

NEWSLETTER



EYE ON ALABAMA

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27th Annual Training Conference

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By all accounts the Alabama AER Chapter's 27th Annual Training Conference was a BIG success. Over 120 persons interested in the education and rehabilitation of the blind and visually impaired gathered at beautiful Lakepoint State Park in Eufaula for learning, fellowship and maybe even a bit of fun. A variety of informative topics related to blindness and low vision ranging from "Bioptic Driving" to "Employment Opportunities for the Visually Impaired" were presented. Always a conference highlight is the presence of our Conference Exhibitors. This year's event attracted sixteen exhibitors from all parts of the country. We sincerely appreciate their participation. We would like to say "Thanks" to all AER members who participated in this year's Silent Auction and the Lights Out Bowling events. Both were big successes. We always appreciate Dr. Terry Graham and Dr. Cary Boswell for their support and attendance at this event. While space will not permit the opportunity to say "Thanks" to all who played important roles in this year's event a "Special Thank You" is in order for your new President Susan Harrell. Susan worked tirelessly and worried over every detail which is what it takes to coordinate a successful conference. We all look forward to working with her and our new President-Elect Issac Beavers as the planning for next year begins.



John Mascla, Alabama AER President addresses the 27th Annual AER Conference. A "Heartfelt Thank You" John for your support and leadership over the past four years! John please know how valuable and appreciative we are of your efforts! *The AER Board*

AER Billy Don Sims Scholarship

On behalf of the AER Board of Directors and the Billy Don Sims Scholarship Committee we want to extend a heartfelt "Thank You" to each person in making the AER BDS Golf Scramble a big success this year! With the help of the Silent Auction, (\$764) and the Lights Out Bowling, (\$166) and after all expenses the golf event produced \$6,354.61 for a total raised of \$7,284.61.

This year's event represented the 7th year of the BDS Golf Scramble and it's effort to raise funds for its scholarship. With this year's effort added to the currently held scholarship CD of \$50,200, the earned interest, and a little help from the Alabama AER Chapter board, the renewed CD will total \$59,000. This amount coupled with the \$5,700 that has been awarded in scholarships brings the total raised to **\$64,700.**

Words cannot express the "Thank You" that each of you richly deserve. Many of you have helped year after year and it is this consistent effort and perseverance that has paid off by enabling the Alabama AER Chapter to provide scholarship assistance to those who are pursuing a career of service for persons that are blind or have low vision.

As my grandfather once said "Make a plan, work the plan, and enjoy the results". That's what we have been doing for the past seven years and it is now showing results! Thanks again to each of you as individuals and to the companies that you represent for helping make this effort a BIG success!

Rod Harrell Honored with Charles B. Grider Award



AER Treasurer Rod Harrell receives the GRIDER Award from Caitlin Simpson.

The Grider Award is presented annually 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 and must be or have been actively involved in helping persons who are blind or visually impaired have fuller, more meaningful, productive, and independent lives. There is no doubt in the minds of all of us who have had the pleasure of working with Rod Harrell that he has made a significant difference in the lives of countless blind persons who have crossed his path. His pioneering spirit, dedication to service, his quality of direct services provided to persons who are blind and the relationships that he has developed with Redstone Arsenal personnel exemplify those honored by the life and reputation of Charles B. Grider.

Additionally Rod has served as the Alabama AER Chapter Treasurer for several years, paying attention to every detail, and making recommendations to maximize the Chapter's resources. Rod's leadership and commitment to Alabama AER and his professional service to individuals with blindness is exemplary and it is our honor that Rod Harrell be selected as the 2010 recipient of the Charles B. Grider Award.

Nothing Speaks Louder than the Customer!

"What would I say that isn't widely known, that hasn't already been said, that isn't already accepted as fact?"
Ben Fordham

Congratulations Rod, Well Deserved!

When I moved the family to Huntsville from Montgomery about 13 years ago, I was assured by state personnel, as well as other vendors that I was getting the best representative in the state. It took no time to come to the same conclusion myself. Upon arriving to Huntsville, Rod took my wife and I on a tour of each location on our new vending route. We knew he cared about us personally. He assured us we would get the next add on according to the rules of the program. Since then, and now, he always takes the time to thoroughly explain all the rules of the program. He has helped each and every time I have had any confusion with the Social Security program and he has personally taken the time to confront Social Security in my behalf. I have never had a business problem or concern that he hasn't had

a good suggestion for. In times of need, he has provided me with a ride, to and from local area meetings. He has only missed two out of seventy two local meetings since I have lived in Huntsville, driving from Decatur to attend each one of them. He helps conduct the local elections strictly by the rules of the program and contributes heavily with knowledge of recent news or events about the program, at each of the other local meetings. He exhibits a great sense of humor and can take any bad situation and put a positive twist to it, always giving hope to any situation. Rod has always been very detailed in his discussions. I have never had a conversation with him (about the past, present or future of the program, program rules, social security, or any aspect of my business) that, when the conversation ended, I didn't feel completely assured and

informed. I understood everything that we talked about. He has always shown empathy toward tragedies in our personal lives and always shared in the victories of each of the families he represents.

If Rod Harrell was interested in computers, he would be Bill Gates.

