



## Welcome to the September 2019 Issue of The Voice

### A Word from AER's Executive Director

Dear AER Members,

I know that January is typically when we think of new beginnings and fresh starts, but for someone who lived over 35 years of my life on an academic calendar, I still feel like the rush and excitement of a “new year” when the beginning of the school year rolls around. As a student and as a teacher, I always looked forward to that new year of possibilities, opportunities and accomplishments. As a student, I was excited to learn from different teachers, discover new knowledge, catch up with my friends, and make new friends. As a teacher, I was excited to learn from my students and watch them grow. I was eager to discover new things, learn from my colleagues in the field, connect with old friends, meet new ones, and fill the days with new experiences and interactions. Yes, there were disappointments and frustrations ahead in the new year as well, but the chance to start anew each year always felt like the opportunity to crack open a new book, literally and figuratively.

I've felt many of those same kinds of feelings about AER the last couple of months. We are, in many ways, in a time of new beginnings and fresh starts. The upcoming year is going to one of possibility, opportunity and accomplishment. As AER members, we get to discover new things, learn from each other, teach each other, connect with old friends, meet new ones and fill our professional lives with new skills and experiences. In the last month alone, AER has introduced our new “AER Power Ups!” professional development opportunities, announced the advent of “Student AER,” and posted a new position paper from the Low Vision Division. Last week's two Chapter Summits brought together over fifty chapter leaders and AER Board members for two nights of information sharing and discussion, and a renewed sense of purpose for our chapter.

More than ever before, AER is committed to enhancing and improving the AER member experience, to providing more high-quality professional development free to our members, being a stronger and more vibrant voice for our field, and strengthening and supporting professionals working with children and adults who are blind and visually impaired. There are

other projects and initiatives in the works that you'll be hearing about over the next several months. More than ever before, now is the time to become an active part of your professional organization. *Want to know more? Let's talk!*

**Janie Blome, Executive Director, AER**

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## President's Corner

During TSBVI's back-to-school "Welcome" we traditionally recognize those that have worked here for a significant number of years. Based on my experience, this is true for many schools and organizations. Employee recognition includes maybe a service pin, a handshake, and much applause. Right before the ceremony, we also gave a shout-out to all the new folks at TSBVI. For me, this was important because every employee really can make a positive impact for our students, even if they are new to our work. As AER members, we need to remember this, too.

There are many icons in our field with extensive knowledge and their collective expertise can be intimidating. We may feel we don't know enough, haven't been around long enough, or don't have enough years of service to contribute. I'm here to say, that simply isn't true, and it isn't just because I'm technically a newbie. It's because I know many other recent converts to the field of blindness, and I've seen their fresh perspectives take shape and begin to change our work in a positive way. Their insight isn't a replacement for any person or any resource...it's only an enhancement.

Thinking about years is particularly on my mind this month as in a few days I will have my 40<sup>th</sup> Birthday! I feel I have so much to learn, while at the same time so much to bring. Remember that your years of service and your years of life don't define you as much as your passion. We need all parts of every spectrum to gain a full perspective on our work and our profession.

**Emily Coleman, President AER**

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## What's New AER

### **AER Power Ups!**

In case you haven't heard... AER launched a new member benefit in August. AER Power Ups! Is a free series of educational sessions offered only to our members. This is an opportunity for you to earn CE hour(s), while learning from experts in the field. We aim to "Power You Up" to be the best that you can. Watch for your emails for details on the September session!

### **Your Input Is Needed**

AER is on the verge of initiating a new ongoing publishing arm that will focus on practice in our disciplines. For many years, AER published its own practice-based journal and operated a

monograph publishing outlet for AER members. We now seek to create an online peer reviewed “practitioner focused” publication under the guidance of the AER Publication Committee. We want it to be as responsive as possible to your needs. We therefore ask that you complete a short questionnaire that should take you no more than 5 minutes to complete: [Click here to complete the questionnaire.](#)

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## AER History and Memorial Committee

### We’re Refocusing—And Invite Your Help!

By AER History and Memorial Committee

This year, AER celebrates our 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary! Five years ago, when we celebrated our 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, we started a Facebook page appropriately titled, “AER 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.” (*Clever, huh?*) We included photos from that year’s international conference and added photos from other conferences every now and then, but since that anniversary event, the page has been relatively inactive. Now the History and Memorial Committee is setting out to once again make this an active page for our members, and we invite your help!

