



HOT AER

Message from the President

Happy December!

Wow! It's hard to believe that 2020 is almost over – we made it! 😊

The only sure thing in life is change. Sometimes it is good, sometimes it is bad, sometimes it is amusing, sometimes it is frustrating, and usually it is out of our control. IN-AER is no different. We had to change plans and hold our annual conference virtually. Fortunately, we were able to partner with the PASS Project and their experience and knowledge of hosting virtual meetings helped to make it a successful conference. We had in attendance people from 20 states, Puerto Rico, and the United Kingdom. I think everyone experienced some type of technical difficulty at some point over the two days, but overall, it was a good conference! 😊 We hope you were able to attend live or are enjoying the recordings. A huge thank you again to those that presented and those that helped plan the conference! We cannot do it without everyone working together.

At the last board meeting, it was discussed trying to present a few virtual events (not for CEUs, merely instructional and networking/sharing thoughts and ideas) throughout the year. Watch for further information to arrive once the plans are finalized.

The IN-AER Bylaws have been updated. Be sure to check them out on the website if you did not receive/or remember receiving a copy of them. Thank you to Krysti Hughes and her committee for taking on such a daunting task. Char Maternowski-Paul, Katrina Anderson, & Don Koors were instrumental in helping structure the changes. Thank you!

I hope everyone enjoys a wonderful holiday season! Enjoy your family time – however it happens, whether in person, Zoom, or other creative ways. We look forward to working with you in 2021. Be sure to submit ideas, feedback, thoughts, etc. to any board member or via the website. We want to hear from you.

Merry Christmas!



Photo of a decorated Christmas tree with presents below. [This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC](#)

Happy Hanukkah!



Photo of Hanukkah menorah with colorful candles, a dreidel to the left, and decorative coin to the right. [This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

Happy New Year!



Photo of colorful fireworks and confetti labeled with "Happy New Year" [This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-ND](#)

IN-AER Fall Conference 2020 Completed

The Indiana AER teamed up with the PASS project and ISBVI to provide teachers, O&M specialists, vision rehab specialists, etc. with its first all virtual conference. Thanks to the PASS Project the conference was free for all attendees, which helped bring in attendees from across the state, country and world.

With a successful conference behind us, it's time to begin the work on the next conference. Be on the lookout for the 2021 IN-AER and Pass Project Vision Conference.

Teachers, Are Ready For the Next Step?

The PASS Project, in conjunction with Indiana State University, is proud to offer 2 Licensure Programs with cohorts starting in January 2021.

The Deaf/Hard of Hearing Licensure Program and the Visual Impairment Licensure Program are designed for individuals who hold a teaching license and are wanting to further their training in the field of deaf/hard of hearing or blind/low vision education. Both programs provide candidates with the training needed to teach students, preschool through grade 12, with diverse backgrounds. Upon completion of these programs, candidates will be prepared to take the Indiana licensure tests.

The Deaf/Hard of Hearing Licensure Program includes 20 credit hours which can be completed in two years. The first class begins on January 19, 2021. It will be an online course with one Saturday face-to-face seminar.

The Visual Impairment Licensure Program includes 16 credit hours which can be completed in two years. The first class begins on January 19, 2021. It will be an online course with 2 weekend face-to-face seminars.

If you want to learn more about the program, please contact Jenni Mesanovic at Jennifer.Mesanovic@indstate.edu for all the details.

Registration Questions?
Contact Jennifer Mesanovic at (812) 237-8115 or
email Jennifer.Mesanovic@indstate.edu

Seasonal Affective Disorder Awareness

Danny Wayne Beemer and Dee Dodd, OIB

In the Wabash Valley we are experiencing less sunlight with the time change, the overcast, and arrival of winter. This puts us at risk of a double whammy: Seasonal Affective Disorder in a season of Covid-19.

According to Jane Brody, this winter the pandemic is expected to intensify the depression experienced by many people with the syndrome known as seasonal affective disorder, or SAD. This disorder already affects hundreds of older Hoosiers who suffer annually from seasonal depression. This winter the pandemic is expected to make it worse.

