



## ***Life Doesn't Stop When Life-Altering Disabilities Occur*** *Anthology Collects Winners of First Helen Keller Foundation Contest*

AUGUST 2008 – Blindness. Deafness. Cancer. Traumatic brain injury. Erb's Palsy and Parkinson's Disease. Accidents and defects. The paths taken by people living with a disability may vary, but they lead to one destination where that disability is overcome and life abounds.

It is not an easy journey, as expressed by the twenty-nine pieces of writing that comprise *Reading Lips and Other Ways to Overcome a Disability*. The anthology collects winners of the first Helen Keller Foundation for Research and Education International Memoir Competition.

"These people had a mission in life, one they realized only after they confronted their disabilities," said editor Diane Scharper. "This is perhaps why an anthology so filled with human suffering is also filled with hope."

The book approaches matters from the perspective of people who are living with disability, people who defeated their disease, and the friends and loved ones who live with a person coping with disability or disease. Announced in November, 2004, the Helen Keller Foundation competition called for memoirs written in poetry or prose of 3,000 words or fewer. By the June 1, 2005, deadline, the foundation received nearly 300 entries, much more than anticipated. Even though the contest was only promoted in the United States, entries came from all over the world—Scotland, Australia, New Zealand, India, Indonesia, Africa, and Israel.

"I've seen first-hand the benefits of the research of the Helen Keller Foundation," said co-editor Dr. Philip Scharper, who hopes the anthology will bring further attention to the Foundation's efforts to eliminate blindness. A retina-surgeon, Dr. Scharper provided the clinical expertise for the editorial team.

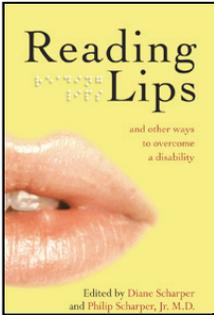
"In this anthology the writers share their joys and frustrations, as living with visual, hearing, and physical impairment requires an openness to learning new skills and lessons every day," said Elizabeth Folwell, Creative Director at *Adirondack Life* magazine in Jay, New York, who contributed the essay "Two-Thirds of a Trilogy." "Each essay is a testimony to overcoming adversity and living on."

"The wind which can suddenly blow across the face of a visually impaired person while crossing a street or disfiguring scars left behind one who has had life saving surgery to remove a malignant nasal tumor are reminders to us all that life has its challenges," said Eve Higginbotham, M.D., Dean and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs at Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta. "Indeed it is the art of overcoming challenges that makes a life."

**Diane Scharper** is a member of the National Book Critics Circle. She teaches writing at Towson University in Baltimore. Her other books include *Radiant: Prayer Poems* and *Songs of Myself: Episodes from the Edge of Adulthood*. **Philip Scharper, Jr., M.D.** is a board-certified ophthalmologist who specializes in diagnosing and treating diseases of the retina. He was a fellow with the Helen Keller Foundation for Research and Education.

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