

Talking Book Voices Podcast  
Season 3, Episode 4  
Volunteer Appreciation Month

April 2, 2026  
Podcast Transcript  
Laura and Volunteers

**Summary:** In this special episode, Volunteer Coordinator Laura celebrates Volunteer Appreciation Month by highlighting the voices behind the Talking Book Program. Through conversations with dedicated volunteers, you will get an inside look at what it's like to narrate, review, and monitor audio books and magazines. Volunteers share how they got involved, what keeps them coming back, and how the experience has expanded their interests and connections. This episode is a heartfelt tribute to the people who make TBP's services possible.

**NARRATOR INTRO:** Welcome to Talking Book Voices, the podcast. Get ready to embark on an adventure with us as we dive into and celebrate the magic of the Texas Talking Book Program. Let's raise our voices together and make the world of literature accessible for all. The Texas Talking Book Program is a division of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission and serves as a regional library for the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled, a division of the Library of Congress. The Talking Book Program

provides specialized library services to individuals who have a qualifying visual, physical, or reading disability, such as dyslexia.

In each episode of Talking Book Voices, we will delve into the heart of the program, uncovering its history, sharing inspiring stories, and exploring the vast collection of materials it has to offer. We will bring you the latest updates, interviews with program experts and patrons, and useful tips to make the most of this invaluable program for Texans and beyond.

So, whether you're an avid reader, someone with a print disability seeking accessible materials, or just curious to learn more about this great program, this podcast is made for you! Don't forget to visit us at [www.texastalkingbooks.org](http://www.texastalkingbooks.org) for more information. So, let's begin Texas Talking Book Voices, a podcast by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

**LAURA:** Hello everyone, my name is Laura Jakopak and I am the volunteer coordinator for the Talking Book Studio. Today we have a special treat for you. We're going to be speaking with some of our MVPs. Our volunteers, so let's get into it. Hi Staci!

**STACI:** Hello! How are you this morning, Laura?

**LAURA:** I am bright-eyed and bushy tailed. How are you?

**STACI:** Excellent, thank you.

**LAURA:** I love it. Staci is one of the first volunteers to come in every morning, and it is a delight to work with her.

**STACI:** Well, thank you Laura. It's so much fun to come in. I look forward to Monday mornings.

**LAURA:** See, now that's not something you hear every day, is it?

**STACI:** Especially not in a volunteer position, but I guess you should always look forward to volunteering.

**LAURA:** Yeah. It should be fun, right?

**STACI:** Absolutely.

**LAURA:** You should absolutely get a sense of, “Hey, I did something.”

So I just have a few questions for you. How long have you been a volunteer?

**STACI:** I have been with the Talking Book Program about four years.

**LAURA:** Wow. Excellent.

**STACI:** Yeah.

**LAURA:** How did you hear about the program?

**STACI:** Another volunteer named John Coffman rides bicycles, long distance bicycles, (they're nuts) with my husband. And he suggested after I retired that I come and volunteer and he is somebody that has volunteered in other states, even... he's volunteered here in Texas and in Arizona, just wherever he's lived. He's done it forever. And he's got one of those deep baritone very wide voices that are so good to listen to. And I thought, there is no way that I would be any good at this. And um, he's like, oh no, they'll love you. Just try it. And I tried it and I loved it. So here I am!

**LAURA:** Hey, and we're thrilled that you're here. I know I personally am thrilled that you're here. What's a typical day look like for you?

**STACI:** Well, I come in first thing in the morning after battling I35 traffic. And then after signing in, I get my marching orders from you, Laura. We're either going to record one of my books or maybe I'll do some reviews on some books, especially if they're behind or something like that. Um, which is kind of neat because you just sit back and you listen to somebody read to you, and then double check their work. And in my former life I was a policy analyst, so I am very detail oriented. My spice drawer is alphabetized and everything.

**LAURA:** Wow.

**STACI:** So reviews are right up my alley, but, then after a couple of hours of either reviewing or recording, then I monitor for John while he reads for two hours.

