



March 2021 – The Voice Volume 3, Issue 3

Welcome to the March 2021 issue of the Voice.

Dear AER members and friends,

I so love the opportunity you all give me to play even a small part in advancing causes we all care about through the public policy process. Such advocacy work has always been at the heart of AER's mission, and so that's why I'm excited to share the text of a very recent email we sent to the hundreds of folks from across the consumer, professional and parent communities comprising the sensory disabilities world. You will see what this is all about as you read on, but for now, just know that while this effort has to do with special education, AER is similarly playing a leading role with respect to aging and vision loss, as well as much needed improvements to the vocational rehabilitation and workforce systems. More about all that later but have a look below at what your involvement in AER is making possible. And of course, if you want to get directly involved in the special education advocacy we are undertaking, I can't wait to hear from you; just drop me a line or give me a ring (mark@aerbvi.org).

Ok, here ya go—

On behalf of the Cogswell-Macy Action Network:

I am so grateful to all of you who registered for the February 16 Ready, Set Advocate community forum launching this year's campaign on Capitol Hill and in the new Administration to improve educational outcomes for all the students we care so much about. More than 430 of you indicated your commitment to the cause by registering for this kickoff event, which just proves yet again how dedicated people are from all across the country who are demanding long overdue change. And while wild weather and technology troubles across America definitely impacted many folks' ability to tune in that evening, we still had nearly 200 attendees, and our presenters were so thankful to have a chance to meet you virtually.

If you were not able to attend, or if you would like to share the February 16 forum with others in your network, you are more than welcome, and you can access the recording at: [Program Recording Link](#)

Next Steps

First things first: As of this writing on March 1, the Cogswell-Macy bill has yet to be reintroduced in the U.S. House and Senate, but never fear; we expect to have Senate and House bill numbers to share with you any day now. Once we have them, your efforts to secure co-sponsorship of the legislation by your elected officials will be made just a little bit easier, and we'll be back in touch with you to provide any and all help you may need to connect with your congressional delegation. It definitely shouldn't go without saying: you are not alone in this effort; this is a community-wide initiative, and we have each other's backs. So stay tuned for exciting news to come your way very soon.

Speaking of needing your help, when the Cogswell-Macy Action Network steering committee met recently, we decided that it would be critical to target specific advocacy with those members of Congress in both chambers who are best positioned to promote the Cogswell-Macy Act (CMA). Yes, all members of Congress can and should co-sponsor the CMA, and just as soon as we have bill numbers in hand, we'll be back with you enlisting your help to make that happen. But once the CMA is reintroduced, the bill will be assigned to specific House and Senate committees. The members of these committees can be particularly helpful in moving the bill through the long and winding legislative process. Even as we speak, we are mapping out the states and localities across the country that are represented by each of the members of these two important committees. When you registered for the February 16 event, we asked for your city and state which will help us greatly in matching these critical committee members with those of you who are in fact in their states and congressional districts. So we'll be following up with some of you in particular to ask if you would be willing to join us in the series of virtual meetings we will be scheduling in the weeks ahead. If your House and Senate members are not on these committees, we still need you and will be reaching out to you about securing co-sponsorships as I said earlier. And if your elected officials do serve on the committees of jurisdiction, then we're especially grateful that you registered for the February 16 event; we're excited for the opportunity to work with you a bit more closely.

Finally, I know the program on February 16 was jam packed, but I hope you got as much out of it as we had hoped that you would. Nevertheless, we have heard that some of you are interested in a bit of a deeper dive into the provisions of the CMA, particularly as they apply to each of the combinations of the kiddos we care about, children who are blind, visually impaired, deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, and who may also have additional disabilities. So we are already at work planning our next Cogswell-Macy Action Network

forum to do just that, to deepen knowledge about exactly what the CMA says and how it will address the overarching policy objectives that motivated all of us to take up this cause in the first place. So, if you're reading this email, then you're in the right place to learn when future forums will be convened.

