

SPRING 2019

Thrive

HADLEY INSTITUTE FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

On the Cover:
Hadley's 2018
Student of the Year,
Ali Benmerzouga

What is Hadley 2.0?

meet our 2018
student award winners

4 Regaining Independence



5 Finding Value

A Journey to Inspiration 6



Building a Safe Home and a Better Life 7

8 Supporting a Blind Child through Braille

9 Learning for Success



10 Expanding Horizons

11 What is Hadley 2.0?

Do you have a Donor Advised Fund? If so, think of Hadley!

A Donor Advised Fund (DAF) is an efficient and flexible way to give to Hadley.

DAFs are increasingly popular because they streamline the giving process, provide an immediate tax deduction, and allow for tax-free growth of overall charitable investments—while preserving donors' influence over how these funds are allocated.

Hadley is an approved and eligible beneficiary of these charitable funds. Please consider talking to your DAF sponsorship organization to make sure Hadley is on your giving list.

For more information, contact Brooke Voss at 847.784.2774 or Brooke@hadley.edu.

Use a QR Code to Hear Thrive's Learner Stories

Step One: Open the camera app on your iPhone or iPad.

Step Two: Hold the device's camera up to the QR code.

Step Three: No need to hit the shutter button, your iOS device will automatically recognize the QR code and provide you with an on-screen notification. (Make sure you have a mobile signal or you're connected to Wi-Fi.)

Step Four: Tap the notification to be taken to the destination of the QR code.





From the President...

to Hadley to build a safer and better life for her and her daughter—both of whom are visually impaired.

Take a few minutes to meet these, and our other amazing Student Award recipients who have triumphed over significant obstacles. We are thrilled these learners turned to Hadley—and grateful for your help, which allows us to be there for them.

As Hadley approaches its centennial, it is an ideal opportunity to recognize our past accomplishments and those of our learners. We will be celebrating this significant milestone throughout the year; be on the lookout for events commemorating this landmark occasion.

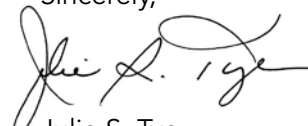
Of course, we are not just celebrating the past, we are embracing the future. This includes our modernized headquarters. In fact, as you are reading this, we are very likely unpacking boxes in our renovated offices. The need for mechanical and safety updates prompted a unique opportunity to make other improvements to the building. Our team is excited about this transformation—an ideal combination of form and function—that will increase collaboration, inspire creativity,

improve efficiency, enable technology, and empower our visually impaired staff and visitors. We invite you to join us for an Open House in the coming months to experience the space for yourself. These dates will be announced soon. Or, if you can't join us in person, visit our Hadley landing page for photos at hadley.edu/renovate.

You may have heard about Hadley 2.0, our transformed approach to educational programming. While the full Hadley 2.0 will not launch until January 2020, we are making exciting progress and have updates to share. Learn more and get a glimpse into what the future holds on page 11.

Bringing together Hadley's esteemed 99-year history with new technological opportunities, we can deliver the most impactful learning experiences to the blind and visually impaired. Your support ensures these individuals overcome barriers, obtain essential knowledge and develop critical skills so they can thrive. Thank you for supporting their incredible journeys.

Sincerely,



Julie S. Tye

It is my pleasure to invite you to meet Hadley's 2018 Student Award Winners. These individuals personify determination and spirit, and each of their inspiring stories is a testament to how your support helps visually impaired individuals unlock their potential to thrive in their work, home and community.

Among these honorees is Clarice Cocco, our Braille Student of the Year, who lost her sight to glaucoma and macular degeneration, and regained her independence when she learned braille at the age of 85. Naoko Zoerlein, the recipient of our Family Education Award, also learned braille through Hadley, but as a sighted learner to support her young daughter who was blinded by a brain tumor. Another dedicated mother, Michele Clock, recipient of the Challenge of Living Award, turned

our mission Hadley Institute for the Blind and Visually Impaired creates personalized learning opportunities that empower people to thrive—at home, at work and in their communities.

