



## Welcome to the February 2021 issue of the Voice

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### The AER eLearning Center

AER has big news for our community; we are excited to inform you that we have now launched our online educational platform! We have put relevant courses at your fingertips - enabling you to keep abreast of new trends in the field - all while qualifying for continuing education hours! We are excited to announce our new professional development website, **AER eLearning (<https://www.aerelearning.org>)**, is now live!

AER Membership benefits include special Member Pricing on all sessions and CE credits. Be sure to login to your membership account to access these special rates!

**We have a series of live events on the site that we want you to join! <https://aerelearning.org/events>:**

**February 15:** Young, Visually Impaired and Happy: How Hard Is It?

**February 17:** Recruit, Re-brand, Re-focus, Re-energize: Let's Fill the Gap by Following in Michigan's Footsteps

**February 19:** Virtual Recreation Therapy with Individuals with Visual Impairments During a Global Pandemic

If you have any questions or need help finding a specific course, please email Megan Doty at [megan@aerbvi.org](mailto:megan@aerbvi.org). Please also let us know if you are interested in presenting a program or sponsoring the site with your organization.

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

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## President's Corner

Your Board of Directors will begin meeting monthly, instead of quarterly, on February 5. What does this mean for you? Issues that arise will be addressed more quickly than before. Because the Finance Committee, who watches over AER's finances, and the Executive Committee, made up of the elected officers, also meet the week before each full board meeting, so in 2021 we will be better positioned to deal with the business of AER than when we met on a quarterly basis. We hope to have a full board again, with the appointment of a new District 1 Representative. Division leaders and Chapter leaders will be invited to planning and training meetings soon. Are you wondering how you can help? Reach out, volunteer to help in your Chapter, Division or at the International level on a committee. There's plenty of work to be done and more hands make the work easier and lots more fun. If you have questions for me, email [nfairchild@afb.org](mailto:nfairchild@afb.org) or call 972-897-4171. If I can, I will answer; if I don't answer, leave me a voice mail or send me a text message. I want to hear from you.

I have been blessed to already have both doses of the vaccine, and I hope you are able to do the same soon. Stay safe, follow the guidelines to stay healthy and let's make 2021 a banner year for AER!

**Neva Fairchild**, *President, AERBVI*

972-897-4171

[nfairchild@afb.org](mailto:nfairchild@afb.org)

## News You Can Use

### UPDATES FROM OIB-TAC!

#### **Upcoming webinar: Cultivating Resilience**

When: February 19, 2021

Time: 2:00 – 3:00 pm Central

This webinar will discuss resilience and how we can proactively cultivate it in our lives. Our presenter Becky Andrews will discuss ten healthy practices and answer your questions. To learn more and register for this event, visit <https://www.oib-tac.org/events/2021/01/cultivating-resilience/>.

#### **Participate in the IL OIB-TAC Forum:**

Do you ever wish you could pop over to a coworker's office to ask them a question, but you can't because you work remotely? Consider stopping by the [IL OIB-TAC text forum](#). To post a question or participate in any of our discussions, sign up, and join our conversations. You can see what others are

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saying and maybe even find an answer to a question you have. If you have any questions about how to use our forum, reach out to Simon at [smarcy@colled.msstate.edu](mailto:smarcy@colled.msstate.edu).

A new course, [Social Isolation, Aging, and Vision Loss](#) (1 hour), has been added to our [course catalog](#). Social isolation can affect anyone of any age. In this course, Dr. Sheffield discusses factors like age, vision impairment, and overall health status and how they contribute to placing individuals at higher risk for social isolation. Evidenced-based strategies to combat social isolation are provided. Additionally, the course looks at vision rehabilitation and its role in reducing social isolation.

### **New Course: Mobility Impairments: Implications for Service Providers**

A mobility impairment might affect an individual's ability to walk, climb stairs, use their hands, or complete activities of daily living. This course covers numerous health conditions that often cause mobility impairments and suggests safe, collaborative ways to provide blind/vision rehabilitation services. Physical and occupational therapists' roles are reviewed, and suggestions are made for how to work together to provide comprehensive and effective services. Additionally, this course will help individuals identify program participants with mobility impairments for federal reporting. Audrey Demmitt and Trina Bassak wrote this course. It is available for 2 hours of CRC, ACVREP, and NBPCB credit.

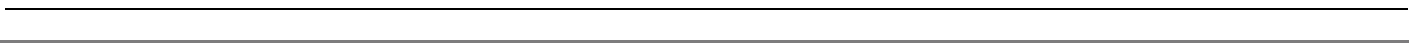
### **New course: [How Social Determinants of Health Relate to Vision and Aging](#)**

Social determinants are defined by the World Health Organization as the "conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age." In this course, Dr. Pricilla Rogers looks at these social determinants and how these factors impact the prevalence of vision loss. Discussion focuses on how individuals with vision impairment or blindness are at greater risk for additional health impairments and consider strategies for how service providers can ease the effects of social determinants. It is available for 1 hour of CRC, ACVREP, and NBPCB credit.

