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OFFICERS, 2023

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December 2023

Dear Friends:

It is hard to believe that as of January 1st, I become USSAAC's *Past-President*! It has been an honor and a privilege to serve. The end of the calendar year is a traditional time for reflection, and here are just *some* of the highlights from the past two years (not in any particular order):

- Six or more webinars held (and archived) EACH year, including ASHA CEUs;
- Opportunities to connect in person (at ATIA, Closing the Gap, or ISAAC Cancun) or virtually, at least once a year;
- Establishment of TWO mini-grant programs available to members, one related to emergency preparedness (3 awarded) and one on Amplifying AAC Voices (2 awarded, 2 currently in review);
- Establishment of two new committees: Research and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access (DEIA);
- Launch of USSAAC's Speaker Connection which in 2023 saw 31 registered speakers from 25 different states who had 60 engagements (<u>https://speaker.ussaac.org</u>);
- Presentations on USSAAC's work on emergency preparedness and other topics at international (ISAAC Cancun) and national (AAC in the Cloud; ASHA; Closing the Gap) conferences;
- Launch of USSAAC Member Finder (https://finder.ussaac.org)
- Recruitment of a new SpeakUp! Editor-in-Chief, resulting in the publication of more than 15 SpeakUp! blog entries, many by people who use AAC (be sure to check out the series on AAC Legends and Leaders, too);
- Videos of and by AAC users at USSAAC YouTube to increase awareness;
- Open access publication: Emergency and Disaster Preparedness for Individuals Who Use Augmentative and Alternative Communication: A Pilot Study on Supported Planning Using a Toolkit; Andrea Barton-Hulsey, Miriam C. Boesch, Yoosun Chung, Tina Caswell, Amy Miller Sonntag and Wendy Quach (2023); <u>https://doi.org/10.1044/2023_AJSLP-23-00086</u>;
- Re-do of the USSAAC website and branding underway; and
- A "President's Letter" from me every month since January 2022!

My list of people and companies to thank for these accomplishments is long! Our 2023 Sponsors included SmartBox, TobiiDynavox, PRC Saltillo, The Bridge School and Attainment; their sponsorship provided resources to fund many of the listed accomplishments. (Thanks to SmartBox, TobiiDynavox, PRC Saltillo, Attainment and Lingraphica for their pledged 2024 support!).

My deep appreciation to everyone who has served/continues to serve on the USSAAC Board of Directors, as committee chairs or committee members. Special thanks to Miriam Boesch and Yoosun Chung who stepped up to represent USSAAC in assuring a successful ISAAC Cancun! These volunteers help make USSAAC a thriving and growing organization, and one of ISAAC's outstanding chapters!

Election results

I am thrilled to announce the results of our recent election and our new board members for 2024! Welcome to Tracy Rackensperger who is "promoted" to President, Patrick Regan, President-Elect, Jennifer Bergstrom, VP of Finance, and Betsy Caporale, returning for her second term as Director, Professional Affairs. Our sincere thanks to outgoing officers Sarah Blackstone and Yoosun Chung who are leaving the Board of Directors after many years of service in various capacities.

Membership Drive 2024 Is Open!

Don't procrastinate – renew your USSAAC membership today! After you sign in at ISAAC – Members Only (isaac-online.org) you can find the downloadable renewal form for printing as well as the link to the online renewal form in the left hand navigation bar. Having difficulty? Consult the FAQs at https://isaac-online.freshdesk.com/a/solutions/articles/35000142525 Note: if you renewed for TWO years last year, you will not see that link at all! Don't remember if you renewed for two years or not? Check your profile on finder.ussaac.org - that will tell you when you are paid up through (and your ISAAC ID, that you will also need for renewing). Know someone who isn't YET a member, but should be? Remind them they can join today and get a "bonus" month (the remainder of 2023) at no extra cost! Remember to renew today so you don't miss a single day of USSAAC/ISAAC benefits!

Member Benefits

New benefit for 2024! ISAAC International and its partner ATAAC are offering ISAAC members who refer a new member **free attendance to the online conference**. The new ISAAC member will also receive free registration to the online conference! The ATAAC conference, focusing on assistive technology and communication, will be held in Zagreb, Croatia, October 23-24, 2024. The conference can be attended in person or online at <u>www.ataac.eu</u>. Learn more at https://isaac-online.org/english/about-isaac/members/members/membership/

As you know, USSAAC members receive the webinar registration links "early" (before they are advertised on social media). Register **today** for our January 17 webinar by Dr. Alyssa Hillary Zisk, as seats are limited. During this presentation "Part Time AAC Use: What Does it Mean and Why Does it Matter?" Dr. Zisk will define intermittent, unreliable, and insufficient speech, along with part-time AAC use. They will provide examples of these types of speech, including from their own experiences as a mostly speaking Autistic adult, and explain their importance in the context of autistic communication. They will share how part-time AAC use can support people with these speech experiences. Finally, Alyssa will discuss AAC research as a form of selfadvocacy. This is bound to be a popular presentation!

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_XPMHAgaaRimjDP33yrUhUg

ASHA CEUs are offered for USSAAC webinars at no additional cost to members (\$25 to non-members). And of course, USSAAC members can access archived USSAAC (and ISAAC) webinars in the "members only" section of the ISAAC website.

Advocacy

Your assistance is needed! DID YOU KNOW...Medicare will be ending reimbursement for telehealth speech therapy services, including augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) services, at the end of 2024. USSAAC, In conjunction with the Patient-Provider Communication Network (www.patientprovidercommunication.org), is conducting a survey to find out how telehealth is used to provide services to individuals needing AAC. This study has been approved by the University of Iowa Institutional Review Board (#202310450) and is being conducted to gather data to inform policy makers about barriers clinicians, clients and their families face to receiving in-person services and the utilization of telehealth in the provision of AAC services. If you are a provider WE NEED YOU TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY. This is an anonymous survey. Aggregated results will available from USSAAC. For each clinic or private practice, one SLP should complete the survey. https://uiowa.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2sNBSY8qvonTczQ If you are a person or family member of a person who has received remote AAC services, WE NEED YOU TO COMPLETE the online survey at https://uiowa.gualtrics.com/ife/form/SV_bw8zOg6PZmREyjA about your experiences

with receiving AAC services via telehealth.

On behalf of the USSAAC Board of Directors, my sincere wishes for a wonderful holiday season and all the best in 2024!

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Amy S. Goldman, President

Calendar Re-Cap

January 17, 2024: 7:00 – 8:00 PM Eastern. USSAAC Webinar: Part Time AAC Use: What Does it Mean and Why Does it Matter?

January 25-27, 2024: Assistive Technology Industry Association, Orlando, FL

January 26, 2024: 6:00 – 6:45 PM. USSAAC Meet-up at ATIA, Miami Meeting Room

February 28, 2024: 7:00 – 8:00 PM Eastern. USSAAC Webinar: Let's Talk about...Camp!

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Follow ISAAC at https://www.facebook.com/ISAACinternational