50 Years and Counting

"I don’t know what would have happened to me if I hadn't been able to hear."

Ray Charles

AZ AER SPRING WORKSHOP
APRIL 1, 2016
Foundation for Blind Children, Phoenix

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FALL CONFERENCE
November 3 - 4, 2016
Hilton Garden Inn at Pivot Point, Yuma
Arizona AER
Board of Directors

**President:** Tamara Bishop-Amavilah

**Vice President:** Becky Hole

**Secretary:** Anna Miller

**Treasurer:** Jenny Wheeler

**Past President:** Rajiv Panikkar

**Board Members at Large:**
Ruth Parsons, Joanne Szabo, Christine Moreno, Jean M Green, Dr. Sungye Hong

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**Table of Contents**

President’s Message………………………3
Margaret Blum Award………………………4
AZ AER Board Members…………………..5-7
AZ AER Committees………………………8
AZ AER Scholarships and Grant Info……..9
Braille Challenge 2016 ………………..10-12
Perkins Pandas………………………..13
AZ Educator moves to APH…………....14
FBC News and Events……………………15-18
University of Arizona News……………19-21
SAAVI Update…………………………22
Business Enterprise Program……………23
AZ Braille Consortium…………………24
Survey Monkey Results (Dec. 2015)……25-26

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**The AERizona View** is the official publication of the Arizona Chapter of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AZ AER).

Editor: Jean Miller Green

**Contributors:** Cody Franklin, Drs. Sungye, Rosenblum and Topor. Mike Armstrong, Diane Shifflett, Anna Miller, Tamara Bishop-Amavilah.

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**To join** the AZ AER member listserv, send an email message with “Subscribe AZAER” to:

listserv@listserv.arizona.edu

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Phoenix, Arizona
Greetings AZ AER Members and Friends,

I’m looking forward to seeing many of you at our spring workshop on April 1st at the Foundation for Blind Children. We have a nice mix of presenters and topics. Dr. Lynne Noon will have a general session on understanding visual field tests. Concurrent topics include a three hour workshop on cane repair and reconstruction, UEB, CVI, the Amazon Echo, adjusting to vision loss by staying active and pursuing outdoor activities, braille music, accessible apps, textured learning for students with multiple disabilities, and more. For the spring workshop we have a special rate for any paraprofessionals and braille transcribers who would like to attend of $30.

At our fall conference we established an advocacy committee. Our former board member, Joanne Szabo, is the chair. We would really love for more non-board members to join the committee to help identify and address educational and community issues that affect individuals with visual impairments and the professionals who serve them. This committee has the potential to make a big impact in our field in Arizona, and we need your help. Think of issues that you, your clients or students have and do encounter frequently. Just one example for me is the new Desert Sky Transit Center at the Desert Sky Mall in Phoenix. I have an O&M client who is totally blind and who would like to take the bus to that mall. Buses used to pull into the mall and stop along a sidewalk that leads up most of the way toward a mall entrance. Now the transit center, which has braille and large print signage, and even texturing on the station floor to help locate bus stops, is off to the side of the mall, completely unconnected. My client can use the transit center to connect to a couple other local bus routes, but can no longer independently access the mall, as it would require walking across a very long stretch of open parking lot. Just food for thought. If you aren’t interested in advocacy, we have many other committee possibilities. We need your help! If you are interested, please contact me or another board member.

Looking ahead our next fall conference will be 11/3-4/16 in Yuma at the Pivot Point Conference Center. The 2017 fall conference will be at the Poco Diablo Resort in Sedona on 11/3-4/17.

Your AZ AER President
Tamara Bishop-Amavilah
Jenny Wheeler was awarded the Margaret Blum Award at the November 2015 AER Fall Conference in Tucson. Becky Hole, last year's recipient, presented the award to Jenny.

Jenny is a teacher of students with visual impairments, orientation and mobility specialist, and assistive technology specialist for Desert Valleys Regional Cooperative. She worked for 8 years at the Foundation for Blind Children in the media, adult services, preschool, and itinerant departments, and continues to support FBC’s braille, remote instruction, recreation, and college prep services. Jenny received a bachelor’s degree in music performance from Arizona State University, completed her studies in visual impairment through the University of Arizona, and is pursuing continuing education through the University of Northern Colorado.

Previous year recipients were on hand for a group photo.
Meet your AZ AER Board of Directors

PLEASE WELCOME OUR NEW AND RETURNING AZ-AER BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR 2016-2017

PRESIDENT: TAMARA BISHOP-AMAVILAH is an Arizona native, raised mostly in Tucson. She is a teacher of the visually impaired and a certified orientation and mobility specialist. She received her Master’s degree at the University of Arizona. She has worked as a TVI in a variety of positions at the Foundation for Blind Children since 1993, as well as at the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind for three years before that. She likes to do O&M with adults, and is just starting part time O&M contracting with the Rehabilitation Services Administration. She has mentored many TVI student teachers over the years. Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with her husband, Voxi, and daughter, Madie; reading; watching movies; traveling; and watching soccer, especially her daughter’s teams and the English Premier League.

