

The Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service — Annual Report, 2009 - 2010

Since 1987, the **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service's** objective has been to *"give the blind a chance to read."* One observer noted that its day-to-day motto could have been: *"few, if any, not-for-profit agencies have done so much with so little."*

During 2009-2010, that motto was put to a brutal test. The national, regional and local economic downturn placed severe hardships on many not-for-profit agencies, including a number of radio reading services for the blind throughout the nation and, unfortunately, the **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service (NFRRS)**.

No fewer than eight long-standing radio reading services for the blind ceased operations in 2009-2010. A number of other radio reading services throughout the nation were forced to significantly reduce operations and/or services to their blind and print-handicapped listeners. Throughout the years, **NFRRS** representatives had not only referred to the cruelty of the onset of blindness, but to the potential second cruelty of people without sight losing access to printed matter-- a second time-- because of an ending of a radio reading service upon which a blind person could depend.

Now, as the financial crisis closed many traditional funding sources of support for radio reading, that ugly second cruelty came to cruel reality to the blind and print-handicapped residents of communities throughout the United States. Suddenly-- often, without warning-- radio reading services stopped providing those without sight daily access to newspapers, magazines and books. It was as if a person would turn on a *"reading radio"* -- and no sound-- no information, no enlightenment, no entertainment-- would come out. Blind residents of those communities suddenly heard nothing but silence from the *"reading radios"* they treasured to open their eyes to printed matter.

The **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service**-- which for 23 years has had its volunteers broadcast daily **"radio readings"** to print-handicapped residents of Buffalo, Western New York and Southern Ontario-- could not let that happen here. Somehow, facing the most profound financial pressures it had ever confronted, the **NFRRS** did not cease operations. The **NFRRS** did not cut back on operations and/or program services. The **NFRRS** did not stop-- or slow down-- *giving the blind a chance to read*. In fact, the **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service** made 2009-2010 a showpiece for its motto: *"few, if any, not-for-profit agencies have done so much with so little."*

Not only did the **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service** continue broadcasting **radio readings** of printed matter to its print-handicapped listeners 24 hours-a-day, seven days-a-week in 2009-2010, but it increased its listenership and service area by adding an additional broadcast signal at virtually no cost! The year 2009-2010 proved

to be a turbulent era of triumph of which the **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service**, its listeners, its volunteers, its supporters and its community can be very proud.

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The Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service

Most of us take for granted the ability to read a newspaper, magazine or book. To others-- blind and print-handicapped people throughout the Niagara Frontier-- a friend is needed to read. That friend is the **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service**, which has broadcast more than 190,000 hours of **radio readings** to those without sight.

Regarded as one of the nation's finest radio reading services for the blind and "*New York State's best radio reading service*," the **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service** has been remarkably productive, efficient and innovative throughout its existence.

Since 1987, the **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service** has provided daily access to printed matter to thousands of blind and print-handicapped persons throughout Western New York and Southern Ontario's Niagara Peninsula. Volunteers broadcast daily readings of newspapers, magazines, books, vital community information and other printed matter to area print-handicapped persons, who are provided "**reading radios**."

The **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service (NFRRS)** is a private, not-for-profit agency founded in 1986 to broadcast daily readings of printed matter to the blind and print-handicapped residents of Western New York and the Niagara Peninsula of Southern Ontario, Canada. The **NFRRS** is an *international Radio Reading Service*, providing 24 hour-a-day daily information, entertainment and enlightenment to appreciative blind and print-handicapped listeners in America and in Canada.

Thousands of area residents are "print-handicapped," i.e., unable to read printed matter because of some uncorrectable physical condition. "Print-handicapped" persons include the blind, many senior citizens, the disabled, and those with macular degeneration, diabetes, glaucoma, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, extreme dyslexia, stroke after-effects and other uncorrectable physical conditions. Print-handicapped people cannot read the newspapers, books and magazines that most of us take for granted.

In communities throughout North America and elsewhere in the world, "**radio reading services**" bring printed matter access to those unable to read; they broadcast daily readings of printed matter to print-handicapped persons, who are provided special *radio reading* receivers. Since a radio reading service presents copyrighted material, and because of the prohibitive cost of purchasing radio stations receivable by the general public, radio reading services typically use "narrowcast" transmission signals-- which cannot be heard on a normal radio-- as their primary means of transmission.