The H&M committee is refocusing the page, going beyond the anniversary theme, to include important historical photos and documents and to remember the shoulders on which we stand. As we do this, we need to rename the page. We’re looking for something *snappy* that will sum up the content of the page in a few short words, and we’d love your suggestions.

If you have an idea for a new name for the expanded AER History and Memorial page, please share it with us at [AERHistory.Memorial@gmail.com](mailto:AERHistory.Memorial@gmail.com). *Deadline for submission is September 30, 2019.* We will plan to unveil the newly branded page in October 2019.

Once the new page is up and running, we will be asking you to send in your photos (with permission of the subjects) and anecdotes. The H&M Committee will manage the posts, including alt-tagging photos, so people will get new posts in their newsfeeds. We look forward to hearing from you!

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## AER Member Spotlight

Meet AER Member Peggy Beckley



Peggy Beckley received a BHS in Occupational Therapy from the University of Missouri-Columbia, an M.Ed. in Adult & Higher Education from the University of Missouri-St Louis and an MHS in Health Care Services and a PhD in Social Work from Washington University in St. Louis. In addition, she earned graduate certificates in Low Vision Rehabilitation at Pennsylvania College of Optometry (now Salus University) and Orientation & Mobility at The Ohio

State University. She is certified through the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Educational Professionals (ACVREP) in vision rehabilitation therapy (CVRT), low vision therapy (CLVT) and orientation and mobility (COMS). Peggy Beckley is a full-time faculty member in the Occupational Therapy Program at Barry University in Miami Shores, FL and also works as an occupational therapist and vision rehabilitation specialist with clients across the life span in St. Louis, MO. Dr. Beckley has been a member of AER since 2008, and has committed many hours volunteering to support AER. She has served as a panel team member and panel chair for the AER University Accreditation Program since 2017— helping to ensure that university preparation programs are performing within the highest standards of excellence.

#### **Meet New Member Lauren Ditta, MD**



AER is pleased to spotlight one of our newest members – Lauren Ditta, MD. Dr. Ditta is a pediatric ophthalmologist and pediatric neuro-ophthalmologist. She completed her fellowship training in both pediatric ophthalmology and neuro-ophthalmology at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center/Hamilton Eye Institute. She received her medical training at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center. Ditta is certified by the American Board of Ophthalmology.

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## **What's Happening?**

### **Be a Conference Presenter: Submit Today**

The “Call for Presentations” for the AER International Conference 2020 is now open. Looking for a chance to connect COMS, VRTs, LVTs, TVIs and other vision professionals to the latest information, evidence-based practices, research, strategies and solutions? Be a conference presenter! Click here to learn more: [CFP Information](#)

## **AER Power Ups! October Sessions**

The AER Orientation and Mobility Division and the Aging Division will be hosting virtual educational sessions in October. You don't want to miss these sessions! Stay tuned for more details in the upcoming weeks.

### **AER is on Social Media?**

Connect, follow and have a conversation with us! We want to hear from you. You can find us here:

*Like us on Facebook:* <https://www.facebook.com/AERBVI/>

*Follow us on Twitter:* <https://twitter.com/AERBVI>

*Follow us on Instagram:* <https://www.instagram.com/aerbvi/>

*And add us on on LinkedIn:* <https://www.linkedin.com/company/aerbvi/>

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## **Info You Can Use**

### **VisionServe Alliance Forms Aging and Vision Loss National Coalition**

VisionServe Alliance announces it is spearheading the new Aging & Vision Loss National Coalition to tackle critical issues related to older people experience impaired sight as the result of age-related eye diseases. [Click here](#) to learn more!

