

Airwaves

For Friends and Supporters of Audio-Reader

FALL 2024



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Feloniz "Felly" Lovato-Winston Director Audio-Reader & Kansas Public Radio



Feloniz Lovato-Winston and Listener/2024
Volunteer Banquet Speaker Shirley Fudge

Thank you for everything you do for Audio-Reader! If you're receiving this newsletter, you support Audio-Reader financially, volunteer your time (often both), or maybe you're part of an organization we partner with. We appreciate you and never take your generosity and help for granted.

The printed word is a huge part of daily life, and it's easy to take it for granted, but our listeners don't have that privilege. They depend on us for access to store ads, their daily horoscope, or *On-Line (The Computer Show)* because it helps them keep up with technology. One listener told us he likes to listen on his phone so he can do chores while listening. Another one said she has Multiple Sclerosis and looks forward to our programs every day; she used to be an "avid reader" and has now transitioned to "avid listener."

I'm an avid reader now, and I love visiting our public library and checking out several books at a time. It's pretty easy for me – I can drive myself there anytime, and the printed word is accessible to me. It's hard for me to imagine what it would be like to lose that accessibility, and I'm so glad that Audio-Reader is here so those we serve can enjoy such a wide variety of programming and feel cared for and valued by our dedicated volunteers.

Because we depend on individuals and sponsors for all of our operating budget, we wouldn't be around without your help. The transition from "avid reader" to "avid listener" isn't easy, but a community of donors, volunteers, and dedicated staff goes a long way in easing that transition. I hope you take pride in everything Audio-Reader is able to do. Thank you very much!

Feloniz Lovato-Winston



AUDIO-READER
SHARING THE GIFT OF SIGHT THROUGH SOUND



Cover Photo: Kris Shields, Kimberly Morrow, Beverley Wilson, Melinda Kearney, Beth McKenzie, Nick Carswell at the 2024 Volunteer Appreciation Banquet.
Photo Credit Meredith Johanning

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Airwaves

Fall 2024

Airwaves is a newsletter published for supporters of Audio-Reader.

Beth McKenzie
Meredith Johanning
Editors

Martha Kehr
Newsletter Design/Layout

Audio-Reader's Misson

The Audio-Reader Network fosters independence by providing access to information and the arts for people who have difficulty reading standard print due to vision loss, physical or learning disability, mobility challenges, and age.

Together, we strive to provide
Access
Empowerment
Self-Sufficiency

*Audio version available on
reader.ku.edu
Printed and e-newsletter

Audio-Reader Staff

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Nick Carswell	Program Manager
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DEVELOPMENT CORNER

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." -Margaret Mead

Audio-Reader has been funded entirely through private donations and small foundation grants since FY21, and we truly could not do it without you. **YOUR** support makes a huge difference in the lives of our listeners, allowing us to continue providing 24/7 services to thousands of individuals across Kansas, western Missouri, and beyond. Thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to sharing the gift of sight through sound.



Have you Heard?

A-R Program Manager **Nick Carswell** is hosting a new show called **105 Live** on Kansas Public Radio, showcasing new and noteworthy music from all 105 counties in Kansas! Each show includes an in-studio session recorded in KPR's Live Performance Studio, plus interviews, live tracks, artist debuts, and song premieres.

Listen Saturday evenings at 5pm.

Have you Considered Joining a Lions Club?

For over 100 years, Lions Clubs International have served with uncommon kindness, putting the needs of our neighbors, our communities, and our world first. Lions' global causes are Vision, Childhood Cancer, Hunger, Diabetes, Environment, Humanitarian, and Disaster Relief. Each local club has a variety of service and social projects to meet the needs of each community.

In Lawrence, our projects include vision screenings, donating exams and glasses to those who can't afford them, adopting children with cancer and their siblings for the holidays, recycling plastic bags into park benches, multiple food and supply drives for local schools and pantries, and more. We're a force for good, and we're currently recruiting new members!

Another great reason to join is because Lions Clubs across Kansas and western Missouri are huge supporters of Audio-Reader. Check out lionsclubs.org or talk to any Audio-Reader staff for more information.



