reading challenge: Physical Braille & Large Print Books and Digital Talking & Braille Books. The digital talking and braille book categories encompass both the Books on Demand service and downloads from BARD. Physical books include Large Print and Braille Books you receive in the mail. Furthermore, there is a division for adults and youth up to 21 years old.

To join in on the fun and register for our Winter Reading Challenge, visit slnc.info/SRP. If you have any questions or need assistance, you can reach us at 1-888-388-2460 or drop us an email at abls-out-reach@dncr.nc.gov.



Rate and Review Your Winter Reading Books!

Looking for a way to earn extra points during our Winter Reading Challenge? **Here's a tip: Rate and Review the books you read!**

In addition to the one point you receive for reading a book, you can earn an extra point by rating it. And if you write a review with at least 50 words, you'll snag a whopping 8 points!

Participating in our Rate and Review program is easy. Just fill out the form at the following link: slnc.info/ABLS_SRBR or if you would like to participate by mail, call us at 1-888-388-2460 to have Rate and Review forms sent to you!

JANUARY BRAILLE READING CHALLENGE

Get ready to celebrate National Braille Month in January!

During the month of January, any braille book that you check out or download will count five times more valuable than books in other formats. No need to sign up for this particular challenge

if you're already registered for our Winter Reading Challenge. Simply check out braille books from us, and they'll automatically contribute to your score. Patrons with the top scores in each category for the month of January will receive fantastic prizes!

“Tar Heel Talk” is a quarterly publication of the State Library of North Carolina Accessible Books & Library Services section (SLNC-ABLS) and the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

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2023 WRITING CONTEST CONTINUES

Calling all patron writers!

The 2023 Writing Contest is in full swing and will continue until the end of the year. There's ample time for you to submit your finest original works, all of which have the chance to be featured on BARD. Whether it's short stories, novel excerpts, poems, songs, fiction, nonfiction, autobiographies, or any other creative endeavor you can think of, we welcome it all!

For a comprehensive list of contest rules, please visit: <https://slnc.info/WC>. Each contestants' entry has the potential to be added to our collection. The contest will be divided into four

separate age groups: ages 8 and younger, ages 9 to 12, ages 13 to 17, and 18 and older. Each submission will automatically be entered into its appropriate age group and each group has the potential to win either the top three places or an honorable mention!

Everyone who competes will win a certificate! We will keep collecting entries until December 31st. If you are interested in participating, visit slnc.info/WC23 for information about how to turn in your stories. We hope to hear from you!

STAFF FEATURE



ABLS Assistant Director
Joshua Berkov

In our previous newsletter, we introduced **Catherine Rubin** as our new Director. Many of you may have been curious about who would take on the role of Assistant Director, and we're excited to put those speculations to rest. Please join us in welcoming **Joshua Berkov**, who assumed this position in July 2023!

Josh has been a valuable part of our team, previously serving as our Collection Management Librarian. In this role, he played a pivotal role in selecting the titles that enrich our library's collection. He also took charge of the cataloging process for the books we acquire and provided leadership to the Machine Unit, which is responsible for the repair and distribution of digital talking books to our patrons.

Now, in his new role as Assistant Director, Josh is set to take on some exciting responsibilities. He will be overseeing our newly established Patron Engagement Unit, which comprises essential departments such as Reader Advisors, Patron Processing, and Outreach

and Volunteer Services.

In addition to leading these crucial areas, Josh will be at the forefront of planning and executing dynamic library programming. His expertise and dedication are sure to bring fresh ideas and vibrant engagement to our community.

We're thrilled to have Joshua stepping into this role and look forward to the positive impact he will make on our library. Please join us in congratulating him and get to know him a little in this Q&A!

Q: What led you to work in the library field?

A: During the summer before my senior year of college at Brown University, I started working in their Archives department, located inside of the John Hay Special Collections Library. I had taken the job so

that I could stay in Providence, RI over the summer, but I soon found that I had a real passion for the work. I loved helping patrons who came in with research questions pertaining to the history of the University. I continued to work there through the end of my senior year and came to realize that I wanted very much to continue working in libraries. A year later, I started my MSLS program at UNC-Chapel Hill and never looked back.

