

Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired



Orientation and Mobility Division Update

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Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired

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From the Chair:

It is hard to believe that the 2022-2024 term is wrapping up, and that it is time to elect officers for 2024-2026! You should have received a ballot on March 22. Voting will close on April 12 and division leaders will begin their term in July. As you read the ballot, I hope you will consider whether a division leadership position might be of interest to you in 2026. Division leaders conduct the business of the division and are a liaison with the AER board.

The O&M Division Board has decided to extend the call for nominations for 2024 student representative. If you would like to nominate a student for this one-year position beginning in July of 2024, please use [this link](#) to complete the nomination and to learn more about the role.

The [AER International Conference](#) will feature a large variety of sessions focused on O&M, the division biennial business meeting, and the O&M division awards ceremony and reception. I hope you are considering attending! The international conference is a valuable opportunity for in-person learning and networking, as well as to stay apprised of and involved with AER and O&M division activities and plans.

We want to hear from you! Please be in contact any time to aeromdivision@gmail.com.

Wishing you a happy spring! Thank you for your dedication to our field.

Raychel Callary
Chair, AER Orientation and Mobility Division

O&M Awards Committee

The Orientation and Mobility Division Awards Committee invites you to tell us about an O&M colleague who deserves to receive one of our esteemed awards. Please consider submitting a letter nominating a deserving professional for the following awards: the **Lawrence E. Blaha Memorial Award**, the **O&M Citation of Excellence for Direct Service**, the **Sandy Kronick Distinguished Service Award**, or the **Janet Barlow Environmental Access Service Award**. Go to bit.ly/aeromawards to review the nomination criteria. Nominations for the awards and letters of support should be **submitted by April 30, 2024**. Submissions should be sent to Nick Leon at nickleon86@gmail.com. Award recipients will be notified and announced by June 1, 2024. The O&M Division award presentation will be held at the 2024 AER International Conference July 24-28, Charlotte, NC.

O&M Awards Committee members currently include Justin Kaiser, Christopher Tabb, Ana Leffel, Tommie Roesch, Mary Kline, Margaret Winn, and Nick Leon, Chair. We still need additional members for the committee, so please email nickleon86@gmail.com if you're interested in joining the committee or have any questions or comments.

Updates from Districts

District 2:

TAER's 2024 Conference "Passion, Pursuit, Purpose" was held in San Marcos Texas, April 4th-6th. For more information go to <http://www.txaer.org/conference.html>

TSBVI's Conference "Texas Focus-Behavior: A Different Focus" was held via Zoom, February 22-24, 2024.

Cane Quest will be held on April 19, 2024, being hosted by Lighthouse for the Blind of Fort Worth and Educational Service Center of Fort Worth.

Texas Tech University has developed a Recruitment flyer for TSVIs and COMS. Recruitment for their TSVI and O&M programs is open. The deadline for Reach Across Texas scholarships is April 15 for summer consideration and June 1 for fall consideration for Texas residents. Further information can be found at: <https://www.depts.ttu.edu/online/programs/certificates/prep/orientationMobility/> and at [https://www.depts.ttu.edu/education/graduate/special-education/special education orientation and mobility.php](https://www.depts.ttu.edu/education/graduate/special-education/special%20education%20orientation%20and%20mobility.php)

The Lighthouse Louisiana is building an innovative team of vision rehab professionals to empower people with vision loss in the New Orleans and Baton Rouge regions. If you're a COMS or working toward certification, let's connect. Email rtrahan@LighthouseLouisiana.org or click below to apply.

Orientation & Mobility Specialist

[:https://recruiting.paylocity.com/Recruiting/Jobs/Details/1856395](https://recruiting.paylocity.com/Recruiting/Jobs/Details/1856395)

District 4:

UMass Boston has a brand-new grant geared specifically to increasing the number of O&M instructors interested in working with students' birth-22. This grant runs until 2029 and will provide differentiated tuition support to enrolled students. Additional stipend money is available to students with demonstrated financial need on a competitive basis. This grant funding covers both those seeking an M.Ed. in O&M as well as a graduate certificate. Please contact Darick Wright (darick.wright@umb.edu) and Paula Kosior (paula.kosior@umb.edu) for more information.

