

NEWSLETTER



EYE ON ALABAMA

Why Aren't More Blind People Employed? Challenges-Responsibilities-Solutions

The above question and title has been chosen as the theme for this years Alabama AER Chapter Conference. The 28th Annual Training Conference will be held at Lake Point Resort State Park on October 2-4, 2011, in Eufaula, Alabama. "Confronting the 70% unemployment rate for persons who are blind or have severe visual impairment (s) has been a serious rehabilitation issue related to the field of blindness for as long as I can remember" stated Joe Helm, AER Board Member.

On February 6, 2009, for the first time, the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) officially reported the Current Population Survey (CPS) employment data about people with disabilities. These data have been gathered since June, 2008 when six questions about disability were permanently added to the CPS, a monthly survey the federal government uses to estimate the unemployment level and rate in the United States. This valid and reliable source of employment data pertaining to people with disabilities is exceptionally important and timely given our nation's focus on economic recovery and job stimulus. The importance of these data will grow over time because the data will be collected frequently and released each month.

Striking Comparison to the Population of People without a Disability As an additional reference point to the population of people without a disability surveyed by the BLS data, there were approximately 212 million people identified in the September 2010 BLS data 16 years of age and over in the civilian noninstitutional population without a disability compared with the approximately 26 million people identified with a disability. Approximately 30% of the people without a disability were identified as "not in the labor force" compared with 79% of the people with a disability identified as "not in the labor force." This means that those with a disability were more than twice as likely to be identified as "not in the labor force" when compared to those without a disability in the September 2010 BLS data.

Employment Data Pertaining to People with Vision Loss (16 Years of Age and Over) What follows is the data from the September 2010 Current Population Survey for all people who responded "yes" to the question "Is anyone blind or does anyone have serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses?" This question was asked of household members 16 years of age and over.

Not in the labor force: Of the nearly 4 million people in September who reported blindness or serious difficulty seeing, approximately 3 million were identified as "not in the labor force." This means that approximately 75% of those who reported that they are blind or have serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses were "not in the labor force." People identified as "not in the labor force" were not actively looking for work so they were not identified by the unemployment rate even though they were not working as well. AFB urges people to draw attention to this troubling statistic that revealed three-fourths of people who reported vision loss were "not in the labor force" instead of focusing on the unemployment rate that does not include 75% of respondents with vision loss identified as "not in the labor force." (Excerpted from the American Foundation for the Blind website at www.afb.org Resources for Employment Statistics)

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Information Centers Established

The American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) Senior Site® and the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services OASIS Program have partnered to place Information Centers in key locations throughout Alabama. The goal of this sustainable project is to provide public education and information regarding various blindness programs and services offered to residents of Alabama. The Information Centers feature kiosks containing brochures, pamphlets, and tip sheets providing information on living independently within the home and community, locating resources, technology available to access print, use of leisure time, medication management, and other topics. Information Centers have been placed in the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind Regional Centers and E.H. Gentry Technical Facility. Additional Information Centers have been located in non-traditional public areas accessible to potential consumers and their families in order to outreach to a consumer base not previously served or underserved by blindness programs. For more information contact Curtis Glisson at curtis.glisson@rehab.alabama.gov or Julie Brock at jbrock@afb.net



Songs for Sight Support Group Event

Hi Everyone,

Please see attached the planned agenda for our next Songs for Sight Support Group Event. The event is free to children (Birth through college) with vision impairment and their families. They do not need to be patients of our clinic. This is our third year for the support group. Please feel free to share the agenda with anyone you feel would benefit from attending. Also, we need volunteers to help staff the event if you or anyone you know is interested in helping. Feel free to call or email with questions! Thank you!