Q: What are things you will miss about being the Collections Management Librarian?

A: One of the best parts about my old position was having the time to look through all of the new book lists being sent to us from the National Library Service (NLS). For nine years, I was never without a big list of

books I wanted to read, based off those lists from NLS. I will certainly miss working with my former staff members on a daily basis. I was incredibly lucky to have such capable and kind people working with me and for me. I also really enjoyed getting to select the books we record in our local studios.

Q: What advice would you give to the person who will fill the Collections Management Librarian that you wish you had received?

A: I'd probably say something along the lines of "I hope you like repetitive work, because you're going to have a lot of it." When I started as the Collection Management Librarian in 2014, we were getting on average 3,000 new titles per year. Now we're getting 12,000 new titles per year. That's a lot of books to catalog, and it takes

three full-time staff members to be able to keep up. But I would also advise my successor to pace themselves. Incorrect cataloging work does no one any good, so take the time to do it right, even if it means doing less in the end. Quality over quantity.

Q: Have you come across interesting challenges as the Assistant Director?

A: Everyday in this new job presents challenges, but I think one of the biggest challenges I am facing is figuring out how to help patrons who aren't receiving their books in the mail. We've had issues with a patron at a particular rehab facility not receiving their books. We have issues with patrons elsewhere who either aren't receiving their books, or they're receiving their books and then receiving them again

instead of being returned to us. I am working with the United States Postal Service to sort through these issues as they arise. Some have been solved. Others are still a work in progress.

Q: What are you looking forward to in your new role?

I am really enjoying working with patrons more closely again. I got into the field of librarianship because I wanted to help people. And while I was indirectly helping our patrons by ensuring that our catalog records were complete to maximize discoverability, now I have direct contact with our patrons on a regular basis.

There's such a rewarding feeling I get from working with our patrons over the phone, listening to their requests, and being able to meet and sometimes exceed their expecta-

tions. The appreciation our patrons show in return is immeasurable. We're often told by our patrons that our service has saved their sanity and/or our service is one of the few services that they approve of their tax dollars going toward.

Q: In addition to being a librarian, you are also a published author with two of your books in our collection. How does it feel to have a couple of your books, *The Enlightenment of Angeline*, and *Adulthood at the Moto-Lodge*, in our library's collection?

A: It's gratifying to know that our patrons have access to some of my writing. I'm not sure I ever would have attempted to write novels had I not begun working here. I've always read, but my reading habits exploded once I started

working here, and I stumbled across a particular format for storytelling that I fell in love with and wanted to try for myself. That, and the motivation I had from several of our former coworkers really propelled me into this wonderful new-ish hobby of mine.

Q: If you had to choose a book from our collection to read for the rest of your life, which book would that be? What about a movie from our collection.

A: I'd probably choose a classic like *Advise and Consent* by Allen Drury. Picking a movie is tough, but I would probably go with the *Star Trek* movie from 2009. It's one of those movies I can watch over and over and over again and never get tired of it.

FRIENDS CORNER



Hello Friends,

“A day without a friend is like a pot without a single drop of honey left inside.” - Winnie the Pooh

Hope everyone is doing well. I don't know about you, but it has been a busy time lately with squeezing in the last of summer vacations, statewide conferences, and the Lions Fishing Tournament to mention a few things. It doesn't slow down now as fall has begun, and we are entering the holiday season for the next few months.

I was listening to a local radio station, and the announcer asked, “What is your favorite holiday?” That was an easy answer for me. My favorite is Thanksgiving-how about yours? Thanksgiving is such

a wonderful holiday where friends and family gather for great food, memories, football, and parades. It is a time of gratitude and for being thankful for all we have.

