



Welcome to the December 2019 Issue of The Voice

A Word from AER's Executive Director

Dear AER Members,

Happy Holidays! I hope this festive season is a happy one for you and yours, filled with the people, events, and things that you like best. It's hard to believe it's December already. This year has flown by!

I am so grateful for the opportunities I've had to represent AER as your Executive Director this year. I've been able to participate in several chapter conferences; and I am encouraged and motivated by the commitment, dedication and passion I've seen among our chapter members and leaders. I am excited that our members in Utah, Alaska, and Missouri are bringing their chapters back to life. I am happy to see our Canadian members actively looking for ways to increase membership among their colleagues. If "*as the chapters go, so goes AER*" is true, and I believe it is, then we have a lot to look forward to!

Our divisions are also stepping up and have provided some outstanding professional development opportunities for AER members. Recent offerings from the divisions, including the Itinerant Division, have been some of the most well-attended events. As well, we have three additional events coming up in December and registration for these has been brisk. These members-only "*AER Power-Ups!*" are available at no cost to you, so check them out!

Every time I have the opportunity to be involved in professional activities in our field, I am struck again by the depth of passion and dedication AER members bring to the work you do. I love hearing the stories of your successes and your concerns. I love seeing AER members sharing their knowledge with colleagues through formal conference presentations and in informal discussions around the breakfast table. I love seeing the great work of AER members recognized with chapter and other awards. And, I love seeing the way our members care about and honor each other. That feeling is evident in every chapter meeting I attend. How could you not want to be part of a professional organization filled with people who care about you and the outstanding work that you do? How can we help others in the field know that's one of the best benefits of being an AER member? *Let's talk!*

Janie Blome, Executive Director, AER

President's Corner

A major benefit of membership within a professional organization is advocacy. As the parent of a child who is blind, I have spoken on behalf of my son and students like him many times. As a state employee, I'm able to provide information about the unique needs of our population but am

unable to advocate for specific legislation. This duplicity in my life is somewhat alleviated by my AER membership. Within AER, I can collectively seek legislative change for our students as a professional, on my own time, along with a plethora of others that feel the same.

If you're new to legislative advocacy, or are unfamiliar with the Cogswell-Macy Act, I recommend you learn more at cogswellmacyact.org. It has been reintroduced in the House and the Senate and there are many opportunities if you'd like to step in and assist. Even without formal adoption, we can still take the guidance within and create change now in our states. I hear this is how the statewide plans for VI, DHH, and DeafBlind were created in Texas.

Whether you advocate at the national, state, district, or individual level, I encourage you to continually speak up on behalf of our students and clients. Better yet, continually empower them to speak up as well. It's important we keep including those we serve in all our advocacy work because they have the most expertise. The eloquence required to define a need can best be found in those who have lived it.

Emily Coleman, *President*, AERBVI

What's New AER

#GivingTuesday

GivingTuesday is a global generosity movement dedicated to giving back. On the Tuesday after Thanksgiving (December 3, 2019), people around the world will come together for one common purpose: *to celebrate generosity and to give*. Please support AER during the Giving Tuesday campaign: <https://my.aerbvi.org/Make-a-Donation>

Facebook has pledged to match donations received during Giving Tuesday 2019!

AER Member Spotlight

Meet New Member Dr. Nicholas Casias: AER Member since September 2019



Dr. Nicholas Casias serves as Assistant Professor in the Orientation and Mobility Program in the Division of Special Education & Counseling at California State University Los Angeles. Dr. Casias is a certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist and the Board President of the Southern California Association of Orientation and Mobility Specialists. He is actively engaged with local, regional, and national issues in the O&M field.

Meet New Member Lisa Ballinger Geist: AER Member since October 2019



Lisa Ballinger Geist is a Special Education Teacher at Winfield City Schools. She has taught for 12 years at WCS and is currently a resource teacher at Winfield City High School. She's been married for 24 years to her husband Mike. Lisa sings shaped note music called *Sacred Harp* all over the country. Mrs. Ballinger Geist always wanted to be a teacher.

Lisa received her Bachelor of Science from The University of North Alabama in Elementary Education. More recently, she decided to get her Master of Education from Auburn University in Special Education. Currently, Lisa is enrolled at The University of Alabama in Huntsville to get a second Master of Education in Differentiated Instruction-Visual Impairments. She was honored to be awarded the Alabama Chapter AER Scholarship in October. Lisa hopes to be able to fill a need in Alabama and to be an advocate for young people that are blind or have visual impairments.

