



LIBRARY OF
NORTH CAROLINA

ACCESSIBLE BOOKS &
LIBRARY SERVICES

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TAR HEEL TALK



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ADD US TO YOUR CONTACTS



We have received multiple reports recently that our phone calls are showing up as suspected spam on people's cell phones.

To ensure that you will receive our calls, please add us to your contacts! Here are 3 step-by-step guides for adding a number to your contacts.

On Apple iPhone Devices:

- 1. Open the Contacts app.**
- 2. Tap the + (Plus) sign located in the top-right corner.**
- 3. Enter our Name in the First Name, Last Name, or Company fields.**

4. Scroll down to tap 'Add Phone' and type in our phone number, **1-888-388-2460**. You can also scroll down and add our email address in the email field, NCABLS@dncr.nc.gov.

- **Note:** Adding our Email to your contacts helps ensure that our emails do not get sent to your Junk or Spam folders!

5. Tap Done in the top-right corner to save.

On Android Devices:

1. Open your Contacts app (usually identified by a blue or multi-colored icon representing a person).
2. Tap the "+" (Plus) icon, which is typically located in the bottom-right corner.
3. Type in our name in the First Name, Last Name, or Company field.
4. Enter our phone number, **1-888-388-2460**, in the Number field.
5. Tap the More field to add extra info like our email, NCABLS@dncr.nc.gov

- **Note:** Adding our Email to your contacts helps ensure that

our emails do not get sent to your Junk or Spam folders!

6. Tap Save (usually in the top right corner).

Optionally, on any device, you can also add contacts from the Phone app:

- 1. Open the Phone app and tap the Keypad tab at the bottom.**
- 2. Type in the phone number, 1-888-388-2460.**
- 3. A + (Plus) icon or option called 'Create New Contact' should appear. Select that option.**
- 4. The number will automatically populate.**
- 5. Add our name and tap Done to save.**

ART KITS AND SHOWCASE RECAP



Captions | Top-left: ABLS Staff member and patron Tawanda Walters, standing in front of her artwork, NCMA's To Go Art Kit **Top-right:** Attendees of the art show locating their artwork. **Bottom:** Art show attendee posing in front of their adapted version of one of NCMA's To Go Art Kits

This past Spring, The **Library of North Carolina's Accessible Books and Library Services (ABLS)** undertook a pilot project with the **North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA)** to send out accessible art kits to roughly 200 patrons. We collaborated with NCMA to modify one of the NCMA To Go Art Kits to make it more accessible to those with various print disabilities.

The art kit we chose to make accessible was inspired by **Lina Iris Viktor's Constellations IX SE, 2021**. Lina Iris Viktor is an artist who wants us to

rethink ideas we have about symbols. The surface of Constellations IX SE is covered with shapes such as swirls, dots, diamonds, and even lifelike forms. She mixes in marks that might remind people of ancient alphabets, taking inspiration from cuneiform from Mesopotamia, hieroglyphs from Egypt, and Australian Indigenous art. Viktor's dazzling artworks are created by molding resin on a surface, then covering the raised marks with black paint and pure gold. The result is a work of art that reflects light and casts its own shadow.

All patrons who signed up received a kit with a piece of black cardboard, corrugated paper, gold glitter paper, black Wikki Stix, gold paint, and a paintbrush to complete

their own work of art. Once the artwork was completed, patrons had an opportunity to send their completed works back to NCMA to be put on display. On Thursday, July 16th ABLS and NCMA hosted an art show reception at the Museum, with 46 people in attendance, to showcase 28 patron artwork pieces, which are currently on display!

A special thanks to the **North Carolina Museum of Art Foundation** and the **Friends of the North Carolina Accessible Books and Library Services** for financially supporting this project.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Alison has been a dedicated volunteer in the Circulation Department for almost five years.

She assists with labeling and relabeling mailing cartridges for Talking Books, stuffing mailing bags for Large-Print and Braille books and helping with various other tasks as needed. While the work can be repetitive, Alison enjoys the camaraderie with the circulation staff, which keeps things fun. She appreciates that



Alison is pictured at her decorated office

she never knows exactly what to expect each day, allowing her to enjoy the element of surprise.

