

**Winter 2024 Volume 27 No. 1**

Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired

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From The Chair:

Happy New Year O&M Division!

As you consider options for professional activities this year, I hope you will think about involvement with division leadership. We will be holding elections starting in March for division officers, District Directors, a Student Representative, and Nominating and Elections committee members. Descriptions can be found in the [policies and procedures manual](https://www.aerbvi.org/assets/docs/OMDivisionPP2020.docx), but please note that this document is being revised and will be finalized in January. The notable change is the combining of secretary and treasurer into one position. The revised manual will be provided after it is approved by the Executive Committee. Several positions do not require a large time commitment during the term. District Director and Secretary/Treasurer positions are a two-year term from July 2024-2026, the Student Representative serves for one year, and the chair-elect position is a six-year commitment progressing after two years to chair and then to past chair. Having completed three and a half years, I feel like the time has gone very quickly and that the roles of chair-elect and chair have been positive experiences. Maybe you would prefer to get involved with your local [chapter](https://www.aerbvi.org/aer-chapters), or with one of [AER International’s committees](https://www.aerbvi.org/aer-committees). However you participate, involvement is needed for our profession to thrive!

Notifications will come out over the next few months about elections and about [O&M division awards](https://www.aerbvi.org/division_o-m). Please consider nominating a colleague for recognition by the division, or encouraging a colleague to consider running for a leadership position or joining a committee. Please contact us at aeromdivision@gmail.com with any questions.

Best wishes for a wonderful 2024!

Raychel Callary

**Updates from Districts**

**District 4:**

Happy New Year!

Conference season has passed up here with wonderful conferences held in Portland Maine and Saratoga New York for NE/AER O&Mers. Congratulations to Andrew Eagan as he retains his O&M division chair.

In New York the O&M Interest Group has a Zoom Meeting on January 22, 2024 at 6:00 pm. No link was available but keep checking the NY/AER website <https://www.nysaer.org> or email newyorkstateaer@gmail.com for more information.

Congrats to the NEAER Awards Winners:

**Excellence for Direct Service to Children**:  Nancy Moulton

**Excellence for Direct Service to Children**:  Tammie Reisman

**Robert McCulley Rising Star**:  Michaela Cowgill

**Thomas Carroll**:  Lauren Goldsmith

**Team Award**: MCB/DDS Partnership Program

**Carroll Center for the Blind:** Nancy Sharon, Christy Andronaco, Janet Bentley, Steve Betterley, Lelia Couzyn, Demetra Edwards, Jillian Ellis, Bianca Fillion, Brianne Killoran, Joseph Kolb, Jennifer Lucht, Jill Suarez, Amanda Wood.

**Department of DD Services Vision and Vision Loss Services**: Lisa DiBonaventura, Georgia Wattendorf-Guiney.

**MAB Community Services:** Stephen Jordan, Tetiana Kumar, Sara Munger, Karleese Nichols, Jacob Thistle

**Massachusetts Commission for the Blind**: Allyson Bull, Karin Barrows, Michael Dionne, Michela Meaney, Kara Peters

**Shriver Clinical Services**: Lisa DiBonaventura, Maureen Coyle, Kathleen Kenney Karen Leger, Sara Salvado

Carroll Center for the Blind will be hosting a **Virtual New England Regional Braille Challenge on** January 20, 2024, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm and an **In-Person New England Regional Braille Challenge:**February 3, 2024 9:00 am – 3:00 pm. Please share the following link with your students and families! [**New England Regional Braille Challenge Registration Link**](https://forms.gle/V4XsfvQkoNh4q57v9)

Finally, I will be the Donald Blasch Scholarship chair for 2024. As I learn the process I will be looking for committee members to aid in reviewing the scholarship applications.

 Eric L Shaw, M.Ed District 4

 Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired

 Teacher of the Visually Impaired, Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist

 Statewide Consultant for Orientation and Mobility

 877-350-8839x14 eshaw@vabvi.org

**District 5:** Georgia had a successful Cane Quest day on October 27th. It was our first in person Cane Quest and plans are underway for next year!

Tennessee reports of shortages in the state for both children and adult services.

Mississippi AER’s (MAER) Recent Accomplishments in Random Order:

We became a 501c3 organization.

We congratulated the Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and Blind on winning the prestigious **2023 Cognia Values Driven Award**.

The May 24, 2023 Biloxi Shuckers baseball game was dedicated to VI.

MAER supported the MS Disability MegaConference on June 6-7, 2023 at the Hilton in Jackson.

MAER recognized the new Braille Trail at the botanic gardens near 2232 Spillway Road in Brandon, MS.

