



## President's Message By Gary Ray

Well, Dean Smith saw his shadow on Groundhog Day, so there will be six weeks of basketball upcoming. Along with basketball, it's time to get ready for the NC "Superconference"--the *NC Conference on Visual Impairment and Blindness*. It is a combined conference for all those involved in the field of vision. For many years, NCAER, DSB, GMS Outreach, and others had small, statewide conferences, but when the state's budget crunch hit, many of the smaller conferences had to be dropped. Then somebody, (I think it was me), thought of having a combined conference. The first one was held in 2002. In a few years, the conference grew to approximately 200 attendees, drawing such luminaries as Abraham Nemeth and Michael Hingston. NCAER remains the linchpin for the conference, handling money and organization of the event.

The 2007 conference will be March 22 - 24, a little later than usual. It will be held on the Governor Morehead School campus. You can find more information at <http://ncaer.net>

Folks ask why they should attend. We all have busy lives and a lot to do, but to maintain excellence in our field is truly

## NCAERolina News

important. Who knows? You might even learn something! There are also opportunities to earn Continuing Education and other professional credits. And, you get to deal with me on a regular basis !

### *2007 Rawls Award*

Each year the NCAER considers nominees for the Rachel Rawls Award. It is a great honor to be nominated, and to receive the award is the top honor in our field in NC. Closing date for nominations is March 9. Information on the nomination process is included in this newsletter. Please review the information carefully as the rules have changed. You **MUST** be an NCAER member to nominate someone. Please review the criteria for the award.

### *Finally Retiring !!*

When the convention rolls around, I will be retired from state employment. If you have not heard about this, you are living under a rock. I have been counting down the months for 3 years. Be assured (or terrified) that you will not be seeing the last of your Supreme Leader. I will transition from paid employee to unpaid volunteer. I plan to do some consulting on the side, some teaching in Mini Centers, and speaking for money, assuming we

can find someone who will pay me to talk. Most folks would rather pay me *not* to talk! I will eventually move to Asheville but that will be later this year. I will burn up the bus routes from Raleigh to Asheville in order to stay involved in the business I love.

I don't want to get maudlin, but as I look back over the years, I am overcome with gratitude for all the things our industry has given me. I have seen the blind business from every angle: consumer, professional, advocate. Some folks in NCAER knew me way back when and know how far you all have helped me come. I owe everything to the grand folks in our industry. What a ride it has been! I owe more than I will ever be able to repay. My plan is to try and keep giving back. The best way I have found to keep something is to give it away. The more you give, the more you get. Ah, jeez, enough of that! You may not believe it, but I have tears in my eyes.

#### *A Final Kudo*

The last thing I want to do this trip is to give a special thanks to Kathy Davis for all she does to support our chapter. Without her, you all would have to depend on me and that might not be a good thing. Salute to Kathy !!

#### Low Vision "On the Road"

"It was a 'feel good' kind of day..."

That was the way Outreach Teacher, Billie LeTendre, described to the Outreach staff her experiences on December 18, 2006, when we in Outreach held our inaugural "mobile low vision clinic". While not exactly what we had envisioned (we went to the kids with gear in the backs of cars rather than a designated van), it was nonetheless a moving experience!

When Dennis Thurman came to GMS as the new school director, he brought with him the vision and commitment to make our dream come true. For awhile we have wanted to take clinical low vision exams out to the kids rather than have them come into Raleigh. We brought the idea up to Dennis, already familiar with a similar model in Iowa, and with his help, support, encouragement, and "push," on Monday, December 18, 4 low vision students in Columbus County were seen by Dr. Elana Scheiner. Dr. Scheiner is graciously giving of her time and skills in helping us with this project, too.

Thanks to all the parties who helped bring this about: Billie

LeTendre, Glenda Phillips (EC Director), June Guyton (VI/O & M), Whiteville Primary (for the use of their school's media center), Dr. Scheiner (without whom it would not have been possible), & Dennis Thurman. And, of course, OES and Cyndie Bennett for believing in this, too.



*Dr. Scheiner at work !*

### *To the hills....*

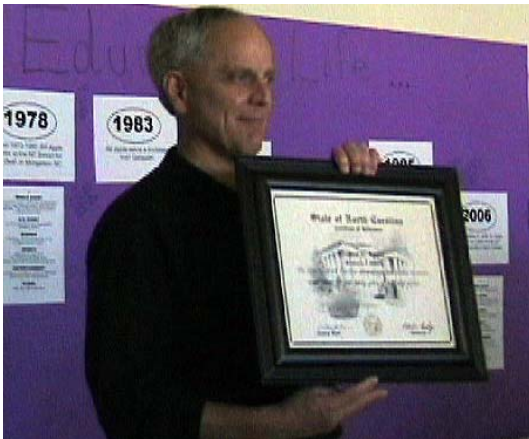
Well, it happened. Bill Apple is headed to the hills.

On December 15, the Vocational Rehabilitation Center for the Blind said farewell to its principal after 11 years. Bill decided that it was time to pursue other interests, including joining his wife, Donna, more frequently at their mountain residence.

