



Welcome to the August 2020 issue of the Voice

Barrels of Laughs, and Bricks, and Memories

So, those of you who know me really well know that I love a good laugh and love nothing more than making others smile and laugh. Yep, I can be pretty serious and can take myself too seriously plenty of the time, but then again, I think this is an affliction that any number of us suffer from now and then. In any case, I don't know about you, but I could sure use a really good laugh right about now. Not just something slapstick but something that might be metaphorical of what we're all feeling these days. Years ago, when I wasn't merely the AER interim guy but held the staff reins with fixity, I put together an article for what once-upon-a-time was the predecessor to the Voice, the AER Report, that got lots of favorable and fun feedback. I've written many things over the course of time, columns like last month's AER Voice article that were, frankly, kind of weighty and maybe not "fun". Even to this day, some people remind me of how much they loved that piece. Since it seems to me that all of us could really benefit from a meaningful and amusing metaphor for life, let me do a reprise below of the classic comedic anecdote (now available all over the place on the Internet) that I shared with the AER membership all those years ago:

Accident Report

This one needs an introduction, so you won't be lost at the beginning. This man was in an accident at work, so he filled out an insurance claim. The insurance company contacted him and asked for more information. This was his response:

"I am writing in response to your request for additional information, for block number 3 of the accident reporting form. I put 'poor planning' as the cause of my accident. You said in your letter that I should explain more fully and I trust the following detail will be sufficient. I am an amateur radio operator and on the day of the accident, I was working alone on the top section of my new 80-foot tower. When I had completed my work, I discovered that I had, over the course of several trips up the tower, brought up about 300 pounds of tools and spare hardware. Rather than carry the now unneeded tools and material down by hand, I decided to lower the items

down in a small barrel by using the pulley attached to the gin pole at the top of the tower. Securing the rope at ground level, I went to the top of the tower and loaded the tools and material into the barrel. Then I went back to the ground and untied the rope, holding it tightly to ensure a slow decent of the 300 pounds of tools."

"You will note in block number 11 of the accident reporting form that I weigh only 155 pounds. Due to my surprise of being jerked off the ground so suddenly, I lost my presence of mind and forgot to let go of the rope. Needless to say, I proceeded at a rather rapid rate of speed up the side of the tower. In the vicinity of the 40-foot level, I met the barrel coming down. This explains my fractured skull and broken collarbone. Slowed only slightly, I continued my rapid ascent, not stopping until the fingers of my right hand were two knuckles deep into the pulley. Fortunately, by this time, I had regained my presence of mind and was able to hold onto the rope in spite of my pain. At approximately the same time, however, the barrel of tools hit the ground and the bottom fell out of the barrel."

"Devoid of the weight of the tools, the barrel now weighed approximately 20 pounds. I refer you again to my weight in block number 11. As you might imagine, I began a rapid descent down the side of the tower. In the vicinity of the 40-foot level, I met the barrel coming up. This accounts for the two fractured ankles, and the lacerations of my legs and lower body. The encounter with the barrel slowed me enough to lessen my injuries when I fell onto the pile of tools and, fortunately, only three vertebrae were cracked. I am sorry to report, however, that as I lay there on the tools, in pain, unable to stand and watching the empty barrel 80 feet above me, I again lost my presence of mind. I let go of the rope..."

Mark Richert, *Interim Executive Director, AER*

President's Corner

Well, by the time you read this I'll actually be Past-President. As one of my last official duties this summer, the Board gave me the authority to create a special certificate for individuals or organizations who really "stepped up" amidst the onset of nationwide closures. Excited to acknowledge recipients, I reached out to the President of CEC's Division of Visual Impairment and Deafblindness (DVIDB) to assist me in this endeavor. Together, in partnership with our boards, we collaboratively selected and named the recipients.

Dr. Penny Rosenblum, TSBVI Outreach "Coffee Hour" and the creators of the ExCEL Academy, Charlotte Cushman, Leanne Grillot, and Dr. Cheryl Kamei-Hannan were recognized for their exemplary efforts to go above and beyond in services to individuals who are blind, visually impaired, or DeafBlind

in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and were given “Presidential Recognition of Extraordinary Achievement.” As the status of the world continues to be in flux, their efforts, and work like theirs, will continue to be important in days ahead.

It’s fitting that I end my term with collaboration and collegiality because those have been two of the most important parts of my service to you, the members. We don’t have the benefit of a large staff and we must rely on each other to continually work on behalf of the vision and mission of AERBVI. Somebody who embodies the spirit of service and dedication more than many is Neva Fairchild, our new President. Neva took the reins on August 1st and she’ll do an extraordinary job.