MAER partners with The Lion’s Club of MS, Mississippi School for the Blind in Jackson, Mississippi Hearing-Vision Project, Family First Braille, Camp Kamassa in Crystal Springs [Mississippi’s Toughest Kids](https://nam11.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fcampkamassa.com%2F&data=05%7C02%7Ckevin.mccormack%40ksb.kyschools.us%7Cd4a8517968584a49e11d08dbfda0e4a2%7C9360c11f90e64706ad0025fcdc9e2ed1%7C0%7C0%7C638382642843381171%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=01M3ec8VhfwUpVP%2FQ1O3eWJUtrljJcqKITj%2FzAxv%2Fhg%3D&reserved=0), The Lion’s Club Sea and Sun Camp in Biloxi, [https://seaandsuncamp.com/](https://nam11.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fseaandsuncamp.com%2F&data=05%7C02%7Ckevin.mccormack%40ksb.kyschools.us%7Cd4a8517968584a49e11d08dbfda0e4a2%7C9360c11f90e64706ad0025fcdc9e2ed1%7C0%7C0%7C638382642843381171%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=Bm6fdAgf5NnIu256i3t8V6ee8m%2BsLCe5NK4i6uJoqKw%3D&reserved=0), MS Renaissance Festival in Gulfport, Family First Braille in writing the *MS Resource Guide for People with VI.*

Congrats to:

Board member Susan Schiller successfully passed all 12 domains of the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor exam.

Board member Tyler Griffin was awarded Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and Blind’s 2022-23 Employee of the Year.

Board president Jane D. Harty successfully completed all 24 Open Hands, Open Access modules offered by the MS Hearing-Vision Project through the Center on Deaf-Blindness.

MAER held our first in-person conference since 2019 in October 2023 at the Marine Education Center in Biloxi.

**Kevin McCormack, PhD, COMS District 5**

Kentucky Statewide Orientation and Mobility/Assistive Technology Consultant kevin.mccormack@ksb.kyschools.us 502-897-1583 ext. 6106

**Environmental Access Committee Updates**

Eight EAC members will be attending the Transportation Research Board Meetings in Washington DC at the beginning of January, to advocate for better access for pedestrians with vision loss to the public rights-of-way. The TRB Annual Meeting attracts thousands of transportation professionals from around the world. The program covers all transportation modes, with sessions and workshops addressing topics of interest to policy makers, administrators, practitioners, researchers, and representatives of government, industry, and academic institutions.

<https://www.nationalacademies.org/event/806_01-2024_trb-annual-meeting>.

Some EAC members will also be attending the **National Committee on Uniform TCDs Annual Meeting,** January 10–12, 2024 in Arlington, VA, after the TRB meetings (<https://ncutcd.org>). The National Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (NCUTCD) or the “National Committee” is an organization whose purpose is to assist in the development of standards, guides, and warrants for traffic control devices and practices used to regulate, warn, and guide traffic on streets and highways.  The NCUTCD recommends to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and to other appropriate agencies proposed revisions and interpretations to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) and other accepted national standards.  NCUTCD develops public and professional awareness of the principles of safe traffic control devices and practices and provides a forum for qualified individuals with diverse backgrounds and viewpoints to exchange professional information.​

Please check back in the next newsletter for updates from these meetings.

**Orientation and Mobility Updates**

Did you have a 2023 White Cane Day Event? Please send your successes, ideas, etc., to share in this newsletter. For additional planning ideas for 2024 White Cane Day, on Tuesday October 15, go to the National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision [www.blind.msstate.edu](http://www.blind.msstate.edu/). The [Community Outreach Guide: How to Host a White Cane Awareness Day Celebration (October 15)](https://www.blind.msstate.edu/our-products/professional-resources#the-nrtc-community-outreach-guide-how-to-host-a-white-cane-awareness-day-celebration-october-15) will introduce you to the history of White Cane Awareness Day, provide inspiration for activities (from a signing ceremony to a large, public event), and offer general event tips to support you as you create a successful celebration.

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The Orientation & Mobility Specialist Association (OMSA) has developed a fund called “Pay It Forward” to support special projects to promote O&M. Funding is available up to $500.00 to an individual or group who could use some extra funding for a program or education**.** Some examplescould be conference registration fees, funds for an O&M field trip/activity, parents who need additional funding to help their child be more involved in the community, etc. Nominate a person or group by submitting a short video clip describing what your nominee will use the funding for. A winner will be selected and approved by the OMSA Membership Committee.

For more information on the eligibility criteria go to the website <https://www.usomsa.org> or email oandmassociation@gmail.com The deadline for submission is 1/15/2024, and funds will be awarded by 4/1/24.

