

Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired



## Orientation and Mobility Division Update

Summer 2018

Volume 21 Number 2

### From the Chair

I have enjoyed serving in this role for the O&M Division. And I am thankful that it is coming to an end in July. As chair, I have gotten to see the passion shared throughout our field. We have many professionals that continuously take on service, research, and advocacy roles beyond any expectation from their employers. These are all significant efforts, necessary for the advancement of our field. For all of the progress we have made, there continues to be many obstacles that we have yet to overcome. Personnel shortages and funding sources continue to be examples where we have not yet found adequate solutions. Thank you to everyone that has contributed to the various activities of the past few years. I would also like to thank all of the members from the 2016 O&M Division Executive Committee. I have expanded on much of the work of the division below with the strategic plan.

#### **Strategic Plan Annual Progress (August 2017-June 2018)**

Our strategic planning group has met 3 times over the past year to discuss what progress has been made and where we needed to focus future efforts. Recruitment efforts have focused on personal communication with members to encourage more active participation in the division. We will continue our recruitment efforts at the AER conference where there will be an O&M Division table coordinated by the division leaders. The O&M Division has begun to use social media more readily and now has 482 followers on Facebook and 194 followers on Twitter.

The Environmental Access Committee was able to once again attend the Annual Transportation Research board meetings with a donation from Polara and some additional funds that were raised at the 2017 O&M Conference.

Our effort to research and identify the O&M provider requirements in each state continues. Online searches have identified state requirements for providers for children in 35 states and for adults in 11 states. We are working to finish this effort and share the information through the O&M Division website and resources.

The O&M Scope of Practice document is nearly complete after a lot of writing and revising. This will be shared with the division membership for a vote and approval. The document has been reviewed and

feedback has been provided by past-chairs of the division, the O&M division executive committee, the O&M division membership, and many others.

The O&M division did help to coordinate a 3D pen webinar by Nick Leon in August 2017. There have been recent discussions regarding other possible topics and trying to offer these more often with more informal meetings.

The O&M division has endorsed a letter to ACVREP advocating for COMS to become an accredited certification. In the first year of this strategic plan, it has been helpful in providing direction for short and long term division activities.

### **O&M Division Resources**

- Connect with the O&M Division and take advantage of the new digital O&M resources available. Professional resources are posted on the O&M Division Outpost at: <http://aerom.org>
- Follow us @ [aeromdivision](#) on Facebook and Twitter.

Justin Kaiser, Chair  
[jkaiser@uscupstate.edu](mailto:jkaiser@uscupstate.edu)

### **O&M Division Announcements:**

#### **AER Orientation & Mobility Division Executive Committee for 2018-2020**

Welcome to the newly elected members and returning members of the Orientation & Mobility Division Executive Committee! The term will begin immediately following the O&M Division business meeting on Friday July 27<sup>th</sup> at the AER Conference in Reno NV

**Chair:** Christopher J. Tabb  
**Chair-elect:** JoAnne Chalom  
**Past-chair:** Justin Kaiser  
**Secretary:** Jennifer Duncan  
**Treasurer:** Anne Zanger

**District 1:** Loana K. Mason  
**District 2:** John W. McAllister  
**District 3:** Margaret K. Winn  
**District 4:** Claudia Libis  
**District 5:** Amanda Stolz  
**District 6:** Valery Herring

#### **Nominating and Elections Committee:**

Brandon Cox  
Kim Zebehazy  
Mark Carter  
Tina Smith  
Kirstin Peahl

## O&M Division Awards

The Orientation and Mobility Division is pleased to announce the 2018 award recipients.

**The Lawrence E. Blaha Memorial Award:** Rod Kossick

**The Sandy Kronick Distinguished Service Award:** Chris Tabb

**The Orientation and Mobility Citation of Excellence for Direct Service:** Mary Ball-Swartout

The O&M Division Awards Ceremony and Reception will be on Thursday July 26<sup>th</sup> at the AER International Conference in Reno NV. Please join us for the festivities as we salute and congratulate our colleagues on the 50th anniversary of the Lawrence E. Blaha Memorial Award.

---

## Donald Blasch Scholarship

Each year the Orientation & Mobility Division awards two \$1000.00 scholarships to students currently in an O&M Program which has AER approval. It is my pleasure to introduce the winners of the 2018 Donald Blasch Scholarship competition.