Emily Coleman, *President*, AERBVI

News You Can Use

AER Webinars!

We are excited to announce that we are offering you a "Summer Learning Series" through the AER Knowledge Center. Members may register at no cost, and earn 1 CE for each session.

Audio Description: If Your Eyes Could Speak

This presentation will demonstrate how audio description provides access to the arts for people who are blind. Describers observe, select and then succinctly and vividly use language to convey the visual image that is not fully accessible to a segment of the population.

Presenter: Joel Snyder

Date: August 10, 2020

Time: 10:00 am - 11:00 am (EASTERN)

Register: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUsdOihqz4tH9EwVCMmDNCvSTmBxO4ZUMN>

GoTap Braille: An Engaging and Inclusive App for iPad

GoTap Braille is a new engaging/inclusive app for iPad designed to teach braille to young children. Braille contractions are taught using tactile overlays similar to how young sighted children learn to read. Participants will first receive information regarding the braille literacy crisis. Second, engaging activities within the app will be demonstrated along with how sighted children can use the app. Third, additional strategies to remedy the crisis will be discussed.

Presenter: Betsy Flener

Date: August 11, 2020

Time: 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm (EASTERN)

Register: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEvf-Gtpz8qH9zMiy7UZY4wACxtAxM0pmo5>

O&M Division 2020: Where are We Now and Where are We Headed?

The AER O&M Division developed a 5-year Strategic Plan in 2017 to provide guidance for activities and focus for the division and executive committee. It addresses the concerns and needs of the division members and it is intended to advance the progression of O&M through advocacy, awareness, recruitment, reconnection. Join us to review what we have accomplished and discuss where we should go from here.

Presenter: JoAnne Chalom, Justin Kaiser and Margaret Winn

Date: August 11, 2020

Time: 4:30 pm - 5:30 pm (EASTERN)

Register: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0ld-qsrT0iHtMSkSWjsJx5aC3dd0SbQm0s>

Genetic Testing and Clinical Trials of Emerging Therapies for People with Inherited Retinal Diseases

Approximately 40 clinical trials are now underway for treatments for people with inherited retinal diseases such as retinitis pigmentosa (RP), Leber congenital amaurosis (LCA), Stargardt disease, and Usher syndrome. No-cost genetic testing is available to help patients and families get a definitive diagnosis for their condition and potentially qualify for a clinical trial.

Presenter: Ben Shaberman

Date: August 12, 2020

Time: 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm (EASTERN)

Register: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0vdeCtqDggEtFx-DOAIV6vIDh5zovn0oGU>

Support Canes: Who is in Support of Them?

The AER O&M Division Professional Issues Committee on Support Canes was tasked with determining if practitioners should consider issuing support canes? Two questionnaires were created and disbursed. Discover the results of these two questionnaires, one focusing on academia and the other practitioners. We will discuss where we should go from here? Should a position paper address support canes?

Presenter: JoAnne Chalom and Margaret Winn

Date: August 12, 2020

Time: 4:30 pm - 5:30 pm (EASTERN)

Register: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEqc-qurT0tGdY4ulydmW7UxN6oFg8X0IZI>

Be the Boss of Your Embosser with PixBlaster and PageBlaster

For the first time ever, two embossing options are right at your fingertips and available on quota! Enter PixBlaster and PageBlaster from APH. Join us at this informational session where we'll introduce you to these two embossers, cover their differences, and the basics of setting them up, so you can make braille and tactile graphics for years to come. Together we will continue to knock down barriers to braille access!

Presenter: William Freeman

Date: August 13, 2020

Time: 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm (EASTERN)

Register: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAsc--rrD4tG9P_QHEjUD9dkxsLAWTWjln4

Teaching and Reinforcing Braille for Students in the Digital World: How We Can Actively Engage Young Students and Those with Additional Disabilities

Presenter: Betsy Flener

Date: August 18, 2020

Time: 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm (EASTERN)

Register: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwkfuyhrTgiEtKhr5x2RQrWPMFCWrsBPfTp>

Help With Research Study

My name is Audra Bishop and I am an AER student member and a graduate student at the University of North Texas. For my dissertation, I am collecting information about Early Intervention (EI) services for children who are blind or visually impaired (BVI) and their families across the United States. I am inviting Certified Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (CTVI), Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS), or a dual-certified (CTVI and COMS) professionals in the United States to complete the following survey.

The survey will require approximately 15-25 minutes to complete. The information gathered should help provide current information about EI services for children with BVI and their families. The study will help identify current practices that may impact children with BVI and their families by consolidating useful information about the EI referral process, service delivery, and service frequency for children with BVI across the United States. Only aggregate data results will be presented. No individual responses will be reported.