To obtain daily access to the printed matter that most of us take for granted, those without sight depend on **Radio Reading**. A typical radio station listener listens about 20 minutes per day, but a typical **Radio Reading** listener listens for five hours a day!

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In 1986, print-handicapped Buffalo area residents had no radio reading service, although more than 100 such services existed elsewhere in the nation. Several local residents created the **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service, Inc.**, a private, not-for-profit corporation, to establish and administer a radio reading service for the region's print-handicapped population. From a tiny loaned office in the Lafayette Square Library, the new agency promoted the **Radio Reading** concept, raised \$200,000, recruited volunteer readers, and leased a sub-carrier broadcast signal from radio station WMJQ-FM and initial studio space in Cheektowaga's Appletree Mall.

On March 19, 1987, the **NFRRS** went on-the-air, with volunteers broadcasting daily readings of newspapers, books, magazines and vital information to area blind and print-handicapped persons-- who were provided "**reading radios**." Less than two years later, **NFRRS** programs were expanded to 24 hours per day, on every day of the year. In 1991, the **NFRRS** moved to leased studios and offices at 15 Industrial Parkway, Cheektowaga; **Radio Reading** broadcast from that rented broadcast facility until 2002.

After 16 years of operating from rented facilities, the **NFRRS** acquired its first permanent home in 2002. Thanks to financial support from many sources, the agency purchased a building at 1199 Harlem Road in Cheektowaga (between William and Clinton Streets), which it converted to broadcast studios and offices. On December 19, 2002, the **NFRRS** began daily broadcasting from the security of its own studios.

The **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service** has earned a long-standing reputation for efficiency and productivity. continually seeking to reduce expenses whenever possible without negatively impacting on service to listeners. In 2007, the **NFRRS** negotiated a lease agreement for a new broadcast signal with the Western New York Public Broadcasting Association-- for only \$1 per year! Thanks to the generosity of WNED, the **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service** now broadcasts on WNED-FM's subcarrier frequency-- and saves many thousands of dollars, after more than two decades of leasing a commercial signal. The landmark agreement between two community-minded public broadcasters has been a great gift to those without sight.

Administration

The **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service** is governed by a Board of Directors.

The Board's 2009-2010 Officers have been: David E. Hall, Chairman; Elaine M. Powers, Vice-Chair; Donna M. Dickey, Treasurer; and Margaret Recktenwald, Secretary. Robert J. Sikorski is the agency's President, responsible for day-to-day operations. The **NFRRS** fiscal year is on a calendar-year basis; an independent audit of the agency is done every year by a CPA accounting firm (Paulus & Company, 2010).

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The **NFRRS'** twofold mission is: to maintain the best possible service for those already served, and to extend the service to those now without access to it. Under its Strategic Plan, the **NFRRS** has three Priorities: *Survival, Growth* and *Excellence*; and five agency Operating Principles: (1) Commitment to its Mission and Priorities, (2) Striving for the highest quality program service and a growing constituency, (3) Seeking fiscal solvency with a growing revenue base in contributed and earned income while controlling expenses, (4) Recruiting/training/retaining high quality volunteers and administrative staff; and (5) Enhancing and maintaining a positive community image for the agency.

Budget and Funding

Funding for the **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service**, a private not-for-profit corporation, comes from various sources, including foundations, corporations, service organizations, groups, individuals and special fundraising events. The **NFRRS** Year 2010 budget totals only \$155,000; no single source provides more than 15% of agency funding. Given extremely limited endowment funds and the lack of guaranteed funding, fundraising has been and must continue to be a major priority.

The **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service** has been recognized as a model of efficiency and productivity; continually striving to minimize expenses and implement more efficient means of operations. Throughout its history, it has maintained **Radio Reading** programming with only a slight increase in operating expense-- a remarkable performance virtually unheard of among non-profit entities sustaining a consistent level of community service. The **NFRRS'** recent signal change has enabled the agency to reduce its normal operating expenses by 20%-- a truly impressive reduction while maintaining listener service. Still, facing ongoing staggering financial pressures, the **NFRRS** seeks to maximize productivity while reducing costs wherever possible.

