



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Alaska State Library Talking Book Center to celebrate 80th anniversary of national library service for the blind**

ANCHORAGE -- On March 3, the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) – the Library of Congress’ talking-book and Braille program – will celebrate 80 years of helping visually impaired and physically disabled individuals enjoy reading their favorite books and magazines. On March 22, Alaska’s Talking Book Center will host a birthday party for its library patrons in Anchorage to mark this national event.

This free library program brings reading materials in digital audio and Braille formats straight to the homes of patrons from preschoolers to centenarians. Books on digital cartridge, digital talking-book players and Braille books are sent to patrons via the U.S. mail at no cost to users. People who sign up with the program also have the option of downloading books and magazines over the Internet in audio or Braille format. By law, priority is given to U.S. military veterans.

The Alaska State Library Talking Book Center, located in Anchorage, has been providing service in Alaskans since 1972. Congress appropriates funds annually to the Library of Congress for the NLS program, while staff, rent, and overhead for Alaska’s Talking Book Center are funded by the State of Alaska through the Department of Education and Early Development. The birthday party for NLS will be held on Tuesday, March 22 from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Talking Book Center, located at 344 West Third, Suite 125 in Anchorage.

“The Talking Book Center is an excellent resource for visually impaired and physically disabled Alaskans. The service offers recorded books – and is moving into the digital age – to help all Alaskans access literacy,” said Linda Thibodeau, Alaska State Librarian. “I congratulate the National Library Service for its 80 years, and thank our state’s Talking Book Center staff for their dedication. This is clearly an important service to Alaskans: our 953 patrons checked out nearly 46,000 books and magazines last year!”

The NLS collection of more than 400,000 titles of bestsellers, classics, biographies, romance and other genres delights even the most selective readers. Magazine lovers enjoy free subscriptions to

more than 40 periodicals in audio format, including *Consumer Reports*, *National Geographic*, and *Sports Illustrated for Kids*.

“Talking books offer a wonderful opportunity for anyone who cannot use regular print materials because of blindness or a physical disability,” says NLS Director Kurt Cylke. “For 80 years this service has been a priceless gift.”

The NLS program also keeps pace with the latest book titles, adding 2,500 annually. Patrons learn of new releases through two bi-monthly magazines, *Talking Book Topics* and *Braille Book Review*.

Those interested in learning more or signing up for service may call the Alaska State Library Talking Book Center at 1-800-776-6566 or 1-907-269-6575. Visit the Alaska State Library Talking Book Center at <http://library.state.ak.us/dev/tbc.html> or the NLS website at <http://www.loc.gov/nls/> .

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