What's Happening AER?

Mattingly Low Vision, Inc. is pleased to announce the **5th Annual Bill Mattingly Memorial Scholarship** for optometry and ophthalmology students and residents specifically interested in the field of low vision. The scholarship is named after their founder, Bill Mattingly, who passed away in 2015. His passion and commitment to the low vision profession and low vision clients

lives on, and they are pleased to partner with the El Paso Community Foundation to offer both a \$2,500 award and a \$1,000 award in 2020.

The deadline for applications is January 29, 2020. Information can be found by visiting the following link: <https://www.mattinglylowvision.com/content.cfm?n=scholarship>

Please call with any questions: 888-642-0842 ext. 6.

Welcome AER New Members who Joined in November!

As the year comes to an end, we are thrilled to have welcomed so many new members to AER! Let's welcome our colleagues who joined in November. Read fully the list and feel free to personally welcome them to AER! **New AER Members**

What's Cookin' AER

White Chocolate Dipped Peppermint Sugar Cookies



2 3/4 (390g) cups all-purpose flour (scoop and level to measure)
1 tsp baking soda
1/2 tsp salt
1/2 tsp cream of tartar
1 1/2 cups (320g) granulated sugar
1 cup (8 oz) unsalted butter, softened
1 large egg
1 large egg yolk
1 tsp vanilla extract
3/4 tsp peppermint extract
2 1/2 cups (15 oz) white chocolate chips
2 1/2 tbsp (30g) shortening
1/3 cup (60g) peppermint bits or finely crush candy canes

Instructions

For the cookies

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a mixing bowl whisk together flour, baking soda, salt and cream of tartar for 20 seconds, set aside.
2. In the bowl of an electric stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream together sugar and butter until combined. Mix in egg then mix in egg yolk, vanilla and peppermint extract. With mixer set on low speed, slowly add in dry ingredients and mix just until combined (dough will thicken, so stop mixer and mix by hand to get flour at bottom if needed).
3. Scoop dough out 1 1/2 tbsp (about 33g) at a time and shape into balls. Transfer to a baking sheet lined with parchment paper or a silicone liner, spacing cookies 2-inches apart (chill dough balls that aren't currently baking in refrigerator on plates). Bake in preheated oven for 10-11 minutes (cookies should appear slightly under-baked). Remove from oven and allow to rest several minutes then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

For the coating:

1. Place chocolate chips and shortening in a medium microwave safe bowl and heat in microwave on 50% power in 20 seconds intervals, stirring well between intervals until melted and smooth.
2. Dip half of cooled cookies in white chocolate allowing excess to run off (or slide bottom slightly along edge of bowl) then transfer to wax paper and immediately sprinkle with peppermint bits.
3. Allow to set at room temperature or in refrigerator. Store in an airtight containers at room temperature.

Submitted by AER Member, *Peggy Sinclair-Morris*

Employment Opportunities

Looking for a new job? Employment opportunities are available for you! Here are some of the exciting jobs that are available:

Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments/Orientation & Mobility

Clark County, Vancouver, WA
Washington State School for the Blind

Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist

Kansas City, Missouri
Children's Center for the Visually Impaired

TVI or TVI/O&M

Winter Haven, Florida
Lighthouse for the Blind and Low Vision

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

Way to Go!



Congratulations Cathy Senft-Graves and Tessa McCarthy!

Two AER members received national awards at the *Getting in Touch with Literacy Conference* in Seattle. Cathy Senft-Graves (right), APH Braille Literacy and Technology Project Leader, received the 2019 Holbrook-Humphries Award for her lead role in coordinating the Building on Patterns product development team. Tessa McCarthy, former APH employee, now Assistant Professor and Director of Vision Studies program at the University of Pittsburgh, received the 2019 Alan Koeing Research Award for outstanding research regarding literacy and visual impairment. *Congratulations! #GITWL2019*

Way to Go Susan Langendonk!

Way to go AER member Susan Langendonk who worked proactively to support the efforts of the AER Higher Education Accreditation Commission. Susan, an AER member since 1983, donated her time and talent to work on the *AER Orientation and Mobility Curriculum Map*- a new tool designed to strengthen the accreditation process. *Congratulations Susan for being a leader among leaders and for your dedication to the Orientation and Mobility profession!*

News You Can Use

\$500 Visa Gift Card Can be Yours

The drawing for the AER *More than Ever Before* Membership Campaign will be held Friday 12/13/2019 at 5pm Eastern. It's still time to be entered to win. Simply, recruit a peer or colleague to join AER, and your name will be entered to win. To learn more, send an email to angela@aerbvi.org.