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Term Begins: 11-6-15    Term Ends: 2017

VICE-PRESIDENT: BECKY HOLE is originally from LaCrosse, Wisconsin. She is the youngest of 4 girls and was raised by her mom. She credits her mother for her interest in working with students with disabilities because she was an instructional assistant in special education. Becky has been a teacher for 24 years. She received her undergraduate degree in Physical Education and Adapted PE from the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse. In 1991 she moved to Yuma and worked as an Adapted PE teacher for 8 years in the Crane School District. After becoming certified as a Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments, through the University of Arizona in 1999, she began working for ASDB/Southwest Regional Cooperative as an itinerant TVI. In 2003 Becky became a certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist from the University of Arizona. Then she earned a Master’s Degree in Educational Leadership/Principalship from Northern Arizona University in 2009. Becky currently works as a CTVI, COMS and Supervising Teacher at the Southwest Regional Cooperative. She has been an AER member since 2002. She enjoys spending most of her free time at home with her “furry kids”- 2 dogs, Bosko and Bentley and 6 cats. Becky also loves traveling across the country to spend time with friends and family.

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Term Begins: 11-6-15    Term Ends: 2017

SECRETARY: ANNA MILLER A lifelong Arizonan, Ms. Miller grew up in the historic mining town of Bisbee. After receiving a Bachelor of Arts in Family Studies and Human Development from the University of Arizona in 2001, Ms. Miller began volunteering at the Southern Arizona Association for the Visually Impaired (SAAVI), and subsequently returned to the U of A for graduate work in Rehabilitation Counseling. While in her masters program, Ms. Miller completed a counseling practicum at the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and the Blind of which she is an alumnus. Upon receiving her counseling certification in 2005, Ms. Miller was employed at SAAVI for five years where she taught group and individual classes in a variety of subjects such as job readiness and retention, adaptive daily living skills, and access to technology. Upon receiving her certification in 2010 in Vision Rehabilitation Therapy and co-building a sister agency for SAAVI in Yuma, Arizona, Ms. Miller accepted a promotion to act as the lead administrator for the SAAVI Yuma campus in 2011. While she loved her work at SAAVI, Ms Miller was also pining for the Southern Arizona monsoon season, and returned to Tucson where she is currently employed with the Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration as an itinerant Rehabilitation Instructional Specialist. In her spare time, Ms. Miller enjoys reading, cooking, and traveling to such diverse places as New Zealand and New York City.

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Term Begins: 3-26-15    Term Ends: 2016
AZ AER Board Member Bios Continued

TREASURER: JENNY WHEELER is a Certified Teacher of Visually Impaired students, orientation and mobility specialist, and assistive technology specialist for Desert Valleys Regional Cooperative. She served for 8 years at the Foundation for Blind Children in the media, adult services, preschool, and itinerant departments, and continues to support FBC’s braille, remote instruction, recreation, and college prep services. She completed her vision resource studies through the University of Arizona and is pursuing continuing education through the University of Northern Colorado.

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Term Begins: 11-14-14 Term Ends: 2016

BOARD MEMBER: KEN BALL is a Certified Teacher of the Visually Impaired. He is originally from Girard, Illinois. He has been a teacher of the visually impaired for over 30 years. He received his Bachelor’s of Arts in Political Science from Southern Illinois University – Carbondale in 1981. Ken worked as a Rehabilitation Teacher for the Illinois Department of Rehabilitation Services in Northern Illinois for about two years. He moved to Tucson and started working for the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and the Blind in 1986. Ken graduated from the University of Arizona with a Master’s of Arts in Vision/Rehabilitation Education in 1991. He worked on the Tucson campus in a variety of positions for 26 years. He retired from ASDB in August of 2012 to return to Illinois to assist his father on the family farm. Upon his father’s death he returned to Arizona and accepted a position as an Itinerant Teacher, working for the Eastern Highlands Regional Cooperative in Holbrook. Ken enjoys returning to Illinois for the Summer to work on the farm and spending time with his two grandchildren, Ethan and Madison, who live in Tucson.

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Term Begins: 11-6-15 Term Ends: 2017

BOARD MEMBER: PAMELA GOTTARD has a rich and varied educational and professional background: She attended Northern Illinois University, with a BS in Elementary and Special Ed.; Texas Woman’s University, with a MS Ed in Educational Diagnostics and Special Education; CSUS – Stanislaus, with a certification in Administration; and U of A, with a TVI certification. Pam has taught in several states, including Illinois, Washington, Texas, California and Arizona, and in many different populations which include learning disabled, cognitively impaired, emotionally disturbed, autistic, visually impaired, and hearing impaired. Pam has been employed with ASDB since 2004 and a member of AER from 2003 to the present. She was listed in Who’s Who Among American Teachers, 1996.

