

## ILLINOIS AER Mail – Fall 2020

Greetings Illinois AER Members!

It is truly my honor to write this letter to as your new president of Illinois AER for the 2020-2022 term. It has been a year like no other and one we will never forget!

Despite all of the changes we have endured this year one thing remains the same, the IAER board continues to be dedicated and hard at work to provide you with professional growth opportunities. Look in this newsletter for some previews on what is to come!

For this letter I want to take the time to thank you for recognizing the importance of continuing to be a part of your professional group and being a member. With the membership there comes other opportunities and advantages such as discounts on conferences and workshops, newsletters, mini-grants, stipends, awards, and more! Also, check your membership to make sure you are taking advantage of being a part of some of the sixteen divisions!

Something else being a member provides is a sense of community, especially in this time where we all may question ourselves if we are doing enough. I want you to know that I see you all. I see you on social media. I see you in virtual meetings. I see you creating and sharing such wonderful tips, resources, and lessons in a world that is new to us all. I see you continuing to explore and try new things to ensure your students, clients, and children all have access and continue to learn.

As busy as we have been taking care of others, please remember to take some well-deserved time for yourself. I hope you all have a wonderful holiday season and a happy new year!

Take care,

Jennifer Duncan  
Illinois AER President

## IAER Board Members

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## Committee Reports

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### Awards Committee

The IAER Awards are now open! Nomination forms for the Illinois Individual Awards and the IAER Community Partner Award are available to download at [Welcome to the Illinois AER Chapter – AER \(aerbvi.org\)](http://www.aerbvi.org)

The Illinois Individual Award form includes nominees for the Illinois Distinguished Award, the Excellence in Education Award, and the Excellence in Rehabilitation Award. Please submit nominations with all requested paperwork to Sara Edwards at [loveisblind0511@gmail.com](mailto:loveisblind0511@gmail.com). Deadline to submit is January 4, 2021.

### Workshop/Conference Committee

IAER Vision Conference 2021

While we have decided NOT to meet in person for a 2021 IAER Vision conference, we would like to provide you with professional development opportunities that are typically gained at conference. Please complete the following survey to let us know the best way to schedule these sessions for you.  
<https://forms.gle/ivFQq8eHkXmXByQv7>

We have already received calls for presentations and the board is excited for what sessions we will have available for you. If you have ideas for a session, and would like to have it as an option for consideration, please contact Amy Lund at [brailledund@gmail.com](mailto:brailledund@gmail.com)

## **IVLC Advocacy Committee**

The Illinois Vision Leadership Council's recruitment committee, "WhyEyeTeach", is continuing to spread awareness and helping recruit people into the field! In addition, WhyEyeTeach is now also spreading the word of current job openings. If you know of any job openings, please Email [WhyEyeTeach@Gmail.com](mailto:WhyEyeTeach@Gmail.com) to have it posted onto our website at [www.whyeyeteach.info](http://www.whyeyeteach.info) under the job openings tab.

We can't do it alone! How can you help? If you know of any high school students, college students, or anyone looking to change their careers, please spread the word about this great field! Ways to spread the word include going to your districts or agencies on career days, speaking to neighbors, families, or friends who are interested in a new career path, or by sharing our information on social media.

Follow, share, and contact us...

Website- [www.WhyEyeTeach.info](http://www.WhyEyeTeach.info)

Email- [WhyEyeTeach@Gmail.com](mailto:WhyEyeTeach@Gmail.com)

Facebook- [WhyEyeTeach: IVLC Recruitment Committee](#)

Twitter- [WhyEyeTeach](#)

Instagram- [WhyEyeTeach](#)

While you're there use the hashtag #WhyEyeTeach and tell us why you are a vision professional or what you love most about your job!

## **Mini Grants/Stipends**

Greetings IAER Members!

Available funds running low for professional development opportunities? How about implementing the programs your students/clients need? Well IAER is here to help!

Members are **each** allotted \$100 awards for use toward IAER conference expenses and \$200 awards to **national and international** conferences (e.g. ICEVI, International AER, CEC, AFB, APH, etc.)! This is a great way to offset the rising cost of hotel stays, food, and registration and is one of the benefits of joining AER! We have **\$1800 available** for conference expenses!

