

Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired



Orientation and Mobility Division Update

Fall 2020

Volume 23 Number 3

From the Chair

Hello Orientation and Mobility Division,

These past seven months have been unprecedentedly challenging, provided ways to support one another remotely, created opportunities for collaboration, and encouraged out of the box thinking. Typically, I would reflect on all that I am thankful for around Thanksgiving, but this year has blurred that finite time to one that is less defined. I deeply appreciate all the individuals that have shared their talents with the AER Orientation and Mobility Division.

I am thankful for Susan Langendonk's continued commitment to the Division Newsletter. It is a time intensive, detail-oriented task. If you have information about Orientation and Mobility events, ideas, or strategies that you would like to share please reach out to her at susanlangendonk@gmail.com

I appreciate all six District Directors who are your go to contact people for your local areas. If you need to reach out to someone representing your district or would like to share activities happening in your area it would be advantageous to contact them. More details about your District Director can be found on the AER O&M Division pages at [Division 9 District Directors Corner](#).

I am thankful for the members of The Professional Committee on Support Canes. They have shared their gifts while addressing the task at hand. They developed questions to address where practitioners and university professors stand on this topic.

The information gathered from the surveys have been reviewed and presented at virtual conferences including the summer AER Learning Series. The sixty-minute presentation was recorded as part of the AER Learning Series and will be available in the future.

Hats off to Raychel Callary who as chair-elect who has taken the lead to organize, review and update the O&M Division position papers on topics ranging from O&M in Naturalistic Environments to Orientation and Mobility Specialists and the Provision of Travel Instruction to Individuals with Nonvisual Disabilities.

Thank you for being a part of the AER Orientation and Mobility community and working together to learn and grow. I welcome questions, suggestions, comments, or any topic related to Orientation and Mobility, you can reach me at aeromdivision@gmail.com. Thank you for the opportunity to serve the AER Orientation and Mobility Division.

JoAnne Chalom

Division Announcements

O&M DIVISION POSITION PAPER REVIEW

I am very happy to begin to serve as chair-elect of the O&M division. My first project is to facilitate the updating of our division's position papers. If you are new to our field (welcome!), you may not be familiar with the position papers adopted by the various AER divisions. These papers have been created to provide guidance in response to specific issues, and were last revised in 2013.

The position papers can provide support for O&M specialists encountering challenges. For example, "O&M in Naturalistic Environments" describes why it is important to teach in real-world situations and could be used to support the need to work with a student off-campus. Papers also address evolving trends - - "Teaching Street Crossing at Signalized Intersections" describes the challenges posed by these often-unpredictable signals and the techniques and strategies O&M specialists are responsible for providing.

To propose a position paper, a division member or team of members can prepare a draft and publish it in a division newsletter or another appropriate publication that reaches all division members. After members have had the opportunity to provide feedback, the author(s) can revise the paper and present the final draft at an international meeting or through mail ballot voting of the division membership. Papers that receive a two-thirds majority vote are distributed and publicized. I hope you will be on the lookout for these draft revisions, and will consider issues you feel our division should support. Additional topics are being discussed for possible position papers, including the O&M's role in the use of support canes and considerations for remote instruction. Current papers can be found at [Division 9 Position Papers](#)

I am so grateful for this opportunity to help our field progress, and look forward to working with our dedicated board and division members toward our shared goals.

Raychel Callary
O&M Division Chair-Elect

ENVIRONMENTAL ACCESS COMMITTEE

Meg Robertson has taken over from Janet Barlow as the Chair of the EAC. Janet will continue to guide the committee with all her knowledge, but Meg will take over the management of the committee.