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Term Begins: 11-6-15 Term Ends: 2017

BOARD MEMBER: JEAN MILLER GREEN holds a dual Bachelors’ degree in Elementary and Special Education from Arizona State University, and will graduate from the University of Arizona Teacher of the Visually Impaired Masters’ program in May of 2016. Jean holds several professional positions, include Braille Technician Specialist, Vision Services Inventory Control Technician, and Assistive Technology Inventory Control Technician. Jean has been a member of the Arizona chapter of AER since March of 2014, she is also professionally affiliated with several other organizations including AmeriCorps, CTEVBI, Phoenix Block Watch, and Barrow Cleft and Craniofacial Center.

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BOARD MEMBER: SUNGGYE HONG

Dr. Sunggye Hong is an Associate Professor of the Department of Disability and Psychoeducational Studies and the program coordinator of the visual impairments teacher training program. He received both his master’s and doctoral degrees from The University of Arizona in Special Education/Education of Students with Visual Impairments. He has conducted research in the areas of braille reading, assistive technology, and expanded core curriculum of students with visual impairments. His research agenda is aimed at promoting equal access to educational opportunities including curriculum materials, classroom activities, and other school programs of students who are blind or visually impaired with or without additional disabilities. Dr. Hong teaches classes on braille, literacy development, Nemeth code, and instructional strategies and adaptations of educating students with visual impairments. He has been an active member for AER from year 1999 and served for Northern California Chapter Board member for the last 3 years. He is affiliated with AER DIV17, CEC and CTEBVI.

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Term Begins: 11-14-14 Term Ends: 2016

BOARD MEMBER: RUTH PARSONS

is a Certified Teacher of Visually Impaired students, Orientation and Mobility Specialist, and a certified Supervisor. She started volunteering at ASDB in 1981 and was hired in 1987. Ruth has had many different position during her time with ASDB and is currently the Director for Eastern Highland Regional Cooperative.

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(email) ruth.parsons@asdb.az.gov
Term Begins: 3-22-13 Term Ends: 2015

BOARD MEMBER: JULIE ROCK

was born in Phoenix, Arizona and is a graduate of ASU with a Bachelors in Agribusiness. She received her Master’s in Vision Rehabilitation Therapy from Western Michigan University and re-certified in March, 2015. Julie celebrated 5 years with AER this past year. She has been an independent contractor for the State and is currently working for the Foundation for Blind Children as the Team Leader of the Adult Comprehensive Program. Julie has been instructing, assessing, and making equipment recommendations for the ADL and Technology components of the Adult Program since 2011. On her time off, Julie trains and competes with dogs and enjoys spending time with her many animals. She and her husband of 33 years have two wonderful daughters.

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AZ AER Committees are all That!

ARCHIVES
Members procure and collect materials and information relating to the business of Arizona AER and its precursor organizations; plan activities to commemorate important dates in the Chapter history (such as the 50th Anniversary and the Bluhm Project!) and disseminate information to the membership about Chapter history through the newsletter, programs and special events.

FINANCE
Members prepare an annual budget, meet at least two times per year to review the financial status of the Chapter; review the audit report sent to AER International; make recommendations to the Board of Directors regarding the level of existing balances, investments, and expenditures.

MEMBERSHIP
Members maintain Chapter records on membership and provide written reports to the Board of Directors and membership at meetings; develop annual plan of activities for recruitment of new members; contact lapsed members; develop a welcome packet for new members; write newsletter articles on new members.

NOMINATIONS
Members coordinate and procure nominations for officer and director positions for the Annual Meeting elections; present the slate to the membership at the first business meeting at the Annual Meeting; accept nominations from the floor; conduct the election, count ballots and present the results of the election to the membership during the second business meeting at the annual meeting.

PROGRAM
Members plan two conferences annually – a one-day conference and an Annual Meeting/Conference for 1½ to 2 days planned in conjunction with business meetings; submit budget requests to Board of Directors for approval; coordinate all aspects of the program and facilities before and during the programs; evaluate programs and develop recommendations for future programs.

SCHOLARSHIP
Members maintain records and solicit applications for annual Student Merit Scholarship, Consumer Grants and Professional Mini Grant. Members will also revise grant and scholarship applications as needed and make recommendations as to procedural changes for grants and scholarships.

The important work of the Arizona AER is done by an all-volunteer board and committees.

Have you considered serving on a committee?

Please contact President Tamara Bishop-Amivilah tbishop-amavilah@seeitourway.org to join a committee today!
Arizona AER has scholarships and grants for students and professionals!