ADVISORY BOARD UPDATES

The Audio-Reader Advisory Board is a dedicated group of volunteers who serve our mission by providing advice and guidance to help us grow and achieve our goals. They offer strategic advice, facilitate partnerships, act as a sounding board, fill knowledge gaps, and help as advocates and ambassadors in communities we serve. We're lucky to have an active committee whose members also help in a variety of ways: volunteering as readers, helping with fundraisers, serving as outreach ambassadors, donating generously, and more.

Our current Advisory Board members are: Randy Austin (Chair), Jill Craft, William Hawkins, Cal Karlin, Melinda Kearney, Tom Kearney, Paul Klepper, Kimberly Morrow, Cindy Penzler, Mark Praeger, Lynn Segebrecht, Bobbi Washechek, Beverley Wilson, and KU Endowment Liaison Kerry Glasgow.

We're very grateful for the time and commitment each member has given to Audio-Reader; thank you all for all you do!

GOLF CLASSIC

Audio-Reader 14th Annual Golf Classic

The 2024 Golf Classic was one of our best tournaments ever – it was a great day on the green to raise over \$39,000 for Audio-Reader! Thank you to all of our sponsors, players, volunteers, and planning committee for making it such a successful fundraiser and to KU Athletics coaches Lance Leipold and Lindsay Kuhle for supporting our mission of sharing the gift of sight through sound.



Randy Austin, Coach Leipold, Mark Rezac, Madison Cox, Brandon Cox (Fairlawn Plaza/KS Commercial Real Estate)

Audio-Reader Golf Classic
2024

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Erik Keizer, Doug Stephens, Clair Keizer, and Bryan Maynard

Meredith Johanning, Steve Kincaid, Beth McKenzie, KU Head Football Coach Lance Leipold, Feloniz Lovato-Winston, and KU Women's Golf Head Coach Lindsay Kuhle

AUDIO SALES

September Audio Sale: A Resounding Success

Dave Ranney (LPL), Douglas May, Ed Hawkins, Jim Carnell, Craig Case, and Gordon Fitch

We are thrilled to announce the tremendous success of Audio-Reader's recent Audio Sale which raised over **\$19,000!**

With more than **100 pieces of vintage and modern audio equipment**, **1,000 vinyl records**, and a fantastic assortment of **musical instruments** and **cassette tapes**, the event drew hundreds of enthusiastic shoppers throughout the day, making it a great community event.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to our dedicated volunteers whose hard work made this event possible. Special recognition is due to Ed Hawkins, Douglas May, Gordon Fitch and Dave Dunford for their countless hours spent fixing, cleaning, and pricing the

equipment. We also extend our gratitude to Wake Mitchell for expertly sorting and pricing the vinyl records and cassette tapes.

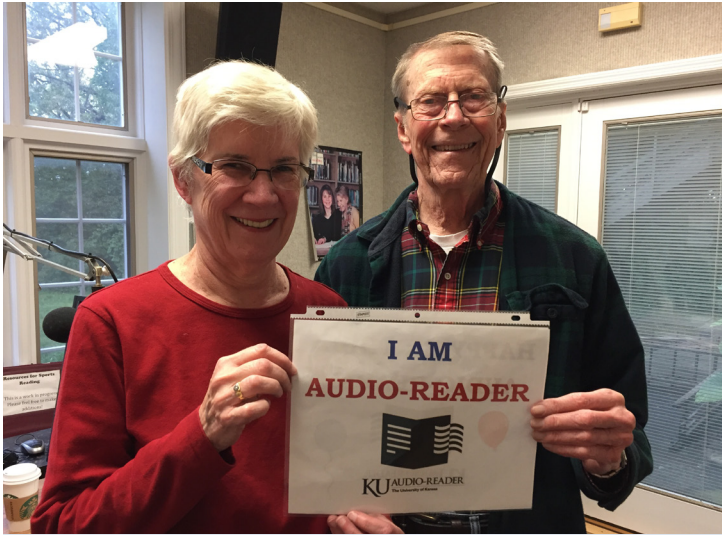
We'd like to give a special thanks to the Lawrence Public Library and the Friends of the LPL for their partnership and for providing such a great space for this event. We couldn't have done it without you!

