



AER Vision Rehabilitation Therapy (VRT) Division

<http://vrt.aerbvi.org>

VRT News
Spring, 2014

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR **Jennifer Ottowitz CVRT**

Greetings! I am writing this message on the first official day of spring. After the crazy weather we have had this winter, I wish you happy thoughts of birds singing, flowers blooming and plenty of opportunities to do all the spring cleaning, yard work and household projects we are all anxious to get done. Well, maybe we're not so anxious about doing the cleaning, but this is an excellent time to review, sort, organize and re-purpose. It is also the beginning of the NCAA college basketball tournament. Whether or not you are a basketball fan (or even a sports fan in general), it is fun to get caught up in all the school pride and spirit. It is fun to cheer for your alma mater or favorite home town team. I like rooting for the underdog and am always very impressed with the level of skill and determination of the teams.

I once heard it said that in the big basketball game of life, we should be one of the players not the ball. Although the game cannot be played without the ball, the ball cannot do anything unless it is acted upon in some way by someone else. The players are the ones who make things happen. They make decisions, work together, take chances and risks, react to the actions of others (play defense) and take control of the game.

We also teach our clients to become one of the "players". We help them understand the importance and impact of actively taking a role in making decisions, taking chances and risks reacting to others and taking control of their lives. We teach skills to enhance independence while reinforcing the idea that we are all interdependent (work as a team).

In addition, you, as a professional, are also one of the players on the team. You may be involved with many teams within your agency or community but you are also a part of the VRT team. All players on the team are important and contribute to the success of the team. In this issue, as we solicit nominations for our awards and for officer positions, we ask you to help your team. Nominate someone you know who deserves to be recognized for their outstanding accomplishments and nominate someone you feel would be a good leader for the team (including yourself). Join us at the AER International Conference in San Antonio and ask about other ways that you can be involved. Please don't drop the ball or even worse, choose just to be the ball. We are proud and excited to have you on the VRT team!

Best wishes for a successful season!
Jennifer Ottowitz, CVRT
VRT Division Chair

Award Nominations for 2014

At the Biennial International Conference, the Vision Rehabilitation Therapy (VRT) Division presents the following awards: The Bruce McKenzie Award for lifetime achievement; The Elizabeth Lennon Award for Meritorious Achievement; The Alice Raftary Rising Star Award to recognize talented teachers who are new to their careers; and the Susan & Paul Ponchillia Publication Award for VRT division members who have written and published work regarding VRT. Please consider making a nomination for one of the four VRT awards described below.

AWARDS:

Bruce McKenzie Award: _____

Elizabeth Lennon Award: _____

Alice Raftary Rising Star Award: _____

Susan & Paul Ponchillia Publication Award: _____

**Send nominations to Chair-Elect, Ian Shadrack at
ianshadrack@missouristate.edu.**

Nominations should be submitted no later than April 30, 2014

The Bruce McKenzie Award for Lifetime Achievement

Purpose:

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 rehabilitation teaching. 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. It is the Division's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Criteria:

- A nominee shall be an active or retired vision rehabilitation therapist/vision rehabilitation therapy supervisor.
- A nominee must have 10 years or more of service in the field of vision rehabilitation therapy.
- A nominee shall have exceptional leadership qualities.
- The uniqueness of a nominee's contribution to the field shall be given due consideration.
- A nominee's contribution shall have been national or international in scope.
- A nominee shall be a member of the Vision Rehabilitation Therapy Division.