As I said on February 16, doing this policy work can mean a lot of different things to a lot of people, but one thing it always has been and always will be is a slow and sometimes frustrating process. We've been working on the CMA for years as you know, but I suspect you feel it too; advocates for any number of causes and issue areas have a new spring in their step this year, not so much because of which political party seems to have a thin but determined hand on Congress and the White House, but because a new Administration and a new Congress always open advocacy doors that were closed or even locked previously. That's why, along with the work we're all doing on CMA, we will be exploring all appropriate avenues in Congress and the U.S. Department of Education to push for many of the changes embodied in the CMA. We'll be keeping you informed of this advocacy work as well and inviting you to engage in it with us as your time and such possibilities allow.

Again, on behalf of all of us standing together for the students we care about with all our hearts who deserve educational opportunities worthy of their tremendous potential, thank you so much for your advocacy!

Mark Richert, *Interim Executive Director, AER*

President's Corner

I had a February to remember! Did you? The first week found me helping my daughter to care for two little boys who could not go to school. One was exposed to COVID-19 so his classroom was closed and the other ran a fever for 6 days due to his fourth ear infection since the beginning of the year. Fortunately, two tests confirmed that the baby did not contract COVID-19 and antibiotics finally reduced the effects of the ear infection in the three-year old. Surgery on the 8th to put tubes in his ears, has brought an end to this scourge and improved his hearing. How could I risk being exposed to the Coronavirus, you ask? I received my second vaccine on January 25th, so I felt fairly safe and when grandbabies need cuddling and comforting, this Grandma is all-in. Unfortunately, the virus that caused the ear infection, brought on bronchitis that laid me low for the entire second week of February. On Valentine's Day, just as I started to feel better, North Texas was hit by severe cold, snow and ice, which cause rolling power outages at our house for 5 days and knocked out WIFI for 6 days. Thank goodness for cellular data! I am also grateful that our city kept water pressure throughout the week, and we found

the intermittent power we got adequate to keep us relatively warm, if not toasty, and cooking hot meals often enough to keep body & soul together. Wherever you are, I hope you weathered the Polar Vortex safely and that life is back to what we euphemistically call normal these days.

Needless to say, the first three weeks of the month were a complete wash for me. Cramming almost everything into the last week of the month isn't my favorite way to operate. I ask for your indulgence and if I promised you something, and you don't have it yet, feel free to nag. I hope you feel comfortable reaching out to me anytime, nfairchild@afb.org or 972-897-4171.

We had a great meeting with some of our Division leaders last month, which was recorded so that those who could not attend can hear what was shared first hand. If you are a Division leader and you didn't get invited to the Zoom meeting, or didn't get the link to the recording, please reach out to me or Michele. We are planning the same type of call for Chapter leaders in March.

Your Board of Directors met on February 5 and will be meeting again on March 5. In the near future, minutes of our meetings will be posted to the AER website. Divisions and Committees are invited to send reports as needed for consideration at a Board meeting.

All Chapters have been asked to complete a form for the AER office, which is due at the end of March. If you are a Chapter leader, and none of your fellow Board members have the form, please let me or Michele know. If we have an email wrong, or don't know about a change to your leadership, the form may have gone into cyberspace, never to be seen or heard of again. One thing each of you can do to help, is to make sure your demographics are accurate in the AER database, and if you are a leader in a Division or a Chapter, Michele should know about the role(s) you fill. You can reach out to her at michele@aerbvi.org as needed.

AER is strong because of you. You are AER!

Neva Fairchild, *President, AERBVI*

972-897-4171

nfairchild@afb.org

News You Can Use



The AER eLearning Center:

Have you explored the newly launched AER eLearning Center yet?

Our new online educational platform provides you with an opportunity to earn Continuing Education hours, providing you with an easy and fun experience. Visit www.aerelearning.org, sign in with your AER log-in credentials, and get started!

Below is a list of some of the functionalities of the AER eLearning Center. (Please note that you should sign in with your AER member credentials in order to take advantage of the members-only pricing.)

