



2021 FAER Conference Overview

Tuesday, November 30, 2021

1:00 to 2:00 pm EST

- Opening Session: "Finding My Way Through the Trees", presented by Joe Strechay

2:15 to 3:15 pm EST

- Concurrent Session 1: "Transportation Roundtable Discussion", facilitated by Ross Silvers
- Concurrent Session 2: "The 4to24 App for Parents and Students - Building Skills Toward Employment", presented by Karla Antonelli

3:30 to 4:15 pm EST

- FAER Business Meeting

Wednesday, December 1, 2021

9:00 to 10:30 am EST

- Spotlight Session: "A Focus on the Future Begins with Individual Assessment", presented by Karen Wolffe

10:45 to 11:45 am EST

- Concurrent Session 1: "Creating Connectedness: Strategies to Reduce Social Isolation for People with Visual Impairment", presented by Sylvia Stinson-Perez
- Concurrent Session 2: "Building Skills for Success", presented by Leanne Grillot and Erika Fundelius

12:00 to 1:00 pm EST

- Closing Session: "Following in the footsteps of Helen Keller and Harry Truman: My Father's Path to Becoming a Change Agent", presented by Harry E. Wedewer

1:15 to 2:00 pm EST

- FAER Awards and Scholarships

2021 FAER Conference Schedule

Tuesday, November 30, 2021

1:00 to 2:00 pm EST

Opening Session: “Finding My Way Through the Trees”

Presenter(s)

Joe Strechay, Consultant and Producer

Description

Joe shares about his personal journey while trying to find his way with twists and turns. He found obstacles and surpassed them with support, counseling, mentors, and positivity chasing opportunities. Sometimes you hit the bottom, and the only direction is up.

Session Objectives

- Participants will hear about Joe’s adjustment to vision loss and blindness.
- Participants will hear about Joe’s turning points in his process of adjustment.
- Participants will hear how mentors, support, counseling, and positivity moved him through the process.

2:15 to 3:15 pm EST

Concurrent Session 1: “Transportation Roundtable Discussion”

Presenter(s)

Ross Silvers, ADA Compliance and Community officer, Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA)

Description

Join this facilitated discussion to share the transportation needs and creative solutions for individuals who have a visual disability. The facilitator will share practical ideas for using technology and self-advocacy to decrease transportation barriers from pedestrian orientation to ridesharing.

Session Objectives

- Participants will identify two barriers for access to transportation in their community.
- Participants will identify two potential sources of transportation solutions in their community.
- Participants will learn how apps can be tools for improved orientation and transportation independence.

Concurrent Session 2: “The 4to24 App for Parents and Students - Building Skills Toward Employment”

Presenter(s)

Karla Antonelli, Research Scientist I, National Research & Training Center on Blindness & Low Vision, Mississippi State University

Description

Parental expectations play a vital role in the education of youth with blindness or low vision. The 4to24 app provides information to parents to empower and engage them in their children’s growth. Starting young to build skills, knowledge, and confidence is beneficial to future success. This session will describe the 4to24 app, how it works, and what it offers to families to support transition.

Session Objectives

- Participants will learn about the development process of the 4to24 app.
- Participants will be able to describe the target audience for the 4to24 app and what it offers.
- Participants will learn how the 4to24 app provides customized information to parents to support their child's learning and independence over time.

3:30 to 4:15 pm EST

FAER Business Meeting

Wednesday, December 1, 2021

9:00 to 10:30 am EST

Spotlight Session: “A Focus on the Future Begins with Individual Assessment”

Presenter(s)

Karen Wolffe, Ph.D., Career Counseling & Consultation, LLC

Description

In this session, Dr. Karen Wolffe will provide attendees with an overview of a vocational evaluation tool developed by the author in collaboration with the Florida Blind Services Foundation and Division of Blind Services. The tool is designed to highlight a test taker’s strengths and need for intervention in areas pertinent to finding, securing, and maintaining employment. Attendees will learn how to access and use the new vocational evaluation tool.

Session Objectives

Attendees will be familiarized with the Blind Services Foundation Vocational Evaluation Tool (BSFVET) and learn:

- How the BSFVET was developed and what other tools are similar.
- How to administer the BSFVET using either the online or a hardcopy option.
- How to interpret student/client scores and establish training goals collaboratively.

10:45 to 11:45 am EST

Concurrent Session 1: “Creating Connectedness: Strategies to Reduce Social Isolation for People with Visual Impairment”

Presenter(s)

Sylvia Stinson-Perez, Chief Program Officer, American Foundation for the Blind

Description

Social isolation is an issue for those with visual impairments (VI). This session will explore the challenges and provide some specific strategies and resources to help reduce social isolation for those with VI.

