

From the President's Desk . . .

“All things change and we change with them.
Alexander Pope

Last August I began my first president's message to you with the quote above and I repeat it now as the first year of my presidency is coming to a close. This HAS been a year of change for NCAER and our Board hopes that you have been pleased with the increase in professional development opportunities, and in the responsiveness of this Board to your questions, concerns and suggestions.

We were proud to add an excellent presentation of deaf-blindness to our programs this year in addition to our continued support for the Lowenfeld-Akeson Symposiums (now in their 7th year). Our program committee continues to solicit your ideas for future workshops.

In the pages of this newsletter you will see that our Board is also asking for your support to renew and revise our chapter bylaws. The proposed changes will give us more flexibility in meeting through electronic media and in providing financial security for the chapter by creating and living within a sound budgetary process. Please take the time to examine these changes and send us your votes so that we can get a real sense of our members' thoughts on these important issues.

Your Board will be taking the summer off from meetings (but not from our duties) and will return refreshed in August. Have a wonderful, safe, and peaceful summer . . .

Stuart Wittenstein, Ed.D.
NCAER President

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Open Board Position
Your Name Here!
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Student Representative: Open Position - Will You Join Us?

Spotlight on Excellence

BLIND BABIES FOUNDATION (BBF)

Blind Babies Foundation (BBF) has been serving families in Northern California since 1949. The mission then and now is to provide services and programs that enable and empower families, professionals, and the broader community to meet the unique needs of infant and preschool children who are blind, visually impaired, or multihandicapped and visually impaired, birth through 5 years of age.

Even before federal law mandated early intervention services, BBF pioneered assistance to families with children with visual impairments. Home Counselors who, through their home based services, help families adjust to having a child with vision loss. A baby who is born severely visually impaired experiences the world differently from typically developing children. Since 85% of all early learning is visual, the child who is blind or visually impaired is at great risk for developmental delays. Effective, intensive intervention is imperative in the early years and this is what BBF's "Off To A Good Start Program" does best.

Through the professional staff of 17 vision impairment specialists known as home counselors, services are delivered on a regular basis throughout 19 Northern and Central California counties. Thousands of families have benefited from BBF services in the past 54 years. In addition to home services, BBF provides services to families and professionals through program consultation, accompaniment of families on medical visits, family events, trainings, and production of materials such as videos, fact sheets and the Hoyt-Akeson Selected Readings in Pediatric Ophthalmology.

The Professional Advisory Committee of BBF, in conjunction with NCAER and California School for the Blind, sponsors the Lowenfeld-Akeson Symposium on Early Childhood Vision Impairment. This important conference for parents and professionals will be held next year at the California School for the Blind, on February 7, 2004.

BBF was instrumental in establishing the Registry of Early Childhood Visual Impairment, now a national data-gathering project of the American Printing House for the Blind. Until establishment of the Registry, no coordinated program for collecting information on very young children with vision impairment was in place in education or medical fields. In addition, staff at BBF have contributed to a national position paper on Natural Environments to be delivered at the AER conference in Washington during July. Copies of the paper are available by contacting BBF at: 415.586.6140 or bbfinfo@blindbabies.org.

BBF is proud to be associated with the re-establishment of the California Association of Parents of Children with Vision Impairments (CAPVI). This organization will fill a much-needed service as parents support each other and share.

If you know of a family who would like to receive BBF services in the Northern or Central California counties we serve, please contact us through the information provided above.

Calendar Of Events

June

18 – 22 106th Annual American Optometric Association Congress, in San Diego, CA. Contact AOA, 703-739-9200 or www.aoa.org.

19 – 22 Guide Dogs for the Blind **FREE** Seminar for O & M Specialists, in Boring, OR. Contact Leslie Edmonds at 800- 295-4050; ledmonds@guidedogs.com.

28 – July 4 National Federation of The Blind's 2003 National Convention, in Louisville, KY. Contact NFB at 410-659-9314 or www.nfb.org.

29 - 8th Annual Camp Bloomfield Summer Games will be held at Camp Bloomfield in Malibu. Campers team with sighted buddies ages 5-12 and compete in Olympic-style events including track and field, archery, and aquatics. Contact Elesha C. Mavrommatis at 323-295-4555 x267 or check the website <www.fjb.org>.

July

5 – 12 American Council of the Blind's 2003 National Convention at the Westin Hotel in Pittsburgh, PA. Contact CCB, 800-424-8666 or www.acb.org.

15 – 19 Association for Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) 26th Annual Conference, Dallas, TX. Contact AHEAD 627-287-3880; www.ahead.org.

25 – 29 Advocacy: Everyone's Responsibility" an AER topical conference, to be held in Washington, D.C. Contact Barbara Sherr, AERBVI Conference manager, 877-492-2708 or bsherr@aerbvi.org.

