



## Welcome to the April 2020 Issue of The Voice

### A Word from AER's Interim Executive Director

I remember like it was yesterday, an ad that was running on TV in the weeks immediately following 9/11. The ad was quite visual in nature, so it had to be described for me, but it was still so compelling nevertheless. The ad first showed a typical American street and neighborhood, and a strong reassuring male voice was heard saying something like, "They thought they would change our way of life;" and then the scene shifted from what was presumably a pre-9/11 neighborhood to a post-9/11 neighborhood scene. American flags were everywhere, people were embracing and coming together. And the male voiceover was heard to say, "They thought they would change us. They did." What a moving thought, that what the perpetrators of terrorism did, as horrific as it was, nevertheless brought America together in its aftermath. It's true, in the years since 9/11, we've become a polarized country in so many ways, but in those first months, our nation came together, not only in a renewed spirit of patriotism but in deeply personal ways.

COVID-19 and 9/11 are obviously significantly different contexts. Indeed, the very nature of this situation strikes at the very heart of our natural human need to "come together." Yes, we are blessed with technology that can remediate some of the distance, but it's just not the same. And yet, just as with 9/11 where we got to see both staggering acts of heroism and smaller but deeply meaningful acts of kindness, we are already hearing about new heroes. The front line private blindness agency staff who are willing to put themselves at risk because they know how critical it is that pick-up and go meals are delivered to seniors with vision loss; the TVI who found a fun way to use this in-door time by launching a podcast featuring visually impaired students interviewing blind professionals about the jobs they do; and the many folks who have been scrambling to take the content that was to be presented at conferences and turn it into virtual presentations are just a few examples.

We would love to hear from you about the heroes you've encountered during these tough days. Tell us your story about who you've seen go the extra mile, take a risk, or found a unique way to live out their professional commitment to our students and clients during these strange days. Maybe you are one of those heroes. Don't be shy; we welcome self-nominations for sure. The

bottom line is that we want to hear from each of you about the above and beyond efforts that we know are happening all around our field, and we want to share these important stories with the AER community. So, please tell us what you're hearing about the large and small heroic acts of your friends and colleagues for whom we should be grateful and who we might recognize in some fashion, if by nothing else, to at least express our appreciation and derive inspiration from their example. Send your stories to [news@aerbvi.org](mailto:news@aerbvi.org).

Let's hear it for our heroes! And let's hear about our heroes who are showing us the best of what our community is all about!

**Mark Richert, *Interim Executive Director, AER***

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## President's Corner

When I wrote last month's article for the Voice and shared about being a "champion" for others, I had no idea what our world would look like a month later. As I'm working from home, isolated from strangers and loved ones, I want to support each of you. I want to answer all your questions, but I don't know the answers, so I need your help.

Watching social media explode with ideas for students and clients during this unprecedented time has made me even more proud to be your President. I'm hearing about innovative and creative approaches for teaching and learning to ensure an ongoing focus on independence and success for individuals who are blind. The best way I'm seeing support these days is through the uninhibited sharing of resources and even products.

So, for those of you who are nailing it with students and clients right now, I hope that you'll share. The best supports we can give each other are success stories and how you made it happen. The news is full of fear and loss, but I know some of you are seeing hope and gains, and we need to hear how you're making it happen. Send it to [news@aerbvi.org](mailto:news@aerbvi.org); and we'll find a way to share with members.

National organizations are gathering events, resources, and more to be shared in a collective way. We want your information included. Please let us know if you have what your colleagues need...innovative, remote approaches that are working. Be a champion for your peers, and we will continue to be champions for you.

**Emily Coleman, *President, AERBVI***

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## History and Memorial Committee

Submitted by the 2018-2020 History and Memorial Committee

### *Leaders Who Guided Us to AER*

In this year of elections—presidential primaries, the presidential election, and countless state and local contests—we, in AER, are also electing our own leaders to take us into our future as an association. This summer, the torch will be passed from our current President, Emily Coleman, to our President-Elect, Neva Fairchild, who will be at the helm for the 2020–2022 biennium. In July, a new Board of Directors will be seated, and they along with Emily and Neva, will lead us in the next the biennium.

This transition time prompted us as the History and Memorial Committee to think not only about what’s ahead for us as a profession and as an association, but also about those “shoulders” that carried us to where we are today. In several earlier issues of *The Voice*, we shared accounts of our professional DNA and the foresight of our ancestors who forged AAWB and AAIB and of the powerful impacts those two associations made on the lives of people with visual impairments. We wrote about events that led to the consolidation of those two organizations to create AER—but we have not named those bold leaders whose commitment and trust and mutual respect led to the formation of AER.

So...because it’s important to know where we have been and who took us there in order to know where we can go, we are acknowledging and recording the names and roles of the final leaders of AAWB and AEVH and the first leaders of AER. Like the organizations they led, we have consolidated their names in a single listing. But first, a bit of context about how all this came to be.