The agency does recognize that reducing costs of operations runs the risk of severely impacting **Radio Reading** programming. The **NFRRS** must seek wide-ranging financial support to maintain its services. In recent years, the fiscal woes of the area public sector eliminated local governmental funding for the agency. The current general national/regional/local financial crisis has utterly compounded the funding problem, and

the **NFRRS** has found itself cast in an ever more challenging situation as it strives to raise the funds to continue. Frankly, during recent times, many of the traditionally available local funding sources have limited or even eliminated their availability.

The **NFRRS** must look to private sources of support, including foundations. During 2009-2010, several foundations were key benefactors of **Radio Reading**. This year's foundation friends included the Buffalo Eye Bank Foundation, the Ralph F. Peo Foundation, the George G. and Elizabeth G. Smith Foundation and the Margaret L.

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Wendt Foundation. The current financial crisis has dealt a staggering blow to a number of foundations, greatly reducing their monies available for grant support. The **NFRRS** hopes that it will soon be able to count on renewed support from additional foundations.

Service agencies and organizations have provided key support to the **NFRRS** throughout local **Radio Reading's** history. The Olmsted Center for Sight (formerly the Blind Association of Western New York) has provided 21 grants to the **NFRRS**, enabling the purchase and repair of 2,000 "**reading radios**." The agencies share a long history of cooperation in service to the visually impaired. The **NFRRS** has treasured its generation-long relationship with the Olmsted Center, which has resulted in the long-term mutual benefit of both the agencies and their shared constituencies.

Since **Radio Reading's** inception, area Lions Clubs have been among the **NFRRS'** greatest supporters. The **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service** is honored to be a "Lions-sponsored project." The Lions and Lioness Clubs of Western New York (District 20-N) and Southern Ontario (District A-2) have been the agency's single largest base of financial support, donating more than half a million dollars to the **NFRRS**. More than 70 Clubs have made donations. The agency is one of relatively few entities worldwide to have been awarded three major grants from the Lions Clubs International Foundation. Area Lions and Lionesses have also promoted the **NFRRS** in their communities, served as volunteer **radio readers** and placed receivers with appreciative new listeners.

Many other local service organizations have provided great support to the **NFRRS**. They include area Exchange, Kiwanis, Quota, Rotary, Sunrise and Zonta Clubs, and American Legion, Church, Masonic, Moose, Polish Falcon and other groups.

This year, area eye care professionals lent their support to **Radio Reading**. Local ophthalmologists, optometrists and opticians contributed to the **NFRRS** in monetary donations and passing the word about **Radio Reading** to patients and their families.

Of crucial importance to the **NFRRS** is local corporate support. Longtime company

donors include Ingram Micro, M&T Bank and National Fuel. Corporate "Dress-Down" days, where employees contribute to causes to wear casual clothing at the office, have often helped the agency. Agency supporters collect register tapes from Dash's Markets; Dash's "Save-a-Tape" program, raising \$3.50 for the **NFRRS** for every \$100 in Dash's register tapes, has raised thousands of dollars in Dash's donations to the agency.

The **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service** has had a tradition of staging special events, to raise both money and public awareness. The **NFRRS** "*Penny Pot*"-- an oversized pop bottle into which people drop off loose change-- has developed into the important annual summertime "**Radio Reading Makes Cents**" **Coin Drive.**"

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In November, the **NFRRS** Board of Directors held the 10th annual **NFRRS** "**Chinese Super-Auction,**" a virtually sold-out event at the Hearthstone Manor where people purchase tickets for drawings for various valuable items-- including more than 100 donated prize packages. Each spring, a "*Book & Media Super Sale*" fundraiser offers thousands of books and other items provided by listeners, volunteers and supporters.

In light of the overwhelming current financial crisis, individual contributions to the **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service** have become critically important. The agency's direct-mail campaigns soliciting donations have generated donations from many new friends of **Radio Reading**. Moreover, individual supporters of the agency often become goodwill ambassadors for the **NFRRS** throughout the community.

There is no charge for access to the **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service**, but listeners can donate— only if they wish to do so— an annual voluntary "subscriber fee" at a suggested level of \$50. A number of listeners give-- and many of them give more.

