



Sara Brown  
Public Relations Manager  
[sbrown@aph.org](mailto:sbrown@aph.org)  
For Immediate Release

## Four Prestigious Awards and Two Inducted into Hall of Fame During APH Annual Meeting

**LOUISVILLE, Ky.** (October 3, 2024) – American Printing House for the Blind (APH) presented the Wings of Freedom Award, Horizon Award, Navigator Award, and Louis Award during APH’s 156<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting. Two trailblazers were also inducted into the Hall of Fame for Leaders and Legends in the Blindness Field. The event took place at an in-person ceremony at the Louisville Marriott Downtown.

### **Wings of Freedom – Kim Charlson and Judith Dixon**

The Wings of Freedom Award is the highest honor presented by APH. The award is not annual, but given periodically, only as deserved. The Wings of Freedom Award was established to honor individuals who have shown exemplary leadership in the blindness and low vision field. This year’s award will be presented to Kim Charlson and Dr. Judith Dixon.

Kim Charlson has been involved with Perkins Library since 1985 and has been its director since 2001, overseeing the library’s mission of providing accessible reading material to people who are blind, have low vision, or physical or reading disabilities. Charlson also oversees the FCC iCanConnect program, the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program providing free communication technology and training to eligible individuals. She is the co-chair of the Federal Communications Commission’s Disability Advisory Committee, and she serves as the co-chair of the Coalition on Assistive Technology.

“Receiving the APH Wings of Freedom Award is a huge honor! To be recognized for my life’s work on braille literacy, information access, assistive technology, library services, guide dog access, civil rights, and so many other advocacy issues for people who are blind or have low vision of all ages. It is such a powerful validation of my efforts and their importance to our community,” said Charlson, Wings of Freedom Award recipient.

Dr. Judith Dixon is an internationally known expert in the fields of braille, tactile literacy, and document accessibility. For decades, she has honed her extensive knowledge of information access to web and print materials for persons with blindness and visual impairments.

For 42 years, she worked at the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled within the Library of Congress, working as the authoritative resource on providing equitable library and information services for the print disabled as the Consumer Relations Officer. When the internet exploded at the turn of the 21st century, she was ahead of the curve and quickly realized the need to highlight the importance of media access for tactile readers. Dr. Dixon is a major point of contact between established organizations, universities, libraries, and consumer environments regarding web and print accessibility.

### **Horizon Award – Ted Henter**

The Horizon Award recognizes individuals who continually pursue innovative ideas that result in the development of products designed to improve the quality of life for people who are blind or have low vision. This year's award will be presented to Ted Henter.

Ted Henter is famous within the assistive technology field for inventing the speech software package, JAWS, Job Access With Speech, one of the most widely disseminated and best-known synthetic speech software packages on the market.

"I am pleased and proud to be this year's APH Horizon Award winner, especially when I see that Gilles Pepin and Deane Blazie are previous winners. I have been friends with them both for over 40 years, and have learned a lot from both," said Henter, Horizon Award recipient. "I owe a lot of my success to these two pioneers and to a bunch of other very talented people that I worked with developing JAWS. I wouldn't be here today if not for all of them, and others, along with my wife and family."

### **Navigator Award – American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults**

The Navigator Award recognizes the collaborative efforts and partnerships necessary to remove barriers and provide pathways ensuring that individuals have full access to education and life. This year's award will be presented to American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults.

The American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults is a national service agency that specializes in providing help to blind people that is not readily available to them from government programs or other existing service systems. It operates through countless volunteers who are overseen by a volunteer board and a full-time executive director. Mark A. Riccobono currently serves in this position.

"Since 1919, the Action Fund has centered Braille literacy and provided programs and services to blind and deafblind Americans to fulfill unmet needs," said Mark Riccobono, Executive Director of the American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults. "We are honored to receive the APH Navigator award in recognition of the past commitment of our leaders, volunteers, and donors, and we intend for this recognition to further inspire us to do even more to empower blind and deafblind people in our second century."

## **Louis Award – Duxbury Systems**

The Louis Award, named after Louis Braille, recognizes the impact, creativity, efficacy of a product, idea, method, or promotional effort that increased the availability or awareness of braille and/or tactile graphics. It is an award that is not presented annually, but only when an effort rises to a level that both captures the imaginative spirit and moves people to action. This year's award will be presented to Duxbury.

