



**IOWA RADIO READING
INFORMATION SERVICE**
For The Blind and Print Handicapped

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Iowa Radio Reading



@IRISReadsToIowa

IRIS Delivers ACCESS:

IRIS volunteers read newspapers and other publications aloud over a special radio network for Iowans living with print disabilities.

Thanks to the dedication of over 300 volunteer readers in seven locations across Iowa, the voices of IRIS can be heard in every corner of the state, every day of the year.

IRIS services and equipment are provided to our listeners at no cost to them.

IRIS ensures equal access to print information - keeping our listeners active, informed and involved in their communities.

The Iowa Radio Reading Information Service for the Blind and Print Handicapped, Inc. (IRIS) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Your donation is tax-deductible.

December 2020

Dear Friends of IRIS,

As we all deal with the multitude of hardships that the pandemic has inflicted, we're heartened each day by inspiring stories of neighbors helping neighbors. From making meals for the healthcare workers on our block, to sewing masks for the local school, to checking on a neighbor who lives alone, we're all doing our part to get through this together.

Supporting IRIS is another important way you can help. Your gift today ensures that essential and reliable information keeps flowing to over 11,000 print-disabled IRIS listeners all across Iowa – for free and 24 hours a day.

The volunteer Voices of IRIS have been recording from their homes since this all began. ELEVEN Iowa newspapers and nearly 80 hours a week. Through the pandemic, elections and storms, our listeners haven't missed a thing.

Pandemic protocols and assistance change often and can differ from town to town. Most of our listeners are vulnerable seniors who will likely be included in the early rounds of vaccination. IRIS will be there to keep our listeners connected to this often fluid and critical local information.

We can't do this important work without you.

Please support IRIS today. You can use the enclosed envelope or make your gift online at iowaradioreading.org/donate.

You'll be helping IRIS listeners live their best lives while we work our way through this challenging time, neighbor to neighbor.

Wishing you health and peace,

The IRIS Board of Directors:

Lori Blachford

Gordy Allen

Rob Gavora

Jim Obradovich

Ray Walton

Karrie Craig

Liz Cooney

Brenda Kole

Britney Samuelson

Iowa Radio Reading Information Service For the Blind and Print Handicapped



IRIS Newsletter - Fall 2020

Gratitude and Grace

For the last nine months, many of our volunteer Voices of IRIS have been recording from their homes. Files are sent electronically to staff who are also working from home. We edit each file and upload it to our automation system. Day after day after day, our volunteers make it all work. We are so grateful for their service and cannot WAIT to gather again in person.

A bit of grace came from our landlord. Our main Des Moines office requested and received a reprieve from rent earlier this year. That incredible gift played a huge part in keeping your IRIS hanging in there this year. However, that gift runs out this month and the rent comes due again - some \$1,470 each month.

Finally, we've kept every member of our outstanding tiny staff and we've kept up with a record demand for IRIS radios. Things are been getting done in a different kind of way – but the IRIS signal is still there 24/7 for our listeners.

In 31 years, we've never asked a listener to pay for IRIS services or equipment. Our mission to make access to print information **simple, equal and free** has not waived. As funding becomes more challenging, keeping it all free is getting more difficult. This newsletter shares some of the many ways you can join in our mission. (Hint: reading from home IS really easy!)

Thank you for allowing me to serve your IRIS. My daughters and I send our best wishes for health and peace to you this Holiday season. *Maryfrances Evans – IRIS Executive Director*



Vintage Radio Plays on IRIS for the Holidays!

We've collected some delightful vintage radio plays for you. From Ronald Reagan to Judy Garland, we hope you will enjoy six nights of holiday classics from the golden years of radio.

- Thursday, December 24 9:00pm: **A Christmas Carol** (1942) Lionel Barrymore as Scrooge. Followed by **The Night Before Christmas – Sherlock Holmes** (1945)
- Friday, December 25 9:00pm: **It's a Wonderful Life** (1947) James Stewart & Donna Reed.
- Saturday, December 26 9:00pm: **Remember the Night** (1940)
Starring Fred MacMurray and Barbara Stanwyck from the Lux Radio Theater.
- Sunday, December 27 9:00pm: **The Bishop's Wife** (1948) Cary Grant & Loretta Young.
Followed by **A Stable in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania** (1944) NBC Matinee Theater.
- Monday, December 28 9:00pm: **Holiday Inn** (1943) Bing Crosby & Dinah Shore.
Followed by **Christmas in Connecticut** (1946) Ronald Reagan & Jane Wyman.
- Tuesday, December 29 9:00pm: **The Wizard of Oz** (1950) Judy Garland.