Nominating Procedures:

- All nominations should include biographical information, education and training, employment history, leadership qualities, contributions, achievements and professional memberships
- All nominations must be submitted and seconded in writing
- If possible, a copy of the nominee's curriculum vitae should be included
- The Division Awards Committee shall select the award recipient
- Bruce McKenzie Award: _____

**Send nominations to Chair-Elect, Ian Shadrick at
ianshadrick@missouristate.edu.**

Deadline for submission: 04/30/2014

Past Bruce McKenzie Award Recipients:

1973: Samie Rankin, Texas; Edmund Bird, New York
1975: Florence Horton, Kansas
1977: Billie Elder, Arkansas
1979: Norman Dalke, Oklahoma
1981: Velma Becker, Illinois
1982: Alice Raftary, Michigan
1983: Vera McClain, Alabama
1984: Linda Olson, Arizona
1986: Scott Oliver, New York
1988: Julia Richardson, Alabama
1990: Susan Ponchillia, Michigan; Paul Ponchillia, Michigan
1992: David Search, Michigan
1994: Patricia Bussen Smith, Arkansas
1996: Nancy Paskin, New York
1998: Don Golembiewski, Wisconsin; Anne Yeadon, New York
2000: Lynda Jones, Florida
2002: Maureen Duffy, Pennsylvania
2004: Barbara Hunt, IL; Lisa-Anne Mowerson, PA
2006: Margaret E. Cleary, MA
2008: Alvin Roberts, IL
2010 B.J. LeJeune MS
2012 Lenore Dillon AL

The Elizabeth Lennon Award for Meritorious Achievement

This award was named for Elizabeth Lennon in 2006 to recognize her dedication and pioneering work in preparing university professionals and supporting community programs for seniors and people with disabilities.

Purpose:

The award shall be presented to an individual who has made a significant contribution to the profession of Vision Rehabilitation Therapy, Rehabilitation Teaching, general rehabilitation, or community affairs. Such contributions may be in the form of published materials, presentations, leadership experiences, or work history.

Criteria:

- A nominee shall be active in or retired from the field of vision rehabilitation therapy.
- A nominee should demonstrate outstanding professionalism and service to the rehabilitation field.
- The uniqueness of a nominee's contribution to the field shall be given due consideration.
- A nominee shall be a member of AER.

Nominating Procedures:

- All nominations should include biographical information, education and training, employment history, leadership qualities, contributions, achievements and professional memberships
- All nominations must be submitted and seconded in writing
- If possible, a copy of the nominee's curriculum vitae should be included
- The Division Awards Committee shall select the award recipient
- Elizabeth Lennon Award: _____

**Send nominations to Chair-Elect, Ian Shadrack at
ianshadrack@missouristate.edu.**

Deadline for submission: 04/30/2014

Past Certificate of Recognition Award Recipients:

1984: Patricia Bussen Smith; William Farrell; Thomas Hansen; Michael Nelipovich; Paul Ponchillia; Alvin Roberts

1986: Juliet Bindt Esterly; Sherrie Raymond; Ruth Kaarlela (special award)

1988: Beatrice David; Dolores Fricke; Judy Matsuoka; David Search

1990: Michelle Frazier; Lynne Luxton; Ramona Sangalli; JoAnn Search

1992: Patty Arnold; Lenore Dillon; Michael Nelipovich

1994: Nancy Paskin

1996: Cheryl Richesin
1998: Pamela Cory; Maureen Duffy; Gretchen Good
2000: Antonina Adamowicz-Hummel
2002: Barbara Hunt; Diane Weiss
2004: Debra Solko-McKay
2006 Jennifer Ottowitz
2008 Roberta McCall
2010 Susan Dalton
2010 Patricia Smith
2012 Mary Beth Harrison

The Alice Raftary Rising Star Award

This award was named for Alice Raftary in 2006 due to her mentoring and support of many new professionals to this field and her years of creative and dedicated work. She is a Living Legend and her story can be found in the APH Hall of Fame.

Purpose:

The award shall be presented to 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.

