



WINTER 2015 NEWSLETTER

Message from the President, Susan Langendonk

As we roll into 2015, I want to wish everyone a belated Happy New Year! Your MAER board is busily preparing for the April 23 - 24 conference and we hope everyone will attend. We had so many submissions for presentations that we will be trying a new venture modeled after the poster session that many conferences offer. A number of presenters will be gathered at stations in one of the salons and will be able to speak with you personally about their topic. We hope this will allow many more presenters to offer information to you.

Dr. Karen Blankenship, from Vanderbilt University in Tennessee, was unable to come last year due to illness, but is joining us this year and will be keynote speaker on Thursday and presenting on Friday. We will have a general session to kick off the day on Friday on recruitment and retention with Audrey Dannenberg, Chair of the AER Professional Development Committee, speaking.

Many of your colleagues from Michigan will be speaking on topics in their areas of expertise, so this is shaping up to be another successful MAER conference!

Remember as your AER membership comes up for renewal, that the Michigan Chapter relies on rebates from your dues as part of our revenue stream. We're able to offer you this opportunity for increasing your professional knowledge base as well as earning continuing education credits for ACVREP certification and MDE-SCECH. The MAER Board recently voted unanimously to offer these to you at no additional charge.

Susan Langendonk
President, Michigan AER

Updates for AER

AER continues to improve its financial stability due to some very stringent fiscal policies and several very successful conferences over the past several years. Your membership dues are a very important source of income as well, so be sure to renew!

Important AER activities include a Task Force on Licensure which is working on a guide to help members pursue licensing credentials in their individual states for Orientation & Mobility Specialists, Vision Rehabilitation Therapists and Low Vision Therapists. This is an important initiative that would allow these professionals to receive payment for their services through insurance.

AER and the American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus have begun to work together to educate members of both associations and parents on the importance of appropriate vision care for children. This is a valuable opportunity to make certain ophthalmologists are aware of the services that are available and should be considered for their pediatric patients.

There will be an AER conference on Vision Loss in Older Adults and Veterans to be held in Norfolk, VA November 4-6, 2015. Registration and program information will be coming soon.

The AER O&M Division, of which I am Chair, has several exciting projects in the works as well.

*Two ad hoc committees are focusing on

1) Development of a strategic plan for the O&M Division which will help guide the Division and profession over the next 5 years. Information on strengths, needs and the future have been gathered at NCOMA, SOMA, SWOMA, Missouri AER and CAOMS and will be presented at a poster session at the International Mobility Conference this summer in Montreal.

2) The scope of practice of O&M Specialists as compared with OTs and PTs. This committee has researched the extent to which other professions are providing vision rehabilitation services and what, if any, training is required for them to receive third party payment. A position paper outlining the scope of practice of Orientation & Mobility Specialists is an expected outcome of this committee.

*The O&M Division is in the process of developing a round-table discussion to be held at the AFB Leadership Conference which is taking place in conjunction with the Arizona AER Chapter conference in April. The focus of the discussion will be identifying sources of reimbursement for vision rehabilitation services for adults. Self-employed O&M Specialists and Vision Rehabilitation Therapists are unable to be paid through Medicare or Medicaid. Alternative sources for funding will be discussed. This is an important conference also in terms of the White House Conference on Aging which takes place only once each decade. A listening session will be held at this conference and give attendees the opportunity to provide feedback on issues relating to aging and vision loss.

Susan Langendonk, O&M Division Chair

Advocacy and Legislation

Just a reminder that the Braille Authority of North America (BANA) adopted Unified English Braille (UEB). The UEB is a new set of rules and contractions. More detailed information about UEB can be found on the BANA website at www.brailleauthority.org.

In order to help us learn and adapt to these changes, MDE-LIO, in a collaborative effort with Clinton County RESA and Oakland Schools, is sponsoring the UEB and You: A Hands-On Workshop for Unified English Braille with Frances Mary D'Andrea, Ph.D. This presentation will be on the Unified English Braille (UEB). Please choose your location: Wednesday May 13, 2015 at Clinton County RESA **OR** Thursday May 14, 2015 at Oakland Schools.

HELPFUL INFORMATION

Tips and Tricks Corner

- **Idea/Suggestion to enhance O&M lessons for middle/high school students...** Incorporate vocational exploration opportunities into O&M lessons in the community. Students can be encouraged to brainstorm jobs, careers or volunteer opportunities in which they are interested. Support them in how to call local businesses, professionals and employees to arrange a **SHORT** (10 minute) job exploration interview. Help your student make the calls, create a short list of questions, and plan the bus/cab trip to the location. I have observed that students are very invested in the travel planning and excited about these purposeful lessons. (Bonus... I've learned a lot along the way!!)