On our AER O&M Division page, there are a number of different Environmental Access resources addressing the needs of pedestrians who are blind or have low vision and impact the teaching of O&M Skills, please check them out [Orientation and Mobility Division Resources](#)

[About Accessible Pedestrian Signals](#)

[Detectable Warning Surfaces](#)

[Guidance through Construction Areas](#)

[Design Guidelines for the Visual Environment](#)

[Shared Streets: Impacts for Pedestrians with Visual Impairments](#)

[Considerations When Requesting an Accessible Pedestrian Signal](#)

[Need for Accessible Pedestrian Signals When Leading Pedestrian Intervals \(LPIs\) and Exclusive Pedestrian Phases are Installed](#)

[Sample Letter Requesting an Accessible Pedestrian Signal](#)

[List of Accessible Pedestrian Signal Manufacturers](#)

EAC members are a resource to all O&M Division members in trainings and or giving resources on environmental access and public right of ways issues. Please check the above resources out and let the committee members know what other resources are needed to develop for your practice and advocating for better public right of ways within your communities.

If interested in participating in the Transportation Research Board meetings this January, this is the time to check it out. These virtual meetings will be held during the weeks of January 5-8 and 11-15, 2021 from 10:00-5:00pm Eastern. Usually one has to travel to Washington DC to attend the January meetings, so this is a unique opportunity. One can attend the meetings for free but must register on the TRB website for the meetings. For more information on the different type of meetings, please contact Meg Robertson at Mobilitymeg@aol.com Go to <http://www.trb.org/AnnualMeeting/Registration.aspx> to set up a TRB profile following the directions in the website. You can become a “friend” of any committee to get on mailing lists. Once you have registered for the meetings (at no cost) you will be able to access the schedule when it is posted. The different committee names are:

- | Code | Committee Name |
|-------------|--|
| A0030C | City Transportation Issues Coordinating Council |
| ACH10 | Standing Committee on Pedestrians |
| ACH20 | Standing Committee on Bicycle Transportation |
| AME50 | Standing Committee on Accessible Transportation and Mobility |
| AP050 | Standing Committee on Bus Transit Systems |

Public Right of Way Resources

TAPCO is a company which produces standard and custom traffic safety solutions for private businesses and government in the US. They have produced a White Paper on “**Optimizing Pedestrian Safety at Mid-Block Crossings**” which discusses different mid-block crossing treatments which may improve protections for pedestrians at these types of crossings. Please go to Tapconet.com/white-paper or www.taponet.com

For pedestrian updates and trainings go to The National Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center <http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/>

The National ADA Great Plains Center is also a great resource for ADA public right of way trainings. <https://gpadacenter.org/>

During these COVID times, with access to many virtual meetings, it is a good time to reach out to your local City/Town, State DOT and Traffic Engineers and Planners to begin meeting and educating them on the needs of pedestrians who are blind or have vision loss.

Meg Robertson COMS Chair EAC EAC Committee Members:

Janet Barlow	Beezy Benstzen	Gene Bouquin	Raychel Callary
JoAnne Chalom	Lukas Franck	Jen Graham	Melanie Hughes
Laura Park Leach	Claudia Libis	Linda Myers	Elizabeth Robertson
Dona Sauerburger			

FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTORS

Illinois

Second Sense

Make sure to check out the upcoming events for clients at Second Sense at 65 E. Wacker Place Suite 1010 in downtown Chicago. <https://www.second-sense.org/calendar/>

Indiana

Indiana AER conference will be October 26th and 27th. Visit [2020 Conference](#) to register. Contact Jennifer Mesanovic at (812) 237-8115 or email at jennifer.Mesanovic@indstate.edu.

Michigan

Leader Dog

Leader Dogs for the Blind began welcoming clients back to our campus in Rochester Hills, Michigan on July 12, 2020. The decision to do so was taken very seriously and with careful planning. The week prior the Leader Dog O&M team began with O&M clients in close proximity to Leader Dog for some in-home O&M.

Leader Dog evaluates COVID-19 numbers in each state on a weekly basis. From this it is determined which clients will be invited to participate in guide dog or O&M training. Clients that live within a six-hour radius are encouraged to come via private transport of a family member or friend. Those that live further or do not have the support of private transportation are offered to fly (free of charge). Flights that are arranged are nonstop. To keep social distancing standards high Leader Dog is operating at 50% client capacity.