“Reading Has Been a Joy For Us”

Eunice and Tom Pingenot are from Vinton, the former home of the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School. Tom’s mother, Betty, worked as a house parent there. In the 1950’s, Tom’s parents would host students from the Braille School for Sunday dinners.

By the 80’s, Eunice and Tom had two young sons, Mark and Aaron. At that time, the Braille School students would go home every other weekend. On weekends when the students were in town, residents were recruited to host a student (or several). The Pingenots jumped in.



Tom writes “we adopted a special young man named Wayne Chute who became a member of our family”. They shared pizza nights during the week and weekends of shopping and attending church together. Wayne is very close in age to their son, Mark, so together they learned to ride bikes and drive the pickup. Wayne even went to Disney World as part of the family.

Fast forward a few decades. They heard a story on KUNI Radio about auditions to read the Waterloo/Cedar Falls Courier to the blind on the radio. Since everyone who showed up for the audition “passed”, Eunice and Tom joined the volunteer Voices of IRIS. For over 20 years, The Pingenots would leave the house at 6:30am in order to make the 45-mile drive to Cedar Falls with a stop to pick up two copies of the Courier on the way. Tom recalls listening to Sunday comics being read on the radio when he was a boy. He continues that tradition by reading Blondie and Dennis the Menace aloud on IRIS.

Today, they’ve mastered the technology to record the Courier from home - including the comics. We celebrate the decades of dedication to IRIS from Eunice and Tom, and volunteers like them all across the state. For the moment, we all serve safely at home. We look forward to the day we can bring listeners and readers together again to thank Eunice and Tom properly.

New \$300 Deduction for 2020

The CARES Act, signed into law last spring, allows taxpayers who do not itemize deductions to take a charitable deduction of up to \$300 for cash (check or credit card too) contributions made in 2020 to qualifying charitable organizations. (IRIS is one of those)

Previously, charitable contributions could only be deducted if taxpayers itemized their deductions. Learn more at [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov)



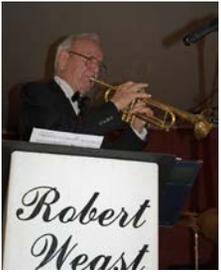
“I Listen All Day”

Helen is 90 years young and lives in Garner. Fiercely independent, she lives alone and is making do through this pandemic with socially-distanced visits and card games in her garage with her neighbor.

She’s been listening to IRIS on the same radio since 1999. It worked for 21 YEARS! When that radio finally met its reward, we mailed multiple replacements, but none of the newer models got a good signal for her.

We masked up, hit the road to Garner and got her hooked up to the IRIS signal once again.

Helen said, “You have no idea how much I depend on IRIS. It’s the only way I know what’s going on. I listen all day”. Helen reminded us that that little old radio is as much a companion as a source of information. We’re happy to be there for you, Miss Helen.



Robert Weast 1929-2020

We lost the inspiration for our Big Band BASH November 18. A self-taught trumpet player, Bob was playing speakeasies and dance gigs at the age of 15. He was a Professor of Music at Drake University for 36 years, a member of the Des Moines Symphony Orchestra and especially proud to serve as soloist and Director of Music for Pope John Paul II's 1979 visit to Iowa. Away from the stage, Bob was a published author and avid environmentalist

who raised bees and silk moths, writing countless articles for environmental publications.

To IRIS, Bob and His Swinging Big Band were the reason people came from far and wide to hear that big band sound. We basically built the event around him raising thousands of dollars for IRIS since 2014.

When it is safe to do so, we WILL bring back the Big Band BASH in celebration of Bob. In the first few months of 2021, we hope to host a virtual concert where listeners and fans can attend on our website and other live platforms.

“It’s a Girl!”

Good news has been hard to come by in 2020, so we were thrilled to hear of the arrival of baby Zoe! Des Moines volunteer Kristy Frideres welcomed Zoe about 8 weeks ago.