**LAURA:** You are a true triple threat here with the Talking Book Program, and we do ask all of our volunteers to review from time to time just because that is so important. We really want to have accurate recordings and we also want them to reflect the style of writing that is done, the tone and whatnot. So reviewing, everybody does, but not everybody monitors.

And today we have our amazing Shane Elam monitoring for us. Thank you, Shane. And then of course, narrating. Which, uh, you do brilliantly.

**STACI:** Oh, well, thank you.

**LAURA:** Has anything surprised you about volunteering with us?

**STACI:** I was really afraid that I wasn't going to be able to narrate.

**LAURA:** Mm-hmm. It's challenging.

**STACI:** It's very challenging, and I still don't cold read well. I take the books home and review everything before I come in, so I make margin notes so I know how to pronounce words, especially Spanish or French, which are not as familiar to me, but it's gotten a lot easier. And to be truthful, I've been doing narrating for almost three years now. And what am I, on my fourth book and umpteen magazine articles and I'm now finally becoming comfortable with it. I find that it's a lot of fun if I can just relax and, you know, because you monitor for me more than probably anybody else does. And it's so much easier when your monitor is friendly and encouraging and also, um, when the monitor can figure out a way to get you out of your head.

**LAURA:** Yes, yes.

**STACI:** The funnest time that I had with you as my monitor was when every time we'd start and you'd tell me “recording,” and it would just like throw me off.

**LAURA:** Yeah.

**STACI:** I would get all tense—

**LAURA:** Stage fright.

**STACI:** —and I couldn't, I couldn't get the word. I couldn't say words in the right order. I couldn't say words and everything like that. So then you started saying, “not recording” to get me to, no pressure, “not recording,” and then I could take off and go. And we haven't had to do that in a very long time.

**LAURA:** Very long time.

**STACI:** But that helped me get through that. So the role of the monitor, I mean, is so important to making the narrator feel comfortable.

**LAURA:** Yes, that makes sense.

**STACI:** And I think the other thing that helps with narration is the reviews. Doing reviews.

**LAURA:** Yes.

**STACI:** Because you not only get to hear the really competent narrators...

**LAURA:** John Coffmans and Evs and Billy...

**STACI:** Exactly. Those people that just should be on NPR full time. Right? Their, their voices are perfect. They read at a perfect pace and everything. And so you're like, "I wanna be like them when I grow up!" But you also get to hear the people that are struggling.

**LAURA:** Yeah!

**STACI:** And so when you are the narrator, you know that I am not alone in my struggles—

**LAURA:** Absolutely.

**STACI:** —that other people have trouble too.

**LAURA:** Absolutely.

**STACI:** And so all of the jobs kind of... All of the volunteer positions, they're not jobs, you don't get paid, but except for in cookies.

**LAURA:** Thanks again to Shane.

**STACI:** That's right. All of the different positions, um, kind of feed into each other.

**LAURA:** Yes.

**STACI:** And I think too, when... when you're mainly a reviewer, if you get to monitor or you do get to do some magazine articles or something, then you get to see the other side of it. And you realize why that person can't get "the," and they kept saying "that," or they skip all of the "ofs" in a sentence, or they miss an A or they slur through words or something. I think you're a lot more sympathetic as a reviewer when you've actually done either some monitoring or some recording.

**LAURA:** Thank you for that insight. I really love that. Was there anything else that you would like to share with our listeners?

**STACI:** If you get a chance to come down and volunteer? I think it's well worth it. I think we make such a difference in the community.

**LAURA:** Mm-hmm.

**STACI:** Not just for people that are blind, but for people that have lost either part of their vision so that they can't read anymore, or people that have learning disabilities that can't, um, can't pick up a written book and read.