If Rod Harrell was interested in cars, he would be Henry Ford himself.

But, Rod Harrell is interested in the Business Enterprise Program.

Every representative that is interested in the BEP program should be Rod Harrell. Be assured, Rod Harrell deserves the Grider Award!

**Sincerely,
Ben Fordham**

Get Answers About Eye Conditions

Do you have questions about eye conditions and ongoing research?

The [National Eye Institute's Office of Communication, Health Education, and Public Liaison](#) responds directly to requests for information on eye diseases and vision research. They cannot, however, provide personalized medical advice to individuals about their condition or treatment.

E-mail: 2020@nei.nih.gov

Phone: (301) 496-5248

Mail: National Eye Institute

Information Office

31 Center Drive MSC 2510

Bethesda, MD 20892-2510

E-mail messages are answered Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Eastern Time, except federal holidays. They do their best to respond within 48 hours.

Additionally, the National Eye Institute (NEI) provides [eye health information](#) on its web site on a number of eye conditions.

AFB Senior Site® also offers an [Understanding Vision Loss section](#) featuring [message boards](#) and guides such as [living with macular degeneration](#) and [managing diabetes and vision loss](#).

More Information for Health Professionals

Featured on AFB Senior Site® this month:

NEI's National Eye Health Education Program (NEHEP) is pleased to announce the launch of [See Well for a Lifetime: An Educational Series on Vision and Aging](#). The series provides a toolkit designed to be used by professionals who work with older adults to convey science-based, easy-to-understand information about general eye health, age-related eye diseases and conditions, and the importance of comprehensive dilated eye exams. The kit consists of 3 modules:

[Making Vision a Health Priority](#): This module includes information about vision changes that can occur with age, the importance of comprehensive dilated eye exams and things that people can do to keep their eyes healthy.

[Age-Related Eye Diseases and Conditions](#): This module includes detailed information on age-related eye disease and conditions and what people can do to protect their vision.

[Low Vision](#): This module includes information about low vision, vision rehabilitation, and questions to ask an eye care professional or specialist in low vision.

Each module contains a PowerPoint presentation, a Speaker's Guide, participant handouts, a promotional announcement, and participant evaluation forms. Learn about [tips for using the Toolkit](#).

Nadine Ballard Honored

Mrs. Nadine Ballard has been a staunch contributor to E. H. Gentry for over 20 years. She began her career in the field of blindness in the Assistive Technology for the Blind Department. Nadine currently works as the Secretary for the Services for the Blind program. Nadine is always willing to help persons with visual impairments. She is more than willing to produce and bind Braille materials. She has also acted as a reader of print materials for persons that are visually impaired. She is willing to stay late or come in early. For the past several years Nadine has worked tirelessly behind the scenes to prepare materials and assist with the AER annual conference registration each year. Congratulations Nadine!



Nadine Ballard receives AER 2010 Para-Professional Award
...from Caitlin Simpson.

AER Spotlight on Debbie Culver

Debbie Culver began her working career in August 1980 in Gadsden, Alabama where she worked as a teacher's aide with the Gadsden City School System for six years. In June 1986, she began her employment with the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) where she worked as a Rehabilitation Teacher for one and a half years. Later she was employed as a Rehabilitation Counselor for the Blind with ADRS a position she held for 17 years. In December 2003, Debbie was selected as Coordinator of Blind Services with ADRS the position formerly held by Billy Don Sims. Debbie achieved her Bachelors Degree in Social Work and her Masters Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from the University of Alabama Tuscaloosa.

One of the highlights of Debbie's twenty-four year career with ADRS has been the opportunity to spearhead the development of an Accommodations Resource Guide. The Accommodations Resource Guide is an effort for ADRS to be proactive in providing the highest level of accessibility for staff with disabilities. A diverse committee of individuals with disabilities and/or with disability expertise strategized to develop this informative resource to guide. The primary goal is to assist ADRS staff and anyone with the responsibility for planning training programs or meetings who desire to provide accommodations and accessibility for participants with disabilities in the most appropriate manner. While the Accommodations Resource Guide does not intend to present an exhaustive list it does provide considerable direction and food for thought regarding accessibility. The best rule of thumb is to make direct contact with the person with the disability to find out their personal needs and preferences.

Being a part of this important endeavor has been an exciting highlight and this tool will result in staff planning work activities that embrace the provision of the most appropriate accommodations to ADRS staff and participants with disabilities. **NEW Accommodations Resource Guide** If you are planning a one day training event or a three day conference and you desire to provide the highest level of accessibility for persons with disabilities then this is a must read! While not intended to be an exhaustive list the "Accommodations Resource Guide" provides useful and informative items to consider when addressing the accessibility needs of various types of limitations posed by disabilities. Those responsible for participating in the development of the guide include, Bedarius Bell, Bill Boules, Evon Black, Connie Givens, Cayla Lackey, Alan Markeles, Graham Sisson, Ashley Townsend, and Debra Culver.

If you are responsible for planning meetings where persons with disabilities may be in attendance this is GREAT RESOURCE! Contact: Ms. Debra D. Culver 334-293-7315 email debbie.culver@rehab.alabama.gov