Susan Langendonk, Chair

Michael Foster

When I graduated from Illinois State University I taught English in South Korea for a year and a half. I have been employed in human services and education in one capacity or another ever since I got home. For the last couple years (prior to coming to Northern in the Fall of 2017) I have worked at the Illinois School for the Visually Impaired. I was first employed as a one-on-one aide and my main job was to assist a young man with no light perception and some travelling difficulties as he went about his school day.



Here at Northern Illinois University I am a member of the University goalball team; I help to officiate and organize the games. I work as graduate assistant for Professor Gaylen Kapperman, and I assist the department in a few different capacities when needed. I have worked as a research assistant, a personal driver for Professor Kapperman (who is blind), and I have aided a professor in the classroom. Last semester I started and lead a study group for our braille class. I ended the Fall 2017 semester with a 3.918 GPA. Michael is currently attending the Orientation and Mobility program at Northern Illinois University.

Jacob Thistle

I was introduced to Orientation and Mobility instruction as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor at the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind. I learned that O&M was a crucial training area, and without it, people with vision impairments may not be able to achieve their goals. I soon realized that I wanted to pursue education and a long-term career in O&M.



After enrolling in UMass Boston’s graduate program in O&M, I completed a 120-hour praxis. I learned to successfully teach complex O&M techniques to classmates under blindfold. The course significantly strengthened my knowledge of O&M methods as well as my leadership qualities. I demonstrated effective communication skills, optimism, creativity, and empathy throughout lessons, which helped create strong rapport and feelings of safety with my classmates.

In May 2018 I began a 350-hour practicum with MAB Community Services, in which I will teach O&M to people who have visual impairments in addition to developmental disabilities in the Boston area. I am very excited about completing my education and entering the field as an orientation and mobility instructor. I look forward to working in the field of orientation and mobility instruction and contributing my leadership characteristics. Jacob is currently in the Orientation & Mobility Program at the University of Massachusetts, Boston

---

## What the heck is TRB and why does the O&M Division support attendance by Environmental Access Committee members?

*By JoAnne Chalom, COMS, Ed.S. and Janet Barlow, M.Ed, COMS*

### Why TRB?

TRB or the Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting is a huge meeting with sessions and committee meetings on all aspects of transportation and over 13000 attendees. Some sessions are of no interest to us, such as the “Surface Requirements of Asphalt Mixtures Committee”, and that’s a good thing! There are hundreds of sessions and committee meetings from early in the morning (7:00 a.m.) to late at night (10:00 p.m.). We spread out and attended as many sessions and committee meetings (that seemed pertinent) as possible. We had over 25 committee meetings that we thought someone should attend, in addition to presentations and poster sessions. We didn’t make it to all of them, but we covered a lot of ground, with help from others such as Rob Wall Emerson.

One of the most important aspects of our involvement is in promoting and encouraging inclusion of issues related to travel by pedestrians who are blind or who have low vision in upcoming research. TRB committees develop research needs statements (RNS) that are shared with several federal organizations, such as the National Cooperative Highway Research Program, the Transit Cooperative Research Program and Federal Highway Administration. Some of those research needs statements become funded research projects in coming years. In the past, our committee members have suggested ideas (and helped with developing the Research Needs Statement) that are of interest to our field. When RNS are selected for funding, TRB puts together a panel of individuals to oversee the research. New applications for panels are solicited each year and serving on panels is an important way that O&M specialists can help make sure

that topics related to blindness are researched by researchers with expertise in this area. The panel develops the request for proposal and selects, from submitted proposals, the contractor to complete the work. The panel supervises the work of the contractor. Recent successes are a proposal related to pedestrian and bicycle access to alternative intersections, now NCHRP 07-25, and a proposal related to innovative signal timing, NCHRP 03-133, both of which included mention of issues for pedestrians who are visually impaired or blind. JoAnne Chalom and Lukas Franck are currently on NCHRP panels and other members, such as Meg Robertson and Laura Park Leach, have been on NCHRP or TCRP panels in the past.

### **Highlights and News from this year's TRB:**

Our successes came in many forms, from discussions with researchers at poster sessions, to witnessing attendees ask questions and demonstrate concern for pedestrians with visual impairments, to suggesting research or sessions to address needs of individuals who are blind or who have low vision.