At my house, we decorate for the fall and Thanksgiving, and not until after our Thanksgiving meal is finished do we begin decorating for Christmas-which just happens to be my second favorite holiday. So, as we enter this holiday season, I hope you will have plenty of opportunities to be with your friends and families to share wonderful times together.

I have some terrific news to share about one of the programs the Friends funds for the

Library. You may have heard about it already, but if not, here you go! **The Friends no longer charges a fee for the DVS movies!** You may ask “What are DVS movies?” Here is a description: DVS movies have a voice describing actions, characteristics, and dress of the actors as well as details of the scenery or setting. This describing voice is on the sound track, during the time when there is no dialogue. These videos can be enjoyed by everyone in the family, both sighted and visually impaired. The videos play on ordinary DVD and Blu Ray players, and there is a selection of VCR movies available.

There are currently more than 800 videos in the collection. As new movies are produced in the descriptive format, Friends will purchase them, and they will be added to the collection. The

collection includes older movies, such as: *It's a Wonderful Life*, *My Favorite Brunette*, and *Topper Returns*, as well as the more popular ones like *The Passion of the Christ*, *Titanic*, *Cold Mountain*, and *Forrest Gump*. There is a selection of children's titles, such as *Dumbo*, *Toy Story*, *Pocahontas*, and *The Lion King*. Patrons will need to complete an application form that is available from the library by calling the Library at 888-388-2460. They will be glad to assist you and provide you with a listing of all of the movie collection that is available in various accessible formats. These movies can be mailed via Free Matter for the Blind. However, it's important to remember that the Library does not loan any DVD/VCR equipment.

Friends will continue to fund the purchase of additional mov-

ies, and we hope you will enjoy this enhanced service from the Library.

We are thankful to our many members and appreciate your support for the services and programs we assist the Library with. Your membership helps us provide this support. If you are not a member of FNCABLS, it is easy to join us with an annual membership of just \$10. You can go to our website at www.fncabls.org and link to our Membership page, or you can email us at info@fncabls.org, and we will send you an application by mail.

Just a reminder to our current Members, we will be sending renewal notices after the first of the New Year to help you remember to renew your Friends membership for 2024. We also receive and accept any donations to help us fund the ser-

vices of the friends, and these donations are tax deductible. If you have any questions about any of our services or programs, please send us an email to info@fncabls.org.

I wish all of you very Happy Holidays! And until next time, remember- hug a friend, be a friend, and join the Friends of the NC Accessible Books and Library Services.

Eddie Weaver
President, FNCABLS

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NC Department of Health and Human Services Division of Services for the Blind Youth and Student Services Pre-Employment Transition Services (PRE-ETS)

The Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) partners with students, families, schools and other service providers to give students an early start at career exploration and preparation for life after high school.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (PRE-ETS)

- Are available for students with a disability, ages 14-21
- Can be requested by a student, school, parent, guardian or another service provider

PRE-ETS Topics

- Workplace Readiness Training is designed to help students develop independent living and social skills necessary for success in employment.

- **Job Exploration Counseling helps students assess their unique skills and interests, learn about in-demand jobs and industries, and make informed decisions about their career pathways.**
- **Self-Advocacy Instruction equips students with information about accommodations, disability rights, peer mentoring and other resources, and helps students develop self-awareness and self-determination skills.**
- **Counseling on Post-secondary Options will teach students about opportunities for education and training after high school and explore post-secondary resources in their community and beyond.**
- **Work-Based Learning Experiences can include information interviews, jobs shadowing, opportunities for paid employment and other activities that connect classroom learning with the realities of work, help students make informed decisions about their options and prepare for a successful future.**
- **DSB offers PRE-ETS at no cost to students. Call 866-222-1546 for a referral to your local office or visit our website ncdhhs.gov/dsb.**



TIPS FOR BETTER SERVICE

- If you receive cartridges, please return the cartridges one at a time.
- If you leave a phone message, please spell your last name, state the city you live in, and leave us a phone number to respond to your call if necessary. Also, due to possible phone connection problems it always helps to repeat the phone number if possible.
- If you are calling for someone else please leave their name and city, so we can pull up their record in our computers and would have another contact number if we can't reach you.
- In order to avoid a delay in your service, notify us immediately of any change of address.
- If you email the library, please include your name, phone number, and mailing address in the email.



