

**Winter 2023 Volume 26 No. 1**

Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired

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## **From the Chair:**

I hope you will join us for a virtual watercooler on Monday, January 23 from 7:00-8:00 pm EST. Meet your district director and the 2022-2024 officers, and learn about division activities and goals. We will discuss the recently-approved strategic plan and opportunities for involvement. You should have received a message from Michele at the AER office on January 4 with a link to register. If you did not receive this, you can check in with her at michele@aerbvi.org. We plan to host a few webinars and watercoolers throughout the year, and are planning opportunities for mentoring and for collaboration with other divisions.

The following position papers have been added to the [AER website](https://aerbvi.org/resources/publications/position-papers/). Four new papers were created to address topics in the field, and existing papers were revised. Position papers provide guidance and support on specific topics, and can be helpful when describing practices to administration. We are grateful to the authors and revisers, and to those who provided comments and voted.

* Teaching Orientation & Mobility Through Individual and Group Lessons
* Teaching Street Crossings at Streets and Lanes Where There is No Traffic Control
* Orientation & Mobility Assessments for Students in Education and Life Skills Settings
* Orientation & Mobility in Natural Environments
* University Personnel Preparation of Orientation & Mobility Specialists
* Teaching Street Crossings at Signalized Intersections
* Use of Visual Occlusion in Orientation & Mobility Instruction
* Remote Instruction for Orientation and Mobility
* Orientation and Mobility Specialist Roles, Responsibilities, and Qualifications
* O&M Specialists and the Provision of Travel Instruction to Individuals with Nonvisual Disabilities
* The Orientation and Mobility Specialist’s Role in Low Vision Driving

Thank you for your contributions to our profession. Please contact aeromdivision@gmail.com any time with questions, or if there is an issue you would like the division to address. Best wishes for a happy and productive 2023!

Raychel Callary, COMS

**District Director reports:**

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

Greetings to the New Year and the currently unpredictable weather that necessitates the use of ice cleats one day and the wearing of rain coats the next. Let’s get down to brass tacks (or spun nylon cane tips).

The Annual NE AER Conference was held October 26-28 in Westford, MA. We had three O&M specific presentations and some great fall weather to get out and about.  Andrew Egan and Cheryl Gagnon were elected co-chairs of NEAER Division 9. We would all like to thank outgoing chair Meg Robertson for her dedication and intense passion over the years.

NYS AER held their Annual Conference October 23-25 in East Syracuse. Keynote speaker L. Penny Rosenblum Ph.D. must have been fantastic! Election results for their Division 9 chair(s) yet so please reach out and let me know so that I can share that information. I wasn’t able to attend that conference but hope to hit it in 2023.

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

There is a [pilot program between Salus University and Vanderbilt where O&M training is given to physical therapists](https://news.vumc.org/2022/07/14/new-program-helps-low-vision-patients-more-safely-navigate-their-home-environments/).

Blind Early Services Tennessee (BEST) hosted their first BEST Fest / White Cane Day December 10th at The Factory in Franklin, TN. Families had a chance to participate in an educational experience for all ages that explored accessibility for persons with blindness and low vision that included immersive stations that simulated areas from daily living to street crossing through the perspective of a person with blindness.

There were multiple white cane day celebrations in Kentucky. Many students and adults who are blind or have low vision showed up at the Capitol building in Frankfort to work on advocacy and awareness among the state’s political leadership. The Kentucky School for the Blind had a white cane day celebration at a public park with games and dancing.

The Mississippi AER conference in October included two COMS presenters-- Carl Arredondo III and Erika Fundelius.

In Birmingham, AL, there was a celebration of White Cane Day on October 15. This event was coordinated by O&Ms from across the state.

In Puerto Rico, a qualitative study is in process where the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic will be analyzed in relation to people who are blind or have low vision.



**Environmental Access Committee Report**

Ten members of the EAC attended the Annual Transportation Research Board Meeting, held in Washington DC. The goal in attending this event is to represent pedestrians with vision loss and our profession on the impact of design to the public right of way environment. Different meetings we attend include the Pedestrian, Bicyclist, Landscaping and Design, and Traffic Control Devices committees. Any changes or updates we will bring back to present at local and national AER conferences and include in the next OM Newsletter.

