



AMESVIEW

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The AMESVI board members
for the 2011-2012 year are:

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Beth.caruso@perkins.org

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katrenaatrautsavino@bpsma.org

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Greater Boston:

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South Shore/Cape:

Richard DeFilippis

Rfdefilippis@yahoo.com

February 2012

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello AMESVI members,

I was recently asked for advice about coping with the myriad of "balls in the air" that all educators juggle on a daily basis. My response was: take time to breathe, be good to yourself and get support from others. One easy way to do this is through AMESVI.

The AMESVI list-serve is a perfect example of a great way to connect with colleagues, to share expertise and experiences. I am always impressed by the depth of knowledge, breadth of experience and incredible creative approaches shared about a wide variety of topics. Many times I have no idea what language is being spoken (clearly I am a not up on the new technology!) but I now know who to contact with questions.

The website is a terrific resource; learn your way around it so you can access information quickly as the need arises.

The AMESVI Board members are an impressive and dedicated group of professionals. It is a pleasure to work with them, yet a challenge to rein them in since there is so much that we all would like to do. Be sure to contact your Regional Representative or other board members with ideas or feedback so AMESVI is responsive to your needs. We meet monthly by phone or in person to address the details of running the organization as well as to plan for exciting opportunities for all of our membership. Past-President Katrena Traut-Savino, myself and President-Elect Michelle Antinarelli are working with member Betsy Bixler to move discussions on Strategic Planning to the next level. We invite veteran and new AMESVI members to participate on a Strategic Planning Task Force. Enjoy this issue of AMESVIEW. I encourage you to contribute to the next one.

Happy New Year! Remember to breathe and to be good to yourself.
Cheers!

Beth Caruso Phone: 617-972-7434 Beth.Caruso@Perkins.org

Calling All Nominees!!!

The following positions are open for the upcoming 2012-13 election year:

- **President-Elect:** Assist the President as requested; perform all duties of the President in the President's absence; and oversee the publication of a newsletter. After serving in this office for one year, the President-Elect shall become the President.
- **Regional Representative:** Promote communication among the members within geographical regions of the state, and represent their concerns to the Executive Board.
- **Central Ma Representative: open**
- **Northeast Representative: open**
- **Greater Boston Representative: open**
- **Corresponding Secretary:** Give notice of all meetings of the Executive Board and of the general membership, conduct the correspondence of the Association, and maintain current membership list and support regarding membership renewal.
- **Recording Secretary:** Keep accurate written minutes of all meetings of the Executive Board and of the general membership, and maintain all reports, records, and archives of the Association.
- **Conference Chair:** This is a board appointed position and responsibilities are to plan and coordinate conferences and professional development opportunities sponsored by the Association.

Which position fits your interests best? The continuation of our association depends on member participation. The board meets face-to-face approximately four times a year, via conference call another four times a year, and communicates regularly via e-mail. If interested in running for a position or to nominate another person, please contact Katrena Traut-Savino at katrenaatrautsavino@bpsma.org

WWW.AMESVI.ORG

Please check the website regularly for updates. Webmaster Meg Robertson is in the process of revamping and revising the site to be more reflective of our needs. Do contact her with any broken links that you find at mobilitymeg@aol.com Soon to come--"COMS Roles and Responsibilities" (new) and reposting of the updated "TVI Roles and Responsibilities." (We have had over 143 visitors from overseas!)

REGIONAL UPDATES

South Shore/ Cape Region

South Shore/Cape had a regional meeting at the Plymouth Public Library. Seven members, including one new member, enjoyed a supper of roll-ups and salad while we shared information on current caseloads and types of students with whom we are currently working. We had some general discussion providing support and information individually. We also screened the AMESVI DVD, "Going Blind". It was informative and a good ending to our meeting. We're shooting for another meeting toward the end of February. Hope to see you there.

Richard DeFilippis rfdefilippis@yahoo.com

Central Regional Report

At the suggestion of region member Charlene Laferrera, we used a Doodle poll to select our Fall regional meeting date, and this worked really well!

A few last minute cancellations affected our numbers, but there were 5 members who met on Thursday Nov 10 from 4-6pm at the new Wegmans Market Café in Northborough, MA. Everyone brought items to share on our topics: iPad apps and CVI. It was great to get together to catch up as well!

Our Winter meeting on February 22nd at 4pm will be at the Southborough public library. Guest speaker Dr. John Abbonanza will present on the topic of Vision Therapy. He recommended that we view the videos on his website prior to attending the presentation in his office. The presentation should last about an hour with optional follow-up and a meal at a local restaurant TBD.

<http://www.greatvisioncare.com/visiontherapyvideo.aspx>

The Central MA Region's Spring meeting will include a viewing of the movie Going Blind, at a date and place to be determined.

