



February 2005

AR - AER Report

Association for the Education and Rehabilitation
of the Blind and Visually Impaired

Message from the President:

Greeting AER members,
I'm sure you have heard the expression, "The Proof is in the Pudding", and I know I have heard it many times in my lifetime. Recent events at the national level regarding legislation for educating the visually impaired brought that old memory about the pudding to the surface. As a national organization I believe we should all be very proud of the results we were able to accomplish with the reauthorization of the "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004." Working together with our sister chapters from other states, Arkansas played an important role in getting IDEA passed into law, which included special language for the Instructional Materials Accessibilities Act. I also believe that this same effort will have a positive impact on the Rehab Act when it makes its way through Congress.

As we move into the future, I would like to encourage each member to be as active as possible in supporting the education and rehabilitation of the visually impaired at the local, state, and national level. I would also like to encourage each and every member to actively recruit a new member this year. In my opinion for our size and resources, Arkansas has the best chapter in the nation and with more of us working together we can

only continue to have positive impacts like the ones mentioned above.

It is an honor and a privilege to serve as your chapter president and I look forward to the opportunity to continue to put the "Proof in the Pudding." **Jim Adams**

New Web Site for AR AER

Check it out!! www.araer.org

We now have a website. AR AER now has a website full of information. Find out the latest information on our conference. If you have an item (vision related) that you would like to buy, sell, or trade, contact the Webmaster with the information. Member information is available on the website as well as a new member application. Many useful links are there too. If you have any suggestions for the website contact the Webmaster through the website.

2005 Annual Conference

The annual Arkansas AER Conference will be held at the Airport Holiday Inn on Monday, May 9 and Tuesday, May 10. The theme this year is Lifelong Learning..... Learning for Life. We are working on getting speakers confirmed. We will apply for continuing education credit from the Academy.

New Organization for the VI

The Arkansas Literacy Alliance for Children with Visual Impairments was officially launched in a ceremony at the State Capital on February 12, 2004. Creation of the Alliance was the result of the collaborative efforts of several organizations, including Nextel Partners, American Printing House for the Blind, Educational Services for the Visually Impaired, and AR-AER. The purpose of the alliance is to connect families, educators and community partners to reach a common goal: to enhance the literacy development of children in Arkansas who are blind or visually impaired.

The initial project for the *Arkansas Literacy Alliance* is the distribution of *Spinoza Gift Packs* to pre-school children throughout the state. *Spinoza* is a cuddly, stuffed bear that “talks and sings” through a hidden speaker and 4-track cassette player that plays a collection of storybook tapes. *Spinoza* is an ideal literacy tool for children who are visually impaired because he can play any storybook on tape borrowed from the Arkansas Library for the Blind. In addition, valuable resources and literacy tools are included with the *Spinoza Gift Pack* to assist teachers and parents in meeting the unique literacy needs of children with visual impairments. A new project with National Braille Press is in the planning stage and should be launched during the 2004-05 school year.

For more information on the *Arkansas Literacy Alliance*, or to sponsor a *Spinoza Gift Pack* for a child who is blind or visually impaired, contact JoEllen Croft at **501-779-2030**.

APH Hall of Fame Legends

AR-AER is pleased to announce its participation in the *Hall of Fame Legends Wall* at American Printing House for the Blind. The *Hall of Fame Legends Wall* was founded in 2001 to honor the legacy of those who have provided the foundations of our profession. Some of the *Hall of Fame* inductees at this time include Helen Keller, Natalie Barraga, Warren Bledsoe, Dr. Thomas Carroll, and Arkansas native Roy Kumpe.

Additional information on the *Hall of Fame Legends Wall* can be found on the APH website at www.aph.org. To learn how you can honor an Arkansas legend from our field, refer to the awards information included in this newsletter for guidelines and criteria for nominations.

