

The AER Voice



Welcome to the December 2021 Issue of AER The Voice

Volume 3, Issue 12

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

2021 wraps up with the usual holiday festivities and a new challenge for AER in 2022. I hope you are able to spend time, either in-person or virtually, with family and friends this holiday season and that taking some well-deserved time off to recharge your batteries and prepare for the New year fits into your plans

AER is ready to launch the search for a new Executive Director. We are establishing the Search Committee at our December 3rd Board meeting, from member applicants who want to serve our association in this important work. Soon after, the committee will be charged and those interested in applying to be AER's Executive director will be sought. This process was begun in 2020 but had to be rethought and redesigned, which took longer than any of us would have liked. We had an excellent Interim Executive Director in Mark Richert, so the sense of urgency was greatly diminished, frankly. With Mark's departure (you can see his farewell message in this issue of The Voice) we are well-positioned to find our next Executive Director in the Spring of 2022.

I want you all to know that Mark has worked incredibly hard over the past 20 months to position AER for success. Keep in mind that the staff also worked very hard alongside him, and will continue to do so as he takes on his new role at Overbrook School for the Blind. He cares deeply about this organization and our field. His creativity and strategic positioning for operating AER have us in a good place to begin 2022 with hope and enthusiasm for an International Conference that will bring us together again, finally. Mark, thank you for all you have done and for what I know you will continue to do to serve our field and those we serve in meaningful and marvelous ways in the future.

I will be working closely with staff to operate AER as we search for a new Executive Director. If I can help you, your Chapter, or your Division, please reach out. Thank you for being a member, thank you for bringing new members into the fold and...

May the Peace of the Season be with you all, now and throughout the New year.

Neva Fairchild, President, AERBVI

Celebrating our First Year and Looking Forward to 2022!

It's hard to believe, but the AER eLearning Center has been around for just about one year already! Reflecting on all that we've accomplished this year, I realize that the eLearning Center is the vibrant and comprehensive professional development platform it is because of our tremendous presenter volunteers and community. When the 2020 conference was canceled, so many of you stepped up to present live over Zoom or to prerecord your session for us to learn from even though we couldn't physically be together. We continued to grow our library of courses through partnerships with Divisions and Chapters who put together programming for their respective members. We also held AER's first-ever three-day virtual event, the "[AER School Year Start Up Summer Camp](#)," which allowed us to get together for up to 12 sessions at discounted prices when purchased as a bundle. All these sessions are now being viewed daily and people around the country are earning their continuing education credits from home, the office, or wherever best works for them! We could not see the great success without you – we thank you!

To wrap up our inaugural year, AER members, staff, and community members will be holding a three-day [Year-End Celebration](#) from December 7-9, 2021! Throughout these three days, take part in a live panel webinar and check out our most popular programs. These are being offered as another bundle opportunity so that members and nonmembers alike can save on registration costs when purchased as a bundle!

Be sure to mark your calendar for upcoming our panel discussion:

The "[AER 2021 Year End Celebration Panel](#)" will be held on **December 8 at 7:00 pm** and will be **FREE** to attend live! Join the most viewed presenters as they discuss how to develop a presentation, techniques, and tips for visually impaired presenters and participants, and learn how to become a presenter yourself.

I want to thank you all for the tremendous support you've shown to the AER eLearning Center since its launch. AER is proud of our contributions to the field and so grateful to our membership for creating the important content to include for all! I'm looking forward to 2022 – more live programs, further developments within the AER eLearning Center, and of course, the Biennial International Conference!

Happy holidays all, and happy new year!

Megan Doty
Director of eLearning and Professional Development
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Consider AER!

This year, while making your end-of-year donation, consider supporting the Association for Education & Rehabilitation of the Blind & Visually Impaired (AER)! Your gift will honor the remarkable work being done by AER members and continue your commitment to your profession. Give a little or give a lot. Every gift is truly appreciated. Thank you for considering a gift to support the future of our field and those we serve.

[Click here to support AER!](#)

AER Office

The AER national office will be closed from December 24 through December 31. The staff will return to work on Monday, January 3.

We wish all of you a happy and safe holiday season.

The AER eLearning Center

In Case You Missed Them – Webinar Recordings Now Available to Earn CE Credit

Our AER eLearning Center has been very busy this fall with new offerings for CE credits. Check out some of the latest new recordings available at the links below:

[Reflections on Providing Low Vision Services to Persons with Albinism in Tanzania](#)

[The Impact of the Need for Closure for Students and Youth who are DeafBlind](#)

[Digital Accessibility Basics: Using Microsoft PowerPoint](#)

[Outdoor Sensory Efficiency Development with a Sprinkling of Technology](#)

[Why, When and How to Disclose A Visual Disability](#)

Looking for more? [Browse our growing library](#) of content to find just what you need.

