

## Greetings from Nebraska

*Jim Adams, Former AR-AER chapter president*

Corn; corn everywhere and not a drop to drink! Greetings from Nebraska; home of Arbor Day, Mannheim Steamroller, corn, the Huskers, and Apple Jack Festival. I had always heard in Arkansas that it was better to drink your corn; well here we drink the apples. The move for Carol and me has been very exciting, seeing new approaches and innovative ideas in the field of education for visually impaired children. The weather has also been great; I can't believe they ordered unseasonably warm weather for the two new southerners!

It was hard to leave all our great AER friends, but we hope to continue working with "ya all" in the future. Which brings me to this, I have been nominated for the AER International Board, District Two position and I am very excited about the opportunity to represent you and the other states in District Two. Challenging times lie ahead for the AER organization and I hope to help lead our association with the experience and ideas I gained while serving in the Arkansas chapter. When you cast your vote for District Two representative I hope that you will support me in this endeavor.

I look forward to seeing many of you in Snow Bird, Utah next year at our International Conference. Or in Omaha, Nebraska, as we will help host the 2007 National Family Conference with the National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments. Again, please remember to consider me when you vote for the District Two representative for AER.

With warm regards to all my friends,  
Jim Adams

## I'm baaaaack!!!

*Sharon Niemczyk, AR-AER chapter president*

As many of you know Jim Adams has moved to Nebraska. While we wish him well in his new ventures, his leaving left a void in our board. Namely, he was the state president. Along those same lines, Kara Mahan Aaron stepped down as president elect. We wish her the best. That left me. Yikes! The board asked me to complete Jim's term. I will be president until July 1 and then past-president for two years. I will try to serve you well.

Jo Ellen Croft has graciously agreed to complete Kara's term and will be our next chapter president. She will attend AER-Lift in April. It will be held at the Snowbird resort in Snowbird, Utah.

Speaking of Snowbird, the AER International conference will be in Snowbird, Utah in July. It will be a beautiful location for the conference. I hope that you will consider attending.

Many of you know that our Arkansas Chapter submitted a bid to hold the 2010 International Conference here in Little Rock. I am pleased to inform you that we are still in the running and will know something soon. If we get the conference, we will celebrate at the chapter conference in May. If not, we will have the opportunity to visit another exciting city. It is a win/win either way for Arkansas chapter members.

Jim Adams was the AER representative to the Division of Services for the Blind's Board of Directors. I had a call from the Governor's office about filling that position. We submitted two names, Robert Connell from LWSB and Ann Moore from ASB. Both are worthy candidates who are excited about representing you on this important board. We should hear about the appointment soon.

I will close by wishing each of you a happy, healthy 2006.

Sincerely,  
Sharon Niemczyk

## Arkansas AER - Board Members 2005-06

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Kathleen.brown@lrzd.org

### Committee Chairs who are not Board Members

Judy Jewell  
Awards Committee Chair  
Arkansas School for the Blind (ASB)  
jjewell@asb.k12.ar.us

Leonard Ogburn  
Scholarship Committee Chair  
(501) 834-8311  
Suog03@sbcglobal.net

## Nominations Needed

Nominations are now being accepted for the 2006 AER elections. All agencies are encouraged to nominate employees so that the AER Board represents the entire vision field. Nominations are now being accepted for president-elect (requires a six year commitment), secretary, treasurer, and five at large board positions. Please send your nominations to Pam Raspberry at [praspberry@asb.k12.ar.us](mailto:praspberry@asb.k12.ar.us).

**I am only one,  
But still I am one.  
I cannot do everything,  
But still I can do something;  
And because I cannot do everything  
I will not refuse to do the something  
That I can do.**

Edward Everett Hale, friend of Helen Keller  
(*Dedication from the front of Helen and Teacher by  
Joseph P. Lash*)

## AER International Membership Drive January 1 to June 1, 2006

Goal: To increase the total membership of AER by 5 % from January 1, 2006 to June 1, 2006

### Rewards:

#### Chapters:

Chapters who have met this goal will be recognized at the Opening Ceremonies of the 2006 International Conference.

#### Individual Members:

Individual members will receive AER Bucks in the amount of \$5 for each new member they sponsor.

(A new member is defined as someone who has not been a member of AER for 5 years.)

AER Bucks can be redeemed by members for membership renewal, International conference registration and AER products.