**LAURA:** Right.

**STACI:** They still get access to all those wonderful stories.

**LAURA:** Yes.

**STACI:** And I think it's... You know, you'll hear about volunteering at the hospital and holding the babies and at the food banks and, and with the homeless. And those are all fantastic volunteering opportunities—

**LAURA:** For sure.

**STACI:** —but the Talking Book Program fills a different niche.

**LAURA:** Mm-hmm.

**STACI:** And so if some of those places don't feel like they're you, and you kind of want something a little more behind the scenes and a little different, maybe the Talking Book program is someplace to explore.

**LAURA:** I love that. Thank you, Staci. It's been so much fun speaking with you.

**STACI:** Thank you for having me and asking me to do this!

**LAURA:** My pleasure. Next we have Robbi Crockett. Hi Robbi.

**ROBBI:** Hi Laura!

**LAURA:** Thanks for being willing to do this with me.

**ROBBI:** My pleasure.

**LAURA:** So how long have you been volunteering with the Talking Book Studio?

**ROBBI:** I would say since 2018.

**LAURA:** Woah. So you've seen some changes in the tech and the, the situation and everything. That's exciting. How did you first hear about the program?

**ROBBI:** On NPR.

**LAURA:** Okay!

**ROBBI:** Mm-hmm.

**LAURA:** And, uh, was it Billy doing the spot?

**ROBBI:** I... Billy and I have had that conversation and I wanna say yes, but I also learned about it because I work within the Deaf and Deafblind community. And so the blind school, I was looking at some of their outreach things and I saw it listed there as well, so.

**LAURA:** Lovely. That's how I heard about the Talking Book Program; was the spot on NPR with Billy. So, um, yeah, he's done lots. He's amazing to bring people in. And we will hear from Billy a little bit later.

**ROBBI:** He's an honor to work with for sure.

**LAURA:** What is it like volunteering? What does a typical day look like for you?

**ROBBI:** What I love about coming in is that it is just a rock, a foundation. And I say that because the people here, staff and volunteers, we really have become like a community. You look forward to seeing each other. And so even from coming into the front door, you see the security. They let you down the elevator, you come in, do your work, you check in, you know what's expected of you, but there's also that flexibility in place. Then once you come into the studio, you either do, as you know, your review duties or your monitor duties or narrating. And that's the other great thing about working here is because you literally have space to work up, but then

you also have space to do as much as you can or as little as you can—

**LAURA:** Right.

**ROBBI:** —but you always have that the season of change. So in the summer, if you can't give as much, but you can in the winter, that's the nice thing of keeping that consistency and that's what I look forward to.

**LAURA:** Absolutely. Has there been a favorite project or a project that's kind of lingered for you after it's been completed?

**ROBBI:** Hmm. I'm honored to be monitor for Ev Lunning and Billy Brookshire.

**LAURA:** Yes!

**ROBBI:** And I would say anything they do, I'm excited about and so, but they've also opened the doors for me. Because I don't know a whole lot about Texas history. I have now since I listened to both of them, but also their in-depth knowledge of not only history, but Texas history. And then these writers, they're like, oh, I've done this series. I've done this series. So now I'm like, “Ooh, how many of those books?”

**LAURA:** Yeah.

**ROBBI:** So I look forward to doing the next one and the next one.

**LAURA:** That makes sense. You get engaged in books.

**ROBBI:** Yes, and it makes Texas even more interesting. Even the magazines like to the point that we subscribe to those magazines

and we really love to find out, “Ooh, I wanna go to there this weekend or next month,” so... We love... yeah.

**LAURA:** I can relate to that. Um, not being a native Texan, when we have the magazines come in, I'm always excited to see a place in Texas spotlighted or a little bit of Texas history that I was unaware of kind of illuminated for me. So I really enjoy that.

**ROBBI:** Yes! Exactly. All parts. And it makes Texas, even though we know it's the largest state and it, you know, is so huge, you're like, “wow, north, south, east, west.” It really is its own world within a world.