Several safety guidelines and instructional modifications are utilized. New safety measures include daily health screenings each morning for clients and team members. Additionally, we instituted use of social distancing, mask wearing, continuous access to hand sanitizers, encouragement of hand washing, limited time in communal spaces, reduced capacities on Leader Dog transportation and many modifications to the residential facility. Some of the instructional modifications made include purposeful social distancing and use of a voice amplifier.

Clients and team members have made these adjustments feel pretty seamless. Leader Dogs for the Blind has found success in service delivery during these unprecedented times.

For any questions call or email Client services for further questions.

888-777-5332, clientservices@leaderdog.org

Michigan AER

Save the Date- April 22 & 23, 2021

Minnesota

Minnesota AER

AER is looking for members to serve as Chapter President, Treasurer and Secretary for Minnesota. If you are interested, please send an email to aer@aerbvi.org.

Maggie Winn, COMS District 3 Representative

IN THE NORTHEAST

The Chapter's November conference, like many others, was cancelled, but will be planned for November of 2021 in Mystic, CT. In lieu of this the Board feels strongly that working through our Divisions may be the way to go to maintain support for our members. Therefore, the O&M division will be having a virtual meeting in November, where we will discuss speakers we might support for virtual staff development. One advantage to this pandemic is that residents in several of our states have not been able to leave their states for several years, making it impossible for them to attend our Fall conference. This year, with everything being virtual, they will be able to fully participate!

Many creative ideas have emerged during this Crisis for service delivery to both adults and children. The smallest state in the union, Rhode Island has a strong group of O&Mers who met over the summer to configure their attack on services for the Fall. They decided to completely revamp their service delivery model and, rather than having each Specialist deliver services to a particular area, they divided their combined caseloads and divided them more according to ages and abilities. Then they looked at all the goals they had written and created some curricular material to make sure they had everyone covered.

In New Hampshire, the O&Mers combined forces with TVI's in a weekly support meeting where we exchanged ideas, frustrations, rumors and resources. None of us likes the situation, but together we will make it work.

I'm sure many of our other States in the region have ideas they could report. Maybe this will invigorate them to write me a line and get tell me of their exploits.

Finally, as we approach Mobility with various modes of attack, I feel that all are in agreement, at least in the Northeast, that we have many concepts that can be taught, as well as skill development. We draw the line at teaching street crossing through another person or in a remote setting.

Keep the News Coming and Stay Safe,
Claudia Libis, District 4 Representative

2020 WHITE CANE DAY

White Cane Day this year fell on Thursday, October 15, 2020. Like many events, the White Cane Day celebrations will look and feel differently due to COVID pandemic. However, the importance of this day should not be neglected. In this day of social media and virtual meetings, sharing about this day should not go unnoticed.

In 1930, a Lions Club member noticed that a man who was blind was attempting to cross a street using a black cane. As a COMS I am quite aware that a black cane would not be visible to people driving. However, that was not the case and the Lions decided to paint canes white to make them more visible and in 1931 the Lions promoted the use of white canes for people who were blind. The first White Cane Day ordinance was passed in 1930 in Peoria, Illinois and it gave people who were blind and using a cane the right of way. On October 6, 1964 Congress passed HR 753 by President Lyndon Johnson and proclaimed that October 15th of every year was "White Cane Safety Day" (retrieved from [White Cane Week / History of the White Cane](#) on October 9, 2020).

In the past many schools, organizations and agencies have celebrated White Cane Day with festivals, walks, fundraisers, awareness activities about a white cane day, and other activities. This year countries,

states, counties, cities, schools, agencies and organizations are celebrating October 15th in many ways- but generally all virtual. These are just a few events that are marking this date.

USA DISTRICT SIX REGIONS

MARYLAND: The Commissioners, on 10/7/2020, joined with Amy Crouse and Mary Elligson of the Worcester County Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind to proclaim October 15, 2020 as White Cane Awareness Day in Worcester County, Maryland, and to encourage area residents and employers to value the white cane as a tool of independence for the blind in both public spaces and businesses. (retrieved from <https://www.co.worcester.md.us/news/white-cane-awareness-day> on October 9, 2020)

PENNSYLVANIA: Believe You Can! Is a virtual talent show sponsored by the Keystone Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind of PA. The show is made up entirely of artists who are blind or visually impaired. The show aired virtually on Saturday, October 17 at 7 p.m. Twenty artists were scheduled to perform, with each performance given a 10-minute time limit. Acts ran the gamut from singers, musicians, to spoken word and there was even a clogging tutorial. Believe You Can! falls on the heels of White Cane Awareness Day, October 15th (retrieved from [Believe You Can!](#) on October 12, 2020).

