



Welcome to the March 2020 Issue of The Voice

A Word from AER's Interim Executive Director

So, We Meet Again!

Hello all! What a pleasure and privilege to once again have the opportunity to serve the membership of AER, our field's one and only fully inclusive and broadly effective voice of professionals in each of the disciplines serving children, working-age adults and older people living with vision loss. Wow, how time flies. Was it really fifteen years ago when I last served as AER's Executive Director? And look at how AER has continued to grow and transform over that period. And now, here we are at yet another transition time with challenges and opportunities to meet with enthusiasm and determination.

Given my more than quarter century of work in the vision loss community and my previous tenure with AER, I expect many of you know me. But if you don't as of yet, I'll just mention a few things about myself. In addition to my previous service to AER, nearly two-thirds of my career has involved guiding the public policy and strategy work of the American Foundation for the Blind. I provided individual advocacy services for the American Council of the Blind, the national consumer organization whose membership elected me last summer to be their First Vice President. My first "real" job out of law school had me cutting my federal governmental relations teeth for National Industries for the Blind. I have been the public policy counsel for the Council of Schools and Services for the Blind, and I have served on the Advisory Committee of the Helen Keller National Center. Over the years, I have helped lead the charge in a number of contexts for all of us, from being the principal author of the comprehensive special education reform legislation, the Cogswell-Macy Act, to efforts to protect the integrity of our nation's vocational rehabilitation system, to advocacy for expanded access to vision rehabilitation devices and services.

As someone who has been totally blind life long, this extensive service with the leading groups in our community has been incredibly rewarding. But certainly, no other experience has been more personally and professionally formative for me than my nearly four years serving the board and membership of AER those many years ago. I learned so much from that experience, and I look

forward to the days ahead as we all work together to continue to shape the destiny of our professional association.

Recently, I had the tremendous opportunity to help teach a module on public policy for a Salus University course introducing soon-to-be professionals to the vision loss community, and one question posed to me stood out from the others, namely "What is the most practical real world thing we can do to affect meaningful change?" What I told the students is what I hope each of you believes wholeheartedly. Beyond being the most effective professional you can be for your students and clients, supporting and being active in AER is the single most effective step you can take to ensure the vibrance of our community. AER offers its members valuable member benefits, unparalleled opportunities for networking, and rich continuing education resources. But perhaps even more critically, AER is your voice. We speak out to call for needed improvements to programs and services for individuals living with vision loss. We speak up when we see practices or obstacles that might impede the most effective delivery of services. We join whenever possible with consumers; and public and private service agencies to apply strength in numbers to tackle the most challenging issues of the day. And, we discuss and debate among ourselves to reach actionable consensus wherever possible. In short, AER is where it's at!

In the coming days, I'll be rolling up my sleeves with our elected board leadership to address a host of priorities, from ensuring that this Summer's Biennial International Conference in St. Louis is our best gathering yet, to developing additional member benefits and furthering our most productive partnerships. I am so grateful to be able to come to this Interim Executive Director role with thorough past experience in the job along with the committed partnership of our President, Emily Coleman, and all of our elected leadership. And knowing as I do that AER is staffed by a small but mighty team of hard-working staff, we are positioned well for continued success. But I also need and welcome your help with open arms. Reach out to me with your ideas and concerns, but also let me know about how you would like to enrich our association. And don't be surprised if you hear from me early and often about how you can get involved to affect meaningful change on the national stage or right where you are. However, in whatever we do, let's have fun and come at the work we commit to do together in a spirit of joy. Thank you so much for your dedication to AER; so, let's get to work!

Mark Richert, *Interim Executive Director, AER*

President's Corner

I was recently asked to think about how the word "partner" is utilized. In my work, we often say we're partnering with individuals, families, organizations, and school districts for the benefit of students. One definition of partner states, "people engaged together in the same activity." I

think it's pretty safe to say that we're using the word "partner" appropriately in this context and it's beneficial to us all.

However, is it enough? Is it enough to be working together on the same goals? Maybe instead of calling each other partners we should be calling each other allies, supporters, or even champions, which is a term I keep running into. Our field is small, so it's crucial we work together. I'm going to continue pondering how we collaborate and what word best describes our relationships.

