

Alabama AER

41st Annual Training Conference

Innovate – Integrate – Motivate



Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors
Orientation and Mobility Specialists
Vision Rehabilitation Therapists
Low Vision Therapists
Assistive Technology Specialists
Teachers of the Visually Impaired
Pre-Employment Transition Specialists
Job Developers & Coaches
DeafBlind Intervener Specialists
Support Service Providers

“Alone we can do so little; Together we can do so much.”
– Helen Keller

November 20-22, 2024

Hotel Capstone
320 Paul W Bryant Drive
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401



November 20, 2024

Members, Distinguished Guests, Honorable Colleagues, and Friends,

Welcome to Alabama AER's 41st Annual Conference. Last year was a celebration of Alabama AER Chapter's 40 years of service in Alabama. This year, let us consider the possibilities and worthy opportunities for this Chapter to serve and provide for the Blind and Low Vision community in Alabama. As we take this first step toward the next 40 years, I challenge each of you to Innovate-Integrate-Motivate in support and commitment of the ongoing mission of the Alabama AER Chapter.

As stated in the Chapter Bylaws, the mission of Alabama AER is, ***"To render all possible assistance to the promotion, development, and improvement of all phases of the education and rehabilitation of individuals who are blind or visually impaired."***

The essence of the above statement is noble and remains as vital today as it was 41 years ago. In fact, the longevity of this Chapter is a testament to the integrity of its mission. The vitality and integrity of those who have served to preserve and maintain this chapter has been equally important and illustrates the caliber of the people who serve in this field.

Without question, a profession based on the service of others brings out the best of us. The impact and accomplishments of Alabama AER is proof of the above statement. Since 1983, Alabama AER has made significant contributions intended to ensure and improve the availability and quality of services for people who are blind or partially sighted. In addition to unmatched training programs, collaboration, and information sharing opportunities, this Chapter has provided more than \$40,000.00 towards the education of some twenty-one individuals choosing to enter this field.

An outstanding slate of speakers and activities have been planned for this robust, information packed event. You will not be disappointed. My sincere thanks and gratitude to President-Elect and Conference Chair, Ms. Kelley Bond, and the Board of Directors for their tireless efforts to make this event possible. Thank You to all sponsors and program advertisers who have supported this chapter for many years, vendors, presenters, and the Capstone Hotel.

Last but certainly not least, thanks to all of you for participating in Alabama AER's 41st Annual Conference. As I always say, Alabama AER is what we, the membership, make it. Let us keep this chapter relevant, strong, and effective now and in the future. Enjoy the conference.

Sincerely,

Stephen M. Sullivan, Ph.D.
President, Alabama AER Chapter

Innovate – Integrate – Motivate

Wednesday, November 20, 2024

8:00 – 12:00	Exhibit Setup	
12:00 – 1:00	Registration Begins / Exhibits Open	
1:00 – 1:45	Opening Ceremony	
	President's Welcome	Steve Sullivan
	Invocation	Kyle Fessler, Church of the Highlands
	Presentation of Colors	University of Alabama ROTC
	National Anthem	
	Pledge of Allegiance	Steve Sullivan
	Introduction of Mayor	Steve Sullivan
	Welcome to Tuscaloosa	Walter Maddox
	Conference Preview	Kelley Bond
1:45 – 3:00	Session 1: Keynote	An Accessible World is a Successful World
	Introduction	Kelley Bond
	Presenter	Dan Parker, <i>The Blind Machinist</i>
3:00 – 3:15	Break / Exhibits Open	
3:15 – 4:15	Session 2:	Supporting Community Integration: Identifying Resources and Overcoming Barriers
	Introduction	Kellee Malinauskas
	Presenters	Cecilia Ballinger, <i>Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program</i> David Rissling-Venit, <i>Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program</i>
5:30 – 8:00	President's Reception	
	Dinner	
	Networking	
	Entertainment Featuring Karaoke and Dancing with Russ Randolph	