- **Search webinars by category or keyword.** Click on **Courses** from the top navigation menu to view the catalog of recorded sessions. Click on the **Browse** dropdown menu to search by category. You can also search for sessions by key word (i.e., date, month, topic, webinar title, presenter, etc.). New webinars will be added on a regular basis.
- **All information about webinars in one area.** The Course description contains detailed information about each webinar, including pricing information based on your membership status. In addition, this is the area where you can access post-webinar evaluations and certificates.
- **Quickly identify webinars for which you have registered.** Once you have signed in with your AER member credentials, click on your name in the upper right-hand corner. You will also see your history – including CE certificates, purchases/activity, and live events.
- **Live events.** Have ease of mind when joining a purchased live web event. You will receive a confirmation email and receipt, and reminder emails for any live web events that you register for.

AER is dedicated to providing you with high-quality services and programs to help you excel, and we kept you in mind every step of the way in the development of the AER eLearning Center. From ease of use to full accessibility: we are excited for you to explore, learn, earn CEs, and have fun. Please contact Megan with any questions at megan@aerbvi.org.

New AER eLearning Center Live Session!

Project INSPIRE: Teaching Nemeth Code within UEB Contexts

The presentation will be packed with the latest resources currently available to teach Nemeth Code within UEB Contexts to students from pre-K through high school. These will include free

online step-by-step curriculums, focused lessons, Nemeth tutorials and glossaries, tools and materials available through APH quota funds, STEM braille boot camps, and more.

This session is presented on **March 18, 2021 at 2:00 pm (eastern)** by Tina Herzberg, Susan Osterhaus, and Sara Larkin.

Register here: <https://aerelearning.org/courses/28816>

AER Communications

AER is committed to keeping our membership informed and connected. Our programs, services and operations are rapidly changing, and we are dedicated to keeping you apprised. To ensure that you receive our communications, please be sure that the emails below are added to your safe senders' list. Each email platforms allow you to identify email addresses that can be safely and directly sent to your inbox without being redirected into junk or spam folders. By taking the time to mark emails as safe senders, you whitelist specified emails within your email client or internet security software; allowing them to be directly delivered into your inbox.

aer@aerbvi.org

conference@aerbvi.org

elly@aerbvi.org

mark@aerbvi.org

megan@aerbvi.org

michele@aerbvi.org

news@aerbvi.org

Updates from OIT-TAC!

Upcoming Webinar – March 19, 2021, Department of Veterans Affairs: Blind Rehabilitation Service- Available Programs and Services Provided <https://www.oib-tac.org/events/2021/02/departement-veterans-affairs-blind-rehabilitation-service-available-programs-services/>

Lessons for Living can be found at <https://www.oib-tac.org/direct-service/curriculum/>
Text versions of our updated Lessons for Living are now available for download. These 19 lessons, written for the consumer, address topics like understanding eye conditions, visiting the eye doctor, learning how to use other senses, low vision, labeling, and organization, adapting tasks, recreation, and leisure, adjusting to vision loss, and accessing a computer or smartphone. Information provided will be helpful to individuals of any age who are facing vision loss. Coming soon, Lessons for Living will be available in an MP3 format.

NASP Interest Group

This IG seeks to support members of the education community by providing guidance for those who serve students who are blind or visually impaired. This IG endeavors to accomplish this goal through several activities focused on education and outreach.

First, we will curate content related to best practices in assessment and intervention for students who are blind or visually impaired.

Second, we will disseminate our findings through posting executive summaries of content identified by our IG members and recommendations from the broader educational community.

Additionally, we will host online webinars and present at national conferences (e.g. NASP). Finally, we will produce and support others to generate original research that extends knowledge in this area."

School psychologists working with this population who have not been members of NASP because they have felt that NASP had nothing to offer them now will have a reason and an opportunity to participate, benefiting from, and contributing to the knowledge base of our field.

Please send your name, contact information, and current position to Dr. Carol Evans at carolevansassessments@gmail.com to be included among those who are working to establish this NASP Interest Group.

