



## NCAERolina News July, 2008

### **President's Message**

#### **Gary Ray**

It sure seems like a long time since Bill Apple and Nancy Massengill cornered me during the Super Conference in 1994 and asked if I would consider running for President Elect of NC AER. At the time, I figured out that they were talking about a six year commitment which seemed like forever. And, now, four of those six years are gone. I am entering the twilight of my term. I will serve as Past President for two more years. Time sure flies when you are having fun!

When I started all of this I had a few goals in mind. I knew I was never going to be a visionary leader, but I thought I could do some good and leave NC AER better than I found it. I wanted to stabilize the membership numbers. Back then, we were dying. We had fallen to fewer than 70 members. Also, I wanted to get the website up and running and being used as a good resource for our members. I wanted to see the NC AER newsletter restarted and published on a regular basis. I wanted the Board of Directors to begin to participate fully and become a good working group.

Well, we have achieved all of the goals over the last few years. Now, I wish I could take credit for all of it, but it took a lot of help. The Board has been critical in achieving all of these goals. I want to thank everyone who has served on the Board over the last four years for all of the support and work they have contributed. We could never have reached these goals without a good team effort.

I believe I am leaving NC AER with a good foundation on which our next crop of leaders can build. I feel really good about all of this as I look back and reflect.

I think the highlight of the whole time was being able to give the keynote address at this year's Super Conference. Doing that was such a blast!

I can promise you all that I will be a working Past President! I am committed to help our new leaders follow on and create a bigger, better NC AER. It has been a pleasure to serve!

#### **I'm Back (Kathy Davis, editor)**

After a break from the newsletter, I'm back. Thanks to Susan Purdy for filling in during my adjustment period as I moved from being *just* Outreach Director to now Principal and Outreach Director at Governor Morehead School. It was quite a year, and I'm glad to be back with the newsletter. As before, if you have articles of interest, send these to me at [mary.k.davis@ncmail.net](mailto:mary.k.davis@ncmail.net). Thanks! Kathy Davis

#### **Discovering AER-Lift**

This year's AER-Lift took place from March 28-30 in Irving, TX, and for this NCAER chapter member, it was a time of discovery. For those who, like me prior to attending this gathering, don't know what AER-Lift is, it is the annual conference of leadership training for AER chapter officers (President, President-elect, Past President, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Chair, Newsletter Editor) and AER Division leaders (Division Chair, Chair-elect, Secretary/Treasurer). While that is a rather boiled down description, the experience was much more meaningful. As your NC AER's President-Elect, the opportunity to attend AER-Lift was useful in alleviating my anxiety about my new role within the chapter. The conference was also a chance to learn about the organization's present condition, its goals, plans for growth and the importance of supporting the Association and each other. In this article I will be reporting on each of those points.

To be sure, AER is facing serious challenges to the organization's sustained viability. For some time, data trends have illustrated two issues of concern. The number one challenge facing AER is and has been declining assets. The second serious issue is declining membership. The two issues are intertwined and addressing membership begins to solve the problem of increasing asset allocation. While membership has increased recently to 5000 members, a similar level 8 years ago when membership started to decline, the association has concluded that membership will need to increase to at

least a level of 6500 to allow AER to reach a point of financial self-sufficiency.

As one should conclude, AER's main goals are centered on increasing membership, and financial stability. A third goal of AER, which is associated with increasing the chances of the previously mentioned goals succeeding, is to improve communication with membership both internally and externally.

AER indeed has a plan for growth and sustainability which is tied heavily into providing better services to its membership which AER considers its primary stakeholders. A final report on AER's strategic plan will be delivered at the 2008 International Conference in Chicago later this summer.

While the agenda of the conference was serious, there was room for developing camaraderie amongst veteran attendees and conference rookies. It was an honor to meet and work with notable leaders who have made important contributions to the field such as Sandra Lewis, Jay Stiteley, North Carolina's very own Diane Wormsley, and many more.

I take away from AER-Lift a greater sense of what the association and our chapter means as a professional and the role I can play in supporting both. As your Chapter's President-Elect, I want to express my gratitude to the NCAER board of officers who supported my attendance at AER-Lift.

### ***Reporting For Duty***

On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008, Braille Boot Camp helped to punctuate a series of three Saturday sessions offered to North Carolina parents of visually impaired children during the current school year. At the Braille Boot Camp, Governor Morehead Preschool teachers led basic and intermediate classes on Braille for 20 parents. A great time was had by all and much knowledge and tips were shared by teachers and parents alike.

Previous sessions included the fall, 2007 Governor Morehead School "Open-House" and the spring, 2008 "Learning with Low Vision". Besides exposing parents to goalball, low vision and Braille assistive technology, Braille instruction and resources, the ultimate intent of setting up the sessions for our NC parents of VI children was to offer the opportunity for our parents to meet and organize as a statewide parent support group.

