

## NEWSLETTER



## EYE ON ALABAMA

***In This Issue:*** *“For Your Eyes Only,” Friday, February 17, 2012, A Workshop on Visual Issues*  
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*AER Registration..... 2011 Conference Photos .....*

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

The above question and title was chosen as the theme for the 28th Annual Alabama AER Chapter Conference. “Confronting the 70% unemployment rate for persons who are blind or have severe visual impairment 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. By all accounts the conference met the



expectations of those in attendance. The conference's overall rating ranged from a low of 4.73 to a high of 4.80 out of 5.00.

A conference highlight was the last session panel before the Awards Luncheon that addressed the area of “Solutions Leading to Employment of Persons with Visual Impairments” moderated by Dr. J. Elton Moore, Associate Dean for Research and Assessment at Mississippi State University. Panel members from left to right were:

Mabrey Whetstone, Alabama Director of Special Education; Cindy Jones representing NFB; Michael Talley representing ACB; Dr. Cary Boswell, Commissioner, Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services; and Dr. Terry Graham, President, Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind.



The conference addressed many important issues from motivational subjects like Al Argo's "Positive Impact Principles: Eight Solutions that Work" to information about using EBay as a viable work option presented by Donovan Bietel. Gary Weaver from AIDT, presented information on Alabama's Workforce Training System while Kristen Jacoway addressed "How Social Media is a Game Changer in a Job Search". This year's conference also accomplished a several **FIRSTS!**

On Sunday evening thanks to the vision and leadership of Curtis Glisson the FIRST ever "**BINGO BLAST**" was held as a fund raiser for the Chapter's Billy Don Sims Scholarship! The event was well attended and raised \$1,500.00 for the Scholarship Fund! Congratulations to Curtis and all who played and contributed funds and prizes!



Rita Houston and Mary Oates try their luck at AER's First Ever BINGO BLAST!



An additional first for the Alabama Chapter happened at the business meeting on Tuesday morning. The audio and video capabilities of "SKYPE" were utilized to have a conversation and update from Louis M. Tutt, AER International's new Executive Director. Dr. John Mascia, currently Past-President of the Alabama Chapter, moderated the discussion with Mr. Tutt.



Susan Harrell receives the COX Award for her long term outstanding service to the Alabama Chapter and for her professional service to persons with disabilities.

Well deserved...  
Congratulations Susan!

A Message from Your AER Chapter President.....



Our 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Training Conference at LakePoint State Park Resort in Eufaula was well attended with 109 registering for the event. We had excellent reviews regarding the quality training you received. Our Board of Directors and committee volunteers have selected Tuscaloosa for the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Training Conference site which will be located at Hotel Capstone on the campus of The University of Alabama. Issac Beavers is the conference chairperson. Please mark your calendar for the conference dates – October 21-23, 2012.

**We are also pleased to announce our Second Annual “For Your Eyes Only”- A Day with UAB Experts workshop scheduled for Friday, February 17, 2012, from 9:50 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. at the Callahan Eye Hospital in Birmingham.** Dr. Dawn DeCarlo serves as chairperson of this event. Registration information is located in this newsletter. The workshop is free to current AER members. Non-members will pay \$35. Application for a total of five CEUs for ACVREP, CRCC, and SW has been completed.

**Your AER Board of Directors is pleased to announce a second workshop has been scheduled for 2012.** This one day event will be a pre-conference in conjunction with the Technology Symposium in Talladega, and has been scheduled for Wednesday, June 6 from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. The workshop entitled “Teach the Teacher” will focus on teachers working in the field of blindness and low vision. The workshop is free to current AER members and lunch will be provided. Non-members will pay \$35. Application for a total of five CEUs for ACVREP, CRCC, and SW has been completed.

As you can see from the two scheduled one-day workshops, your Board is striving to offer quality training for you as an AER member benefit. If you have not renewed your membership, a copy of the membership renewal form is listed in the newsletter as well as a new membership form. The annual membership cost is as low as \$87. The membership application is online at the AER international website at [www.aerbvi.org](http://www.aerbvi.org). I encourage you to take the time to complete your registration form and mail in your membership dues to support the Board’s efforts to continue offering quality workshops and conferences for our membership. If you have questions regarding membership, please contact me at [susan.harrell@rehab.alabama.gov](mailto:susan.harrell@rehab.alabama.gov) or (256) 314-6222.