Meet Hadley's 2018 Student Award Winners

Since 1959, the Edwin J. Brach and Hazel and Bertram Brodie Awards have recognized Hadley's highest achieving students—individuals whose hard work, determination and spirit serve as an inspiration to others.

For the first time in many years, we were fortunate to have all of our honorees in attendance at the award ceremony, held near Hadley's Winnetka, IL headquarters. This was an exceptional opportunity for many of Hadley's staff and leadership volunteers and donors to meet these students in person and hear their remarkable stories. It was an uplifting event that brought to life the impact your generosity has had on the lives of these individuals, as well as so many others.

Regaining Independence

Braille means independence to Clarice Cocco.

Clarice first faced visual impairment 25 years ago and has been legally blind for 15 years as the result of macular degeneration and glaucoma. While she still retains some of her peripheral vision, Clarice recognized this might not always be the case and, at the recommendation of Blind Services in Texas, set out to learn braille at the age of 85.

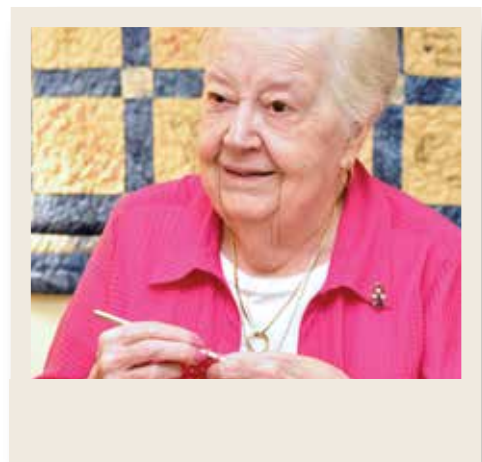
She began by taking the braille literacy program at Hadley and was delighted, remembering, "I just couldn't wait to get to the next lesson. Everybody has been so encouraging. It's just absolutely wonderful." However, it was not always an easy process and Clarice recalls telling her instructors, "Please know I am not going to quit, but today I want to." Rather than feeling alone during these difficult times, she received great support from Hadley staff and fellow students.

Braille has enabled Clarice, now 92, to build confidence, maintain

her independence and continue to do the things she loves. "I've found many other practical uses for braille that sighted people might not think of," she says. Through the use of braille labels she continues to perform important everyday tasks such as identifying her mailbox amidst a sea of similar looking units, differentiating her medications, and locating canned goods in her pantry. "Those little things are so valuable," Clarice explains, "Each time that I braille label something, I feel a little more independent."

Through braille, Clarice can also continue to do the things she loves. For example, she uses braille to label her crochet hooks and differentiate between sizes. This has not only brought her tremendous enjoyment, but she has crocheted nearly 300 hats and countless headbands for the homeless in the past two years.

Clarice was married to her husband, Rocco Sr., for 68 years, before he passed away four years ago. She has five children, ten grandchildren and three



great-grandchildren. As Hadley's Braille Student of the Year, she is proof that there is no age limit to learning. Summing up the impact that braille has had on her, Clarice remarks, "It was a life-changing moment for me to learn about braille because it's been so helpful, to help me be just a little bit more independent. Each time that I do something during the day where braille comes into play, that moment gives me a lift. I just love it." ■



Scan this QR code to watch Clarice's Student Award video

or go to: hadley.edu/donate-hadley/stories.asp



Finding Value: Ali Benmerzouga honored as Hadley 2018 Student of the Year



Ali Benmerzouga is not one to let his brain or body sit still. So, when he lost vision in his left eye in 1998 as a result of myopia—a condition which occurs if the eyeball is too long, or cornea too curved—he continued to stay active in his career as a university professor, at home with his wife and seven children, and in the outdoors where he enjoys spending time.

Nor did he slow down when he first experienced difficulty with his working eye in 2011. Eventually “it got to the point where I wasn’t able to read, write, or drive, and I decided surgery was my only option,” he remembers. Sadly, multiple surgeries were unable to repair his deteriorating eye and he became legally blind in 2012, at the age of 54.