SAD predictably kicks in each fall when the hours of daylight shorten in the valley. Dr. Norman E. Rosenthal believes that an estimated 5 percent of the population or 1 in 20 people suffer from full-blown SAD syndrome. Dr. Rosenthal was the psychiatrist who first identified the disorder in the 1980s and then devised an effective treatment. He estimated that three times as many people have a milder version of SAD, commonly called winter blues. Those blues zap their energy and enthusiasm for life.

Except for its seasonal pattern, the symptoms of SAD are like those of clinical depression: pervasive sadness, undue fatigue, difficulty concentrating, and excessive sleep, lost interest in normally enjoyed activities, and cravings for starches and sweets and its attendant weight gain.

The [WILL Center](#) hosts monthly peer support meetings via the telephone. These peer supports meetings can be very beneficial for people struggling with SAD. You can contact the Center at (812) 298-9455 for a peer meeting schedule.

Another option for treatment is exposure to sunlight or its artificial equivalent for 20 to 30 minutes every morning. The WILL Center low vision staff researched the lack of sunlight and found an inexpensive resource called the "[Happy Light](#)."

According to research done by Elaine Kitchel, the idea is to place the light source near your ankle and or knee for 20 to 30 minutes each day. This daily light exposure therapy is done by exposing a portion of your body to the blue light that is omitted from the lamp. Kitchel researched the benefits of lighting and worked for American Printing House for the Blind for many years. Kitchel also helped to educate our staff about the benefits of the Happy Light. Kitchel was a strong advocate for lighting advantages for low vision individuals and has since retired.

The center has received positive feedback from individuals whom we provided a Happy Light for use in their own living environments. The standard recommendation of light needed daily is 10,000 lux. Sitting under a commercial light box at least one-foot square is another option. The combination of exercise and outdoor light is crucially important. It connects you with your environment – not just the light but also the birds, trees, animal life, neighborhood all can act as an antidote to the cocoon of isolation.

Another valuable tip is to establish and maintain structure by doing things in a more-or-less set pattern every day. The center also helps to provide sensory challenged seniors with a 11 x 17-inch calendar. We encourage consumers to write a daily note in the large squares reflecting their experiences for that day and important dates to remember.

Winter 2020/2021

Publication of Indiana AER Chapter

in-aer.net

3

*The "Happy Light" by Verilux can be purchased thru this link:

<https://verilux.com/collections/happylight-therapy-lamps-boxes>

HAPPY BIRTHDAY LOUIS BRAILLE

Lenore Dillon, CVRT

Everyone loves a birthday party! Our hearts are filled with joy as we celebrate life accomplishments. As members of the blind and low vision community January 4th is a day of celebration for us. If he were alive, Louis Braille would have been celebrating his 211th birthday. He only lived on this earth 43 years, during that short time he changed the lives of blind and low vision children and adults forever.

On Jan. 4, 1809 Louis Braille was born. He was blinded in an accident when he was three years old, working/playing in his father's Harness shop trying to punch a hole in a piece of leather when an awl (Sharp tool) slipped and hit him in his right eye. His right eye soon became infected and the infection spread to his left eye, leaving him totally blind by the age of five.

Louis Braille was both an intelligent and diligent student at The Institute for Blind Children in Paris. Charles Barbier came to his school to introduce a system he created, which allowed soldiers to communicate with each other in the dark. Night Writing was an encoded system consisting of twelve dots arranged in two Columns of six dots. Most teachers and students thought it was too hard, and it would not work as a communications method for blind students. Eleven-year-old Louis Braille kept working/playing with the system. He trimmed a twelve-dot system down to six dots. He was determined to create a method of communications that would lessen the gap between the blind and sighted. Braille did not become the official code used by people who are blind until after Louis' untimely death. Braille became the official code used by the blind in France in 1853 one year after his death. The braille code made its way to America in 1860 where it was introduced at the Missouri School for the Blind in St. Louis.

Two hundred years of braille literacy is worth a celebration! At the time of this writing the world is in a pandemic. When the ideas for refreshments/games and activities were developed in-person classes were the norm. Now much of our learning is virtual. Celebration and fun-filled activities are more important than ever. Some of the activities listed below will need to be tweaked for virtual learning, others may need to be tabled until person-to-person learning occurs. I will try to emphasize activities which can be accomplished at home with the help of parents or siblings.