Thursday, November 21, 2024

7:00 – 8:00	Breakfast	
8:00 – 8:30	Exhibits Open	
8:30 – 9:30	Session 3 Introduction Presenters	AER: Membership Has Its Privileges Kelley Bond Jack Harrison, <i>Alabama AER Membership Chair</i> Sharon McLean, <i>Alabama AER Vendor Coordinator</i>
9:30 – 9:45	Break / Exhibits Open	
9:45 – 10:45	Session 4: Introduction Presenters	Transition Evaluations Jack Harrison Russel Craig, <i>AIDB E.H. Gentry</i> Stephanie Sieger, <i>AIDB E.H. Gentry</i>
10:45 – 11:00	Break / Exhibits Open	
11:00 – 12:00	Session 5: Introduction Presenters	RISE: Reaching Independence through Supported Education Marquitta Riggins Wendi Glass, <i>AIDB RISE</i> Katelyn Peoples, <i>AIDB RISE</i>
12:00 – 1:30	President's Awards Luncheon	
1:30 – 2:30	Session 6: Introduction Presenter	They Not Like Us Donte Little Isaac Beavers, <i>Alabama Freedom Center for the Blind</i>
2:30 – 2:45	Break / Exhibits Open	
2:45 – 3:45	Session 7: Introduction Presenters	Health and Lifestyle Behaviors Among Adults with Visual Impairment Kellee Malinauskas Laura Dreer, <i>UAB</i> Molly Whitney, <i>UAB</i> Brooke Bailey, <i>UAB</i>
3:45 – 4:00	Break / Exhibits Open	

Thursday, November 21, 2024

4:00 – 5:00	Session 8:	Help Is On the Way! How to Identify, Address, and Connect Consumers and Families to Mental Health Services
	Introduction	Kellee Malinauskas
	Presenters	Molly Whitney, <i>UAB</i> Brooke Bailey, <i>UAB</i> Laura Dreer, <i>UAB</i>
TBD	Bingo Social: Hosted by the Alabama ACB Chapter	

Friday, November 22, 2024

7:00 – 8:00	Breakfast	
8:00 – 9:00	Session 9:	Ethics Laws/Codes and How to Ethically Interact with People with Disabilities
	Introduction	Jack Harrison or Ashley Townsend
	Presenter	Graham Sisson, <i>ADA Coordinator and Deputy Attorney General</i>
9:00 – 9:15	Break	
9:15 – 10:15	Session 10:	A Whole New World: Trends in Future Technology
	Introduction	Bill Adams
	Presenter	Jason Martin, <i>APH</i>
10:15 – 10:45	Break / Hotel Check-Out	
10:45 – 11:45	AER Business Meeting	
	Call to Order	Steve Sullivan
	Committee Reports	AER Committee Chairs
	ADRS Update	Commissioner Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw
	AIDB Update	President Dennis Gilliam
	Closing Remarks	
	Adjourn	

BDS RECIPIENT 2024 JACKLYN WILSON

Jacklyn Wilson is our 2024 BDS Scholarship Award Recipient. Jacklyn is a student at the University of Alabama. She expects to receive her Master's Degree In Rehabilitation Counseling in December 2024. Jacklyn has maintained a perfect 4.0 grade point average during her time as a graduate student at UA since January 2023.

Jacklyn's undergraduate degree is in Business. After embarking on a career in the business world Jacklyn knew that something was missing. Jacklyn is now an employee of AIDB at E.H. Gentry in the Blind Services Department. She found that she loves to advocate for others in her work at AIDB. She feels that she has found her calling in rehabilitation. Her future career path is unknown whether to remain at Gentry, entering private practice or as a Rehabilitation Counselor.

Jacklyn says "treat life like a crockpot, not a microwave. Just because it took longer to cook doesn't make the meal any less fulfilling." We congratulate Jacklyn and wish Jacklyn continued professional success!!

ALABAMA AER CHAPTER OFFICERS, BOARD MEMBERS & CHAIRPERSONS 2025-2026

OFFICERS

	Term Expires
President, Kelley Bond	2025-2026
President-Elect & Conference Chair, Marquitta Riggins	2025-2026
Past President & Elections Chair, Stephen M. Sullivan, Ph.D.	2025-2026
Secretary, Sharon McLean	2025-2026
Treasurer, Joe Helm	2025-2026

BOARD MEMBERS

	Term Expires
Kellee Malinauskas	Board Member 2023-2025
Donte Little	Board Member 2023-2025
Jack Harrison, Membership Chair	Board Member 2024-2026
Vacant	Board Member 2024-2026
LaTonya Chatman	Board Member 2025-2027
Stephanie Pizza	Board Member 2025-2027
Julia Brock, Permanent Scholarship Chair Non-Voting	



AUBURN BANK

“Congratulations Alabama AER on your 41st Annual Conference.....from all of us at AuburnBank”

In 1907, Sheldon (Shel) L. Toomer, a successful businessman actively involved with community activities, established Bank of Auburn (now Auburn Bank) with his fellow merchants and faculty friends. The bank is located, in the heart of downtown Auburn, which was an educational center in the early twentieth century.