**LAURA:** So diverse.

**ROBBI:** So diverse.

**LAURA:** Are you currently reading anything? At home?

**ROBBI:** Oh, at home I am, I'm actually, uh, reading a book called *Mother Father Deaf*.

**LAURA:** Oooh!

**ROBBI:** And it is about, uh, children of deaf adults.

**LAURA:** Okay.

**ROBBI:** Uh, and so it's short stories, um, based on various interviews, so.

**LAURA:** That sounds interesting. Do you have a particular genre of books that you gravitate towards or would like to explore?

**ROBBI:** I gravitate towards nonfiction.

**LAURA:** Okay!

**ROBBI:** I love anything about the study of the brain, study of emotions. Um. I love studying anything about children behavior.

**LAURA:** Yes.

**ROBBI:** Um, and especially how it affects young adults and how we transition and what's the definition of an adult—

**LAURA:** Ahhhh.

**ROBBI:** —or what's the definition of a child?

**LAURA:** Yes.

**ROBBI:** And because usually a disability carries a comorbidity and so you don't usually have one disability, you have multiples, but how they can actually help each other.

**LAURA:** Ohhh.

**ROBBI:** And so that's the part that really interests me. I think now the kind of key word is superpowers with an S. And so I truly believe in that. So kind of focusing on the five senses. And so if you may not have one as strong, your others are heightened, but at the same time, because you don't have one, they learn to work together even more. And so the fascination of how the brain works. Just that. I love that.

**LAURA:** Yes. That is fascinating. Thank you for sharing that. Was there anything else you would like our listeners to know?

**ROBBI:** I would have to say volunteering here, because it is so diverse, even the volunteers, the staff, um, what you can choose to listen to, what you can choose to read, um, it is an investment. And it's an investment for me because when I come in here, apart from what I do for a living, it really is my space where I can learn something that otherwise I wouldn't have applied myself to. And so

if that's something that interests you, then this is a place for you to come.

**LAURA:** Thank you, Robbi, for sharing your experience with us. It was great to chat with you.

**ROBBI:** Thank you, Laura.

**LAURA:** My pleasure. Good morning, Billy!

**BILLY:** Good morning, Laura.

**LAURA:** Thank you for, uh, sitting down and interviewing with me.

**BILLY:** Oh sure.

**LAURA:** I appreciate it. We were chatting earlier, Staci and I, and Robbi and I, that we heard about this program on NPR. And it was you who was, uh, doing the prompt for, “Hey, come volunteer with us.”

**BILLY:** Oh, totally cool!

**LAURA:** So when I got to meet you, I'm like, “I know that voice!” How long have you been volunteering with the Talking Book Studio?

**BILLY:** Uh, since 2008, I believe.

**LAURA:** Oh my goodness.

**BILLY:** Yeah.

**LAURA:** So you've seen quite the technology shifts, huh?

**BILLY:** Uh, well, you know, a, a little bit. They were still doing cassettes when I started. Trying to think of some of the other changes, but they shifted to a digital format pretty, pretty soon thereafter.

**LAURA:** Nice. That makes sense. It's a lot easier to do. How do you, do you remember how you heard about the studio?

**BILLY:** Well, I worked for 40 years... I've worked for over 40 years in the blindness field. I guess it's about 50 years now since I still volunteer here.

**LAURA:** Wow.

**BILLY:** Part of our training when we joined the agency was to tour different agencies. This was around 1975. And so, in 1975, I toured the studio and I thought, boy, that's kind of a neat thing. Uh, but it was really different then. It was the old reel to reel tape recorders.

**LAURA:** Wow.

**BILLY:** The booth was, uh, that the, uh, the narrator sat in was, I'm guessing, three times this size, but there was only one. I don't know how they did all the narration they did back in those days. But it was just a really neat setup, and you could tell they were enjoying it by the smiles on their faces. I thought, nah, maybe one day.

**LAURA:** Yeah. Has anything surprised you about volunteering with the Talking Book Studio?

**BILLY:** I don't know that it's surprised so much as impressed by how professional, uh, the staff are, how professionally this whole thing is handled, how quickly the things get to the patrons. I have... I have no idea. Many, many friends, uh, because I was in the field so long, I've got a, a lot of my friends are blind. They're visually impaired and uh, a lot of them listen to talking books and so I get feedback from them as well.