You can't have a party without snacks. Candy red hots can be used as braille dots. Each red hot will serve as a braille dot, place the dots in the formation of the letter desired. It is easy to write happy birthday, or other messages on a cake, cupcake or cookie. A braille alphabet reference sheet is available at www.braillebug.org.

Another fun activity is to make fortune cookies and write the fortunes or secret messages in braille. Opening fortune cookies and reading fortunes is always a fun-filled and interactive event. Reading fortunes in braille adds a whole new dimension to fortune telling.

My favorite game for learners of the braille alphabet is called "dots up". Six students will arrange their chairs in the form of a braille cell, two dots wide, and three dots long. Each person will be assigned a dot number. If the game host asks for the letter "A", dot #1 will stand. If the game host asks for the letter "Z" dots, "1, 3,5, and 6" will stand. This is a good way to incorporate both braille skills and exercise.

Another fun game is to pass around a box with cards that have the name of an object written in braille. The card can be printed in uncontracted or contracted braille depending upon the student's skill level. Then a second box is passed around containing objects matching the words in the first box. Examples may be brush, pencil, and pen. Pick out the object that matched the word.

A more advanced game would be to pass around a box with short instructions written in braille. Introduce yourself to the person sitting to your left. A scavenger hunt with instructions written in braille is always fun, and a good family activity which can be played by both blind and sighted.

Building with Legos is always a fun activity for everyone. Now Legos with braille markings are available. Learn more about Lego braille brick by visiting their website, <https://www.legobraillebricks.com/>

Another fun activity would be for the student who is learning braille, to share newly acquired knowledge by teaching friends and family how to read and write braille. A braille coloring book is a good tool for teaching sighted children braille. Having parents and siblings who know braille can be helpful throughout life. As they can use their braille skills to help with written communications.

Encourage students who are learning braille, to use creativity to express feelings (good or bad) about braille. Write articles or poems about the use of braille, or what happened in braille class. Artists can draw a picture. The American Printing House for the Blind (APH) has a contest each year for artists who are blind or who have low vision. It would be exciting to have an entry depicting the life of Louis Braille. A raised lined coloring book may be a good way to reinforce knowledge of the braille alphabet. Board games were once a good way for families to connect. A wide range of board games including scrabble are available from [Maxiaides](#).

Creative families could also design their own board game using braille. The drama queens among us could write a play re-enacting the life of Louis Braille. A podcast about the life of Louis Braille, or what braille means to you would be a fun/educational activity. Students could build the home of Louis Braille, his father's workshop, or his school with braille Lego's.

The Jazz Band at the Ohio School for the blind gave us an example of how to put creative skills to work. They used their music and literary skills to re-write the song "It's All About that Base". Their song is entitled "[It's All About That Braille](#)".

The above paragraphs were designed to serve as a springboard for finding fun-filled ways to teach and learn braille. Students often think of braille class as the "braille jail". Louis Braille was a liberator, and the best way to honor him is to be the best learners, teachers, and promoters of the braille code we can be.

References:

braillebug.org	www.brailleworks.com
www.maxiaids.com	Lego Bricks
www.pathstoliteracy.org	Fortune Cookies Recipe Food Network
70 Braille Fun and Games ideas in 2020	Fortune Cookies Recipe Molly Yeh Food Network

What's on your Screen?

Jessica N. Hunt, COMS

Teaching O&M virtually has proven challenging this school year. One way I have been trying to help my students continue to learn this year is by introducing apps that would benefit their daily lives. There are several apps I show students, but [Seeing AI](#) is an app that can be used for daily living and even during O&M lessons. It has been nice to see how excited they get when they experience this app for themselves.

A feature of this app that is helpful for our students with low vision is the barcode scanner. Students can walk into a grocery store and confirm the product they are picking up by using the barcode scanner feature. You don't need to know where the barcode is to be able to scan, you simply make sure the item is in the camera's view and then rotate the object. When the camera sees the barcode, it will automatically scan it and inform you what the product is. This can also be helpful for students to identify an item from their pantry that is not already braille labeled.

