

Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired

# Canada Bulletin

## Greetings Fellow AER Canadians!

### Featured In this issue:

- Upcoming events & dates to remember
- M.O.M. Conference
- Canadian Membership Update
- AER International Conference
- Coping Strategies for Living with AMD
- SCORE
- Unified English Braille—A Short Course
- Ontario AER Outlook

I hope you all had a great Summer. Now that Summer is over, it is time to begin thinking about Fall events. There are some major upcoming Canadian conferences.

The BC Vision Teachers' Conference 2010: Inspiring Success takes place October 21-23 in Richmond at the Vancouver Marriott Hotel. The conference is presented by the Metro Vancouver Chapter of the BC Vision Teachers' Association (in collaboration with PRCVI

and SET-BC). For more information and to register, please visit <http://www.prcvi.org/hostedsites/BCVTA.htm>

One week later will be the annual CNIB Conference at the CNIB Centre in Toronto, ON October 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. The theme of this year's conference is "Now I Know MY ABCs": Access, Braille, Communication. Please visit <http://cnib.ca/en/events/cnib-conference/>

The Vision Quest Conferences will be in Toronto (Saturday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>)

and Ottawa (Saturday, October 30<sup>th</sup>). Please visit [www.ffb.ca](http://www.ffb.ca) for program details.

Please continue to send event information, articles, Chapter news, etc... for future issues as the Bulletin is an excellent way to communicate across the country. Please feel welcome to contact me with concerns or ideas you have regarding AER in Canada.

Best Regards,  
Dan Vodon

## SCORE—Skills Confidence and Opportunities through Recreation and Education

Written by Nick Lebrun, CNIB Program Coordinator, Child and Youth

SCORE 2010 is a fantastic opportunity created by CNIB to assist adolescent clients from across Canada. SCORE is a two week intensive summer program for 16 to 18 year olds who are blind or partially sighted. This program has a strong focus on leadership, per-

sonal development, post-secondary and career preparation.

The first week of the SCORE programming takes place at the CNIB Lake Joseph Centre. Here students have the opportunity to do many things in its fully accessi-

ble facility. Many activities are offered there such as canoeing, tubing, tandem bicycling and many more. It's not all fun and games, this program does include many helpful workshops.

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## SCORE (Continued from page 1)

SCORE aims to help students build skills such as confidence and leadership that will be important for their future success. The four primary themes are teamwork, leadership, personal development and civic responsibility.

The second week takes place in Toronto. Here the students are required to participate in a 3 day community service project. They have a choice of volunteering with either Habitat for Humanity, Toronto Urban Garden, Good Shepherd Homeless Centre, Royal Ontario Museum or High Park Nature Centre. Every year, students have a great time volunteering and are sad to leave by the end. The community placement program gives all of the students a good chance to get work experience and to give back to the community.

The program also has a post secondary night. Topics include advocacy, accessibility services and the opportunity to talk to other students with vision loss. During the time spent in Toronto students stay at the Ryerson university residence so they get a glimpse of university

life. Career Night is the highlight of the program! Students have the opportunity to talk with successful professionals who are living with vision loss and they are open to ask any questions they want.

The program also has a recreation component to promote fun alongside learning about healthy, balanced lifestyles and physical activity. Participants learn important advocacy skills and learn from the successes and challenges of their peers with vision loss.

Learning during this program does not strictly happen during scheduled instructional time.

Learning happens all the time. The students are constantly learning from each other and learning the necessary social skills of life. Score gives the students opportunities to try things that they may never have had a chance to try. SCORE does not only impact the student's lives during the two weeks it is run, it is a far reaching program that will affect the students for the rest of their lives. SCORE teaches its par-

ticipants the skills necessary to become an active member of the community and gives them the confidence to go out into their communities, and make a difference.

Independent Living Skills and Orientation and Mobility are a big part of SCORE. An Independent Living Skills Specialist is on staff to teach the students tips and strategies for living independently away from home for the first time. SCORE is a great opportunity for stu-



dents to further develop their O&M skills as well. An O&M specialist works with them in a group setting and on an individual basis to help foster their skills and increase independence. By having Toronto as a setting the students have the opportunity to learn about the subway, buses and how to commute in a busy urban environment.