In 1964, the managers decided to change the bank's name to Auburn National Bank.

In 1991, the Bank became a member of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta (the “FHLB”), and in 1995, they changed the bank’s name again to Auburn Bank, which is also the bank’s current name.

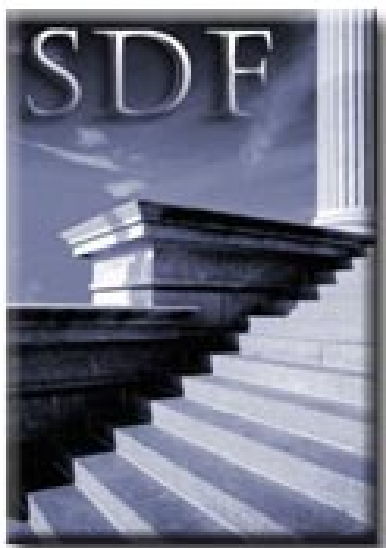
Auburn National Bancorporation, Inc. is a bank holding company. The Company’s business is primarily the management of the Auburn Bank, which is an Alabama state member bank. The Bank offers financial products and services including checking, savings, and lending. The bank is a member of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta (the “FHLB”). Its operation is regulated by the Federal Reserve and the Alabama Superintendent of Banks.

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If you or a family member has a disability and needs assistive technology and/or adaptive equipment to gain or maintain greater independence or an improved quality of life, we may be able to assist you to secure a low interest rate, extended-term loan to purchase needed assistive technology or adaptive equipment.

A person's disability may be related to vision, hearing, movement, communication, cognition and/or psychological issues, and knowledge. A disability can occur at birth, older age or anytime in between. It can be congenital or can arise because of chronic illness, injury, malnutrition, or aging. The Center for Disease Control estimates that one in five people in the United States has a disability. The diversity and severity of disability, age of onset, income and intersection with other marginalized communities defined by race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation may compound discriminatory treatment that limits access to credit and financial inclusion.

For Information Contact Joe Helm
334-759-0918



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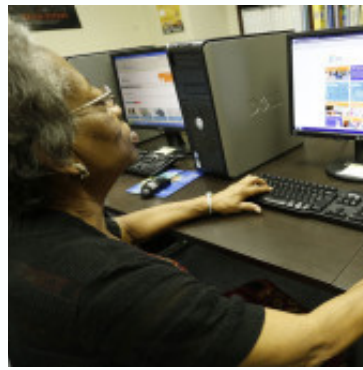


The Center for Assistive Technology Training (CATT) Project is a collaboration between the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) and the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB). Our mission is to provide assistive technology training to teachers of the visually impaired, utilizing a “train the trainer” model, while also providing training for students and families.

Devices are provided through APH and training is provided through AIDB-employed trainers serving a nine-state region (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee), Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands

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easterseals Central Alabama

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LIMITLESS POSSIBILITIES.**

WHO WE ARE

Easterseals Central Alabama works to change the way the world defines and views disability by making profound, positive differences in people's lives every day.



WHAT WE DO

We are a collection of disability services and programs designed to help empower children, teens, adults & seniors to greater independence.



**PEDIATRIC
OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY**

AUTISM TESTING

**SPEECH
THERAPY**

children
adults
seniors

**CNA TRAINING &
CERTIFICATION**

**LEARNING
DISABILITIES
TESTING**

**SIGN LANGUAGE
INTERPRETING**

**DYSLEXIA READING
THERAPY**

**NO-COST MEDICAL
EQUIPMENT**

**EMPLOYMENT
PROGRAMS**

teens
adults
seniors

**VOCATIONAL
EVALUATION**

**CONNECT
WITH US**





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***Congratulations Alabama AER
On Conducting your 41st
Annual Training Conference!***

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*Wishing A&R a
great conference*

**Congrats on 41
years!!**

From your friends at



“

**The best and most
beautiful things in the
world cannot be seen
or even touched.**

**They must be felt with
the heart.**

”

- Helen Keller

We hope you have a great 2024 conference.

Goodwill

Gulf Coast



®

The family of Robert F. Davie is proud to support members of Alabama's AER Chapter and offer Congratulations on 41 years of Service in Alabama.

I and my family are honored to present you with a donation made payable to your organization. I admire your work in our state, its communities and your diligent efforts to provide and improve services for Alabama's blind and low vision citizens.