**LAURA:** Marvelous. Wonderful. What does a typical day look like for you volunteering?

**BILLY:** Uh, well for me it's pretty simple. I think, uh, you know, I just do two hours a week, sometimes more depending on whether it's a rush or, or, uh, whether Robbi and I have to mix our schedules around a bit, but basically... come in and narrate and leave. And from time to time I do, when I stumble over words, do this stuff: "Rubber baby buggy bumper." See, I can't even do that.

**LAURA:** Red leather, yellow leather, red leather, yellow.

**BILLY:** That's the one! How much wood could a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood. All those things, so.

**LAURA:** A woodchuck would chuck as much as a woodchuck could chuck, if a woodchuck could chuck wood.

**BILLY:** Oh holy cow. Oh wow!

**LAURA:** Did I impress you?

**BILLY:** Yes, you did. Yes you did. I couldn't do that.

**LAURA:** Are you currently reading anything in your personal life and if so, what?

**BILLY:** I'm reading a book called *The White Princess*.

**LAURA:** Oooh.

**BILLY:** And uh, I don't know if you're familiar with Philippa Gregory.

**LAURA:** I am not.

**BILLY:** It's not the kind of thing I ordinarily read. In fact, it's more like what my wife would read. She likes gothic England.

**LAURA:** Oooh.

**BILLY:** And this is about Henry VII's reign and his princess, whose, uh, name was Elizabeth.

**LAURA:** Okay.

**BILLY:** And, uh, it's, uh, uh, it's absolutely awful. The book is well written, but the period... You realize how, uh brutal those people were.

**LAURA:** I see.

**BILLY:** Uh, Henry, you know, had to eliminate all the people that, uh, that came before him and the pretenders to the throne and for his entire reign, pretty much, there were pretenders.

**LAURA:** Oh my goodness.

**BILLY:** And so he's killing people. So far he's only let one, one, uh, pretender go.

**LAURA:** Okay.

**BILLY:** And, uh, the rest of them, he pretty much murdered.

**LAURA:** Oh my goodness. That does sound brutal.

**BILLY:** Had them beheaded. I guess it was legal, but it's, you know, that's just, he, he was not the nicest of all persons. And the aristocracy, uh, aristocracy in those days. That was just the way they were. Ordinarily I read... I like science fiction a lot.

**LAURA:** Me too.

**BILLY:** So I've read a whole lot of that.

**LAURA:** Nice.

**BILLY:** Uh, I like history and historical novels. Uh, I also like, uh, I call 'em pot boilers.

**LAURA:** Pot boilers?

**BILLY:** It's the real action-oriented kinds of things.

**LAURA:** Oh, yes.

**BILLY:** Like, uh, David Baldacci.

**LAURA:** Okay.

**BILLY:** Uh, I love, I've loved Baldacci a lot. His best book, though, that I read, is not really action oriented that he usually has. It's, it's called *Wish You Well*.

**LAURA:** Oh!

**BILLY:** He has, he and his wife started a foundation called Wish You Well, that helps kids and parents.

**LAURA:** Oh, marvelous.

**BILLY:** So anyway, really love his stuff.

**LAURA:** Perfect, thank you. I'm gonna add that to my wanna read list.

**BILLY:** I also read a lot of Austin authors.

**LAURA:** Okay.

**BILLY:** My favorite's Sarah Bird.

**LAURA:** Okay. Oh, she's great.

**BILLY:** I just love her stuff.

**LAURA:** Yeah, excellent writer.

**BILLY:** Uh, *The Mommy Club*, one of my favorite books of all time and, uh, about three years ago, four years ago, I got to meet her. She did a, a talk at, uh, Neil Cochran.

