



NCAERolina News **March, 2009**

President's Message

Kathy Davis

Is it spring yet? Well, technically and practically speaking, NO! As if dealing with economic issues wasn't enough for this year's conference planning committee, Mother Nature seemed to join in the conspiracy and try to put the kibosh on the 2009 VI Superconference by giving us a dose of snow on March 2. We were spared the conference, however, by the kind intercession of the GMS School Director and Residential Life Director who advocated sparing the 20th! Thanks to those folks for helping us out. So we trudged on with our plans, bringing you on March 20 the best in the VI field.

Economies still don't look good, and I realize that impacts dramatically and practically people's pocketbooks. I am happy to report that in spite of economic shortcomings our membership remains stable, number-wise. I guess it all depends upon your emphasis and your desire to be part of a professional community. I understand that finances are tight for everyone but sacrifices can be and are made every day. Would you give up a month of Starbuck's for an AER membership? We may not always be as stimulating as caffeine but in the long run, membership in our professional organization is intrinsically more rewarding than the short-term spurt of a mocha frappuccino. Again, it's the priorities....and it's YOUR AER.

So on to the conference and on to spring! See you at the GMS Campus!

***NCAER sponsors YOUR
2009 Conference on Visual Impairment and
Blindness
"Workin' for a Livin'"***

***Check www.ncaer.net for additional
information, details, registration!***

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Into the Wild (Rod Poole)

Imagine three blind high school age students on a four hour wilderness trail hike. They might cross three creeks, handle a startled crayfish, use topographic maps and tactile trail maps, and perhaps use an 8x scope to check out the mountain on the other side of a river. Those things and more were exactly what three young men from GMS did on February 10 in the

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Birkhead Mountain Wilderness area southwest of Asheboro. Two certified O & M specialists accompanied these young men. Each hiker used a sturdy walking staff, and two used long white canes as well.

It was so cool having a snack break right beside an old chimney that dates back to the 1800s. The cabin built with the chimney has long since rotted away. Further along the trail, the old Bingham family cemetery lies on a bluff above the North Prong River. Since the Bingham family was in this area dating back to before the American Revolution, we know the cemetery is quite old. In fact, one grave site is sunken in about three feet below the level of the surrounding soil, indicating that both the wood casket and body have long since gone to dust. Tombstones in this graveyard have no writing on them, and trees have overgrown parts of the graveyard.

When the students had such a unique opportunity with this wilderness hike, they eagerly responded with enthusiasm and a clear desire to learn. From touching the bark of three varieties of smooth-barked trees (maple, beech, and American holly) in the forest and learning to differentiate among them, to discovering a salamander and crayfish in the creeks, to understanding what a contour line is on a topographic map and how it feels underfoot to gain and lose elevation, to having to use their maps correctly in order to choose the desired trail at two trail junctions, these students used their problem-solving skills to handle a number of opportunities in experiential learning. Who knew learning could be such fun (smile)?

Of course, students at our school also learn the usual Orientation and Mobility skills in travel in neighborhoods, semi-business and business areas, both indoors and outdoors. Also each year, for many students, the O & M staff at GMS provides some unique and challenging learning opportunities: wilderness hikes, urban O & M workshops, and use of all types of technology. The reward is seeing students grow in confidence as they learn to expect the best of themselves in some very challenging settings.

APH Sharing Time (Julie Kagy)

I am looking forward to seeing many of you at the NCCVIB Conference on March 20. Last year at the conference, Jean Shipke, VI Teacher, suggested a trade-off of APH materials at the

conference. I thought it was a great idea, and this year we are going to do just that. If you have materials or equipment FROM APH that you no longer use, bring them to the conference. We will have a table set up where you can deposit your “no longer needed” items and where you can look for items that you may need.

Here are the ground rules:

- If you bring devices, they MUST be in working order with all parts, cords, etc. included.
- If you bring kits, e.g., Light Box, Sensory Learning, please make sure the kits are complete. Don't bring partial kits.
- If no one wants what you bring, it will be disposed of, OR you can take it back with you. No storage is available.