The agency has encouraged-- on and off-the-air-- people to consider planned giving, as well as will and memorial gifts, to the agency. **Radio Reading** provides information on planned giving, while knowing that the effect of such communication might not be realized until a generation later. The agency has received testamentary and planned gifts from **NFRRS** listeners, volunteers and supporters. The potential positive short and long-term impact on the agency of planned, will and memorial gifts could be significant.

An eventual safeguard for the agency is its development of endowment. Although the agency must give priority to fundraising for necessary general operating expenses, the fledgling **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service** Endowment Fund is envisioned as ultimately being available for agency use in emergency situations and major projects.

Facilities and Equipment

At its offices, the **NFRRS** has professional broadcast studio facilities, including a control room/studio, one “live on-air” studio, and six recording studios. The service can broadcast “live,” if necessary, from any studio. The agency's broadcast equipment is analog, i.e., audiotape-based. A costly one-time conversion to the current broadcast standard of digital/computer-based equipment must be done in the near future, since the expense and difficulty of maintaining analog tape recording equipment rises each year. Current broadcast equipment includes control consoles, reel-to-reel tape decks, cart recorder/ players, VCR's, cassette recorders, digital audio tape recorders, CD units, a signal compressor/ limiter, an automation system and a telephone relay.

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Since March 2008, the **NFRRS** broadcast signal has been transmitted via leased broadcast phone lines from its studios to the Boston transmitter site of local radio station WNED-FM; **Radio Reading** is now broadcast on the station's subcarrier, leased by the agency. The signal can be heard on special SCA subcarrier receivers (“*reading radios*”), which the agency distributes to print-handicapped individuals and institutions serving those without sight; each **radio reading** receiver costs the **NFRRS** about \$125.

Staffing

The **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service** is recognized nationally as a model of efficiency and productivity in non-profit agency administration. Because of financial considerations, the **NFRRS'** professional staff has been reduced to only one full-time administrator and two part-time board-operator technicians responsible for daytime, evening, overnight and weekend programming. The **NFRRS** produced and broadcast nearly 9,000 hours of printed matter readings in 2009-2010 to an ever-increasing audience of appreciative blind and print-handicapped listeners.

One of the **NFRRS'** greatest resources is its workforce of 300 volunteers. Volunteer **radio readers** routinely provide excellent quality readings to **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service** listeners. Other volunteers work on administrative, clerical and special projects. Agency volunteers receive initial orientation and continual evaluation. **NFRRS** volunteers are valued communicators and goodwill ambassadors, giving many hours of dedicated service at agency special events and in agency fundraising efforts.

The **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service** treasures its volunteers, key members of the **Radio Reading** family. The agency regularly salutes them, and holds events to

build morale and productivity. To honor agency volunteers, the **NFRRS** has commissioned special volunteer pins. A blue-and-gold **NFRRS** Volunteer Pin displays the agency's microphone logo with a "volunteer" chevron; the pin is worn with pride, and has been copied by many other services. **NFRRS** Length of service pins include a burgundy-and-gold 5-Year Volunteer Pin, a black-and-silver 10-Year Volunteer Pin, a violet-and-silver 15-Year Volunteer Pin and a green-and-gold 20-Year Volunteer Pin.

Programming

The **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service** is one of very few radio reading services nationwide-- and the only such service in New York State-- broadcasting locally-produced readings of printed matter 24 hours each day, every day of the year. All **Radio Readings** are done by volunteers; **radio readers** have broadcast more than **190,000 hours** of readings to print-handicapped listeners.

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Most other radio reading services rely upon syndicated and/or satellite programs, but the **NFRRS** is able to provide totally local readings and maximum quality control.

Key to any radio reading service's programming is the reading of daily newspapers. The **NFRRS** broadcasts readings of the Buffalo News weekdays (9-11am, 4-6pm and 8-10pm); the weekend Buffalo News is read at 9-11am and 4-6pm. The national newspaper USA Today is read weekdays, from Noon until 2pm. The daily newspaper readings are broadcast "live," with two volunteer **radio readers** alternating stories.

