

AERWaves

Northern Rockies AER 2022 Winter Newsletter

Who we are

The Northern Rockies Chapter of AER is the most active professional organization in the states of Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming serving the workers of the blind and visually impaired. The chapter has a history that is even older than the national AER organization.

The organization serves as an educational and social outlet for many teachers, rehab counselors, and other workers for the blind. Serving in these positions in rural states can be a demanding and lonely job and does not often lend itself to an opportunity to network or compare notes with other professionals in the field. That's where we come in. The Northern Rockies Chapter provides annual meetings as well as newsletters to update the members on activities in the region.

Who can join? Anyone!! The organization has attracted teachers of the VI, paraprofessionals, rehab counselors, administrators, consumers, and parents. The Chapter offers continuing education opportunities every year in order to renew or obtain certification in working with VI. Ours is not a cold or detached group but one of family where we know each other as individuals and friends. You can find a membership form under membership at this website or the national office at [aerbvi.org](https://aerbvi.org/about/chapters/northern-rockies/home/). <https://aerbvi.org/about/chapters/northern-rockies/home/>

NRAER Chapter Awards 2021

By: Barb Peterson, NRAER Board Member

The NRAER Chapter Awards were awarded this year to the following for their hard work in supporting students in the tri-state area who are blind or have visual impairments. This year was a very special year in that we had two individuals nominated for the Frank Smith Award. Both nominees were so fantastic and equally deserving. The Chapter membership cast their votes and the results of the poll for the Frank Smith Award was a tie vote! The NRAER Chapter Board chose to recognize and award both nominees which was both unprecedented and so very, very awesome!

H. Smith Shumway Award – given to the person who has provided an exceptional level of support to the NRAER Chapter. Nominees must be members of the NRAER Chapter.

Awarded to: Amy Tangen – Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind

Frank Smith Award – given to the person who has done the most for the blind in the tri-state region. Nominees can be chapter members or other individuals who are active in the field.

Awarded to: Jeanne-Marie Kopecky – Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind

Awarded to: Carol Clayton-Bye – Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind

Community Partner Award – given to an organization that has provided or sponsored programs for the blind in the tri-state area.

Awarded to: Lions Club of Montana

Congratulations to all NRAER Chapter Award winners 2021!



Picture description: Jeanne-Marie Kopecky, Amy Tangen & Carol Clayton-Bye dressed in semi-formal clothing, standing in front of colored flags holding their award plaques.

MSDB and Montana Lions Partner Together



MONTANA
SCHOOL *for the*
Deaf & Blind

giving kids the building blocks to independence



Idaho News

Hello from Idaho! My name is Tina Johnson, and this is my second year as the NRAER Idaho State Representative. I am a TVI and working towards O&M certification. I work for Idaho Educational Services for the Deaf and the Blind as an outreach consulting teacher in the northern region of Idaho. Let me tell you about a few exciting activities that are happening in Idaho:

Who's Who in Idaho!

Alison Stevens facilitates monthly meetings for a community of practice in Idaho. Members include TVIs, COMS, and the regional BVI director from IESDB, staffing from the Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually impaired (ICBVI), AT specialist, and TVIs from school districts. In past meetings, Alison has invited speakers from the Helen Keller Center and encourages the community to share and collaborate with each other in the interest of our students, especially for transitional students. This month the community explored *I'm Determined* as presented by John McNaught who was a keynote speaker at 2021 Idaho Transition Institute. The focus was on *The Good Day Plan* which can help students to map out what a good day would look like and use this map as a guide to get back to having a good day in case their day takes a turn otherwise. Having a good day helps students to become self-determined, accountable, and feel connected. See embedded video posted below.

Idaho Winter Camp

IESDB and Gooding Elks Lodge are hosting a four-day Winter Camp near Sun Valley in February. This camp is offered, free of charge, for 12–18-year-old students with visual impairments. Campers will enjoy outdoor activities such as tandem snowmobile rides, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, and tubing by day and then warm up next to a wood fire and friendly conversation by night. There is even a dance party planned for the last evening of camp! Little do the campers know, but components of Expanded Core Curriculum are embedded in camp activities (snicker).

Work Readiness Summer Camp

IESDB and ICBVI are partnering to provide a Work Readiness Summer Camp at Boise State University to be held in June. This four-day camp provides students ages 14-15 with a variety of opportunities that gear them up for the world of employment, understanding the benefits of teamwork, and

engaging them with fellow students to learn independent living skills. Students need to be clients of ICBVI and will be housed in BSU dorms. This camp is also free of charge for the campers.

Secondary Transition Institute: Keynote Speaker Dr John McNaught (11/3/21)



Idaho Assistive Technology for All!