AMESVI (Association of Mass. Educators of Students with Visual Impairments) and the Northeast Resource Center for Vision Education at UMass Boston will be holding a synchronous workshop on Wednesday 4/10 and 4/17 from 6:30-8:30PM EST. Dr. Gene Bourquin will be presenting on **"Advanced Topics in Orientation and Mobility: Understanding the Understudied."** 5 ACVREP CEUs will be available for \$50. [Use this link to sign up for the workshop.](#)

The **NE/AER 2024 Conference will be held at** The Lodge at Spruce Peak in Stowe, Vermont during the week of November 13-15, 2024.

District 6:

On Saturday, April 6, 2024, The Veering Cane will be partnering once more with Kutztown University to host the 3rd Annual PA Regional Cane Quest, in Kutztown. Cane Quest gives visually impaired students from grades 3-12 the opportunity to showcase their cane skills. Sign-ups and additional information can be found at the following link: <https://theveeringcane.wixsite.com/website>

Environmental Access Committee Updates

Some members of the O&M Environmental Access Committee were able to attend the Transportation Research Board meetings this past January in Washington, due to the generous support of AER, Polara Enterprises, Access Products and Stronggo Industries. At these meetings, we raise awareness with transportation planners, engineers, policy developers and researchers on the needs of individuals with vision loss, blindness and deafblindness. This year EAC members Beezy Bentzen, Mary Beth Cleveland, Jen Graham, Claudia Libis, Linda Meyers, Meg Robertson, and Dona Sauerburger attended.

TRB Reports:

Linda Myers: Accessible Design for the Blind had a large presence at Transportation Board Meetings/TRB this year. O&M EAC members Linda Myers, Jennifer Graham, and Beezy Bentzen, and President, Alan Scott made brief PowerPoint presentations on Tactile Walking Surface Indicators (TWSIs) at six committee meetings: Pedestrian Committee; Bicycle Committee; Performance Effects of Geometric Design; Passenger Intermodal Facilities; Roundabouts and Other Intersection Design and Control Strategies; and Accessible Transportation and Mobility. This presentation introduced the terminology and the message that each of the three surfaces (domes, bars, and the trapezoid) conveys to pedestrians who are blind. Educating traffic engineers, policymakers, administrators, practitioners, researchers, and representatives of government, industry, and

academia was great. Jennifer Graham made a video of an orientation and mobility student crossing at a roundabout with and without tactile directional indicators (TDI), which she showed at the Roundabout Theater and stirred great interest. Beezy Bentzen presented on the Accessibility Guidelines for Public Rights of Way to a large audience, including members and friends of more than four committees.

Dona Saurberger: I attended the ‘Older Driver/Mobility’ subcommittee. One big change for the committee is not just to focus on older adults driving but also to include emphasis on the transition from driving to non-driving. Due to continued attendance by EAC members, this is a great change. Originally the committee only focused on keeping older drivers driving, without any consideration that eventually that might not be a choice. A new resource raising awareness of non-drivers in the US is a book “When Driving is not an Option” by Anna Zivarts, who has a vision impairment which prevents driving. She is the Director of Disability Mobility Initiative at Disability Right agency in Washington State. This book can be brought from www.islandpress.org/books/whendriving-not-option

Meg Robertson: I attended a number of committee meetings, Accessibility Transportation and Mobility, and Military Transportation subcommittee. I am also a committee member of the Pedestrian (along with Mary Beth Cleveland) and Traffic Control Devices Committees. A resource from one presentation, I attended, is called **Project Sidewalk** developed by The Makeability Lab at the University of Washington. “Project Sidewalk is a web-based tool that allows anyone with a web browser and internet connection to contribute sidewalk accessibility information virtually using Google Street View. The data collected is open and publicly available through our APIs. The long-term goal of Project Sidewalk is to use this very large dataset to train computer vision and machine learning algorithms to detect accessibility problems automatically. Collecting accessibility data is expensive for cities and time consuming for volunteers. If this data can be collected automatically, it will free up money in city budgets to do the sidewalk repairs and improve accessibility.” Please, check it out & use it. It is not perfect (not including accessible pedestrian signals in a data set) but if one includes it in comments, they will keep improving it.). Check it out at <https://scistarter.org/project-sidewalk>

White Cane Day Activities

Start planning now for White Cane 2024. Please share 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 . The 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.

