Greetings,

On behalf of the TAPVI Board members, we look forward to another year of moving our mission forward! We propose to create an even stronger knowledge and leadership presence while upholding the core values and mission of TAPVI. I need your assistance to encourage membership and recruitment efforts for the 2018-2019 year. Please help spread the word to families, students, public/private educators, administrators, higher education faculty, etc. about the benefits of joining TAPVI.

It is such a sincere honor to serve as the 2018-2019 TAPVI President. My goal is to focus on creating an even stronger sense of community within Texas and continue to highlight the hard work and accomplishments that our members achieve on a day-to-day basis. I want to extend an open invitation to our membership to attend our monthly Board meetings via teleconference. We hold these meeting the second Tuesday of the month at 5:30. In addition, we hold face to face meetings bi-annually (typically in Austin at TSBVI) and strive for membership participation. I welcome any suggestions, questions, or comments that will enhance our chapter efforts in moving forward. Please feel free to contact me at any time.

Lastly, I would like to say a huge ‘thank you’ for the dedication and devotion of time and efforts that our Board and membership continually put forth to enhance the field of visual impairments.

Educationally yours,

Beth A. Jones, Ph.D.
Newly Elected TAPVI Board Members

Effective June 30, 2018 the following candidates began their terms in the following positions:

**President: Beth Jones**

Beth Jones, Ph.D. is a tenured, Associate Professor of Special Education in the Department of Psychology, Counseling, and Special Education at Texas A&M University—Commerce (TAMU-C) in Commerce, Texas. Beth earned her B.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies and Master’s in Educational Psychology, with emphases in special education and school counseling from Texas A&M University. Beth earned her doctorate from Louisiana State University in Curriculum and Instruction, with a concentration in special education. At TAMU-C, Beth has taught courses in content area instruction, effective inclusionary practices, and special education law. Beth’s research interests are focused in the areas of home-school collaboration, assistive technology, and visual impairments. Prior to her work at TAMU-C, Beth taught public school for a total of 7 years, with experience in grades K-6 reading/language arts and mathematics resource and inclusive settings. During her public school tenure, Beth served as lead special education teacher for two different districts and was nominated for special education teacher of the year.

**A Message from the President**

Hello, TAPVI Members! My name is Beth Ashby Jones, and I am honored to serve in this role. You may be wondering why I wanted to serve as President for TAPVI. The answer is because my family (father, sister, myself, son, and daughter) has dominant optic nerve atrophy, which has given me first-hand experience with the needs of individuals with visual impairments.

I am anxious to work with everyone as we advocate for individuals with visual impairments through service, leadership, and research. I look forward to meeting you all and encourage you to get involved with our established Family Support Groups or start one in your area! I would love to hear from you should you have any questions, comments, etc. Please feel free to email me at: beth.jones@tamuc.edu

Best,
Beth A. Jones, Ph.D.

**President-Elect/Secretary: Alison Smith**

Decades ago, I thought I had it all figured out – I got my education and my dream job, married a man whom I thought would be a great dad, and I started on my family. I had two daughters and everything was just how I planned it. Then life threw me a few curve balls when I discovered my younger daughter was legally blind, and eventually that she had additional disabilities. Then, my son was born deaf-blind with critical medical problems. These issues taught me how important relationships are for support and information. I learned so much from other parents who had “been there”, and I learned how to be strong again by helping others. Early on, I co-founded two disability support groups, and participated in several more. I was involved in TAPVI’s 2004 beginnings. At every point, my participation in these groups has helped me connect with others for giving and receiving support and information. I have benefited from participating in disability groups of all kinds, but the visual impairment component is the aspect that is closest to my heart .... This is why I’m part of TAPVI.
Treasurer: Linda Hulett

Many people know that I worked in the field of special education for 25 years. What you might not know is that after my son, Robert, was born in 2004 and then diagnosed with a Cortical Visual Impairment in 2005, I chose to specialize in the area of visual impairment for my career. Although I had already been an Educational Diagnostician in Cyfair ISD for seven years, I then became an Educational Diagnostician in Houston ISD who tested only students with visual impairments for the next five years. After that, I worked as a Certified Vision Teacher in Houston ISD for four years. I have gained so much knowledge and experience through my jobs in special education as well as my on the job training as a parent of a child with a visual impairment. It is a priority to me for parents of children with visual impairments to be able to connect with each other to gain access to the services and support that they need.