I look forward to another great year of serving you as the Alabama Chapter President.

*Susan Harrell*



## Second Annual “For Your Eyes Only” - A Day with UAB Experts”

The Alabama Chapter of AER in coordination with UAB Center for Low Vision Rehabilitation will present the second annual one-day workshop, **“For Your Eyes Only,” on Friday, February 17, 2012 from 9:50 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. located in the Smith Education Center on the third floor of the UAB Callahan Eye Hospital.** Dawn DeCarlo, OD, MS, serves as chairperson of this event. The workshop will offer presentations by specialists which include Kellie Flood, MD, who will provide new information regarding geriatrics; Beth Barstow, OTR/L, will discuss physical activity and facilitation for people with vision impairment; Marcela Frazier, OD, MPH, will provide an update on eye care as well as vision loss and the Alabama Hispanic community; Lei Liu, PhD, and Ellen Bowman, COMS, will present new research and applications to clinical practice in orientation and mobility; and Dawn DeCarlo, OD, MS, will discuss condition - specific implications for low vision rehabilitation.

Application for CEUs for ACVREP, CRCC and SW has been completed. Individuals can register for up to five contact hours. There is no registration charge for current AER members and lunch will be provided. A \$35 registration fee is charged for non-AER members. Directions to the UAB Callahan Eye Hospital is included on Page 6 of this newsletter. Limited parking will be available in the Callahan Parking Deck. Additional parking will be available one block away on the corner of 19<sup>th</sup> and University Street. **All current AER members planning to attend should fax the completed registration form on page 5 of this newsletter to Susan Harrell at (256) 389-3149. Non-AER members should follow the instructions on the registration form.**

We look forward to seeing you on February 17.

For further information contact Susan Harrell at (256) 314-6222 or [susan.harrell@rehab.alabama.gov](mailto:susan.harrell@rehab.alabama.gov).

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### **“Rights and Privileges of the Blind in Alabama” an Alabama Chapter Publication has been Updated!**

Caitlin Simpson AER Secretary and her (crack) legal team (who shall remain anonymous) are commended for updating the Rights & Privileges document. Thank you Caitlin for a job well done! The AER Board of Directors will be reviewing the changes at its next board meeting before voting on it's approval for distribution. The revision of this document was requested by members of the Chapter.



## Second Annual - "For Your Eyes Only"- A Day with UAB Experts February 17, 2012

9:50 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

UAB Callahan Eye Hospital, Smith Education Center – 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
1720 University Blvd., Birmingham, AL

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Current AER Member YES ☐ NO ☐

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

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

**Registration Fee: Current Members – No Charge; Non- AER Members – \$35**  
**Lunch will be provided. Pre-registration deadline is February 10. On site registration will be available but will not include lunch or group invoicing.**

**AER Members** – Please fax registration form to Susan Harrell at (256) 389-3149 or email to [susan.harrell@rehab.alabama.gov](mailto:susan.harrell@rehab.alabama.gov).

**Non AER Members** - 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 registrations including ADRS/AIDB joint service staff should mail registration form with \$35 payment to:

Ms. Sheila Pennington  
E.H. Gentry  
P.O. Box 698  
Talladega, AL 35161  
[Pennington.Sheila@aidb.state.al.us](mailto:Pennington.Sheila@aidb.state.al.us)

**CEUs have been applied for - Register for up to 5 Contact Hours \_\_ ACVREP \_\_ CRCC \_\_ SW  
(CEU Information To be mailed to participants at the conclusion of the workshop)**