A champion can be defined as, "a defender, advocate, or supporter of a cause or another person." I want to be that. I'd like to be a champion for all of you and the work you're doing every day and a champion for our students, clients, and families. Maybe it sounds a little cheesy, but it feels like a great aspiration. What level of relationship will you aspire to achieve?

Emily Coleman, *President*, AERBVI

History and Memorial Committee

Submitted by the 2018-2020 History and Memorial Committee

AER Tapestry: Commemorating Our Past, Inspiring Our Future

Last fall, we asked you to help us rename our History and Memorial Facebook Page, which previously celebrated the 30th anniversary of AER. With your help, we are broadening the focus of the H&M page to more fully reflect our organization's history and to remember our colleagues and friends who have passed away. Following our call for help, you members really came through with some great proposals! Thanks to a suggestion submitted by Ana Williams Leffel, the page is newly titled, *AER Tapestry: Commemorating Our Past, Inspiring Our Future*.

Now we are asking for your input again. In anticipation of the 2020 International AER Conference in St. Louis this summer, we want to post photos from past AER conferences—international, regional, and chapter. Please help us fill our Facebook page with photos from earlier AER conferences and people we've known or met at those events; photos can be from recent conferences or from as far back as you can remember.

We ask that you try to get permission from people featured in the photos and include their names as well as the date and conference where each photo was taken. Please send your photos and descriptions to us at AERHistory.Memorial@gmail.com, and we will post them with descriptions and alt text so everyone can enjoy your memories.

If your photos go back far enough, we may see how we and our friends looked earlier in our , perhaps when we had dark hair—or even had hair at all!

Submitted by 2018 – 2020 AER History and Memorial Committee

Co-Chairs: Mary Nelle McLennan (PA) and Julie Hapeman (WI)

Gala Brooks (IL)

Billy Brookshire (TX)

Rod Kossick (MN)

Lacey Long (ND)

Lauralyn Randles (IL)

AER Outstanding Member Spotlight

Meet Jill Brown, AER Member since 1986



Hi! My name is Jill Brown. I have had the honor of being a TVI since 1979 and an O&M since 1996. I can honestly say I love getting up and going to work. I work in the great state of Texas as a dually certified teacher in a suburb of Fort Worth for the Crowley School system. I enjoy the variety of lessons and no day is the same. I have been a member of AER since 1986. I served within the Itinerant Personnel division as newsletter editor 2000-2012, secretary 2008-2012, and division chair (elect, present, past) 2012- present. I was able to serve on the AER board of directors as CDC chair from

2014-2018. I have also served as Texas chapter president, conference chair and secretary.

As part of a group of awesome ladies, we just completed and published an Orientation and Mobility evaluation and curriculum young children (birth-5 years) called “Texas 2 STEPS” (Successfully Teaching Early Purposeful Skills). I am so proud of this project. While I have recently retired, I still contract with a school system for 2 days a week, as I still want to be a part of this field. I have been married to my husband 41 years (as of March) and have 2 grown boys (still waiting to be a grandmother). Between home life and job, life is great!

Meet New AER Member Sheryl Brown, Member since September 2019



After graduating from college with a bachelor's degree in Social Work, I found the Tampa Lighthouse for the Blind. I was hired as a social worker on March 11, 1985. Two years later, I was promoted to Supervisor of the Rehabilitation Program. I so believed in the mission of the Lighthouse, that I entered the Master of Science in Visual Disabilities remote training through FSU, in 1990. After one semester, we were blessed with the adoption of our newborn daughter, so classes were put on hold. In August of 2000, I resumed the training and obtained my master's degree in Visual Disabilities in August of 2002. Since 2000, I have been a CVRT.

I have been a member of AER since 1985 as well as a member of Florida AER (FAER). I served two years as President Elect for FAER coordinating the annual Florida Conference and then two years as President of FAER. I have served several years on the scholarship committee for AER and chaired the committee two years ago. In Florida, I have served on the Rehabilitation Council for the Blind and the Blind Services Foundation of Florida. I just completed a three-year term as President of Florida Agencies Serving the Blind. In 2013, I became the President and CEO of the Lighthouse. In the Lighthouse's 80-year history, I am only the third President.