Survey Link: https://unt.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ erf27jfwvDENdH

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OIB Program Manager's Technical Assistance Conference

The OIB-TAC is hosting our second annual OIB Program Manager's Technical Assistance Conference the week of August 31 – September 4. This year, it will be a virtual conference hosted on our Community of Practice and managed through Zoom. The conference agenda is now available for

download on our [Community of Practice conference page](#). You'll notice upon review of the agenda that some sessions are closed only to program managers. However, we have many open to all to provide an opportunity for an even greater exchange of ideas.

Please save the date and share the agenda with your staff, contractors, and friends! Registration for sessions will be released by August 15.

Professional Development Series for Educators and Related Service Providers

An exciting opportunity is being offered by the University of South Dakota for all certified educators serving children and young adults birth through 21! Four newly created 3-credit professional development courses will be offered:

- An Introduction to Deaf-Blindness (Fall 2020)
- Deaf-Blindness: Communication Strategies (Fall 2020)
- Deaf-Blindness: Assessment & Instructional Planning (Spring 2021)
- Life Planning for Success: Deaf-Blind Strategies (Summer 2021)

Each course consists of a 16-week semester, approximately 2½ hours of online work per week, and synchronous online meetings. The cost is \$200 per 3-credit course for continuing education credits (or \$320 to receive 3 graduate credits).

Visit <https://www.nationaldb.org/updates/professional-development-series-for-educators-and-related-service-providers/> for more information.

Registration is now open with limited spaces available.

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.

[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 or contact her via telephone at (703) 671-5875.

Chapter Updates

The Arkansas chapter of AER will be hosting their annual conference on September 17-18, 2020! Please join us for our virtual conference as we are “Building a Stronger Vision in 20/20”. We are excited to be joined by presenters: Barry Kran, Kevin McCormack, Yue-Ting Siu, and Darick Wright. We look forward to the opportunity to learn, network, and grow together!

Conference registration and our “Conference-at-a-Glance” can be found on our website ArkansasAER.org/Conference. Be sure and check for updates on our Facebook page facebook.com/ArkansasAER!

Welcome AER New Members who Joined in July

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

AER New Member Spotlight

Welcome new AER member, Mackenzie Dirlam, who joined us in January!



My name is Mackenzie Dirlam. I am an instructional aide at the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children (WPSBC). I graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in April of 2018 with my Bachelor of Science in Applied Developmental Psychology (ADP). I will graduate from the University of Pittsburgh with my Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments (TVI) certificate in April of 2021, my Orientation and Mobility (O&M) certificate in August of 2021, and my MEd in April of 2022. In my free time I play rugby for the Pittsburgh Forge Women’s team. I regularly attend kettlebell classes and just recently joined Running In Stride as a sighted guide. One of my goals is to help spread awareness about the positive effects of participating in sports and recreational activities. I would

like to become a sighted guide for those who wish to compete in marathons, tough mudders, and various other events.

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:

[Orientation and Mobility Specialist](#)

Rochester Hills, Michigan
Leader Dogs for the Blind

[Job Development Specialist](#)

Tampa, Florida
Lighthouse for the Blind and Low Vision

[TVI/COMS/Braille Transcriptionist Positions](#)

North Carolina, and Minnesota
Invision Services

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

What's Cookin' AER

Tomato-Watermelon Salad with Turmeric Oil

Red, juicy and sweet - tomatoes and watermelon are soul maters and they both need salt, spice and fat to reach their full potential! Make sure your tomatoes and watermelon are room temperature -- if they are too cold, they'll make the spiced coconut oil seize.

INGREDIENTS

- ¼ cup virgin coconut oil
- 1 tsp. coarsely crushed peppercorns
- 1 tsp. coarsely crushed coriander seeds
- ½ tsp. cumin seeds
- ½ tsp. ground turmeric
- ¼ large seedless watermelon (about 3 lb.), preferably yellow, rind removed, flesh cut into ½" pieces (about 4 cups)

2 medium heirloom tomatoes, cut into ½" pieces
8 oz. mild French feta, cut into ½" pieces
Flaky sea salt

RECIPE PREPARATION

Heat coconut oil, peppercorns, coriander seeds, cumin seeds, and turmeric in a small saucepan over medium until fragrant, about 3 minutes. Let turmeric oil cool slightly.

Arrange watermelon, tomato, and feta on a platter. Drizzle turmeric oil evenly over and sprinkle with salt

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 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 September issue is 8/26/2020.

