



Welcome to the June 2019 Issue of The Voice

A Word from AER's Executive Director

Dear AER Members,

Earlier this week I had the opportunity to represent AER at a town hall meeting of the United States Access Board in Indianapolis. The Board is an independent federal agency that promotes equality for people with disabilities through leadership in accessible design and the development of accessibility guidelines and standards. They represent people across the disability spectrum. As I listened to members of the audience express their heartfelt concerns and frustrations, I was reminded that it's our duty, as an organization and as individuals, to work alongside consumers in our field to educate businesses, organizations, communities, legislators, our friends and neighbors, our families and others on not only the need for inclusion and access, but on the downright "rightness" of respecting all of our fellow human beings.

During the meeting, a grandmother of teenage twin grandsons who have cerebral palsy choked back tears as she spoke about their attempts to have a simple outing to a neighborhood park. Her story reminded me of the many, many stories I've heard and incidents I've witnessed where barriers, physical and societal, have limited experiences for children and adults who are blind and visually impaired. Those memories made me think about how AER helps us all become better at what we do – including being there to support our students and clients, and their families, with information, encouragement, and the learning that leads to self-determination. Don't you love those "aha" moments when a student finally gets it? And the enthusiasm and pride that come when a client conquers a challenge? And the satisfaction when a new skill is learned and mastered? Aren't those the moments that make it all worthwhile?

Being a part of your professional organization gives you the chance to share those moments with others who understand and share your passion. When we share our stories, others in the field will discover strategies and inspirations that will lead to "aha" moments within their own professional lives. We would love to hear and share your stories about challenges, successes and celebrations. You can share them in the Voice, you can present at a conference, you can post on social media, you can tell colleagues in your district, state or agency. Do you have stories to tell? Let's talk!

Janie Blome, Executive Director

President's Corner

It is no secret that I have a son who is blind with additional disabilities, as many know from familyconnect.org. Lately, Eddie has decided an important part of his morning routine is getting me out of bed. At 5:30 he opens the bedroom door, uses the restroom, and then promptly turns on the light in our room and pulls me out of bed loudly stating, "Hi, Mom!" I've tried sneaking back into my room, but he quickly returns to admonish my laziness and so off to the coffee pot I go.

I recently reflected on this act of engagement and equated it to the work I do within the field of blindness daily. Every question I receive from a parent or professional, suggestion I get from a colleague, or constructive criticism I acknowledge from a friend is a wake-up call. Eddie literally tugs me on the arm, but the needs of our field symbolically pull me every day, too. This is why I'm an active AER member and encourage action in others.

Whether our call to action comes from a parent, a professional, or another individual...we need to recognize the call. The urge to roll over and close our eyes can be strong, but I recommend we rise up and find more coffee instead. Maybe not always for us, but always for the students and clients we serve.

Emily Coleman, President

What's New AER?

Bill of Rights

AER's mission is to serve and empower professionals to deliver standards-based practices that lead to improved educational and rehabilitative outcomes for individuals with visual impairment and blindness. Our vision is to be a dynamic and thriving professional membership community with innovative practices and standards that result in responsiveness, recognized leadership, and improved outcomes for individuals who are blind and visually impaired. In support of both our mission and our vision, the AER Board recently voted unanimously to endorse a newly written Bill of Rights for All Students with Visual Impairments and Their Families. Written by members of AER and COSB, the Bill of Rights has also been unanimously endorsed by the COSB Board. It is available on the AER website and a downloadable version can be accessed here: [Bill of Rights Document](#)

You are encouraged to share the document with parents, colleagues, administrators and others interested in promoting the rights and dignity of children with visual impairments, including those with additional disabilities. If your organization is interested in signing on as an endorser of the Bill of Rights, please contact Janie Blome, AER's Executive Director at janie@aerbvi.org.

AER Board of Directors Meeting Update

The AER Board of Directors convened April 26, 2019 to review and discuss an agenda complete with AER business items and other matters related to the AER membership and the organization.

Here are some highlights from the board meeting: [Meeting Highlights](#)

AER History Reflection

Our Professional DNA: Quite an Inheritance!

Submitted by *Mary Nelle McLennan, AER History and Memorial Committee Co-Chair*

It's almost impossible to watch TV these days without seeing multiple ads inviting us to have our DNA tested to learn about our ancestry—to reveal where we came from and who went before us. This year, we are celebrating the 35th anniversary of the formation of AER, yet AER is not as new as that makes it sound. Instead, you and I as AER members are part of a professional caravan with a long and respected pedigree.

Now 35 years old, AER has been around long enough that most members have forgotten or perhaps never learned how it came to be or the lineage upon which our organization was founded. In truth, our roots as AER members go way back! AER did not ‘just happen’ in 1984, and its story is an inspiring one.

Our DNA in Context

In the United States, the first organized programs for educating students who were blind did not develop until the first half of the 1800s. Astonishingly, Harvard, founded in 1636, was nearly 200 years old when the US began to establish education programs for blind students! As these new schools were being established in various states and people working in those schools were just beginning to develop educational practices, there was no way for the teachers and leaders to share their emerging understanding of how to teach blind learners. There was no professional association to connect them and help them pool their knowledge and growing expertise. There was no organized “body” to help the profession develop or to provide professional development for their teachers and staff.