Past President: Deb Christoph: A Message from the Past-President: Ashley’s Cataract Surgery

My 17 year old daughter, Ashley Christoph has Sticklers and was a micropreemie born at 24.5 weeks, weighing only 14 ounces. She has ROP and is extremely nearsighted myopia. Wednesday, May 2, 2018, she had her eyes dilated as part of a regular eye exam she then had emergency cataract surgery the following Monday, May 7th. When the iris is dilated it will cut off the flow of vitreous fluid from the front to the back of the eye. Because of the shape of Ashley’s eye ball (which is more like an egg with the narrow part at the front) and the thickness of her lens, when the iris tried to go back down to normal size it was caught on the lens causing acute angle closure glaucoma.

This type of glaucoma is not easily diagnosed, especially in a 17 year-old. Usually, an older person in the typical glaucoma age range will go to the movies or another event where it’s very dark, and when they come back outside their eyes cannot return to normal. They begin to have nausea, headaches, vomiting and other symptoms that do not suggest “extreme eye pressure” seem more like flu or food poisoning symptoms. They go a week trying to figure out what’s going on and by the time it’s identified they are blind.

The doctor said she would have developed glaucoma sooner than most anyway (probably early twenties) and had to have had this surgery too. The wonderful side effect besides saving her vision it is it improved so much that she’ll only need a typical eyeglass prescription. Her acuity was -22 in the left eye and -23 in the right improving about -2 or -3 in each eye. Which is better than my vision without glasses.

We’re sort of in shock at the implications of the surgery. She has been disabled due to her visual impairment her entire life - ARDs, IEPs, O & M, a cane and accommodations. Ashley could not ride a bike, see me at 20 yards and was told she could not drive a car. All of that is seemingly going to fall by the wayside. She will need bifocals but she’s okay with that. Ashley can now see the Houston skyline from the beltway. Yea she can see that well now. Am I freaking out? Most definitely, is she? She said she ready to be a typical kid.

Please spread the word about this potential opportunity for children who could have a similar situation to Ashley’s (micropreemie with ROP and/or Stickler’s - for Ashley it’s sort of a chicken/egg thingy - not sure which came first or which one is the main cause of her myopia). Please have other potential candidates talk to their ophthalmologist.
September 2018
Newsletter

Spotlight on New Members

Elaine Sveen, Parent/Professional, DFW area
Nicole Johnson, Parent, Houston
Laranda Adams, Parent/DFW area

Morgan Rios, Parent, Corpus Christi
Deanne Goen, Professional, ESC 17
Kalee Lundry, Parent, Region 12

We are glad to have you!!!
Committee Service
The TAPVI Board has the following committees on which membership may serve:

- Fundraising
- Marketing/Website
- Conferences/Scholarships
- Newsletter
- Membership

*Please email Beth Jones, beth.jones@tamuc.edu, if you are interested in committee service. A service letter can be provided upon request.

FAMILY SUPPORT GROUPS (AFFILIATES):
In addition, please see the list of established Family Support Groups around the state.

- Austin (Reg. 12 & 13) Central
- San Antonio (Reg. 20)
- Ft. Worth (Reg. 11) Metroplex
- Houston - TAPVI is partnering with Creating with Blind Abandon (CBA). Their contact is Katherine Trimm, creatingwithblindabandon@gmail.com.

If you do not find a group in your area and would like to inquire about establishing one, please email Beth Jones, President, at beth.jones@tamuc.edu. We need both parent leaders for Affiliate family Support Groups and liaisons at Education Service Centers around the state.

Connect with us on Facebook:
Please like our page on Facebook to receive any information we pass on to our membership (i.e. legal updates, etc.), to participate in membership votes, and to post questions/offer input to others around the state. Our page can be found at:

https://www.facebook.com/groups/TAPVI/

How can you get plugged in?
Connect with us on Facebook:
Please like our page on Facebook to receive any information we pass on to our membership (i.e. legal updates, etc.), to participate in membership votes, and to post questions/offer input to others around the state. Our page can be found at:

https://www.facebook.com/groups/TAPVI/

Conference Scheduler/Important Dates

October 27, 2018
Sports Extravaganza
Irving, TX

November 1–3, 2018
Southwest Orientation & Mobility Association Conference
TSBVI and Region 13 ESC

November 29–December 2, 2018
Game of Life: Middle School Transition
Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired,
Austin, Texas

January 30–February 2, 2019
Council for Exceptional Children
Indianapolis, IN

March 28–29, 2019
Texas Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired Annual Conference
San Antonio, TX

February 21–23, 2019
2019 Texas Symposium on DeafBlindness Preconference and Conference
Austin Marriott North,
Round Rock, TX
Current Topics/Legislative Updates