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## From Susan Howe, AER Canadian Representative

Dear Friends,

Welcome back. I hope you have experienced a great summer and that you are rested and refreshed for the year ahead.

This was an exciting summer for AER, especially for those who attended the Conference in Little Rock. I had the pleasure of meeting with the Canadian delegates, and although my AER duties kept me from attending the restaurant social with them, I know they had a great time renewing friendships and getting to know each other.

The conference was a great success. The diverse program ensured something for everyone, and the program did exactly what Sandy Ru-



conich, 2010 International Conference Program Committee Chair, predicted. We were informed and challenged in countless ways. The MacFarland Seminar on "Brain Injury and Vision Loss: Medical Insights into Our New Challenge" made us far more aware of the results of brain injury, even seemingly minor head injuries occurring in sports, and the precautions that need to be taken. Kudos to Sandy, members of the Program Committee and, Jim Gandorf and the staff at central office, for making this one of the most successful AER conferences. Well Done!

I have the honour of serving you in AER for the next two years. I thank all of you who put your trust in me by voting for me. It promises to be a challenging year for the

International Board of Directors. We are saddened at the resignation of Jim Gandorf, our Executive Director. During the 4 years of Jim's tenure, membership has been increased, new regional conferences have been created and a new scholarly journal (with our own Debra Gold as the Editor in Chief) has been

created. Although many difficult decisions were made, Jim led us through a financial recovery program that is ensuring the survival of AER, which is no easy feat during this economic recession. Jim has always been supportive to our Canadian members, and we shall all miss him very much, but we wish him all the best in his new professional opportunity.

As some of you may know, I have decided to formally retire from a career in the field of vision at the W. Ross Macdonald School in Brantford that has spanned 43 years. It was a difficult decision for me, since this has been a profession that has provided me with far more than I have ever given. I learned so much from colleagues, professionals, parents and families, but more importantly from the children and students with whom I have served. I have had great mentors who have helped to shape my career, but I wish to acknowledge two very special people who have contributed to this profession more than anyone I know.

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Conference Program Chair Sandra Ruchonich and Keynote speaker Cay Holbrook in Little Rock, AR.



## Ontario AER Outlook— "New Perspectives" AER Ontario Workshop, June 4, 2010

What a pleasure to attend the AER workshop in Toronto! It's always enjoyable to see old faces, catch up with the news and meet any new kids on the block, and with great presenters like Tammy LaBreche, (Dr. of Optometry, UW) and Dr. Gord Hope psychotherapist), we certainly did gain new perspectives!

Tammy LaBreche gave a fascinating presentation on how prism glasses can help clients with strokes and brain injuries to regain some of their vision. d recreation can be in strengthening the self esteem of individuals with visual impairments.

their vision. Dr. Hope reminded us all just how valuable physical sports and recreation can be in strengthening the self esteem of individuals with visual impairments.

In the afternoon, Lisa Tyrrell (EIS) and Jennifer Ladd (ILS/O&M) shared their expertise in presenting easy and

entertaining activities to prepare young children for Braille. I found Doug McJannet's presentation on Personal Futures Planning particularly interesting. Having worked many years in Florida with kids coming out of the school system, I have experienced first hand how important it is for educators

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## Score - Continued from page 2

In order to participate in this program students are required to fill out an online application form and questionnaire that are due in early spring. Applicants must also submit a reference letter from a teacher, CNIB staff member or community group leader. Following that there is a short telephone interview.

Information for next year's program will be available on the CNIB website in January 2011 or send your questions to [score@cnib.ca](mailto:score@cnib.ca).



## Update on Canadian Membership

Congratulations to our new Canadian members, who have joined between February and August 2010:

Wendy Veldman  
Anne Jarry  
Kimberley Douglas  
Stacey Gilbert  
Trisha Klein  
Susan Nieto  
Leanne Cornell

Emily Baarda  
Karen Watts-Linares  
Natasha Woodcock  
Ruth Ferguson  
Michael Lonergan  
Sophia Sypropoulos  
Michael Venturi  
Shademan Akhaven

**Thanks to everyone  
who renewed their  
membership!**

## From Susan Howe, Con't....

*Continued from page 3*

David Neill, former Superintendent, W. Ross Macdonald School, Brantford, who inspired me to go beyond my safety net and embark on different journeys and Evelyn Chorniak King, former Principal, W. Ross Macdonald School, who encouraged me to be the best I could be, and led me where I needed to go.