## News from International AER International Fund-raiser!

Your AER board has kicked off a fund-raiser to help strengthen AER and to ensure that the organization can continue to offer the benefits that we members expect. As you know AER, like most not-for-profit and many professional organizations, is having difficulty attaining a balanced budget without cutting membership benefits. There is no single action that can be taken to solve this problem, however there are a number of small steps we are taking that will collectively take us out of the "red" and put us back in the "black." For example, we're looking at subleasing our excess office space, merging our newsletter with RE: view, increasing membership, along with other constructive ideas. At its last meeting your International Board also voted to adopt a strategy used by many organizations: to increase donations.

At the September board meeting, all 17 board members made anonymous donations. We hoped for two things:

1. To get 100% participation, reminding people that no amount was too small;
2. To average \$10 a person or \$170. Our results were overwhelming. We had 100% participation and collected \$935.

Most organizations send a donation envelope with renewal notices. AER will start doing this by the first of the year. Many people would like to help AER, their organization, but don't know how. If every member donated \$10 a year to the general operating budget, we would clear over \$40,000 a year. We understand that some people can't afford to donate \$10, but any donation would help.

A successful donation drive will help ensure that AER returns to a balanced budget at the earliest possible time and continues to provide all membership services.

Take the Challenge and make this a successful fund-raiser.

# Professional Development

Reynolds at (501) 664-7100 or [lreynolds@lwsb.org](mailto:lreynolds@lwsb.org) if you have questions or information to share.

In 2005, the AR AER chapter sponsored two successful Trekker training workshops co-presented by Lisa Reynolds and Dave Wilkinson. All participants received six hours of continuing education credit as well as "hands-on experience" with two of the GPS devices for the visually impaired: the Trekker and the BrailleNote GPS. A special thanks goes to Dave Wilkinson as well as Vince Cianfrone, a representative from NanoPac, for lending us extra Trekkers. We are really grateful to Dave! He is always willing to share his time and knowledge to keep us up to date on the latest technology devices.

The professional development committee is also planning to sponsor two workshops in 2006. First of all, Guiding Eyes for the Blind will offer a Distance Learning Guide Dog Seminar at LWSB for eight hours of continuing education credit. This seminar is designed for O&M specialists to learn more about their role in dog guide work and will provide "hands-on training" with a dog guide. We have decided to offer two sessions of this training, once on March 30 and a second time on March 31. Each class is limited to 8 participants, so be certain to reserve your spot as quickly as possible. Secondly, we have scheduled a full day workshop to focus on teaching communication skills for working with the deaf-blind on April 7th. This workshop will be co-presented by Theresa Mays of the Arkansas School for the Deaf and Eugene Bourquin, an independent contractor in the field who frequently works with the Helen Keller National Center. Pre-registration for all of these workshops is mandatory and must be made before the deadline of March 10. Contact Lisa Reynolds with questions and to pre-register.

As of July 1, 2004, all workshops and seminars attended must be pre-approved by ACVREP in order to obtain continuing education credit for attending these activities. Check the website ([www.acvrep.org](http://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

## Cell phones wanted!!!

The Fundraising Committee is busy as always with plans to raise money for our chapter. Our newest project involves collecting unwanted cell phones. We will receive at least 50 cents for each phone we send to the Pace Butler Corporation. This company repairs and recycles the phones and sells them to countries overseas for a profit. Please contact Luanne Blaylock at (501) 831-6300 if you have a phone to donate to our cause. . We should all be disposing of our used cell phones properly to protect the environment so this is a perfect opportunity to get rid of them and help our chapter!

## AR AER 2006 Conference Connect the Dots

Our state conference will be held at the Little Rock Holiday Inn Airport on Monday, May 15 and Tuesday May 16 with registration beginning at 8:00 a.m. We are pleased to welcome Tuck Tinsley from the American Printing House as our keynote speaker. Other seminars will include: Brian Ayres

presenting on technology and Easter Seals, Jay Stiteley discussing airport travel, Dr. Margaret Robinson getting us in touch with functional Braille, Kay Ratzlaff talking about functional vision assessments and infant motor development, Jimmy Jones demonstrating white cane repairs, Sandy Bennett exploring professional compassion, fatigue and burnout, Bill Jacobson getting us online with the University of Arkansas at Little Rock's degree programs in the vision field, Barbara Gunther hooking us up with dog guide travel, and Dave and Dawn Wilkinson updating us on technology. We will update our web page with conference agendas and pre-registration forms shortly, as details become available. General and concurrent sessions will be held from 8:00-4:00 on Monday. Be sure to plan to stay for Monday evening's social where we will be entertained by soloist Lis Geoghegan, enjoy heavy hors d'oeuvres, and participate in the annual drawing. The conference will conclude on Tuesday with the awards luncheon to celebrate professional excellence in our chapter. Mark your calendars and get ready for learning and fun as we connect the dots together.