I learned firsthand of rehabilitation services provided for Alabama's children, adults, and special populations when my family partnered with Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services to build to suit a building to consolidate their services in the Anniston area. For several years I and my son Rob participated in your annual golf event to support the Billy Don Sims Scholarship. It has been my high honor to participate with others as a Director on the Southern Disability Foundation Board charged with supporting the access and acquisition of needed assistive technology for Alabama citizens with disabilities to improve their independence and ability to fully participate in life's offerings.

Please know that my family and all of us at **Davie's School Supply** wish you the very best training conference in 2024! *Robert F. Davie*



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Keynote

Dan Parker

The Blind Machinist / World's Fastest Blind Man

Dan Parker is more than just the world's fastest blind racecar driver; he's a testament to human resilience and the power of possibility. After losing his sight in a racing accident, Dan refused to let his dreams be sidelined. He defied limitations, pioneering a custom audio guidance

system and returning to the racetrack, eventually claiming the Guinness World Record title at a blistering 211 mph.

Dan's story isn't just about speed; it's about defying expectations and redefining what's possible. He ignites audiences with his passion, humor, and unwavering determination, inspiring them to overcome their own obstacles and chase their dreams, no matter how audacious they may seem. As a motivational speaker, Dan's impact transcends the racetrack, leaving audiences empowered, motivated, and ready to take on the world.

*"I'm not a blind man trying to race.
I'm a racer who went blind."*

I was born into a racing family on July 2, 1970 in Salem, Alabama. My father, Jimmy Parker, still races today. I was 8 years old when dad entered me into a mini bike class at an all-motorcycle event, and I placed second!

In 1997, I started driving Pro Mods for Ellis Milner. I have won one Dixie Pro Stock championship as well as the 2005 ADRL Pro Nitrous world championship title. I was also in the first side-by-side 3-second Pro Nitrous pass. Racing was my life, and I never imagined it would be taken from me.

In 2012, I was involved in a horrific wreck. It was a miracle that I survived the accident at all, but I was rendered completely blind as a result. I was determined to continue life as usual, and to keep racing. I made a plan.

I built a motorcycle and became the first-ever blind man to race at the Bonneville Salt Flats in 2013, then set my class record in 2014 with no exemptions for blindness.

Most recently, I built a 2008 C6 Chevrolet Corvette in hopes of becoming the world's fastest blind driver. It took years of hard work and perseverance, but exactly ten years to the day after the violent accident where I lost my sight, I achieved that goal.

On March 31, 2022, while racing on the Spaceport America runway in New Mexico, I clocked a top speed of 212 MPH and officially became the world's fastest blind driver with a Guinness World Record average speed of 211.043 MPH!

I race with no human assistance. I use a custom guidance system that gives me audible feedback on how to correct my course, and, to help fund my mission, I custom-make ink pens by hand and machine the entire pen from start to finish.

Speaker Bios



Alyson Hooks, BS, MS

Alyson Hooks is currently serving as a Program Specialist in the RISE Autism Program at the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind. She and her husband, Jordan, reside in Florence, Alabama, along with their four children. Alyson graduated from the University of North Alabama with a Bachelor of Science in Human Environmental Sciences, specializing in Child Development. She is set to complete her Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education Leadership in March of 2025. Alyson's professional journey includes six years as a Head Start teacher, one year as a Center Director, and two years as a District Early Intervention Coordinator for the state of Alabama.



Brooke Bailey, MSW

Ms. Brooke Bailey, MSW, is a graduate of Tulane University and Auburn University and is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in Social Work at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. Prior to starting her doctoral program, Ms. Bailey worked as a research assistant in Dr. Laura Dreer's Behavioral Health Research and Clinical Services within UAB's Department of Ophthalmology & Visual Sciences. She has primarily worked with survivors of traumatic brain injuries, patients living with a variety of eye conditions, and informal family caregivers. In addition to her research responsibilities, Ms. Bailey also served as the co-facilitator of the UAB Connections support group serving individuals and families adjusting to vision loss.



Cecilia Ballinger

Cecilia is an Equal Justice Works Fellow, sponsored by Faber Daeufer & Itrato, with the Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program (ADAP). Her fellowship provides medical and educational advocacy to children with medical complexities across Alabama. In designing her fellowship project, she was inspired by her work with ADAP on children's issues while a student at the University of Alabama School of Law. She has a longstanding passion for educational advocacy and is committed to ensuring individuals with disabilities remain in their community. When she is not working, she enjoys relaxing at her home in Tuscaloosa with her partner and spoiling her cat, Duchess.