Other **NFRRS** newspaper programs include readings of the Buffalo News supermarket ads (enabling print-handicapped listeners to compile shopping lists and find bargains), and comics, sports and feature sections. Wall Street Journal readings air weeknights at 11pm. The **NFRRS** provides readings from community newspapers, such as daily papers from Dunkirk, Jamestown, Lockport, Niagara Falls, Tonawanda, and from 30 weekly papers, including the Bee Group. Also read are such local publications as Artvoice, Bills Digest, Buffalo Spree, Business First and Western New York Heritage. The **NFRRS** presents readings of more than 75 national magazines. Newspapers and most magazines are donated to the **NFRRS** by their respective publishers.

Another element of **Radio Reading** programming is the broadcast of serialized readings of current best-selling books. More than 3,000 books have been recorded for broadcast. The **NFRRS** has earned a reputation for presenting best-selling books on-the-air faster than any other radio reading service in the nation, thanks in part to the cooperation of Borders Books, which loans the agency new books for reading.

A 22-year **NFRRS** programming staple is “Insight,” a weekly program on matters of interest to those without sight, produced by the agency and the Olmsted Center for Sight. For more than two decades, Old Time Radio Club of Western New York members Dick Olday and Frank Boncore have produced weekly, holiday and summer old-time radio shows for the **NFRRS**. Other **Radio Reading** programming includes TV listings, death listings, election ballots, holiday book marathons, in-depth specials, and vital information otherwise unavailable to the area’s blind and print-handicapped population.

To keep listeners informed on **NFRRS** programming, **Radio Reading** announces its daily program schedule at the beginning of each hour. The agency produces and distributes a bi-monthly large-print program guide. The **NFRRS** broadcasts several on-air readings of the program guide, to enable listener recording for easy reference.

The **NFRRS** welcomes comments and suggestions regarding its programming from listeners, volunteers and the general public. It conducts surveys, and encourages written and telephoned comments. Research indicates that **Radio Reading** listeners are “heavy” users of the service, routinely listening for extended periods every day.

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Audience

Since its inception, the **NFRRS** has distributed thousands of **Radio Reading** receivers ("**reading radios**") to blind and print-handicapped individuals and to institutions throughout Western New York and Southern Ontario's Niagara Peninsula. Each of the **Radio Reading** receivers costs the agency—not the recipient—about \$125.

Of **NFRRS** listeners who have a **Radio Reading** receiver, about 30% live in the City of Buffalo, 47% elsewhere in Erie County, 12% in Niagara County and 11% outside of Erie and Niagara Counties. About 63% of **NFRRS** listeners are female, and 37% are male. Nearly 70% of **Radio Reading** listeners are senior citizens. Most **NFRRS** listeners are not totally blind, and were previously able to read printed matter on their own.

The **NFRRS** has become a trusted friend to its listeners. It helps those without sight become active members of society, and improves their quality of life. Twenty-three years of extraordinarily favorable listener comments have given great testament to the worth of the **NFRRS**, and to how important it has become to the blind and print-handicapped residents of the City of Buffalo, Western New York and Southern Ontario. Listeners often express how much the efforts of volunteer **radio readers** mean to them.

Recognitions

The **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service** has compiled an exemplary record of achievement throughout 23 years of giving the blind a chance to read. The **NFRRS** has broadcast more than 190,000 hours of **radio readings** to those without sight. The breadth and quality of **NFRRS radio readings** are unmatched by those of any other New York State service and virtually any other service in the nation.

The **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service** has received many citations for excellence, including *the Governor's Eleanor Roosevelt Community Service Award* (the greatest honor a State non-profit agency can receive), *the Buffalo Eye Bank Award* (for service above and beyond the call of duty to the sight-impaired), *the J.C. Penney Golden Rule Award* (for Western New York's outstanding volunteer service program), *the Buffalo News Best of Show Award* (the first non-profit agency ever honored for the year's best newspaper advertising) and *the National Association of Radio Reading Services Award* (for the nation's finest radio reading public awareness campaign).

The greatest recognitions come from **Radio Reading's** print-handicapped listeners. One gentleman told the agency how often he listened-- many times in the middle of the night. He said, "I just love the **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service**. My wife may be disturbed by my late-night listening, but she knows how much it means to me."

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Developments

The remarkable achievements of the **NFRRS** can be highlighted, year by year— showcasing a dynamic progression of award-winning community service...