Dawn K. DeCarlo, OD, MS
Associate Professor of Ophthalmology
Director, UAB Center for Low Vision Rehabilitation
UAB Callahan Eye Hospital, Suite 405
700 18th Street South
Birmingham, AL 35233



Fall Meeting Agenda McWane Science Center 200 19th Street, Birmingham, AL 35203 September 17, 2011

	Younger Children with Vision Impairment	Siblings*	Teens with Vision Impairment	Parents
2:15- 2:45	Registration – 3 rd Floor Special Events Entrance (This event and parking are FREE!)			
2:45- 3:00	Introductions			
3:15- 4:00	Science Activity	Games and Contests	Don't Laugh at Me- coping with bullying featuring Dr. Loucrecia Collins	Ask the Experts: Panel Discussion
4:00- 4:45	Don't Laugh at Me- coping with bullying featuring Dr. Loucrecia Collins	Science Activity	Teen Chat – Round Table Discussions	Parent Round Table Discussions
5:00- 5:30	Craft Activity		Science Activity	Don't Laugh at Me- coping with bullying featuring Dr. Loucrecia Collins
5:30	Picnic Buffet: hamburgers, chicken fingers, salad, chips, baked beans and cookies			
6:00	Enjoy McWane Center Adventure Halls (McWane will be closed to the general public during this time) IMax Movie "Born to be Wild" (Descriptive Video headsets available)			
8:00	Program concludes			

* We will have structured, fun activities for siblings who are potty-trained. If you have an infant or toddler and need care during this time, please let us know as soon as possible. We will do our best to provide babysitting on an as-needed basis.

Financial assistance is available for travel to this event. Please contact Kelly Ware at 205-325-8612 or lowvision@uab.edu if you have questions or wish to apply.

Please feel free to share this information with families who may benefit. All families with children with vision impairment, infants through college age are welcome to attend.

RSVP: Kelly Ware 205-325-8612 or lowvision@uab.edu

NEWS from Mississippi State University's Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision (MSU-RTC)

MSU-RRTC researchers are actively recruiting college students and professionals for "An Employment Mentoring Intervention," one of six research projects under our current National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) RRTC on Employment Outcomes for Individuals who are Blind or Visually Impaired. Nationwide recruitment of college students who are legally blind with mentors who are employed in similar professions and who are also legally blind is underway now and will continue through July, 2012. To volunteer for participation in this project, please complete an online eligibility survey for students at <http://tiny.cc/mentor-students> or for professionals at <http://tiny.cc/mentor-professionals>. For more information about this project, visit our website at <http://www.blind.msstate.edu/research/projects/project.php?id=2>, or contact Jamie O'Mally by email at rrtc2@colled.msstate.edu or by phone at 662-325-2001.

The Vision Specialist in Vocational Rehabilitation Certificate program offered by MSU-RRTC is currently accepting applicants. A limited number of stipends are available for students enrolled in this program, which provides specialized training for rehabilitation professionals to allow them to better serve the needs of consumers who are blind or visually impaired. For more information, visit <http://www.blind.msstate.edu/training/visionspecialist/> or contact MSU-RRTC training coordinator, B. J. LeJeune, at bjejeune@colled.msstate.edu or 662-325-2694. The application deadline for the 2012 Vision Specialist program is October 1, 2011.

To learn more about MSU-RTC, visit <http://blind.msstate.edu>.

SILENT AUCTION!

Don't forget to bring your checkbook and/or cash to participate in Alabama AER Chapter's Silent Auction to support the Billy Don Sims Scholarship Fund!

Your items donated for sale are always appreciated! If you would like to donate an item for sale please contact Julie Brock at:
JuliaBrock11@aol.com

**2010 BDS Scholarship Recipient Loretta Bryan accepted for
Master's Program at
Western Michigan University
CONGRATULATIONS LORETTA!**

Date: July 12, 2011

Hi Julie,

I hope all is well with you. I wanted you to know that I have been accepted into the Vision Rehabilitation Therapy/Teaching Master's degree program at Western Michigan University.

I will start online classes this fall. I was accepted too late for the grant/stipend that they offer for the fall semester. I would like to apply for the AER scholarship. Is it too late to apply for the fall semester? Thank You Loretta Bryan, Huntsville VR

Loretta:

Great News!!!! We are all very proud of you! I am disappointed to have to tell you that the deadline for the AER Scholarship was June 30, 2011. However, please apply next year (after January 2012). The amount is now \$2,000! Keep me inform of your progress. Julie



Alabama's Business Enterprise Program Pilots Wireless Vending Machine Monitoring

The work environment for Alabama Business Enterprise Program vendors has long been a guessing game. Are my machines stocked? Are they in working order? How much product do they need? Is the cash being collected honestly? Installment of the Cantaloupe wireless vending machine monitoring system has rendered these types of questions, a thing of the past.