- Having EAC members as committee members on four TRB committees: Roundabouts, Pedestrians, Accessible Transportation and Mobility, and Work Zone Traffic Control. At TRB, this can be important because only committee members can “sit at the table” in the meetings. Most committees welcome comments from visitors, but it depends on the committee and the agenda for that committee
- Presenting at workshop *Mind the Gap: Can Inclusive Cities Bridge Social Equity Disparities*. JoAnne Chalom presented, with contributions from Laura Park Leach, on *Equity Indicators for Special Needs Travelers*.
- Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) were a big topic of conversation this year, since there were patent issues that blocked their use (finally resolved on March 18, 2018) Many pedestrian advocates are strong supporters of installation of RRFBs at midblock and roundabout crosswalks as an option and were quite dismayed with the situation. The fact that they were a big topic of conversation provided us with many opportunities to educate people about the need for audible features when RRFBs were installed, to make them accessible to individuals who are blind or who have low vision. The revised interim approval for the use of RRFBs actually mentions pushbutton locator tones and the appropriate speech message. It can be found at <https://speech message>
- Advocating for safe and accessible pedestrian environments for individuals with visual impairments in the planning and design stages of complete streets, alternative intersections, and roundabouts.
- Emphasizing the inclusion of people with disabilities, especially ones with visual impairments in the discussion of Complete Streets at committee meeting of Institute of Transportation Engineers.
- Discussion of including ADA compliant channelizing devices (barriers) around pedestrian construction sites in the design and planning process.
- Discussing with traffic engineers and roundabout experts the challenges placing a fountain in the middle of a roundabout, especially the sound impact for pedestrians who are blind.
- Addressed the ability of autonomous vehicles to identify and respond to pedestrians, however how do they predict pedestrian behavior that is not predictable?
- Proposed a workshop to the Pedestrian Committee for 2019 meeting on “How pedestrians with disabilities are affected by new pedestrian and bicycle facility designs.” The Pedestrian Committee was very supportive of developing this idea in collaboration with other committees.
- Influenced the decision of the Traffic Control Devices committee to focus next year's Traffic Control Device Challenge on “Traffic Control Device Innovations to Improve Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety at Signalized Intersections”
- Seeing the fruits of our many years of advocating when someone who is not in our field asked a question showing her concern for pedestrians who are blind.

- Beezy Bentzen joined the Intermodal Passenger Facilities Committee. They are supportive of developing a workshop addressing the needs of older people and people with disabilities in intermodal environments (i.e. transit stations and bus transfer stations).
- Attended the Transportation Issues in Major Cities Committee and they are also supportive of developing a workshop addressing the needs of older people and people with disabilities in intermodal environments.
- TRB's theme for next year is "Transportation for Smart, Sustainable and Equitable Communities." A sustainable and equitable community needs to include people who are aging and who have disabilities.

### **EAC committee**

Members of the Environmental Access Committee at the 97<sup>th</sup> Transportation Research Board (TRB) Annual Meeting from January 7, 2018 to January 11, 2018 included Janet Barlow, Billie Louise "Beezy" Bentzen, Meg Robertson, Jennifer Graham, JoAnne Chalom, and Lukas Franck.

During lunch one day, we had an EAC Meeting and discussed and considered different means of outreach to EAC Members and the O&M Division on on-going environmental access issues. We are still investigating some of the ideas discussed but expect to hear more from us soon. And we'd love to hear your ideas and questions. Email us at oandmEAC@gmail.com

### **Thanks!**

The EAC appreciates the support of the Division for our attendance. We think we are making a difference in bringing issues to the attention of transportation professionals. The above is just a quick snapshot of several long days of endless meetings, conversations, and explanations of orientation and mobility in DC with 13,000+ transportation professionals. Thanks also to Polara Enterprises for support of our travel expenses, and Lois Thibault and Jacques Peters for providing a place for us to stay in DC.

---

## **Eyeglasses for Education**

*By Rachel Bigham*

Last year, in response to a need recognized by the Care Team of Zane Grey Elementary/Intermediate in Zanesville, Ohio, a partnership was created with Gary Morgan and the local Walmart Vision Center to create a day in which Gary and another optical technician would come out to the school to provide free adjustments and repairs of eyeglasses for students. Due to high poverty levels and lack of efficient transportation, it was often found that many students would not have access to the prescribed spectacles ordered for them due to cost, insufficient means to go to appointments, and accidents occurring with glasses they had that would make them no longer wearable. Students would also choose to not wear their glasses due to the fact that they would be uncomfortable and need adjusting.

This year, work has been done to expand this program to all of the buildings within Zanesville City Schools. After the one round of eyeglass clinic visits, 114 students were able to be seen and provided with services. The individual PTOs were able to provide financial assistance to purchase needed pairs of glasses.