**Questions: Please Call (256) 314-6222 or [susan.harrell@rehab.alabama.gov](mailto:susan.harrell@rehab.alabama.gov).**

### **Directions to UAB Callahan Eye Hospital**

#### **From North and East Alabama:**

- Take I-65 South to 4th Ave. South Exit.
- Follow 4th Avenue 10 blocks to 18th Street South.
- Turn right on 18th Street South to University Blvd (8th Ave. South).
- Turn right on University Blvd.
- The hospital will be on the corner on the right.
- To enter the Parking Deck, turn right into the driveway between the School of Optometry and the Callahan Eye Hospital.
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- Take I-20 to I-59 Birmingham.
- Take the Hwy. 31 South/Hwy.
- 280 East exit off of I-59.
- Once on Hwy. 31 exit on University Blvd/8th Ave. South.
- Turn right off the exit. You will be on University Blvd.
- Take University Blvd. to 18th Street South.
- Just past the intersection, the Callahan Eye Hospital will be on your right.

To enter the Parking Deck turn right into the driveway between the School of Optometry and the Callahan Eye Hospital.

#### **From South Alabama:**

- Take I-65 North to Birmingham.
- Exit at 8th Avenue South/University Blvd. Exit ramp will put you on University Blvd.
- Just past the second UAB Walkway overpass move into the left turn lane.
- Before you get to the 18th Street intersection the hospital will be on the left.
- To enter the Parking Deck turn left into the driveway between the School of Optometry and the Callahan Eye Hospital.
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- Take Hwy. 31 North/280 West to Birmingham.
- Exit on 8th Avenue South/University Blvd. Turn right at the end of exit ramp.
- Just past the 18th Street South intersection the Callahan Eye Hospital will be on your right.

To enter the Parking Deck, turn right into the driveway between the School of Optometry and the Callahan Eye Hospital.

#### **From West Alabama:**

- Take I-59 North to Birmingham.
- Exit onto I-65 South.
- Take the 4th Ave. South exit.
- Follow 4th Avenue 10 blocks to 18th Street South.
- Turn right onto 18th Street South.
- Take 18th Street to University Blvd. (8th Ave. South).
- Turn right on University Blvd.
- The hospital will be on the corner on the right.

To enter the Parking Deck, turn right into the driveway between the School of Optometry and the Callahan Eye Hospital.





### **Alabama AER Employer of the Year 2011**

Since October 1988, the Social Security Administration Birmingham Teleservice Center (BMTSC) has hired approximately 33 blind and visually impaired employees through a partnership with the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services. Currently BMTSC has 14 blind/visually impaired employees. They are employed as Contact Representatives and Teleservice Representatives (TSR). Their duties and responsibilities consist of answering calls and taking actions on SSA National 1-800 number.

To succeed at doing their jobs, employees who are blind and visually impaired use JAWS or MAGIC at their work stations. Reader Assistants are assigned to totally blind employees. Performance Awards are presented to all Social Security Administration employees who display outstanding service. Most of the employees who are blind or visually impaired have received one or more performance awards. Three blind and visually impaired employees received the Commissioners Citation, which is the highest SSA honor. Two of these employees have been promoted. Another employee who is blind received the Regional Commissioners Award, which is the highest regional award. Several employees who are blind or visually impaired are enrolled in programs that will allow them to expand their roles at SSA.

On behalf of the Alabama AER Chapter, the 2011 Employer of the Year Award was presented to the Social Security Administration Birmingham Teleservice Center (BMTSC) for hiring, accommodating, and promoting employees who are blind and visually impaired. Ashley Townsend, Unit Supervisor for Blind Services, in the ADRS Homewood office, accepted the award on behalf of SSA at the annual AER Awards Luncheon held on October 5<sup>th</sup> at Lakepoint Resort in Eufaula, Alabama. On November 4, 2011, the AER Employer of the Year Award was presented at SSA Birmingham Teleservice Center. The Award was presented by Alabama AER Board Members Issac Beavers and Dr. John Mascia. Ashley Townsend, Debbie Clemons (Business Relations Consultant), and Stella Pelham (retired) along with about 40 SSA employees and supervisors were a part of the Ceremony. Stella Pelham spoke about the great working relationship she had with Doris Webster, SSA Specialist for Employees with Disabilities. SSA was pleased to receive the award and plans to feature the story in their Newsletter.