Under the capable leadership of our President, Pat Leader, AER, I have faith that AER will continue to become stronger, especially during this time of transition and economic recession. My retirement now means that I have more time to serve you, our Canadian members, to ensure Canada continues to have a voice in AER. I look forward to continuing to work with Dan Vodon, and you, the

Canadian members, in the next two years.

Regards,

Susan Howe  
Canadian Representative to  
the International Board  
[sue.howe@sympatico.ca](mailto:sue.howe@sympatico.ca)



## Ontario Outlook Continued from page 3

Planning particularly interesting. Having worked many years in Florida with kids coming out of the school system, I have experienced first hand how important it is for educators and families to plan ahead for their blind children. Doug's well organized presentation included helpful tools for assisting families to think ahead and work out "student focused" maps and a path to long-term goals.

These plans are not always easy. Families and educators often may find that the student's priorities may surprise them, but these issues need to be confronted before the future arrives. While goals may be attained, there are a lot of special considerations and extra help may be needed. What is especially important is understanding what's important to the student. Maybe he wants the same goals we do, maybe we can help him get there but it sure takes planning. Then again, maybe these goals aren't right for him, or maybe they aren't where he wants to go! This too must be considered. How many times have we all sat in

on meetings discussing a young person's future where well meaning parents and teachers did all the talking!?

I appreciate the respectful approach to planning provided by Doug's MAPS & PATH presentation. I also appreciated him forwarding his slides and would encourage anyone working with transition kids to ask for a copy.

Sally Plant  
VRT, COMS

### **CNIB Toronto Highlights of our Summer Programs for Children and Youth**

#### **IRTC Teen Program Summer Highlights**

The summer IRTC group had an eventful 6 weeks. We dedicated 1 day a week to volunteering at The Good Shepherd men's shelter making beds, sorting snacks and folding linens putting into practice their O&M and ILS skills. Our students also worked on keyboarding skills, social skills development, kitchen safety, money identification and strategies for organization at home and at school. Orientation and mobility skills were

taught and re-enforced regularly. We were fortunate to be able to go to Holland Bloorview Kids Rehab to use their Snoezelen pool which was like a day at the spa for our students and volunteers. Other summer highlights included a touch tour at the AGO, bowling and grocery shopping trips, as well as hiking and picnics at a local park. Our students finished the program successfully and look forward to the upcoming school year.

#### **Summer Camp Toronto Region 2010**

Due to the high interest generated from our March Break 2010 children's program, CNIB Toronto region is proud to say we were able to offer two summer camps for children; one for kids aged 6-9, the other for 10-14 year olds. Both camps were run by groups of dedicated and enthusiastic service staff and volunteers.

In the 6-9 year old group, the children enjoyed a full week of indoor and outdoor activities designed to capture the imagination, stimulate the mind, body, and senses all in the name of fun!



mind, body, and senses all in the name of fun! Children had a blast participating in competitive relay races, practicing their shot in basketball, and working on their throw in bowling. Percussion musicians from *Bloorview Spiral Gardens*, an integrated art, garden and play program, taught the children how to listen for and create musical rhythmic patterns- a feat thoroughly enjoyed by all.

A trip to the movies, via public bus travel, to see *Toy Story*, was an excellent opportunity for the kids to interact and solidify friendships. A trip to the movies, Also enjoyed, was an outing to Centre Island again involving bus travel as well as ferry travel. Here the kids enjoyed A trip to the movies, amusement rides, pony rides, and a picnic in the park.

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## Ontario Outlook

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Invited guest Patricia, from *Beading Buds*, instructed the children in the craft of bracelet making, an activity to work on fine motor skills and tactile discrimination. Another guest, Yolanta, from *Creature Quest*, thrilled the children with her hands on presentation of various reptilian creatures. The kids touched and held a guinea pig, a skinny pig, a slimy tree frog, a young python, a baby alligator and more!

The week ended on a high note with the children presenting three plays they had been practicing all week, Goldilocks, the Three Little Pigs, and Little Red Riding Hood to a delighted audience of family and friends. The children then, along with their guests, snacked on cookies and Rice Krispie treats they had made earlier in the day. Camp ended with the children receiving graduation certificates and applause for being fully active participants in a week filled with fun.