This program has been an excellent way for Walmart to step out into our community and make a huge difference in the lives of the students served. So many of our students have come to not only appreciate the service being given to them but have also gained a positive role model and friend in Mr. Morgan. They often ask when he is coming back.

This program has also become an excellent expansion for child find and identification of those with visual impairments that are not fully corrected by eyewear. It has allowed for greater provision of both TVI and COMS services to students who otherwise may have gone without servicing due to not being identified.

This program has quickly become an amazing asset to our school and moreover, our community. Families are seeing improving grades and interactions at school because students have greater access to the information around them. Many no longer have to strain or struggle to see academic curriculum being presented to them. This program has given short term positive effects, but I believe will also positively affect the future of our community.

If you have further questions or interest, please contact:

Rachel Bigham  
Zanesville City Schools  
Visual Impairment Services  
M.Ed., TVI, COMS  
740-450-1335  
rbigham@zanesville.k12.oh.us

---

## New Online O&M Conference Helps Students Around the World Gain Independence

by *Kassy Maloney*

The International Orientation and Mobility Online Symposium (IOMOS) is our profession's first community driven fully digital online conference. During its inaugural conference last January, the Symposium helped over 300 Orientation and Mobility Specialists increase their students' mobility skills through two days of presentations held in real-time online conference rooms.



Orientation and Mobility Specialists from all around the world came together to learn some of the most cutting-edge, research-based, and effective O&M strategies while earning ACVREP credits from the comfort of their own homes or offices. We were thrilled to have attendees and presenters from China, to the U.K., Australia, to Bermuda, Alaska to Key West, and everywhere in between.

Dona Sauerburger led the way with a collaborative street-crossing analyzation presentation that featured Orientation and Mobility Specialists at their intersections in the U.S., Thailand, Australia, India, and Canada. We learned how to use the Dakota Disk with our students and gained some incredible organization tips to keep us organized on the road. Everybody walked away from Chris Tabb's presentation with a trunk-full of knowledge about accessible technology for our students and clients.

Participants were able to watch the presentations live and interact in real-time with the presenters. They also had the option of watching the replay videos of the presentations after the live presentations were over. Surprisingly, being allowed to attend the conference sessions at your own pace actually increased the networking in the chat rooms! One participant said "Being able to network with my peers in regions far away was one of my favorite aspects."



At the end of the symposium, Angela said “A big thank you to everyone who played a role in this online symposium! It was wonderful. So many great presentations and information. I look forward to many, many more!!”.

“Just wanted to give you a shoutout and huge thank you for the Analyzing Street Crossings info. Such a HUGE help to have information from so many O&M specialists to learn from!”, Christina said.

This year’s symposium is shaping up to be even better than last year’s. We hope you join us for the 2019 International Orientation and Mobility Online Symposium next January 30-February 1(EST)! You can get more information and become part of our growing community by going to our website, [www.orientationandmobilitysymposium.com](http://www.orientationandmobilitysymposium.com).

---

## DISTRICT REPORTS

### ***District 3 – Maggie Winn***

Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ontario and Wisconsin

#### **Illinois**

##### **For Students with Visual Impairment**

Deadline: May 25, 2018

Week 1: June 24 – 29, 2018

Week 2: July 22 – 27, 2018

##### **Location:**

UIC Polk Street Residence

1933 W. Polk St. | Chicago, IL

This unique residential program, held at UIC Polk Street Residence in Chicago, offers a five night experience. Students attend classes in technology, mobility, communication, and daily living skills. The evenings are spent exploring and experiencing all the excitement that Chicago has to offer, such as the theatre, boating, sports venues, restaurants, etc.

For more information, view the [event flyer](#).

Or contact Shelle Hamer at

[shelle.hamer@chicagolighthouse.org](mailto:shelle.hamer@chicagolighthouse.org) | (847) 510-2055

**REGISTER ONLINE and COMPLETE ASSESSMENTS at:**

[chicagolighthouse.org/youth-transition-application](http://chicagolighthouse.org/youth-transition-application)

<https://chicagolighthouse.org/summer-in-the-city-assessment/>

#### **Michigan**

Leader Dogs for the Blind is accepting applications for Accelerated Orientation and Mobility, a one-week program that allows your clients to enhance their skills, and then continue training with their local COMS upon their return home.

For more information, visit <http://www.leaderdog.org/clients/programs/accelerated-o-m-program>

Leader Dogs for the Blind Summer Experience Camp will be held Saturday, June 23–Saturday, June 30, 2018. The camp application process is completed, but applications for 2019 will be available this fall for individuals who will be 16 or 17 during the dates of camp. Summer Experience Camp is a unique summer



camp for boys and girls ages 16 and 17 who are legally blind combining summer fun, independent travel skill training, leadership development, an introduction to guide dogs and the opportunity to spend time with peers facing similar challenges.