By Diane Shifflett/ Jean M Green

Did you know that the Arizona Chapter of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired has three types of financial support for members, or individuals with visual impairments who are sponsored by a member? There is a Consumer Grant, a Student Merit Scholarship and a Professional Mini Grant. Visit the Arizona AER website (www.azaer.aerbvi.org/scholarships) for downloadable applications, or contact Anna Miller amiller@azdes.gov for more information.

CONSUMER GRANT:
AZAER will award up to $200 for an activity or event that will enhance an individual with a visual impairment’s quality of life. This could include, but is not limited to, participating in a workshop or conference, taking a class, traveling, or purchasing technological equipment or other products. The applicant should either be a member of AZAER or nominated by a member.

STUDENT MERIT SCHOLARSHIP:
AZAER offers a $500 Student Merit Award recognizing an outstanding student with a documented visual impairment who is between the ages of 4-22 and enrolled in a primary, secondary or post-secondary educational program. The application must be accompanied by a letter of recommendation from the student’s Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI), who is a member of AER. This one-time scholarship may be used to attend educational programs outside of the current educational setting or for college education expenses such as tuition, travel, books, and supplies.

PROFESSIONAL MINI GRANT:
The Arizona chapter of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AZAER) offers a Professional Mini Grant of up to $500 for an AER member in good standing. The grant may be used by an AZAER Division to host a workshop or conference, send a division member to a conference, publish a newsletter, or purchase books or equipment that will benefit division members.
Arizona Students Compete in 2016 Regional Braille Challenge

By Diane Shifflett

Almost 70 students showed up on Leap Day (February 29, 2016) to compete in the annual Arizona Regional Braille Challenge held in Tucson on the campus of the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and the Blind.

A whole day of reading and writing braille — charts and graphs, spelling, proofreading, speed typings — and no one complained!

Tucson Unified School District’s Lead Teacher of the Visually Impaired, Stephen Goudinoff, serving as the Master of Ceremonies — dressed in his signature pink bowtie and suit in his persona as Professor Confidence — and kicking off the day’s activities in the Berger Performing Arts Center with music, welcome speeches from Kelly Creasy, the principal of the School for the Blind, and Diane Shifflett, teacher of the visually impaired and member of the Braille Challenge Steering Committee.

The theme of the 2016 Braille Challenge event was Legos — students were broken into groups by popular Lego brick colors — and one extra event included a Lego building table. Community participation in the event was huge — University of Arizona’s pep band welcomed people at registration with (very loud) peppy tunes, as well as kicking off the ceremony on stage. Davis-Monthan Air Force Base brought a robot for students to check out, students in Boston sent artwork and created an audio description of the artwork using a QR code mounted on foam board; trivia contests, raffle prizes, an obstacle course and pilates class offered by the ASDB Orientation and Mobility team.

The overall winner — the most points scored over all four events — was sixth grade student at ASDB Joey Parra. First and Second Prizes were awarded in all four categories.

Interested in sending a student to the Braille Challenge next year? Or becoming a member of the steering committee? Or volunteering the day of the event? Contact AZ AER member Christine Moreno at christine.moreno@asdb.az.gov.
Braille Challenge Steering Committee
And Professor Confidence

(l. to r.) Diane Shifflett, Elizabeth Webb, Christine Moreno, Hayward (dog), Penny Rosenblum, Peg Hartman, Deb Hartz and Stephen Goudinoff as “Professor Confidence.”

Photo by student E.K.
More Than Meets the Eye Art Exhibit--Stop by the ASDB library in Tucson to experience this hands-on exhibit developed by high school students from Needham, Massachusetts, who wanted to showcase art for people with visual impairments.

Each artist created a unique piece that is touchable. You can listen to the artists describe their art using a QR code on foam core at the bottom of each piece. There are also print/braille descriptions to read. The artists would LOVE to know what you think. You can make a recording or write a note to share your experience examining their art.

Exhibit will be in library until April 8.

The art is from the Needham Red Cross Club, led by Heather Harris.
Perkins Panda is my bear!

By Diane Shifflett

Librarian Peg Hartman first introduced me to the Perkins Panda kit. I checked it (him) out from the ASDB Library for my public school students. The bear, and the books that go along with it, as well as the hands-on items (blanket, cups, plates) for a picnic are marvelous for engaging students at many levels: A third grade boy got a kick out of setting up a picnic for three of us (student, teacher, bear) and practiced his typing with words from the books that he was struggling to read. A sixth grade girl refused to look at books and would push them away — until the book about Perkins Panda came along, with fuzzy and soft textures, tactual elements on high contrast pages — and now she turns pages, anticipates the story, and enjoys the crinkle when she squeezes Perkins’ feet. Of course a pre-school student enjoys the bear, and for our Orientation and Mobility lesson, she has to find the bear, and then we sit down and work on reading and writing.