Laura Koester

laura.koester@carroll.org

cell: 508-259-5922

Greater Boston Region

The Boston region representatives would like to invite our members to our first conference call. We would like to use this time to learn about issues, speakers and topics which can aid with your professional development. With your participation we will identify and focus on topics which are important to you. We will use your feedback to plan in-person meetings for the remainder of the year. The meeting will be held on Wednesday February 29, from 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM. Specific call-in information will be provided.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch with your Boston regional representatives:

Kate Crohan kbcrohan@comcast.net

Cheryl Cumings President@ourspaceourplace.org

Please contact your regional representatives (email addresses on the website and the front of this newsletter) regarding planned meeting dates, topic requests, and special events in your area.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Focus Conference

Seventh annual “Focus” on Vision Impairment & Blindness Conference: Meeting the Needs of Individuals with Intellectual Disability & Vision Loss

March 14, 2012

Four Points by Sheraton, Norwood, MA, 8:00 am – 3:30 pm.

Welcome Remarks: Elin M. Howe, Commissioner, Department of Developmental Services

Keynote: Lotfi B. Merabet, OD, PhD., MPH,

Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology, Harvard Medical School

Director, The Laboratory for Visual Neuroplasticity, MEEI

“How the Brain Changes in Response to Blindness”

Registration & Fee due by February 29, 2012.

Registration Brochure and Form can also be downloaded from the **Perkins Training Center**

Schedule: www.perkins.org/professional/ptc and soon from the “Training and Events” section of the **DDS Vision Loss website:** www.mass.gov/dds/visionloss

AMESVI Spring Conference

Mark your calendars for the **AMESVI Spring Conference ~ Friday April 13th** at the new Perkins Grousbeck Center for Students and Technology. The committee has planned a full day of concurrent sessions addressing requests from the field for both TVI and O&M professionals. Sessions include **O&M for the CVI/Young Learner, iPads apps and accessibility, E-Readers, TVI & CVI, Support for O&M reports, Tools for AT Evals.** Yes, it will be hard to choose which session to attend! We hope that you can join us and that you will bring along colleagues to introduce them to AMESVI. We are looking for additional members to help with the conference. Contact Katrena Traut-Savino at katrenaatrautsavino@bpsma.org . Watch your email for registration forms and information.

Early Connections:

Taking Care of Our Children ...Taking Care of Ourselves

April 28, 2012

Perkins School for the Blind

175 North Beacon Street, Watertown, MA 02472

Please join us for our 29th annual conference for parents of children with visual impairments (birth-7) and professionals to come together to both learn new information and to network. The conference offers an opportunity for parent-to-parent networking around specific eye conditions, as well as grandparent-to-grandparent and professional-to-professional support groups. Lunch and childcare are provided.

This year’s sessions will include:

- iPad Applications
- Feeding Issues
- The Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC)
- Low Vision Aids and Adaptations
- Orientation & Mobility
- Dealing with Stress
- Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI)

Keynote: Amber Bobnar, founder of Perkins WonderBaby.org. She will present...

"In This Together: Building a Successful Family Support Team"

One mom's journey finding the resources, professional services and community support necessary to raise a child with multiple disabilities.

For Registration information go to www.perkins.org or call 617-972-7553

FROM OUR MEMBERS

"Thunder Dog, The True Story of a Blind Man, His Guide Dog, and the Triumph of Trust at Ground Zero" written by [Michael Hingson](#) and forward by [Larry King](#) .

A man who is blind and his guide dog show the power of trust and courage in the midst of devastating terror. It was 12:30 a.m. on 9/11 and Roselle whimpered at Michael's bedside. A thunderstorm was headed east, and she could sense the distant rumbles while her owner slept. As a trained guide dog, when she was "on the clock," nothing could faze her. But that morning, without her harness, she was free to be scared, and she nudged Michael's hand as it draped over the bedside toward the floor. She needed him to wake up.

With a busy day of meetings and an important presentation ahead, Michael got out of bed, headed to his home office, and started chipping away at his daunting workload. Roselle took her normal spot at his feet. By all indications it was going to be a normal day.

Follow Michael and his guide dog, Roselle, as their lives are changed forever by two explosions and 1,463 stairs. This is a harrowing story of trust and courage, discovery of how blindness and a bond between dog and man saved lives and brought hope during one of America's darkest days.

This was the first 9/11 book I have read and it was an excellent choice. This quick read will keep you at the edge of your seat. Well written and with excellent resources at end of the book for the average person about blindness.

Submitted by Jessica Erlich

Perkins Braille and Talking Book Library Shelf Project

The Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library is pleased to announce the availability of a new download service for Perkins-produced studio local titles. The SHELF Project (Shared Electronic Files) is an online catalog of locally recorded titles combined with the capacity to download these available titles and play them on your Library of Congress player on a cartridge or on a Victor Stream, BookSense, PlexTalk Pocket, BookPort Plus or other compatible third party purchased player.

