

Audio-Reader dedicates new home

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Kansas University's reading service for blind people and those with reading disabilities dedicated its new home Friday to two benefactors who spent much of their lives helping out those less fortunate than themselves.

Audio-Reader Network's new headquarters, a renovated fraternity house at 1120 W. 11th, was officially named the Baehr Audio-Reader Center in honor of Louis W. and Dolpha Baehr, the late Paola couple whose charitable foundation trust gave the network \$150,000 to renovate the building.

The dedication ceremony was held in a big tent in the center's backyard that was filled with members of the Baehr foundation and KU officials, Audio-Reader staff and volunteers, some listeners and other contributors.

W.C. Hartley, a foundation trustee, told the audience the trustees found giving KU the

money an "easy" decision because they recognized the "potential and opportunity to serve" people that Audio-Reader provides.

Such service, Hartley said, is in keeping with the way the Baehrs lived their lives and set up their foundation.

DOLPHA BAEHR had been blind for the last 50 years of her life, and she and her husband were well known for their generosity to others, though they themselves led simple, frugal lives, he said.

Hartley recalled how Louis Baehr once told the superintendent of Paola schools, "Whatever child get them for them and send the bill to me."

With their contribution, the foundation will be helping provide Audio-Reader's nearly 5,000 listeners across the state with current newspapers, books, magazines and short stories around the clock.

The service, which began

operating on Oct. 11, 1971, uses FM radio subcarriers to carry its signal, with listeners using special radio receivers to get the signal.

Judith Ramaley, KU's executive vice chancellor, noted that Audio-Reader's was the second such reading service established in the United States and the first to be located on a college campus.

"NINETY PERCENT of our listeners are blind, 10 percent are physically disabled or dyslexic or have some other print handicap, and over half of them are 65 or older or retired," she said. "And our voice is an important voice for them."

Chancellor Gene Budig agreed, thanked the foundation and other benefactors for their support of Audio-Reader, and praised the dedication, energy and time the Audio-Reader staff and its more than 150 volunteers put into making it work.

He also paid special tribute to Petey Cerf, the Lawrence woman

who was a key sponsor of Audio-Reader and provided its impetus, and Rosie Hurwitz, who directed the center for 13 years and raised much of the more than \$300,000 needed for the renovation.

"IT IS SAID that success has many parents, and failure is an orphan," Budig said. "In the case of Audio-Reader, that saying is true. From the very beginning with individuals like Petey Cerf and Rosie Hurwitz, to the present, under the direction of Dave Andrews, Audio-Reader has been a success."

One of those Audio-Reader "parents" is Ralph Turner. A longtime volunteer and current chairman of Audio-Reader's advisory committee, Turner spoke last at the dedication ceremony.

"I have volunteered for over 15 years and it is difficult for me to put into words what the service has come to mean to me, and what it's meant over the years. . . . We have something truly unique and special here at the University of Kansas."

