

News from Creative Adaptations for Learning

38 Beverly Road, Great Neck, NY 11021-1330 • Phone: (516) 466-9143

CAL Celebrates 20 Years of Growth

Often, great ideas seem obvious—after someone else has thought of them. Take, for example, making images clearly perceptible to the blind or visually impaired.

That was the observation of Shirley Keller, who was retiring from a career in nursing in 1985. She had also for many years worked with people who are blind, but was dismayed that things had not changed much since the 1940s with respect to their early literacy.

Through trial and error problem solving, she determined that “pictures” were a missing link. Out of her desire to implement positive change in this area came CAL, Creative Adaptations for Learning,

a not-for-profit 501 (c)(3) corporation with a stated mission to make pictures “visible” to people who are blind the way printed words have been made “readable” through braille.

The crusading orga-

nization is now celebrating its 20th anniversary.

“Twenty years ago, even professionals in the field would not accept the fact that children who are blind should have books

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

A Dream Becomes a Reality

A high school friend of mine, who was blind, accepted my description of the pictures in a Life magazine story, but kept pressing me for more information.

“How can you ‘see’ a car or a building or whatever on the page?” she persisted “Isn’t every page the same?” “I know you’re reading the descriptions” she would insist, “but what do they do to convince you that something is different on each page?”

She kept prying; trying to understand how so much information could be compressed on each flat page. “Didn’t they (the pages) all look alike?” she wondered.

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CAL Celebrates 20 Years of

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with pictures,” said Ms. Keller. “Today, only a few such hard-liners still exist. CAL has received rave reviews for its activity books, flash cards, nursery rhymes and greeting

cards, all with embossed illustrations—and now others are beginning to follow.”

In 1990, Ms. Keller began collaborating with Irma Goldberg, CAL’s creative director, now responsible

for the development of the organization’s entire product line. Irma’s early background in art and jewelry making proved invaluable in the development of the metal plates used to vacuum form the

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That was in the 1940s. In the 1980s (1985 to be exact) I discovered the question still remained largely unanswered, especially for the young child who is blind: “What is a picture?”

Taking this as a personal challenge, I began the process of formulating an answer:

1- Found an organization whose purpose is to create and publish pictures that can be interpreted by people who are blind, without the need of a sighted person’s intervention.

—accomplished (1985) Creative Adaptations for Learning (CAL)

2- Research what has been done, then learn how to design and emboss pictures so they may be replicated and published.

—accomplished (1985-90)

3- Trademark the CAL-tac™ format

(Creatively Adapted Legible-tactuals)

—accomplished (1992)

4- Hire a graphic artist to design and emboss master plates for production.

—accomplished (1990-to present, Now she’s the Creative Director)

5- Engage a team of blind people to evaluate the prototypes for clarity.

—accomplished (ongoing)

6- Mass produce, market, and distribute the products.

—accomplished (1991 ongoing)

CAL is celebrating its 20th anniversary: we have moved from fighting for acceptance to taking a leadership position in the field of tactile graphics for the pre-school child.

Are we tooting our horn? You bet we are!

We look back with pride on our accomplishments and look forward to continued innovations!

What’s next? Stay tuned!

Bringing Pictures to the Blind

plastic to make the tactile or raised-line illustrations CAL publishes.

“A blind or visually impaired person views a picture by touch,” she

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said. “A tactile drawing enables people with vision difficulties to ‘see’ details that sighted people often take for granted.”

CAL developed a series of products featuring CAL-tac™, pictures transformed from print into three dimensional textured illustrations interpreted by touch, not only for people who are blind or visually impaired, but also for those with autism, dyslexia or cognitive disabilities. Distinctive bold raised outlines, embossed on firm, durable non-toxic white plastic, facilitate tracing shapes by touch. Every product provides a wide variety

of uses, adapting to the level and sophistication of the learner.

Their first product was a set of six basic shape flashcards. It was followed by alphabet flashcards, counting cards, clothing cards, a book on astronomy and another featuring well-known children’s nursery rhymes. Their newest product is an interactive children’s book, “Touch and Learn Tactile Activity Book.”

“The team began by demonstrating their unique products to teachers and at trade shows.” It took time to achieve ac-

Notice Our Size and Golden Color?

Just why is this newsletter yellow? And, why is the type so big?

The color yellow is universally used against black print because it is the best contrast for ease of reading. That’s why school buses, taxi cabs and CAL all use a goldenrod background with black writing.

ceptance, to gain access,” Ms. Keller said. Gradually, their unique products began to receive critical praise. CAL started to receive grants from several major organizations, including Mitsubishi Electric, Hyde and Watson Foundation and National Braille Press.

CAL became a resource for information on

Ms. Keller became a leading advocate for using pictures to teach pre-reading skills to the blind.

making and using tactile graphics. CAL staffers were invited to speak at conferences around the world. Ms. Keller became a leading advocate for using pictures to teach pre-reading skills to the blind. “I told—and still do tell—academics, parents, teachers, in fact, all who

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CAL's Latest: Children's Activity Work-

CAL is constantly developing new products to assist the blind and visually impaired.

Their newest product, about to be released, is a Touch and Learn Tactile Activity Book, an

interactive workbook for children getting ready to read print or braille.

Ideal for pre-readers, the book complete with a user's guide, offers age appropriate activities for young learners to use at home, school, or while traveling.

Book activities include print-braille letter and number recognition, and many skill building activities.

For further information about the workbook, call CAL at 516-466-9143.

CAL Celebrates 20 Years

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will listen, that pictures are a precursor for teaching literacy, even for children who happen to be blind.

Her views and CAL products have been the subject of extensive articles in the New York Times, Newsday, Long Island Busi-

ness News and numerous weekly newspapers and trade publications.

What is the first picture you ever saw? "A blind person can tell you in vivid detail," Ms. Keller said. "But it is hard to find a sighted person who can give you an answer to that question!"

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Our mission is to make pictures "visible" to people who are blind the way printed words have been made "readable" through

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For further details on topics in this newsletter log on to the CAL website: www.cal-s.org