



Alissia Jones reciting the Pledge of Allegiance while holding her Braille flag.
Photo by Ed Breen

Marion High graduate born sightless but has vision for a bright future through Braille

By Ed Breen

Alissia Jones is 19 years old and she has never seen the American flag.

Last week, in yet another new experience, she felt the contours of the stars and the stripes of the flag and, as her fingers sped across the surface, she read aloud something of the history of the flag and the Pledge of Allegiance to that flag.

Alissia Jones, a new graduate of Marion High School, is sightless. Blind since birth, her interaction with the world is auditory and tactile. All is unseen, but that does not stop her. Slows her a bit, maybe, but that’s all and she demonstrated that on Thursday with a small group of people who introduced her to this flag intended to make it more meaningful to those who had never had the experience of “oh, say can you see . . .”

The flag was printed and embossed on heavy paper and the words – history and pledge – were delivered by a complex code of raised dots pressed into the paper.

It was in Braille, the writing system named for the man who created it 200 years ago, the system by which the whole world of the written word was opened up to those who cannot see. It is named for its inventor, a visually impaired Frenchman, Louis Braille.

Alissia Jones calls Braille “my very

own private language.”

The convergence of the young lady, the flag, and the Braille was caused by Ruthann Sumpter, a Marion resident and the leader of the Gen. Francis Marion Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution in the Grant County area.

Sumpter said she had seen a news report on Jones’s accomplishments in speed reading of Braille in a multi-state competition for sightless students.

“It occurred to me that the DAR had this Braille flag available for presentation to blind people and I thought, ‘well, why not.’”

Sumpter and her predecessor as DAR regent of the Marion chapter, Linda Kuester, Wabash, made the application and were selected for presentation to Jones, who graduated from Marion High School last week.

On Thursday morning, in a small ceremony in front of Marion High School and in the presence of Principal Keith Burke, Alissia Jones read the history of the American flag to a group who watched her fingers glide across the page on which there was not a single word imprinted in printer’s ink.

“This is very special to me,” Jones said, offering her thanks and assuring them that she will do well as she pursues a degree in humanities and business this fall at Indiana Wesleyan University.



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