



VRT News October, 2020

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Message from the Chair

Hello fellow Vision Rehabilitation practitioners!

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Kathy Spengler. I am relatively new to this field, graduating from the University of Massachusetts in 2015. I initially graduated from nursing school in 1985 and loved nursing. However, a diagnosis of Stargardt's disease in 2000 caused me to question what my future would hold. I eventually found myself working with a support group for people with visual impairments that was facilitated by a VRT. This was the first time I was aware that there were professionals who focused specifically on

assisting people who live with vision loss to remain as independent as possible.

I have personally benefited from learning all of the skills that I now teach other people. This second career has provided me a strong sense of satisfaction and purpose. Offering hope to persons facing a diagnosis of vision loss is so rewarding and I am thankful for the opportunity to serve in this field.

We are an international community and the board and I are very interested in learning about you. We can certainly say we have lived in interesting times in 2020! Most of our roles have probably changed in some way. As we look forward to 2021, we would like to hear your voice. We hope that you will attend our water cooler /webinar events and consider writing an article for our newsletter.

Thanks for reading!

Your VRT Chair,

,

Kathleen Spengler RN BSN M.Ed. CVRT

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Webinar and AWARDS! (FREE)

Who: Award: Find out WHO are the winners of the AER VRT Division this year! It only happens every two years so you know these are some of the best of the best!

Webinar: Dr. Cunningham is a psychologist at the Hines VA Hospital in the Central Blind Rehabilitation Center. She completed her postdoctoral fellowship at the Hines VA Hospital in the Inpatient Medical Care emphasis and has a background in health and rehab psychology.

What: AWARDS! And Zoom: Visual Impairment and Mental Health

When: October 30, 2020 *12:00 PM Eastern Time; 11:00 AM Central Time; 10:00 AM Mountain Time; 9:00 AM Pacific Time*

Where: Zoom Login:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83479196184?pwd=bzNWbm1LL2xVNTkyemJnYjYvSGtPUT09>

Why: To learn!

As you may recall, the AER International conference was cancelled due to COVID. This is when we award AER VRT Division awards. FINALLY! We will be awarding The Bruce McKenzie Award for Lifetime Achievement and The Susan and Paul Ponchillia VRT Publication Award. If you know someone who has been nominated let them know they should tune in!

A Recruitment Effort

As we look at the field of Vision Rehabilitation Therapy, it is evident that there is a high need and demand for trained and certified individuals in all regions across North America and throughout the world. Recognizing this, the VRT Division has been discussing where recruitment and community education efforts might be best focused to make the biggest impact possible. We have also had some preliminary discussions with AVRT to coordinate community outreach and magnify the impact of our efforts. Moving forward there are four main recruitment & messaging efforts that will be of focus, in no particular order:

- **Increasing the Number of VRTs in the field:**
 - **Outreach efforts should seek to increase diversity within our field and reach out to all ages, educational levels, related professions, second careers and more.**
- **Raising awareness among our profession of what VRTs do (not everyone in our field understands what VRTs do)**
- **Influence VRTs to do more research, publish and expand the content of our field**
- **Influencing employers to hire trained vision professionals**

We would love input from the community as to ways you think these areas can be most influenced and welcome any support in attaining any of these or other related efforts. If

you are interested in helping or providing any input, please reach out to Daniel Norris: dnorris@vabvi.org

RESOURCES!?

Have you EVER been to the AER VRT Division website? Why not? Nothing there for you, you say? Well let's change that! Your division board is looking to cram full the resources in this page for YOU! What kind of things do you want to see? What are you needs? We want to hear from YOU!

In the meanwhile, check out the site! We will be revamping to put in more resources!

<https://aerbvi.org/about/divisions/vision-rehabilitation-therapy-division/>

Have YOU Heard about AVRT?!? Check it out!

I'd like to share the 2020 AVRT Professional Development conference information. The conference is virtual this year November 10-12. The conference offers ACVREP credits (including 1 CATIS credit) and CRC credits. Registration closes November 6th. Please see attached save the date and full conference agenda or visit www.avrt.org to register.

**Thank you,
Ian Shadrick**

Ian Shadrick Ed.D., CVRT, CRC, FNRCA
Past President
Association of Vision Rehabilitation Therapists

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

January 15, 2021 Deadline for articles for next issue of VRT News. Send articles to Amber Mooney at amooney@theiris.org.

Vision Rehabilitation Therapy Division Board Contact Information:

Please contact the division if you have any questions, concerns, or errors regarding the VRT newsletter.

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