### Tween's Summer Program

In the 10-14 year old group had a action packed week filled with activities designed to be fun while reinforcing a variety of life skills. Some of the activities offered were outings to the following place:

Local grocery store to pick up items for a cooking competition (Iron Chef), Art Gal-

lery of Ontario to experience accessible art, Centre Island where they experience tandem cycling, a maze and other various sports and games, Splash Park, In houses activities include a karate and dance lesson as well as cooking competition.



Some of the skills reinforced included route planning and subway, bus and street car travel, social skills, gross and fine motor skills, team work and sharing, and cooking skills.

So successful were both camps, many parents and children alike expressed their wishes for CNIB to extend the camp next summer. CNIB Toronto looks forward to again offering summer camps in 2011 and fully anticipates extending each to be two weeks in length.

**Article submitted by Christine Matthews, Orientation and Mobility Specialist.**

**For more information, please contact Sue Marsh-Woods, Service Manager, Toronto.**



## Upcoming Events

October 21-23, BC Vision Teachers' Conference 2010. Vancouver Airport Marriott Hotel, 7571 Westminister Highway, Richmond, BC. For more information, please visit <http://www.prcvi.org/hostedsites/BCVTA.htm>

October 23, Vision Quest Conference. Metro Toronto Convention Centre, Toronto, ON. National Youth Conference – 8:30 to 12:30 p.m. Age-Related Macular Degeneration – 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. For more information, please visit [www.ffb.ca](http://www.ffb.ca)

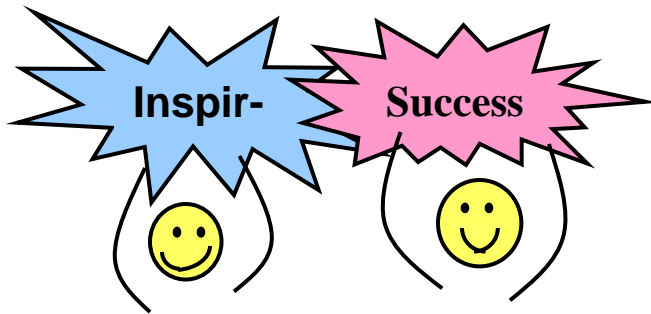
October 28-29, 2010 CNIB Conference. CNIB Centre, 1929 Bayview Ave., Toronto, ON. For more information, please visit <http://www.cnib.ca/en/events/cnib-conference/>

October 30, Vision Quest Conference. RA Centre, Ottawa, ON. Retinitis Pigmentosa – 8:30 to 1:30 p.m. Age-Related Macular Degeneration – 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. For more information, please visit [www.ffb.ca](http://www.ffb.ca)

Know of an upcoming event of interest to Canadian AER Members? Please send details to [aercanada@aerbvi.org](mailto:aercanada@aerbvi.org)

# BC Vision Teachers' Conference 2010

For those living or working with children  
and teens who are blind or visually impaired!



**October 21-23, 2010**

Vancouver Airport Marriott Hotel  
7571 Westminster Highway  
Richmond, BC, Canada



*Presented by  
the Metro Vancouver Chapter  
of the BC Vision Teachers' Association  
(in collaboration with PRCVI and SET-BC)*



For more information, please feel free to contact any of us:

Stacey Gasoi [sgasoi@sd38.bc.ca](mailto:sgasoi@sd38.bc.ca)

Danita Kwong [drkwong@vsb.bc.ca](mailto:drkwong@vsb.bc.ca)

Rita Schouls [rschouls@vsb.bc.ca](mailto:rschouls@vsb.bc.ca)



Thursday, October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010

### Low Vision Technology

Dave Rathwell & Vicky Midtdal, SET-BC Consultants

In this SET-BC (Special Education Technology-BC) workshop, we will be running two sessions. In the morning session, we will be looking at the SET-BC Vision Road Show: "Reading and Writing Strategies for Students with a Visual Impairment: A Classroom Teacher's Guide". This will be your opportunity to look at the workshop being presented to districts in the Province this fall. In the afternoon session, there will be a demonstration of low vision technologies. It will be followed by a brief presentation of "What is New" in the world of assistive technologies supporting visually impaired students.