Despite Ali’s incredible energy and optimism, this was a difficult transition. He explains, “I am the kind of a person that is very active. So, all of a sudden you

“Hadley has restored my life in so many ways and allowed me to live my authentic life, communicate with the world, and meet people.”
—Ali Benmerzouga, North Olmstead, OH

find yourself stagnated in a room sort of dark...you used to drive. You used to exercise. You used to run. You used to bike...all of that is gone.” His doctors referred him to the Cleveland Sight Center for assistance with this new reality. Recognizing that Ali was a good candidate for braille, they told him about Hadley.

A teacher himself, Ali was initially scared of failure when it came to learning braille. However, he quickly overcame these fears and completed Hadley’s Braille Literacy programs in just eleven months. Next came an online independent living series and additional courses—on subjects ranging from Abacus to Business Communications, Using Excel to Finding Employment—for a total of 30 Hadley courses since 2013.

There is tremendous mutual admiration between Ali and his Hadley instructors. Throughout his journey, they have been impressed by his energy, eagerness to learn and mastery of subjects. And, Ali is thankful for the support, patience, encouragement, responsiveness and subject matter expertise of Hadley’s learning experts. He is also impressed by the accessibility of Hadley’s learning materials which allow students to

choose a format that works best for them, be it large print, braille, audio or online.

“I was trying to salvage myself and sharpen my skills so that one day I would be able to re-enter the workforce,” Ali added.

Ali has become one of Hadley’s best ambassadors, sharing his love for Hadley with others he meets who have a visual impairment. He encourages them “to take courses with Hadley and have their life improved, and their independence regained, and [build] their connection with the old world of friends and the new world of new friends.

“I was overjoyed to learn that I had won Student of the Year,” Ali said. “It made me feel like, ‘Hey, I’m back, and still worth something to this world.’ It gives me a great feeling knowing that I can continue to be a good, productive citizen.” ■



Scan this QR code to watch Ali’s Student Award video or go to: hadley.edu/donate-hadley/stories.asp



A Journey to Inspiration

A Grandmother's
Vision Loss Leads
Granddaughter to
Help Others



When her grandmother began to lose her sight, May Yee Khoo set off on a journey to understand vision loss that would lead her to Hadley, and beyond.

May was abroad in Hong Kong for college during the time her grandmother's eyesight was deteriorating. When calling home to Malaysia, she would hear troubling news about how her grandmother's vision had led to injury—including burning herself cooking and becoming ill by taking the wrong medication. May remembered, "I was hurt hearing such news from home, and because I was away, I felt helpless. So I started thinking, what can I do to help grandma and other people who face similar challenges and vision loss?"

May started looking for learning resources, choosing Hadley because of the wide variety of courses offered and Hadley's correspondence and distance learning approach. Through Hadley "I could still help my grandma in different ways even though I am abroad," she explained.

With a love of languages and interest in communication systems, May jumped enthusiastically into braille. This further spurred her interests to take additional college classes about deafness and teaching special needs learners. After college, as a graduate student at Stanford University, May continued to learn braille and how to teach it to others with Hadley. Throughout her studies, she found her Hadley instructors to be an excellent source of help and support as well as a valuable resource for additional information on vision loss, beyond the textbooks.

"Having learned about braille and blindness from Hadley, I find that my life has changed in the way that I've gained a lot of different perspectives."

—May Yee Khoo, Palo Alto, CA

May was recognized with Hadley's Dean W. Tuttle Professional Award because of her passion and shared mission to help the low vision community. And, she shared that winning the award has motivated her to "keep on learning and keep on sharing the knowledge to contribute further and help more people."

"Learning more about braille and vision loss makes me feel more empowered," May stated. Looking ahead, she hopes to contribute more in this area by combining her background in education with her interests in educational technology and access to technology to "work with educational institutions and maybe collaborate with corporations in redesigning tools and services where we can make things more accessible and less of a challenge for people with vision loss." ■



Scan this QR code to watch May's Student Award video
or go to: hadley.edu/donate-hadley/stories.asp





Building a Safe Home and Better Life

accessibility and everyday living courses which enabled her to perform tasks such as using the stove, boiling water and cutting her daughter's fingernails. "All the life skills I learned changed my world," Michele remembers.