## VRT List Serve

A new listserv has been established for VRTs to share experiences, ideas, and information to better serve our consumers. This list provides a forum to ask questions, share product information, discuss available and up coming technology, and stay connected with VRTs across the country to serve the ever growing and evolving community of people with vision loss. The list is available to anyone who would like to participate in a respectful and professional manner.

and put "subscribe" in the subject field. Nothing needs to go in the body of the message. You will receive an e-mail back, which you need to reply to (you don't need to add or remove anything in the body of the message). To subscribe through the freelists website go to [www.freelists.org](http://www.freelists.org). Click on the link "find, join or leave a list" (on the left side of the page). Search for visionrehabtherapist, then select the list and enter your e-mail address.

The list is being hosted through [freelists.org](http://freelists.org). There are two ways to subscribe to the list. You can subscribe through e-mail or through the freelists website. To subscribe through e-mail, send a message to [visionrehabtherapist-request@freelists.org](mailto:visionrehabtherapist-request@freelists.org)

If you have any trouble signing on to the list you may e-mail the moderator at [visionrehabtherapist-moderators@freelists.org](mailto:visionrehabtherapist-moderators@freelists.org) or [dietz1112@yahoo.com](mailto:dietz1112@yahoo.com).

## State of the State Update Arkansas School for the Blind

ASB has worked out a process where AER dues can be paid through the payroll and we hope that many of our staff will sign up as new AER members.

have accomplished that goal. We welcome any improvements you can suggest to us.

We are proud of the administrative work done by Sharon Berry to set up the structure for our Birth to Three Program. Betty Parker and Mary Weeks have also worked very hard to put the curriculum in place and made many visitations to parent's homes in the state. Sixteen new babies have been enrolled and judging from the response we have had, we will require additional personnel in the future in order to handle the load. The parents and grand parents of the children have been very excited about the program and their interest remains high. If you have a chance we would love to have you stop by for a visit.

We also are laying the groundwork for a new "Short Term" enrollment program at ASB. It will be a program where students can come to the school for a short length of time for special classes in Braille, O&M, adaptive technology, or any other special need they may have. While attending ASB for the short-term course, the student would remain enrolled in his/her home school and the school district teacher would send assignments for specific academic courses to ASB. The assignments would be taught by ASB certified staff. While the student continued his/her home school academic work, he/she would receive the special training required. At the end of the short-term course, the student would return to the local school district to finish the school year.

Please keep in mind that ASB still provides a low vision evaluation, by Dr. Kenny Doan. Appointments may be set up by calling Teresa Mays at 501.351-5752.

We have worked hard to improve services in the textbook resource center. James and Elaine have worked hard to restructure the whole program in hopes that we can provide better services and we are hopeful that you feel, along with us, that we

## Lions World Services for the Blind

Lions World Services for the Blind has had an exciting year! 48 trainees have graduated from vocational programs, including the new Enterprise Solutions Programming course, which began in February 2005. The center has now served over 8,900 individuals from all 50 states and 57 other countries.

Plans are progressing for the building of their new facilities. Property in downtown Little Rock, South of the Clinton Library and Heifer International's new headquarters, has been secured. If you drive by the intersection of 6<sup>th</sup> and Collins streets, you will see the sign announcing their intended building project.

Several special events have raised money for the center, including the 5<sup>th</sup> annual Vision Award, which this year honored Dr. Jonathan Bates and helped to raise over \$35,000. The Angels of the Blind hosted both the Treat Your Treasure Luncheon and Style Show and the Crazy Shades party and raised close to a combined \$15,000.



## Lighthouse Develops New Product for the US Army

It was an interesting 2005 for the Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind, but it was also very successful. ALB completed its contract with the Defense Supply Center in Philadelphia (DSCP) for the Army brown cotton undershirt. We then went to work immediately on the planning for the new moisture wicking underwear T-shirt. The military had some very specific specifications for the new 100% polyester shirt, so most of the summer was spent on finding the acceptable material, getting pricing, doing cost analysis, making acceptable patterns, retooling some of our equipment and finally getting our samples approved by DSCP. It was quite a process and of course we were not bringing in any money from sales, because DSCP chose not to order any additional brown t-shirts during this period. Therefore, all of the expenses for this planning and development were born by ALB. Of course we will recoup some of these start-up expenses in the price of the new moisture wicking T-shirt. There is some negotiation in the price, but basically the government sets the price they want to pay and we sell at that price. Our first shipment of 29,000 moisture wicking t-shirts was shipped by December 1, 2005. The Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind will manufacture 630,000 moisture wicking t-shirts during the next twelve months. DSCP is now also purchasing again the brown cotton undershirt. So our Sewing Department is very busy.