She always brings her infectious smile and happy

attitude, even in the early hours of the morning. The Circulation team even set up a desk for Alison, adorning it with vibrant flowers and other decorations she finds most meaningful.

Originally from Long Island, New York, Alison moved to North Carolina in 1985 after undergoing her second brain surgery to remove a tumor. Her first brain tumor was removed in 1979 when she was only 11 years old. Following the surgery, she had to live with her sister, who had moved to North Carolina, to relearn “everything from A to Z,” as she put it.

Doctors had informed Alison and her family that she would never lead a normal life and likely wouldn't live past the age of 20. Despite these predictions, she is still here all these years later. However,

because of the surgeries, Alison lost all peripheral vision on her right side. This has made it difficult for her to find work and, as she remarks, a place where she belongs. Because she only has partial vision loss, she initially felt that she didn't fit in with either the blind community or the sighted world. However, after visiting the Library of North Carolina's Accessible Books and Library Services, she realized that this was where she truly belonged and fit in.

Alison discovered volunteering here somewhat by chance after visiting one day, looking for a job. She had been a patron of our Books on Demand service for quite some time but had never visited our location before. Upon her visit, she instantly fell in love with

the place. She described the employees as incredibly kind and remarked that she had, "never heard the words 'Thank You' as much as she has here."

When she is not volunteering, Alison enjoys making handmade Christmas Cards, swimming, and walking the North Carolina Museum of Art's trails since they are accessible to her friend, Rusty, who uses a motorized wheelchair. Alison recommends checking out Ann B. Ross (a local to Hendersonville, North Carolina) and reading any of the books in her Miss Julia cozy mystery series. Alison says she loves "the escape that listening to books provides" and encourages others to use their imagination and get lost in a good book. When asked what she would say to those

considering volunteering at our library, she replied, "Definitely do it! Everyone is so nice and appreciative."

We are deeply grateful for Alison's kindness towards all our staff, her enthusiastic word-of-mouth advocacy for our services, and her unwavering commitment to assisting the circulation department.

COLLECTIONS COMMUNIQUE



Katie's Collections Communique: A Quarterly Collections Update

- In May 2026, we added 46 new DVD titles to the DVS Club Collection. You can access a full listing of titles available by visiting our Online Public Access Catalog. You can also call our reader advisors to learn about the most recent titles added to this collection.
- Two new talking magazines
- began circulation in May 2026; call the library to subscribe to either of these new magazine titles:
- Good Old Days, a bimonthly magazine from Ohio that remembers the best of times. Featuring stories and photos of the good olde days of 1930 through 1960 contributed by readers.
- Disability Issues, a quarterly magazine from Massachusetts that provides

current information about the world of disability, new initiatives, and other helpful resources for members of the disability community.

- If you are a BARD user and no longer need your digital talking book player, we have a Digital Talking Book Machine recycling program. We will take your no-longer-needed player, recondition it, and send it out to another patron who needs it. You can send it back in the box it came in. Please include a note in the box stating that the player is no longer needed. Please also make sure to take out the mailing card on the top of the box, flip the card over, and reinsert it so that our name and address is visible, rather than yours. If you don't have the box that your player came

in, please call us at 1-888-388-2460, and we can send you an empty box. Once your player is boxed up, simply hand the box to your mail carrier or take it to your local post office. No postage is required for sending your player back to us.

FRIENDS CORNER



Dear Friends,

Welcome to summer!

We hope everyone is doing well and staying cool!

The Friends Board would like to thank each of you who voted in our recent election for members to our Board. We have four returning members that include **Brice Smith** as Vice President, **Debbie Meadows** as Secretary, and At Large members for **Chris Flynt** and **Claire Hakin**.

