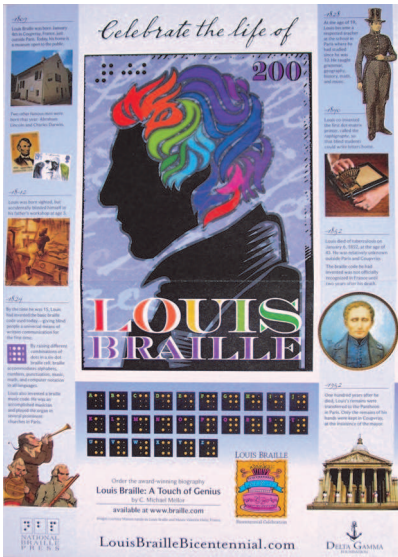


Happy Birthday Louis Braille



On December 4, 2008 faculty, staff, and graduate students of the WMU Blindness and Low Vision Studies Department (BLVS) hosted a celebration of Louis Braille's 200th birthday from 3 to 6 p.m. on the 4th floor of the College of Health and Human Services building on the WMU campus.

The free, public education event marked the importance of Louis Braille's contribution to literacy for people who cannot see to read print. Guests experienced Braille through 16 learning stations that included Braille birthday cake, an introduction to Braille code, an opportunity to have one's name written in Braille, secret Braille messages to decipher, a Braille twister game, a demonstration of Braille technology and products, and a "Careers in Blindness and Low Vision" station.

There were readings from Braille and Braille/print combination books. Also, representatives of the Portage Lion's Club presented information about the club and its new Braille menu project for Greater Kalamazoo area restaurants. Through the project, restaurant owners are invited to e-mail their interest to BRILLEMENU@SBCGLOBAL.NET. The Lion's Club will work with the Michigan Braille Transcribing Fund to transcribe menus in Braille.

Braille was born on January 4, 1809 and devised a tactual system of reading books and music that has been shown to be the most effective way to read and write for people who are blind. Louis Braille's system, based on a six-dot Braille cell, is the standard throughout the world.

Happy 200th Birthday, Louis Braille Photo Gallery



Left: Students **Margaret Hill** and **Esteban Zuniga** explain the "Dance Revolution Twister Game" to Michigan Commission Training Center for the Blind teacher **Barb Wile** (center).



Above: On the left, WMU faculty member and event organizer **Sue Ponchillia** chats with Michigan Commission Training Center for the Blind teacher **Betty Lujan-Roberts** (R) and **Art Roberts**.



Above: **Jeanne Church** (R) assists **Shaleah**, who is just beginning to learn Braille. Jeanne is retired from her position as Teacher Consultant for the Visually Impaired with the Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Center. She continues her work as a volunteer.

Gallery continues on next page



Lucy Edmonds (center), former WMU student, reads from a Harry Potter book in Braille.



Dyana (right) teaches her sighted friend **Cullen** to read Braille.



Student **Tieu Kohler** reads at station 12, the Braille Children's Books Reading Station.



Left to right, **Bill and Jeannette Davis, Tanya Greffe** and Tanya's daughters represent the Portage Lions Club and its Braille menu project.



Left to right, students **Ben Smith, Kristen Oplinger, Alexis Read** and **Moriam Abiolu** manage the Name Braille Station



Braille teacher **Shig Toda** demonstrates a Braille writing tool for student **Leah Williams**.



Moriam Abiolu writes a name in Braille.