Idaho.at4all is a service of the Idaho Assistive Technology Project, in partnership with many other participating programs around the state of Idaho. Find a variety of used equipment available for sale, free, to borrow or to see demonstrated.

Montana News

Hello from Montana and the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind! Professionals across our state continue to meet the challenges of not only great distances to travel but the ongoing pandemic. Montana School for Deaf and Blind has a fully staffed and highly qualified Department (on campus and outreach) serving students and children from birth and beyond. Most recently, our Life Skills, Employment, Academics and Post-High School Program (LEAP) is up and running. This program supports students post-secondary who are working towards goals for independent living, job exploration and post-secondary education. This program works in conjunction with Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Blind and Low Vision division. Blind and Low Vision division of Montana continues to serve individuals in Montana in their Pre-ETS program as well as adults with visual impairments.

Montana Blind and Low Vision Services retirees:

There are some terrific professionals in at BLVS who will be moving on to new horizons as they retire. Please send happy wishes to Cindy Dye (Orientation and mobility specialist in the Billings region), Diane Gray (Vision Rehabilitation Therapist) and Mark O'Brian (Orientation and Mobility Specialist in the Missoula region).

If any of these positions sound interesting please visit:

Orientation and Mobility Specialist in

Billings: <https://mtstatejobs.taleo.net/careersection/200/jobdetail.ftl?job=21143394&tz=GMT-07%3A00&tzname=America%2FDenver>

Orientation and Mobility Specialist in Missoula:

<https://mtstatejobs.taleo.net/careersection/200/jobdetail.ftl?job=21142769&tz=GMT-07%3A00&tzname=America%2FDenver>

Vision Rehabilitation Therapist in Missoula:

<https://mtstatejobs.taleo.net/careersection/200/jobdetail.ftl?job=21142769&tz=GMT-07%3A00&tzname=America%2FDenver>

Summer Orientation Program of 2022

The Montana Association for the Blind will be holding its Summer Orientation Program for blind/visually-impaired adults (SOP) in Billings June 13-July 9. This program offers classes in orientation and mobility, daily living, computer, braille, low vision equipment and more! Plus, this program is held at no cost to Montana residents (out of state tuition paid opportunities are considered). MT MAB is seeking instructors for the SOP programs. If you are interested please contact mabdirector@mabsop.org.

NFB of Montana

The National Federation of Blind Montana Chapter at Large meets by conference call the second Thursday of each month at 6:00 PM.

Montana news shared by:

Sharon Woods, M.Ed. TVI/COMS/ASDVI-DB

NRAER Montana Representative

Montana Dog Guide Group

The Montana Dog Guide Group (MDGG) is a support group for visually impaired or blind individuals who currently use dog guides, those considering getting a dog guide, family members of individuals that use a dog guide + more.

Wyoming News - What's happening in Wyoming?

CVI Bookstudy

We are through the first half of the school year and Wyoming Vision Outreach Services has some exciting happenings across the state. During the COVID shutdowns in the Spring of 2020, we were prompted to virtually support our TVIs and COMS across the state as they suddenly were catapulted to rethinking how to provide services to their students in a virtual environment. This began a statewide quarterly TVI/COMS Zoom forum.

From the forum and listening to the needs of the group, this year, has brought an enriching online book study of the book *Vision and the Brain, Understanding Cerebral Visual Impairment in Children* by Amanda Hall Lueck & Gordon N. Dutton, editors. This group meets bi-monthly to discuss the reading

and share each individual's application of the new skills and knowledge. The response has been positive and participants have been actively engaged in rich discussion.

Transition Services for Students ages 14-21

This year, Wyoming students are benefiting from an Interagency endeavor between Wyoming Vision Outreach Services and Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. Through grant funding provided by DVR, VOS was able to hire an independent contractor to work with us in engaging all 48 school districts in the state to take a deeper look at the transition services being provided to our students who are blind or visually impaired, including students who are college and career bound and those who have more complex needs.

This is an effort to better support and ensure that the 9 components of the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) for Blind and visually impaired (B/VI) are being incorporated into student IEPs and that students are obtaining the important post secondary skills that they will need for future success once they leave the public school setting. As part of this great work, monthly web trainings for the second half of this school year are in the works, as well as an on-site two day training in June that will have two, one day tracts. One that is geared at supporting staff and teams working with students with complex needs that include B/VI and one for staff and teams working with career and college track students. Any NRAER members interested in attending the web trainings or the on-site training (one or both days), please email Leslie at leslie.vanorman@wyo.gov.