**LAURA:** Oh, wow!

**BILLY:** And so I went and we just hit it off immediately. She's just, she's just as delightful in person, you know, as she is in her books. I just had the greatest visit with her.

**LAURA:** Oh, how wonderful.

**BILLY:** She's wonderful.

**LAURA:** We've recently uploaded *Recent Studies Indicate* by Sarah Bird, so, um, yeah.

**BILLY:** I'll have to grab one of her books one of these days. Although a feminine voice might be good for her stuff. Some of the books, not all of them.

**LAURA:** Sure, sure. Is there anything else you would like our listeners to know?

**BILLY:** I think everybody needs to know how much fun this is. Um, I, I knew it'd be fun, you know? And, and having seen how the process worked.

**LAURA:** Right.

**BILLY:** But it's, it's the people who work here, the personalities are such wonderful personalities. Uh, so it's you guys and it's, uh, it's the other narrators who I really don't get to know very well. I see 'em usually once a year at the appreciation dinner, you know?

**LAURA:** Yeah.

**BILLY:** Some of them I work with periodically. This process attracts a lot of, of very good people—

**LAURA:** I agree.

**BILLY:** — who were very involved in what they'd want to do, uh, wanna make a difference and, like me, absolutely love reading.

**LAURA:** In addition to this, you also lead art tours around Austin.

**BILLY:** Uh, yeah, that's something I might want to talk about. It's, I do, I do 20 plus tours and that, what, what was funny is when I first started doing this, of course we read all books about Texas and about Texas authors. And so initially I picked books on, on history because as a tour guide, you know, it helped me as a tour guide.

**LAURA:** Sure.

**BILLY:** I'm a, a certified Austin tour guide. And so. Uh, it helped me expand that, so I was kind of doing the same thing with that as with

this, but golly, it expanded my knowledge of so many things. So the tours, I'm trying to think how much this has enhanced tours— quite a lot. It helped me with the character I do sometime called Ben Thompson. I don't know if you know Ben Thompson.

**LAURA:** I'm not familiar.

**BILLY:** He was the sheriff of Austin from 1880 to 1882. A notorious gunslinger killed, by his estimates, over 40 people.

**LAURA:** Woah.

**BILLY:** Fought in Maximilian's army, was in the Civil War. He fought in one of the cottonclads, if you know what the cottonclads were.

**LAURA:** I don't.

**BILLY:** The ironclads, you know, were the Merrimack and the Monitor.

**LAURA:** Right.

**BILLY:** That they, uh, that they took these old boats and, and ironclad them. Well, in South Texas when they were defending Galveston, they didn't have a lot of iron, but they had lots of cotton bales.

**LAURA:** Oh my word!

**BILLY:** And so what they did was stack cotton bales all around these, the parts of these boats. And those cotton bales are a lot harder than the iron really. You know, you can't get a bullet through the things.

**LAURA:** That is fascinating!

**BILLY:** So it protects them. They called 'em the cottonclads.

**LAURA:** Cottonclads!

**BILLY:** So I learned things like that. That, uh, that leaked into my, my tour guiding, uh, 'cause I do a, a Republic of Texas tour. I do a Civil War tour. Uh. Volunteer at Oakwood... There's Save Austin Cemeteries. I volunteer for Save Austin Cemeteries. They do enactments every year. The best one is around Halloween. It's called, uh, "Murder Mayhem and Misadventure."

**LAURA:** Ooh, I'm putting that one on my calendar.

**BILLY:** It's a lot of fun. It's a lot of fun, and we just stand by the graveside and enact some of the, the action of this particular character. One portion of their life. I talked Robbi into doing it, uh, last year, year before last, I don't know. But they're always looking for volunteers, Laura.