Beginnings

In 1853, superintendents and select teachers from the recently established residential schools for the blind took the first steps toward forming a professional association. They held a meeting to share the information they were each developing in isolation, and they began to see that their budding efforts at educating blind learners could become a real PROFESSION! Then came the Civil War, which along with its aftermath and economic consequences, prevented the development of a formal association for almost 20 years. But even a devastating war on their own soil did not daunt our professional ancestors.

In 1871, under the leadership of Samuel Gridley Howe, the Director of the Perkins School for the Blind, administrators of the schools for the blind traveled by train, by horse and buggy, and even by boat to a meeting where they established the American Association of Instructors for the Blind (AAIB). In doing so, they committed themselves to the systematic improvement of education for blind students through professional development opportunities, publications, and public advocacy.

Early Work

Our professional family was off and running! AAIB's early work resulted in the 1879 passage of

the federal Act to Promote the Education of the Blind—our nation’s first disability legislation. This action led to the establishment of the Federal Quota program, which is still in effect through the American Printing House for the Blind.

Our predecessors’ efforts to professionalize their work did not stop with the establishment of AAIB and its focus on educating children and youth. In 1895, a group made up primarily of graduates of residential schools for the blind formed another association to focus on the needs of educated blind adults who could not find employment. The organizers were also concerned about the dismal circumstances of most blind adults. This second organization was originally known as the American Blind People’s Higher Education Improvement Association (ABPHEIA). [Editorial note: It seems that long and convoluted names must also be in our DNA!]. In 1905, the members changed the name to the American Association of Workers for the Blind (AAWB). This organization focused on the difficult problem of finding suitable employment for the graduates of the special schools as well as on the special needs of older blind people who lost their vision as adults.

Remarkable Contributions and a New Organization

From those early beginnings through most of the 20th century, AAIB and AAWB existed as separate organizations. AAIB continued to focus on education—and AAWB centered its work on employment, O&M, and the needs of adults and older citizens.

For over a century, members of AAWB and AAIB (renamed AEVH in 1968)—our ancestor organizations—were responsible for many changes and advancements in the blindness field and led the nation in recognizing the talents and rights of people with blindness or visual impairments. We will explore that amazing list in another column.

Eventually, in 1984, AEVH and AAWB merged to form a new association that would blend our work and our commitment into one professional organization—and that new association became AER! Now, 35 years later, we celebrate its progress and its future.

In developing AER and continuing the evolution of this professional association, we were—and are—standing on the shoulders of giants who, in joining together, made countless positive impacts on the lives and opportunities of blind people and those who served them. We can rightly be proud of our heritage and our professional DNA!

Based on an earlier article authored by the late Richard L. Welsh, PhD

Member Spotlight

AER Board Member Chris Tabb: Large Divisions Representative



Chris Tabb is presently employed at Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI) Outreach Programs as the Statewide Orientation and Mobility Consultant. He enjoys working with all age groups, including infants and toddlers, school age students, adults, and senior populations. Chris’ greatest professional interests are all things Orientation and Mobility, as well as Assistive Technology.

Being on the AER Board was something that never crossed my mind when I joined in 1999. I do not think my brain could stretch that far; I was too awed by all the learning occurring at conferences and in division activities. Today, I cannot think of anything more beneficial to developing professionally. The connection with other professionals in the field of blindness, visual impairment, and DeafBlindness is priceless; the true benefits only become tangible when you jump into the middle of the herd. Being involved in the process of AER lets you learn about other perspectives in the field, lets you hone your own skills and ability to convey your perspectives with others, and helps bring the field forward into new opportunities. I find I am often siloed in my day to day work activities. This does not contain all the ingredients needed for professional growth; in order to find those ingredients, I need to connect with professionals from other areas and learn about what happens in their day to day worlds. When we meet as a board, we are able to collaborate with one another to make great things happen; we do that by sharing what we have learned in our unique areas so that we can all understand new views and share new directions.

What's Happening?

Chapter Events

"Gear Up for Success" IN-AER 2019 Conference

Date: June 19, 2019

Venue: Bosma Enterprises (6270 Corporate Dr.)

City & State: Indianapolis, Indiana

To learn more about these and other events, please visit: <https://aerbvi.org/event/>

Division Event(s)

Vision Rehabilitation Therapy Division

Date: June 12, 2019

To learn more about this event, please click on the following link:

[Division Events](#)

Aging Division

Parkinson Webinar - Canada

Date: July 18, 2019 at 12pm Eastern

Check your email for more details.