Friday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010

### Low Vision & Literacy

Dr. Frances Mary D'Andrea and Dr. L. Penny Rosenblum

*Dr. Frances Mary D'Andrea and Dr. L. Penny Rosenblum will be presenting on low vision and literacy. They will be addressing issues such as best practices in literacy instruction, the impact low vision can have on literacy acquisition, use of low vision devices (including the pros and cons of various devices), and the need for collaboration. They will also be providing us with strategies for our own teaching. This will be done through the use of video clips, hands-on activities, photos and discussion.*

Saturday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2010

### Transitions

Dr. Karen Wolfe

#### **Morning Session: Skills for Success**

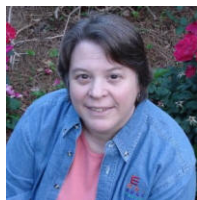
Dr. Wolfe will be discussing the five critical components in the lives of children and youth with visual impairments to ensure their success in life: the importance of having high expectations, encouraging socialization, developing alternative techniques or disability-specific skills, providing realistic feedback, and promoting opportunities to work. This session will include a panel discussion with working adults who are blind or visually impaired.

#### **Afternoon Session: Transitions from School to Work**

Dr. Wolfe will be discussing transition issues such as functional academic skills, transportation, housing, socialization and recreation, career exploration, job seeking, and job maintenance. Learning activities from *Navigating the Rapids of Life: The Transition Tote* system, a career education curriculum for high school students, will be shared as well as additional resources. This session will also include a panel discussion with representatives from various organizations that support young adults who are visually impaired.

#### **Conference Speakers**

«**Dr. Frances Mary D'Andrea** started teaching students who are blind or visually impaired in 1982. She has played a significant role in promoting braille literacy on a national scale. Dr. D'Andrea is the co-author of *Instructional Strategies for Braille Literacy*, *Looking to Learn: Promoting Literacy for Students with Low Vision* and *The Braille Trail* books! You can read more about Dr. D'Andrea at:



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<http://www.salus.edu/nclvi/fellows06/dandrea06.htm>.

**Dr. L. Penny Rosenblum** is an Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of Arizona who prepares teachers to work with children with visual impairments. She has worked as a teacher of children with visual impairment and multiple disabilities. She has submitted contributions to the *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness* and contributed chapters to several books including Sacks & Wolfe's *Teaching Social Skills to Students with Visual Impairments: From Theory to Practice*. You can read more about Dr. Rosenblum at: [http://coe.arizona.edu/faculty\\_profile/128/bio\\_sketch](http://coe.arizona.edu/faculty_profile/128/bio_sketch).



★ **Dr. Karen Wolffe** is a counselling consultant in private practice in Texas. She has worked for the American Foundation for the Blind where she managed their professional development and their CareerConnect program. Her areas of expertise include: career education, social skills development, transition issues, and employment opportunities for people with disabilities. She is the author of *Skills for Success: A Career Education Handbook for Children and Youth with Visual Impairments*.



★ **Vicky Midtdal** received her teaching degree in the area of vision from UBC under the direction of Sally Rogow in 1981. She earned her certificate for Orientation and Mobility at UBC under the direction of Pete Wurzbarger from San Francisco State. Vicky set up the vision program in 1981 in Port Alberni and then moved to the Okanagan to continue working with visually impaired students. Twelve years ago she became an assistive technology consultant with SET-BC. Vicky has developed curriculum and spoken at provincial, national, and international conferences. She has also done some work for SET-BC in Thailand. Her goal now is to keep just one step ahead of those eager children and teams working in classrooms in BC.



★ **Dave Rathwell** holds a Masters Degree in the Education of the Visually Impaired (O&M). He is presently an Assistive Technology Consultant with SET-BC and an Adjunct Professor at the University of British Columbia where he teaches a course in vision technologies. Dave has developed many teaching resources including accessible GPS and JAWS as well as contributing to the BC Expanded Core Curriculum for students with visual impairments. Dave has presented on vision technologies at provincial, national and international conferences.



