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For Immediate Release

Louisville Residents Graduate from Blind Leaders Development Program

LOUISVILLE, KY (August 4, 2022)— American Printing House for the Blind (APH) is pleased to announce that Paul Ferrera, Communications Accessibility Editor; and Jessica Minneci, Communications Associate, have graduated from the [Blind Leaders Development Program](#) at the American Foundation for the Blind's (AFB) special commencement ceremony on Tuesday, August 2. Launched in 2020, the Blind Leaders Development Program was created by AFB to increase upward mobility and create meaningful leadership experiences for individuals who are blind or low vision, who are already employed and in the early stages of their careers.

“As we studied leadership qualities and discovered or confirmed strengths and opportunities for growth, I was even more strongly convinced that my work was valuable, that my passion for accessibility has, would, and could propel me to even greater levels of fulfillment,” Ferrera said. “In short, I was able to reinforce the message that I needed to continue to press on. Each successful project ... each completed task ... all of them bring forth a more accessible world.”

While in the program, Mr. Ferrera and Ms. Minneci received extensive training in leadership, networking, communication, and other key skills for advancing in their careers and improving their effectiveness as they achieve higher levels of authority and influence.

“I am grateful to the AFB staff, Lee Nasehi, and donors who made this program possible,” Minneci said. “I am also very grateful to my mentor, Amir Rahimi, for guiding me through the program and for his career advice and counsel in our weekly meetings.”

Other facets of the program included following the Leadership Challenge curriculum, attending a series of webinars, and being paired with a successful blind or low vision mentor who provided honest advice and feedback about what it takes to succeed in the workforce. Mr. Ferrera and Ms. Minneci were among 18 graduates of the Centennial Cohort, named as such in light of AFB celebrating 100 years advocating on behalf of those who are blind or have low vision throughout 2021.

“These 18 professionals, including Jessica and Paul, have honed their knowledge and skills to take on greater authority and responsibility in their professional fields,” said [Neva Fairchild](#), who oversees the program. “Due to their intensive learning and practice, as well as the work of their mentors, for whom we are all grateful, Jessica and Paul and their fellow graduates now have the imperative to create and sustain a more inclusive workforce.”

Mr. Ferrara is the Communications Accessibility Editor at the [American Printing House for the Blind](#) (APH), where his duties include testing and reviewing departmental documents and websites for accessibility with screen readers, as well as serving as the voice of many of APH's webinars. He also hosts a segment on APH's Changemakers podcast, called Partners with Paul, which involves interviewing individuals from companies that partner with APH to develop varying types of products. Before joining APH, he spent two years in customer service and then six years in collections for CitiBank. Mr. Ferrara has always been passionate about accessibility, and has worked to develop relationships with accessibility professionals from other companies whenever possible. He also holds two master's degrees in theology. Ferrara is a Certified Literary Braille Transcriber and holds an Accessible Document Specialist and Certified Professional in Accessibility Core Competencies certifications from the International Association of Accessibility Professionals. He also has a JAWS certification which indicates an expert level of knowledge with the JAWS screen reader.

Ms. Minneci is a Communications Associate at (APH), where her duties include compiling submissions, writing articles for, and editing APH's newsletter for educators and consumers, APH News. She also writes and edits blog posts for the APH website; creates and executes email campaigns for new APH Press titles; and edits and publishes the quarterly employee newsletter, InTouch. She is a graduate from Seton Hill University with a Bachelor's in English, Creative Writing; a Minor in Communication; and a Certificate in Genre Writing. Before joining APH, she worked as an Archivist Intern for the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill at Caritas Christi, located on the Seton Hill campus. She is currently pursuing her Masters in Writing Popular Fiction at Seton Hill. She also has a yellow Labrador guide dog named Joyce from Guide Dogs for the Blind in California, who she loves to go hiking with.

Since its inception in 2020, the program has seen a steady rise in applicants. The recently-launched [third cohort is the largest class](#) to date. For more information, visit [AFB.org/BlindLeaders](#).

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About the American Foundation for the Blind

The American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) mobilizes leaders, advances understanding, and champions impactful policies and practices using research and data. Publisher of the [Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness](#) for over a century, AFB is also proud to steward the accessible [Helen Keller Archive](#), honoring the legacy of our most famous ambassador. AFB's mission is to expand pathways to leadership, education, inclusive technology, and career opportunities to create a world of no limits for people who are blind, deafblind, or have low vision. To learn more, visit [www.afb.org](#).

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.