Massachusetts is the first state to make its locally produced audio books available on the SHELF Project. Other libraries content will soon be coming onboard and users will have access to that content in addition to the Massachusetts titles listed.

"The Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library is so excited to be the first library to make locally recorded titles available to borrowers for download," says Kim Charlson, Library Director. "We worked with Keystone Systems, the provider of our Library's automation system to incorporate this functionality into our already existing online catalog for user convenience."

Interested borrowers can access the SHELF Project through the Perkins Library's online catalog www.perkinslibrary.org.

To actually download an available title, you must login using your library user identification code and password. Your user identification is usually the first five letters of your last name, and the first letter of

your first name, followed by two digits. This code is printed on all of your mailing cards. (Example: Harry Potter POTTEH01) Your password is often your birth year. If you have any problems with your login information, please contact the Perkins Library for assistance.

One of the easiest ways to use the SHELF Project is to browse the collection. Go to Patron Information and login first before you start to look around. This will ensure that when you find a title you want to download, you can start the download immediately instead of being prompted to login and lose your place.

Once you have logged in, go to the SHELF link. This will bring up a browsing list of the nearly 300 titles we have placed onto the SHELF for your download. More titles will be added on a regular basis. When you see a title you would like to know more about or download, you click on the title link. You can read more about it, and if you want to download it, you press enter on the Download Locally Recorded Title Produced by Massachusetts link.

Note: you should not press on the Add to Book Basket link as that is the link to add a physical copy of the book to be sent out to you through the mail.

After you press the download link, you will be prompted to Open or Save the file. You should select Save. The file name will appear beginning with LDB-MA for Local Download Book-Massachusetts, then the title and book number, followed by .zip. The file is a compressed or zipped file that you will need to extract into its own folder named with the title of the book for easy location, on a cartridge or flash drive to play on your player. Be sure you know where your downloads go on your computer... more people have trouble with this than you might think.

Several other states will be adding their locally produced titles to the SHELF Project soon and there will be over one thousand local studio produced titles available from Perkins and other states on the service for you to browse.

We hope you are as excited to try this new download service out as we are to make it available to our borrowers.

For further information, contact: Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library
617-972-7240 or 1-800-852-3133

download-support@perkins.org

Perkins Braille and Talking Book Library Announces New Librarian

Johanna (Jo) Umana is the new Children and Youth Services Librarian at the Braille and Talking Book Library. She has a Library Science degree from Simmons College, a degree in Spanish Literature from the University of California, Santa Cruz and has taught courses for children in South Korea and Haiti.

She enjoys reading contemporary young adult books like, *Harry Potter* and *The Hunger Games* and children's series like the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. She also enjoys the classics many students read for school and is happy to discuss these with students.

Jo is ready to work with parents and teachers on specific reading needs, resource questions and reference inquiries for all special format materials including digital audio books, downloads from BARD, the new Perkins SHELF, (see article elsewhere in this newsletter), braille, large print, audio described videos and braille and CCTV equipment loans.

You can reach Jo at the Perkins Library in the following ways:

Email Johanna.Umana@perkins.org

Call 617-972-7242 or 1-800-852-3133

Send an AOL IM to BTBLJo

We look forward to hearing from you!

Support “Our” Students

Open Door Theater of Acton, Ma. presents “Fiddler on the Roof,” on several dates in March. Please refer to the website www.opendoortheater.org for more details. Open Door Theater of Acton is a non-profit family-oriented community theater company that has been creating learning experiences through theater for adults, children, and people with special needs since it was founded in 1980. The Open Door philosophy is that when you offer a positive theater experience, with this mix of people, they learn a lot about themselves and how to get along with each other. In addition to our yearly production, Open Door supports other aspects of theater in the community such as workshops for children and adults and grants for theater facilities.

A special ASL presentation will be held on March 25th at 2pm which will include ASL interpreters. Of note, two students with visual impairments (one braille reader, one large print reader) will be participating in this production with the support of our Susan Cantos. “Break a cane, not a leg!”

A Course Not to Miss—for TVIs, COMS, VRTs

Last summer I participated in the Summer Institute course, “ Technology for Students with Visual and Multiple Disabilities” offered by Wendy Buckley. My advice---it is the one tool for *your* tool box that you must *not* go without! This course covers everything that we vision professionals need to consider in discussing AT needs for our students---evaluating good technology programs and assessments, tools for conducting AT evaluations, checklists for student profiles, how to find those very specialized devices as well as utilizing mainstream commercial software and hardware for our special students. What you can do with power-point alone is amazing! As a COMS I am always looking for fun ways to use technology with my students—and this course created a whole new realm of possibilities for me! Great course, great teacher, and absolutely essential content! Don’t miss it!

