

Alabama AER Election Results for 2022 and Information about Officers and Board Members.

The AER Board and membership extends its congratulations to the persons below who have been elected to serve as an officer or board member. The terms for the newly elected officers and board members began with their installation at the 39th Annual Training Conference at Lakepoint State Park, November 18, 2022. **Congratulations to all who are willing to serve Alabama AER!** The May-June 2022 election cycle elected two members to serve three-year terms as board members, Kellee Sanchez and Donte Little. Officers elected are Kelly Bond, President-Elect, Sharon McLean, Secretary, and Joe Helm, Treasurer. Steve Sullivan served as the Nominations and Elections Chairperson for the May-June 2021 election cycle. Dr. Yvette Pearce, Past-President will serve as the Nominations and Elections Chairperson for the May-June 2023 election cycle.

Information About Officers and Board Members

President 2023-2024, Steve Sullivan, Ph.D. Dr. Stephen M. Sullivan has been a member of AER since 1994. He has served the Alabama Chapter as Board Member, Newsletter Editor, President Elect (2 terms), and currently serves as President for the second time. He also attended the first Alabama AER Leadership Training Institute in 2008. Stephen currently resides in Mobile, Alabama with his wife Staci.

Stephen was born on April 6, 1967, in Mobile, Alabama to Eugene and Sylvia Sullivan. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Special Education from the University of South Alabama in 1990. In 2007, Stephen earned a Master of Science degree in Instructional Design and Development and a Ph.D. in 2016.

Stephen has worked as a case manager, program coordinator, self-contained classroom teacher, and as an Assistive technology Specialist / Project Director for more than 23 years at Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind, Regional Center in Mobile. He has provided direct services related to education and technology (demonstration, assessment, recommendation, instruction, job placement, technical support, and others) for people who are vision impaired or blind in the state of Alabama. Stephen has presented on education and assistive technology topics locally, statewide (AER, NFB, ACB), and at international conferences (ATIA, Council for Exceptional Children, and others). After retiring from the state in 2018 he founded Navillus Technologies LLC, offering services similar to those mentioned above and conducting research and development of new and innovative assistive technologies for people who are visually impaired or blind.

President-Elect 2023-2024, Kelley Bond **President-Elect 2023-2024, Kelley Bond** is a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS) and is currently serving adults with visual impairments at the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind on the E.H. Gentry campus. She received her Bachelor of Arts from the University of Louisiana at Monroe in 2010 and began working for the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services at the Addie McBryde Center for the Blind in Jackson, Mississippi in 2012. While working there, she completed her Master of

Arts in Rehabilitation of the Blind at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock and became ACVREP certified in Orientation and Mobility. Kelley has been a member of AER since 2013 and has previously served the Mississippi chapter of AER as board member, president-elect, and president.

Past-President 2023-2024, Dr. Yvette Pearce serves as the Director of Student and General Services, Adult Education, and CARF Accreditation Compliance at the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind, E.H. Gentry. While working in the Residence Life Department at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, Yvette earned her Bachelor's in Business/Human Resources Management and master's degree in Counseling. In 1993, she moved back to her hometown of Coldwater, Alabama and began working in the Student Development Department at the Alabama School for the Deaf. In 1999, she began a supervisory position at ASD and completed her Master's in Public Administration from Jacksonville State University that same year. In 2010, Yvette earned a Doctorate in Deaf Education from Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas. Yvette is a member of the Optimist Club of Talladega, the American Council of the Blind (ACB) Alabama Chapter, the Alabama Adult Education Directors Association, the Alabama Association for Public Continuing and Adult Education, and Coalition on Adult Basic Education.

Secretary 2023-2024, Sharon McLean: Sharon McLean has lived in Mobile, AL for 32 years and counting. She is a Senior Vision Rehabilitation Therapist (SVRT) with the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) and has been doing this for the past 10 years, however, she has worked in the deaf and blind unit for 16 years. Sharon's passion is assisting Alabamians in adjusting with their visual impairments and ensuring the person is supported in all aspects of their adjustment process. Sharon's accomplishments include, she served as the Sight Chair for the Bay Minette Lion's Club for 4 years, serving on the Board of Lions Eyes Research Institute (LERI) located on the campus of the University of South Alabama, and serving on the Board of Alabama Lion's Sight (ALS) in Birmingham. She has been on the AER board for several years. Sharon is the mother of two sons who are both married and is a proud grandma (Sunny) to Brady.