Info You Can Use

Convergency Insufficiency Webinar

On April 24, 2019, the Council of Schools and Services for the Blind (COSB) held a webinar called Convergency Insufficiency: OSEP Mandate and Current Case Law, hosted by Todd Reeves, Overbrook School for the Blind. Many AER members were unavailable to listen to the webinar. AER is pleased to provide this recording to those who were not able to participate and to those who want a review: Click here to listen now: [Recorded Webinar](#)

Scholarship Opportunity

Vision Forward Association

Vision Forward Association has scholarship opportunities to benefit blind and visually impaired students in Wisconsin. Scholarship money must be used for tuition. All tuition payments will be sent directly to the selected educational institution. All applications are reviewed by the Scholarship Committee with consideration to the following: personal and family financial need, academic achievement, career goal, extracurricular activities and character. The number and value of the Vision Forward Association Scholarship Awards vary each year, ranging in amounts from \$500 to \$3,000, depending on the number of applicants and the financial needs presented. To learn more: [Application and Information Sheet](#)

CVI Survey*

Attention Occupational Therapists, Occupational Therapy Assistants, and Teachers of the Visually Impaired, please consider participating in a survey regarding the educational background related to Cortical Visual Impairment. For more details, read the information sheet: [Survey Information Sheet](#)

Click here to complete the survey: [Survey](#)

**This survey is being shared by AER and is in no way an indication of an endorsement of its contents or matters thereof.*

Welcome AER New Members

Join us in welcoming the following members to AER who joined in the month of May: [New AER Members](#)

What's Cookin' AER

Super Easy White Chicken Chili

My wife and I generally make this recipe in an Instant Pot; but it can be easily made on a stove top.

Add the following ingredients:

- 4 large Chicken breasts
- 4 cans of white beans. Our favorite are Bush's Great Northern. There is no need to drain the liquid.
- 32 ounces of chicken broth
- 2 packages of McCormick White Chili Chicken seasoning
- 8 ounce block of pepper jack cheese
- 8 ounces of Philadelphia Cream Cheese

1. Stir this mixture then lay 4 large chicken breasts on top. Lock the lid, select soup mode and set time for 30 minutes.

2. When this part of the process is done, take the chicken breasts out carefully and shred them with two forks before putting it all back into the pot.

3. At this point, add an 8 ounce block of pepper jack cheese (it should be cut into smaller pieces to melt more easily) as well as 8 ounces of Philadelphia Cream Cheese. Stir it all together until it is smooth and creamy. Serve and enjoy.

If you are making this with a stock pot on the stove top you will need to cook the chicken breasts separately but make sure they are moist and tender before attempting to shred them.

Otherwise, the first ingredients should cook nicely on the stove top. Adding the shredded chicken and cheese at the end will be the same.

This is so easy even an O&M guy can do it.

**Paul H. Olson—Superintendent
North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind**

*Hey members, do you have a favorite recipe that you want to share with the group?
Send it to news@aerbvi.org!*

Employment Opportunities

Employment opportunities are available for you! Here are some of the exciting jobs that are available:

[O&M Specialist or Instructor with COMS](#)

05/22/2019 | Aberdeen, South Dakota

[SD School for the Blind & Visually Impaired](#)

Teacher of the Visually Impaired

05/22/2019 | Buffalo, New York

[Olmsted Center for Sight](#)

Occupational Therapist

05/22/2019 | Alamogordo, New Mexico

New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Early Childhood Program

[O&M Specialist](#)

Rochester Hills, MI

Leader Dogs for the Blind

For more jobs that are available, please visit: [Job Exchange](#)

Way to Go!

Emily Coleman (President, AER) has been selected as the New Superintendent of TSBVI!



The Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI) in Austin, Texas, has selected Emily Coleman as the incoming Superintendent to succeed Superintendent William Daugherty, effective August 1st, who will be retiring in August after 12 years of leading the school. Ms. Coleman is currently serving as TSBVI's Director of Statewide Outreach, and will become the first woman to lead the school in its 163- year history.

Emily's background includes itinerant work as a Teacher of the Visually Impaired, Statewide Leadership with TSBVI and the WA State School for the Blind, National Leadership as President of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), and family leadership through her work with FamilyConnect. Ms.

Coleman, who serves as the current volunteer President of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) is a parent of a child who is blind with multiple disabilities. Superintendent William Daugherty and the TSBVI Board of Trustees are excited and proud to have an individual of such high quality to lead the school moving forward, and know that Ms. Coleman will build upon the school's outstanding mission and its national and international reputation as one of the flagship organizations of its type in the nation.

Accreditation Announcement

Congratulations! The Orientation and Mobility program at the University of Northern Colorado has earned the distinction "AER Accredited" and is in full compliance with the standards set forth by the AER Accreditation Program.

Save The Date!

AER International Conference 2020- St. Louis, Missouri

Plans are underway for the AER International Conference 2020. Conference Program Chair Joe Catavero promises to provide a full learning experience complete with deep dive discussions, value-added general sessions and top rated breakout sessions. So, mark your calendars today for July 22-26, 2020 and join your colleagues at the Gateway Arch in the grand St. Louis!



The AER Voice is a monthly newsletter that serves as an information hub for members; and offers an easy and dependable way of keeping current. This electronic newsletter includes AER updates, events, special announcements, useful tidbits and so much more. If you have news, resources, information or any updates that you would like to share with the membership, please send it to AER at news@aerbvi.org. Deadline for the July issue is 6/27/2019.



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