

I signed up for braille to get out of the job I was in cutting grass outside for 8 hours a day. I am redheaded, and I don't know how much you know about redheads, but we aren't exactly made for the sun.

I stepped into a shop where a braille program had just begun in Tennessee. I joined just 6 months after it opened, and everything was being figured out. I always try to do my best, and it turns out I had somewhat of a knack for braille. I began to love the idea of learning this new language, and not only that, but what it would mean for those I would produce it for! I was going to help make materials for people who could read no other way, nor are there many people that even know how to produce the materials.

In just under two years, I earned my literary and formats certifications, and I was not far from my release date. I sent in my portfolio to APH Braille Transcriber's Apprenticeship Program (BTAP). I didn't think I would actually be accepted, but I sent it in anyway, and I am so glad that I did!

Just a few weeks after my release I was contacted by the one and only [redacted], my now "bonus mom". She came to see me shortly after with a laptop from APH and took me shopping for other materials.

There was only one thing I had to do, and that was put in the work to begin doing work in the field I had grown to love. [Redacted] connected me on emails with people, and soon I was being offered work. I began my LLC, and just finished a volume of a math book before writing this.

That isn't all. I went to the APH conference in October and met many people in my new field. Some I had already communicated with through email. What a blessing! I was welcomed like family, and felt no judgement for where I had come from. The braille community is my new family, and APH especially! I am so grateful for them and all they have done for me. I am now living in my own place, and have everything I need and more. Braille has been a large part of my success. The BTAP program is such a blessing to people like me that just need an opportunity. I give thanks to God for APH, the BTAP program, and my bonus mom.