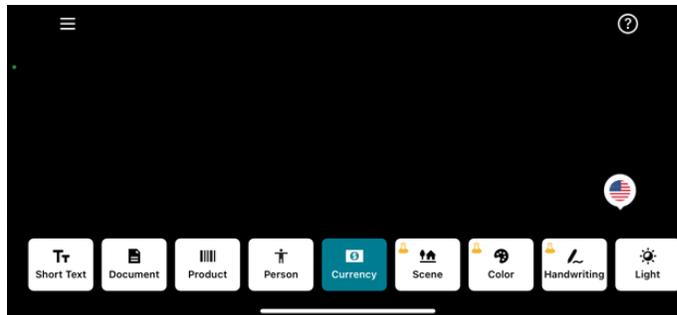


Photo of a screenshot of the Seeing AI app. It displays the nine available features for a user to select.

Another feature I introduce is the short text reader and the document reader settings. With the short text setting, you do not need to take a picture to allow the short text feature to work, it will automatically read any text that is in front of the camera. However, a weakness of the feature is that if you move the camera slightly it starts to read from the beginning again. With the document reader, it tells you if it cannot see one of the corners of the page. When this happens, you simply move the camera further away from the document until it automatically takes the picture. It will begin reading the content of the document if voiceover is on. If you do not have voiceover on, you need to hit the play button on the bottom left corner of the screen to have it read to you. It will also tell you the font type and size for the document.

This app has nine helpful features for someone to use. If you have not already used it, try it out for yourself. You can find how this app can be helpful for your everyday life or for your students and consumers.

Here are a few other helpful websites I have used.

For Low Vision Students Using Screen Share:

Minecraft Education- There is a movement tutorial that is essentially a maze. I have students begin by telling me if they need to move left or right. We also work on moving clockwise or counterclockwise through the maze.

Santa Code Lab- This is a lab built by Google to teach coding. However, the code uses cardinal directions to move the elf to the gift. Using this game, we discuss cardinal directions and route travel. <https://santatracker.google.com/codelab.html>

For Visual and Non-Visual Students

Sound Identification Videos on YouTube- Sounds are extremely important environmental clues for orientation. Oftentimes we use incidental learning for various sounds. Provide videos of environmental sounds and helping the student to identify the sound. Be aware that often when the video identifies the sound, it is with print on the screen. Make sure to verbally identify the sound for the student.

O&M Jeopardy- I found this game on the internet. It plays traditional jeopardy but with categories being O&M concepts or skills. I found this helpful to highlight what students may have missed during instruction. It can be played individually or as a group.
<https://www.playfactile.com/omtrivial>

What's on your screen? Go to [IN-AER Facebook](#) page to share the various apps and programs you use to keep your students and consumers learning and growing.

Holidays Behind a Screen: Making the Most for Our Students with Visual Impairment

Krysti Hughes, COMS, TVI, CVRT

This year Evansville Association for the Blind (EAB) is determined to still have our Children's Christmas Party. Since we can't meet in person, we are meeting virtually. Our plan is to use Google Meets to connect with our kids. Kids will receive a holiday box with game ideas, trivia games, a craft, a treat, and hot chocolate. Our yearly Christmas Party always involves a fun but educational element in the kitchen. Since we are not able to bake cookies, we decided to send hot chocolate mix packets and some tactile dots. We will work with the kids (virtually) while parents monitor to mark the microwave (if needed), make the hot chocolate, and have a treat. We have parents sign up as usual, but what is different is that we require an email account to send the meeting link and any clues needed for the games.

I found a few game ideas on the internet and Pinterest to help with our virtual Christmas party!

Virtual Bingo: This would require us to send a bingo card and some markers.

Guess Who or What: they are given clues and who is the first to guess the correct item.

Are you Smarter than a 5th grader: I would ask questions and the kids would ding (give a noise maker of some sort) to answer the questions.