The Tucson Unified School District recently received a mini-grant from the Arizona Blind and Deaf Children’s Foundation to purchase two Perkins Panda kits. We gave one to the teachers who work in the Direct Link program, who work with students in their homes, some of them with visual impairments. Many of these students are confined to a bed or wheelchair, often on oxygen or other restrictions. When Perkins Panda shows up, however, it’s time for reading and fun! The kit includes a cassette tape — we hope that this will soon be available as a DVD or MP3 — and is a beautiful, thoughtful series of three books by Odds Bodkin.
Arizona Educator Gets Big Job at APH

By Diane Shifflett

Dorinda Rife, former principal at the Arizona State School for the Deaf and the Blind (Tucson, AZ), and former Executive Director of National Educational Programs at Perkins School for the Blind (Watertown, MA) is now the Vice President of Educational Services and Product Development at the American Printing House for the Blind! (Louisville, KY).

APH is delighted to have Dorinda Rife join their team, and posted part of her personal statement on their website:

“I headed out to my first student assessment armed with an APH Light Box and Level I Materials, as well as a blue carton containing the Diagnostic Assessment Procedure (DAP). Brand new and inexperienced, I felt strangely confident carrying tools that I had learned to use as a student teacher and that were considered state-of-the-art. APH and I have grown up through the years, moving into the digital age and enabling our students to participate alongside their sighted peers with graphing calculators, downloaded tactile graphics, and electronic textbooks. I am eager to apply what I have learned to support and grow APH’s mission.”
FBC News and Events

Cane Quest at FBC

On Saturday, January 30th there were 17 contestants and 95 volunteers participating in the 2nd annual Arizona Regional Cane Quest event held at FBC. While the contest was taking place, parents were invited to short workshops in braille, cooking, O&M and also a support group. In the afternoon while the scoring room was hard at work tabulating the results everyone got to learn about beep kickball.

Cane Quest® is not a race- it's more of a rally. Students earn points by independently following audio instructions to complete a half-mile route throughout the community. To succeed, they must know their cardinal directions, make correct turns right or left, safely cross streets, and use proper safe-travel techniques and cane skills. Junior high and high school contestants navigate a route off campus, and are monitored at all times by certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists, and also are accompanied one-on-one by a trained "shadow" to insure they stay on route. Younger contestants in grades 3-6 team up with a blindfolded parent or volunteer sighted adult and compete as a team as part of the “Scouts’ Route” obstacle course on the campus where the event is held. The route consists of stations were Scouts are scored and awarded 1-4 coins which they redeem for prizes. Here are the winners:

Scouts (3-6 grade): 1st Cesar Yanez, 2nd Yessalyn Perez, 3rd Malia Suhr

Explorers (7-9 grade): 1st Danna Rivera-Carreon, 2nd Jorge Castro, 3rd Josselyne Gallegos

Trailblazers (10-12 grade): 1st Scott Marlow, 2nd Marilyn Villa

Thank you Cane Quest committee and everyone who came and helped out. It was such a wonderful event and a great opportunity for TVIs and O&Ms to reconnect and earn professional development credit while volunteering. Please consider signing up to volunteer for Cane Quest 2017. If you would like more information please visit www.canequest.org
Scott is walking on the sidewalk as Spencer trails behind as his “shadow”.

Students head to the stage on a red carpet underneath an arch made by volunteers holding up canes.

Marilyn showing her “silver” medal.

Cane Quest U of A Graduate Student volunteers with Drs. Topor and Zwald at FBC in Phoenix.
FBC Summer Programs

Once again, the Foundation for Blind Children will be offering the Sports, Habilitation, Art & Recreation program (SHARP) Summer Camp.

The program is from June 6th-June 30th, Monday-Thursday from 9am to 2pm.

The summer camp is a four week long program that focuses on the following areas:

SPORTS- We utilize the brand new FBC Pulliam Gymnasium for rock climbing, sports, fitness and games!

ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING (ADL)- Learn about money and time management, cleaning, party planning, hygiene, cooking and more!

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY & SCIENCE- Explore the technological world from iPads to computer braille and participate in exciting science experiments!

EXPANDED CORE CURRICULUM (ECC)- Advocacy, career exploration, braille and O&M instruction through fun, hands on activities!

The cost of the program is $125 per week and financial assistance is available for qualified families. SHARP Summer Camp is also a DDD & ESY qualified program.

Registration will be available March 1st- May 1st online www.seeitourway.org or by phone 602-337-8259. For more details on SHARP Summer Camp, including participant criteria, please visit our website www.seeitourway.org.

Teen to Work
June 10th- July 21st 2016

The Teen-to-Work program is all about learning what jobs match one's abilities and interests, and how to get a job. Participants will have real life experience in working and living on their own.

The Teen-to-Work program is a six (6) week residential program where participants live in dorms on campus at Arizona State University. Training includes orientation & mobility, daily living skills and career education. Many recreational opportunities are provided such as camping, goalball, beep baseball, challenge courses, water-skiing, self-defense, rafting and more!