### **New course: [Fall Prevention: Interventions for Older Individuals who are Visually Impaired](#)**

Falls are the leading cause of injury among older adults. Having vision loss puts an individual at higher risk for falls. In this course, an interdisciplinary team from Vision Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired, a non-profit agency in New York, focuses on this important topic. Learn how to identify individuals at risk for falls, learn about home safety checklists, and modifications and strategies to help prevent falls. This course was written by William Hixson, Travis Joseph, Teddy Kern, and Julie Spodnick and is available for 1-hour CRC, ACVREP, and NBPCB credit.

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## Low Vision Tablet and Phone Stand

For some time now, and especially during the pandemic, TVI's, CVRT's and COMS have observed that tablets and phones are frequently being used by individuals to aid in daily activities like text and image enlargement, image magnification, and video chatting. We also find that posture is typically poor because our clients need to hunch over to view the screen on a table. Given the extra screen time during the pandemic, the issue is even worse.

Below is some information on a new device with you that can significantly help. Our Vermont CATIS and AER member, Allie Fuddy, partnered with a local design engineer at Blue Vista Creations, and they developed a device stand specifically to help low vision users. The stand is highly adjustable and supports nearly any tablet or phone for comfortable ergonomic viewing at the distance and height that low vision users need. One version holds standard size devices and has a low-profile base for easy portability. Another version holds the largest of devices, including a case, and has a larger base for additional stability. Details can be found at <https://lvtabletstand.com/>

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## UPDATES FROM ACVREP:

### FREE Chromebook Accessibility Certificate Program

ACVREP, the nonprofit organization that certifies the professionals who provide services to individuals who are blind or have low vision, has partnered with Google to provide an in depth online, on demand, and FREE Chromebook Accessibility Certificate program. The online Certificate course is available FREE to both consumers and professionals.

Those who successfully complete the training will receive a digital badge to display that confirms that they are a Chromebook Accessibility Expert.

Professionals will be able to hone their skills in teaching use of the Chromebook and consumers can expand their professional opportunities and be more skilled in using this well priced computer with built in accessibility.

The Certificate programs expects to launch March 2021. Watch for more information about the exact launch date and how to apply for the Certificate program. For further information, contact: Kathleen Zeider, President/CEO of ACVREP, [kzeider@acvrep.org](mailto:kzeider@acvrep.org)

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## Saluting the Super Heros!

### Miami Lighthouse for the Blind

As we approach the one-year mark of the COVID-19 pandemic, we recognize and salute our front line workers; teachers of the visually impaired, early childhood teachers and teacher assistants. In March 2020 with a quick shift from face-to-face instruction to remote learning our teachers found new and innovative ways to engage learners. Not even a pandemic was going to stop the amazing team at Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Drive by graduations, home deliveries of instructional materials, food and pamper deliveries became the norm. A remote learning fidelity checklist was developed to ensure all individuals interacting remotely with blind or visually impaired students are sure to make the experience engaging and accessible. The start of the 2020-21 year presented its own challenges with hybrid learning, a mix of students onsite and online. Yet, our teachers continue to embrace change and learned to navigate high tech systems installed in classrooms to support "Parent Choice" guidelines. We salute the superheroes of Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and thank them for their continued dedication to children who are blind or visually impaired.

For additional information please contact:

Virginia A. Jacko, President and CEO- [vjacko@miamilighthouse.org](mailto:vjacko@miamilighthouse.org)

Isabel Chica, Director of Children's Programs- [ichica@miamilighthouse.org](mailto:ichica@miamilighthouse.org)

## AER Chapter Updates

### Arkansas AER Chapter

The AR-AER fundraising crew is at it again! Check out these new limited edition hooded sweatshirts and zip up hoodies from our *Visionary* line!!! **Place your order by February 7th.**

Items feature the word *Visionary*. The "o" in *visionary* is depicted as a magnifying glass and *visionary* is also written in braille below the print word. (Note: the braille is not tactual.) All items will ship after the campaign ends. Place your order

here: <https://www.customink.com/fundraising/buildingstrongervisionin2021>

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### Georgia AER Chapter

#### 2021 Virtual Conference

The Georgia AER Chapter will be holding their 2021 Virtual Conference on February 26 and March 1, 2021!

**Registration Fee:** Free for GA AER members - \$175 for 2 Full Days for non-members

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Click here for more information and to register:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/georgia-aer-2021-virtual-conference-on-technology-for-the-visually-impaired-registration-119822629711>

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### **Mississippi AER Chapter Two-Part Webinar:**

#### **Quality Essential Assessments: What Can Be Done in a Virtual Environment**

In this 2-part webinar, Dr. Karen Blankenship will discuss the foundational rationale for completing the FVLMA and the ECC screening and assessment to provide quality programming for students with visual impairments. In addition, during these unprecedented times we will discuss what is possible to complete virtually and what we need to do during a face-to-face meeting.