David Rissling-Venit

David is a peer specialist with the Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program (ADAP). He is blind and identifies as being on the autism spectrum. In his role as Peer Specialist, David works with community partners to support the growth of the state's self-advocacy movement. He works one-on-one with ADAP clients, supporting them to be better self-advocates so that they can live the lives they want for themselves. In describing his peer specialist job, David says he is a "guide and mentor, not a do-it-for-me person." David is involved with several disability rights organizations, including Ability Alliance and the National Federation of the Blind. David graduated from The University of Alabama in 2014 with a degree in music. Befitting his musical training, David is a church organist. In football season, he says you will hear him loudly cheering on the Tide.



Dr. Graham L. Sisson, Jr.

Dr. Sisson was appointed to the United States Military Academy in 1982 but was injured in a car accident, leading to permanent paralysis. In 1983, he entered the University of North Alabama, graduating summa cum laude in 1987 with a B.S. in Accounting. He then attended Vanderbilt Law School, graduating in 1990. Dr. Sisson has worked in various legal roles, including deputy attorney general and assistant attorney general with the State of Alabama. Currently, he serves as the State's ADA Coordinator and Deputy Attorney General with the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, and Director of the Governor's Office on Disability. He teaches disability law courses at the Birmingham School of Law and Auburn University, where he earned his doctorate in rehabilitation in 2016. His hobbies include vegetable gardening and woodworking, and he is a certified scuba diver. Dr. Sisson is a graduate of the 2005 Leadership Birmingham Class and Leadership Alabama 2017.



Isaac Beavers, CRC

Isaac Beavers is the Executive Director of the Alabama Freedom Center for the Blind (AFCB) and serves as AIDB's Liaison to the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services. He has worked in the field of blindness for 27 years as a service provider, a Regional Director, and Executive Director. Isaac is a graduate of the Alabama School for the Blind (ASB). He possesses a BA in Psychology from the University of Alabama and earned a M.Ed in Rehabilitation Counseling from Auburn University. Isaac has been a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor for more than a decade. He has served on various boards in many roles including: the National CRCC Board, AER of Alabama, the State Rehabilitation Council, ASB Alumni, Lion Club the Auburn and Alabama A&M University's Rehabilitation Advisory Boards. Isaac is the creator of 13 unique transition programs. He has spoken at more than 30 local, state, national, and international conferences. Isaac has been recognized for his collaborative work with ADRS by the agency and the Governors committee on the employment of people with disabilities. In 2015 he was awarded ASB's Distinguished Alumnus Award (Lilian Rick's

Award) and he is the 2023 Outstanding Alumnus for Auburn University's Rehabilitation and Counseling Department.



Jack Harrison, COMS

Jack Harrison has served in the education and rehabilitation field for over 40 years, primarily at the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB). Currently at E. H. Gentry, he is the Principal Investigator for an Orientation & Mobility research subaward from UAB and the National Institutes of Health. Also, at AIDB, Jack has worked as a classroom teacher (HKS and ASB, 25 years), a vocational evaluator, adult education instructor and director (E. H. Gentry), a department head and wrestling coach (ASB), always seeking personal and programmatic improvement. He holds undergraduate degrees in Vocational Rehabilitation and Industrial Arts, and graduate degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling, Education Administration, Special Education, and Orientation & Mobility. He first joined AER forty years ago and has served as treasurer and a board member. He has a strong commitment to personal and professional excellence and considers himself a lifelong learner.



Jason Martin, TVI, CATIS

Jason Martin is a Technical Innovations Product Manager with the American Printing House for the Blind and is currently closely working with the Monarch Tactile Display. Jason previously toured the southeast as a trainer with the Center for Assistive Technology Training with the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind and prior served seven years as the Statewide Assistive Technology Specialist for the Blind for the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services. Jason is a native of Talladega, Alabama and was the third generation of his family to attend the Alabama School for the Blind. Jason later taught Assistive Technology to low vision, Blind, and Deaf-blind students at the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind. Jason holds a bachelor of the arts in Radio, Television, and Film from Auburn University, a master's degree in special education and visual impairments from the University of Alabama Birmingham and is currently working on a Doctor of Education at Auburn University.