27 – 30 Innovative Community-Based Options for Elders Conference, Seattle, WA. Contact Jane Braziunas 206-543-8727, or geron@u.washington.edu.

August

20 – 21 employmentAccess 2003 (eA'03), Increasing workplace opportunities through innovation, sponsored by TransAccess and Sensory Access Foundation, to be held at the Microsoft Conference Center, 1065 La Avenida, Mountain View. Pre-conference activities with Larry Robbin on August 19th. Further details at www.employmentaccess.org.

September

25 – 28 Guide Dogs for the Blind **FREE** Seminar for O & M Specialists, in San Rafael, CA. Contact Leslie Edmonds at 800-295-4050; ledmonds@guidedogs.com.

October

15 – 19 CCB Fall 2003 Convention to be held at the Crowne Plaza Los Angeles Airport Hotel, 5085 West Century Blvd., Los Angeles. For Reservations call 310-642-7500 or 888-315-3700.

3 – 5 Foundation for the Junior Blind (FJB) Davidson Program for Independence Family Camp Weekend at Camp Bloomfield in Malibu. For information contact Shirley Manning 323-295-4555 x286.

16 – 18 21st Annual Closing the Gap Conference in Bloomington, MN. Contact Closing the Gap at 507-248-3810 or www.closingthegap.com.

17 – 19 Southern California Network Family Camp at Camp Bloomfield, Malibu. For information contact Kathy Goodspeed at 714-573-8888.

November

CAOMS Annual Statewide Conference to be held in Northern California. Further information can be obtained from David Torgersrud dtorgers@tcde.tehama.k12.ca.us

15 – 18 Annual American Academy of Ophthalmology meeting, in Anaheim, CA. Contact AAO, 415-561-8500 x320 or www.aao.org

December

4 – 7 Getting in Touch with Literacy 2003 to be held in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Contact Cay Holbrook cay.holbrook@ubc.ca or Linda Evans 604-431-2121. <www.gettingintouchwithliteracy.org>

13 – 16 AERBVI's National Orientation and Mobility Conference in New Orleans, LA. Contact George Tully at 225-342-4754 or gtully@lwol.com.

2004

March

CTEVH 45th Annual Conference to be held in Southern California. Stay connected for further details! Contact CTEVH 323-666-2211.

July

AER International Conference to be held in Orlando, Florida at the Hilton, Walt Disney World. Contact AER, toll free 877-492-2708.

Announcements

- AER is hosting a new on-line discussion forum to allow people interested in vocational rehabilitation and employment to share expertise, pose/debate questions, and network with other professionals and consumers in the discussion of rehabilitation-related techniques, research public policy and critical issues. To subscribe, send a blank e-mail to AER-Rehab-subscribe@topica.com. For answers to questions, e-mail Jackie Fairbarns, AER Assistant Director, jackief@aerbvi.org.
- Medicare Vision Rehabilitation Services Act is being considered in the 108th Congress. Positive progress has been made, but support is still welcomed and needed. To check the status of the bill, go to <www.medicarenow.org> or call (877) HELP-WIN (435-7946). And remember to encourage your legislators to vote for this important legislation.
- The AER Central Office has changed locations. The offices are now located in their new facility at 1703 N. Beaugard Street, Ste. 440, Alexandria, VA 22311. Telephone: 703-671-4500 FAX: 703-671-6391
- BANA (Braille Authority of North America) has changed the terminology for Braille from the traditional grade 1 and grade 2 Braille to “uncontracted” and “contracted” Braille. This change should decrease the confusion with elementary school grades 1 and 2, and also increase awareness and understanding of Braille.
- Conductive Keratoplasty (CK) is a non-laser procedure for correcting hyperopia (farsightedness). FDA has approved the procedure for farsightedness, and is expected to grant approval for presbyopia in 2004. CK implements radio-frequency waves to cause tissue to contract and make the cornea steeper, which in turn improves the eye’s focusing power. This process has been shown to be successful in 92 percent of trials. Cost is about \$1500-2200 per eye.
- A new phase III multi-center clinical trial for people suffering with the “wet” form of AMD is being conducted. The trial will compare the safety and effectiveness of an investigational medication called Anecortave Acetate with FDA-approved Visudyne Photodynamic therapy (PDT). Those wishing to participate may call 866-692-5959 toll free or visit the website www.alconinc.com.
- At First Sight is a new company offering Braille bracelets, necklaces, and windchimes. Special orders are available. For information or to view products, to go the website www.braillestone.com, or call Leslie Ligon 800-630-6650. Help promote Braille awareness and literacy, with beautiful Braille jewelry.
- eSight Careers Network invites you to join their online resource system which addresses the employment and career management needs of blind and visually impaired individuals. eSight offers a free weekly newsletter, professional development seminars, job postings, profiles of disability friendly companies, career management guides, and more. Go to www.eSightCareers.net

AER: Joint statement on current issues in rehabilitation

Partly in response to a couple of current controversial issues and partly as a reaffirmation of our field's clear consensus, the following joint statement has been prepared. Please make use of this statement as may be helpful/appropriate in your state when questions or concerns arise. Additionally, organizations are encouraged to sign on.