2020 Hall of Fame Nominations are Now Being Accepted

"The Hall of Fame for Leaders and Legends of the Blindness Field is dedicated to preserving, honoring, and promoting the tradition of excellence manifested by the specific individuals inducted into the Hall of Fame and through the history of outstanding services provided to

people who are blind or visually impaired." To learn more, click here: [Hall of Fame Info](#). **The nomination process will close Thursday, April 30, 2020.**

Member Winter Travel Savings

You will have extra money to spend this Winter Season when you book your reservations through the AER car rental and hotel discounts program! You can receive up to 20% Off on car rentals from Hertz, National, Alamo, Avis, Budget and Payless. And, you can save up to 50% on hotels worldwide with Marriott, Wyndham, Radisson, Sheraton, Hilton and many others. Simply visit <http://www.alumnibenefits.org/aer> to make your reservations and receive your discount.

New Member Benefits Coming in 2020

Thanks to everyone who completed the new benefits survey. Your feedback is very important. As a result, new member benefits are coming! Watch your email for details about the new member benefits coming in 2020. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please send an email to angela@aerbvi.org

Office Closing

The AER office will be closed December 23, 2019 – January 1, 2020.

Member Profile Updates

If you need to update your membership information and need assistance, please send an email to michele@aerbvi.org or contact her via telephone at (703) 671-5875.

AER International Conference 2020: Proposal Deadlines

The deadline to submit a proposal for the AER Symposium Day to be held during the AER International Conference 2020 is 1/15/2020. The deadline to submit a proposal for a breakout session is 2/3/2020. For more information, visit <https://aerbvi.org/professional-development/conferences/aeric2018/> or send an email to conference@aerbvi.org

Division Highlights

AER Power Ups!

Virtual Session: The Changing Roles of the VRT

12/11/2019

7:30pm Eastern

Presenter: Elyse Connors, Ph.D

A current understanding of the VRT position will be explored through the results of the 2017 Roles and Functions of VRTs Survey Data. Demographics of survey participants, frequency that specific VRT job tasks are performed, and factor components are reported. Comparisons to 1989 data will also be made to examine how job roles have changed over the last quarter century.

Sponsored by: AER VRT Division

AER Power Ups!

Virtual Session: It is More than a Daily Schedule: Calendar Systems for Students with DeafBlindness

12/12/2019

5 PT/6 MT/7 CT/8 ET (75 minutes)

Presenter: Robbie Blaha, Texas DeafBlind Project Consultant, TSBVI

The term "calendar system" typically brings to mind a device: a dayrunner, a wall calendar, a van Dijk calendar box. A device or timepiece is an important part of any calendar. This session will cover the key components for representing time all devices should reflect regardless of the timeframe (daily, weekly etc), This session will also cover the use of a calendar system to provide emotional support and to teach important time concepts and vocabulary.

Sponsored by: AER MDD Division

AER Power Ups!

Virtual Session: Blind Coding Academies: Overcoming Accessibility Barriers

12/13/2019

12 – 1:00pm Eastern

Presenter: Tony Candela, Immediate Past Chair, Division 2

Prepare blind students to overcome or mitigate barriers faced in mainstream coding classes. Barriers include inaccessible text editors and classroom materials, "cultural" or attitudinal resistance, and a variety of performance issues. Teach students how to mitigate or work around these barriers; acquire introductory coding experience; and hone related social and career-related skills. At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Understand and differentiate concepts of computer programming (coding);
- Understand and recognize barriers to success faced by persons who are unable to see the computer screen;
- Identify options for working around or overcoming some of the barriers that can prevent blind coding students from succeeding in mainstream coding classes.

Sponsored by: AER Employment and Rehabilitation Counseling Division

For more information about these sessions, please send an email to aer@aerbvi.org

Chapter Events

Chapter conferences provide a great opportunity to connect with your peers and to gain approaches, information and techniques that advance your knowledge, skills and abilities.

["Technology" Georgia AER Conference 2020](#)

March 16-17, 2020

RT Jones Memorial Library, Canton, GA

[Virginia AER 2020 Conference](#)

March 30-April 1, 2020

DoubleTree Hilton, Charlottesville, VA

[Michigan AER Conference 2020](#)

April 23-24, 2020

The Marriott at Laurel Park, Livonia, MI

Visit <https://aerbvi.org/event/> for more information about these and other upcoming chapter conferences and events.

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

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 January issue is 12/19/2019.