We still have \$2000 available in mini-grant funds! Priority is given to new and innovative programs but **please don't let this discourage you from sending in an application!** We have ample money for mini-grants, even if you have applied for a specific program in the past. As a member, you can use this money for planning quality programs for students, clients, and families.

Last, but not least, the Volunteer Direct Service grant is available for this fiscal year. If you or someone you know is traveling to provide services or programming in another country or area of the USA, please apply for this grant! More information is available at <https://aerbvi.org/about/chapters/illinois/>

If you have any questions, please see the contact information below.

Email: [mollyclesen@gmail.com](mailto:mollyclesen@gmail.com)

Address:

Molly Pasley

300 High Oak Dr.

East Peoria, IL 61611

Molly Pasley

IAER Mini-Grant/Stipend/Volunteer Service Grant Chair

## Resource Updates

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### **Chicago Lighthouse for the Blind Transition**

<https://chicagolighthouse.org/program/youth-transition-program/>

Upcoming events:

- January 24, 2021- ABSF Ski Trip
- February 13, 2021, 10:00-2:00 on Zoom-Resume writing and Job Search Strategies
- March 13, 2021, 10:00-2:00 on Zoom-Interview Techniques
- April 10, 2021, 10:00-2:00 on Zoom-Mock Job Interviewing
- First Jobs Program: Virtual Training Week June 28-July 1 followed by 5-week internship
- Summer in the City:
  - Virtual July 18-23
  - In-Person August 8-13

We are continuing our Monthly Parent Support Group on Zoom the first Wednesday of each month for parents of children with VI of all ages

### **Leader Dogs for the Blind**

What's New at Leader Dogs for the Blind?

2020 – a year which has certainly brought some new challenges. Like many others, Leader Dog has continued to adapt and find new ways to reach our clients and continue serving people with high quality

instruction. We are continuing to provide FREE orientation and mobility, guide dog training and a summer experience camp for teens. Beginning in 2021 Leader Dog will offer several new virtual learning options on our website to meet everyone's individual needs and requests. We've divided these resources into a few categories including potential clients or those in the application process, Leader Dog graduates and family/friends of clients. Additionally, Leader Dog will begin providing some FREE virtual continuing education credit opportunities for our other COMS in the field to learn more about working with a client with a guide dog and how to help prepare a client for a guide dog. Please feel free to reach out to Leslie Hoskins, outreach services and community engagement manager with any questions or requests for presentations. Leslie can be contacted at [leslie.hoskins@leaderdog.org](mailto:leslie.hoskins@leaderdog.org) or 248-650-7104.

## **Northern Illinois University Update**

### **Northern Illinois University Visual Disabilities Program Update**

Please see our national advertisement below and share widely with your networks.

#### **Training for a Rewarding Career Generous Student Financial Assistance**

#### **Teaching Adults who are Blind or Visually Impaired and Providing Orientation and Mobility Services for Those Adults**

**AND**

#### **Teaching Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired, Providing Orientation and Mobility Services for Those Children, and/or Specializing in Assistive Technology for Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired**

Northern Illinois University (DeKalb, Illinois) offers a nationally regarded program at the graduate level for individuals who wish to join a rewarding career in teaching children or adults who are blind or visually impaired as a teacher of students with visual impairments, orientation and mobility instructor, or assistive technology specialist for children with visual impairments or a vision rehabilitation therapist for adults who are visually impaired. There is an overwhelming need for professionals who specialize in instruction for people who are visually impaired. As a consequence, there are many job opportunities in all regions of the United States. Individuals who choose this career path can anticipate having no difficulty obtaining life-long employment with great job security! In addition to numerous job opportunities, good pay, and excellent job security, individuals who choose this career path experience a sense of fulfillment not commonly found in other careers. These professionals play a significant role in the lives of children who are visually impaired, adults who are visually impaired, and their families.

Generous student financial assistance is available. We will pay all in-state or out-of-state tuition, all fees, health insurance, and a stipend of \$5,520 per calendar year for qualified individuals who wish to come to Northern Illinois University to enroll in the Visual Disabilities Graduate Program focusing on special education for children who are blind or visually impaired with an additional emphasis in assistive technology.