Session Objectives

- Participants will learn about the statistics and implications of social isolation.
- Participants will learn specific strategies, such as creating and sustaining activity and support groups, to help create connectedness and reduce social isolation for all age groups.
- Participants will learn about specific resources available to refer clients/consumers/students to increase connectedness.

Concurrent Session 2: “Building Skills for Success”

Presenter(s)

- Leanne Grillot, National Director of Outreach Services, American Printing House for the Blind
- Erika Fundelius, Graduate Student, Florida State University

Description

Stressing the integration of work skills and behaviors into everyday activities at home, at school, and in the community, these important capabilities can be developed through meaningful learning experiences at different ages. Learn ways to build the abilities of preschoolers, elementary school students, and middle school students which lead to career and life satisfaction.

Session Objectives

- Participants will explain the employers’ three areas of concern and how this relates to individuals with visual impairments.
- Participants will identify the four types of social skills which affect a person’s employability and construct solutions for addressing these skills with individuals with visual impairments.

- Participants will illustrate how self-concept and self-esteem combine with compensatory skill education in the Expanded Core Curriculum.

12:00 to 1:00 pm EST

Closing Session: "Following in the footsteps of Helen Keller and Harry Truman: My Father's Path to Becoming a Change Agent."

Presenter(s)

Harry E. Wedewer, Author

Description

Don Wedewer's journey to national prominence as an advocate for those with vision loss was sparked by brief but life-changing encounters with two iconic figures, Helen Keller and Harry Truman. Listeners will take a journey from those moments to the pioneering and transformative initiatives he led to open opportunities for those with vision loss-- lessons from which remain relevant today.

Session Objectives

- Participants will gain a historical perspective on innovations in the rehabilitation field as an aid to guiding decision-making going forward.
- Participants will learn how persistence brings about hope.
- Participants will gain a renewed appreciation of the criticality of support systems in becoming a change agent.

1:15 to 2:00 pm EST

FAER Awards and Scholarships

Followed by mix and mingle; bring your own lunch and network.

Presenter Biographies

Karla Antonelli



Karla is a Research Scientist at the National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision. Her doctorate in cognitive science from Mississippi State University included study on human factors design and usability. As a principal investigator at the NRTC she has contributed to projects on mentoring, transportation, and transition for people with blindness or low vision.

Erika Fundelius



Erika is a Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments and a certified mobility specialist. She is a full-time doctoral student at Florida State University with an emphasis on the self-determination area of ECC and how it is essential for student success and for long-term quality of life. She is also an instructor of students both in the visual disabilities program and within the College of Education.

Leanne Grillot



Ms. Grillot directs the operations of APH's Outreach Services Department, which provides consultation, support, and other services to Ex Officio Trustees, professionals in the field of vision, families of people who are visually impaired, and consumers. Outreach Services links APH with educational practice in the field of vision and promotes sound models of best practice.

Ross Silvers



Ross is the ADA Compliance & Community Officer at the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA). His work at the PSTA focuses on increasing access, ridership and customer satisfaction on PSTA bus, ADA paratransit, Transportation Disadvantaged, and innovative partnerships with taxi, wheelchair van, Lyft and Uber to offer on-demand rides to individuals with disabilities.

Sylvia Stinson-Perez



Sylvia Stinson-Perez is the Chief Programs Officer at the American Foundation for the Blind. She was previously the director of the Independent Living OIB-TAC and the Vision Specialist graduate certificate program at the National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision at MSU and a CEO of the Lighthouse for the Visually Impaired and Blind in Florida. She is a CVRT, with master's degrees in Social Work, Visual Disabilities, and Business Administration. She has over 20 years in the field and is visually impaired.

Joe Strechay



Joe is a consultant and producer for the blindness and entertainment fields. He has been a Co-Executive Producer, Co-Producer and Associate Producer for a large streaming television show. He has supervised services for individuals who are blind in Pennsylvania, and worked in various roles for non-profits and state governments around the services.

Harry Wedewer



Harry is the author of "The Bravest Guy" about his father, Don Wedewer, a leader in the rehabilitation field. Harry is a retired U.S. Navy Commander and served as a Naval Flight Officer on active duty. He is currently an attorney in public service. Harry is a graduate of the Georgetown University Law Center, and The Citadel, The Military College of South Carolina.

Karen Wolffe



Dr. Karen Wolffe manages a private practice as a career counselor and consultant in Austin, Texas. She coordinates content for the World Blind Union's employment resources website, Project Aspiro, consults with organizations and schools worldwide on employability skills training and transition programming for individuals with visual disabilities, and teaches distance education courses. Dr. Wolffe has written extensively and lectured worldwide on the importance of careers and employment, social skills development, self-determination, and transition in the lives of people with visual disabilities.