Criteria:

- A nominee shall be an ACREVP-certified vision rehabilitation therapist.
- A nominee should have no more than three years of VRT professional service.
- A nominee should demonstrate outstanding professionalism and service to the field.
- A nominee shall be a member of the VRT Division

Nominating Procedures:

- All nominations should include biographical information, education and training, employment, leadership qualities, contributions and achievements
- A supervisor or professional mentor should submit the nomination
- All nominations should be submitted and seconded in writing
- If possible, a copy of the nominee's curriculum vitae should be included
- The Division Awards Committee shall select the award recipient
- **Alice Raftary Rising Star Award:** _____

**Send nominations to Chair-Elect, Ian Shadrack at
ianshadrack@missouristate.edu.**

Deadline for submission: 04/30/2014

Past Rising Star Award Recipients:

2004 Vacent Garcia
2006 Sarah Heinrich
2010 Ian Shadrack
2012 Cammy Holway-MorarOS

The Susan and Paul Ponchillia VRT Publication Award

This award was established in 2008 to honor VRT Division members who have written and published for the benefit of the field and the enhancement of our knowledge base.

Purpose:

The VRT Division is offering a Publication Award to recognize a VRT Division member whose publication contributes highly to the field of Vision Rehabilitation Therapy. Submissions may include, but are not limited to, journal articles, books, chapters of books, and development of or significant contributions to websites. This award carries a \$250 honorarium to further encourage VRT Division members to write and publish.

Criteria:

- Author(s) must be a member(s) of the VRT Division.
- The publication should be within the current biennium (July 2006—June2008)
- The publication submitted should contribute to the rehabilitation field and enhance our knowledge base.

Nominating Procedure:

- Nominations may be submitted by the author or by another member of the Division.
- A copy of the publication must be submitted to the Awards Committee. Only publications costing over \$25 will be returned, please indicate as such with your submission.
- If possible, a copy of the author's curriculum vitae should be included.
- The Division Awards Committee shall select the award recipient and the division of the honorarium, if necessary.
- Nominations must be submitted to the Chair-Elect and Awards Committee Chair.
- Cover letter must include: Author's name and Contact Information; Nominator's name and contact information (if different than author); A Brief Summary of the Publication (no more than 2 paragraphs) of the significance of the publication; Publication date(s)/ Website date(s); and Publication title and credits.
- Susan & Paul Ponchillia Publication Award:_____

**Send nominations to Chair-Elect, Ian Shadrick at
ianshadrick@missouristate.edu.**

Deadline for submission: 04/30/2014

Past VRT Publication Award Recipients:

2008: Debra Solko-McKay

2010 Vision Aware

2012 Margaret Cleary

AER Vision Rehabilitation Therapy Division Call for Officer Nominations

Nominations must be received by April 30th 2014

Nominations are currently being accepted for the positions of Chair-Elect and Secretary/Treasurer for the 2014-2016 biennium.

Please nominate someone you think would be a good leader. You can also consider yourself for a division officer position. Remember, the nominee must be a division member with voting privileges.

Member being nominated for Chair Elect:

Name: _____

Email Address: _____

Is this person aware that they are being nominated for the position of Chair-elect _____

Member being nominated for Secretary/Treasurer:

Name: _____

Email Address: _____

Is this person aware that they are being nominated for the position of Secretary/Treasurer? _____

Division member making the nomination (self-nominations are allowed):

Name: _____

Address: _____

Work Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Nominations must be received by April 30th, 2014

Please send nominations to:

Deanna Austin either at Deanna.austin@va.gov OR
5248 Spring Creek Court Indianapolis IN 46254

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

June 22nd-28th 2014 Vision Rehabilitation Therapy Week

July 30th –August 3rd 2014 AER International Conference “Moving into the Future” San Antonio Texas.

