

# Book News And Notes



## Visually Impaired Reader Inspires Author

(NAPSA)—Four years ago, bestselling author Mary Jane Clark spoke at the Friends of the New Jersey Library for the Blind and Handicapped's Fall Festival. There, she met Otilie Lucas, a former rehabilitation teacher for people with macular degeneration and other disabilities who is visually impaired herself.

After the festival, "we continued our correspondence and one thing led to another," Lucas says of Clark. "She decided to include a character in her next book with macular degeneration."

And so was born Terri Donovan, introduced in the first book in Clark's Wedding Cake Mysteries series, 2011's "To Have and to Kill."

"Mary Jane asked me to give her ways to identify symptoms that a person may be experiencing macular degeneration," Lucas says. These include blurred vision and difficulty discerning the intensity of colors—symptoms shared by Terri Donovan, who runs a bakery and is the mother of the protagonist of Clark's series, struggling actress Piper Donovan.

Lucas, who was born with retinitis pigmentosa, became a patron of the New Jersey State Library Talking Book and Braille Center (TBBC) in 1966. TBBC is among more than 100 libraries across the United States affiliated with the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS), part of the Library of Congress.

NLS oversees a free reading program for U.S. residents and citizens living abroad who are blind, have low vision, or cannot hold a book because of a physical



**The new mystery series by Mary Jane Clark (above) features a visually impaired character inspired by a real-life reader.**

disability. NLS patrons may choose from tens of thousands of books and dozens of magazines in audio and braille—including mysteries such as Mary Jane Clark's. NLS also loans the portable playback equipment needed to read its audiobooks. Patrons may access books online through the NLS Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) service.

Lucas has been married 49 years and has been on more than 20 ocean cruises. "Otilie is such an inspiration," Clark says. "She helped me so much in the creation of Terri Donovan—a mother who faces macular degeneration head-on, who doesn't feel sorry for herself and is determined to adapt to the challenges she faces. I wish I were as brave as Terri and Otilie!"

To learn more about how the NLS program can help you, a loved one or a friend, go online to [www.loc.gov/nls](http://www.loc.gov/nls) or call 1-888-NLS-READ.