Bill's rather extensive work history includes 7 years as a teacher and later principal for the multihandicapped hearing impaired students at NCSd in Morganton. This program was the first effort by NCSd to provide comprehensive services for deaf students with additional disabilities. About 600 students attended the school. Bill pursued doctoral work at Gallaudet University from 1980 to 1983. From 1983 until 1988, he was the Director of Adjustment Services at the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind, then acting principal at the Helen Keller School of Alabama. For seven years (1988 - 1995), Bill served as principal of the program for multihandicapped visually impaired and implemented the work, social and independent skill building curricula. He served his first term as NCAER President. Bill, as director of Community Programs, helped re-emphasize the role of the School's Board of Directors and was instrumental in forming and guiding the school's Human Rights Committee, as well as focusing attention on the school's history, and in forming and implementing the school's sesquicentennial celebration.

From 1995 until his retirement, Bill provided leadership as principal of the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind. He formed the Center's program for deaf-blind students, oversaw curricular changes for the center, chaired planning the committee for the statewide Deaf-Blind Awareness week, chaired the planning committee for the Center's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, and provided leadership in the planning of NC's conferences on visual impairment and blindness. He served his 2<sup>nd</sup> term as NCAER president and has served on the Governor Morehead Foundation for 13 years.

Best of luck to you in your new endeavors, Bill! We will miss you !



*Thanks for years of devoted service, Bill !! The vision world is a better place because of folks like you....*

### *Braille Challenge*

The first regional Braille Challenge in North Carolina was hosted by the Outreach Program at The Governor Morehead School. The Braille Challenge program was designed by the Braille Institute of America and is coordinated through an array of academic and community partners, with the goal of motivating school-age Braille readers from throughout North America to excel in this vital medium. In its sixth year as a national event, it has grown in size and impact and this year was awarded the prestigious "Creative Use of Braille Award" by the American Printing House for the Blind at their Annual Meeting in Louisville.

The Braille Challenge is a part of Braille Institute's literacy initiative. From the mid-60's to the present, the percentage of school-aged blind children in this country who use Braille as their primary reading medium has dropped from 50 percent to 12 percent, and more than a generation of blind children has been largely allowed to grow up illiterate under the notion that tape recordings and talking computers suffice. Braille is the only means by which blind people can truly read the written language.

A sighted child has instantaneous visual feedback aiding him in the writing process. A blind or visually impaired child who writes on a keyboard with speech output before learning the basics may never learn the intricacies of writing: spelling, grammar, and

punctuation. Academic research has shown that the early learning of Braille correlates strongly with both academic and employment success later in life.

Eligible students include all blind and visually impaired students from NC in grades 1 - 12. Students are divided into 5 age groups, and asked to complete a series of exercises demonstrating proficiency in Braille reading and writing, reading speed and comprehension, spelling, proofreading, and use of tactile graphics. All students participating in the preliminary round contest are acknowledged with prizes. All eligible contests are ranked nationally with the 60 top scoring contestants earning a 3-day trip to the Braille Institute in Los Angeles as finalists in June.

#### On-Line Resources

Check us out at <http://ncaer.net>, where you can find information on your North Carolina Chapter of AER. At <http://ncaer.net> you will find contact information on your representative Board Members, our Bylaws, upcoming events, resource links, & links to past NCCVIB Conferences, and membership information. <http://ncaer.net> is continually updating & would appreciate any feedback on how we can be more responsive to your needs in terms of providing information via our website.

\*Visit [NCAER.net](http://NCAER.net) for updates on the coming 2007 NCCVIB conference held on the campus of the Governor Morehead School.\*

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March 22- 24, 2007  
GMS Campus

"The Eyes Have It: Focusing on  
the Future"

**The Eyes Have It**

Focusing on the Future



**March 22-24, 2007**

*Who Was Dr. Rachel Rawls, and  
Why is There an Award in Her  
Honor?*

*(submitted by Gail Waters)*

Dr. Rachel Rawls was a longtime advocate for children and adults with visual impairments in NC. She died in 1999 at the age of 77. Although many of the younger consumers and professionals in the field have not had the opportunity to know her, the impact she has had on them and the profession is enormous. In 1992, on the occasion of her seventieth birthday, over 150 attendees recognized her unique contributions by attending a dinner in her honor. At that time the Rachel Rawls Award for significant contribution to the field of visual impairment was established. An education fund was also created in her honor, in addition to one already established at NC State University, where she was Professor Emerita.

Rachel's career was long and distinguished. She joined the faculty of the Governor Morehead School in 1945, after a brief time with Wake County Public Schools and the State Department of Public Instruction. In 1949 she became psychologist and counselor at the School and served in this capacity until becoming Director of Research in 1965. After obtaining a doctorate in psychology from George Peabody College (Vanderbilt University), she accepted a position as instructor in the Department of Psychology at NC State. In this position she was a consultant in psychological testing for the NC

Division of Services for the Blind, and not only did psychological testing herself but trained many psychology students at NC State in psychological testing of children and adults with visual impairments. She became NC's recognized expert in this field. After her retirement as Professor Emerita at NC State, she continued consulting, especially in the area of children with visual impairments, as she undertook private practice.