We have two new At Large Board members joining our organization as well. Here's a little information on them:

Ricky Enger grew up in the Texas Panhandle and moved to Charlotte in 1999 after

receiving her Bachelor's degree in Computer Information Systems. Her career has allowed many opportunities to utilize her enthusiasm for technology and her passion for helping people to reach their full potential. Her experience ranges from ensuring websites are accessible for those with disabilities, podcasting on a variety of topics including mainstream and assistive technology, one-on-one training, and creating materials to make technology less intimidating and more approachable. She currently serves as the Director of Practical Help for Hadley, where

she oversees the creation of informational tutorials and community engagement for older adults new to vision loss. She is a member of the visually impaired community. When she's not working, she can be found playing word games or curled up with a good book.

Veronica Puente says “I am the braille teacher at the [North Carolina School for the Blind](#) (GMS). As a member of the visually impaired community, an educator and a current patron of the library for the Blind, I know the power of literacy for all. I am passionate about advancing opportunities for education, employment, and enrichment activities that lead to the overall well-being and happiness of the visually impaired and blind community.

I am bilingual in Spanish and English. During my free time; I like to cook, travel, and read! There are never too many books!”

We welcome the new Board members as well as the returning members. We look forward to another successful year and to continue working with the Library to fulfill our mission that everyone can read.

If you listen to the radio or TV, or read information from social media, usually, every day has a product or an event that is recognized for that day. For example, when I started writing this article, it was National Hotdog Day. Here's two days that I thought you would be interested in learning about pertaining to friends. There

are two Friendship Days-one on July 30, and the other one on August 2. July 30, 2026, is International Friendship Day. According to the United Nations website, “International Friendship Day was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2011 with the idea that friendship between peoples, countries, cultures and individuals can inspire peace efforts and build bridges between communities.” As I read more about International Friendship Day, I also learned that in the US, we recognize National Friendship Day, and this is August 2, 2026. So, there are really two different days to recognize your friends! I realize that you will be reading this after these dates, but it is never too late to recognize your friends! So, take time today to

reach out to your best friends with a call, text or hand-written note. You might also share a meal together or volunteer with an activity. Our friends are part of our everyday story, and without them, we would not be who we are today. Hug a friend today! We, the Friends of the NC Accessible Books and Library Services, thank you for being our Friend, and wish you a happy (though a little belated!) Friendship Day!

If you haven’t checked out the Friends website recently, check us out at friendsncblph.org to learn more about the Friends organization. For example, there are links to learn about the James Benton Braille Writer program and learn more about the Audio Described DVS Movie club. If you are not a Friends member, there is a

link where you can join online and information on how to join us by mail. If you have any questions, please email me at info@fncabls.org.

The Board would like to say thanks again to each of you for renewing your membership with us. Your continued support allows us to provide many programs and services to the blindness community in North Carolina. If you are not a member of the Friends organization, we hope you will consider joining us! You can join us online, or you can join us at one of the upcoming outreach events at the North Carolina Council of the Blind conference, the National Federation of the Blind conference, or the Lions VIP Fishing Tournament. We love talking with each of you in

person at these events. Please visit our table!

So, until next time, keep reading, be a friend, hug a friend, and join the Friends if you are not a member!

Eddie Weaver,
President

FRIENDS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Claire Hakin

Susan Patterson

Ryan Trask

NLS BARD AND AMAZON UPDATE

NLS has updated the BARD login system to offer the option of accessing the BARD website using Amazon credentials.

Logging into BARD with Amazon is optional and only works on the website version of BARD. Amazon credentials will not work with other BARD platforms, like BARD Mobile.

Patrons who wish to log into BARD with their Amazon credentials must first link their BARD login and Amazon accounts. This is a complex process, and patrons may need assistance. Please contact Amazon Support directly for assistance with this process.

