



HOT AER

Summer 2021

Publication of Indiana AER Chapter

in-aer.net

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Message from the President

Happy Summer, Everyone!

Although summer is not even officially one month old, the stores are preparing for fall. Always a season ahead! We, the Board, are trying to prepare for fall as well – our conference.

The IN – AER conference is being held in-person on Monday, October 25th & Tuesday, October 26th at the Crowne Plaza Indianapolis Airport Hotel. The hotel is located at 2501 S High School Road, Indianapolis. We are joining forces again with PASS. Everyone has been working hard on putting the program together; locating speakers, arranging food, accommodations, etc. Hopefully, you will receive more detailed info next month! In the meantime,... **Save the Date!!!** 😊 By the way, there will NOT be same day registration, so you will need to plan ahead. At this time, we are unable to offer virtual attendance. We are trying to work on the ability to record sessions which would to be made available later to attendees, but details are not finalized as of yet. So, to be safe, plan on being there! CEUs will be offered.

Attending conferences (at a reduced rate) and networking has always been one of my favorite parts of being an AER member. Talking to people from all over the world, across the nation, or just even in my own state has been so helpful over the years. As a self-employed person, I do not get to attend as many conferences now as I wish I could, but I do still enjoy sharing stories or seeking assistance or just knowing I am not the only one going through such struggles whenever possible.

Another benefit of AER membership is the resources. One may purchase books and other items at reduced prices. Newsletters and materials are sent on a regular basis. Listservs are available. And now the ability to earn CEUs anytime needed are available.

Central Office works hard on keeping up with the latest news, sometimes before we even know about it. They advocate in DC on various issues on our behalf frequently. They help write/support position papers for us. They encourage and support the membership to the best of their abilities. We are fortunate to have such dedicated staff members on our behalf.

We should be (humbly) proud to say we are members in the only professional group for professionals in our field. There are other groups, but they are consumer groups. AER is geared for professionals so that we may share ideas, questions, experiences, etc.

Perhaps you can encourage a coworker or colleague to attend the conference and see what we are all about. Or perhaps share the newsletter or other emails received from Central Office.

See you at Crowne Plaza in October! Safe travels....

Becky Smallwood, COMS
IN-AER President

Why You Need Plants in Your Life

Courtesy of Elizabeth Garvey, ISBVI BLV/Horticulture

There is a reason gardening has become the #1 hobby in the United States...plants are good for you! Whether you are gardening outdoors, spending time in nature or growing houseplants on your windowsill, just being around plants benefits your physical as well as emotional health.

Indoors

If outdoor gardening is not your thing, you can start small with indoor plants! Young and old alike can enjoy the benefits of indoor gardening. Houseplants come in every shape and size and texture imaginable!



And many offer fragrant leaves as well as blooms! Recently, young people have discovered the amazing world of plants, especially those living in urban apartments, to create green spaces to help destress. Millennials love houseplants! It not only encourages self-care and nurturing, but it also creates community in a world where there is often a disconnect.

You can find good quality, affordable houseplants everywhere these days! Plant collecting builds community – both in-person and online. New plant clubs, plant swaps, and plant shows have been popping up in communities around the country. Give it a try!

Studies have shown that indoor plants...

- Boost your mood, productivity, concentration and creativity
- Reduce your stress, fatigue, sore throats and colds
- Help clean indoor air by absorbing toxins, increasing humidity & producing oxygen
- Add life to a sterile space, give privacy and reduce noise levels
- Are therapeutic to care for (it's true when they say Plants Make People Happy)

Outdoor

Outdoor gardening as a hobby is more than recreational, it has everlasting benefits. Gardening rejuvenates our minds and souls. It has huge learning opportunities for children, adults, and society. Gardening is also rewarding in terms of money and time. There is nothing like growing your own food- even if it is a pepper in a pot on your balcony! The benefits of working with Mother Nature are endless!

Studies have shown that gardening:

- is a learning opportunity for children
- teaches ownership, patience and responsibility
- relieves stress
- is excellent physical activity
- increases your self-esteem
- improves brain function
- benefits local wildlife
- motivates us to eat better
- builds a sense of connection and community



Visit your local garden center for tips. Turn off the screen and connect with green...you'll be glad you did!