AER Personal Spotlights

AR-AER would like to recognize member Margaret Robinson on her recent completion of a doctoral degree from Texas Tech University. She will continue in her position at UALR coordinating the Teaching Students with Visual Impairments program. Honors to Dr. Robinson!

Best wishes to Kara Mahan, AR-AER President Elect, on her recent engagement! Kara and her fiancé, Rod Aaron, plan to be wed on April 30th, 2005.

Jimmy Jones, AR-AER Board member, became the proud grandfather to twin girls on October 1st. Mia weighed in at 3lb 12 oz, and Maggie at 3 lb 2 oz. Both are doing well. Another granddaughter, Hailey, was born on July 8th. Congratulations Jimmy!

LWSB Update:

As of October 15, 2004, LWSB had 55 clients on campus in training programs, raising our total number of clients served to more than 8,700.

LWSB will begin offering the Enterprise Solutions Programming course in January 2005. This 10-month course will prepare our clients to work in a wide range of programming environments including .NET developer environments and other application projects as well. Optional certification exams for Microsoft Certified Solution Developer will also be offered through this new program.

LWSB has hosted several "big events" recently. The 2004 Vision Award Luncheon was held on Oct. 6 at the Peabody Hotel. More than 680 people turned out to watch Doyle Rogers of Metropolitan Bank accept this year's award, and the event raised more than \$50,000 for programs at LWSB. The Angels of the Blind Auxiliary hosted their Art, Antiques and Collectibles Auction honoring Betty McMath and raised more than \$10,000 for the Independent Living Skills for the Elderly Program at LWSB.

DSB Update:

Many good things are happening at the Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind (DSB).

DSB partnered with the Arkansas School for the Blind again this year for the Jumpstart program. In June of 2004, 20 visually impaired high school students from around the state came together for three weeks. In the mornings, they worked at a variety of

jobs around Little Rock. In the afternoons, they attended fun and informative field trips. In the evenings, they did laundry and prepared meals. We look forward to continuing this program next year so these students can continue to get a jumpstart on working and living independently.

As of September 30, 2004, DSB vocational counselors had 338 successful case closures for this recording year. This is more cases than DSB has ever successfully closed in one year. DSB consumers are now working for many employers including NASA, ARS, and the IRS. DSB consumers have a variety of careers such as massage therapist, dietitian, music teacher, vocational counselor, and computer specialist just to name a few.

On Monday, October 4, 2004, in the Double Tree Hotel Ballroom, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and the Governor's Commission on People with Disabilities awarded DSB Director Jim Hudson with the Commissioner's Award at the Second Annual Arkansas Ability Awards.

UALR Update:

We are pleased to announce that the UALR Summer O&M Institute will run from mid June to mid July 2005. This year approximately 24 mobility students will be coming in town from about 22 states, including Arkansas. Teresa Mays, Sharon Niemczyk, Dr. Pam Broadston and Kate Buck will be adjunct instructors either teaching courses or supervising student teachers. Student teachers will be at the School for the Blind and at Lions World Services for the Blind and additional sites to be determined. Dr. Bill Jacobson will
(Continued on Page 5)

Professional Development Update:

The AR AER sponsored Wheelchair Workshop for O&M specialists held in June 2004 was a big success! All seven participants experienced "hands-on" some of the challenges a visual impaired wheelchair user faces in indoor and outdoor environments. A special thanks goes to the presenter Scott Crawford and to Central Arkansas Transit Company. CAT provided us with a bus so we could practice maneuvering a wheelchair in and out of a bus.

The professional development committee is planning to sponsor more workshops in 2005. The first workshop is scheduled for April 29, and it will be an all day training session on the use of the Trekker. This device uses GPS and digital maps to provide information to visually impaired persons for orientation and route planning purposes. The BrailleNote GPS will also be discussed at this workshop. For more details on this workshop, check out the new AR AER website.