Adult Services

In an effort to find ways to improve our services to adult clients, we are continuing to have rich discussions covering a variety of informative topics during our monthly teleconference adult forums. Additionally, we have also created mini vision kits that we are using as a promotional item to build referral connections with other community agencies. The kits include some basic items such as bump dots, signature guide, bold line pens, to then leave with senior centers, local librarians and other community agencies that tend to serve our adult clients and could be a referral point. Through this, it is our hope to establish long-term partnerships that enable other agencies to provide some very basic support and build a connection to then point individuals with vision needs to the more in-depth services provided through VOS.

Wyoming news shared by:

Jennifer R. D'Alessandro

Educational Consultant, Vision Outreach Services

Special Education Unit

NRAER Wyoming Representative

NEW.....Retiree Recognition.....A BIG THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE!!!!

As a board, it was unanimously decided to recognize our prized & dedicated retirees. If you are planning on retiring this year or we missed your retirement, please share with one of our board members to receive proper recognition.



Picture description: Ken McCulloch and Renni Maki standing in front of a colored flag. Ken's arm around Renni while displaying their retirement pins.

SAVE THE DATE: 2022 Northern Rockies AER Conference

When

Wednesday, Oct. 19th, 12pm to Friday, Oct. 21st, 12pm

Where

Great Falls, MT, USA Great Falls, MT

More information

Conference details in the works

Current NDAER Board members

Leslie Van Orman - President
Bruce Breslauer - Past President
Barb Peterson - President Elect
Jocelyn DeHaas - Treasurer
Kerri Norick - Secretary
Brian Darcy - Parliamentarian
Suzie Mahon - Social Media Coordinator
Tina Johnson - Idaho Representative
Jennifer D'Alessandro - Wyoming Representative
Sharon Woods - Montana Representative

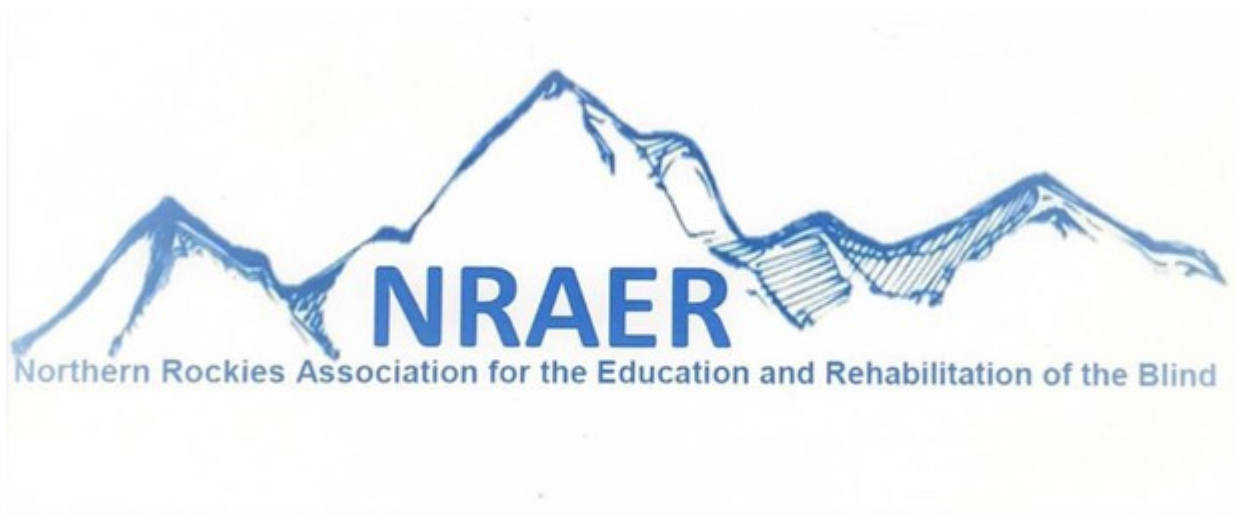
Interested in becoming a part of the NRAER board?

What? 2022 Elections in Great Falls

Why? The purpose of elections shall be to determine by a majority vote the following officers of the Chapter: president-elect, secretary, state representatives, social media coordinator and parliamentarian.

When? Each board position serves a two year term. (The treasurer position is up for election every 3 years.)

How? Please submit your nomination or interest to run for election to Leslie Van Orman at leslie.vanorman@wyo.gov



NRAER Chapter Website - Check us out!

Stayed connected! To join AER contact the national membership office at (877) 492-2708, or look online at www.aerbvi.org.

NRAER Facebook Page

Join our Facebook group page to stay up to date with the latest on social media!

Braille Challenge 2022

Please share your students efforts in this year's braille challenge by posting to NRAER Facebook page!