Montgomery. He is a certified Teacher of the Visually Impaired and is the first Certified Assistive Technology Instructional Specialist in the state of Alabama. Jason credits much of his work in the field of blindness to his father who is totally blind, and his mother who was visually impaired. In 2017 he was awarded Advocate of the Year by the Montgomery Area Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities. Jason is a graduate of the American Foundation for the Blind's Centennial Leadership Cohort and served as a mentor in the following 22-23 BLDP Cohort. He is a nationally known speaker in the field of Assistive Technology, Transition, and STEM programs for students with visual impairments. Jason is married to his lovely wife, Shelby, who has four incredible kids, and perhaps too many standard poodles.



Katelyn Peoples, BS

Katelyn Peoples serves as an Outreach Provider for Autism in the RISE Autism Program at the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind. She obtained a bachelor's degree in education for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing from the University of Montevallo in 2023. Katelyn's current role involves working with individuals from birth to beyond across Alabama who have been diagnosed with sensory loss and Autism Spectrum Disorder. She focuses on delivering personalized interventions and resources to help these individuals thrive in both their educational and social settings. Katelyn's dedication to advocacy, education, and creating inclusive environments and ensuring every child has the opportunity to succeed drives her work.



Laura Dreer, Ph.D

Dr. Laura Dreer is a tenured, Associate Professor in the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). She is a scientist-practitioner by training and a licensed clinical medical rehabilitation psychologist and neuropsychologist with extensive expertise in developing, implementing, and evaluating the impact of medical psychological rehabilitation interventions, neuropsychological assessments, health behaviors, and health promotion

programs for people with disabilities (e.g., vision impairments; traumatic brain injuries). Dr. Dreer completed dual fellowships in medical rehabilitation psychology (UAB) and in neuropsychology (Duke University Medical Center). Dr. Dreer's clinical research efforts address complex issues confronting people with various chronic health conditions and injuries, neurological medical illnesses, along with issues facing their family caregivers. Due to her expertise and leadership, Dr. Dreer developed and now serves as the Director of the UAB Behavioral Health Clinical Research Services that focuses on both clinical and research efforts across disabilities and age groups, including adults with a TBI and their family caregivers. She has conducted a successful, independently funded program of research on personal and familial adjustment to a variety of chronic medical conditions (both vision impairment and traumatic brain injury). Her research program has also focused on the development and evaluation of evidence-based CBT-based health promotion and behavioral health approaches for patients and/or their family caregivers (e.g. to minimize depression; enhance knowledge; promote skills leading to healthy lifestyle behaviors; increase adherence to medications; foster resilience; promote healthy weight management). Dr. Dreer has independently and consistently secured extramural funding over the past 19 years through a variety of mechanisms including: the National Institute on Disability and Independent Living Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR), National Institutes of Health (National Eye Institute; National Institute on Child & Health Development; National Institute on Aging), Wise Up! Concussion Initiative of the AI and Sharyne Wallace Foundation, EyeSight Foundation of Alabama (ESFA), the International Retinal Research Foundation (IRRF), Research to Prevent Blindness (RPB), Brain Tumor Network (BTN), and the Lakeshore Foundation. She is well recognized for her national reputation in medical rehabilitation research in low vision, traumatic brain injury, and other disability-related research. Finally, she is heavily involved as a PI and Co-Investigator on several studies examining the impact of health promoting interventions on health outcomes among people with disabilities.



Molly Whitney, M.S., LPC

Mrs. Molly Whitney, MS, LPC is a clinical research coordinator and licensed professional counselor within the UAB Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences. Originally from Louisiana, Molly moved to Birmingham in 2014 to join Dr. Laura Dreer's clinical research lab. She oversees various research responsibilities on large-scale clinical trials, facilitates the UAB Connections support group for patients living with visual impairments and their families, and provides individual behavioral health services. Her expertise includes working with patients living with a variety of chronic health conditions and disabilities (e.g. vision impairment, traumatic brain injury, stroke), caregivers, and an aging population. Additionally, she provides individual psychotherapy utilizing a primarily cognitive-behavioral framework. Molly is also trained in problem solving therapy, motivational interviewing, positive psychology, mindfulness, and grief counseling.



Russell Craig

I am one of two Outreach Vocational Evaluators at E.H. Gentry. We are the first and the only outreach evaluators in the state of Alabama whom work for the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind. I have held this position since November of 2020. I am an AER member. I am a proud graduate of Auburn University. My undergraduate degree is in Rehabilitation and Disability Services. I have been blind since birth. My condition is Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP). I have been both a consumer and a rehabilitation professional. Outside of my profession, I am an avid musician and a lover of all outdoor activities such as fishing, swimming, and playing any sport with a ball.