### BC Vision Teachers' Conference 2010 Schedule

	Thursday, October 21 <sup>st</sup>	Friday, October 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Saturday, October 23 <sup>rd</sup>
8:00am	Check-In Coffee & Tea	Check-In Coffee & Tea ★ visit displays/vendors	Check-In Coffee & Tea ★ visit displays/vendors
8:30am	SET-BC AM session	Low Vision & Literacy AM session	Skills for Success AM presentation
10:00am	<b>Coffee Break</b>	<b>Coffee Break</b> ★ visit displays/vendors	<b>Coffee Break</b> ★ visit displays/vendors
10:30am	SET-BC AM session	Low Vision & Literacy AM session	Skills for Success AM panel discussion
12:00pm	<b>Lunch Buffet</b>	<b>Lunch Buffet</b> ★ visit displays/vendors ----- <b>AER AGM 12:15pm</b>	<b>Lunch Buffet</b> ★ visit displays/vendors ----- <b>Poster Sessions 12:30-1:30pm</b>
1:30pm	SET-BC PM session	Low Vision & Literacy PM session	Transitions PM presentation
2:30pm	<b>Coffee Break</b>	<b>Coffee Break</b> ★ visit displays/vendors	<b>Coffee Break</b> ★ visit displays/vendors
3:00pm	SET-BC PM session	Low Vision & Literacy PM session	Transitions PM panel discussion
4:00pm		<b>BCVTA AGM 4:15pm</b>	
6:00pm		Silent Auction & Banquet in Ballroom	

# Unified English Braille (UEB) - A Short Course

Here's what UEB is about:

- one braille code for literary and technical material
- one numbering system
- unambiguous
- one print symbol is represented by one braille character
- students will see the same symbol regardless of the subject
- print = braille = print which allows a student to work in braille and the teacher to read print
- automatically computable
- system for creation of future symbols
- symbols constructed so that the beginning and end of a symbol is always known

Here's the history -

- 1991 Braille Authority of North America (BANA) begins the project to unify its codes
- 1993 International Council on English Braille (ICEB) agrees to take on the project for all English codes
- 2004 UEB accepted by ICEB as an official code
- 2010 Australia, New Zealand, Nigeria and South Africa have implemented UEB. Canadian Braille Authority (CBA) approves UEB as preferred code for Canada.

The braille authority of the UK will be considering UEB again in four years; the USA has yet to do so.

Here are the results -

Australia was the first country to implement UEB. New Zealand and South Africa followed within two years and Nigeria one year ago. Each country's plan was unique to their circumstances in many ways but there were many similarities as well.

Implementation was staged beginning with the lower grades for all materials,

middle grades for new texts, upper grades continued with their current technical codes. If a new technical textbook was introduced, it was provided in UEB and all future texts in that subject for that student were in UEB. General collections in libraries were phased in quickly because UEB is easily readable by any readers of English braille.

Training materials have been shared and the code book is available for downloading in print and braille at [www.iceb.org](http://www.iceb.org)

Countries are able to exchange braille materials. Australia and New Zealand have one braille certification. Nigeria, a developing country, demonstrates the great value of one code when materials are available to them from many sources.

All the countries found that the implementation was much quicker than originally planned; that the students used texts in literary braille in both the old code and UEB without any problems, and that most of the students chose to write their exams in UEB. Each country reported a renewed emphasis and enthusiasm for braille among the teachers and students generated by the move to UEB.

Here's to the future of braille in Canada!

Darleen Bogart

[Darleen was the Chair of the ICEB UEB Project until its completion in July, 2010]

# Coping Strategies for Living with Macular Degeneration

The FDA recently approved an implantable telescope that may help people with macular degeneration regain some of their sight and aid them in object recognition and reading. This first of its kind technology is exciting news for the estimated 11 million people living with macular degeneration.

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is a disease associated with aging that gradually destroys sharp, central vision. Central vision is needed for seeing objects clearly and for common daily tasks such as reading, setting appliance dials and driving. AMD affects the macula, the part of the eye that allows you to see fine detail. AMD causes no pain. In some cases, AMD advances so slowly that people notice little change in their vision. In others, the disease progresses faster and may lead to a loss of vision in both eyes. AMD is the leading cause of vision loss in Americans 60 years of age and older.

While the new telescope is certainly a breakthrough, it is still in the early stages of development and is not a cure. Those with the condition must still educate themselves about the best strategies and treatments available to help them cope. Don Golembiewski teaches a course on macular degeneration at The Hadley School for the Blind ([www.hadley.edu](http://www.hadley.edu)) and offers these top tips for learning to live with the condition.