MARYLAND at the Maryland School for the Blind: This year we are focused on the ever-evolving opportunities that teaching during a pandemic presents. We are driving all over Maryland, serving students from our school in their home environments (PPE and masks in place, of course). We also are serving some students in their schools in various counties and teaching virtually. With all these changes to instruction, a trivia game that can be used anywhere, with a variety of students is just the ticket. The questions are of different difficulty so the team can find something for everyone. Not a lot of bells and whistles, but it is a fun way to remind students of the history that has moved us all toward greater freedom. Also, we are fortunate to be celebrating one of our own on White Cane Day this year. The DC/MD AER Chapter is recognizing Bill McGeachy, one of our Maryland School for the Blind (MSB) COMS, for the Excellence in Direct Service in Education Award. The awards ceremony was held virtually on the evening of October 15th. Bill has been an Orientation and Mobility Specialist for over 25 years and has been working at MSB for 40. Among his impressive qualities is he teaches in Spanish, ASL, and English on a regular basis. He is a natural born teacher who meets each student where that person is and helps them to move and experience the world! Celebrating his artistry in the teaching of O&M was a wonderful way to spend White Cane Day. By Martha Graf O&M instructor at MSB

WEST VIRGINIA at the West Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind: Thursday October 15, 2020 the day began with an introduction/Welcome from Superintendent Homberg and CAO Vittorio as well as Mayor Keadle and Delegate Rowan. The day continued with the White Cane Day Songs/sing along and a Watch White Cane. A march around campus with canes proceeded the welcome. Later in the day younger students participated in a Scavenger Hunt and obstacle course activity. Later in the day the students were treated to a presentation by Conrad Bennet about Pilot Dogs and getting a guide dog during a pandemic. What a great celebration at WVSDB!!!! Thank you, Melanie Hesse! The school shared their video "Signs" <https://youtu.be/-btBcPKOpAM>

WASHINGTON DC Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind: The organization did virtual lessons with students to talk about what this day is and overall awareness!! Thank you Bethany Martin!!

DELAWARE Independent Resources, Inc. hosted a virtual White Cane Day to commemorate this important date in history. This organization in the past has celebrated at the legislative hall in Delaware, and all month long White Ribbons are hung for blindness awareness. Thank you, Sharon Thomas!!

INTERNATIONAL CELEBRATIONS

(Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/whitecaneday> on October 12, 2020)

AUSTRALIA: It's the end of the week, which means we're only days away from our [#WhiteCaneDay](#) Virtual Concert featuring the likes of Rick Price, Cristina Jones - The Blind Soprano, Caitlin Smith, Victoria Oruwari!, Ginny Owens, Connor Wink - Singer, Lara Nakhle Music, Johnnyhilandoofficial, Laurie Rubin, Mac Potts Music, Robert Cini and DEAN RAY MUSIC You can listen to the podcast on [White Cane Day Concert 2020 Podcast](#)

AFRICA: The white Cane is beyond a rod (cane). It signifies confidence, safety, productivity to a blind person. It's painted in White for visibility and tinted in red for safety. At Accesstech we are joining the World Blind Union to mark the International White Cane and Safety Day with a Pan-African Mobility Conference. Our discussions shall be centered on "safe and independent travel of blind persons during covid-19. The conference was open to visually impaired persons, eye care professionals, special needs special and anyone who knows and want understand the dynamics in the mobility of blind persons. Check the comment session for registration link. [#whitecaneday](#) [#worldblindunion](#)[#oct15thwhitecaneday](#)