Kristy and Zoe are both doing well and are excited to get back to reading for IRIS in January. We hope our tiniest new volunteer makes an appearance on her mom’s recordings now and then.



Audio Describers Training

IRIS will host a series of virtual sessions to strengthen our skills and grow our AD team. We want to be ready when theaters open their doors again! The first session will be **Wednesday, January 6 at 7pm**. If you are a current IRIS AD team member or would like to learn how to become one, please email iris@iowaradioreading.org to register.

Giving While You’re Living

We’ve never asked a listener to pay a penny for IRIS services. In 2020, estate gifts made from listeners years ago have been critical to keeping that promise.

There are multiple ways you can leave your own legacy to keep IRIS strong. From Bequests and Donor Advised Funds to our Endow Iowa Fund, we can help you make a plan that ensures your legacy keeps access to information simple, equal and free for IRIS listeners for years to come. Call 515-243-6833 or email IRIS@IowaRadioReading.org to learn more.



IRIS On-Demand

When the August storms knocked our live signal around, listeners turned to our podcast pages for the latest information. Downloads doubled in August and remain at that rate. ALL Iowa newspapers and Midweek Shopping Cart are available on our website for 7 days.

“IRIS made such a difference in my grandmother’s life after the macular degeneration took her sight completely. Forever grateful for them.” *Ellen Keyser Endelmen*

How Do I Become an IRIS Listener?

If you or someone you love cannot comfortably SEE, HOLD or UNDERSTAND print material, you qualify for IRIS services. Complete an application online at IowaRadioReading.org/become-an-iris-listener, mail it in or give us a call at 515-243-6833 or toll-free at 1-877-404-4747.

- Blindness
- Visual Impairment
- Stroke
- PTSD
- Muscular Dystrophy
- Ink Allergy
- Physical Impairment
- Cognitive Barrier
- Dementia
- Isolation
- Alzheimer's
- Parkinson's
- Amputation
- Brain Injury
- Sundowner's Syndrome

WHY DOES IRIS ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT MY TECHNOLOGY USE?

Learning how you connect to technology helps us choose the best IRIS delivery method for you.

RADIO - IRIS provides our traditional custom radio receivers to our listeners at no cost to them. We use a number of models. Based on your address, we'll choose the model we believe will get the best signal at your location. All kinds of things can affect signal strength and quality. It might take a couple of tries to get your signal where we want it to be.

ANTENNA TV - Iowa PBS generously provides the IRIS signal on one of their digital channels. If you live outside one of our optimal signal areas, we will help you tune in to the IRIS signal on an antenna TV. If you do not have an antenna TV, we can provide an IRIS DTV receiver for you. These receivers require an antenna (which IRIS provides) and travel to you for installation.

TELEPHONE 1-877-534-2240 - Listen LIVE toll-free from any landline or mobile telephone.

SMART SPEAKERS - You can listen to IRIS on the Amazon Echo Dot, Apple HomePod, Google Home and others. Download the app TuneIn Radio then tell it to go to Iowa Radio Reading. We now provide refurbished Echo Dot devices when that is the best signal option.

LIVE STREAM AND PODCASTS- IowaRadioReading.org/Listen

FACILITIES & HOSPITALS - If your facility has an in-house TV channel for announcements, menus, etc., give IRIS a call! We can put IRIS audio on most in-house systems.

All IRIS equipment and services are provided at no cost to the listener. If you are listening to IRIS and are NOT a registered listener, please give us a call so that we can sign you up. We need to know who is listening (and how they are listening) in order to keep our services free.

How Do I Become an IRIS Volunteer?

We would LOVE to have you! Though we are currently limited to home readers only, we are always building our reading teams for the wonderful day when we'll resume live reading in Iowa City, Sioux City, Ames, Cedar Falls, Mason City, Dubuque, Fort Dodge and Des Moines. Fill out an application at IowaRadioReading.org/become-a-volunteer regardless.

Home readers need a little technology. You can record on an iPhone, smartphone, iPad, PC or Mac. We can walk you through the process. Please send an email expressing your interest in home reading to us at IRIS@IowaRadioReading.org/become-a-volunteer.

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