She continued to build her awareness and confidence with classes such as self-defense and visual impairment that gave her the self-confidence and courage to live independently from others and safely set up house for her and Bayleigh. Now, thanks to help from Hadley, Michele says,

"Keeping myself and my daughter safe... and just having the basic foundation of safety has changed my world." —Michele Clock, Exeter, NH

"I feel alive, because you can't live if you don't feel safe. And I feel safe and we're happy."

Michele has taken 29 Hadley courses in the past five years. This includes an abacus class that she has, in turn, taught to Bayleigh who can now do math without relying on her faulty visual tracking. "Being able to teach my daughter the skills that I've learned and become a better parent overall has been priceless to me," Michele explains. Other courses such as Birdsongs have enhanced their enjoyment of the outdoors, while learnings from Hadley's orientation and mobility classes empower them to continue activities they love such as hiking, gardening, snow skiing, and horseback riding. And, she

applies knowledge from Hadley's family courses to advocate for her daughter at school.

The skills and confidence this mother-daughter duo developed through Hadley are empowering them to thrive outside of the home. "We're meeting people and going places and doing it with confidence and there's a whole new world out there for us now," Michele explains. For example, they have been exploring the city of Boston, "Think about that for a second: we are both visually impaired but

have the confidence to explore a city as large as Boston by ourselves. It's truly amazing."

Michele praises the Hadley community as "a welcoming place where I feel accepted and I feel valued," and credits her incredible instructors for going above and beyond to support her in her journey. "It's all about helping you find a way and they do it with love. It's amazing. They are family to me. I love this Hadley family." ■

Safety is a key concern for any parent, and an especially pressing one for Michele Clock. Born with poor visual acuity, Michele's sight continued to worsen as a result of several head injuries throughout her life. Then, during the difficult birth of her daughter, Bayleigh, Michele endured additional insult to her brain that further increased her visual challenges. Now 13 years old, Bayleigh has her own set of visual issues caused by periventricular leukomalacia at birth, a brain injury that compromised her sight and left her with cerebral palsy.

Due to her vision loss, Michele was unable to continue her career as a speech pathologist and she and Bayleigh became dependent upon others. Once Michele connected with Hadley, things began to look brighter.

Michele's first Hadley class was on raised markers, which helped her navigate her own home and surroundings. She followed with instruction in braille, Apple iOS



Scan this QR code to watch Michele's Student Award video or go to: hadley.edu/donate-hadley/stories.asp



Supporting a Blind Child through Braille



“Hadley provides free courses. So we feel more encouraged to take courses so that, as a parent, we can help our blind kids like other parents help sighted kids.”
—Naoko Zoerlein,
Alexandria, VA

Hadley kept coming up in conversation when Naoko Zoerlein was researching the tools and resources she would need to support her five-year-old daughter, Maria, who was blinded as the result of a brain tumor pushing against her optic nerves. Despite a series of three surgeries to remove the tumor, the damage was too great and Maria lost her vision completely.

“We were forced to jump into the world of blindness rather unexpectedly, but Hadley has been a wonderful source of support,” says Naoko. “Its programs have helped us as we attempt to help Maria keep up with the studies at the regular school she attends.”

While Maria was learning to read by studying braille with her vision teacher, Naoko was studying beginning and advanced braille with Hadley so she could read along with her. Later, Naoko turned to Hadley for Nemeth Code to help Maria keep up with math. And, when Maria became interested in violin, Naoko took Hadley’s braille music course so she could support these musical aspirations. She remembers, “Each time I needed to extend my braille education there was always the right course with a dedicated and professional instructor.”

A native of Japan, it was important to Naoko that Maria learn to read Japanese as well. By applying the foundation in braille she developed through Hadley, Naoko had the confidence to go out on her own to learn Japanese braille so she could teach it to Maria.