Using the PenFriend as a Tool for Clients and Students with Vision Loss

By Krysti Hughes, COMS, TVI, CVRT

I have a client who wanted to learn how to use the iPad and access a newspaper. This client has no experience with an iPad or smart device and has low vision. He also has short-term memory loss. He struggled with the steps on how to turn on the iPad, and how to swipe versus double tap versus go from page to page. We simplified his iPad so that he had fewer apps. We slowed down the speech and worked



on slowing down the speed for the double tap. We also practiced swipes and double taps to access tasks. We thought to use a Penfriend to help him keep track of steps when trying to do different tasks on the iPad. The [Penfriend](#) is voice labeling system. You can record your voice and mark household items onto self-adhesive labels. You can individualize each label according to what you say or read. We used the stickers on a piece of paper in a binder. Each task was broken down to steps that allow him to start over if he got confused on where he was at in the process. We had a label for each task and a label for each step. If progress continues, we will use this device to help in other areas such as

his calendar, organizing music, and labeling medication. You can locate the Penfriend 3 at maxiaids.com for around \$155.00.

This device can be used for adult clients and students alike. I have used the Penfriend with a student to help locate classrooms in a school. He needed encouragement to attend to his route and be in the moment when traveling. If he traveled correctly with his route and located the sign and read the braille, we would use the Penfriend to read a label placed on that room. Sometimes it would say the room number to confirm his braille reading or sometimes it would give a clue to another room (or sometimes I just left a silly message) and we made it into a game. Not only did he enjoy using a new device, but he also attended to his routes and worked on braille skills and using two hands to use the Penfriend device (he had to feel for the sticker and use the other hand to touch the Penfriend to the sticker).

Resources:

<https://www.penfriendlabeller.com/>

maxiaids.com

Mark your Calendars for the 2021 IN-AER Conference

Mark your calendars for October 25th and 26th! More information to come! The 2021 conference planning is well underway. We will again be in collaboration with the Indiana PASS program to bring the most comprehensive and beneficial information to help you become the best instructor and teacher you can be. Keep a look out for more information via the INAER website.

Scholarship Opportunity

Do you know someone who is currently enrolled in a college program to become a Vision Rehabilitation Therapist? Or do you know someone who would make a great Vision Rehabilitation Therapist and is thinking about pursuing that path? Check out the Dobson Scholarship, administered by the American Council of the Blind of Indiana! Available to students in a college program to help with the expenses of their field work, the Dobson Scholarship awards \$1,000 to eligible applicants selected by the ACBI. For those about to start their field work, consider applying! And, for those considering this path, know there is assistance available when you get to that point! Visit acb-indiana.org and click on “Awards and grants” and the Dobson Scholarship will be the first thing you come across.

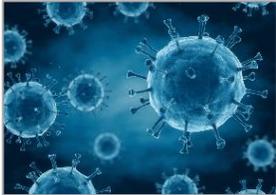
IN-AER Virtual Happy Hour

Do you want to collaborate with other professionals in a calm and fun atmosphere online? Join IN-AER in our first session of the series of Happy Hour on August 26th at 6:30 via zoom. Please email IN-AER at inaercommunications@gmail.com to register for this fun event to talk to other professionals about ECC and whatever else is on your mind.

Virtual Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Lessons

By Tommie Roesch

O&M has always been an in-person service until the past year with COVID-19 restricting our movement and in-person activities. So, what do you do for a lesson with a student that is completely blind and needs to work on their independent travel skills? How do you give them the same experiences and information



that they would have if they were out in the community in-person? How do you make sure that they do not lose their skills when you are not able to work with them in-person? These are the many questions that I faced as an O&M instructor in a public school system while the schools were closed due to COVID-19. Here are a few things that I did during this time that worked for me and my students.

One of the most interesting activities that I did was map reading with the student while we were on a zoom lesson. I created a tactile map of their neighborhood and then I mailed it to them. Then when we met online, we went over the different streets that surrounded the student's neighborhood together (he had his tactile map, and I had a print version of the map). We would discuss various route patterns such as I, L, U, and Z routes that he could do in his neighborhood. Next, I would have the student tell me the turns that he needed to take to get back home and which roads that he needed to turn on to get back home. After reviewing a route several times with the map, the student's parents would take him out into the neighborhood, and he would lead the route with his parents following behind. The parents would also video tape him as they were walking on the route so that I can see if the student was using his cane properly. This style of lesson was very successful for my student but required parent involvement to add the needed in-person follow through.