Program participants will learn:
• How to write resumes and explore job options
• How to apply for a job and prepare for a job interview
• Gain job experience with a paid internship
• Independent living skills such as cooking and cleaning
• Navigate around the ASU's campus, use of light rail & public transportation

Cost:
The Teen-to-Work program is funded by Rehabilitation Services Administration, Vocational Rehabilitation(VR) Program. With a referral to the program from a VR counselor, qualified VR applicants can attend FREE of charge. All activities and supplies will be provided.

Application:
If you know someone who might be interested in the program, their VR counselor will assist them in the application process.
Who’s New at the FBC Media Center in Phoenix?

(l. to r.) John, Jared, Norma, Christina, Michelle, Nancy

Hello Arizona AER I would like to introduce myself, Jared Leslie, I’m the new Director of the Media Center at the Foundation for Blind Children or AIRC. I want to thank Arizona AER for the opportunity to introduce my staff who you’ll be working with.

Nancy Raspiller, is our braille transcriber, she deals with the textbook services and the volunteer management of our textbook production. She also assists and supports our braille on demand efforts.

Norma Begay, is a media technician, she handles the Federal Quota program.

And now for the new names:

Cristina Quintana, previously a para-Educator here on the FBC campus is a media specialist in charge of purchase orders and in flow and out flow of supplies. She took over Joanne’s position.

Michelle Barney, is our Braille Technician in charge of the physical production of the Braille books and supports the efforts of volunteers. Michelle was previously an employee of the SHARP program and is a great addition to the Media Center Team.

John Drake, is the Large Print Specialist, he handles the requests for large print format production and Electronic files.

This is our team that works Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm

If you ever have any questions please do not hesitate to reach out to me either through email (jleslie@seeitourway.org) or you can call me at 602-678-5816.

Lastly I would like to update you on the construction that is being competed in the Mofford Building, where the Media Center is housed on the Central Campus of FBC. We are waiting for the final stages of the flooring to be delivered and installed due to be finished by the end of March. We appreciate your patience with the construction and changes and look forward to the end of construction.
We hope that our update finds everyone having a great start to their spring. As always we have been busy at U of A! We’d like to take a few minutes to share our news with all of our AZ AER colleagues.

Cane Quest & U of A Graduate Students

On January 30, 2016, sixteen U of A students in Dr. Irene Topor’s and Dr. Kathy Zwald’s Phoenix and Tucson O&M for Teachers course participated in the Cane Quest® event at the Foundation for Blind Children in Phoenix. Cane Quest is a challenging orientation and mobility contest developed for students in grades 3-12 by Braille Institute of America, Inc. The middle and high school contestants were given auditory instructions and challenged to complete secret routes in the community using proper travel techniques and appropriate cane skills. The elementary school contestants teamed up with a sighted adult to navigate a route that demonstrated mastery of basic orientation and mobility skills and proper human guide techniques, within the boundaries of a school or agency. Most of the U of A students shadowed a contestant as s/he participated in the events. Other students kept the “store” open for Cane Quest contestants to turn in their hard earned tokens for prizes.

Dr. Kathy Zwald also taught beep baseball to contestants and siblings after the Cane Quest event. Groups were first formed to learn to kick and retrieve the ball; to localize the ball by sound; and to localize the sound of the bases. A modified version of a beep baseball game was played with many of the contestants and their brothers and sisters. Several U of A students played the game and assisted Cane Quest contestants to locate the bases and kicked balls.

Here’s what some of the U of A students had to say about the experience:

“One thing that really jumped out at me that I never thought of was when I was walking her across the major intersection at 7th St. and Northern using human guide. I told her, “Ok, we are heading West on Northern.” She said “Yeah, I can tell because the sun is on my left side of my face.” Something so simple that you don’t think of as a person with vision!

“I noticed the participants that performed best at the tasks tended to ask questions and requested clarification of the task at hand. To be an independent person with a visual impairment, self-confidence and being fearless are important skills to acquire”.
Cane Quest Continued…

“One of the highlights of the day was when M and I were walking down Northern towards 7th Street. She had to cross an intersection without human guide and we started and M made it across without any help. When M stepped on the sidewalk she jumped up and said 'This is my first time crossing the street!! Thank you.' and she gave me a hug!”

Overall, a grand time was had by all participating in Cane Quest! Many U of A students vowed to return next year to volunteer again in this outstanding event.

U of A Future Teachers

At the U of A we are busy training a new group of future teachers. In December, 4 new TVIs graduated. Guess what? They each have begun their career as a teacher of students with visual impairments. Congratulations to Cyndi, Jennifer, Jon, and Laura!

Cyndi is employed in Mt. Diablo Unified School District in California. Cyndi shares, “Things are challenging, but very exciting at the same time. I am enjoying getting to know my students and their families. The team is wonderful to work with and we are enjoying being able to collaborate with each other regarding our students.”