**Get the facts-**While there is a wealth of knowledge available about AMD, from the Internet to various vision and health organizations, it's important for consumers to separate fact from fiction. Many misconceptions are prevalent when it comes to macular degeneration. For example, many people are told that they will never go totally blind from macular degeneration. But in reality, macular degeneration is a leading cause of legal blindness. "Hadley gives people all the information—the correct information—in order to make the best choices for themselves and their health," says Golembiewski.

**Learn to use your "functional vision"**-While macular degeneration can severely limit central vision and limit a person's ability to perform everyday tasks like driving or reading, there are strategies people can use to maximize the vision they *do* have to improve everyday activities. "Since a lot people are older when they develop macular degeneration, they may feel like they want to give up. But it's important to learn strategies early so that as their vision worsens, they are better equipped to deal with the challenges," says Golembiewski.

**Utilize support groups-**When dealing with any major impact such as vision loss, it's important to remember that you're not alone. Since it is the leading cause of vision loss of Americans age 60 and older, people with macular degeneration are clearly not alone. Still, unless or until people with AMD come into contact with someone who also has the condition, they may feel very alone. "Support groups are local, usually free and normally welcoming to anyone. I always encourage my students to join them; talking about your problems with someone who is going through the same thing can be very therapeutic and a place to share tips and ideas that work," adds Golembiewski.

**Learn to use your "functional vision"**-While macular degeneration can severely limit central vision and limit a person's ability to perform everyday tasks like driving or reading, there are strategies people can use to maximize the vision they *do* have to improve everyday activities. "Since a lot of people are older when they develop macular degeneration, they may feel like they want to give up. But it's important to learn **Consider medical interventions-**

Depending on the type and severity of macular degeneration, there may be medical treatment options that while not a cure, can improve the condition. "Wet" macular degeneration may be treated by laser surgery, photodynamic therapy or injections. According to a study performed by The National Eye Institute, taking a specific high-dose formulation of antioxidants and zinc significantly reduces the risk of advanced dry macular degeneration.

**About Hadley:** Founded in 1920, The Hadley School for the Blind's mission is to promote independent living through lifelong, distance education programs for people who are blind or visually impaired, their families and blindness service providers. The world's largest educator of braille, Hadley enrolls more than 10,000 students in all 50 states and 100 countries each year. For more information, visit [www.hadley.edu](http://www.hadley.edu) or call 800-323-4238.

Kate Streit  
Media and Marketing Specialist  
The Hadley School for the Blind



# AER International Conference 2010

## July 21-25, 2010 Little Rock, Arkansas

Reflections of this summer's biennial AER International Conference.



### **What We Learned in Little Rock** **Biljana Zuvella, Researcher Evaluator, CNIB** **Alex Shaw, Senior Researcher, CNIB**

Among the many excellent presentations at AER 2010 was Dr. Karen Wolffe's "Lifelong Learning in Career Education." Dr. Wolffe drew on years of counseling experience and outlined the stages of her Career Education Model. Career education, according to Dr. Wolffe, begins early in life and continues throughout the lifespan.

We have seen a number of Dr. Wolffe's presentations in the past and have read much of her written work. Her work is always informative and inspirational and this time was no exception. What we find most remarkable is her ability to provide very concrete and common sense examples to illustrate each of the stages of her model.

In her presentation at AER 2010, Dr. Wolffe described the interrelated learning stages of her Career Education Model. These stages include: Career Awareness, Career Exploration, Career Preparation, Career Placement, Career Maintenance, and Career Mentoring. According to Dr. Wolffe, these stages apply equally to persons who are sighted as to those who are blind or partially sighted. However, because children with vision loss are restricted in their ability to learn through observation, they need structured learning activities to successfully progress through the stages and acquire knowledge about such things as work roles, the types of available jobs, tasks inherent in different occupations and expected and appropriate work behaviors

Although these stages progress throughout the lifespan, it is in the earliest stages that children need to develop the skills that will form the foundation on which their school and work efforts will rest. For example, in the Career Awareness stage (preschool – elementary school years), children will need to develop an awareness of themselves, the world in which they live (including the jobs held by significant others), and the importance of contributing by helping around the house. Similarly, in Career Exploration (which usually begins late in elementary school or early in middle school), children should learn to manage time and money, balance home, school and community responsibilities, build academic and social skills, and explore vocational interests.