- * *March 19, 1987: The **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service** begins broadcasting daily readings of printed matter to print-handicapped area residents...*
- * *1988: The **NFRRS** becomes the first international radio reading service, providing **reading radios** to print-handicapped Canadians in Ontario's Niagara Peninsula...*
- * *1989: The **NFRRS** develops a low-cost automation system, enabling the **Radio Reading Service** to expand its schedule to 24 hours every day...*
- * *1990: The **NFRRS** wins the **Governor's Eleanor Roosevelt Award**...*
- * *1991: The **NFRRS** moves to new studios with no interruption in its programming...*
- * *1992: The **NFRRS** wins the **J.C. Penney Golden Rule Award** for the outstanding volunteer community service program in Western New York...*
- * *1993: The **NFRRS** simulcasts on WKBW's "SAP" Channel, enabling TV listening...*
- * *1994: The **NFRRS'** "Maybe We Should Call It Radio" public awareness campaign is the first non-profit advertising to win the Buffalo News "**Best of Show**" Award...*
- * *1995: The **NFRRS'** Strategic Plan, confirms its twofold mission of continued service and outreach to those without sight, and commits to survival, growth and excellence...*
- * *1996: The last of five mini-telethons benefiting the **NFRRS** airs on Fox 29/WUTV...*
- * *1997: The **NFRRS** marks its 10th Anniversary of award-winning service...*

- * 1998: The **NFRRS** creates a “**Radio-Thon**” event, with guest **radio readers**...
- * 1999: The **NFRRS** reaches a milestone: **100,000 Hours of Radio Readings**...
- * 2000: The **NFRRS** implements its first major broadcast equipment upgrade since going on-air, thanks to a Public Telecommunications Facilities Program grant...
- * 2001: The **NFRRS** marks a year-long “15 years of **Radio Reading**” celebration...
- * 2002: The **NFRRS** purchases and moves into a permanent home of its own-- at 1199 Harlem Road, Cheektowaga...
- * 2003: The **NFRRS** develops its new studios and offices into a “volunteer-friendly” facility, maintaining optimum programming services during the transition...
- * 2004: The **NFRRS** establishes its internet website...
- * 2005: The **NFRRS** reaches the milestone of **150,000 Hours of Radio Readings**...
- * 2006: The **NFRRS** overcomes the loss of local government funding...
- * 2007: The **NFRRS** celebrates its 20th Anniversary on-the-air by reaching a landmark agreement with WNET for a new donated **Radio Reading** broadcast signal...
- * 2008: The **NFRRS** begins broadcasting on the new signal, and acquires and distributes hundreds of **reading radios** tuned to the new frequency...
- * 2009: The **NFRRS** continues giving the blind a chance to read, despite facing the monumental challenges of the nation's and region's financial crisis... and...
- * 2010: The **NFRRS** adds an additional signal, making its service available to print-handicapped residents of Jamestown and Southern Chautauqua County.

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New York State's first radio reading service was in Western New York-- not in Buffalo, but in Jamestown, sponsored by the Chautauqua-Cattaraugus County Library System. When the Jamestown radio reading service ceased operations in the early 1990's, print-handicapped residents Southern Chautauqua County were cut off from daily access to printed matter. Unfortunately, the signal of the **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service** could not reach them... that is, until now.

In 2008, the Western New York Public Broadcasting Association (WNYPBA) began donating use of its WNET-FM subcarrier broadcast signal to the **NFRRS** for Western New York **radio reading** transmission. The WNET-FM 94.5 primary signal could not reach many listeners in the Jamestown area, so the WNYPBA constructed a repeater FM station at 89.7, designed to reach Southern Chautauqua County. In 2010, the WNYPBA followed its great act of subcarrier generosity with another one, donating use of the repeater station's sideband to the **NFRRS** for concurrent **radio reading** transmission throughout the Jamestown area. Now, for the first time in nearly two decades, Jamestown area print-handicapped people were able to access printed matter, via the **NFRRS**. The cost to the **NFRRS** of adding the auxiliary signal amounted only to about \$500.00. Thanks to the generosity of the WNYPBA, the **NFRRS** is now able to reach print-handicapped people virtually throughout Western New York.