Endrew v. Douglas County, March 2017

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of children with disabilities by stating that IDEA demands IEPs and educational programs tailored to the child’s unique needs. The Court proclaimed, “The IEP must aim to enable the child to make progress. After all, the essential function of an IEP is to set out a plan for pursuing academic and functional advancement.” Furthermore, being “fully integrated” and “making progress in the general education curriculum” are the keys. If a child is not fully integrated, the focus shifts even more to the “unique circumstances of the child.” Please see this link for more information: http://www.wrightslaw.com/law/art/endrew.douglas.scotus.analysis.htm

Marrakesh Treaty Passed by U.S. Senate

The Marrakesh Treaty creates a copyright exemption for domestic use of accessible literary and printed musical works. The treaty would allow for the exportation and importation of accessible items formatted as audio books, in Braille, and large print. People who are blind or visually impaired would be able to import works to or from more than 30 countries that are part of the treaty. Before the U.S. can become a participating member in the sharing of accessible books, the Act must be passed by the U.S. House of Representatives. Please see this link for more information: http://www.fredshead.info/2018/07/aph-applauds-passing-of-marrakesh.html

TIPS

Sight Savers

Sight Savers America is a unique team working to support low vision students. If a student is approved in the application process, they will purchase recommended low vision equipment for a student to use in their home completely free of charge for qualifying families.

They target students, ages 4-19, who may benefit from having a portable electronic video magnifier (CCTV) in their home. The electronic video magnifier is the student’s to keep for life. They are committed to repairing or replacing the EVM until the student is 19 years old. For the Dallas/Ft. Worth area, please note their next funding application cycle may be in 2019. It is all based upon grant funding.

A critical step is to work with your teacher of students with visual impairments in the application process and discuss what is needed. If your child has received a low vision evaluation and various devices prescribed for school, please include it with the application. A current (within three years) eye report is required.

For Dallas and Ft. Worth area families when distributing the equipment, they will host a training clinic at the Dallas Low Vision Clinic where the student and at least one parent/guardian must come to the clinic location and be trained on all of the functions of the equipment.

Kati Moore Fernekes is the Sight Savers America contact person. Her contact information is kmoore@sightsaversamerica.org, phone 205-942-2627, ext 231 and Fax 205-942-5201. For more educational information, contact Mary Ann Siller, teacher of students with visual impairments in Richardson ISD.
AVIT Listserve

www.alliancevitexans.org

You are invited to join the AVIT Alert Network. AVIT uses a Group/Listserve to disseminate information related to AVIT and its mission, including meeting announcements, AVIT Minutes, activities, policy-making, etc. We welcome your participation. This is a private listserve. To join, contact Mary Ann Siller, Treasurer, at dmasiller@sbcglobal.net.

This listserv is the primary means of updating the blindness and low vision community about legislation and policy issues concerning children and adults with visual impairments, blindness, and deafblindness in Texas. AVIT’s force and voice depends on member organizations that define important issues. TAPVI members and friends are important community members, and AVIT will continue to benefit from your participation.

As a statewide nonprofit coalition since 1992, we represent 29 agencies and organizations of and for people with visual impairment. AVIT assists in bringing knowledge and leadership to policy programming that will benefit Texas’ adults with visual impairments and children, birth through twenty-one, who are blind or have low vision. AVIT has been included as a stakeholder in important statewide meetings through the years, along with TWC, HHSC, TEA, TSBVI, and the state legislature.

AVIT is the only statewide coalition that represents all ages of people with visual impairments that is active in the U.S. We hold a special history to bring organizations together to talk from one streamlined voice. This is done by a 100% approval process through the proposal. We speak on behalf of people who are blind or have low vision.

We hold quarterly meetings in Austin and offer a free conference line for members and all concerned individuals. Once you are part of the Alert Network, you will receive timely messages about AVIT and upcoming meetings.

Christal Vision

Christal Vision is dedicated to improving the lives of blind and visually impaired individuals through adaptive technology. Our main office is in San Antonio, Texas although we serve the entire state of Texas. We sell equipment to schools, Regional Service Centers, the Veteran’s Administration, Texas Workforce Solutions and individuals. We carry a wide variety of products such as refreshable braille displays, braille embossers, desktop video magnifiers, hand-held video magnifiers and screen reading and magnification software. Christal Vision has representatives throughout the state of Texas. Please call the home office for a representative near you. Our number is (800) 299-0700.

Special thanks to our departing Board Members

Much appreciation and gratitude for the time, service, and dedication that was put forth to ensure and uphold TAPVI and its mission to the following individuals! You have been instrumental to the TAPVI Board. Many thanks!

Karen Whitty, 2016–2017 TAPVI President, Deb Christoph, 2017–2018 TAPVI President

and Liz Eagan, Board Member at Large