Camp Abilities World

We are happy to share the launch of the Camp Abilities World web site! This web site showcases the history of Camp Abilities, the many Camp Abilities programs across the world with photos and stories, a link to many resources, videos of the camps, and most notably a blog of the many athletes, directors, Paralympians, and teachers who continue to make a difference for youth with visual impairments.

To sign up please go to www.campabilitiesworld.com. We also have a Camp Abilities World Facebook page. Please like us on Facebook and share this wonderful new resource.

Teaching Braille Virtually

I think that one benefit of teaching during these unprecedented times is the number of successful Braille adults I have taught.

Prior to March 2020, I would have a student come into our agency and provide an hour of Braille instruction once a week. I had been using The Mangold Developmental Program of Tactile Perception and Braille Letter Recognition (Mangold, rev 1994) curriculum. Students would complete the exercises using the pages from the series. As you could imagine this could take at least four months for the student to learn the alphabet; with their success being based on retention through independent study and practice.

Once self-isolation practices were enforced in my area, I began to provide Braille training virtually. I continued using The Mangold curriculum.

I modified this system over time and now reproduce 5 pages from each lesson (starting with Chapter 15). I use a Perkins Braille writer to create the worksheets on plastic (thermoform) paper. I paper clip plastic flash cards (1.5"x2") of corresponding letter(s) to each lesson. I cut the top right corner to help with orientation. I write the students name, lesson number, and letters introduced on the first page of each set. The complete set is stapled to prevent mix-ups if dropped.

I have mitigated the possibility of students' losing the flash cards by placing the complete set on a binder ring. The first card is a six-cell combination ("for") made using bump dots. I have them reference this card to tell me the configuration of the dots for each letter they are presented with. The last card on the ring is the number sign. I will write the letter represented on each card with a permanent marker or the Spot 'n Line Pen.

I mail out a week's worth (2 lessons) of material at a time. Before I mail the lessons, I take a picture of each page. The pages are saved to the student's album on my phone.

When I contact the student for training, I have the image of the page they are working on open on my iPad. I am able to mark up the picture by highlighting letters that are missed.

I meet with each student for an hour over the phone twice a week, with at least one day between sessions. I created a tracking chart and note what lessons have been mailed to the students and the date of the training session. I have learned how to tell if they are looking or feeling the dots by asking pertinent questions. (Example: What finger have you found to be the most sensitive with discerning dot formation?, What does the letter feel like? Does your reading finger need a break?). They could catch on and start replying according to what I want to hear. However, at the end of the day, they will still know what the dots look like (tactility or visually).

Pre COVID-19, I may have had 3 students learn the Braille alphabet a year. Last year, I had seven. Over a two-month time span, my students learn the alphabet and numbers.

Due to how quickly and efficiently they learned the alphabet, most of my students wanted to learn UEB Braille. I had been using a combination of two sources to introduce the contractions (Braille Tutor app (iEnable Technology Solutions, 2018) and New Programmed Instruction in Braille Second Edition (Ashford, Henderson, Sanford & Koeing, 1994)). I would ask the student why they wanted to learn UEB Braille or what their interests are. I would use that information to help create lesson material. This could be Bible scriptures, recipes, quotes, etc. If I was unable to perceive a specific interest, I used sentences from the New Programmed Instruction book.

In February of this year, I participated in a virtual conference where one of the sessions provided about a training manual titled, "Unified English Braille (UEB) Practice Sentences" (Becker 2020). I quickly ordered it and am thoroughly pleased with the content. I have created 4 notebooks, using content from the first three lessons. I mailed the books to my students. A paper clip is attached to the beginning page of each lesson. I used binder rings to attach heavy card stock that can be used as a reading mat behind the current page. This could, also, be used as a page marker.

So far, I have one student that I was teaching UEB contractions using quotes and scriptural text. She has been provided instruction in the punctuation, alphabet word signs, strong contractions, and strong contractions used as word signs. She finds completing the exercises from the UEB Practice Sentence book to be easier.