RUSSIA: Moscow to host White Cane International Charity Festival [#Disability](#) [#Moscow](#) [#Blind](#) [#WhiteCaneDay](#)

Activities that you can do virtually may include:

- Discuss the importance, and history of the white cane
- Decorate slender, dowel rods, (about 6") with white, red and black paint- this may require assistance, but materials for younger children may be provided (mail or drop off) and a zoom meeting may ensue to discuss how to make this cane
- Older children and young adults can learn how to order a white cane from companies as well as NFB's free cane
- Older children and teens may learn about options for traveling independently and include both a white cane as well as a dog guide.
- Younger children may enjoy writing questions to "interview" their white cane
- Any age child may enjoy writing poems about "If your cane could talk, what would it say?"
- Older children may benefit from learning about courtesy rules of blindness and what they mean
- Older children would benefit from learning about their states White Cane Laws
- Whatever activity you participate in, mark this important day of independence with others!

Valery Kircher COMS/TVI District 6 Representative

In the News

Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CABVI)

Announces Unique Virtual Competition for Blind Students:

Students from Greater Cincinnati to Compete in Local Cane Quest® Mobility Challenge



For many years the white cane has been a symbol of independence and ease of travel for children and adults with visual impairments. It helps people with low or no vision navigate the world around safely and efficiently, and alerts others that the user is visually impaired. But this fall the white cane will become a tool in a fun, yet challenging competition—**Ohio Regional Cane Quest hosted by Cincinnati Association for the Blind & Visually Impaired (CABVI)**. The event will be virtual this year from September 26 through December 12 including interactive events on Facebook and prizes delivered to the contestants' porches!

Created by **Braille Institute of America, Inc.** as a part of its expanding National Programs offerings, Cane Quest® is a national competition that tests the ability of blind and visually impaired youngsters to navigate the world around them independently and safely. With the help of area Orientation and Mobility Specialists, students will demonstrate and master their orientation and mobility skills in their own communities!

Cane Quest® seeks to motivate students to master their mobility skills, while also educating the sighted public about the abilities of blind youth to travel independently. To participate or for more information please contact Vicki Lorenz at vicki.lorenz@cincyblind.org

Exciting news from the Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired!

We have been working with the MoveBR project team from the DOTD and advocacy leaders from Lighthouse Louisiana to improve accessibility around the city in regards to the VI population. As a team, we have discussed priority areas including perpendicular intersections, accessible pedestrian signals (APS), and improved bus stops. Most recently, we have discussed adding tactile crosswalks to those intersections where the aforementioned are not a possibility.

We met with some of our students and the team to test out different options for tactile crosswalks such as thermoplastic, raised reflectors, and even a model in which a channel is cut into the crosswalk in which blind and visually impaired clients can follow with their cane to maintain alignment while crossing. We are very excited to be moving forward in increasing accessibility around the city for our students!

Thank you!

Stacy Cox, MS, TVI/COMS
Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist
Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired
Baton Rouge, LA
225-757-3472

Save the Date

2020 Dakotas AER Virtual Conference

20/20—Focusing on our Future
October 28-30, 2020
Aberdeen, South Dakota

Featured Presenters
Terese Powletko
Grace Ambrose-Zaken

Registration and conference information will be emailed and will also be available at <https://sdsbvi.org/> and [Dakotas AER](#). Applications are in process for ACVREP & university credit from NSU

Questions? Contact Amy Scepaniak, Tevan Fischbach, or Jane Mundschenk at 605-626-2580 or toll free at 1-888-275-3814.

South Carolina AER Annual Conference

Remote Control:
Channeling into Virtual Learning for Vision Professionals

Featured Speakers
Diane Sheline- Virtual CVI strategies
Ting Siu- Accessible platforms and virtual learning strategies
Diane Brauner w/Ed Summers- Non-visual digital mapping skills
Dona Sauerburger- Teaching street crossing remotely and visual scanning while socially distant

When: November 12-13, 2020
Where: Virtual via Zoom Webinar

Contact: [Amanda Stolz](#)



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Visit the O&M website for a list of Committees: <https://aerbvi.org/oandmdivision>

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