Wendi Glass, BS, MS

Wendi Glass has worked at the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind since 2014. She currently serves as the Program Coordinator for RISE Autism at the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and a Master's in Public Service Management from Cumberland University in Tennessee. With a decade of experience, Wendi has developed expertise in serving students who are deaf, blind, and deafblind, as well as those diagnosed with multiple disabilities and autism. Prior to her current position, Wendi worked as a Behavior Specialist at the Helen Keller School of Alabama. Her professional background also includes extensive work with children and families, focusing on preserving child home placement, facilitating family reunification, and providing rehabilitation services to juvenile offenders.

Sessions

A Whole New World: Trends in future Technology with Jason Martin.

Jason Martin, TVI, CATIS

Audience: Administration Assistive Technology Blind Entrepreneurs
Orientation and Mobility Recreation / Social Rehabilitation Counseling
Teachers of the Visually Impaired Vision Rehabilitation

Over the past year, Jason Martin. has worked with numerous industry leaders of blindness technology and would like to share some of the wild and interesting advancements he has had the joy of experiencing. As a Global Technical Innovations Product Manager directly overseeing software development, Jason invites you to discover software innovations for the Monarch Braille display that is currently shaping the educational landscape. Along with these updates, Jason Will invite you to learn more about the resources and materials. You can utilize today from the American Printing House for the Blind.

AER: Membership Has Its Privileges

Jack Harrison, COMS

Audience: Administration Assistive Technology Blind Entrepreneurs
Orientation and Mobility Recreation / Social Rehabilitation Counseling
Teachers of the Visually Impaired Vision Rehabilitation

One of the greatest opportunities that professionals can find in an organization is the opportunity to invest in their professional development. Membership-based organizations provide members access to training, research material, and industry insights to help them grow in their field. The Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) in the premier international organization offering its members the opportunity for an active part in the promotion and enhancement of skills in serving individuals who are blind and low vision.

Ethics Laws/Codes and How to Ethically Interact with People with Disabilities

Dr. Graham L. Sisson, Jr.

Audience: Administration Assistive Technology Blind Entrepreneurs
Orientation and Mobility Recreation / Social Rehabilitation Counseling
Teachers of the Visually Impaired Vision Rehabilitation

This session will focus on ethical code basics under Alabama state law as well ethical requirements for rehabilitation counselors and mental health counselors. Likewise, information on disability culture and perspective will be outlined to assist counselors in effectively working with individuals with disabilities. If time permits, there will be a question-and-answer session.

Health and Lifestyle Behaviors Among Adults with Vision Impairment

Laura Dreer, Ph.D – Molly Whitney, M.S., LPC – Brooke Bailey, MSW

Audience: **Blind Entrepreneurs** **Orientation and Mobility** **Recreation / Social**
Rehabilitation Counseling **Teachers of the Visually Impaired** **Vision Rehabilitation**

Participation in healthy lifestyle behaviors such as physical activity and healthy eating/nutrition are important habits critical for promoting health, mental health, and preventing secondary chronic health conditions. However, engaging in these types of healthy behaviors can be particularly challenging for people with vision impairment. As a result, the risk of obesity along with other negative health outcomes is disproportionally elevated within this population (e.g., sedentary lifestyles; greater number of co-morbid chronic diseases). This presentation will focus on an overview of our clinical research in this area as well as the larger scientific literature and will discuss practical strategies to help adults with vision impairments compensate for barriers to healthy living.

Help Is on the Way! How to Identify, Address, and Connect Consumers and Families to Mental Health Services

Molly Whitney, M.S., LPC – Brooke Bailey, MSW – Laura Dreer, Ph.D

Audience: **Assistive Technology** **Blind Entrepreneurs** **Orientation and Mobility**
Recreation / Social **Rehabilitation Counseling**
Teachers of the Visually Impaired **Vision Rehabilitation**

Adjustment to vision impairment and blindness can present a range of challenges that can interfere with everyday living. For some, these challenges can subsequently have a detrimental impact on one's emotional well-being (e.g., frustration, depression, anger, anxiety, social isolation and withdrawal, sedentary lifestyle behaviors) which can further compromise health. As such, it is important to recognize those who may be at-risk for problems with emotional adjustment and connect them to needed mental health services. This is particularly important as there are effective treatments available for mental health problems. Therefore, this presentation will focus on an overview of common emotional reactions associated with vision impairment and blindness, as well as factors that can impact adjustment. We will also provide practical strategies for initiating conversations around adjustment and mental health with both consumers and their families. We will also discuss screening tools that can be used to identify those who may be at risk. Finally, we will provide a brief overview of available evidence-based mental health treatments and ways to connect consumers to such services.