As of July 1, 2004, all workshops and seminars that you attend must be pre-approved by ACVREP in order to obtain continuing education credit for attending these activities. Check the website (www.acvrep.org) under the "Continuing Education" page for further information on other ACVREP approved continuing education programs. This committee wants your ideas for future professional development activities. Please contact Lisa Reynolds at 501-664-7100 or lreynolds@lwsb.org if you have questions or information to share.

Fundraiser News:

The Fundraising Committee is busy again planning activities to generate funds!!! Plans for the 6th Annual AR-AER Prize Drawing are underway with several fab prizes donated already. The drawing will take place on May 9, 2005 at the social of our annual state AER meeting. Included in the prizes are a gorgeous tanzanite & amethyst ring, diamond tennis bracelet, \$200 Shell gasoline, and our famous weekend getaways in Gulf Shores, Mississippi and Branson, Missouri. The committee will be collecting prizes for the next few months. If anyone would like to donate an item for the drawing or knows of a good source for one please contact Luanne Blaylock, Fundraising Chairman at (501) 851-7863.

FYI...Your AER colleagues worked very hard at the AER International Conference in Orlando this past July selling our cool T-Shirts. We made \$750.00! We are lucky because we still have several size and color options for sale...\$15.00. Ask any committee member or contact Luanne Blaylock for info.

Your Fundraising Committee is always looking for new ways to make money...if anyone reading this has any suggestions/ideas please contact me.

Thanks to all who have helped our organization raise money!
Luanne Blaylock, Fundraising Chairman

NOTICE:

All future issues of AR-AER Report will be published on our website

www.araer.org

For a print copy contact a board member.

Request for Board Nominations

The AER Nominations' Committee is requesting nominees for the 2005-2006 year. There are ten board members and each serve a two-year term. The five members elected in 2003-2004 will be rotating off the AER Board of Directors and five new ones will be elected. The committee is accepting nominations for these five board positions.

Kara Mahan is President Elect. There will be no nomination for this position at the May conference since as Preident Elect Kara is obligated to a six-year term, two years as President Elect, two years as President, and two years as Past President. Nominations will be accepted for the offices of Secretary and Treasurer. There are many committees where members-at-large are encouraged to serve. We hope that each and every one of you will take a part in the organization. We need your participation! We want you to take an active part in our AR AER organization. We have a good reputation nationally, and we are proud to have enrolled several new members.

2004-2005 AR-AER Board of Directors:

President: Jim Adams
Past President: Sharon Niemczyk
President Elect: Kara Mahan
Secretary: Diane Quick
Treasurer: Carol Adams

Board Members:

| | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| Jo Ellen Croft | Barbara Kemp |
| Luanne Blaylock | Jimmy Jones |
| Pam Raspberry | Vicki Hopkins |
| Bill Johnson | Darlina Smith |
| Lisa Reynolds | Bill Jacobson |

New Address for AR-AER:

Be sure and use our new address for correspondence.

**AR-AER
P.O. Box 7248
Sherwood, AR 72124**

Congratulations to 2004 AR-AER Award Recipients

J. Max Woolly Award
Diane Woolly

Joyce Ogburn Memorial Award
Barbara Kemp

Tom Phifer Award
Kate Buck

Arkansas Distinguished Advocate
(Individual)
Bill Maxwell and Nancy Otto

Arkansas Distinguished Advocate (Group)
AR Pediatric Facility

Bill Tomlin Scholarship
Elizabeth Graves

UALR Update continued from page 2:

coordinate this summer's institute. UALR will hold a second summer O&M Institute at the University of Utah right after the AR institute. Eight graduate students will participate in the four-week program under the Dr. Bill Jacobson's direction

Nominations for AR-AER Awards

Once again the Arkansas AER Awards Committee is accepting nominations for awards. These awards are offered annually to recognize outstanding professionals and advocates within our field. Nominations for each of the following awards and scholarships will be considered: APH Hall of Fame Legends, J. Max Woolly Award, Joyce Ogburn Memorial Award, Tom Phifer Award, Arkansas Distinguished Advocate Awards and the Bill Tomlin Scholarship. The criterion for each award is included in this newsletter. Please note that the APH Hall of Fame Legends is a recently established honor which must be voted on by the entire AR-AER Board. Now is the time to nominate someone you know who may be worthy of this honor! Nominations and support letters will be accepted through Friday, April 15th. All letters should be sent to:

Jo Ellen Croft
Awards Committee Chair
9819 Old Arkansas Drive
Roland, AR 72135

Individual Award Criteria

J. Max Woolly Award

This award is presented in recognition of outstanding contributions in the field of work for people with visual impairments. The award may be given to an AER member for the following reasons:

1. Efforts far in excess of those of similar professional rank.

2. Professional excellence or accomplishment and outstanding achievements in one's own profession.
3. Personal intervention, which has directly helped a visually impaired client who was classified as difficult with the assistance changing the client to a successful orientation.
4. Research or literature accomplishments.
5. Development of a new technical adaptation or strategy that will benefit the consumer.
6. Accomplishments in the area of organization of and for the blind.

This award is not necessarily given each year, but only when the awards committee feels it has been earned. Nominations should refer to the specific criteria met by the nominee and should be accompanied by letters of support. Letters of nomination must be from current AER members.

Joyce Ogburn Memorial Award

The Joyce Ogburn Memorial Award is dedicated to the memory of Joyce Ogburn, a teacher at the Arkansas School for the Blind from 1971 to 1985. The dedication she showed to her students, school and colleagues was an inspiration to all who knew and worked with her. This award is meant to inspire others to walk in her footsteps and will honor only those who aspire to her ideals. The award will be made when deemed appropriate by the AER Awards Committee on the basis of the following:

1. Nominations may be made by AR-AER members only.
2. Recipients must be AR-AER members.

3. The recipient must be an instructor/teacher of visually impaired persons.
4. The award will be presented to a person who had rendered outstanding service in the field of education or rehabilitation of the visually impaired as demonstrated by:
 - a. Willingness to work beyond usual job requirements;
 - b. Concern for individual needs of students or clients
 - c. Involvement in professional organizations;
 - d. Dedication to the highest professional ideals.

Tom Phifer Award

This award is in recognition of Tom Phifer, an Arkansas rehabilitation counselor who worked tirelessly to improve and enhance employment opportunities for persons who are blind and visually impaired. The award is to be given to an individual working in the field of blindness who has made significant contributions toward the independence of blind and visually impaired persons living in the state of Arkansas. Contributions may be made in the following areas:

1. Professional excellence or accomplishment in the area of rehabilitation teaching or vocational rehabilitation.
2. Utilization of new strategies, techniques, or equipment to achieve the independence goals of individuals with visual impairments.
3. Promotion of a positive image for potential employment of individuals who are blind and visually impaired.
4. Promoting the transition of persons who are blind or visually impaired into an independent lifestyle.

Recipients of this award must be members of AR-AER and the award will only be given when an individual with significant merit is nominated. Nominations must refer to specific criteria and should be accompanied by letters of support. Letters of nomination must be from current AER members.

Arkansas Distinguished Advocate Awards (For Groups and Individuals) ("ADAA Boy Awards")

These two awards are designed to honor individuals and organizations, groups, or businesses outside our "traditional" professional field. Contrary to other established awards, these will be announced prior to the state conference. The criteria for the awards are as follows:

1. Nominations for either award can come from any source.
2. Awards recipients are NOT limited to citizens of Arkansas or AER members.
3. The nominated person or group must demonstrate outstanding contributions to the dignity, independence and/or advancement of persons who are visually impaired in Arkansas.
4. The person or group efforts should benefit Arkansans who are blind or visually impaired.