Amazon Support Contact Information

Customer Service Phone Number:

1-888-280-4331

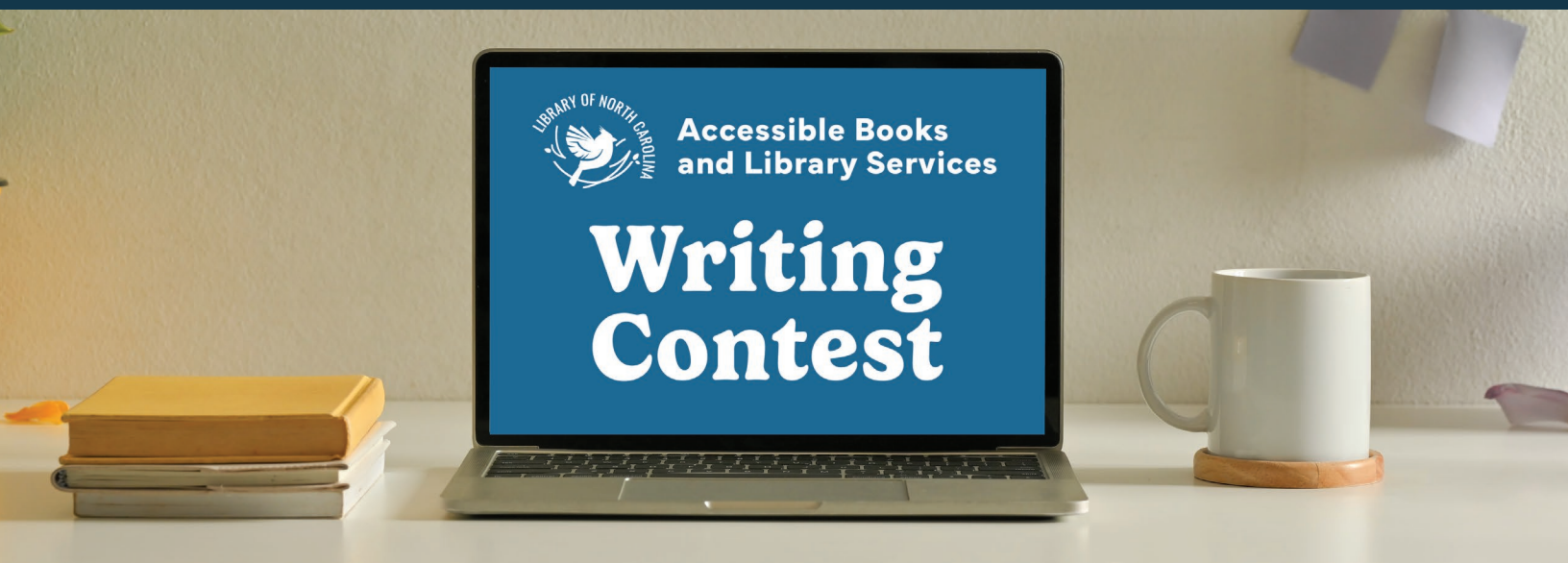
Self Service help link:

amazon.com/gp/help/customer/contact-us

Specific Sign In Help:

amazon.com/gp/help/customer/account-issues/ref=ap_login_with otp_claim_collection

PATRON WRITING CONTEST



That time of year is approaching again! We will be accepting entries for our annual writing contest from **September 1, 2026, through December 31, 2026.**

Contestants' entries can be the following: short stories, novel excerpts, poems, songs, fiction/nonfiction, auto/biographies, or something entirely different; be creative!

All submissions will be judged by the following criteria: Clarity, Spelling, Grammar, and Creativity.

Each contestant's entry has the potential to be added to our collection. If we select your entry to be added to the collection, we will notify you before it is published. Before a contestant's submission is added to the library's collection, it will be subject to proofreading.

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. Your submission will automatically be entered to your age group.

Writing Contest Rules

- Contestants must have a qualifying print disability and be an active patron of the Library of North Carolina's Accessible Books and Library Services.
- Your entry must be your own original work.
- Entries must not use artificial intelligence as a part of their creation.
- Please do not use previously published materials.
- Only one entry per contestant will be allowed.
- There is a 5,000-word count limit for all submissions.
- All writing contest submissions can be in the following formats: Word File, Audio File, Braille File, Mail-In, or Type-written.
- All mail-in entries must be typed, at least 14-point font, double-spaced with numbered pages, and include a cover page with a title and the author's name.
- If your entry is in Braille, an additional translated Word file will be required.
- If your entry is in an audio format, please include a transcript as a Word file.
- If your entry contains images, please include alternate text.