Once again, this is only for materials that you or someone in your LEA has ordered from the American Printing House with Quota funds. It is NOT for items that your LEA has purchased with local monies.

So go through those shelves, closets, your car, and bring what you can. Take a look at the conference and take what you can use.

News from NCCU (Julie Bardin)

There has been so much emphasis locally and nationally on the negative impacts of the economy, e.g., budget cuts, programs sliced, etc. I think it is important to focus on the positive aspects of the field of visual impairments. The faculty of the Visual Impairment Training Program (VITP) received word from Dean Cecelia Steppe-Jones, that for now the VITP is stable and should not face significant budget cuts. In order to continue to have this security, it is important to recruit students into the program. If you know of anyone interested in earning a Master's degree or licensure in VI, please talk to him/her about the great field in which we work.

We will be offering the fast track courses again this summer. Students can earn credit in Teaching Braille and Communications and Orientation and Mobility for the Classroom Teacher by attending classes from 8 – 5 for two weeks. Fast Track courses will be offered the weeks of July 6th and July 20th. Participants must

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attend both weeks. Registration for summer semester will be mid-March.

For people interested in working with adults, we currently have grant funding available. The funding is intended to pay full tuition and a generous stipend. Students need to specialize in Orientation & Mobility and/or Rehabilitation Teaching and commit to working with adults or transition-aged teenagers for two years for each year of funding received. For more information, contact Diane Wormsley at dwormsley@ncsu.edu or 919-530-7693.

Deadline for fall applications is March 30, 2009.

Additional good news for VI stakeholders in North Carolina is the National Agenda Planning Committee has reconvened and is looking at implementation of the *National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairments, Including Those with Multiple Disabilities*. If you are unfamiliar with the National Agenda and its goals, visit <http://www.tsbvi.edu/agenda/index.htm> to read the document and see what other states are doing to improve the education opportunities for persons with visual impairment. Also, be on the lookout: volunteers will be needed to chair goals and help with the implementation.



NC Association of Blind Students' Spring Seminar

Do you know a blind or visually impaired high school or college student in NC? Do they want to network with other students? Do they want to learn more about transition services? The NC Association of Blind Students along with the National Federation of the Blind of NC is holding a spring seminar for interested high school and college students. Local and national representatives, speakers, group discussions, artists, a self-defense lesson, demonstrations of the latest blindness-related technology, chances

to meet other students, and giveaway of a Victor Reader Stream ! Details....

DATE: March 28, 2009

LOCATION: GMS Campus, Raleigh

WHEN: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

COST: \$10 at the door, includes food

PARENTS: Parents are welcome to attend for \$10, but student programming will be separate from parent programming. We encourage that if it is possible you allow your students to attend without you.

For more information, contact Brice Smith, Vice President of the NC Association of Blind Students at NCABS11@yahoo.com or at 919-637-1028. To register, send your name, grade, phone number, address, email address, and the medium of materials you will need (print, large print, or Braille) to NCABS11@yahoo.com. If you don't have email, please mail the information to Dasha Radford, 3604 Octavia Street, Raleigh, NC, 27606. Be sure to include any food allergies.

Urban O&M/Discovering our Capital City

Many Orientation and Mobility specialists working with middle and high school students long for teaching complex travel skills associated with cities, public bus travel, taxi travel, city street crossings, navigating with compass, and orientation using tactile or print maps. Unfortunately our state continues to be more rural than urban.

Reality check: we can't bring the cities to our students; why not bring the students to the city? The program was a collaborative effort of the Outreach and Orientation & Mobility departments of Governor Morehead School. Conceived in the, hot, dog days of August and executed in the cold windy days of the last week of February '09, four brave high school students discovered Raleigh, NC.