**For more information, go to the following YouTube link:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VUfWnBbNZMg>

**And, the following webpage:**

<https://www.cedu.niu.edu/seed/graduate-programs/masters-visual-disabilities.shtml>

**Interested individuals can contact the Project Director, Stacy Kelly, at the following e-mail:**

[skelly@niu.edu](mailto:skelly@niu.edu)

Or by calling 815-753-4103

Admissions requirements are as follows:

Online application

GRE scores of 30%tile verbal and 30%tile quantitative

Official transcripts of all previous academic work

GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale

ACT score of 22 or successful completion of the Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP)

Two letters of recommendation

Personal statement

The direct link to the online application can be found on the page,

<https://www.niu.edu/grad/admissions/apply-now.shtml>.

Students progress through the program in cohorts. Each cohort begins in the fall of each academic year. The generous financial assistance is awarded on a first come, first served basis to qualified applicants. Be sure to notify Stacy Kelly ([skelly@niu.edu](mailto:skelly@niu.edu)) of your intent to apply to ensure that your name is included in the pool of candidates!



**The Future of Hadley is NOW**

Hadley celebrates our centennial anniversary this year. And while no one could have seen 2020 unfolding the way it has, distance learning and technology have played important roles in our “new normal.” Now, I’d like to invite you to another celebration—a chance to rediscover Hadley for yourself.

Just as William Hadley’s ‘Braille by Mail’ revolutionized distance education for learning braille in 1920, one hundred years later, our new approach to learning connects us to those with vision loss in a way that sets a new standard well into the future.

At the core, Hadley today combines innovation with a highly personalized approach. No two learners are alike. Each has unique needs, interests, and preferences for how to learn new skills, no matter their level of vision.

Because of this, we have designed a learning experience as a guided approach through a variety of topics. So, whether you’d like to discuss gardening techniques, learn how to safely use a sharp knife, or discover ways to use your smart phone with more confidence, you’ll find something for you at Hadley. And of course, we continue to innovate our approach to braille, too.

“The beautiful thing Hadley has to offer, in addition to the learning content itself, is free and direct access to expert advice,” notes Hadley’s Chief Program Officer, Ed Haines. “No matter where you live, you can talk to a vision professional, a Hadley learning expert, about your specific questions and get your own personalized help. We provide real help in real time and it’s all free of charge.”

The new [hadley.edu](http://hadley.edu) experience has been called “groundbreaking” by the hundreds of learners who have tested the website. And while we are excited about our new site, we have also redesigned our learning content for those who prefer large print, braille, and audio content, too.

But the future of Hadley depends on you. Tell us what you like, what you don’t like, and what more you want from your Hadley experience. We are in this together for many years to come.

Check us out at [www.hadley.edu](http://www.hadley.edu) or give us a call 800.323.4238.

### **Spectrios**

Here’s some information on what is happening with Spectrios, including updated ways to continue to serve the students around the state during the pandemic.

As you can imagine COVID-19 has made things more challenging, but we are determined to continue to help children with vision loss be successful. We have implemented the following strategies to reach our students regardless of the situation with their schools.

1. Created a dedicated exam room for Seeing is Believing in the Access Technology center at Spectrios in Wheaton.

We have had several clinics at the House of Hope and it has gone really well. It is an exciting way to reach local students even though their schools might be closed and they have the added benefit of seeing all the wonderful technology tools available.

2. Continuing to have in-person clinics at administration buildings or school locations.

We were able to make use of space that allowed us to see students in a way that was safe for all involved. We have had our vision teachers able to attend the exam virtually, even if they were in quarantine or needing to teach other students at other locations at that time.

3. Telehealth

We have purchased a telehealth platform called Doxy.me that allows us to see students, their teachers and parents in a HIPPA secured environment. This has been great because everyone is trying to adapt during the pandemic and we can meet our students and families regardless of where they are. We send out a packet a couple weeks before the exam to families or teachers which contains materials to ensure we can get a successful exam even by video conferencing.

We also wanted to let everyone know that this is our Seeing is Believing program's **30<sup>th</sup>** year! I am looking for any photos or stories you might have that could help us celebrate this milestone. We would love to see any old photos you may have featuring younger versions of our students, teachers, coordinators and even the doctors!!