- Conversations about closer collaboration between AAWB and AEVH became more serious in the 1970s.
- In 1975, the two organizations formed a ten-member Collaboration Committee, which “proposed a number of specific steps to take in an effort to improve our work together.”
- In 1980, in their respective business meetings at the joint Boston conference sponsored by AFB, both associations voted to explore joint conferences every three years.
- In the spring of 1981, the two organizations formed a new body—the Alliance. Officers of both AAWB and AEVH served as the Operating Board of the Alliance. This more formal collaboration called for a Joint Management Committee, a shared office and combined staff, a joint publication program, more collaborative activities, financial support from AFB, and—perhaps most importantly—a commitment to form a consolidated organization by July 1, 1984.

- In 1984 in Nashville, TN, at the first and only conference of the Alliance, a new association—AER, previously approved by mail ballot, was ceremoniously approved by those in attendance. AFB presented its gift of an endowment to the new organization, and AER was officially born.

That's *how* it happened—but it is also important to record and remember those bold and insightful leaders who created “us” as AER: [Leaders Who Guided Us](#)

We express our appreciation to Gala S. Brooks, a member of our History and Memorial Committee, and Michael Hudson, the Curator of the Museum of the America Printing House for the Blind, for their assistance in compiling this consolidated listing. We also recognize the valuable resources found in the writings of Dr. Richard L. Welsh, first president of AER.

Submitted by the 2018–2020 AER History and Memorial Committee

Mary Nelle McLennan, *Co-Chair* (PA)

Julie Hapeman, *Co-Chair* (WI)

Gala Brooks (IL)

Billy Brookshire (TX)

Rod Kossick (MN)

Lacey Long (ND)

Lauralyn Randles (IL)

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## AER New Member Spotlight

### Meet New Member Amber Leffew, Member since December 2019



Greetings, my name is Amber Leffew, and I am nearing the end of my first year as a TVI. I am a recent graduate from Vanderbilt University, with a Master's degree in Special Education, and Visual Disabilities. I am currently a middle school transition teacher at the Tennessee School for the Blind. I am so grateful to have had a previous professor and mentor purchase my first subscription to AER! I am elated to see how I can grow and learn through my

membership to AER.

## Meet New Member JoAnna Forsythe, Member since January 2020



My name is JoAnna Forsythe. I am a visually impaired graduate student at the University of South Carolina Upstate. I will be receiving my Master of Arts in Teaching the Visually Impaired and Blind, in December. I have a guide dog named Jamaica; she came from the Guide Dogs for the Blind School in Portland Oregon. Jamaica attends my classes and teaching practicums when I am in Spartanburg, SC.

I look forward to all that AER can inform and enhance in my knowledge of the field.

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## News You Can Use

### **AER International Conference 2020 Information**

AER is closely monitoring conditions related to the COVID-19 pandemic; and will provide timely updates regarding impacts to the AER International Conference 2020. The health, welfare and safety of our attendees are our top priorities. Though planning for the conference continues, we know that the COVID-19 situation is changing rapidly daily. These are unprecedented times. We will communicate conference related changes via the website, social email and e-blasts. Please be safe.

### **AER Board of Directors Election 2020-2022**

Now is the time to elect the 2020-2022 Board of Directors! Please take this important opportunity to cast your vote. Voting ends April 26, 2020 at 11:59pm Eastern. Please check your email for bios, ballots and details on how to cast your vote. Meet the Candidates information is also available at [www.aerbvi.org](http://www.aerbvi.org). Please contact [aer@aerbvi.org](mailto:aer@aerbvi.org) should you have any questions.

### **Deadline Extended! AER Awards: Call for Nominations**

The deadline to submit award nominations has been extended. The new submission deadline for all awards is **April 15, 2020**. To be eligible for consideration, all nominations must be submitted before the stated deadline. The specific criteria is noted on each individual nomination form. For more information, please visit <https://aerbvi.org/professional-development/aer-awards/>.

### **AER Scholarships**

Attention Students: it's not too late to submit your application for the AER William and Dorothy Ferrell Scholarship. This scholarship is for **individuals continuing their education in a field that provides services to people who are blind and visually impaired**. Share with anyone who might be eligible. Deadline for submitting the applications and accompanying documentation is April 30, 2020. 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 issues? Take a moment, login and discover the Journal! As an added plus, each issue contains up to two articles that you can read, take a quiz, and earn valuable CE hours! Below are instructions for accessing the journal. If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact [michele@aerbvi.org](mailto:michele@aerbvi.org).

**[JVIB Login Steps – Word](#)**

**[JVIB Login Steps – PDF](#)**

### **Stay current! Member Profile Updates**

If you have changes to your membership profile information, you can update the information (I.e. email, postal address, telephone numbers, etc.) online via your member account. If you need to update your membership information and need assistance, please send an email to [michele@aerbvi.org](mailto:michele@aerbvi.org) or contact her via telephone at (703) 671-5875.