APH Hall of Fame Legends

Guidelines for the AER Board to place individuals on the Hall of Fame Legends Wall at American Printing House for the Blind:

1. The AR-AER Board will vote on who should be honored for the Wall of Legends Plaque.

2. The Honor will not be a yearly award, but will be made at the discretion of the Board.
3. The dollar amount to be paid for the plaque will be determined by the AR-AER Board
4. Any AER member in good standing may submit a nominee to a current AR-AER Board member.
5. Board members may also nominate individuals for this award.

Criteria: In order to be considered for this nomination the chairperson of the Awards Committee should verify the following:

- The nominee must have been retired from his or her primary work in the field of vision for at least five years.
- The nominee's career should have been for at least twenty-five years in duration in the education or rehabilitation fields.
- A nominee should have been a twenty-year active member of AEVH, AAWB, or AER (combinations of these organizations is acceptable).
- An active member is an individual who has attended or presented at state and international conferences on a regular basis, has served on committees, held an office, or served on the Board of AEVH, AAWB, or AER.

Bill Tomlin Scholarship Award

This award was established by the Arkansas Chapter of the Association for Rehabilitation and Education of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AR-AER) to honor the memory of long time AR-AER member and past-president Bill Tomlin. A monetary award will be made each year to a student who is

blind or visually impaired and who will be enrolled in a post-secondary educational or vocational training program for the 2005-2006 school year. Funds will be awarded for the purchase of textbooks, specialized materials or adaptive equipment. The award this year will be in the amount of \$1,000.

Eligibility Criteria:

1. Applicant must be legally blind and enrolled or planning to enroll in a post-secondary or educational program.
2. Applicant must currently be a legal resident of the state of Arkansas.
3. Applicant must submit a signed application with required supporting documents to the AR-AER Awards Committee Chairperson by April 15, 2005.

Applications should be sent to:

Jo Ellen Croft, Awards Committee Chair
9819 Old Arkansas Drive
Roland, AR 72135

Professional Development Workshop

AR-AER continuing education will sponsor the TREKKER hand-on training seminar for O&M specialists and assistive technology instructors on April 29, 2005, at Lions World Services for the Blind (LSWB) from 8 a.m. to 4:30 pm. There will be no charge for AER members and \$25.00 for non-members. The seminar is designed to increase your knowledge of GPS systems for the visually impaired. Dave Wilkinson, a technology expert and assistive technology instructor at LSWB, will present the seminar. Registration is due by April 4. To register for the seminar or for further information contact Lisa Reynolds at 501 664-7100 or lreynolds@lwsb.org.

**Bill Tomlin Scholarship Award
Application Form**

Personal Data:

Name: _____ D.O.B. _____

Address: _____

Phone: Home _____ Other: _____

Cause of Visual Impairment: _____

Visual Acuity: _____

Method of Reading (check all that apply)

Braille _____ Recordings _____ Large Print _____
Regular Print _____ Live Readers _____ Other _____

If other, please explain _____

Educational Background:

Current or most recent school or training facility attended:

Name of School: _____

Address _____

Proposed or Current Field of Study: _____

Cumulative Grade Point Average, if applicable _____
(Based on four point scale)

Supporting Documentation

Autobiography: Include no more than one to two typed written pages listing personal goals, perceived strengths and needs, hobbies, honors, extra-curricular activities, achievements, etc. If you have decided upon a field of study or a particular area of training, indicate why you are interested and your reasons for choosing that particular field of endeavor.

References: Two letters of recommendations from instructors/counselors at schools or facilities, which you have attended.

Transcript: A certified transcript of your grades from the school you are presently attending, or have most recently attended if applicable.

Conditions for Award

1. Proof of acceptance from applicant's choice of post-secondary training site is required before the monetary award can be made.
2. Scholarship recipients will be notified of the award prior to the annual state AR-AER Conference. Public announcement and acceptance of the award will take place at the conference.
3. Monetary awards will be made by AER directly to the post secondary educational or training facility indicated by the applicant. Awards may also be paid directly to specified vendors or agencies for the purchase of adaptive equipment.

Applicant's Signature: _____

DATE: _____