Rachel's professional and special interest affiliations, spanning several decades, include the following: Board Member of the NC Commission for the Blind; President & Board of the Sir Walter Lioness Club; Board of the Friends of the NC Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped; New Bern Avenue Day Care Center Board of Directors; President & Board of the Wake County Genealogical Society; Board of the Gamma Eta Chapter of the Delta Kappa Gamma Society International; and the Human Rights Committee of the Governor Morehead School.

Rachel organized a committee in the early nineties in an attempt to address the issue of Braille literacy in this state and reestablish a teacher-training program in visual impairments. She spearheaded the effort as she worked with other professionals, resulting in the teacher training program that is now operating at North Carolina Central University. In addition, she spent many hours over the years in the General Assembly, fighting for funds for the NC

Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped and for specialized, trained staff, such as rehabilitation teachers, in the profession.

Through legislative contacts, Rachel advocated for other programs that would benefit people with visual impairments and strongly advocated against such proposals as "right turn on red," which she believed would be detrimental to people who are visually impaired. She was a life member of the Association of Educators of the Visually Handicapped and AER. It was a great tribute to Rachel that the Secretary of the Department of Cultural Resources and other leading state officials donated the book *North Carolina Women Making History* in her honor to the Library for the Blind with the request that it be taped for the patrons of the Library.

Whether she was known as Mrs. Rawls, Dr. Rawls, or Rachel, she is lovingly remembered by her friends and long-time associates for her keen intellect and teaching ability, and her passion to improve the lives of North Carolina citizens with visual impairments. She loved children and animals, especially cats, and would put aside everything to help a friend. Those of us who were fortunate enough to know her recognize the legacy she leaves to all of us who follow in the love and work of education and rehabilitation of the blind and visually impaired.

*Dr. Rachel Rawls*



*Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!*

On February 9-11, 2007 Governor Morehead School was given the opportunity to take interested seniors to Snowshoe, West Virginia for an opportunity of a lifetime. They visited Snowshoe Mountain for a weekend of skiing and snow tubing. This winter wonderland was exciting for those who attended. The students were given individualized adaptive ski lessons by experienced adaptive skiing instructors. As you can see in the pictures, some of the more involved students were given tethers to maintain balance and assist in staying on the correct course. Later in the day some students opted to go snow tubing. There is nothing more exhilarating than to experience the rush of zipping down the mountainside on a tube in the snow. As one participant stated, "There is

nothing better than this natural high."



<http://cawvsports.org/february.html>

## What's Happening

March, 2007

2–4 48th Annual CTEVH. Santa Clara. [www.ctevh.org](http://www.ctevh.org)

19–24 CSUN (California State University at Northridge), 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual International Conference: Technology and Persons with Disabilities Conference. [www.csun.edu/cod/conf/index.htm](http://www.csun.edu/cod/conf/index.htm), or [conference@csun.edu](mailto:conference@csun.edu), or phone 818-677-2578

22-24 NCCVIB, Raleigh NC. Contact [mary.k.davis@ncmail.net](mailto:mary.k.davis@ncmail.net) or <http://ncaer.net>

April, 2007

12–16 AER-Lift Leadership Conference for Chapter, Division, and AER Board of Directors, Alexandria, VA. Contact [bsherr@aerbvi.org](mailto:bsherr@aerbvi.org)

May, 2007

6–11 Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology Annual Meeting, Ft. Lauderdale, FL. [www.arvo.org](http://www.arvo.org), or [arvo@arvo.org](mailto:arvo@arvo.org), or 240-221-2900

June, 2007

30–July 7 American Council of the Blind National Convention. Minneapolis, MN. [www.acb.org/convention](http://www.acb.org/convention), or [info@acb.org](mailto:info@acb.org), or phone 800-424-8666

July, 2007

1–6 National Federation of the Blind National Convention. Atlanta, GA. [www.nfb.org](http://www.nfb.org), or [nfb@nfb.org](mailto:nfb@nfb.org), or phone 410-659-9314

2–6 2007 Lions Clubs International Annual Convention. Chicago, IL. [www.lionsclubs.org](http://www.lionsclubs.org), or phone 630-571-5466

13–15 Families Connecting with Families Conference, Omaha. Contact [napvi@perkins.org](mailto:napvi@perkins.org)

30–8/4 National Federation of the Blind Youth Slam: A 2007 STEM Leadership Academy. Baltimore, MD. [www.blindscience.org/ncbys/Youth\\_Slam.asp](http://www.blindscience.org/ncbys/Youth_Slam.asp), or [youthslam@nfb.org](mailto:youthslam@nfb.org), or phone 410-659-9314

September, 2007

25–30 14<sup>th</sup> World Conference of Deafblind International. Perth, Australia. [www.dbiconference2007.asn.au](http://www.dbiconference2007.asn.au), or [conference@senses.asn.au](mailto:conference@senses.asn.au), or phone +61-8-9473-5400

Please see the attached packet for information on the Rachel Rawls Award nomination process. You should be receiving this information under separate mailing; however, if you do not, please feel free to use the attachment for nominating an individual for the award.