Click here to learn more:

[images.magnetmail.net/images/clients/AERBVI/attach/QualityEssentialAssesmts\\_MississippiAER.pdf](images.magnetmail.net/images/clients/AERBVI/attach/QualityEssentialAssesmts_MississippiAER.pdf)

**When** : Saturday, February 13th and Saturday, February 27th, 2021 -- 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Central Time each day

**Who Should Attend** : TVIs and O&M'ers

**Cost** : AER Members and Students are free. Non-members: \$25.00

**Registration** : Essential Assessment Workshop February 13 and 27

**Want credit for attending?:** ACVREP credits will be available

Certificates of Completion will be available upon completion of the entire set of Modules.

Contact [Toni.hollingsworth@usm.edu](mailto:Toni.hollingsworth@usm.edu) if you need something else for Educators in your state.

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### **Texas AER Chapter**

#### **Registration is Now Open: Texas 2021 Conference**

The **TAER 2021 conference** will be held virtually March 25-27, 2021. All presentations will be done over ZOOM with professional support. Registration is now open at: [www.txaer.org/registration](http://www.txaer.org/registration)

Reduced rate registration deadline submission is March 1, 2021

Hard Deadline for Registration Submission is March 19, 2021

### **AER Member Spotlight**

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### **Meet AER member, Joyce Lopez, who joined us in 1993!**



Ms. A. Joyce Lopez is a Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist (COMS®) for the Texas Workforce Commission-Vocational Rehabilitation Services in Corpus Christi, Texas. She received a Bachelor of Science degree in Education from The University of Texas-Austin with specializations in Deficient Vision and Mental Retardation with a minor in Psychology. She returned to the university and received her O&M certification. Her career in the blindness field spans over 38 years.

Ms. Lopez was a teacher for the blind and visually impaired in the McAllen Independent School District for four years and then returned to her native home in Corpus Christi, Texas to take on a new job. She worked for the Education Service Center, Region 2 as a Consultant for the Program for the Visually Impaired for 16 years. She worked with blind and visually impaired students and their assigned educators, administrators, and other professional staff. During her tenure at the ESC-2 she began working part time as a contractor for the legacy agency Texas Commission for the Blind providing Orientation & Mobility training (O&M) to their consumers. The rehabilitation field offered some new changes and challenges for her.

Ms. Lopez left her education career and began her rehabilitation career at the legacy agency DARS-Division for Blind Services in August 2006 as one of three O&M Specialists selected to work in the State of Texas. After spending five years in the Rio Grande Valley establishing an O&M program it was time for her to return to her native home by the bay! She continues to work as an Orientation & Mobility Specialist (COMS®) for the Texas Workforce Commission-Vocational Rehabilitation Services in Corpus Christi, Texas. She has been an AER member since 1993. Her longevity motto is my job is not work, but a life adventure every day!

She continues to reside in Corpus Christi, Texas with her Mom and their two cats, Cookie and Lil' Bit.

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## **Meet AER member, Jamie Lugo, who joined us in 2016!**

My name is Jamie Lugo and I am the principal of the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind, School for the Blind program in Colorado Springs, CO. This is my 6<sup>th</sup> year as principal. I taught at CSDB for 6 years prior to becoming principal. In 2003, I graduated from the University of Wisconsin, Madison with an undergraduate degree in special education. I lived in Peru, teaching English, and working at an orphanage from 2003-2004. In 2004, I moved to Austin, TX and was hired at the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. I obtained a certification in visual impairment from Texas Tech University while working as a TVI for TSBVI from 2004-2008. My husband and I got married, moved to Colorado Springs and I worked for just one year, as a special education case manager and staffing coordinator for Palmer High School. I missed working with students who are blind/visually impaired, so I applied at CSDB and was hired as a classroom teacher in 2009. I decided to go back to the University of Northern Colorado to obtain an official master's degree in Visual Impairment. I absolutely love working in our field. I have a strong passion for the expanded core curriculum and working with families to understand the continuum of services available to their children across the state of Colorado.

## **Welcome AER New Members who Joined in January**

Join us in welcoming the newest members, who joined AER in January 2021. We are so glad to have you! [\*\*AER New Members\*\*](#)

## **Employment Opportunities**

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

### **Experienced Grant Writer – Remote Work**

**Seattle, Washington, The Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc.**

### **Special Schools Teacher – Dual Certified (TVI/O&M)**

**Nashville, Tennessee, Tennessee School for the Blind**

### **Orientation and Mobility Specialist- Des Moines area**

**Johnston, Iowa, Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired**

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

*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 March issue is 2/25/2021.**