Jennifer has been hired by Catholic Charities of Maine, Educational Services for Blind and Visually Impaired Children where she did her internship in the fall 2015 semester. Jennifer is enjoying her new job and enjoys having the opportunity to work with many students across school districts and settings. She appreciates the challenge of designing a curriculum that is suited to each student's individual needs.

Laura is working with the team at the Foundation for Blind Children and provides services in northern Arizona. Now that there is snow on the ground up north, we are betting she is missing our lovely Tucson weather.

Jon is finalizing his employment paperwork with Southeast Regional Co-Op and will soon be able to say he is an ASDB TVI.

The U of A faculty members all enjoyed working with these very fine December graduates and are excited to welcome them as our colleagues into the field.

Sincerely,

Sunggye, Irene, Penny, and Antoinette
U of A Graduate Student Receives a Scholarship to Attend the AFB Conference in D.C.

Contributors: Jean Green, Garrett Pendergast

Garrett Pendergast, a graduate student in the U of A TVI program, was chosen to receive a Delta Gamma Foundation Graduate Student Fellowship Award to attend the 2016 AFB Leadership Conference.

“They had a breakfast in our honor (other Gamma fellows as well) and recognized all of us at a special luncheon.” Garrett said.

With generous support from the Delta Gamma Foundation, AFB solicited nominations from universities nationwide for the 2016 fellowship program. U of A instructors randomly selected Garrett from a pool of twelve master’s candidates.

“I was nominated by U of A and selected by AFB”, said Garrett.

The conference is held on March 3-5 2016 at the Crystal Gateway Marriott, just minutes from Washington, DC. Delta Gamma Fellows receive conference registration (including access to all conference events, a $275.00 value), and up to three nights at the conference hotel. Additional travel expenses will be offset with a travel reimbursement of up to $500.00, provided after the conference, for transportation and meals.

Good Luck Garrett!
AER and SAAVI are expecting more
Blind children and youth are achieving more
And then they are becoming more!
Expect More, Achieve More, Become More with SAAVI.

SAAVI is a non-profit organization with offices in Phoenix, Tucson and Yuma. SAAVI Saturday programming takes place in Tucson and Phoenix, and in Phoenix the focus is on health and wellness.

We are running a variety of sports clinics in the Phoenix area that are totally free to blind students and want to make sure that your students are aware of this great opportunity!

Health and Wellness Coordinator, Mike Armstrong is managing the programs to include sports such as beep baseball, goal ball, Samurai sword challenges, karate and surfing – just to name a few – but one of the most important aspects of these programs is that participants will be meeting other blind students in the Phoenix area.

Here is a story about one of our participants in the program:

Nine year old Nikki took part in one of our Hike and Bike events. Nikki’s Mom brought her to the event with some reservations. Nikki had lived a fairly sheltered life and both her family and she were nervous about attending. Sometimes it is best to just jump in with both feet, and after we talked about what we were going to accomplish that day, we headed up the trail! As we started to hike we had a slight rain come down and Nikki became quite scared. We worked with Nikki on getting past the drizzle and she hiked on. When we came to the activity of tandem cycling, again Nikki became quite hesitant. Once again she gave it a try and even seemed to enjoy herself. We weren’t sure if Nikki and her mom would come back to the program because they were both so unsure and nervous but the next event - here they came! The Mom told me how Nikki would not stop talking about her "adventure" with SAAVI. She even called her grandparents eight times to tell them about her experience. Nikki is a regular at SAAVI Saturday events in Phoenix and is now a member of our Martial Arts program. Nikki and her mom are now able to talk with other students and parents who may be nervous about coming out.

This is just one of many examples of how SAAVI Children and Youth programming is giving blind students the confidence and skills to become mentors to other blind students, to learn about how critical health and wellness is in their lives and creating memories and friendships that will last forever.

For more information about our programming or to join our mailing list of events please contact Mike Armstrong at marmstrong@saavi.us or Shannon Kemlo at skemlo@saavi.us

“Never Let the Fear of Striking Out Get In Your Way.”  Babe Ruth

Expect More, Achieve More, Become More With SAAVI
News from the Business Enterprise Program (BEP)
Part of Services for the Blind, Visually Impaired and Deaf (SBVID) portion of RSA

By Anna Miller, MA, CRC, CVRT

Below are some highlights about BEP from 2015:

In 2015 the program blind vendors had the highest total program revenues since 2011 ($15.7 million); and was nearly $500k higher than 5 year average for annual revenues

Median annual income of blind vendors highest in program history ($55.2k); median income has increased year over year for 5 straight years with 8.11% increase in FFY 15 (following 27.76% increase in FFY 14)

The agency completed site surveys on 187 new merchandising locations for vending, food service, or other types of revenue opportunities. This is the highest number of site surveys completed in a fiscal year in over a decade.