Treasurer 2023-2024, Joe Helm: Joe retired from his position of Assistant Commissioner with the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services in April 2014. He currently serves as a consultant and trainer for various organizations and served as an administrative surveyor for CARF the Accreditation Commission for Rehabilitation Facilities until 2019. Joe has served as AER Treasurer since July of 2012, filling the unexpired term vacated by the unexpected passing of Rod Harrell. He was elected to serve as treasurer in 2014-2016 and has been re-elected to serve a two-year term in 2016-2018, in 2018-2020, in 2021-2022 and in 2023-2024. Joe has served the Alabama Chapter as President-Elect, President, Past-President, and Treasurer. Joe also served as the District V representative to the AER International Board 2008-2010. Joe currently serves as Chairman of the Board for Achievement Center Easterseals in Opelika, AL and serves as CEO of Southern Disability Foundation managing the foundations Ability

Loan Fund for Alabama Citizens with disabilities that need funding to acquire Assistive Technology.

Board Member 2021-2023 Vacancy

Board Member 2021-2023, Jack Harrison: Jack Harrison has served in the fields of education and rehabilitation for over 40 years. He is currently the Principal Investigator for an O&M research project within the Services for the Blind Department at E. H. Gentry, in Talladega, Alabama. E. H. Gentry is one of several Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind campuses.

Jack earned a B. A. in Rehabilitation Services and Industrial Arts Education from Auburn University. He holds master's degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling and Special Education from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and a master's degree and AA certification in Education Administration from the University of Alabama. He also holds an Ed. S. in Special Education and has completed the curriculum for a Ph.D. in Vision Science from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Jack is a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS).

At the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind, Jack has been a pre-vocational instructor, a vocational evaluator, a supervising teacher, a work experience coordinator, a coach, an adult education instructor, and a program director. He has spent a total of twenty-five years in direct classroom instruction at three of the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind campuses.

Jack has supervised students, student workers, teacher aides, college interns, and teachers in a variety of settings. He is experienced in planning, organizing, and coordinating activities and programs. Jack has made presentations at state, regional, and national conferences and has served on the boards of professional, educational, civic, and ecumenical organizations. He received Alabama AER's Hez Cox award in 1996. He was the United States Association of Blind Athletes Wrestling Coach of the year in 1995, and he received the Alabama School for the Blind's Honorary Redskin award twice (1988, 1999).

Mr. Harrison has a strong commitment to personal and professional excellence and considers himself a lifelong learner.

Board Member 2022-2024, Ashley Townsend: W. Ashley Townsend is the Assistant Commissioner for the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) Vocational Rehabilitation Blind and Deaf Division. Prior to his current Assistant Commissioner role, he was the ADRS Blind and Deaf Services Director of Special Programs from April 2014-December 2021. He holds a BS in Rehabilitation from Troy University and a MA in Rehabilitation Counseling from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Ashley has been directly involved with Blind and Low Vision Vocational Rehabilitation Service provision since 2009 when he became the VR Field Supervisor for North Central Alabama. Ashley has also worked as a Job Coach for individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury as well as a General VR Counselor. Previous non-profit work includes work with the Arc of Shelby County which consisted of a term as Board President. He has direct

experience with the OASIS Program (OIB Program) and the Vision Rehabilitation Therapy and Orientation & Mobility Programs. In addition, Ashley has extensive experience with the implementation of special VR projects and initiatives, policy, and procedure development, and has overseen quality assurance for blind and deaf services. In his previous role as Director of Special Programs he was the state office liaison to AIDB's EH Gentry Facility and implemented/monitored ADRS's longstanding MOA's with AIDB, Troy University, and Mississippi State University. Ashley is a resident of Shelby County and married to Krista Townsend who is the Assistant Principal at Calera Elementary school. They have two daughters Emma and Lily.