This successful sale not only helps support our mission but also fosters a vibrant community of music lovers. We look forward to seeing you at our future events! Thank you for your continued support!

Sale Volunteers and AR Staff in front of the Audio-Reader building

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A Legacy of Service: Elinor Schroeder's 25 Years with Audio-Reader



Elinor pictured with AR Volunteer Emeritus Harlan Roedel. Elinor and Harlan read the 'Breakfast Table Times' broadcast together for many years.

This past spring, Elinor Schroeder celebrated an incredible milestone: 25 years as a volunteer with Audio-Reader. Her journey with Audio-Reader is a story of dedication, personal connection, and a deep commitment to giving back.

Elinor first learned about Audio-Reader while teaching at the KU School of Law, a role she held for an impressive 40 years. However, during those early years, her busy schedule and commute from Kansas City made it difficult to find time to volunteer. But in 1998, when she moved to Lawrence, one of her first priorities was to audition to become an Audio-Reader volunteer.

For Elinor, volunteering for Audio-Reader wasn't just about giving back to her community - it was personal. "My father lost almost all of his vision later in life, initially due to glaucoma and later macular degeneration," she shares. "He had some vision, but it was very limited. He was always an avid reader and missed that part of his life dearly."

Her father's church stepped in to help with volunteers reading to him five days a week - books, newspapers, magazines, and the Bible. This act of kindness lasted for the final 10 years of his life, enhancing his quality of life and helping him stay connected to the world around him. "That made such a difference for him," Elinor recalls.

In honor of her father, Elinor began volunteering with Audio-Reader as a way to "pay it forward." She knows firsthand the impact that reading and access to information can have on someone's life, especially for those with visual impairments. "Audio-Reader is a terrific service for people who are print disabled. It's available any time of day and accessible in so many different ways."

After 25 years, Elinor is still as passionate about her work as when she first began. "If you want to find an organization where you can have an immediate impact, this is one of them," she says. "It's a good service, and it's local. I'm happy I can contribute."

Elinor Schroeder's two and a half decades of volunteer work have not only honored her father's memory but also made a lasting difference in the lives of countless individuals. Her story reminds us of the profound effect that small acts of service can have, and the legacy they leave behind.

New Listener Show



Long time listener **Duyahn Walker** is excited to host a new music program on Audio-Reader's Kansas City Stream.

The *Musical Meyhem* Show with DJ Maurice

Martin (Duyahn's pseudonym) will air 9pm-11pm on Friday nights. It is available for our listeners through the KC Stream on closed circuit radios, Amazon Alexa, or our additional digital listening platforms like audioreader.net.

The new program is a fun and relaxing weekly selection of music from a wide variety of genres, designed to bring an enjoyable musical end to the broadcast week. The show is produced with support from online radio station Z103.com where DJ Maurice Martin also produces a weekly music show.

YOUR IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

Listener Stories about Audio Description



Beth McKenzie, Trish Dowd Kelne, Lynda Anders, Erik Kaiel, and Martha Kehr at the Lied Center *Tetris* event (April 2024)

For many years, Audio-Reader has provided live audio description at theaters and live performances across the Kansas City, Lawrence, and Topeka region. For example, our highly-trained describers are available for at least

one performance during Theatre Lawrence's main season and KC Starlight's Summer Broadway series each year. We send volunteers to the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, KC Rep Theatre, and the Lied Center by request. We have also been a part of the annual Free State Film Festival and more recently added connections to The Coterie Theatre at Crown Center and the Flint Hills Shakespeare Festival.

Listeners across the metro area rely on this service being available when they buy their tickets. Here are some of those listeners' stories.

Bobby Wettengel works as a Rehab Instructor with the Missouri Department of Rehabilitation Services for the Blind. Through his professional role and as a person with low vision himself, he manages multiple low vision support groups across the KC area.