At the conclusion of the Braille Boot Camp session, 15 parents met and discussed the reemergence of the North Carolina Chapter of National Association of Parents of Visually Impaired Children (NAPVI). This is an exciting development for professionals in the field and obviously the parents and students we serve. The chapter is in the process of organizing through the selection of officers, board members, development of a mission plan, and recruitment of additional members; the desire, commitment and support are in place to help ensure that the NC chapter of NAPVI is successful and enduring.

Special thanks go out to Sandy Bryant for having the vision to see the sessions through, the teachers of the Governor Morehead Preschool and GMS Outreach Program who offered their expertise and experience, the volunteers who gave their time to provide child care services for our parents, and the GMS Director and OES Superintendent for supporting this endeavor to give our parents in-service opportunities, a chance to network, and most of all to bringing back a much needed VI parent support group.

Please refer to future NCAER newsletters and [www.ncaer.net](http://www.ncaer.net) as more information becomes available on NC APVI.

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!!!**  
**NCAER is proud to sponsor the 2009 NC Conference on Visual Impairment and Blindness. "Workin' for a Livin'" is the title, with the theme of transition, employment and employability.**  
**Come to GMS Campus, March 19 – 21, 2009!!**

### ***Mitch Wood Receives Rachel Rawls Award by Sandy DeLuca***

At the Super Conference in April, the Rachel Rawls Award was presented to Mitch Wood, the Braille teacher at Governor Morehead School. Mitch began her career as a teacher assistant at GMS in 1978. She became the high school social studies teacher in the early 80's. During the following years, she taught in a variety of classroom settings at GMS: multihandicapped,

kindergarten, first, second, and third grade, as well as middle school language arts. In the mid 90's she became the "Braille teacher" and worked with students in grades K-12 to teach them Braille.

Mitch learned on her first day at GMS that blind children "can do what others do-they just can't see". She has always treated every child as her own; she wants to give them the respect they deserve and help them become as independent as possible. Her goal in teaching Braille has been to get children to love Braille as much as she does-especially those children who have lost vision and must transition from print to Braille.

Five years ago, Mitch was responsible for organizing and implementing the first Braille Challenge in North Carolina as part of the national competition sponsored by the Braille Institute in California. At that time, the event was for Governor Morehead students. All students were involved in Braille competition, other Braille activities, or Braille awareness activities. This was a fun day-long event. During the first three years, two GMS students went on to the national competition. The event expanded over the years to include a talent show, tactile art displays, and guest speakers who champion the cause of Braille. Two years ago, the GMS Outreach program became involved and provided a Braille Challenge event for public school students on the GMS campus; one of those individuals went to the national competition. This year, the program expanded again to include three sites for the state competition. A public school student and a GMS student went to the national competition this year. Without Mitch's strong commitment to promoting Braille and her dedication to helping students become the best they can be, Braille Challenge would not be what it is in North Carolina today.

Mitch is retiring from her position at GMS in early July. Although she does not have specific retirement plans, she hopes to find ways to continue to use her Braille skills. We wish her the best on whatever path she chooses.

#### ***Polo Shirts for Sale***

Once again NCAER is selling polo shirts! Get yours! Get caught wearing your polo shirt! The order form is included in this newsletter.

#### ***RSA Grant Awarded***

NCCU's VITP has been awarded a five year, \$500,000 grant from Rehabilitation Services Administration for their proposal "Increasing the Quality and Quantity of Professionals Serving Blind and Visually Impaired Individuals." The project allows NCCU to provide scholarship support beginning Fall, 2008 for students enrolled in and meeting eligibility criteria in the O & M program. It will also provide scholarship support for students wishing to become certified in Vision Rehabilitation Therapy. Scholarship support requires that students sign a work payback agreement. For each full-time (or equivalent) year of support, the COMS or VRT must pay back two years of work after receipt of certification. Work is to be performed with young adults in transition services or adults as part of rehabilitation training. Anyone interested in working toward certification as an O & M specialist or VRT and wishing to receive scholarship funding should contact Victoria Poole ([vpoole@nccu.edu](mailto:vpoole@nccu.edu)) at 919-530-7291.

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#### ***REMEMBER!***

***March 19 – 21, 2008***

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

***Check [www.ncaer.net](http://www.ncaer.net) for  
additional information, details,  
registration!***

## ***What's Happening***

July 21 – August 22

Youth in Transition: Carroll Center for the Blind Summer Residential Program. [www.carroll.org](http://www.carroll.org)

August 13 – 15

Second Annual Pathways to Possibilities: A Combined Conference for Educational Professionals, Related Service Providers, Parents and Family Members of Students Who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Blind, Low Vision, Deaf-Blind, Dual Sensory Impaired, or Multi-Disabled. [www.vcu.edu](http://www.vcu.edu)

September 5-6

Envision 08: A Multidisciplinary Vision Rehabilitation and Research Conference.  
[www.envisionconference.org](http://www.envisionconference.org)

October 16 – 18

Closing the Gap. [www.closingthegap.com](http://www.closingthegap.com)

October 24

10<sup>th</sup> Annual Sowell Center Distinguished Lecture Series: Impact of Cochlear Implants on People with Deaf-Blindness, Deafness, or Those Who Are Hard-of-Hearing with Ella Taylor.