- If your submission is in a different language, an English translation will be required.

[Submit your digital writing contest entry using this form.](#)

Mail-In entries can be sent to the following address:

ATTN: Writing Contest
1841 Capital Blvd
Raleigh, NC 27635

Prizes are provided by the Friends of North Carolina Accessible Books and Library Services.

The following prizes will be available to each age group:

- 1st Place - Submission will be added to the library's collection and made available for download. In addition, the contestant will receive a certificate and the

first-place prize.

- 2nd Place - Submission will be added to the library's collection and made available for download. In addition, the contestant will receive a certificate and the second-place prize.
- 3rd Place - Submission will be added to the library's collection and made available for download. In addition, the contestant will receive a certificate and the third-place prize.
- Honorable Mentions - Submission will be added to the library's collection and made available for download. In addition, the contestant will receive a certificate.

All other contestants will receive a certificate for their entry.

Recordings will be available on BARD, on cartridge, and can be downloaded or requested through the catalog.

Visit the ABLS Writing Contest Page: slnc.info/WC26

Submit your entry:

slnc.info/WC26submit

Access Resources for writing:

slnc.info/WC26-resources

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Internet Catalog, Ordering Site: ncabls.klas.com

STAFF AND JOB FEATURE

Our Patron Processing department manages the records of our over 10,000 library patrons across the state. When we receive new patron applications, this department inputs the information into our library management system (LMS) to ensure that patrons have access to our various library services.

When a patron discontinues service for any reason, Patron Processing will also update their status in our records. Recently, this department completed a massive project of digitizing all of our patron records. Additionally, this department also manages the

front desk, where they greet and assist all incoming visitors and support the walk-in, self-service aspect of our library.

This past May, the Patron Processing department gained a new team member as its supervisor: **Sonya Williams!** Sonya initially joined the ABLS library as a Circulation Assistant in 2025, helping to keep the flow of our talking book, large print, and braille media materials from our shelves into our patrons' mailboxes and returning items to the shelves.

Prior to joining ABLS, Sonya had over 11 years of library experience, including serving as Library Assistant at

Hillsborough Public Library and as Reference Assistant at Chatham Community Library. You can check out Sonya's full staff feature in the Tar Heel Talk Issue Number 178 – Winter 2025. Here are some of Sonya's answers about her new position:

Q: To you, what is your new role in Patron Processing all about?

A: I'm an artist, and I tend to think creatively like an artist even when I'm working at the library. Standard libraries (public, academic) have physical shelves, but our library operates on a sort of custom curation. My team and I are the first point of contact for new applications. Ensuring eligibility is verified quickly and compassionately means

a person losing their sight or living with a physical disability doesn't have to wait a day longer than necessary to regain their love of reading.

Q: What are your goals with this department?

A: I imagine the moment someone submits an application to our blind and disabled library, the clock starts. They are often eagerly waiting to regain their connection to books. For some, it is likely their only escape from what they deal with daily in their lives.

I feel the overall goal for our department is to streamline the application review, certification, and initial equipment assignment processes to get new patrons registered and

their first "welcome pack" (audio player, audio books, physical books, etc.) shipped out as quickly as possible. The Patron Processing team already works very hard to be efficient in getting requests and applications handled efficiently.

Q: Do you have a message for our patrons?

A: Our team in Patron Processing is so incredibly grateful for the opportunity to bring stories, voices, and ideas directly to you. Whether you are opening a newly arrived braille or large print book, listening to an audio cartridge on your digital player, or downloading a book from your favorite author on the BARD app, we want you to know bringing you joy and comfort makes us feel great about the services we

provide. We love being a part of your learning, dreaming, and exploring, and if there is ever anything we can do to make your reading experience smoother, more comfortable, or more tailored to your needs and preferences, please never hesitate to reach out to us.

Thank you for allowing us to be part of your daily life, and for sharing your love of reading with us. Knowing we're making a difference in the lives of others makes what we do much more than a job—it gives everything we do a real sense of purpose.