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Joint Statement on Critical Issues Facing Specialized Rehabilitation Services for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired

We the undersigned organizations endorse the following Principles:

Use of Visual Occlusion in Orientation and Mobility Instruction

We believe that programs providing instruction in independent travel to individuals with functional/usable vision are most effective when they recognize the importance of using both visual and nonvisual techniques to travel safely and efficiently. For some individuals, blindfolding may be an effective method for teaching reliance on the use of other senses; however, we believe the best practice is to incorporate instruction in the use of remaining vision so that individuals will learn to use both visual and nonvisual information simultaneously. While we believe that the use of visual occlusion is an appropriate instructional technique for some individuals, it must not be mandated as a condition for the receipt of any services. Additionally, when occlusion is to be used, it should be provided with the prior expressed consent of the individual receiving instruction. The professional orientation and mobility specialist, in consultation with the consumer and when appropriate the consumer's family, should determine whether and how to make use of visual occlusion.

Certification

We support certification of professionals meeting the unique and individual needs of consumers with visual impairments[.] to be meaningful, [such certification] must require satisfaction of relevant post secondary education, practice-based skills acquisition, and adherence to a Code of Professional Ethics. These criteria are designed to ensure that certified professionals possess a relevant and measurable knowledge base, competencies, and skills to provide individually tailored services. A certification program's adherence to this combination of criteria assures a level of professional quality which cannot be guaranteed by minimal practice-based criteria alone.

the certification program of service providers in the blindness and low vision field administered by the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP) [meets these criteria. In addition,] The ACVREP maintains full recognition with the National Certification Commission (NCC), a nonprofit external reviewer of certification programs. To ensure adherence to meaningful standards, we believe that any organization that purports to certify professional service providers should be similarly recognized by the NCC and/or other comparable independent reviewing or accrediting bodies.

Use of Dog Guides

The Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act, and laws in all fifty states guarantee access to public accommodations and to the programs and services of state/local government by people who are blind or visually impaired who may use dog guides. This guarantee extends to participation in any and all education and vocational rehabilitation programs and services. The use of a dog guide therefore is the individual choice of a consumer which must be honored.

Save this date: Friday, November 14, 2003

AER will sponsor a Special One-Day Workshop: Understanding Children with Cortical Visual Impairment, led by Dr. Lea Hyvarinen
Location: San Francisco Bay Area. (exact location to be determined)
Sponsored by: NCAER, Blind Babies Foundation, San Francisco State University
Continuing Education Credit will be available (1 unit)

Lea Hyvarinen, MD, a Finnish ophthalmologist, has been interested in the psychophysics of vision and in the development of visually impaired children for over 30 years. She is an expert on issues related to CVI and other aspects of visual impairments, and she shares her expertise lecturing throughout the world and through the publication of over 200 articles. Dr. Hyvarinen is best known for her work with infants and children with multiple disabilities, the development of vision assessment tools (Lea Test System), and playthings for stimulation of young children with visually impairment.

Position Openings

2 positions open for VI Teachers in Berkeley Unified School District for Fall 2003:

VI Elementary Resource Room serving blind and partially sighted students. May also need to travel to other schools. Responsibilities include teaching Braille, preparing materials in Braille and large print using specialized technology, working closely with classroom teachers, supervising instructional assistants.

Elementary SH/VI Special Day Class - serving students with multiple disabilities including deaf/blindness.

Contact Jan Dunlop by email at janetmd2@aol.com or call 510-237-320

Anaheim-VI Elementary Resource Room Teacher Needed!

Anaheim has an opening in a traditional resource room, including an on-site O & M instructor and several instructional assistants. The average number of students in this class is between 5 and 8. Contact Jane Vogel, jrvogel@earthlink.net, for further information. Position to be filled prior to August.

NCAER will go electronic with the September issue of the AERial View. If you do not want to receive the newsletter by e-mail (we will obtain e-mail addresses from central office), please advise Pat Leader, Editor, 408-266-6163 or plleader@earthlink.net. If central office does not have your e-mail address, please send it to the above e-mail address. Thanks for helping NCAER to reduce paper waste and save on mailing costs!

Remember, this is YOUR organization... we want to hear from you and have the newsletter reflect your interests and ideas. Contact your Officers and Board Members today . . . MAKE A DIFFERENCE!