### **The Division of Ophthalmology at Rhode Island Hospital and its Hasbro Children's Hospital presents the 2019 Ophthalmology Mini-Symposium:**

*Pediatric Low Vision: Helping Our Little Ones See Their Potential*

September 27, 2019, 7:30am-2:00pm, Providence Marriott

[Click here for more details](#)

### **The National Eye Institute and Lighthouse Guild will celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October. Share your story!**

The [National Eye Institute \(NEI\)](#) and [Lighthouse Guild](#) plan to run an awareness and education campaign for National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October 2019. They are **currently looking for testimonials** from people in the workforce who are blind or have low vision. NEI and Lighthouse Guild will highlight the testimonials on social media during the month

of October. If you'd like to share your story, please contact Kristina Beaugh at [kristina.beaugh@nih.gov](mailto:kristina.beaugh@nih.gov) or call (301) 435-8846 by **September 11, 2019**.

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## Welcome AER New Members!

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

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## What's Cookin' AER

With Fall right around the corner, we think this hearty stew sounds just perfect!

### Seafood and Sausage Stew

#### Ingredients

2 tbsp. olive oil  
6 oz. fully cooked andouille sausage, sliced  
2 small leeks, white and light green parts only, sliced  
1 small fennel bulb, chopped  
2 garlic cloves, chopped  
1 bay leaf  
1 small pinch saffron (optional)  
1/3 c. dry white wine  
1 (28-ounce) can diced tomatoes  
2 (8-ounce) bottles clam juice  
1 lb. mussels, scrubbed and debearded  
1/2 lb. peeled and deveined medium shrimp  
1/2 lb. skinless flaky white fish (such as bass, halibut, or cod), cut into 1-inch pieces  
2 tbsp. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley  
Kosher salt  
Freshly ground black pepper

#### Directions

1. Heat oil in a large copper pot or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add sausage, leeks, and fennel. Cook, stirring occasionally, until tender, 4 to 6 minutes. Add garlic, bay leaf, and saffron (if desired). Cook, stirring constantly, 30 seconds. Add wine and cook until syrupy, 1 to 2 minutes.

2. Increase heat to medium-high. Add tomatoes and cook, stirring occasionally, until thickened, 9 to 10 minutes. Add clam juice and 3 cups water; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium and add mussels; cook 3 minutes. Add shrimp and fish.
3. Cook until mussels, shrimp, and fish are cooked through, 3 to 4 minutes. Discard bay leaf. Stir in parsley. Season with salt and pepper. Serve immediately.

*Submitted by AER Staff Member  
Michele Basham*

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## **Employment Opportunities**

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

### **Classroom Teacher**

08/29/2019 | Alamogordo, NM  
New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

### **Orientation and Mobility Specialist**

08/15/2019 | Des Moines, IA  
Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired

### **Teacher of the Visually Impaired (2) or TVI/COMS**

08/05/2019 | Rutland and South Burlington, Vermont  
Vermont Association f/t Blind & Visually Impaired

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

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## **Way to Go!**

Congratulations to Northern Illinois University! Their VRT program has met the standards and has earned the distinction AER Accredited. Looking for a VRT program or know someone who might be considering a degree, check out the NIU VRT program-- a program that has demonstrated excellence: [NIU VRT Program Information](#)

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## Chapter Highlights

The Alabama Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) will host the 36th Annual training conference on October 16th, 17th, and 18th at the DoubleTree Hilton, located at 8 Perimeter Park S, Birmingham, Alabama. The conference theme will be "*Mind, Body, and Spirit*". Please click on the link below for information regarding conference registration, hotel accommodations, conference agenda, and President's message.

[Click Here](#) To Review Registration Information

[Click Here](#) To Review Conference Agenda

[Click Here](#) To Review President's Message

**AER Virginia** member Kimberly Coleman recently interviewed Ricki Curry, Braille Literacy Advocate about her braille program, Just Six Dots. [Click here](#) to read the article.

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## Save the Date!

**Save the Date: July 22-26, 2020 St. Louis, MO Union Station Hotel**

Themed "Gateway to Community," the AER International Conference 2020 is sure to be AER's best conference ever! We want a conference that reflects your needs and interests. Are there topics that you want to have covered during the AER International Conference 2020? Is there something that you would like to learn more about during the conference? Click "*Topics & Interests*" and tell us your needs and every effort will be made to have it covered! [Topics & Interests](#)

To learn more, send an email to [conference@aerbvi.org](mailto:conference@aerbvi.org)





***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](mailto:news@aerbvi.org). Deadline for the October issue is 9/25/2019.***



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