



AER Vision Rehabilitation Therapy (VRT) Division
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VRT News
Fall, 2016

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Bill Boules M.A., M.A., CVRT, COMS, CLVT, CATIS

Welcome to the fall edition of our newsletter. I am extremely proud to be serving our community. As the calendar year comes to a close, I would like to take the time to remind everyone about a major accomplishment for our profession this year. There is an updated exam being administered by ACVREP to new certificants. There are several CVRTs that served on a subject matter experts committee who worked long hours to make this happen. They are dedicated and passionate about improving quality to the services that we provide. I am extremely proud to have served alongside such outstanding professionals. The updated exam allows for our new professionals to show their knowledge of skills and techniques that fit the needs of today's consumer.

I would also like to announce that our division will be conducting some webinars that we hope will be helpful to our members. Please make sure that all contact information is up to date in order to receive announcements in a timely manner.

I would like to thank our new slate of Officers and Board Members. They are extremely hard working and dedicated to furthering our profession. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns. I look forward to all our future accomplishments as a division, and appreciate your support.

Bill Boules

Biennial Awards

Ian Shadrick M.A., M.A., CVRT, CRC

It was with great honor and that we presented the following awards to division members at the 2016 AER International Conference. We congratulate them on their exceptional accomplishments, leadership, professionalism, creativity and dedication.

Maureen Duffy was presented the **Susan and Paul Ponchillia VRT Publication Award** for her text "Making Life More Livable: Simple Adaptations for Living at Home After Vision Loss, Third Edition" an AFB publication. Maureen's text is used by both consumers, families, and in university training programs; and is a vital text to address these adaptations. This award was established to recognize a VRT Division member(s) whose publication contributes highly to the field of Vision Rehabilitation Therapy and expands our knowledge base.

Polly Abbott was also presented the **Elizabeth Lennon Award for Meritorious Achievement**. This award is presented to an individual who has made a significant contribution to the profession of Vision Rehabilitation Therapy, Rehabilitation Teaching, general rehabilitation, or community affairs.

The **Alice Raftary Rising Star Award** which is bestowed upon an individual who demonstrates potential for exceptional leadership and is expected to provide a unique and lasting contribution to the field of Vision Rehabilitation Therapy. It is meant to recognize people new to the field who are making a significant impact early in their career. Unfortunately the award did not receive nominations for the cycle. While unfortunate, this is an opportunity to nominate an up and coming leader you feel deserves this recognition.

The **Bruce McKenzie** award is a biennial award established by the VRT Division to honor Bruce McKenzie for his pioneering leadership in the field of vision rehabilitation. It is the division's highest award, presented to an exemplary individual for outstanding contributions to the field of rehabilitation teaching and independent living services. This year's award was presented to **Dr. John McMahon** to recognize his exceptional accomplishments over the years. His work is national in scope and continues to have positive influences for both professionals and individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

John has worked providing direct service and in supervisory capacities in Michigan and Maine. He graduated with a Master's degree in rehabilitation teaching from Western Michigan University where he also received his Doctoral degree in Interdisciplinary Health Studies. He strongly believes in being involved in professional and consumer organizations and has served on the Executive Board of the Michigan Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired as well as the Chair-elect, Chair and Past Chair of the VRT Division of AER. He currently serves on the AER international board as a regional

Director Representative. He has presented at state and national conferences promoting the important role of the VRT within the rehabilitation process.

John currently serves as a national consultant providing technical assistance across various aspects of blindness and vocational rehabilitation. He is the former Director of the Maine Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Biennium Activities 2014-2016 Ian Shadrick M.A., M.A., CVRT, CRC

As new biennium begins within AER, we thought it would be beneficial to highlight some activities of the VRT Division over the past biennium (2014-2016). Officers and committee members:

- Finalized completion of the new ACVREP VRT exam and related professional documents (study guide is forthcoming).
- Continued participation in the VRT consortium regarding professional issues in VRT with the three standing work groups addressing recruitment, professional identity and updating curricula
- Participated in presentations on issues facing the VRT field at the 2016 International AER conference
- Presented on VRT specific areas at the 2015 AER Aging and Vision Loss with Veterans conference in Norfolk, VA
- The Recruitment & Retention Committee sent a mailing to members and worked diligently to promote the celebration of VRT Week across the country

The board would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the most recent board Jennifer Ottowitz for her six years of service as a division officer. Jennifer recently completed her term as Past Chair and Newsletter Editor. Her leadership and dedication to strengthening the field of VRT are second to none and very much appreciated. Susan Dalton recently completed her sixth term as Secretary Treasurer for the Division. Without her dedication the board would not have been able to remain nearly as organized over the years. We thank you for your dedication to the field.

MEET A MEMBER AER VRT DIVISION: Amber Mooney M.Ed., CVRT

1. How did you enter the Vision Rehabilitation field?
As a client! After having worked with providers in the field as a client, I heard about a job opening in the same agency, applied, was hired and then started working on becoming a VRT!
2. How long have you been Vision Rehabilitation Therapist / vision rehabilitation professional?

I started my internship in the fall of 2014 and became a certified vision rehabilitation therapist in early 2015.

3. Tell us about your current job?

I am case managing and teaching in a center based program. Clients come to The Iris Network Rehabilitation Center in Portland, Maine for an intensive, on site 10 week program. I love being able to teach while also getting to know each client better as an individual going through the rehabilitation process.

4. Tell us something special about yourself?

My undergrad degree was a liberal arts degree in Spanish and then I spent two years in Nicaragua. Next to being a CVRT, speaking Spanish is my greatest joy.

5. Why did you join the VRT division?

I joined in order to delve deeper into the field, access the amazing array of experience there is in the division, and grow with the field.

6. Any words of wisdom for your fellow professionals?

Never stop thinking outside the box! One of my favorite parts of the field is the unique problem solving that goes into it.

MEET A MEMBER AER VRT DIVISON: Elizabeth Chamberlain PhD, CVRT

1. How did you enter the Vision Rehabilitation field?

As an undergraduate student studying to become a TVI, I took classes in Blind Rehabilitation and enjoyed them. I graduated in December and started graduate school in January to become a CVRT. I had a desire to work with children teaching them independent living skills.

2. How long have you been Vision Rehabilitation Therapist / vision rehabilitation professional? I graduated in 1985.

3. Tell us about your current job? I am currently employed full time as a TVI working with students who are in a special day school. My students range in age from 3-21. Prior to this position, I was a CVRT working on an itinerant basis with students in grades K-12.

4. Tell us something special about yourself? Nothing special about me. I am pretty darn average.

5. Why did you join the VRT division? To support the division and meet other CVRTs.

6. Any words of wisdom for your fellow professionals? Go to as many conferences as you can. It is a great way to meet others and pick up a ton of information about teaching and tips/tricks.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

March 15, 2017 Deadline for articles for next issue of VRT News. Send articles to Ian Shadrick at ian.shadrick@gmail.com.

Vision Rehabilitation Therapy Division Board

Contact information

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Please let me know of any questions, concerns, errors, or comments that you have regarding the VRT newsletter.