“Duxbury Systems is proud to have provided software support for braille production in the US and abroad for over four decades. We are thankful to APH for the 2024 Louis Award in recognition of the work that APH and Duxbury have done together in service of literacy for blind people. And we're looking forward to work on exciting developments in the third century of braille,” said Peter Sullivan, Duxbury Systems Vice President of Software Development.

[View additional information about the award recipients.](#)

## **Hall of Fame**

Two trailblazing pioneers will be inducted into the Hall of Fame for Leaders and Legends in the Blindness Field. The new inductees will join over 70 esteemed professionals already in the Hall of Fame who have shaped the history, philosophy, knowledge, and skills of the blindness field over the past 200 years.

### **Dr. Jane Erin**

In 1971, after earning her bachelor's degree in secondary education from Edinboro State College, Dr. Jane Erin realized she wanted to be a teacher of students with visual impairments. She enrolled at the University of Pittsburgh, where she earned her master's and doctoral degrees in 1973 and 1984, respectively. While pursuing these degrees, she worked at Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children.

Dr. Erin joined the faculty at the University of Texas at Austin in 1984, where she worked with Natalie Barraga and Anne Corn. In 1994 she became coordinator of the Specialization in Visual Impairment Program at the University of Arizona in Tucson, where she remained until she retired in 2014. Her ability to bring people together to work collaboratively led to the development of innovative programs to prepare teachers of students with visual impairments and orientation and mobility specialists.

Throughout her career, Dr. Erin conducted research and published papers on a wide range of topics including diversity, low vision, early braille readers, professionals in the field, learning strategies of high school students, follow-up studies of specialized school graduates. She was selected by the director of AFB Press, American Foundation for the Blind (AFB), to serve as the first academic Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness (JVIB) - a role she held from 1998 to 2001. She recently worked with Association for Educational Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) to establish The New RE:view (TNR) and serves as Assistant Executive Editor. In 1996 Dr. Erin was selected for the Mary K. Bauman Award for Education of

Visually Impaired Students from AER. Other awards include the Margaret Bluhm Worker of the Year Award and the Corinne Kirchner Research Award.

Dr. Erin has served the field for 50 years. Her scholarship, leadership, mentorship, and knowledge have impacted countless professionals and the children and adults with visual impairments whom they serve.

### **Tuck Tinsley**

Dr. Tinsley's career began at the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind where he was a math teacher, assistant principal, and then principal. The Board of APH recruited him to join as President in 1989. The Board challenged Dr. Tinsley to lead APH into a new phase of its nearly 130 years of existence. As APH entered the relatively new world of assistive technology and more advanced production practices, this focus attracted talented new employees. New products resulted in new opportunities for students and adults in classrooms and boardrooms across the country.

In Washington, D.C., Tinsley presented to the Subcommittee on the House Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies to advocate for the education of students who were blind or had low vision. His excitement for the mission of APH was evident and resulted in steadily increasing funding.

Using his national platform, Dr. Tinsley was unwavering in his support for braille literacy. His efforts and published articles proved that new braille production techniques and digital braille displays were making even more braille available.

With funds from the APH endowment, Dr. Tinsley authorized the National Prison Braille Center to be created and housed at APH. This allowed for a more coordinated effort among what had been isolated programs around the country. As a result of this network, textbooks and tactile graphics were reaching students much more quickly.

Dr. Tinsley's career has always been about kids who were blind or low vision and his desire to make things better than he found them. Whether in the classroom, the boardroom, or on the world's stage – he has spent his life's work doing just that.

[View additional information about the Hall of Fame inductees.](#)

### **About American Printing House for the Blind**

American Printing House for the Blind is a worldwide leader in designing innovative lifelong learning solutions for children and adults who are blind or low vision. In this fast-changing world, we believe in the power and necessity of learning to open the doors to educational success, satisfying employment, social inclusion, active citizenship, and personal well-being. We level the learning playing field by providing specialized technology, materials, products, and services that are essential for education and life. American Printing House for the Blind is headquartered at 1839 Frankfort Avenue in Louisville, Kentucky. For more information, please visit [www.aph.org](http://www.aph.org).

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