Follow the link below for more information.

<http://www.leaderdog.org/clients/programs/summer-experience-camp>

Congratulations to Becky Racine on becoming the new COMS for the Delta Schoolcraft ISD and Bureau for Services for Blind Persons in the Upper Peninsula and partnering with the Iron Mountain VA and Milwaukee VA to provide services to the veterans in the Upper Peninsula.

### **Wisconsin**

The upcoming NCOMA Conference will be held September 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> 2018 in Milwaukee, WI.

Call for papers is open now!

[NCOMA Call for Papers](#)

Call for papers are being accepted through June 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **Minnesota**

The Lighthouse Center for Vision Loss in Duluth, MN has upcoming camps for Transition age youth (14-21).

<https://www.lcfvl.org/transition>

These camps are open to students (14-22 years old) who have vision impairment or blindness. During camps, students will stay at University of Wisconsin – Superior and participate in activities throughout the Duluth/Superior area. Past camp activities have included sailing on Lake Superior, horseback riding, Beep Baseball, tandem biking, GoalBall, a train ride up the North Shore and more!

Call the Lighthouse and contact your State Services for the Blind Counselor to discuss your eligibility. Students are welcome to participate in any or all of the camps that interest them.

### **To Apply**

Follow this link to access online application for Lighthouse Summer Transition

Programs: <https://googl/forms/hGcrwIyD8F3wBAj73>

To download an application in word or pdf format, follow this link: <http://lcfvl.org/application>

### ***District 5 - JoAnne Chalom***

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Puerto Rico, Tennessee

### **Southeastern Orientation and Mobility Association (SOMA)**

#### **2018 O&M Conference**

**Saturday-Tuesday, December 8-11, 2018**

**2225 N Lois Ave, Tampa, Florida, 33607**

The theme for the upcoming SOMA 2018 Orientation and Mobility Conference is “Innovation and Exploration in O&M!” It will be held at the Hilton Tampa Airport Westshore close to Tampa International Airport and other amenities. Session options will focus on learning how to incorporate new technology techniques and innovative ideas to implement during O&M instruction. This conference is dedicated to providing new ideas and ways to serve individuals with visual impairments. If you like the idea of feeling invigorated after a conference consider joining your colleagues in Tampa, Florida to exchange ideas and explore innovations in O&M.

## Division Executive Committee

CHAIR: Justin Kaiser  
EMAIL: jkaiser@uscupstate.edu

SECRETARY: Kathryn Botsford  
EMAIL: kdbotsford.ver@gmail.com

PAST CHAIR: Susan Langendonk  
EMAIL: susanlangendonk@gmail.com

TREASURER: Susan Bradley  
EMAIL: bradlesk@aol.com

CHAIR ELECT: Chris Tabb  
EMAIL: tabbc@tsbvi.edu

DISTRICT 1: Loana Mason  
EMAIL: loanam@nmsu.edu  
(Alaska, Alberta, Arizona, British Columbia, Colorado, Hawaii, New Mexico, California, Nevada, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Northwest Territories, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Yukon Territories)

DISTRICT 2: John McAllister  
EMAIL: jwmcallister@ualr.edu  
(Arkansas, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Manitoba, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Saskatchewan, Texas)

DISTRICT 3: Margaret Winn  
EMAIL: margaretkwinn@gmail.com  
(Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ontario and Wisconsin)

DISTRICT 4: Lynnette McElwain  
EMAIL: nortlyn@yahoo.com  
(Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, New Hampshire, New York, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Rhode Island, Vermont)

DISTRICT 5: JoAnne Chalom  
EMAIL: jchalom@infocusmobility.com  
(Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Puerto Rico, Tennessee)

DISTRICT 6: Anthony Nigro  
EMAIL: anigromobility@gmail.com  
(Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virgin Islands, Virginia, West Virginia, Washington D.C.)

Visit the O&M website for a list of Committees: <https://aerbvi.org/oandmdivision>

Susan Langendonk, Editor  
susanlangendonk@gmail.com

Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired  
1703 N. Beauregard St., Suite 440 ■ Alexandria, VA 22311-1744  
[aer@aerbvi.org](mailto:aer@aerbvi.org) ■ [www.aerbvi.org](http://www.aerbvi.org) ■ <https://aerbvi.org/oandmdivision>