For several years, the BEP administration had searched for a cost-effective technology solution to assist our blind vendors to achieve more profitability and provide them with greater control of their businesses. The solution must also be compatible with adaptive technology software used by blind consumers. After exhaustive research, meetings with the Legislative Contract Review Committee, and seemingly endless red tape, ADRS Assistant Commissioner Joe Helm was able to acquire the funding to make this pilot project a reality.



Jeff Thomas explains the SEED install to Chief Justice Chuck Malone, Dr. Boswell, Mr. Helm and Josh Hood.

The Cantaloupe System consists of a SEED device, communications hub, and web-based software. The SEED device is placed inside each machine and monitors the temperature, stock, cash count, security, and overall health of the machine. This information is transmitted wirelessly to a web-based software program that can be accessed by blind vendors and BEP staff. At any time of the day or night, an operator can log in and know exactly what the machine needs and how much money is in the coin box. Better yet, if the machine experiences an error or malfunction, it will actually call the operator to let them know! Having access to this type of information is a boon to vendor efficiency. Participants in the pilot project no longer burn expensive gasoline to inspect their machines on site. The needs of each machine can be determined from the breakfast table and the day's route planned accordingly.

One of the most valuable features of the Cantaloupe System is asset protection. Cantaloupe will immediately alert an operator of any unauthorized access to the machine. The SEED keeps track of exactly when each door to each machine is opened and how long it stayed opened. Because the SEED tracks each coin in the machine in real time, a blind vendor can know exactly how much money should be in each collection. Many blind vendors have for too long had to trust their route drivers to report accurately and honestly. Participating vendors may now enjoy peace of mind with regard to this aspect of their business. Part of the formula for success in operating a small business consists of knowing everything about your business, instituting loss prevention controls, and maximizing efficiency. The Cantaloupe pilot project seeks to provide Alabama BEP vendors with a state-of-the-art tool to help them achieve success in a competitive business environment. **Submitted by Darryl McCaul**



AER Election Results

The AER Board would like to extend its congratulations to Jennifer Stephens and Dr. Lisa Moses for their election to the Alabama AER Chapter's Board of Directors. Both Jennifer and Lisa have served on the Chapter Board previously and we look forward to their continued board work and support of AER. Both Jennifer and Lisa will serve one three year term beginning with their installation at the 28th Annual Training Conference, at Eufaula in October.

CONGRATULATIONS! JENNIFER AND LISA!



Alabama Association For Parents Of Children With Visual Impairments Weekend Family Conference October 14-16, 2011 Island House Hotel

Each year AAPVI hosts a weekend retreat in Orange Beach, Alabama. Registration information for the 2011 AAPVI Conference was mailed to 300 families with children who are blind or have low vision. This includes children with multiple disabilities. AAPVI is a support group for families with children who have vision loss. Families who participate in AAPVI sponsored events have children who range in age from under one year to college aged young adults. This year's annual retreat will be October 14-16.

AAPVI sponsored events include educational, social and recreational components. Experts in the field of vision rehabilitation, blind rehabilitation specialists and teachers for the blind provide resources and information these children, young adults and their families need in order to compete with their sighted peers in academics, in a chosen occupation and in life. Families who have participated in AAPVI sponsored events for years are now mentors for families who are just learning about this support group. Young adults who have benefited from what they have learned from AAPVI and its affiliates are called upon to mentor younger members.

Many of the families who attend AAPVI support group events need financial assistance to participate. The support group has not wanted financial challenges to be the reason the families could not attend. Through fundraising efforts, AAPVI members raise money to offer financial assistance to families who qualify for scholarship assistance.