Research Survey - TVIs

What's your why for becoming an educator for students with visual impairments? Everyone has their own unique story for how they found this profession and we want to hear your story!

We're recruiting teachers of students with visual impairments who graduated from U.S. university TVI programs between 2000-2021. You do not need to currently be a TVI to participate.

This anonymous survey will take about 10-20 minutes to complete. At the end of the survey participants can enter a raffle to be randomly selected for a \$25

gift card to Amazon or Target.

You can access the survey here <https://redcap.link/WhyTVI> Questions? Email rachel.schles@vanderbilt.edu

Perkins E-Learning

AER members receive a 20% discount on the total cost of Perkins self-paced tutorials. Each provides an opportunity to enhance your knowledge, skills and abilities, and job performance! AER members only may use the voucher code 20aer20 to take advantage of this member benefit and earn CE hours. Click here to get started: [Perkins Discounts](#)

Instructions: Select the tutorial. Add to your cart and when checking out enter code 20AER20 in the Voucher Box. Enter re-calculate and the discount will appear.

On the next screen, sign in (if you already have an account with Perkins Learning Center or Register if you do not yet have a Perkins Learning Center account.

On the final page, enter your AER member number in the Phone Number field. Your AER member number will be verified. If you encounter any problems or have any questions, please email perkins.elearning@perkins.org.

FAREWELL AND A NEW BEGINNING

Very dear AER members and friends,

Twenty years ago this month, the then AER Board of Directors, so ably led by President Billy Brookshire, invited me to be your Executive Director. I have always been so grateful for that expression of trust and confidence. I was so young, I thought I knew everything but had more to learn than I could've possibly imagined, and I was so excited to be your champion on the issues of the day at that time. And then life happened, I lost a lot of weight and put it all back on and then some, I kept being one of our field's champions alongside so many amazing accomplished colleagues and friends, and as the song goes, I "wandered off to find where demons dwell." And then this amazing thing happened. At what was arguably the lowest point ever in my life, I got a call saying that you needed me. Really? You mean it? Are you sure you meant to call me?

It was a tough time for AER too. AER and a much-loved colleague and friend of ours unexpectedly parted professional company, the COVID craziness kicked in, and all of us felt our anxieties and fears go through the roof. AER had to give up on its single most significant revenue generator, namely our 2020 Biennial International Conference, and most importantly, we all had to give up the one thing that AER members and friends have always prized most highly, namely human touch and personal and professional connection. What frightening days.

But working together, and especially in partnership with my friend and our President, Neva Fairchild, and your current Board of Directors who I know have your best interests always uppermost in their minds, we turned a bunch of things around. Heaven knows there's tons more to do, but wow, is AER ever in a better place, arguably better than it has been in recent memory. And I do have to say that, while I am not one to be very tribal in my loyalties, I just think there's something particularly special about AER coming through all the challenges even stronger while being co-led, for the first time in AER's history, by a totally blind chief volunteer officer and a totally blind chief staff officer. Go team! It's been a ton of tough work and also a ton of fun to show everyone in our field just how it's done!

But life is always about moving on and meeting new challenges and learning to embrace change, and that time has now come for me. You'll see below what's next on my professional horizon, and I'm not ashamed to say that I am so off-the-charts thrilled about what's happening next. But I want to state what I hope you already know to be self-evident: AER is in fabulous hands, and AER's best days lay ahead for sure. After my last day on Friday, December 31, Michele Basham, your Associate Executive Director, will be pressing ahead in full partnership with your Board leaders to tackle all manner of things, not the least of which will be the ongoing planning for what promises to be the best biennial conference ever. And of course, you hopefully also know that the Board is moving forward with a search for your next permanent Executive Director.

People have asked me so many times over these last twenty months whether I wanted to stay on in the Director role, and I have consistently told them what I'm about to tell you: AER is amazing, I of course want to believe that I would be of meaningful use to you in this role, but honestly change is also a very good thing. I've now been your ED twice, and you and I have truly made history together, but maybe there are even higher mountains to climb and worlds to conquer that require bunches of skills that someone else might have in spades. As your Board moves ahead with the ED search, we'll all be learning more about the profound needs that have been identified and the type of leader our elected leaders believe would be best suited for the job. And now, I am looking forward to holding the best office I know in AER, namely the office of the rank-and-file member who learns from smarter colleagues and on occasion has pretty cool ideas to share and volunteer hours to offer.