I currently have four students learning UEB using the Practice Sentences book. I plan to have group meetings with them as sort of a "Braille Roundup" session. This would allow them to meet others who are learning Braille, share learning tips, and commiserate.

I am thoroughly enjoying getting Braille under the fingertips of as many blind and visually impaired adults as I can.

Chelsea Bridges, CVRT, Florida

Resources:

"The Mangold Developmental Program of Tactile Perception and Braille Letter Recognition", Sally Mangold, PhD., revised 1994

"Braille Tutor" app, iEnable Technology Solutions, 2018

"New Programmed Instruction in Braille Second Edition", Ashford, Henderson, Sanford & Koeing, 1994

Jonathan Hooper Interview, ny.chalkbeat.org

Click here for the full interview: <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2021/2/16/22286305/blind-students-accessibility-covid>

Online classes have meant a learning curve for all children, but they pose a particular challenge for Jonathan Hooper's students, who are blind or visually impaired. Many of them rely on tactile learning materials for which there are no digital substitutes.

Because with the right accommodations blind students can learn and thrive alongside their seeing classmates, Hooper has spent the past year making sure his students have what they need to do their work remotely. "One of my primary roles is to be the bridge between inaccessible content and accessible content," said Hooper, who works with students across age groups at multiple New York City public schools. "Basically, my day looks like: creating accessible materials, seeing students remotely, creating accessible materials, communicating with parents, communicating with teachers, making sure things are accessible. You get the idea."

Read the full interview: <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2021/2/16/22286305/blind-students-accessibility-covid>

Blind Early Services Tennessee Launches and Debuts its "Best Together" Program

New nonprofit Blind Early Services Tennessee provides support services for families of young children who are blind or visually impaired across Tennessee

NASHVILLE, TENN. (February 24, 2021) -- Blind Early Services Tennessee (BEST), a new nonprofit that provides support services for families of children who are blind or visually impaired, primarily ages 0-5, announced the organization's official launch and its first phase of programming this month. Founded to eliminate gaps in state services for these families, BEST aims to be a comprehensive resource for children with visual impairments, working with families to ensure they receive needed support.

Through its first phase of programming, the BEST Together Parent Support Program, families and caregivers will have access to support groups, at-home resources, seminars featuring professionals in the vision impairment and early intervention fields, and hands-on educational training on how to raise a child with a diagnosis of blindness or visual impairment. The organization has plans to unveil in-home early intervention, vision-specific educational training for professionals, and family advocacy services later this year. All services are funded by public-private partnerships, grants and private donations, making them no-cost to the families they serve.

"Nothing in my life had prepared me to raise a child who is blind," said Stacy Cornwall, BEST co-founder, and mother of a 4-year-old son who is visually impaired. "I needed help, and I knew the first years of his life were critical. We only had one shot at this. We were one of the few lucky families in Tennessee to have a certified Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI). But even so, we did not receive vision services until he was 18 months old. I wonder how much further his development would be if I had the same guidance during his infancy. I had to fight to get vision services for my son, which took many precious months and energy I didn't have to spare. I don't want that for other families. The next sentence that parents hear after being told their child has little or no vision should be "but here is a place to turn."

BEST aims to be that place for other families like Stacy's. Access to certified professionals in visual impairment and early childhood is challenging for children ages 0-5 in Tennessee. There is a shortage of such specialists, and visual impairment is often considered a "low incidence disability," leaving many families to fall through the cracks. Co-founders Cornwall and Alison Clougherty, also a mother of a child who is blind, seek to remedy that through their comprehensive program and service offerings planned over the next year.

BEST will be a referral-based program, but families can also reach out directly. When a medical professional or caregiver finds that a child may have a visual impairment, they can fill out a referral form for the child or refer the caregiver directly to BEST. Through virtual offerings, BEST hopes to serve families across the state with the BEST Together program. Direct, in-person services will be specific to middle Tennessee until the organization grows and can expand its reach.