"Thank you for the tickets to "Come From Away" at Starlight. I really enjoyed the play and the audio description. This is such a nice service that is provided for the visually impaired to enjoy the play. The volunteers were great at Starlight from the very beginning. They were very friendly and eager to assist me. The describer gave good insight on things I would not have known such as placement of chairs on the stage to simulate an airplane. Her description assisted me draw a visual picture in my mind to enjoy the play even more."

Kirby Hough works as a motivational speaker and was diagnosed with low vision at an early age.

"I recently attended a *Tetris* performance where Audio Reader volunteers provided live descriptions

for blind and low-vision attendees like myself, and I was truly impressed by the experience. Although I couldn't see what was happening on stage, the volunteer's detailed and vivid descriptions made the performance come alive. They captured not just the actions but also the emotions and energy of the performance, allowing me to fully engage with the show. The professionalism and enthusiasm of the Audio-Reader team made the event a memorable experience. I highly recommend Audio-Reader for anyone looking to stay connected to the world of performance art!"

Halley Korff is a staff member at The Whole Person in Kansas City, a KC chapter member of Foundation Fighting Blindness, and an accessibility advocate.

"Before I attended *Tetris*, I was a bit hesitant as I have never felt connected to any stage shows due to my vision impairment. I was apprehensive as I thought I could not experience the same thing as my sighted friends. To my absolute surprise, Audio-Reader provided their amazing service of describing what was taking place on stage. This was a particularly difficult show to describe as the performers were moving in so many directions quickly. This was the most fun I have had at a performance!"

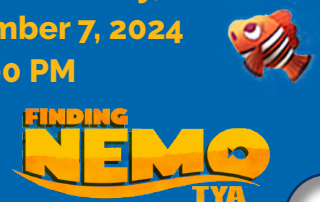
"My mom and I often talk about the difficulties of attending performances as there is very little option for accessibilities in this setting. Attending this show with friends who are sighted and visual-impaired helped to provide me with a sense of increased independence that I could never have imagined. I am so thankful for Audio-Reader and the service they provide. I am so excited about this program that I cannot help but share this service with many organizations. I look forward to continual connections with and through Audio-Reader!"

JOIN US!

AUDIO DESCRIPTION RECEPTION
The Coterie Theatre at Crown Center
2450 Grand Ave, Kansas City, MO
Saturday, December 7, 2024

1:00 - 3:00 PM

**Includes reception,
theater tour, and
tickets to the show**





AUDIO DESCRIPTION EVENTS

Audio description is a narration of visual elements in a video or multimedia product to provide context and clarity. It's often used in television programs and movies, and it is a way to make content more accessible to people who are blind or visually impaired. Thanks to **your** support, Audio-Reader was able to provide audio description at the following events last year:

Downtown Lawrence Outdoor Sculpture Exhibition - Watkins Museum Audio Tour - Lied Center Dance Event Tetris - Theatre Lawrence 2023-24 Season: Crowns, A Christmas Story, Dead Man's Cell Phone, A Murder is Announced, I Hate Hamlet, and Fiddler on the Roof - Starlight Summer Broadway Series: The Cher Show, STOMP, Disney's The Little Mermaid, Shrek: The Musical, Come From Away, West Side Story, and Peter Pan - Kauffmann Center for the Performing Arts: Johnny Cash: The Official Concert Experience and Lyric Opera Roméo et Juliette - Coterie Theatre at Crown Center: Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, and Horse Power - Free State Festival Silent Film: Daughter of Dawn - Flint Hills Shakespeare Festival: Much Ado About Nothing

WHY I VOLUNTEER

Volunteer Stories

Audio Description aims to bring more meaning and enjoyment to entertainment, cultural, and educational experiences for blind and visually impaired people. Learn why two of Audio-Reader's talented audio describers take on this challenging task time and time again.



Patricia Hamarstrom Williams

Patricia Hamarstrom Williams said that caring about the blind began for her when she was researching her family tree and discovered her mother's older cousin born in 1899 in Leavenworth, Kansas. Emil Wussow, Jr. was premature, blind, and sickly.