VRT Sessions featured at the Conference

- Vision Rehabilitation Techniques for Traumatic Brain Injury
- Do-It-On-A-Dime; Affordably Meeting Adapted Daily Living Supply Needs
- Know Where to Go: Accessing Free /Low Cost Online Resources
- Instructional Strategies for Consumers with Brain Injury
- Elite Athletes, Paralympians, and Role Models
- Survive Your Ride: How to Optimize Your Itinerant Vehicle
- VRT and OT professionals working together
- Vision Rehabilitation Therapists: The Most Underutilized Resource in the Vocational Rehabilitation Process.
- "The What, Where, When and Why of Written Documentation"

Hadley School Announces New Low Vision Focus @ Hadley

The Hadley School for the Blind is pleased to announce its new Low Vision Focus @ Hadley, which offers a unique free learning opportunity, 13 different audio lessons on CD or online. A person with low vision can learn everything from how to put raised markers on kitchen appliances to using accessible technology. This series of recordings encourages independent living and teaches individuals how they can continue the activities that they enjoy, even with diminished vision.

The Hadley School for the Blind has a 94-year history of providing tuition-free, distance education courses for people who are blind or visually impaired. Although the Hadley School has long been associated with “blindness,” in fact, nearly half of our students have some vision, but are functionally blind and can still benefit from Hadley’s distance education courses. The majority of these people with low vision are older adults. Hadley is serving this population, as well as their adult children and rehabilitation professionals, with the new Low Vision Focus @ Hadley.

Plans for The Low Vision Focus @ Hadley program include developing additional resources on independent living and vision related topics, including interactive webinars and videos.

The Low Vision Focus @ Hadley requires little more than a short registration form and is available to anyone with low vision, their family members and other service providers. For more information, including a complete list of audio lessons and information on how to get started, please visit www.LowVisionFocus.org or call us toll-free at 1-855-830-5355.

**MEET A MEMBER AER VRT DIVISION: Deanna Austin LSW, CVRT
Past Chair, VRT division,
Visual Impairment Services Team (VIST) Coordinator VA Medical
Center Indianapolis**

- 1. How did you enter the Vision Rehabilitation field?** I went to a small private college (Hyles Anderson) in Crown Point Indiana. We had to work at a church and I worked in the "Blind Department" I met individuals who were blind/visually impaired and was very fascinated. I also got to know a young boy who was blind. I knew from then on I wanted to work with individuals who were blind or had low vision.
- 2. How long have you been Vision Rehabilitation Therapist / vision rehabilitation professional?** I graduated from Western Michigan in 1994 and have been working as a VRT since 1995.
- 3. Tell us about your current job?** I work at the Indianapolis VA with veterans who have vision loss. I provide case management for over 400 veterans, run a monthly support group and compile a quarterly newsletter. I am the gatekeeper of all things vision loss at the Indianapolis VA.
- 4. Tell us something special about yourself?** I really love the work that I do and feel so blessed that I was led to work with individuals who have vision loss. I also love cats/dogs/reading/sports
- 5. Why did you join the VRT division?** I love the VRT listserve and being able to go to professionals all over the county to get their expertise. I also love being a part of something bigger than my little world.
- 6. Any words of wisdom for your fellow professionals?** If you have been at your job/career for longer than 5 years and are not on any board, committee, special emphasis group etc. YOU ARE MISSING OUT on your own professional growth. Your career is more than seeing clients and going out on home visits. It is also

about making the profession stronger and helping in the survival of our profession. Of course you are busy, we ALL are. You will be able to work with your clients' sooo much better and stronger when you involve yourself in the bigger picture of our profession.

Vision Rehabilitation Therapist Division Board

Contact information

Chair: Jennifer Ottowitz, CVRT

E-mail: jennifer@hadley.edu

Chair-elect: Ian Shadrick, CVRT

E-mail: ianshadrick@missouristate.edu

Secretary/Treasurer: Susan Dalton, CVRT

E-mail: susan.dalton@att.net

Past Chair: Deanna Austin, CVRT

Newsletter Editor

E-mail: deanna.austin@va.gov

Please let me know of any questions, concerns, errors, or comments that you have regarding the VRT newsletter. As I near the end of my tenure of being on the VRT board it has been a privilege and honor to be of service. There is a lot of work to be done and we have hardly scratched the surface.