The conference begins Friday 10/14/11 at 5:30 with a poolside pizza meet and greet. The conference speaker presentations are scheduled for Saturday 10/15/11 from 8:30 to 4:30. The remainder of the weekend is for socializing and getting better acquainted with the families and the speakers present for the weekend. This year the conference agenda includes:

-Carrie Gottney, from the law firm Town, Woods and Roberts. Carrie will speak about SSI, wills and estate planning. -Margie and Jeff Haddox of Sight Savers of America will speak to the families about their mission and the process for getting a referral to Sight Savers.

-Joey Richey, ADRS Rehabilitation Counselor, will speak to the families about his personal journey and the challenges he faced growing up with low vision. -Mike Hage of Emerald Coast Vision Aids and Bill Boules IT Accessibility Specialist for the State of Alabama will demonstrate and discuss some of the latest technology available for children who have low vision or are blind. -Chantal McManus, COMS/TVI will speak about "Related Services", what they are and how they are incorporated in the IEP process.

If you or someone you know would like to find out more about AAPVI and AAPVI sponsored events please contact the AAPVI State President Chantal McManus at chantalmcmanus@yahoo.com.

Nominations for Alabama AER Chapter Awards are due September 15th, 2011

It is that time of year again! Please consider a person or an employer that you think has made a significant contribution to the field of blindness. Please remember that for a person to be nominated for the Grider, the Cox or the Paraprofessional/Worker awards the person must be an AER member. The deadline to submit a nomination is September 15, 2011. Please submit all nominations to Jennifer Stephens, stephens.jennifer@aidb.state.al.us or mail to 4755 Rounton Lane, Southside, AL 35907.

Grider Award

The Grider Award is presented to a person who has made a significant contribution in working for persons who are blind or visually impaired to promote an understanding of blindness and visual impairment in the mainstream of society. The recipient of this award must be or have been actively involved in helping persons who are blind or visually impaired have fuller, more meaningful, productive, and independent lives. He or she shall have exemplified the pioneer spirit, dedication to service, and quality of direct services to persons who are blind or visually impaired as shown by the life and reputation of Charles B. Grider. Nominees may be of any race or gender, sighted or visually impaired/disabled.

Cox Award

The Cox Award is presented to a member of the Alabama Chapter. This person must have been a member for at least three years and must have shown, in the judgment of the Awards Committee, his or her commitment to the goals and principles of this chapter. The recipient shall have aided persons who are blind or visually impaired in their quest for acceptance in their community. Nominees may be of any race or gender, sighted or visually impaired/disabled.

Paraprofessional/Worker of the Year Award

This award will honor a full-time paraprofessional or worker who is a member of this chapter. The award will be presented to a paraprofessional/worker who has been employed at least three years, has performed duties conscientiously, has taken pride in the work performed, has shown initiative, has assumed additional responsibility when called upon, and has demonstrated a good working relationship with supervisors, co-workers, and the public. The recipient shall have promoted an understanding of blindness and acceptance of persons who are blind or visually impaired by the public. Nominees may be of any race or gender, sighted or visually impaired/disabled.

Employer of the Blind Award

This award will be presented to an employer who has given an individual who is blind the opportunity to work in business or industry, thereby showing that the employee who is blind has been accepted by his employer because of his ability. Other criteria include willingness to modify or change existing equipment, schedules or procedures to enable the employee to become more competitive in today's labor market. Nominees shall have exhibited a willingness to speak out positively to promote hiring persons who are blind or visually impaired in other industry besides his own, and may be of any race or gender, sighted or visually impaired/disabled/disabled.

AER Annual Training Conference continued.....

A number of qualified presenters will address topics such as "Blindness Demographics", "Where are the Jobs in Alabama", "Social Security Employment Incentives", "Work from Home Options" and other topics related to the unemployment issues. For registration and complete agenda information please visit the Alabama AER Chapter Website www.alabamaaer.com

Alabama AER Conference Registration Form

October 2-4, 2011 *** Lakepoint State Park Resort ***104 Lakepoint Drive, Eufaula, AL

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____

AER Member YES ☐ NO ☐

Email: _____

Please indicate preferred format e.g. Braille, Large Print:

Please identify any needed accommodations e.g. Interpreter, Mobility:

Registration Fee: \$135.00 per person which includes breakfasts, breaks, luncheons and President's Cookout. **Pre-registration deadline is September 16th.** On site registration will be available but may not include meals.