NEW USPS POLICIES FOR PACKAGE PICKUP

The United States Postal Service (USPS) has instituted new optional policies for pickup of packages such as braille and digital books due to staff shortages, turnover, and seasonal workers.

USPS requests that patrons who may need this service use the online form at slnc.info/USPS-ABLS to schedule pickup of library materials. Patrons who do not have computer or internet access may call USPS at 800-275-8777 or reach out to us for assistance.

We would like to emphasize this action is optional, and not all patrons will be required to sched-

ule their library materials to be picked up. If your library materials have always been picked up by the USPS no action may be required on your part. However, if you have had carriers who have not picked up your library materials, this policy can be a remedy.



NEW DESCRIPTIVE MOVIE TITLE LIST

For years, we've been dedicated to providing our patrons with comprehensive Descriptive Video Catalogs. These extensive catalogs have included essential details like movie titles, ratings, release dates, and brief descriptions of the films. We're excited to announce some positive changes in the way we deliver this information. Moving forward, we've decided to refine our catalog to make it even more user-friendly.

What's Changing?

- 1. No More Brief Descriptions:** In response to your feedback, we've decided to omit the brief movie descriptions from our Descriptive Video Catalogs. This streamlines the catalog and makes it easier to navigate.
- 2. Alphabetical Order:** Instead of listing movies by their Movie Disc (MD) numbers, we'll now arrange them alphabetically. This change simplifies the process of finding the movies you want to order. No more flipping through numerous pages!

Where to Find Movie Descriptions?

Don't worry; we haven't left you in the dark. Movie descriptions will still be readily available to you. You can access them through our Online Public Access Catalog, located at ncabls.klas.com. Simply use the "Quick Search" feature to find the descriptions you need.

Additionally, you can also search for movie descriptions on popular platforms like IMDB or Google. Just remember to tread carefully to avoid spoilers!

If you have any questions or would like to learn more about our Descriptive Video Service, please don't hesitate to reach out to the library. We're here to assist you every step of the way.

DOWNLOAD SOMETHING NOBLE

One of the many services we offer our patrons is access to our version of BARD we call NOBLE (North Carolina BARD Local). NOBLE features digital braille books and digital talking books and magazines which are published in North Carolina and produced by our library. While there is no patron application necessary to use NOBLE, all media downloaded from NOBLE can only be played on a digital book player approved by the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled. You may visit NOBLE to see if there is anything you would like to download by going to slnc.info/ABLS-NOBLE.



medicare

MEDICARE INFORMATION IN ACCESSIBLE FORMATS

Medicare provides free auxiliary aids and services, including information in accessible formats like braille, large print, data or audio files, relay services and TTY communications. If you request information in an accessible format, you won't be disadvantaged by any additional time necessary to provide it. This means you'll get extra time to take any action if there's a delay in fulfilling your request.

To request Medicare or Marketplace information in an accessible format you can:

1. Call us

- For Medicare: **1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227)**
- TTY: **1-877-486-2048**

2. Send us a fax: 1-844-530-3676

3. Send us a letter:

**Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
Offices of Hearings and Inquiries (OHI)
7500 Security Boulevard, Mail Stop S1-13-25
Baltimore, MD 21244-1850
Attn: Customer Accessibility Resource Staff**

- Your request should include your name, phone number, type of information you need (if known), and the mailing address where we should send the materials. We may contact you for additional information.
- Note: If you're enrolled in a Medicare Advantage Plan or Medicare drug plan, contact your plan to request its information in an accessible format.
- For Medicaid, contact your State Medicaid office.

LIBRARY CLOSING DATES

Christmas..... December 25-27, 2023

New Year's Day January 1, 2023