Submitted by Michelle Antinarelli

IEP Procedures----From www.doe.mass.edu/sped.iep/ “A Parent’s Guide to Special Education,” This is a great pamphlet to review as special educators, so that we understand the process and student/family rights. The process—ANYONE can make a referral for evaluation: a parent, a teacher, another professional. The district has 5 days to respond to a written request for referral by contacting the parent for written consent to test. The district has 30 school days from receipt of written consent to test to conduct all evaluations. The family has the right to written copies of all reports at least two days prior to the scheduled IEP meeting, but must request them. At the IEP meeting there must be a knowledgeable school representative who can COMMIT to the plan as discussed in the meeting. The written plan must be presented to the family as soon as possible after the meeting. The district has 45 school days from receipt of written consent to present a written copy of the IEP as developed at the team meeting. The family has 30 days to accept or reject the plan. If a parent requests an independent outside evaluation and the student receives free or reduced lunch, the district must pay for the evaluation. Otherwise the family may provide insurance and financial information and collaborate with the district for the cost of the assessment, including sliding scale payments, etc. If the family requests that the district pay for the independent evaluation, the district must either pay, or respond within 5 days to initiate a hearing regarding the appropriateness of the district’s own evaluation. If the district believes that the child no longer requires special education, they must request parent consent for a complete reevaluation prior to taking any action to end special education services.

PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS

ABC CAMP PRIDE New Durham, New Hampshire August 19—25th

For information visit their website at www.blindcitizens.org or call the office at 781-961-1023

Camp Inter-Actions Georges Mills, NH for ages 8-15

For information contact: Debbie Gross campinfo@inter-actions.org 603-228-2803

Carroll Center for the Blind: Year-round outdoor Programs and summer enrichment programs. For more information visit their website at www.carroll.org or contact: Karen Ross, Education Director 617-969-6200, ext 237, karen.ross@carroll.org

Global Explorers: Leading the Way Individual programs open to students of all abilities. A collaborative effort between renowned blind athlete Erik Weihenmayer addresses the unique needs of the visually impaired/blind student. For information visit their website at www.globalexplorers.org

Lowell Association for the Blind 169 Merrimack Street, Lowell, MA 01852

For information contact: Christie Cleaver, Youth and Adult Program Coordinator (978) 454-5704, ccleaver@lowellassociationfortheblind.org

Perkins Outreach Short Courses for spring, summer & the fall Space Exploration Program.

<http://www.perkins.org/community-programs/outreach-student-services/students.html>

For information contact Kelly Cote, Supervisor of Outreach Short Courses 617-972-7867, kelly.cote@perkins.org

Youth Leadership Programs

For information contact: Colleen Flanagan, cflanagan@eastersealsma.org, 1-800-2756 ext. 410.

Summer break offers opportunities for our students to address Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) topics in depth, achieving success in areas that we cannot consistently address within the school day or school year. Include goals in the Individual Educational Plan to address the ECC, and be creative in finding funding sources to involve students in these programs. Some districts do (and all SHOULD) provide funding to attend these types of programs. Additional funding may also be available through the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, Lions Clubs, My One Wish, and other community organizations. Contact these programs, and others listed on WWW.AMESVI.ORG, for more ideas regarding funding and scholarship opportunities. Sure, it seems like you have to do it all---teach the student, teach the school, and inform the community. Being a hero is hard work.

And yes, YOU are a hero. Thank you.

RESOURCES

Gift ideas for students with visual impairments and their friends:

Preschool: Kidz Delight Light and Sound Phonics—lightweight battery operated music toy that lights up—easily add braille labels to buttons. Early letters, phonics, and familiar music~ \$18 on Amazon
Neds Head or Brain Surgery Game---add braille labels to picture cards and it's equal opportunity for all players---actually gives the tactile learner an advantage. ~\$20 everywhere

Grade School: Stare Junior—board game for low vision kids----Cards can be used with magnifiers or presort and use high contrast cards picture cards only. Works on scanning skills, details, visual memory. Level the field between ages or visual acuities by adjusting timer~\$25 from Mindware

Quirkle---high contrast mainstream dominos type game—black backgrounds, works on shapes, colors, visual planning~\$25 from Mindware

Left Right Center—dice game for all—easily adapt dice with braille labels. Reinforce laterality (and gambling!) skills. ~\$6 Everywhere

Qbitz—high contrast mainstream visual memory matching game--level the playing field by having sighted individuals match the card from memory. ~\$25 from Mindware

Dinner Games—to play while you eat, for all. ~\$15 from Mindware

Cat in the Hat I Can Do That---preschool through grade school, inclusive game for all abilities. ~\$25 from Target

Middle and High School: Onyx Risk, Oversize Scrabble, Monopoly Platinum----high contrast and oversize versions of favorite games for mainstream and low vision students.~Barnes and Noble