Successful mastery of these earliest stages will enable youth to progress to the Career Preparation stage (from early middle school to high school), a time for applying well developed academic skills, setting personal and vocational goals, using technology efficiently to complete tasks, and acquiring job seeking skills. In the Career Placement stage (high school into adulthood,) youth should begin to acquire real world work experience (both volunteer and paid) and plan for life and career.

The last two stages of Dr. Wolfe's model come later in life and occur once gainful employment is secured. These stages include Career Maintenance and Career Mentoring. In Career Maintenance, the focus is on good workplace habits and skills including punctuality, reliability, team work skills, and working with supervisors to advance in one's career. Later in life, adults should create an opportunity to mentor and share their experiences with younger less experienced people in their field.

Dr. Wolfe's work is not simply about preparing for and securing employment. It is also about preparing for all the roles one plays over the course of one's lifetime. Her enthusiasm is contagious and we strongly recommend Dr. Wolfe's work to anyone in the field of vision loss, anyone working with or raising children, or anyone looking for guidance in their own career development. We feel we benefited both professionally and personally from attending Dr. Wolfe's AER 2010 presentation.

## **Reflecting on Little Rock** **Adam Wilton** **Graduate Student, University of British Columbia**



Selecting a topic for a reflection on the 2010 AER International Conference in Little Rock, Arkansas, is no small matter. Whether it be the informative concurrent sessions or the fascinating key note addresses, there were so many "high" points to choose from! True to my own experience of the conference, I have elected to write on a topic that is very important to me, and I am sure one that is important to many readers – the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC). I was thrilled to see the ECC so well represented at the 2010 Conference, in sessions across several divisions of AER. Dr. Phil Hatlen, Dr. Karen Blankenship, and Mary Ann Siller, all pioneers in the conceptualization of the ECC for students with visual impairments, held a day-long workshop to update teachers on the latest resources and tools for instruction in each of the nine areas of the ECC. Based on the audience's reception, it very likely that the information presented during this session will be put into practice by the time I type these words.

While the 2010 Conference was certainly about highlighting both research and practice, its impact extended far beyond professional development. At Little Rock, friends and colleagues had a chance to reconnect and rejuvenate. The "Canadian content" was evident in this facet of the conference, in addition to the many stimulating sessions originating from Canada. I am quite sure that no one will soon forget Dr. Cay Holbrook's very moving reflection on the relevance of messages from "pop culture" to our professional lives in the field of visual impairment. Equally as unforgettable was "Canada Night" - a great time to visit with our colleagues and enjoy the duelling pianos (something I have yet to find here in Vancouver!).

Looking forward to the next conference in 2012!










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# M.O.M. Conference

## By Elaine Bradley



*Waiting at the bus mall—high school student Kyle Harris, Consultant for the Visually Impaired Laura Roy & Educational Assistant*

Orientation & Mobility specialists in Manitoba have been hosting and participating in an annual professional development activity for over 20 years. This event, known as the M.O.M. (Manitoba Orientation & Mobility) Conference, was held in Brandon Manitoba on June 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>. The theme for this year was 'Access in the Community'.

On Thursday, Michael Goehring, field rep for Guiding Eyes for the Blind, discussed dog guide issues specific to rural and urban Manitoba. Friday

saw an excellent presentation on audible signals by Judy Redmond, Universal Design Co-ordinator for the City of Winnipeg, Jonathan Foord, Traffic Signals Asset Management Engineer and Jody Morgan, Traffic Signals Maintenance Analyst. Participants came away with valuable information as well as an appreciation for the complexity of universal design issues.

The conference has always included a hands-on (and blindfolds on!) component. Participants worked in groups of two or three and practiced city bus travel. Two Brandon high school students joined the conference for lunch and supplemented this practical activity by reflecting on their experiences with transit travel.

The M.O.M Conference is attended by almost all of Manitoba's O&M specialists as well as others in the field of visual impairment (we have occasionally had representation from North Dakota as well!) We are small but dynamic group of professionals, and would welcome those from neighbouring provinces and states to attend our event next year.



*Instructor Katie Cable & 'Student' Joanne Tokar waiting at a bus shelter*



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