Board Member 2022-2024, William Adams: William (Bill) Adams is a Blind Rehabilitation Specialist with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Southeastern Blind Rehabilitation Center (SBRC), located in Birmingham, Alabama. Bill held several positions before taking this current job with SBRC. Previously Bill worked in Information Technology at the Kent State medical center, as a programmer for the VA, a Case Manager for the Blind with Alabama Institute for Deaf Blind and as a Senior Orientation and Mobility Specialist at the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services. Bill lives with the love of his life Sara Roberts, who happens to be a wheelchair user, and has encouraged Bill as an O&M to focus on persons with multiple disabilities. While at the VA, Bill wrote the admissions, automatic scheduling, and data collection system for the Blind Rehabilitation Services. With Bill's extensive background in technology, he is always looking to push the field of Assistive Technology and Orientation and Mobility and has developed ways to make indoor maps, and easily printed Braille that is usable and long lasting with 3D printing technology.

Bill was born with albinism and had mild vision loss and planned to be a member of the Air Force Security Forces until he received a traumatic brain injury in 2004. The brain injury caused Bill's vision to be very unstable. Now Bill is a guide dog user and depending on the day uses a screen reader or screen magnification software. Bill attributes his ability to thrive with vision loss because of his first O&M instructor and VR Counselor. Because of them, Bill did not have to leave college and in fact completed his bachelor's degree from Kent State University in Justice Studies and Political Science. His final semester was in their world-renowned Washington Program in National Issues where he interned at the American Council of the Blind. Bill then completed his masters in Orientation and Mobility at Western Michigan University. For those who are curious his guide dog's name is Travis and is a beautiful and smart blonde lab.

Board Member 2023-2025 Kellee Sanchez: Kellee Sanchez is an Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Specialist with the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services since 2018. She received her training and Master of Education from Stephen F. Austin University in Nacogdoches, TX. Before stumbling upon O&M, Kellee was an educator in the Houston Texas Independent School District working with middle school students from 2009-2018. She taught 8th grade science, became the coordinator for numerous events, and had the privilege of making an impact in young minds to challenge themselves academically and personally. Kellee's medley of work, whether it was an educator or athletic trainer or Taco

Bell connoisseur, have allowed her to connect with consumers that are blind and low vision to conquer fears of their new reality. Kellee's greatest skills are asking questions and learning from her colleagues, attempting to learn how to be a better advocate for the blind community.

Board Member 2023-2025 Donte Little: Dontavious D. Little, Sr. serves as Assistant Director to the Executive Director at Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) E. H. Gentry Facility. He has been in this role since August 2022. He is an AIDB alumnus, having graduated from the Alabama School for the Blind (ASB) in 2004. In 2010, he was employed as an Employment Specialist at AIDB E.H. Gentry Facility in the Project Green Program. He returned to his Alma Mater, ASB, to teach Business Education in 2011 and gained administrative experience as the Director of Outreach for the WeKare Community Development Center in Childersburg AL. Previously, he served as the Director at the AIDB Talladega Regional Center from 2015 to 2022.

Mr. Little holds an MBA from Troy University, a Master's in Business Education from Auburn University, and a Master of Arts degree in Special Education with Visual Impairment Certification from University of Alabama at Birmingham. He is currently pursuing an advanced educational degree in Christian Leadership from Liberty University.

Throughout his life, Mr. Little has always been active in community service. He has served as a Youth Pastor, Associate Pastor, Community Outreach Director, and currently the Senior Pastor of First Missionary Baptist Church of Anniston, AL. He is also an active member of the Theta Tau Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated. Through these roles, he has gained valuable experiences in preaching, teaching, outreach, business management, and working collaboratively with large and small groups to achieve goals. However, he attributes his success to continuously finding great spiritual and professional mentors—road guides with more knowledge and experience than his own. Above all, his greatest achievements are being happily married to his college sweetheart, Tamara Little, and being the father of 5 amazing children: Jr, Dylan, Daleigh, Declan, and Donaldson.

Mr. Little is a proud member of the Blind community, a professional in the field of education and rehabilitation, and honored to serve as a Board Member of the Alabama Chapter of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER).

Julia Brock, Permanent Chair BDS Scholarship: In 2021 the AER Board approved Julie as the Permanent Chair of the Billy Don Sims Scholarship. Julie is retired from the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services with over 29 years of service and served for several years as a consultant with the American Foundation for the Blind and with Disability Rights and Resources of Greater Birmingham. She earned the Bachelor of Science from Jacksonville State University and the Master of Arts from the University of Alabama. She is a longtime member of AER having served numerous terms as Alabama Chapter Board Member and as Board Secretary during which time she was instrumental in the Alabama Chapter's establishment of the Billy Don Sims Scholarship.