"We have seen this model done very successfully in other states, even just one state over," said Clougherty. "Had our children been born in Kentucky, for example, we would have had a place to turn that could have provided us with all the answers and support we needed from birth or diagnosis. Instead, we had to fight for services, piece answers, and a team together, and pay out-of-pocket for many of these services. We don't want that for other families like ours in Tennessee any longer. No child should be at greater risk of delays simply because their disability is rare. No family should have unequal access to federally mandated services because their child has a low-incidence disability. No family should be faced with a diagnosis and no place to turn. At BEST, we have put together a premier team of professionals, board members, and advisors to create that place to turn."

To learn more about BEST, visit the website [blindearlyservices.org](https://www.blindearlyservices.org).

<https://www.instagram.com/blindearlyservices/>

<https://www.facebook.com/blindearlyservices/>

Saluting the Super Heros!

Sixty Years of Reading Technology

By William Powell -- Indiana

Sixty years ago, I began my career in technology at the tender age of three. I remember a big, heavy box with a handle, and boxes of large, round plastic disks. I was trained to open the big box, then open the box with plastic disks, then how to put the plastic disk onto a round thing with a little pole, and finally how to set the arm thingy onto the plastic disk, and finally how to flip a switch and start the contraption... Magic! Stories from around the world transported me into places I had never been—I had traveled as far as my front yard, or to the barn where the horses were, to church, or to Grandma's house. An epiphany occurred, a bright light shown from on high, and I gushed forward with a torrent of "why" questions.

A timer had to be set for my new machine, and I had to learn the language of the part of the machine. "Talking Book," "record," "ON/OFF," "needle arm," and other vocabulary became familiar. If it were not for the dreaded timer, I would have stood in front of the stand that held my machine for hours. So, being curious and wanting to learn all that I could, I began my career of experimentation. I learned that if I put my pointer finger on the disk and helped it move faster, I could read much more in my allotted time, at least until my mom caught me. Then to my parent's chagrin, I found the speed lever—I bet they wished they could have hidden that part from me. Our living room sounded like a very high-speed chipmunk!

As the years rolled by, I learned of a new way to read my Talking Books. A real genius invented the cassette tape, and a player that was smaller and easier to transport. I found the speed button on that machine too! I made an even greater discovery involving putting masking tape in the little holes on the back of the cassette, given me much more room for books, music, and other recordings, much to the annoyance of my teachers. At a very tender young age I learned accountability for my actions—my cassette player was impounded for a period of time, leaving my reading adventures in limbo—three days is a long time when you are ten years old!

In my adulthood I am still a voracious reader. I now read digitally on my phone, computer, braille notetaker, and any other device known to humanity. I can now multi-task by reading in one ear (Bluetooth air pod), and use my other ear for my screen reader, or my fingers for my braille display—occasionally I do slip and put a statement from my book into the report I am writing—not sure if that is my advanced age or not.... Of course, need you ask, I listen at the fastest rate I possibly can! No longer do I have my mom to set my reading timer, nor set the boundaries, so I use a digital accountability partner known as Alexa (Eco Dot-Amazon).

There is not time here, but I have wonderful stories about dreaming that my papers could type themselves, or that I could sleep on my books and absorb all the information.

Reading has taken me from a three-year-old on a little farm to lands all over the world, both figuratively and literally. I will always be grateful to the genius' behind advancing audio reading. I, as many do, use my listening along with braille, and a little survival print. To all of the librarians who put up with me, especially during my formative years, thank you, and I truly hope your nerves are now settled a bit.

Chapter Updates

Dakotas AER Chapter

An exciting professional development opportunity is available through a collaboration with the University of South Dakota (USD) Deaf-Blind Program and the National Center on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB). Existing NCDB Open Hands, Open Access online training modules have been aligned with CEC competencies for educators. This has resulted in some change in content and assignments as well as the development of a new course for educators on assessment and intervention strategies. These four courses provide educators with a concentration in Deaf-Blindness and the opportunity for continuing education or 3 graduate level credits per course from the University of South Dakota. The attached infographic provides you with information related to a summary of the past two semesters. This summer, course 2 (Deaf-Blind Communication Strategies) and course 4 (Life Planning for Success: Deaf-Blind Strategies) will be offered.