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## **Employment Opportunities**

Check out the new positions that are available in the field. Here are some exciting jobs that are posted via the AER Job Exchange:

### **Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist**

**03/20/2020 | Kansas City, MO**

Children's Center for the Visually Impaired

### **Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI)**

**03/20/2020 | Kansas City, MO**

Children's Center for the Visually Impaired

### **TVI/O&M Instructor**

**03/20/2020 | Thurston County,**

Washington State School for the Blind

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

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## What's Cookin' AER

### Brussels Sprout Gratin

Looking for something simple, yet yummy! This recipe is sure to please. Using basic ingredients and “brussels sprouts” as the star, you can quickly have a delicious one dish meal.



**Photo: pan with brussels sprout gratin**

### Ingredients

- 1 pound Brussels sprouts, cleaned and trimmed
  - 2 slices bacon, cut into 1/2 inch pieces
  - salt and ground black pepper to taste
- ½ cup heavy cream
- ¼ cup breadcrumbs
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons butter, cut into tiny pieces

### Directions

- Preheat an oven to 400 degrees F (200 degrees C). Lightly grease a baking dish.
- Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add the Brussels sprouts and cook uncovered until tender, about 8 minutes. Drain in a colander, then immediately immerse in ice water for several minutes until cold to stop the cooking process. Once the Brussels sprouts are cold, drain well, and cut in halves or quarters, depending on size. Set aside.
- Meanwhile, place the bacon in a large, deep skillet, and cook over medium-high heat, turning occasionally, until limp and lightly browned, about 5 minutes. Reduce heat and stir in the Brussels sprouts. Season with salt and pepper then toss for about 1 minutes to evenly distribute the seasonings. Arrange bacon and Brussels sprouts on the prepared baking dish. Pour cream evenly over the Brussels sprouts, then sprinkle breadcrumbs and Parmesan cheese on top. Distribute pieces of butter over the breadcrumbs.

- Bake in the preheated oven until golden brown and heated through, 20-25 minutes.
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## Division Updates

### Rehabilitation Counseling & Employment Division

AER Power Ups! Session

April 17, 12 – 1pm Eastern

#### *Understanding Customized Employment*

This session will present an overview of customized employment, its advantages and impact for clients with blindness or low vision and additional disabilities. The presenter will provide background and context regarding customized employment, discuss its implementation in his agency, and advantages and challenges as they apply to clients. Many people with disabilities and co-occurring disorders want to work, but find typical job search processes (identifying open positions, completing job applications, interviewing) ineffective and frustrating. These more traditional, labor market approaches, are very competitive and often put people with disabilities and co-occurring disorders, particularly those with more significant limitations, in direct competition with job seekers with fewer barriers to employment. **Presenter** Michael St.Julien M.A.

### Orientation & Mobility Division

The O&M division election is underway. If you haven't already done so, please vote today. Ballots have been provided to division members.

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## Chapter Information

### Kentucky AER

Please remember to cast your vote in the chapter election. If you have not received a ballot, please email [aer@aerbvi.org](mailto:aer@aerbvi.org).

### Illinois AER

Please remember to cast your vote in the chapter election. If you have not received a ballot, please email [aer@aerbvi.org](mailto:aer@aerbvi.org).

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## Something New: Book Review

Russell C. Williams: A Journey Well Traveled by James Whitehead is far more than a biography of Williams. It is a meticulously researched history of the development of long cane training that evolved during WWII primarily through the efforts of Richard Hoover and Warren Bledsoe. As the retired president of the Carroll Center of the Blind, I was familiar with the general outline of the story and as the current biographer of another person of that era, Reverend Father Thomas J. Carroll, another important innovator, I have been researching and reading all important historic documents. This book has much of the important factual detail covering the WWII years and the immediate aftermath- continuing the experimental programs begun by the U.S. Army by developing the Rehabilitation Center for blinded veterans at Hines Hospital. I highly recommend it to all Orientation and Mobility professionals, to newly blinded vets, to professionals working in the many VA Rehabilitation Hospital programs, to rehabilitation professionals working with other disabilities. Russell Williams' life is an inspiration to all of us.

**About the Author:** James Whitehead, a Midwesterner, attended the University of Illinois- Navy Pier, received his undergraduate degree in education from the University of Illinois- Champaign Urbana and a Master's degree from Western Michigan University. He was employed for more than 30 years by the renowned Hines Blind rehabilitation Center at Edward Hines Jr., VA Hospital in Maywood Illinois. During his tenure at Hines, he held the positions of Orientation and Mobility Specialist, Researcher, Assistant Chief and Chief-- retiring in 1998.

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*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](mailto:news@aerbvi.org). Deadline for the May issue is 4/27/2020.*



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