Through her research, Patricia came to the conclusion that babies born at the turn of the century could either be cared for by family, or they would be warehoused in an asylum. Fast forward to 1917 and a short news article titled "Love is Blind," Emil and a classmate at the KS School for the Blind had run away to the Wyandotte County, KS, courthouse where they married, contrary to the wishes of family and community.

"I watched and read accounts of Emil and his young bride, Hope, battling for independence and facing the ensuing tragedies of life during a time when disability rights were non-existent.

"Reading and describing for the blind is my personal

way of carrying a protest sign into each and every recording studio or performance venue. It is to honor their struggle and give others the opportunities that they were denied. ***Equal rights are human rights.***"

Dave Corely started volunteering at Audio-Reader in the summer of 2012. He began in telephone reader, which he still does today, then regular live studio reads, then to also recording from home.

"In late 2014, I was asked if I'd like to do the description service. It sounded intriguing and challenging. My first description event was at Starlight in the summer of 2015. It is

quite fun and challenging to develop a description that is accurate, concise, colorful, and in sync with the action without overriding or squelching those on stage. Those alone make it fulfilling.

"But there is a deeper, more altruistic and selfless reason. In the early '60s, I started listening to the live radio Saturday matinee broadcasts of the Metropolitan Opera from New York. The singing and orchestra were great, but I would have liked to know what was happening on stage during those broadcasts. Now, I get to provide for the patron what I wanted during the radio broadcasts and, hopefully, give them more information, understanding, and enjoyment. I have the opportunity, the responsibility, to let listeners know what is going on to their benefit."



Dave Corley at KC Starlight

GROWING LISTENER BASE



Our services and listener base continue to grow thanks to the ongoing support of friends and donors like you, our talented pool of volunteers, and the efforts of Audio-Reader staff. For example, Martha Kehr, Outreach Coordinator (pictured left), has traveled across Kansas and Missouri over the last year presenting to Lions and Rotary Clubs, low vision support groups, and care giver staff meetings. She promotes our programming at senior resource fairs, eye doctor conferences, and to libraries and assisted living facilities - all with the goal of spreading knowledge about how Audio-Reader is sharing the gift of sight through sound and supporting the well-being and independence of our listeners.

By The Numbers

These numbers reflect usage between
July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024



Amazon Alexa devices

431 new Alexa Skill activations with
3,600+ sessions



Website Visits

Audioreader.net is a big hit with
listeners - **4,100+** listens per month



Lions Telephone Reader

4,500+ Telephone Reader
listens averaging **22 mins** a call



Closed-Circuit Radio

15 new radios and **30** new Echo
Dots issued to new listeners



IAAIS RECOGNITION

Audio-Reader was recognized by the International Association of Audio Information Services (IAAIS) for multiple Excellence in Programming awards in 2024.

An audio production of the City of Lawrence's Outdoor Downtown Sculpture Exhibition brochure won Program of the Year Award in the Consumer Information category, and two other Audio-Reader programs received honorable mentions.

In the Consumer Information category, volunteer



Tracy Harrison voiced the now award-winning audio tour of the outdoor sculpture exhibit. Harrison has been an Audio-Reader volunteer since 2015 and

regularly reads the Reader's Digest and Saturday Post programs. The annual Outdoor Downtown Sculpture Exhibition was founded by Jim Patti in 1987 and is sponsored by the Lawrence Cultural Arts Commission.

Steve Grimm also started volunteering for Audio-Reader in 2015 and voiced a production promoting Audio-Reader's audio description events that was recognized in the Now Hear This category.

Originally an Audio-Reader volunteer since 2018, **Martha Kehr** became outreach coordinator in 2023 and hosts the "Good Works in the Heartland" podcast for Audio-Reader. The podcast's November 2023 Medicare Open Enrollment episode with Lori Phillips from the Senior Resource Center for Douglas County was awarded an honorable mention in the Interview category. **Nick Carswell**, Audio-Reader Program Manager, engineered and produced all of these award-winning programs.



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Thank you to all donors who support our mission and help share the gift of sight through sound! This list reflects donations received between July 1, 2023-June 30-2024.

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