Today, Maria is an active 12-year-old who, thanks to her parents’ dedication, is thriving. “Whatever she wants to do, we want her to do,” Naoko explains. Maria continues to enjoy the activities she loved to do before losing her sight. The family has also started volunteering to raise guide dog puppies for Guiding Eyes for the Blind. ■



Scan this QR code to watch Naoko’s Student Award video
or go to: hadley.edu/donate-hadley/stories.asp

Learning for Success

Karen Thomas Achieves Goals, with Hadley by Her Side

Hadley has been part of Karen Thomas' life for more than three decades. Karen first turned to Hadley in high school when, determined to graduate with her peer group despite her vision loss, she needed help improving her braille proficiency. Not only did she finish on time, but the skills she gained through Hadley also helped her complete her college coursework. Karen graduated from the University of Texas at Austin with degrees in English and Journalism.

Karen's vision issues began with a rare form of pediatric eye cancer when she was just 18 months old. Complications from this, including a detached retina, led to more significant vision loss when she was a teenager.

In addition to the initial braille support, Karen recalls, "there have been so many things that I've done with Hadley that have been extremely helpful." This includes more than 26 courses over the past 30+ years in areas such as business and technology, which have empowered Karen to excel in her education and career.

After college, Karen worked for eight years as a research and editorial office assistant, and she was a longtime columnist of an international magazine, before being promoted to editor. She credits her Introduction to

Business Management course at Hadley as critical to this opportunity because it gave her knowledge of "contracts and filing quarterly taxes and all the things that go into having your own business." Karen is also the author of a resource handbook for visually impaired job seekers.

"It's very easy to take courses with Hadley to learn what you need or want to learn. You can study at your own pace, and you have instructors that provide one-on-one attention to help you along when you get stuck," Karen explains. She also emphasizes the importance of the weekly braille groups for help overcoming frustrations and challenges, "There are others in the group who understand and are quick to offer encouragement and practical solutions." And, she is a strong proponent of Hadley's technology programming, acknowledging, "All my friends use Hadley resources for the technology. It's just magnificent."

"Hadley programs can change a life. They changed my life." –Karen Thomas, Austin, TX

Karen is now applying the skills, knowledge and confidence Hadley helped her build in exciting new ways. With the goal of promoting web accessibility, she is currently studying website design and is a member of a web content development team for a group of blind artists and



crafters. She is also a tactile craft advocate, designer and teacher who makes and sells useful art and one-of-a-kind creations.

The Lifelong Learning Award is a well-deserved honor for Karen. As Hadley learning expert, Susan Fisher, explains, Karen "is not only a fabulous student, but readily shares her knowledge and talents with others. She is truly an inspiration." Upon receiving this award, Karen recognized, "When I think about all the things that I've had to go through in my life, it's not been easy. But I've been able to overcome quite a lot and Hadley has been a big part of that." ■



Scan this QR code
to watch Karen's
Student Award video

or go to: hadley.edu/donate-hadley/stories.asp



Expanding Horizons

Teacher Aims to Improve Opportunities for Visually Impaired in Trinidad and Tobago

Aisha Williams began learning braille so she could teach her visually impaired students at The Tobago School for the Deaf, Speech and Language Impaired, in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Referred to Hadley by a colleague, Aisha started the braille course and was soon “hooked,” she remembers.

“The input and mentorship I have received from Hadley has borne fruit. That’s why I can stand here today and say I have found my purpose—to help the visually impaired community reach its full potential.”
— Aisha Williams, Scarborough, Tobago

Aisha completed the entire braille series for sighted learners, learning the code itself as well as how to teach it to others—including students with multiple disabilities. She shares that this is an area especially close to heart because “often children with disabilities are labelled and assumed to have limited futures. In fact, there is so much that can be done to help these kids reach their full potential.”

While the course work was not always easy, Aisha recalls her Hadley instructors were always at hand to help. And, Aisha’s instructors were impressed by her tremendous energy and determination, leading them to nominate her for Hadley’s International Student of the Year.