Conferences/Workshops/Webinars

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 is now open. <https://www.aerbvi.org>

Mid-Atlantic ADA Center presents a webinar on Common Myths and Mix-Ups: Accessibility Standards on April 17, 2024, 2-3 eastern time. This session will review and clarify common sources of confusion in the ADA Standards for Accessible Design, including application of the standards in new construction and alterations, electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, toilet and bathing rooms, signage, accessible routes and ground surfaces, and other areas and elements.

The Federal Highway Administration has produced some free webinars on the updated Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices/MUTCD. The first webinar was held on March 6, 2024, and provided an Executive Summary and General Overview of the 11th Edition of the MUTCD. A recording of the Webinar is now available on the MUTCD News Feed. The next webinar will be held on **April 11, 2024, 2-3** eastern time on **“Vulnerable Road Users”**, including pedestrians and

bicyclists as well as accessibility. Click here for [Registration](https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/index.htm).
<https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/index.htm>

This and That

Focus Group Opportunities for Individuals with vision loss:

The Mid-Atlantic ADA Center is seeking participants with disabilities who are 55 years of age or older, living and working (part-or-full-time in the Mid-Atlantic region (DC, DE, MD, PA, VA, WV) for a virtual Focus Group on Workplace Accommodations on April 10, 2024, 5:00-6:00 pm eastern time. The Center would like to find out about how older people with disabilities get information and gain understanding of the ADA and accommodations in the workplace. Qualified participants will receive a \$25 Amazon gift card after the focus group. Interested individuals should email the [Mid-Atlantic ADA Center](#) to confirm eligibility and review pre-registration requirements.

The Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Employment of People who Are Blind or Have Low Vision seeks participants with blindness or low vision, between the ages of 30 and 65, who have had a career mentor or received career mentorship. Participants will complete a survey of approximately 10 minutes. Participants who complete the survey will have the option to enter a drawing for one of three \$100 gift cards.

<https://www.blind.msstate.edu/news/2024/03/nrtc-recruiting-participants-career-mentoring-survey>

The Southwest ADA Center is seeking participants ages 18+ for a research study on the perspectives of **individuals who use service animals or emotional support animals in their workplaces**. Participation is confidential and can be done via telephone or zoom. Participants will be compensated for their time. For more information or to schedule an interview, email [Jocelyne Fajardo](#) or call 713-797-7118.

YouTube has a channel features kid-friendly videos designed to help elementary school students better understand disability, the ADA, service animals, adaptive sports, and more. Check it out at [**YouTube: School Animation Series About Disability**](#)

The National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision (NRTC) has updated their *Creating an Accessible Document* resource sheet. This guide was developed to provide tips and guidance for formatting, designing, and saving an accessible document and PDF. It can be found on the NRTC [Accessibility Resources page](#).

NRTC also has a course on [Cultural Diversity and Humility](#) . This course provides an overview of key considerations for providing vision rehabilitation services with cultural awareness, humility, and competence. This course emphasizes the importance of awareness of personal cultural orientations, understanding the effect culture has on interaction with consumers, and the impact of agency policies and culture on practice with diverse consumers. (2 credits CRC, ACVREP, and NBPCB)

The National Eye Institute has developed a free App NEI-VR named “See What I See Virtual”. This app lets people see what an Individual with a particular vision impairment sees and how it differs from other vision conditions. This app could be helpful working with families and/or other professionals in understanding what an individual with vision loss, might be seeing in the real environmental.

National Lighting Safety Awareness Week falls during the week of June 23-29. For more information on lighting safety during lighting storms go to <http://lightningsafetycouncil.org>

FEMA has a Summer Ready Campaign resource page at <https://www.ready.gov/summer-ready> and a Hurricane Readiness Campaign resource page at <https://www.ready.gov/hurricanes>

The 2022-2024 Division Nine Executive Committee

Chair: Raychel Callary

Chair Elect: Maggie Winn

Past Chair: JoAnne Chalom

Treasurer: Megann Brouard

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: June 1, 2024, Submissions are welcomed at any time!