Another new, yet familiar, face has joined us in the Patron Processing department as well: **Avery Houck!** Avery is our newest Patron Processing Assistant, helping to manage



**Patron Processing
Assistant Avery Houck**

our patron database with tasks such as updating phone number changes and mailing out welcome letters to new patrons. You also might meet Avery as one of the smiling faces at our reception desk when you come to visit!

Here is a Q&A to help you get to know Avery:

Q: What led you to join this library team?

A: I was led to join this team for

a variety of reasons! My biggest reason is that my older brother, Spencer, is blind and has been a patron and volunteer at this library for many years. It was amazing to hear about the services they provided and to see their impact directly. Additionally, I studied English literature in college, and so working in a library has always been a dream of mine.

Q: What do you enjoy most about working here?

A: I enjoy most getting to see the impact that the services provided here have on our patrons. It is so rewarding to hear feedback about how much patrons have enjoyed being able to read accessible books, and it is amazing knowing that I can help be a part of something that can bring enjoyment and

entertainment to people's everyday lives.

Q: Who is your favorite author and why?

A: My favorite author is Sarah J. Maas. I've been reading her books since I was about 14 or 15, and I think the strong female protagonists in her books really helped shape who I was as I was growing up.

Q: If you could only read one book for the rest of your life, what would you choose and why?

A: If I had to pick one book, I would pick *Queen of Shadows* from the Throne of Glass series by Sarah J. Maas. I have read that series at least 7 times, and each time *Queen of Shadows* stands strong as my favorite. It is so entertaining and action-

packed, and really when the story begins to get to the depths of the plot.

Q: Do you have a favorite quote or work? Why is it your favorite?

A: One of my favorite quotes is by Shirley Jackson from her novel *The Haunting of Hill House*. The book is from the point of view of a character named Eleanor who takes a leap of faith and leaves behind everything she knew to go to Hill House, and it reads, "I would never have suspected it of myself, she thought, laughing still; everything is different, I am a new person, very far from home." I read that book on my flight as I was leaving the country for the first time in my life to go live abroad for 4 months, and it felt so apt

to my situation. I like to think the quote represents who we are as readers as well – each new book helps us travel to new places and sometimes can change us into new people.

Q: Can you share a fun or interesting fact about yourself?

A: A fun fact about me is that I love collecting hobbies, especially if it's something that keeps my hands busy. I play piano, have taught myself guitar, and have recently picked up about 3 new craft hobbies!

ACCESSIBLE VOTING



North Carolina visually impaired voters can request and vote using an absentee ballot online. This article aims to publicize the online accessible absentee ballot and share information on how to take advantage of this option.

A thorough overview of the process for voting using the accessible ballot can be found on the NC State Board of Elections website at slnc.info/ABLS-VOTE. The “How

It Works” section will walk you through the process of requesting, accessing, marking, and returning the accessible absentee ballot.

The NC State Board of Elections webpages and forms are all compatible with screen readers and allow for entering signatures digitally. As with anyone voting absentee, you must have two witnesses that sign (or type) attesting that they have witnessed you

marking your ballot and verify your identity. The witnesses are not to observe how you vote.

You can practice locating, marking, and returning a demo ballot at any time through the N.C. Absentee Demo Ballot Portal at slnc.info/BDEMO.

The deadline to complete and submit the accessible ballot online is 7:30 p.m. on Election Day. The next statewide general election is the midterm election on November 3rd, 2026.

Additional information about the voting options for voters with disabilities, including help for those in care facilities, curbside voting, requesting ballots in alternative formats like large print, etc. can be found on the NC State Board of Elections website at slnc.info/NCBSE.

If you are blind or visually impaired and need assistance with any aspect of voting, please first contact your county board of elections. If you are not familiar with your county's board of election, you may find them using vt.ncsbe.gov/BOEInfo.

You may also contact the ADA Coordinator at:

Email:

ADACoordinator@ncsbe.gov

Phone:

(919) 805-1302

Address:

6400 Mail Service Center,
Raleigh, NC 27699-6400