I have enjoyed watching the Lighthouse grow over the years with the addition of babies, children and teen programs and the creation and expansion of our Assistive Technology Training and job placement. Technology was not existent when I began my employment at the Lighthouse. You had the choice of a braille watch or low vision watch. It has been amazing to watch new technology items being introduced monthly. As we celebrate our 80th birthday, we continue to strive to maximize independence and provide employment opportunities for individuals who are blind or visually impaired of all ages.

Welcome AER New Members who Joined in February!

Join us in welcoming the newest members who joined AER in February 2020. We are so glad to have you! [New AER Members](#)

News You Can Use

COSB's Advocacy Day

You can make a significant impact in the lives of people who are blind and visually impaired by participating in COSB's Advocacy Day, March 25, 2020, in Washington, DC. During Advocacy Day, COSB will host over 100 people who care about legislation affecting people who are blind or

visually impaired. We will meet with members of Congress at the Capitol and educate them about the Cogswell-Macy Act. You don't want to miss out on this influential opportunity!

[Register Here!](#)

AER Board of Directors Election

The AER Board of Directors 2020-2022 election starts March 15th. You will have a chance to elect the AER President Elect, Treasurer, Secretary, Canadian Representative and District Representatives. All members are encouraged to vote in this important election and help shape the future of AER. Check your email box for details and ballots on 3/15.

AER Awards: Call for Nominations

Its' that time of year again! We are pleased to announce that the 2020 Call for Award Nominees is now open! Every biennium, AER recognizes individuals in education, rehabilitation, and employment services – and we need your help in celebrating the dedication and commitment of the people in our field and our Chapters.

The submission deadline for all awards is **April 1, 2020**. To be eligible for consideration, all nominations must be submitted before the stated deadline. Specific criteria are noted on each individual nomination form. Please visit <https://aerbvi.org/professional-development/aer-awards/>.

AER Scholarships

Attention Students: AER is now accepting applications for the William and Dorothy Ferrell Scholarship. This educational scholarship is for **individuals continuing their education in the field of providing services to the blind and visually impaired**. The William and Dorothy Ferrell Scholarship is awarded every other year in even years to two selected applicants who are legally blind and are studying for a career in the field of services to persons who are blind or visually impaired. Deadline for submitting the applications and accompanying documentation is April 30, 2020 and scholarship recipients will be notified on or around May 31, 2020. The two winners will be announced at the AER International Conference 2020, July 22-26, in St. Louis, MO. To learn more, please visit <https://aerbvi.org/resources/aer-scholarships/>

Accessing the *Journal for Visual Impairment and Blindness*

Do you know that AER members have full access to JVIB (current issue and archived issues)? Take a moment, login and discover the Journal! As an added plus, each issue contains up to two articles in which you can read, take a quiz, and earn CE hours! If you are having trouble logging into the Journal, please follow the instructions provided below:

[JVIB Login Steps – Word](#)

[JVIB Login Steps – PDF](#)

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.

Employment Opportunities

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

Director of Development and Communications

02/21/2020 | Philadelphia, PA (US)

Overbrook School for the Blind

Director of Independent Living

02/21/2020 | Daytona Beach, FL

Conklin Center for the Blind

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

02/19/2020 | Rutland and South Burlington, Vermont

Vermont Association f/t Blind & Visually Impaired

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

What's Cookin' AER

In last month's issue of The Voice, we offered you an amazing Keto-friendly recipe. This month, we thought we would switch it up a bit and provide a delicious vegetarian recipe. It is made with roasted tomatoes, spinach, garlic, basil and parmesan – and tossed with the most delicious creamy sauce. You are going to love it!

Creamy Rosé Pasta with Roasted Tomatoes

Ingredients

- 2 pints cherry or grape tomatoes, halved
- 3 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- kosher salt and freshly-cracked black pepper
- 1 pound uncooked pasta, any shape (I used penne)

- 1 large shallot, peeled and thinly sliced
- 6 large garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 3 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 1/2 cups dry rosé wine
- 2 cups whole milk
- 1/2 cup Parmesan
- 3 handfuls baby spinach
- 1/4 cup thinly-sliced fresh basil leaves, lightly packed
- optional toppings: extra Parmesan, extra basil, crushed red pepper flakes, and/or toasted pine nuts

Instructions

-To Make the Roasted Tomatoes: Heat oven to 400°F. Spread the tomatoes out on a foil- or parchment-lined baking sheet, toss with 1 tablespoon olive oil, and sprinkle with a few pinches of salt and pepper. Bake for 20 minutes. Remove from the oven and transfer the baking sheet to a cooling rack until ready to use.