The Transportation Cooperative Research Program/TCRP is seeking qualified individuals to serve as panel members on [**FY 2023 Projects**](https://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001Qc6xIhazF5NhFGcpowzmvA2D4X_v61HyFTCci5zMW2TeqMVcpBHIq104URrJeFxfCj5N-q5-EljdULoE09E_DogRIYa8KQ0r_CPo7PlF84E782Q1Ham-OFd9mSnBcwS1N8SeaD1CL9rQZB6-ZAfUPgFqLTKk2D-LoaNUEMTVHP-7Dp_FUIXba9jiCOjIWs2KPTJJyCqtBpE-EvkEnxjr1QmD9BL_1GH5&c=ljilHmdOOhBGViN9Jd0KxFchORigxVGR2WrFcLXTO9J2qLORXFZ8fQ==&ch=L3QdrNyQcbBhgafNcB8RebjEyyloYoNqo1jf9p9PNeUxw0tMNmTB7g==). Individuals can nominate themselves or others at **[MyTRB](https://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001Qc6xIhazF5NhFGcpowzmvA2D4X_v61HyFTCci5zMW2TeqMVcpBHIqwaTCRxPfZoW72_VsWMvl6Q0CklztECKCWk1hxWopEHGsO-BlvkTzkfsGR_J-s3RyObplpEHTiTsu_2qQF1EuMXBEaQYWCV6EwURO82G8f2L0FbHpO7lu3pEdZBfQxB5Kj_OCa47oRvEtGnDqB3B1BDpUvszAbCK4HCtJGeIDyhb&c=ljilHmdOOhBGViN9Jd0KxFchORigxVGR2WrFcLXTO9J2qLORXFZ8fQ==&ch=L3QdrNyQcbBhgafNcB8RebjEyyloYoNqo1jf9p9PNeUxw0tMNmTB7g==)** by February 3, 2023.

[**FHWA’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) website**](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDIsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMzAxMTIuNjk2ODE4OTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5maHdhLmRvdC5nb3YvYmlwYXJ0aXNhbi1pbmZyYXN0cnVjdHVyZS1sYXcvIn0.vFqdTZyXRHLbwAoXeYkTKlKxfEqxDhJWNzUQ3hii3T4/s/1491641046/br/152411247946-l) serves as a one-stop shop for FHWA’s implementation of the law, including information on funding, assistance, education, and guidance. <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/bipartisan-infrastructure-law/>

[**U.S. DOT’s Equity website**](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDMsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMzAxMTIuNjk2ODE4OTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy50cmFuc3BvcnRhdGlvbi5nb3YvcHJpb3JpdGllcy9lcXVpdHkifQ.YbY2EO_WmvuWvcvqm_NneicOAoGdwRxJUSsVcSFGHLk/s/1491641046/br/152411247946-l) provides plans and resources for delivering a more equitable transportation system. <https://www.transportation.gov/priorities/equity>

Meg Robertson, Chair of the EAC



# Orientation and Mobility Awards

It is never too soon to begin thinking about nominating someone for the Orientation and Mobility Awards which will be awarded at the next AER conference in 2024. For more information contact Nick Leon, O&M Awards Committee Chair nickleon86@gmail.com.

O&M division awards:

**The Sandy Kronick Distinguished Service Award** was established in 1994 to recognize professionals who demonstrate distinguished service in O&M through a long-term commitment to direct service.

## **The Lawrence E. Blaha Memorial Award** was initiated in 1968 to honor people who have shown exemplary behavior in the field of O&M, made outstanding contributions to the profession, and shown dedication to serving people with visual impairments. It is the highest honor that the O&M Division can bestow.

**The Janet Barlow Environmental Access Service Award** was established in 2021 to recognize professionals who demonstrate distinguished service in orientation and mobility through a long-term commitment to environmental access.

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**The Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Division of AER**

 **2023 DONALD BLASCH SCHOLARSHIP**

**Application opens February 1, 2023**

AER’s O&M Division presents an annual scholarship competition for students enrolled in AER-accredited O&M programs. The scholarship recognizes the vital contributions of the late Donald Blasch to the profession of O&M during his long tenure at Western Michigan University.

Individuals selected for the scholarship receive an unrestricted award of $1,000.00. Two scholarships are awarded each year when funds are available.

**THE DEADLINE FOR RECEIVING APPLICATIONS FOR THE BLASCH SCHOLARSHIP IS March 10, 2023.**

*All O&M students enrolled in AER-accredited programs are encouraged to apply.*

**ELIGIBILITY**

Applicants for the Donald Blasch Scholarship must have completed at least one semester (*part-time or full-time*) in an AER-accredited orientation and mobility program on the date the scholarship application is signed. Applications for the scholarship must be received by the chair of the committee (Margaret Winn, COMS) with an email date no later than **March 10, 2023**.