The week began with assessment of student skills, review of basic and intermediate orientation skills and group activities to facilitate personal interaction. Students were given portfolios containing information about Raleigh as if they had just begun their first job after college. They were given home addresses, business addresses and maps, city directories and websites for route planning and execution. Several of these students experienced firsts during the week:

- APS (audible pedestrian signals)

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- Truncated domes, (tactile warning areas at the intersection of street and the sidewalk)
- The compass to aid in orientation
- Revolving doors
- Complex multi-cycle stop lights
- City bus travel

As the week progressed the students discovered Raleigh through a natural progression of sessions designed to promote critical thinking and problem solving. The students were asked to choose landmarks and essential businesses/services within a defined six block area that would become their “neighborhood”. Raleigh’s unique state museums and cultural arts centers were introduced as the students encountered the buildings during travel. The students’ culminating activity was a mini drop-off where they were given an address and asked to find it with minimal instructor intervention. The mystery business was a private restaurant at the top of one of Raleigh’s tallest buildings! All students completed the activity and enjoyed a formal lunch at the Cardinal Club.

The week ended with a session trialing the new Trekker GPS system presented by our friend and great resource, Jack Mitchell from Indigo Logic. The Trekker was used in the same six block area allowing everyone a chance to experience the pros and cons of a GPS system designed specifically for the VI traveler. One student said it all, “it has so much to offer, the whole city in my hand!”

The instructors enjoyed teaching such an enthusiastic group and look forward to developing this unit of instruction for the Summer Enrichment Camp at Governor Morehead School.

Happy Sidewalks to you!



Helpful Tips

Do you or your students struggle with zippers and garment fastenings, especially cuffs on long sleeved shirts? If so, try this. Extend the buttons on the shirt so that the cuff does not have to be unbuttoned or buttoned by threading an elastic pony tail holder through the buttonhole and looping over the button as shown below. Buttonhooks are also available to help you button clothing using only one hand.



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What's Happening

March 16 – 21

California State University at Northridge (CSUN) Center on Disabilities. 24th Annual International Conference on Technology and Persons with Disabilities. www.csun.edu/cod/conf/

March 20

NC Superconference, "Workin' for a Livin'", GMS Campus, Raleigh NC

April 1 – 4

Council for Exceptional Children Annual Convention and Exposition. Seattle, WA. www.cec.sped.org

April 23 – 26

American Occupational Therapy Association Annual Conference and Expo. Houston, TX.
www.aota.org/confandevents/conf.asp

July 3 – 8, 2009

National Federation of the Blind National Convention. Detroit, MI. www.nfb.org for details

July 17 – 19, 2009. Families Connecting with Families Conference. Costa Mesa, CA.

www.familyconnect.org

October 15 – 17, 2009. APH Annual Meeting. Louisville, KY. info@aph.org for information

October 28 – 31, 2009. Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATIA 2009). Chicago, IL. www.atia.org

November 12 – 15, 2009. Getting in Touch with Literacy Conference. Costa Mesa, CA.

www.gettingintouchwithliteracy.com for information

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Order Form**

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Shirts are \$25 each. How many would you like? _____

Check Amount: _____

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Blueberry, Pistachio, Sunset Red, Light Pink, Lilac, Oxford, Faded Olive,
Dark Green, Athletic Gold, Bark, Royal, Ivory, Steel Grey, Forest

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**Please send your check payable to NCAER and mail it to:**

**Mrs. Susan Purdy, 2 Sedgewood Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27514**

**Thank You for Your Order!**

## **JOIN THE FRIENDS NOW! FNCLBPH Membership Categories**

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**Make checks payable to FNCLBPH and mail with this form to:**

**FNCLBPH  
1811 Capital Boulevard  
Raleigh, NC 27635**

*Questions? Call us at (828) 505-0338 and ask for Gary Ray.*

**FNCLBPH Home Page:**

**[www.friendsnclbph.org](http://www.friendsnclbph.org) (under construction)**