The Defense Supply Center Philadelphia also released a new contract and orders for utility belts last August. So that department is back in production. Our Paper Department has been busy with several large orders for our memorandum and steno notebooks. These items are used all over the world in US government offices.

The mission of the Arkansas Lighthouse is to provide blind and visually impaired individuals the opportunity to improve their quality of life and independence by providing employment. During this past year fifty-one blind and visually impaired individuals were employed by the Lighthouse manufacturing quality products.

## Educational Services for the Visually Impaired, ESVI

The structure of the ESVI program has changed as of July 1, 2005. Instead of individual service components (preschool, public school and Orientation and Mobility) Vision Consultants now provide services to all ages within smaller service areas. Angyln Franquemont is our new Operations Manager with Cynthia Kelley serving as Office Manager.

By July 2007, all ESVI Consultants will be dually certified in both teaching the Visually Impaired and Orientation and Mobility.

We are working closely with the newly developed Technology and Curriculum Access Center at Easter Seals to meet the adaptive technology needs of students in public schools.

## News from the Arkansas Literacy Alliance

*The Arkansas Literacy Alliance for Children with Visual Impairments* is an organization committed to the early development of literacy skills for all children who are blind or visually impaired. Since its inception in the 2003-04 school year, the alliance has distributed a number of *Spinoza Literacy Kits* to preschool children throughout the state. *Spinoza* is a stuffed bear that "talks and sings" through a hidden speaker and 4-track cassette that plays 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. During the 2004-05 school year, the alliance participated in a cooperative effort with National Braille Press to provide *Braille Book Bags* to each pre-school child in the state of Arkansas identified as a potential reader of Braille.

This fall the alliance was pleased to provide an additional 23 *Spinoza Literacy Kits* to young children who are visually impaired throughout the state. Included with the kits are valuable resources for

parents and teachers to assist in meeting the unique literacy needs of children with visual impairments. These kits are being distributed through Educational Services for the Visually Impaired and the Arkansas School for the Blind, Early Childhood Parent Resource Center.

The *Arkansas Literacy Alliance* is a non-profit organization run by volunteers who rely solely on fundraising and donations for their activities. If you are interested in sponsoring a *Spinoza Literacy Kit*, or would like to donate to the alliance, contact Jo Ellen Croft at 501-779-2030 for more information.

## Divisional Services for the Blind

The Division of Services for the Blind was very busy in the last 12 months. For many years, DSB was a division of the Arkansas Department of Human Services. After a recent merger, DSB became part of the Arkansas Department of Health and Human Services. We had a new interesting challenge of working with consumers that evacuated to Arkansas due to Hurricane Katrina. These consumers ended up relocating all over the state. We had referrals involving hurricane evacuees from Harrison all the way to Texarkana and in many towns in between.

DSB is happy to report that we had another record-breaking year for VR consumers this year with 344 successful vocational rehabilitation closures. Two DSB vocational rehabilitation counselors retired in the last year. We have a new counselor in Texarkana and plan to hire in the Pine Bluff office soon. We continue to look for additional funding for the rehabilitation teaching program for seniors. Our rehabilitation teachers working with seniors continue to cover large geographic areas and have less money for adaptive devices.

Lastly, we want to publicly thank former AER President Jim Adams for all his hard work on the DSB Board in the past few years. We miss his input, but we are looking forward to having two AER members join our DSB Board in 2006.

## AR-AER Awards

The Arkansas AER Awards Committee presents awards on an annual basis to recognize outstanding professionals and advocates within the field of blindness and visual impairment. Nominations for each of the following awards and scholarships are considered: APH Hall of Fame Legends, J. Max Woolly Award, Joyce Ogburn Award, Tom Phifer Award, Arkansas Distinguished Advocate Awards and the Bill Tomlin Scholarship. The criterion for each award is listed below. 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. Nominations are currently being accepted for 2006 awards, which will be presented at our annual state conference on May 16. Nominations and support letters will be accepted through Friday, April 14<sup>th</sup>. Nominations for Hall of Fame are due in by March 1, 2006. All correspondence should be sent to:

Judy Jewell  
Awards Committee Chair  
316 Beechwood Ave.  
Little Rock, AR 72205

### 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 2006-2007 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 14, 2006.

**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 type 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, May 16, 2006 at 12:00 p.m.
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:** \_\_\_\_\_