-To Make the Pasta: Meanwhile, cook the pasta in a large stockpot of generously-salted water according to package instructions. Drain.

-To Make the Sauce: Meanwhile, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil in a large sauté pan. Add the shallot and cook for 3-4 minutes until soft and translucent, stirring occasionally. Add the garlic and sauté for 1 more minute, stirring occasionally, until fragrant. Stir in the flour and tomato paste until evenly combined, sauté for 1 more minute, stirring occasionally. Then gradually pour in the rosé, followed by the milk, and whisk until combined

-Continue cooking the sauce until it reaches a simmer and thickens. Then reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer for 10 minutes until it has partially reduced. Stir in the Parmesan (I also recommend a pinch of crushed red pepper flakes). Then taste, and season with a few generous pinches of salt and pepper if needed.

-To Wrap It All Up: Combine the cooked/drained pasta, roasted tomatoes, sauce, baby spinach, and basil together in the large stockpot, and toss for 1-2 minutes, until the spinach is slightly wilted and the pasta is evenly coated in the sauce. Serve immediately, garnished with your desired toppings.

VRT Division

AER Power Ups! Session

"Head Mounted Devices"

When: Wednesday, March 11, 2020 at 7:30pm Eastern

Earn CE Hour(s)

This session will provide a discussion about Head Mounted Devices (HMD), what they do, pros and cons of the device, and assessment/training protocol. The session will give participants a chance to define what a HMD is and describe general features of the device(s). In addition, participants will gain knowledge about the benefits and misconceptions of HMD's; and acquire a better understanding of the assessment and training protocol for HMD's.

Sponsored by the AER VRT Division.

For more information, please email aer@aerbvi.org

Physical Activity and Recreation Division

Professional Preparation of TVIs and O&Ms in Relation to Physical Activity and Sport

This study will be assessing the knowledge of teachers of the visually impaired and orientation and mobility specialists with regard to physical activity, physical education and sport for students with visual impairments. Duration: Questionnaires will take no more than 20 minutes

Compensation: Participants can be entered for the chance to win a \$100 gift card to Amazon

Click here to get started: [Online Professional Preparation of TVI and OM Study Link](#)

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

[Oregon & Pacific Northwest AER: Come Together Conference](#)

March 19-21, 2020

The Heathman Lodge, 7801 NE Greenwood Dr, Vancouver, WA 98662

[Virginia AER 2020 Conference](#)

March 30-April 1, 2010

DoubleTree Hilton, Charlottesville, VA

[Michigan AER Conference 2020](#)

April 23-24, 2010

The Marriott at Laurel Park, Livonia, MI

Wisconsin AER, Collaborative Vision 2020

May 7-8, 2020

More details soon!

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

AER International Conference 2020 Information

Registration Information

Register today! The AER International Conference will be the best conference ever! Conference registration includes Symposium Day sessions on Thursday, daily educational breakout sessions Friday-Sunday, and so much more...Register today to attend the AER International Conference 2020! You can [register online by clicking here](#) or download the [registration form](#).

Group Registration

AER is pleased to offer a special group registration discount for AER members. A discounted conference rate of \$350 per person is provided for groups of 5-7; and \$325 per person rate for groups of 8 or more. Please complete a conference registration form for each person and provide the completed Group Registration Cover Form with the registration forms. All registration forms must be received at the same time with this Group Registration Cover Form in order to apply discount.

Conference Volunteers

We have several great volunteer opportunities available for the upcoming AER International Conference 2020! Volunteering is a tremendous way to help make it the best conference ever! From helping at the registration desk to provide hotel tours, we have an opportunity for you. Click here to learn more: [Conference Volunteer Sign-Up](#)

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, recipes or any updates that you would like to share with the membership, please send it to AER at news@aerbvi.org. Deadline for the April issue is 3/26/2020.



5680 King Centre Drive | Suite 600 | Alexandria | VA | 22315 | 703-671-4500 | 877-492-2708 toll free | 703-671-6391 fax | aer@aerbvi.org
[Click here to unsubscribe](#)