**Conferences/Workshops/Webinars**

ADA National Network free **Accessible Powerpoints Webinar**: Thursday, January 18th, 2:00-3:30 PM ET **“**PowerPoint presentations accomplish the goal of facilitating effective communication, enhancing understanding, and creating a visually compelling platform for sharing information across various contexts. Learn how to design PowerPoint presentations that break down barriers and make information accessible to individuals of all abilities.”
[Learn More / Register for the Accessible PowerPoints Webinar](https://adata.us19.list-manage.com/track/click?u=d25e82521c232c8679b1458fb&id=6144bf8e96&e=a9ae967c89)

Orientation and Mobility Specialists Association is sponsoring a Zoom CE Opportunity: **O&M in the DeafBlind World** by Monica Godfrey-Lehrer, Thursday, February 8, 2024 7:00-8:30 PM EST Register [**here**](https://forms.gle/FSKKMyKXf5rMxFjA8)!

The **2024 AER International Conference** will be held in Charlotte, North Carolina at the Le Meridien/Sheraton Hotel, July 24-28, 2024. This will be the 40th anniversary of AER. Registration will be open in early 2024.

**DOT's Advisory Committee on Transportation Equity:**  The objective of the reestablished Committee is to provide advice and recommendations to the Secretary of Transportation on comprehensive, interdisciplinary issues related to transportation equity from a variety of stakeholders involved in transportation planning, design, research, policy, and advocacy in pursuit of the Department’s equity goals. The full agenda for the meetings can be found on the [DOT website](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDIsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsInVybCI6Imh0dHBzOi8vd3d3LnRyYW5zcG9ydGF0aW9uLmdvdi9jaXZpbC1yaWdodHMvYWN0ZS9tZWV0aW5naW5mby9sYXVuY2htZWV0aW5nIiwiYnVsbGV0aW5faWQiOiIyMDIzMTIyNy44NzY4MTMwMSJ9.62fY3NyulT3L7NWeVxwz3lyyaVeOoKulb7mErEn-Rio/s/3043337352/br/233833801255-l) and [here.](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDMsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsInVybCI6Imh0dHBzOi8vd3d3LnRyYW5zcG9ydGF0aW9uLmdvdi9zaXRlcy9kb3QuZ292L2ZpbGVzLzIwMjMtMTAvMjAyMy4xMS4wMy5EcmFmdCUyMEFDVEUlMjBNZWV0aW5nJTIwUHVibGljJTIwQWdlbmRhLnBkZiIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMzEyMjcuODc2ODEzMDEifQ.JCDNasb2LH3680F-VCKtwj1Nr4o47qFbM-ZnTEsCmfY/s/3043337352/br/233833801255-l) Go to the website to sign up for information to attend the meeting via Zoom.

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***Congratulations to:***

Massachusetts Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist Joe Kolb was recognized by Governor Maura Healey for his 40 years of dedicated service providing O&M services through the Carroll Center for the Blind. In addition to providing O&M services to many clients, he has mentored many O&Mers during his career.

Lukas Frank has officially retired from The Seeing Eye after over 40 years of service as a Guide Dog Mobility Instructor & COMS. He will continue his association with The Seeing Eye as a volunteer and as an advocate for environmental access for pedestrians with vision loss.

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***This and That***

Please share: The Smithsonian Seeks “User Experts” with Disabilities: The Smithsonian Institution’s Access Smithsonian program seeks individuals in Washington, DC and surrounding communities to join their User/Expert Advisory Group. User experts are people with disabilities who have developed expertise through their lived experience in dealing with the challenges of the environment. User experts review the usability and accessibility of physical environments, museum exhibitions, public programs, technologies, and services at Smithsonian Institution museums.

In addition, user experts assist in providing training on inclusivity and accessibility to Smithsonian staff, interns, and volunteers.

This User/Expert Advisory Group especially needs bilingual (English and Spanish-speaking) individuals who are blind or have low vision. Participants will be compensated for their time and contributions.

If you know of individuals who are interested in being a part of Access Smithsonian’s User Expert Advisory Group, please email access@si.edu or call 202-633-2921.

***The 2022-2024 Division Nine Executive Committee***

Chair: Raychel Callary Chair Elect: Maggie Winn

Past Chair: JoAnne Chalom Treasurer: Megann Brousard

Secretary: Valery Kircher Student Representative: Mickey Lorento

Email the Committee at aeromdivision@gmail.com

**District Directors**

**District 1: Angela Leavens** (Alaska, Alberta, Arizona, British Columbia, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, Northwest Territories, Wyoming, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Yukon Territories.)

**District 2: Shay Utley** (Arkansas, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Manitoba, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Saskatchewan, Texas)

**District 3: Jennifer Duncan** (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ontario, Wisconsin)

**District 4: Eric Shaw** (Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, New Hampshire, New York, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Quebec)

**District 5:** **Kevin McCormack** (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Puerto Rico, Tennessee)

**District 6**: **Tessa McCarthy** (Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virgin Islands, Virginia, West Virginia, Washington D.C.)

Email Newsletter editor Meg Robertson at Mobilitymeg@aol.com or at aeromdivision@gmail.com. Report any errors to the Newsletter Editor.

**Next newsletter deadline: March 1, 2024**

**Submissions are welcomed at any time!**