I am certain that Neva and our Board leaders will have more to say about the weeks and months ahead, but please do be assured that AER is in tremendously capable staff hands. And honestly, while I am over the moon about my new professional gig, easily the hardest part for me about parting company with AER now involves my needing to give up the day-after-day partnership with three ladies whom I have come to love like family.

First, there's my fun, brilliant and wise aunt, Elly, who, by any measure, has transformed the accreditation function in our field and, in very short order, has matured AER's role in our community as the guardian of program standards. Elly, congratulations, thank you for your spectacular leadership, and thank you for joining me on this wild ride; you are a blessing.

And then we come to my favorite niece and all-around rock star, Megan, whom so many of you have come to know and love along with the rest of us as

Megan has so adroitly led the buildout of AER's first ever robust continuing education platform. Thanks to Megan, AER is offering more member benefits and more support directly to our chapters and divisions than AER has maybe ever made possible before. Megan, you are a gem; you are most definitely going places young lady, but just please don't break our hearts and go to any of those places any time soon.

And then, well, what can I possibly say about my sister from another mother, Michele. She is so faithful to you and such an incomparable and reliable colleague; I don't really think most folks in AER fully appreciate her contributions to the daily, and indeed hour by hour, operation of our beloved professional association. Michele, I'm honestly not sure I can write anything here that would do you justice. And this too must be said: If it really was necessary in those first several months when I came on board that I should have to run through Hell, for all of my life, I will be so deeply thankful that I was on your elbow. Putting it simply, and to interpolate the lyrics from one of your favorite tunes, there's not "a million trillion things I'd rather #*&\$ do" than to have had your partnership, your advice, your correction, and your faithful friendship during these twenty months.

As for me, well, you'll see below what's going to be holding my attention in the times to come. But if you want to know just exactly what and how I'm thinking and feeling about AER right now, have a listen to this song that is one of my all-time favorites.

[Cara Dillon - I Am a Youth That's Inclined to Ramble](#)

Mark Richert, Interim Executive Director
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CHAPTER UPDATES

Georgia AER Chapter

Georgia AER has scheduled our 2021-2022 Conference! This year we are joining forces with the Georgia Vision Educators Statewide Training (GVEST) to host a virtual two-day conference. The next session day will be on **Friday, March 11, 2022**.

We will offer concurrent sessions that will be recorded so attendees will have the ability to earn up to 21 CEU credits (ACVREP and CRC). The two-day conference is \$75 with a discount to all AER members at the rate of \$50.

Learn more by visiting gaaer.org or gvest.org website.

Kentucky AER 2022 Annual Conference Back to Berea

We invite you to share your knowledge, skills, and creativity at the 2022 KAER Conference! We are looking for presenters with various backgrounds that will give insight into technology, K-12 education, vocational rehabilitation, early

childhood, orientation and mobility, serving individuals with multiple or severe disabilities, DeafBlindness, or other topics related to working with those who are blind or visually impaired.

Due to Covid continuing to be a concern for our state, this conference may be held virtually instead of in person.

Selection:

Conference session proposals will be chosen based on the following criteria:

- Does the topic present a practical application and demonstrate effectiveness for the education or rehabilitation of visually impaired individuals?
- Is the topic important and relevant to the needs of blind or visually impaired individuals or the professionals who serve blind and visually impaired?
- Does the topic provide significant or innovative ideas or research findings that bring fresh insight or approaches?
- Does the topic present a new or expanded perspective, practice, program, or innovation?
- Has the topic been presented at a recent KAER conference?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the submission process, please feel free to contact Janell Turner, KAER Past President, JanellK.Turner@ky.gov (Members)

WELCOME TO THE NEWEST AER MEMBERS!

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

[Adaptive Technology Instructor](#)

Goodwill of the Finger Lakes – Vision Services, Rochester, New York

[Orientation & Mobility Therapist](#)

Goodwill of the Finger Lakes – Vision Services, Rochester, New York

[Children and Youth Coordinator Phoenix](#)

Saavi Services for the Blind, Phoenix, Arizona

[Access Technology Instructor](#)

Saavi Services for the Blind, Tucson, Arizona

[Youth Services Vision Specialist \(Part-time\)](#)

Cincinnati Assn for the Blind & Visually Impaired, Cincinnati, Ohio

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 them to AER at

news@aerbvi.org.

The deadline for the January issue is 12/15/2021.



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