The program and blind vendors were featured in multiple news stories in print, TV, and digital media across the state.

The BEP completed a 2 month test of vending machines being placed in DES waiting rooms. Previously machines were only available in staff areas, but with the addition of these new machines, visitors were able to enjoy snacks and beverages while they waited for appointments. This also highlighted the success of DES in featuring a former VR client who had become successfully employed in their own business, and could be a role model for others.

5 new candidates completed Hadley/NFBEI provided training in 2015, with 2 new candidates in training currently – 100% successful completion rate for trainees so far AZ BEP has become nationally recognized for innovation and growth, BEP staff serve on multiple national advisory panels – agency staff was invited to speak with the Texas BEP about our branded concepts and the blind vendors’ success with them.

Program completed a branding initiative to improve public awareness of equipment, program, and blind vendors. These include a new color logo and information on who benefits from purchases in vending machines and cafeterias. This has helped raise the public awareness of BEP, and includes a QR code that can be scanned by any mobile device that links to the BEP website.

BEP currently maintains 33 employment opportunities for blind vendors in the state, with 5 opportunities currently available (operated by a blind vendor on temp contract)

Total number of vending machines increased 10.2% in 2015, which is 2nd straight year of double digit increases; 2016 already on pace to exceed that number.
did you wake up on January 4, 2016 and think:

“Today’s the day! UEB is now officially here!”

The reality is that all of us in the braille business are still very much in a transition as the US implements UEB and runs into some interesting challenges and ambiguity.

Yet there is a lot about UEB that is really good and will make some things clearer for braille users and producers, so like anything else it is a mixed bag. I encourage all of you to regularly visit the Braille Authority of North America (BANA) web site at http://www.brailleauthority.org/ to check for new updates and added resources. Many states have a UEB transition plan in place and others like our own do not.

To be sure our pre-service TVIs have the tools they need; this year at U of A we are teaching UEB in both the Braille 1 and Braille 2 course. In the Braille 2 course we took a quick look at the differences between English Braille American Edition (What most of us would call literary braille.) and UEB.

Now we are learning Nemeth code because the US is maintaining this code. We continue to see more resources becoming available to support all aspects of UEB implementation.

If you’d be interested in learning some UEB math (or as it is really called technical material) send Dr. Rosenblum an email to rosenblu@email.arizona.edu. If there is sufficient interest I may look at developing some training options.

-Penny
Survey Monkey Results

In December 2015, an informal survey invitation was sent out via the AZ AER list serve to all CTVIs & COMS. The editor of this newsletter was given the results to share with all of you. Seven questions were asked about: job location, title, retirement, words of wisdom for beginners in the field, technology and if you had time to teach what you wanted and what would it be (if ECC, choose one) scenario. Responses: 56 responses were totaled as the result of two emails announcing it on the AER list serve. It was opened for 10 days.

(Not all questions were answered by each participant)

1. Who are you?
   19 FT TVI
   7 PT TVI
   11 FT COMS
   11 combined CTVI/COMS
   7 Other

2. Where are you?
   53% Phoenix Area (29)
   27% Tucson/Marana (15)
   3.64% North of Flagstaff, Sedona Area, Holbrook Area, Yuma, Nogales (2)
   1.82% Pinetop/ShowLow (1)

3. Do you teach technology in your classroom or to your students with VI?
   (multiple answers allowed)
   43.4% YES, I use technology with my student with a VI
   49.06% I use it when I can
   24.5% I support the classroom teacher
   11.3% My district’s internet is unreliable
   5.7% I am not comfortable using technology
   7.6% Not enough time in my day to teach technology
4. If you had time in your day, which would you do that you are not currently doing or able to do?

   - **Incorporate ECC into my student’s day** 40.91%
   - Spend more time with one or more students 18.18%
   - **Communicate more with parents** 9.09%

5. If you chose ECC for #4 please indicate the area of ECC in which you’d like to work on with your students.

   - **Independent Living** 32%
   - Compensatory Skills 17%
   - **Social Skills** 10.71%
   - Assistive Technology 10.71%

6. When do you plan to retire?

<table>
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<th># of years</th>
<th># of responses</th>
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<tr>
<td>This year</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of Next</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within 2-4 years?</td>
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<td>&gt; 5 but &lt; 10</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; 15</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; 20</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. If you had one piece of advice to give to new persons in the field of VI, what would it be?

To enjoy your job

**carve out time for ECC**

be flexible, learn technology, collaborate with school personal

**first 2 years you will be finding your stride, after that it will all fall into place**

Understand multiple disabilities

**Network**

Every situation is different

**First months of school can be tough, hang in there**

If you don’t know, ask

**Family involvement is crucial**

Be open to new things

Understand/find out how your students vision impacts their learning