If you are interested in joining, check out the USD Center for Disabilities training page and look for registration information once it is posted:

<https://www.usd.edu/medicine/center-for-disabilities/deaf-blind-program/concentration-in-deaf-blindness-and-high-intensity>.

If you have any additional questions, please contact Brandy Sebera at Brandy.Sebera@usd.edu

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

Deadline for Registration Submission is March 19, 2021

Kentucky AER Chapter

Registration is Now Open: Kentucky AER Annual Conference: Today, Tomorrow, Together

March 3, 2021

For more information and to register, visit <https://forms.gle/MGS1GEWgxwze9ia47>

Michigan AER Chapter

Michigan AER Conference: Motivation. Access. Excellence. Resilience

April 22-23, 2021

Contact michiganaer@gmail.com for more information

Northern Rockies AER Chapter

Save The Date! The Northern Rockies AER Chapter Conference will be held virtually on October 26-28, 2021. Stay tuned for more information.

Northeast AER Chapter

Northeast AER Annual Conference: Mystical Connections 2021

Mystical Connections will be held at the Hilton in beautiful Mystic, CT. The committee has some exciting activities planned as well as informative sessions. If you are interested in submitting a session proposal, we are accepting proposals until Spring 2021.

The Call for Papers can be found at: <https://www.nercve.org/ne/aer-2020-conference>.

AER Member Spotlight

Meet AER member, Richard Vanover, who joined us in 2020!



Richard Vanover, member since November 2020

My name is Richard Vanover. I am 40 years old and currently living in Tempe, Arizona. I will be moving to Riverside, California after the new year. I've lived all over the United States, as well as in South America, in Colombia. I have a B.A. from Gallaudet University in Communications, and a M.S. in Information Technology from Capella University. I currently am an Assistive Technology Specialist, working with DeafBlind and those with combined vision and hearing loss. I also serve as a commissioner on the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing board as well as Treasurer of Arizona Association of the Deaf.

I am currently completing Masters in Orientation and Mobility at Western Michigan University, I will be completing my internship by the end of the year. I plan to work as an Orientation and Mobility Specialist in Southern California, also utilizing my background in Assistive Technology. I have been involved in the DeafBlind community in Arizona since I moved back to Phoenix back in 2007.

While I will miss my Arizona community, I am looking forward to the next chapter of my life in Southern California and making an impact there.

Meet AER member, Rennie Maki, who joined us in 1998!



Rennie Maki, TVI and COMS

Rennie Snapshots of 42 years of teaching. Looking back at times, places, and experiences that stand out in my memory. In 1972, graduating from Northern Michigan University with a B.S. degree in Elementary Education. My first position was teaching 2nd grade in the Florida Keys and living on a houseboat. In 1983, attending Northern Arizona University and completing their Early Childhood Master of Arts Program. At that time, I was teaching kindergarten on the Navajo Reservation in New Mexico and living in the teacherage with my year-old son. In 2000, teaching resource in Wyoming and completing the Master's

Program for Teachers of Students with Vision Impairment at the University of Northern Colorado. That same year, I was certified by ACVREP to be a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist. Working with students with vision impairment made me grateful for past training and experiences helping me meet the wide variety of needs of individual with vision

impairments. Northern Rockies AER was my community and support. I held the NRAER offices of President, Past President, and Treasurer. In 2015, I retired from the school district, but recertified to work with student's at BOCES and consult with programs within Wyoming. In 2020, my recertification was made possible by Perkins, and the webinars, which were AER and ACVREP's response to the needs of their teachers during the pandemic. Thank you!

Welcome AER New Members who Joined in February

Join us in welcoming the newest members, who joined AER in February 2021. We are so glad to have you! [New AER 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:

TVI Team Leader

Future In Sight, Concord (Across the state of NH), New Hampshire

Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments

State of Montana: School for the Deaf and the Blind, Great Falls, Montana

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. Deadline for the April issue is 3/26/2020.