Please indicate your payment method below:

Purchase Order: *AIDB _____

Group Invoicing: **ADRS _____

Payment Enclosed: _____ ***Payable to AER, Alabama Chapter

*AIDB staff (other than joint service) should fax registration form and PO to Sheila Pennington at (256) 761-3450.

**ADRS staff (other than joint service) should fax registration form to Susan Harrell at (256) 389-3149. Your registration form will be forwarded to the ADRS Staff Development Office to be included in group invoicing.

***All other conference registrations including ADRS/AIDB joint service staff should mail registration form with payment to:

Ms. Sheila Pennington

E.H. Gentry

P.O. Box 698

Talladega, AL 35161

Pennington.Sheila@aidb.state.al.us

CEUs applied for - Register for up to 9 Contact Hours __ ACVREP __ CRCC __ SW
(To be mailed to participants at the conclusion of the conference)

Hotel Reservations: Contact Lakepoint State Park Resort by calling (800)544-5253 or (334)687-8011. The Group Number is **1404**. Reservation rates are \$80.10 plus tax for 2-Queen Beds and \$86.40 plus tax for a King Bed. If you are interested in a King Suite, Cabin or Cottage, please contact the hotel and give the Group Number to get the conference rate.

Questions: Call (256) 314-6222 or susan.harrell@rehab.alabama.gov.

Billy Don Sims Golf Scramble

Date: Sunday, October 2nd, 2011

Location: Lakepoint Resort Golf Club
Eufaula, AL

Lakepoint Resort State Park's 18-hole golf course will present a challenge to all golfers. It is championship long so bring your "A" game. The Club House offers a Pro Shop which sells golfing apparel, golfing supplies as well as snacks and drinks. A practice putting green and a driving range are located near the Club House. The Pro Shop is open Mon. - Fri. from 8-6 and Sat. and Sun. from 7-6. -

Park Address: 104 Lakepoint Drive, Eufaula, AL 36027, **Phone 334-687-8011**

REGISTRATION FOR THE GOLF EVENT WILL BE HELD IN THE MAIN LODGE BUILDING, ACROSS FROM THE REGISTRATION DESK, your registration includes the Sunday Buffet which will be available from 11:30 am – 12:30. Tournament play begins at the Golf Course at 1:00 PM.

FORMAT: Four-player team scramble, (captain's choice), choose your team or tournament committee will place you with a team. Come early enjoy the Sunday Buffet, hit some balls and be ready to tee it up at 1:00 PM. ***Four Places: Championship, First Flight, Second Flight and Third Flight winners determined after play. Take home the infamous YELLOW Cooler!***

ENTRY: Registration is \$75.00 per player or \$300.00 per team. The registration fee(s) for teams and/or players may be paid in advance and/or will be collected at the golf course the day of the Tournament.

TOURNAMENT REGISTRATION INCLUDES:

- Greens & Cart Fees, Range Balls, Goody Bag
- Closest to the Pin Prize (All Par Three's)
- Longest Drive Prize
- Lot's of Door Prizes (Lady Luck Only!) *Has nothing to do with your golfing ability?*
- The Winning Team (Low Gross) takes home the infamous Yellow Cooler Trophy
- Four Flights, Flights determined after play.
- **Buffet Lunch served from 11:30 AM until 12:30 in the Main Lodge Building**

TEE TIME: Tournament Play begins at 1:00 PM

GENERAL INFORMATION: The tournament committee is working hard to make this as fun an event as last years, while raising funds for the **Billy Don Sims AER Scholarship Fund**. In addition to tournament play, hole sponsorships, may be purchased for \$100.00 per hole. An attractive sign identifying each sponsor will be placed at each tee box. If you are interested or would like to suggest a hole sponsor to be contacted by the tournament committee please contact Lori Brady at (334) 566-2491 or email lori.brady@rehab.alabama.gov

PLAYERS NAME

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Registration For Tournament: Submit Player Names as follows:

Email joe.helm@rehab.alabama.gov or jpheagle@charter.net

FAX (334) 293-7389 or by Telephone (334) 293-7087