Another type of lesson that I did during COVID-19 was a sensory walk through a variety of different communities. To do this lesson, I went into a variety of environments and recorded the different sounds within the environments. I would stop and listen to the sounds of the different areas and recorded them. Next, I would write down the various environmental noises and which neighborhoods I recorded the sounds to let the student know where we are at while we are listening to the sounds. Then I would tell the student what neighborhood that I was traveling in while I was recording the environmental sounds. Next, I would play the recording during our lesson and have the student guess the various sounds of the environment. The student had to really pay attention to the sounds on the recording to be able to identify the different sounds within the environment. As a follow up lesson, I had the student explore an environment near the student's house and then make a list of the different sounds that he/she had heard on the journey. Then we would



discuss the sounds that he heard in his neighborhood compared to the sounds that I recorded during my sensory walk.

The final type of lesson that I did during COVID-19 was a form of street crossing in a variety of intersections. To prepare for the lesson, I would go to a variety of intersections and record the noise of the cars. I made sure that the intersections were busy enough that I could hear the surge of traffic or when the intersection was quiet to cross on all quiet. Then I would play the recording for the student through zoom and ask him/her when it was quiet at the intersection and safe

to cross. Next, I would ask him/her to tell me when there was a surge of traffic and identify when the sound changed from surge to continual traffic sound.

These are just a few of the different things that I did during COVID-19 for my O&M students to make sure that they did not lose their skills. I know that everyone has gone through many educational changes, and you had to get creative with your lesson plans to meet the needs of the students. I would love to hear what you did during this unique time and how successful it was for you and your students. Please feel free to write back to IN-AER for future newsletters to share with everyone about your experiences during this time.

AER Membership

Are you Current?

Make sure to check your AER Membership and renew! Being a member gives you an opportunity to connect with and support other specialists and teachers in the field of blindness and low vision while providing your best to your clients and students. Go the <http://aerbvi.org> to make sure your membership is up to date.

Not a Member? Become One!

There are benefits to becoming a member. If you know someone in the field that isn't a member, here are a few perks!

- Discount to the IN-AER Conference
- Discount to national and international conferences
- Access to professional development
- Access to current and past publications
- Access to fellow professionals in your state, region, and occupation
- ACVREP and professional credit
- Advocacy at local and national levels
- Low cost professional insurance

Most importantly, we support change and progress for our clients and students with visual impairment!

IN-AER Website & Social Media

Reminder, the website is up and running. This is where you can find what you need for the IN-AER chapter. The chapter has revamped the website and made it work better for you. If you have content you would like to see on the website, let us know. Email us at inaercommunications@gmail.com

You will find newsletters, past award recipients, meeting minutes, and any information you need to know about Indiana AER Chapter. To visit the website, you can go to <http://in-aer.net>



What's Happening

IN-AER Board Meeting

All board and committee meeting are currently being held over zoom. All are welcome to attend meetings. For meeting zoom link, dates, and times visit <http://in-aer.net> to contact a board member for attendance.

Current Standing Committee Meetings

Membership Committee Committee Chair: Becky Smallwood	Communications Committee Committee Chair: Krysti Hughes
Program Committee Committee Chair: Tommie Roesch	Finance Committee Committee Chair: Samantha Kixmiller
Bylaws Committee Committee Chair: Krysti Hughes	Nominations Committee Committee Chair: Becky Smallwood

Other Events

AER International Conference ~~2020~~ 2022

“Gateway to Community”

July 21st -25th, 2022

St. Louis Union Station Hotel

St. Louis, MO

For more information go to

<https://aerbvi.org/event/gateway-to-community-aer-international-conference-2020/>

2021 AER-PASS Vision Conference

Monday, October 25th & Tuesday, October 26th, 2021

Crowne Plaza Indianapolis Airport Hotel

2501 S High School Road, Indianapolis

Be on the lookout for more information!

<http://in-aer.net>

IN-AER Virtual Happy Hour

Thursday, August 26, 2021 6:00p EST

To register for event email for access to zoom link:

inaercommunications@gmail.com

2020-2022 Board Members

President Elect:	Tommie Roesch	Member at Large:	Kurt Deichman
President:	Becky Smallwood	Member at Large:	Jill Pangle
Past President:	Char Maternowski-Paul	Member at Large:	Amy Planalp
Secretary:	Kristi Hughes	Member at Large:	John Trueblood
Treasurer:	Samantha Kixmiller		

We are striving to provide quality professional support and development to the Indiana AER Chapter members, so that we can better teach and assist our students and clients to be self-sufficient, independent, and successful in present and future endeavors.

Hot AER is published by the Indiana AER Chapter (IN-AER).

If you have newsletter submission suggestions or articles for inclusion in Hot AER please go to <http://in-aer.net> to submit your ideas.