

Wal-Mart Foundation to Sponsor Web Site for Exchange of Braille Reading Materials

Baltimore, Maryland (February 2, 2009): The National Federation of the Blind, the oldest and largest organization of blind people in the United States and the country's leading advocate for Braille literacy, and the Wal-Mart Foundation are partnering to bring Braille reading materials to those who need them. The Wal-Mart Foundation is sponsoring NFB ShareBraille, a Web site to facilitate the exchange of Braille books through a community-run library. NFB ShareBraille will help connect those who want Braille with those who want to give Braille away, thus increasing the life of Braille materials. The Web site is located at <http://www.nfbsharebraille.org/>>www.nfbsharebraille.org.

Dr. Marc Maurer, President of the National Federation of the Blind, said: "There are many contributing factors to the decline in Braille literacy among the nation's blind children and adults, but access to Braille reading materials is one such factor. That is why the National Federation of the Blind has launched NFB ShareBraille to help students, professionals, and avid readers find the Braille materials they need for enlightenment, productivity, and success. We deeply appreciate the Wal-Mart Foundation sponsoring this important effort."

Crosby Cromwell, manager of disability markets for Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., said: "Literacy is critically important to a fulfilling and productive life, and this is no less true for the blind than it is for anyone else. That is why we are proud to work with the National Federation of the Blind to increase the availability of Braille books and to support literacy for all blind Americans."

NFB ShareBraille is part of the NFB's Braille Readers are Leaders campaign, a national initiative to promote the importance of reading and writing Braille for blind children and adults. One of the campaign goals is to make Braille resources more available through online sharing of materials, enhanced production methods, and improved distribution. NFB ShareBraille is designed to help in meeting this goal by encouraging blind people to trade Braille books and build their library. Frequently, Braille materials in good condition are discarded because a new home for the materials cannot be found. NFB ShareBraille now offers a way for a community to close that gap and keep Braille reading materials circulating.

The Braille Readers are Leaders campaign kicked off in July of 2008 with the unveiling of the design of a commemorative coin to be minted in 2009 in recognition of the two-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Louis Braille. The coin, which will feature the word "Braille" written in tactile Braille, will be released on March 26, 2009. The Wal-Mart Foundation plans to support other aspects of the Braille Readers are Leaders campaign in addition to sponsoring NFB ShareBraille. For more information about the campaign, please visit <http://www.braille.org/>>www.braille.org.