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By **Patrick Ronan** The Patriot Ledger

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MARSHFIELD —

The Talking Information Center, at 130 Enterprise Drive, announced Friday it is set to launch reading services for a national audience beginning in September. The company, which was established in 1978, currently serves approximately 23,000 listeners in Massachusetts by broadcasting readings of periodicals that are not typically accessible to the blind and visually impaired.

The national stream is made possible by a \$10,000 grant from the Verizon Foundation, the charitable arm of the telecommunications company. Talking Information Center Executive Director and founder Ron Bersani said the grant covers the cost of the new stream, a server to manage the stream and the extra staff needed to oversee the program.

Unlike the Massachusetts reading service, which has affiliates in Boston, Lowell, Mashpee, Worcester, Springfield and Pittsfield, the national stream will broadcast content that appeals specifically to a national audience. Bersani said periodicals such as The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times and The Washington Post will be featured on the national broadcasts, which will be streamed online and offered at no charge to other reading services in the U.S.

“There’s no one else in the country doing anything like this,” Bersani said.

The Talking Information Center hired Katie Crocker of Wareham in the spring to produce the national programming. Crocker, 25, is legally blind and is one of the first graduates of the Vocational Opportunities in Communication Education (VOICE), a first-of-its-kind program that prepares blind students with training in communication fields such as on-air broadcasting, digital editing and program producing.

The program, launched last September by the Talking Information Center and the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, is based in a studio on Boylston Street in Boston.

“I never really considered radio as a career,” Crocker said. “But, from the first day of the VOICE program, I fell in love with every aspect of broadcast radio.”

Crocker said the Talking Information Center has accommodated her vision impairment by allowing her to bring her seeing-eye dog, Traveler, into work every day.

Bersani said the Marshfield-based reading service is flourishing while similar programs throughout the nation are cutting back due to budget constraints. He credits the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind for much of their lasting success.

“Janet LaBreck, the commissioner of the commission, is a huge supporter of reading services for the blind,” Bersani said. “She really believes in this service and has really advocated on our behalf.”

The award-winning station also benefits from 200 volunteers who read from periodicals at the Marshfield studio.

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Read more: <http://www.enterpriseneews.com/archive/x1510863297/Marshfield-radio-station-for-blind-going-national#ixzz1TmO8z4Gk>