However, the good bad news presented a new challenge for the **Niagara Frontier**

Radio Reading Service. **Radio Reading** receivers are required to be tuned to a single frequency. The "**reading radios**" tuned to the **NFRRS'** primary 94.5 FM subcarrier do not work in Southern Chautauqua County. The **NFRRS** obtained an initial allotment of new receivers-- at a cost of about \$125 per unit-- tuned to the Jamestown-area 89.7 FM subcarrier signal for distribution to people there. In the days to come, the agency plans to seek special designated support for the purchase of additional **radio reading** receivers for Southern Chautauqua County area print-handicapped persons.

The need for Jamestown-area "**reading radios**" occurred just as the agency continued the project of purchasing receivers tuned to the **NFRRS'** new primary broadcast signal. The necessary mammoth undertaking placed a severe drain on available **NFRRS** operating resources at the onset of an unprecedented financial crisis affecting the **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service** and many of its traditional funding sources.

The **NFRRS** has upgraded its internet website at **nfradioreading.com**. The website provides information on the agency, including how to obtain the service, how to become a volunteer and ways to contribute. The website, maintained by volunteer webmaster Ron Storfer, has also become a key source for news of agency special events.

The agency has made more than 2,000 outreach presentations to community groups. The **NFRRS** and its activities receive much publicity from print and broadcast media.

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Many articles, features and thousands of public service announcements on the agency have enabled increased public awareness of and support for local **Radio Reading**.

Long recognized for its remarkable efficiency and productivity, the **NFRRS** has often been sought for advice and consultation by other agencies throughout the United States and Canada-- and in Africa, Asia and Europe. The agency has also been asked to participate with major commercial and non-profit entities regarding the national questions of free speech and constitutional broadcast safeguards.

Whether or not the current financial pressures subside, the future poses other extraordinary challenges for the nation's radio reading services, including the issue of provision of guaranteed **Radio Reading** space amidst a potentially redefined broadcast spectrum. There must be room for **Radio Reading** for the blind in every community.

The Future

Simply stated, the **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service** not only must survive, but it must maintain its quality of service, for the sake of its print-handicapped listenership.

The **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service** recognizes that it must overcome the financial crisis it faces, to guarantee its continuance to the many area blind and print-handicapped persons who now or will in the future depend upon it.

NFRRS listeners have come to expect the best possible service, and they deserve it. The **NFRRS** maximizes efficiency, but will not minimize service quality. Given the increases in virtually every aspect of necessary operating expenses, the agency must be ever vigilant in exploring new avenues of generating funding and developing revenue sources. Its ongoing fundraising efforts, including grant writing, special events, direct mail and planned/testamentary giving, must be pursued to maximum potential.

The **NFRRS** must generate greater public awareness. Print-handicapped persons, who would appreciate the **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service**, need to know of the **NFRRS'** existence and that they are eligible for it. Potential volunteers and donors should know about **Radio Reading's** importance to their neighbors without sight.

Key to the agency's reputation for excellence is its programming. Its program quality and breadth can only be maintained by the continual evaluation of schedules, formats, readings, reading materials and readers. Its listeners depend each day upon the totality of **NFRRS** readings of newspapers, magazines, books and special informational items.

Technological developments have had and will have a profound effect on the **NFRRS**.

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The agency's next major project must involve its conversion to computer-based digital studio broadcasting. Virtually all radio stations and most radio reading services no longer use analog tape-based equipment. The **NFRRS** finds it increasingly difficult to maintain and repair its analog equipment, and to acquire audiotape for recording and playback. The **NFRRS'** much-needed conversion to digital broadcast studio operations would reduce automation, production, repair, maintenance and service staff time.

Without the **NFRRS**, area print-handicapped persons would be cut off from the wealth of printed matter that most people take for granted. With the **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service**, they have daily access to the information, enlightenment and entertainment that printed matter can bring. The **NFRRS** will never be a cure for blindness, but it has become a godsend to those who face each day without sight.

In the coming year, the **Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service** will reach the milestone of producing and broadcasting **200,000 hours** of printed matter readings to area blind and print-handicapped listeners. Throughout 23 years of providing daily printed matter access to those without sight, the **NFRRS** has kept its promise to its