Aisha explained, “Winning this award means I could help back home...it could help me open the eyes of the people of Trinidad and Tobago that more could be done for the visually impaired community.” She explains that most visually impaired individuals in Trinidad and Tobago “are going into adulthood and they are just home, not independent, cannot work anywhere, a family member has to do everything for them,” but the award shows “there are things out there we can use, that we can educate the visually impaired to make themselves independent.”

To that end, Aisha is actively applying what she learned at Hadley to change the lives of her visually impaired students, and also credits Hadley for helping her be creative with all of the children she teaches. Sharing her enthusiastic optimism she asserts, “we should not limit the lives of the visually impaired, instead become ambassadors and facilitators of their dreams.” ■



Scan this QR code to watch Aisha’s Student Award video or go to: hadley.edu/donate-hadley/stories.asp



What is Hadley 2.0?

Scheduled to launch in January 2020, Hadley 2.0 will transform learning for the visually impaired community. Here's what you need to know about this exciting initiative:

ENGAGING EDUCATION

Hadley's traditional courses, seminars and videos are being transformed into dynamic learning products. The form will fit the function of the content, and typically will be portioned into digestible, engaging 10- to 20-minute experiences. Using a conversational tone of voice, multi-media approach and interactive format, learners will be able to go at their own pace, practice their knowledge and learn through scenario-based settings with real-life applications.

PERSONALIZED EXPERIENCES

Each learner's online experience will feature customized settings—including font style and size, page color and contrast—to suit learners' specific needs. Content will also be tailored to their experiences and interests based upon their earlier choices, feedback, preferences, and other interactions. In addition to accessing learning material online, they will also find recommendations, track their progress, rate the workshops, and contact experts.

For those preferring an offline learning experience, large print,

braille and audio will be available, too. Learning in this case will take place through a series of short booklets and audio clips, with the on-demand production and shipping powered by an upgraded and integrated database.

CONNECTED COMMUNITY

Learners will have greater access to instructors, more coaching opportunities and additional means for communicating with Hadley experts. They will also be able to connect with one another to share experiences and forge a stronger community. Some of these community opportunities will be online but most will be enabled by the learner's phone, a technology which is quite comfortable to most of our learners.

ACCESSIBLE LEARNING

Free of hoops and hurdles, visually impaired individuals can register with Hadley easily, and begin their learning sooner. This will help Hadley attract and retain a larger audience, and expand the reach and impact of our services.

The Hadley team is hard at work on this. Feedback on the prototypes we have shared with visually impaired learners has been excellent and insightful. We are well on our way to meeting our early-2020 launch date. ■



We are repackaging and reorganizing existing content to prepare for Hadley 2.0 and enhance current learning experiences. Check out these new resources:

PRACTICAL HELP FOR LOW VISION

Consolidated catalogue of tools, tips and skill development for learners adapting to low vision. hadley.edu/lowvision.asp

INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEOS

A comprehensive resource for learners to easily access information across a wide range of subjects—from iPhones to Microsoft Office to Technology in the Kitchen. hadley.edu/InstructionalVideos.asp

DISCUSSION GROUPS PAGE

Access our popular monthly discussion groups, including Tech It Out, Hadley Growers, Writers' Circle and Spanish. Use the "Tune In" links to get information about upcoming sessions and to listen to previous discussions. hadley.edu/discussions



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Hadley Moves Back Home

We are excited to be back in our updated offices at 700 Elm Street in Winnetka, IL. This renovated space not only brings our infrastructure up to code but will also improve Hadley's ability to serve blind and visually impaired learners into the future. We've come a long way in the past eight months. Hope you can join us for an Open House to experience the space for yourself, or see more of this transformation at hadley.edu/renovate.

Photos above: 1. The exterior may look quite similar, but inside, much has changed! 2. Hadley's landmark front window, in the shape of a braille cell, remains a focal point. 3. A large, flexible conference room will host meetings and events. 4. The second-floor addition looks across to a new curtain wall. 5. Building the bright and welcoming front entrance.