[www.educ.ttu.edu/sowell2](http://www.educ.ttu.edu/sowell2)

October 26 – 29

Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children 2008 Conference. [www.dec-sp.org](http://www.dec-sp.org)

November 21 – 22

World Congress on Disabilities Expo. [www.wcdexpo.com/2008/fla/conference.cfm](http://www.wcdexpo.com/2008/fla/conference.cfm)

December 4 – 5

NC Partnerships in Assistive Technology AT Expo. [www.pat.org](http://www.pat.org)

January 22 – 24, 2009

Technology, Reading, and Learning Diversity 2009 Conference: "Opening Doors to Universal Learning."  
[www.trld.com](http://www.trld.com)

March 5 – 8

2009 AFB National Conference (Josephine Taylor Leadership Institute). [www.afb.org](http://www.afb.org)

March 19 – 21

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

April 1 – 4

Council for Exceptional Children Annual Convention and Exposition. [www.cec.sp.org](http://www.cec.sp.org)

April 17 – 19

Families Connecting with Families International Conference. [napvi@perkins.org](mailto:napvi@perkins.org)

**NCAER Polo Shirt  
Order Form**

**Name** (Mr., Mrs., or Ms):

\_\_\_\_\_

**Street or P.O. Box:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**City/State/Zip Code:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Email Address and/or Phone Number:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Men's Size** (XS-6XL; Tall LT-4XLT):

\_\_\_\_\_

**Lady's Size** (XS-XXL; Plus 1X and 2X):

\_\_\_\_\_

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

**Check Amount:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Color:** (Please Circle)

Khaki Heather, Navy, White, Black, Light Blue, Burgundy, Yellow, Purple,

Turquoise, Stone, Faded Blue, Red, Classic Navy, Sea Foam, Orange,

Blueberry, Pistachio, Sunset Red, Light Pink, Lilac, Oxford, Faded Olive,

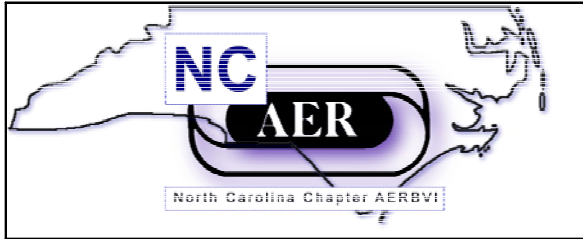
Dark Green, Athletic Gold, Bark, Royal, Ivory, Steel Grey, Forest

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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!**



Gary H. Ray  
Past President  
18 Sandon Drive  
Asheville, NC 28804  
(828) 505-0338

September 2008

**2009 Rachel Rawls Award  
Nomination Form**

All nominations should be submitted either electronically or in print by March 1, 2009, to Gary Ray. The email address is [ggray@mindspring.com](mailto:ggray@mindspring.com). The mailing address is 18 Sandon Drive, Asheville, NC 28804.

The Rachel Rawls Award was established by the NC AER in 1989 to honor Dr. Rawls and to recognize achievement in the field of work with the blind and visually impaired.

***The Ground Rules:***

- The person making the nomination must be a member of NC AER.
- The person being nominated does not have to be an NC AER member.
- Current NC AER Board members are NOT eligible for nomination.
- The Board of the NC AER grants the Rawls Award.
- The NC AER Board need not give the Rawls Award every year.
- Only one Rawls Award may be given each year.
- Each nomination must be made using the form provided and must be accompanied by at least two (2) letters of support from persons who have personal knowledge of the nominee and his/her achievement. Each letter of support must contain contact information for the author.

***Award criteria***

- A person whose unique achievements have benefited North Carolina citizens who are visually impaired
- A person whose achievements have exceeded the expectations of their particular job description
- A person who has been innovative in the field of education, rehabilitation or human services
- A person who has had an impact on the field that extends beyond current or former job placement
- A person who has positively altered attitudes toward visual impairment or the manner in which services are delivered to individuals who are visually impaired
- A person who has demonstrated extensive collaborations with other disciplines or organizations working with people who are visually impaired (including but not limited to the NCAER, Lions Clubs in North Carolina, the Division of Services for the Blind, the Governor Morehead School, the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, the NC Council of the Blind, the National Federation of the Blind of NC) in order to enhance the overall quality of life for individuals who are visually impaired

**2009 Rachel Rawls Award Nomination**

**Name of Person Nominating:**  
***(MUST BE AN NCAER MEMBER)***

**Address, including City, State, and Zip:**

**Phone number, including Area Code:**

**Email:**

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**Name of Nominee:**

**Address, including City, State, and Zip:**

**Phone number, including Area Code:**

**Email:**

**Please explain why this person should receive the 2009 Award. Pay particular attention to the criteria given above. Feel free to use additional pages for your answer.**