People/places my students have completed interviews?... restaurant chef, Humane Society director, newspaper journalists, sports journalist, literary author, radio station dj's, massage therapist, athletic director, teachers, librarian, attorneys, non-profit director, telemarketer, police officer, etc. Here is a resource for career exploration questions (we limit the questions to 5 or 6)....

<http://bestcareermatch.com/interview-questions>

Happy interviewing!

Kathy Christensen

Washtenaw ISD

Resources

- MDE-LIO is proud to announce our new website! You can check out the MDE-LIO website at www.mdelio.org
- The MDE-LIO CVI mentor team is offering Cortical Visual Impairment workshops throughout the State of Michigan for the 2014-15 school year. A workshop is being held in Grand Rapids on March 20th and Traverse City on March 24th. These workshops will provide information regarding the 10 characteristics and medical conditions associated with CVI, assessment and scoring of the CVI Range, and accommodations for students in Phase I, Phase II and Phase III. This information will be beneficial to teachers for the visually impaired, orientation and mobility specialists, paraprofessionals, parents, special education teachers, OTs, PTs, teachers for the speech and language impaired, psychologists, etc. Anyone who works with a student with a cortical visual impairment will benefit from this workshop, so please share this information with others. All three of the workshops are posted on the MDE-LIO website. To register for a workshop go to our website at www.mdelio.org
- The future for our students/clients looks so awesome!
 - Imagine using the 3doodler for making graphics.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emUIHFWcHck&feature=youtu.be>
<http://the3doodler.com/store/>
 - Or maybe a Braille tablet
<http://blitab.com/action-for-blind-people-introducing-the-worlds-first-tablet-for-the-blind/>

Reminders

As MAER Board members, we find ourselves at the end of another board cycle awaiting another year of elections. If you are interested or if you know of someone interested in running for an officer or board member position on the MAER Board, please click [here](#) to fill out the form to nominate yourself.

Also, we are accepting nominations for the MAER Award, please click [here](#) to fill out the form to nominate a person. And for the David and Joann Search Lifetime Achievement Award. You can click [here](#) and open the form and nominate the person you feel would best deserve this award.

The board nomination form should be returned no later than **March 9, 2015** and the award nomination form should be returned no later than **March 9, 2015**.

We will need the forms filled out, as we need to contact the nominees prior to the spring conference to verify their interest.

Calendar of events

February 2015

Feb. 28	Michigan Braille Challenge	Waterford Township, MI
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March 2015

Mar 20	Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) Workshop	Grand Rapids, MI
Mar 24	Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) Workshop	Traverse City, MI

April 2015

April 22	MAER Board Meeting	Livonia, MI
April 23 & 24	Annual MAER Conference "Drawing Parallels Across the Lifespan"	Livonia, MI

May 2015

May 10-12	WMU/MBAA Junior Sports Camp	Kalamazoo, MI
May 13-16	WMU/MBAA Senior Sports Camp	Kalamazoo, MI
May 13	UEB and You: A Hands-On Workshop for Unified English Braille	St. Johns, MI
May 14	UEB and You: A Hands-On Workshop for Unified English Braille	Waterford, MI
May 15 & 16	WMU/MBAA Michigan State Games	Kalamazoo, MI

June 2015

Jun 26-28	Strengthening Families and Communities Weekend	Greenville, MI
Jun 26- Jul 2	Leader Dogs for the Blind Summer Experience (ages 16 & 17) application deadline April 1	Rochester Hills, MI

July 2015

Sat, July 6	Bear Lake Camp Open House	Lapeer, MI
July 5- July 11	Bear Lake Camp Level I	Lapeer, MI
July 19- July 25	Bear Lake Camp Level II	Lapeer, MI

August 2015

Aug 10-14	Expanded Core Curriculum Camp (Ages 10-17)	Greenville, MI
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Members Speak Out

Do you have an article, resource, or other information you would like added to the MAER newsletter? Use this opportunity to get information to other members. Please send all ideas to ssteffer@kresa.org



What is DB Central?

DeafBlind (DB) Central: Michigan's Training & Resource Project is a comprehensive statewide technical assistance project. We provide information, training, educational consultation and support for families and/or professionals who are impacted by, or associated with, a child who has a combined hearing and vision loss. Services are provided year-round, free of charge. DB Central is the DeafBlind project for the state of Michigan. All states have a DeafBlind project available to their constituents.