RISE: Reaching Independence through Supported Education

Wendi Glass, BS, MS – Katelyn Peoples, BS

Audience: Administration Rehabilitation Counseling

The field of autism intervention has made significant progress in understanding effective strategies based on research. However, there are challenges in translating these findings into practical and impactful programs. This presentation aims to provide participants with insights into the evolving landscape of autism program development, informed by evidence and research. The goal is to improve outcomes and enhance the quality of life for individuals with ASD and their families.

Supporting Community Integration: Identifying Resources and Overcoming Barriers

Cecilia Ballinger – David Rissling-Venit

Audience: Orientation and Mobility Rehabilitation Counseling
Teachers of the Visually Impaired

ADAP's presentation will focus on services to help individuals become more integrated in their community. First, we will give an overview of ADAP's services, including community access, voting, the Client Assistance Program (CAP), Rep Payee reviews, supported decision-making, Medicaid Waivers, juvenile justice, and school-related advocacy. David Rissling will then discuss his role as a peer advocate with ADAP and his experiences as an individual who is blind and on the autism spectrum. David is an active member of multiple disability rights organizations, has two jobs, and is active in the community. He will share how he has overcome challenges as an individual who is both blind and on the autism spectrum. David will also share how his role with ADAP can help others in the community. Cecilia will discuss Medicaid Waivers, the Colby Act, and CAP services. Various Medicaid Waivers can provide additional services to individuals with disabilities to assist them in managing their health and being integrated into the community. Cecilia will discuss what the Waivers are and how to apply for them. She will also discuss the Colby Act, which creates a supported decision-making framework for individuals with disabilities that are less restrictive than guardianships, conservatorships, or powers of attorney. Finally, Cecilia will discuss ADAP's CAP program, which assists those encountering barriers in contacting or receiving services from Vocational Rehab.

They Not Like Us:

Isaac Beavers, CRC

Audience: Administration Assistive Technology Orientation and Mobility
Rehabilitation Counseling Vision Rehabilitation

The goals of Vocational Rehabilitation are to aid consumers in the pursuit of productivity, independence, and inclusion. The pathway to the achievement of these goals is often through a rehabilitation training program. People who are Blind have two types of training choices. The traditional training model is generally a program that uses a mix of tools and techniques that can be

customized based on the trainee's vision. These techniques are taught and endorsed by (ACVREP) Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation & Education Professionals. The second-choice consumers who are blind can make is a structured discovery training center. These programs use non-visual techniques, Socratic questioning, role modeling, and experiential learning. These methods are taught at eight centers throughout the country. Six centers are certified by the (NBPCB) National Blindness Professional Certification Board. In this presentation we will examine the two programs' differences, similarities, overall goals and the relevance of informed consumer choice.

Transition Evaluations

Russell Craig – Stephanie Sieger

Audience: **Assistive Technology** **Orientation and Mobility** **Rehabilitation Counseling**
Teachers of the Visually Impaired **Vision Rehabilitation**

I am one of two Outreach Vocational Evaluators at E.H. Gentry. We are the first and the only outreach evaluators in the state of Alabama who work for the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind. I have held this position since November of 2020. I am an AER member. I am a proud graduate of Auburn University. My undergraduate degree is in Rehabilitation and Disability Services. I have been blind since birth. My condition is Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP). I have been both a consumer and a rehabilitation professional. Outside of my profession, I am an avid musician and a lover of all outdoor activities such as fishing, swimming, and playing any sport with a ball.



We would like to express our sincerest gratitude to all of the individuals and organizations who have helped make this year's Alabama AER 41st Annual Training Conference a success!

Conference Coordination – Kelley Bond and AER Board Members

BDS Scholarship Committee – Steve Sullivan, Joe Helm, Julie Brock

AER Awards Committee – Steve Sullivan, Joe Helm, Julie Brock

Conference Registration – Sheila Pennington and Ashley Robinson

Vendors and Sponsorships – Sharon McLean, Joe Helm, & Kellee Malinauskas

Program Accessibility and Printing – Bill Adams, Joe Helm, & Debra Myrick

Participant Bags – Marquitta Riggins, Yvette Pearce, Sharon McLean, & Susan Sarro

CEU Coordination – Ashley Townsend & Marge Lebrick

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