Name, place, or thing: In the packet, each kid would have a letter in the alphabet. They would have to think of an item that is Christmassy and describe that item to see who can guess it. **Fun twist, they have to put some marshmallows in their mouth and then describe it. We could ask the families to supply or we could supply the marshmallows.

Scavenger Hunt: This (the O&M part...you know I have to!!) is where I give them an item they have to go find and get back to the camera first.

Finish My Phrase: Sort of Like Match Game...where we have phrases and we see who can match the most. Christmas Phrases of course.

Santa Says: This is Simon Says.

It's all about Santa Quiz: We could send this to them and they fill out and then we discuss the answers.

Days of Christmas Quiz: We would send this to them or can ask the question over the link.

Fun Facts about you: Each person gives me a fun fact that no one knows about them and the group will guess who it is.

Unwrap the present: We would send the kids a saran wrapped ball with candy...they would race to see who gets it all unwrapped the fastest.

**They could all tune into the same station to have Christmas Music

- Games printed off (bingo, Days of Christmas, it's all about Santa, etc.)
- Marshmallows
- Noise maker to alert when they are answering
- Use of Google Meets
- Clue for "Name that Item"

We are doing a lot of other items that are individual to our group, but you get the idea. My students are so excited for it each year. Many of them have been asking me not to cancel the Christmas Party due to COVID. I hope more will attend than usual because it is virtual. Many of my students live too far away to attend the in-person party. We are even having Santa call in!!!

If anyone has any questions or suggestions, contact me at krystihughes@evansvilleblind.org and Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

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>



@inaerbvi

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>

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

July 2022

St. Louis, MO

St. Louis Union Station Hotel

For More information go to www.aerbvi.org

2021 AER-PASS Vision Conference

Be on the lookout for more information!

Resources

Courtesy of Lenore Dillion

Large Print Calendar

Free Large Print Calendar provided by:

Lutheran Braille Workers
PO Box 5000
Yucaipa, CA 92399
800-925-6092 toll-free

lbw@lbwinc.org
www.lbwinc.org External

Please note that the large print calendars do not provide much room for writing notes and provides a scripture reading for each day.

Free Bold Line Templates

If you have your own printer or access to a printer, you can print your own bold line paper and more! [Live Accessible](#) has several templates you can download and print yourself. Options include lined paper featuring different line thickness; spacing and colors; planners for 2021; to-do list template; meal planning and kindergarten worksheets. The digital files are free to download and the site also has other helpful information for kids and adults with vision loss. Download the files by visiting [digital downloads page of Live Accessible](#).

Braille Calendars

Free Braille Calendars
American Action League for Blind Children and adults
1800 Johnson St.
Baltimore, MD 21230
410-659.9315

www.actionfund.org

To request your free Braille calendar, send a letter to the provided address or apply online at <https://www.actionfund.org/resources/braille-calendars>.

From the “Eyes” of a Blind Infant

Tommie Roesch, COMS, TVI

This is a story from the perspective of a blind child that is about 8 months old written by an Orientation & Mobility instructor.

Continued... It is my 8-month birthday; I am still not getting these birthday things. But I was just told that someone new is coming to work with me. In my head I just think, “Another person (O&M instructor)? Don’t I have enough people coming to play with me?”

When the lady shows up, my mom is excited to see this new person and they spend a lot of time talking. “What about me? Isn’t she here to play with me? Why is it when a new person shows up to work with me they always start talking to my parents?”

Then she sits down next to me and starts talking to me and I like her voice because it is full of energy and rolls like the ocean waves that come out of my sound machine. She starts handing me toys to play with and I really like this. There is no work with this new person.

After a while of playing, she puts me on my belly and puts me in the crawling position. In my head, I was thinking. “Not this again! I do not need to go anywhere! There are too many things in my way!”

Then the lady starts talking to me. She sounds very close to me. Is she laying on the floor next me? She tells me that she is going to stay next to me and that we are going to crawl together. I still do not understand what this crawling is all about, but she says that we can do it together. She starts by moving my hand further in front of me along with my knee on the same side. She tells me that she is going to put my toy right in front of my other hand and shows me how to move it. Slowly we do this for several movements. I kind of like getting the toys but I still think crying is easier to get what I want.

To Be Continued...

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.