**LAURA:** Alright, alright. I'm intrigued. Billy, it's been a pleasure chatting with you. Thank you.

**BILLY:** Oh, you're most welcome. Thank you, Laura.

**LAURA:** Good morning Tom!

**TOM:** Good morning!

**LAURA:** Thanks for coming in today. How long have you been a volunteer with the Talking Book Studio?

**TOM:** About a year and two months.

**LAURA:** Wow. Has it already been a year? I remember when you first came in, I was excited.

**TOM:** It's gone fast.

**LAURA:** I have no judgment. Sometimes folks will come in for the tour and I think, “oh, they're gonna love it here,” and I never hear from them again. And then sometimes they'll come in and I'll be like, “I don't know if they were feeling the vibe here.” And then they come in like you all the time, which is amazing. So thank you for everything that you do for us. Do you remember how you heard about the studio?

**TOM:** Yes, I do. It was about 50 years ago.

**LAURA:** What??

**TOM:** The, uh, recording studio at that time was located on the campus of the school for the blind. And I would pass it twice a day going to work. And I'd see a sign once in a while and encouraging people to volunteer.

**LAURA:** Ahhh.

**TOM:** I thought, I think I would like to do that. But we moved away and never, never did. When we moved back to Austin, uh, retired and, uh, had the opportunity. So I'm grateful that you, uh, brought me on board.

**LAURA:** Fabulous. So that little seed like stayed planted and waited for the right time to sprout.

**TOM:** Right.

**LAURA:** That's marvelous. What is it like volunteering with us? What does a typical day look like for you?

**TOM:** Well, I come in twice a week typically. And one day, uh, I'm expecting to review, uh, the entire time listening to recordings that others have made, checking for things that need to be corrected, but occasionally, uh, a monitor is not available and I will substitute for someone. Uh, then the second day I come in expecting to review the first two hours, and the second two hours have started narrating, uh, which I've enjoyed.

**LAURA:** Yes. And I have the privilege of monitoring for you, and you're doing a fantastic job. You are a natural. Has anything surprised you about volunteering with us?

**TOM:** Yeah, I think two things. Uh, one is what a long and tedious process it is to get a book ready for the patrons to use.

**LAURA:** Yes.

**TOM:** I had no idea of how many steps were involved and how lengthy the process was. Of course, the volunteers only here, uh, a few times a week. And it takes a long time to get everything finished.

And the other surprise was I've enjoyed reading and or listening to, uh, books that I would never pick up in the library or the bookstore. They just don't appeal to me.

**LAURA:** Right.

**TOM:** But I open them and listen to them and they're delightful. So that's been a, it's been a good expansion of my uh, of my worldview.

**LAURA:** Yes! Oh my goodness. I love that. Are you currently reading anything in your personal life?

**TOM:** I started a book, and I'm sorry I can't remember the author's name, but it's, uh, written by a Sherpa Buddhist, uh, in, uh, Nepal. And his father was, uh, one of the early mountain climbers of Mount Everest.

**LAURA:** Wow.

**TOM:** And he's following in his father's footsteps and viewing it as sort of not only a physical journey, but a spiritual journey as well. So, uh, I've enjoyed getting started in that book.

**LAURA:** That sounds fascinating. Is there anything else you'd like to share with our listeners?

**TOM:** Well, I suspect it comes through, uh, in some subtle way, but I think it's good for the patrons to know what a delightful group of people put their efforts together, uh, to make this material available. Uh, those of you who are full-time employees are just great to work with and the volunteers are delightful and, uh, it's just a, a good experience for all of us. And I hope that kind of, uh, energy comes through somehow, uh, in the recordings.

**LAURA:** I hope so too. Thank you, Tom. It's been a delight to speak with you.

**TOM:** Thank you.

**LAURA:** Thank you for sharing some time with us getting to know Staci and Robbi and Billy and Tom, and thank you to Shane for recording this. If you know of anybody who would like to volunteer

with us, please don't hesitate to have them email either me:  
[ljakopak@tsl.texas.gov](mailto:ljakopak@tsl.texas.gov) or our general studio mailbox email,  
[tbp.volstudio@tsl.texas.gov](mailto:tbp.volstudio@tsl.texas.gov).

Thank you again, and I hope you have a wonderful day.