DB Central offers training and consultation in an effort to promote best practices for children and young adults who have a combined vision and hearing loss. In addition, we have a lending library of resources available for parents and professionals. The lending library contains books, other written instructional material, and audio-visual resources. A list of lending library resources is available on our website, via email, or by calling our office. Furthermore, the project collaborates with various community agencies to meet the needs of families emphasizing Person-Centered practices.

As Michigan's DeafBlind project, we are also required each year, by the U.S. Department of Education, to collect information on all students (age birth – 26) in the State of Michigan who have a combined vision and hearing loss. The DeafBlind child count (census) is the main instrument used to track the DeafBlind student population and is conducted during the first quarter of each calendar year. We are currently preparing for the next child count (census) which will be distributed on February 1, 2015. Accurate reporting helps to ensure that Michigan continues to receive adequate funding to support services for students, their families, and the professionals with whom they work.

All students, ages birth through twenty-six, who have difficulty accessing visual and auditory information, should be registered with DeafBlind Central, regardless of educational label. Please note, students previously reported on our census must have their information verified and/or updated each year.

If you know of any students age birth—26, who have a combined hearing and vision loss, who you believe may not be registered with us, please call our office toll free, 888-758-0508, or visit our website to download a census for, and return it to our office by fax, (989) 774-1572, or mail Sloan 105; Central Michigan University; Mount Pleasant, MI 48859.

To learn more about DB Central services, or the DeafBlind child count, visit our website www.dbcentral.org, like us on Facebook, or call our office. We look forward to hearing from you!

Leader Dog

Leader Dogs for the Blind Summer Experience Camp – June 26 – July 2, 2015. Applications due by April 1, 2015.

Summer Experience Camp is a unique summer camp for boys and girls ages 16 and 17 who are legally blind that combines summer fun with an introduction to guide dogs and the opportunity to spend time with peers who are facing similar challenges.

Campers kayak, rock wall climb and tandem bike, receive a free GPS device with instruction and spend time with dogs and Leader Dog guide dog mobility instructors to learn more about living and working with a guide dog. For more information visit <http://www.leaderdog.org/clients/programs/summer-experience-camp>.



“Save the Date” Flyer

Strengthening Families and Communities Weekend

Friday, June 26-Sunday, June 28, 2015

Come join us and connect with families from around Michigan in a beautiful outdoor camp setting. Family activities include canoeing, swimming, fishing, hiking, campfire stories, and more. Challenge one another on the outdoor climbing tower. Families will build community with one another and leave with lasting memories and friendships. Watch for event registration information on www.mde-lío.cenmi.org.

Expanded Core Curriculum Camp (Ages 10-17)

Monday, August 10-Friday, August 14

Expanded Core Curriculum Camp is a great opportunity to explore topics of social skills, technology, recreation and leisure, orientation and mobility and independent living skills in a natural, fun outdoor setting. This camp is specifically designed for youth who are blind/visually impaired and between 10-17 years old. Watch for event registration information on www.mde-lío.cenmi.org.

Bear Lake Camp

In order to improve our camp experience, Bear Lake Camp has divided their two week session into two separate 1 week sessions. Click [here](#) to log on to our website for more information and register today!!

Level I, July 5-11

This session is for the visually impaired child that has never been away from home and also returning campers. It is a one week long introduction to camping. The focus will be to give basic introduction to camp activities, independence with daily living skills, mobility around camp and living with a cabin group. Campers will have exposure to the same camp activities with more flexibility to meet the needs of newer campers.

Level II, July 19-25

Our camp for lifers is our traditional camp session. This session is one week long. Campers will have the opportunity to learn outdoor skills with an increasing challenge and independence. We encourage campers that would like to attend this session to also attend our Level I session. This provided them with more time to become comfortable with camp in order to be able to demonstrate more independence and challenge themselves more within the program.

Leadership Development

Leadership Development is a special session that focuses on leadership skills and responsibilities in the camp environment. Participants gain knowledge of how to be an effective leader and team member. The program runs over two summers. The first summer being more of an introduction and the second summer provided more hands on opportunity to demonstrate and develop skills. You must have been a camper at Bear Lake Camp and

be 15-16 years of age.

If you have any questions you can contact our program coordinator at ssteffer@bearlakecamp.org.

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Our AER Mission: *To render all possible assistance to the promotion, development and improvement of all phases of education and rehabilitation of blind and visually impaired persons of all ages.*