

Alabama AER Election Results for 2019 and Information about Officers and Board Members

The AER Board and membership extends its congratulations to the persons below who have been elected or appointed to serve as an officer or board member. The terms for the newly elected officers and board members began with their installation at the 36th Annual Training Conference, Birmingham, Alabama. Congratulations to all who are willing to serve Alabama AER!

The May-June 2019 election cycle will elect two members to serve three-year terms as board members. Caitlin Simpson as Past President serves as the Nominations and Elections Chairperson.

Information About Officers and Board Members

President 2017-2020 Steve Sullivan, Ph.D. Dr. Stephen M. Sullivan was born on April 6, 1967 in Mobile, Alabama to Eugene and Sylvia Sullivan. In 1990, he received a Bachelor of Science degree in Special Education with a certification in Mental Retardation (K-12) from the University of South Alabama. In 2007, Stephen received a Master of Science degree in Instructional Design and Development from the University of South Alabama, and in 2016 received his PhD. in Instructional Design and Development also from the University of South Alabama in 2016. Stephen has worked as a case manager, self-contained classroom teacher, and is currently employed at the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind Regional Center in Mobile as a Project Director/Adaptive Technology Specialist. For more than 23 years, Stephen has provided direct services related to education and technology (demonstration, assessment, recommendation, instruction, job placement, technical support, and others) center based, at work, at home, and at school to people who are vision impaired or blind in the state of Alabama. Stephen has presented locally, statewide (AER, NFB, ACB) and at international conferences (ATIA, Council for Exceptional Children, and others) regarding strategies and technology as they relate to services for people who are vision impaired and/or blind.

Steve has been a member of AER since 1994. He has served the Alabama Chapter as a board member and newsletter editor. He also attended the AER, Alabama Chapter, Leadership Training Institute in 2008. Stephen currently resides in Mobile, Alabama with his wife Staci, and their four children, Phillip, Lauren, George, and Vann.

President-Elect 2018-2020, Dr. Yvette Pearce serves as the Director of Student and General Services, Adult Education, and Business Enterprise Program (BEP) 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, and serves as the Treasurer for the Alabama Adult Education Director's Association.

Past-President: Vacant Lenore Dillion Retired and moved out of state.

Secretary 2018-2020, Caitlin Simpson: Caitlin works as a Certified Orientation and Mobility Instructor for the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services in the Huntsville office. She received her undergraduate degree in English from the University of Alabama. She completed a master's degree at Florida State University, double majoring in Rehabilitation Teaching and Orientation and Mobility. Her internship was completed at E.H. Gentry and in the Gadsden ADRS office. She worked for five years in the Mobile area as an O&M instructor, and then transferred to Huntsville where she has served the mobility needs of north Alabama for the past four years.

Treasurer 2018-2020, 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 serves as an administrative surveyor for CARF the Accreditation Commission for Rehabilitation Facilities. 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 and in 2018-2020. 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.

Board Member 2018-2020, Dr. Derrick Smith: Dr. Derrick Smith is an associate professor and Associate Dean of the College of Education at the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH). Dr. Smith holds a B.S. in Mathematics from Faulkner University, an M.A.Ed. in Special Education-Visual Impairments from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and an Ed.D. in Special Education from Texas Tech University. He has an Alabama State Teaching Certificate in Secondary Mathematics (6-12) and Visual Impairments (N-21). He taught secondary mathematics at the Alabama School for the Blind. He is also a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS) and National Library of Congress Braille Transcriptionist. For the past 13 years, Dr. Smith's research agenda has focused on STEM education for students with visual impairments and blindness and he has written numerous book chapters, articles, and presentations on the topic.

Board Member 2018-2020, Jack Harrison: Jack Harrison has served in the education field for over 40 years. He is currently the Director of 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 2019-2021 Sharon McLean: Sharon McLean has lived in Mobile, AL for 31 years and counting. She has been a Vision Rehabilitation Therapist (VRT) with the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) for the past 7 years, however, she has worked in the deaf and blind unit for 13 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, serving as the Sight Chair of the Bay Minette Lion's Club, 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. In addition, she was a volunteer of the Alabama Leadership Forum held in Troy the summer of 2019. Sharon is the mother two sons who are both married, she has two grand pups named Fin and Ella.

Board Member 2018-2021, Julia Brock: Julie is retired from the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services with over 29 years of service and is currently 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 Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist and a longtime member of AER.

Board Member 2020-2022 Marge Lebrick: Marge is the Coordinator of Vision Rehabilitation Therapist (VRT) services and Orientation and Mobility (O&M) services for the State of Alabama's Department of Rehabilitation Services. She is responsible for recruiting and training new VRT's and O&M employees, developing and managing annual training events and heading new projects to create the best environment for vision services in Alabama. Marge has been a member of Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired since 2005. She was instrumental in the development of an Adult Summer School for the visually impaired in Wisconsin and has been involved in our College Quest since she was hired in Alabama. She is very passionate about making sure every visually impaired person in Alabama knows about the services we provide at ADRS and can learn and become as independent as possible with these services. She believes strongly in community outreach to ensure our services are well known. Marge and her husband like to camp, golf, and bowl in their spare time. Her 10-year-old Collie is her pride and joy along with her six kids and six grandkids. Loves Alabama! Roll Tide! And go War Eagles!

Board Member 2020-2022 Shelia Pennington: Born in Mobile, Alabama Sheila Pennington is a passionate advocate for helping persons with disabilities and loves to ask, "How can I help you?" Being raised in a family of five brothers and two sisters taught her many valuable lessons on the importance of serving one's family and community, in addition to oneself and one's organization. Sheila began her career in a variety of support positions. After focusing on raising a family of five children, which she considers one of her most important and fulfilling life accomplishments, Sheila returned in 1998 to the corporate/social services world as Secretary to three Case Managers. She quickly promoted to Secretary to the Executive Director, Secretary to the Vice President of Adult Services, and now is the Secretary to the Chief Financial Officer. As a result, Sheila has worked at the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind "AIDB" for over 20 years, gaining unparalleled experience in the field of blindness, deafness, and budgeting, while also establishing herself as a respected and knowledgeable executive administrative support partner. Sheila is widely known for her passion for serving and she knows the work she does behind the scenes empowers the direct service providers to touch those with disabilities to help them be limitless.

In addition to her many duties at AIDB, she has served as registration chair for Alabama's Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired "AER" conference for 12 years, as secretary for Easter Seals of North Talladega County for 14 years and has been on the Alabama Council of the Blind's Dancing with the D'ega Stars; an event which has raised over \$100,000.00, committee for four years. Sheila has been recognized as the AER's Paraprofessional of the Year, AIDB's Volunteer of the Year, and she was recognized for outstanding dedication, devotion, service, and loyalty to the Talladega Lion's Club.