**HOW TO APPLY**

An application form must be completed in full and signed by each applicant. Application submission is as follows:

* ***Electronic submissions are required***. These should be emailed to Margaret Winn (BlaschScholarship@gmail.com), with the subject heading of, “**Donald Blasch Scholarship Application**” and must be in Word or PDF format. Applications sent in other formats will be rejected.
* Applications mustbe received with an email date no later than ***March 10, 2023.*** *Incomplete applications or applications that are not received with an email dated on or before March 10, 2023 will not be considered.*

The application will be available via e-blast on February 1, 2023.



Visit the O&M website for a list of O&M Committees: [https://aerbvi.org/oandmdivision](https://aerbvi.org/about/divisions/orientation-mobility-division/)



 **Orientation and Mobility Updates**

**White Cane Day Activities**

White Cane Day/Blind Americans Equality Day is a wonderful opportunity to promote inclusion and provide community education. If you have a good story, please email it to aerom@gmail.com. In 2022, university student Angelica Inman used the opportunity to help her student explain his abilities and vision loss. Here is her story:

At the start of the school year, a para educator and a general education teacher reached out about my fourth-grade student with low vision because some of his classmates had difficulty understanding how to interact with him. Our team wanted to find a way for him to share more about himself with his class, and decided to make a video about White Cane Day. The hope in creating the video was to help spread awareness about the event, while at the same time allowing his peers to learn a little bit about what he goes through. With the permission of his mom, we created the video and shared it with his class.

In the video, the student was asked a series of questions which we discussed ahead of time: “What is a White Cane? “What is White Cane Day?”, “Who is White Cane Day for?”, “Why is White Cane Day Important?”, “When is White Cane Day?”, and “What does independence mean to you?”. After the interview, there are video clips of my student demonstrating how he uses his white cane. My student and I talked about the importance of audio descriptions. We discussed how it’s necessary to include in videos so that people who are blind and visually impaired will know what is happening on the screen.

Sharing this video with his class helped his classmates get a better understanding of what he goes through on a daily basis. It provided an opportunity for students to ask questions and gave a small glimpse of the types of accommodations he needs in order to access certain materials.



**Moving On and Updates**

New Staff Changes: If you have an update on OM staff changes, or retirements please send them along to the Newsletter Editor.

Correction: Congrats to Joanne Iuro (not Luro) on her retirement. Her name was misspelled in the newsletter.



**Conferences/Workshops**

* ***The International Mobility Conference IMC18*** will be held in Warsaw Poland May 22nd-26, 2023. Check their website at [www.imc18poland.com](http://www.imc18poland.com/)
* The ***National ADA Symposium***, in-person event is scheduled for May 21 – 24, 2023 in Kansas City, Missouri, or the virtual event scheduled for June 12 – 14, 2023.
* **Pedestrian Access Considerations at Transit Stations Webinar Thursday February 16, 2023, 12:00-1:30 pm Eastern time ($30.00)** Registration information: [Register Today](https://na.eventscloud.com/728818) <https://www.pspe.org/event/webinar-pedestrian-access-considerations-at-transit-stations/>
	+ **Description**: Our ability to move about and travel are essential to our quality of life. A healthy nation is dependent on a safe, efficient, and robust transportation system accessible to all citizens, regardless of their age or personal mobility capabilities. Fundamentally, bus and rail transit systems exist to provide riders with transportation options, whether a necessity or a choice.



***2022-2024 Biennium Executive O&M Committee***

Chair: Raychel Callary Chair Elect: Maggie Winn

Past Chair: JoAnne Chalom Treasurer: Megann Brousard

Secretary: Valery Kircher

District 1: Angela Leavens District 2: Shay Utley

District 3: Jennifer Duncan District 4: Eric Shaw

District 5: Kevin McCormack District 6: Tessa McCarthy



A newsletter needs news, so if you have something that you wish to share with the OM members, or feedback to improve this newsletter, please email Meg Robertson at Mobilitymeg@aol.com or at aeromdivision@gmail.com. Please report any errors to the Newsletter Editor.

**Next newsletter deadline: March 1, 2023 – submissions are welcome at any time!**

