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AAC and their families
Alison Pentland, Secretary

February, 2022

Dear Friends:

I was delighted to greet almost two dozen members and prospective members in person at ATIA last month. One of highlights of the meeting was the drawing for a free ATIA 2023 registration from the pool of "early birds" who joined or renewed by December 31, 2021. Congratulations to our winner, Heather Miller Schwartz! Stay tuned for information about a virtual membership meeting in the Spring. Another way to stay up-to-date on USSAAC activities is to follow us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/ussaac1>

By now you have probably heard the sad news of the passing of David Beukelman in early February, a huge loss to our AAC Community. As Sarah Blackstone wrote, on behalf of USSAAC's Board of Directors, "Dave was a founder of USSAAC in 1991. Since the 1970s he has written prolifically, worked with people who use AAC, mentored students who are now leaders in the field, conducted research and led development activities, and raised a family with his dear wife Helen. He was humble but would brag about her, their children, grandchildren, and his students. Dave was a kind, committed and gentle man of great integrity and vision. Michael Williams captured it best when he texted "his spirit lives on in ALL of us".

USSAAC has many active committees doing wonderful things to support people who use AAC, their families, and of course, our members. Learn more about our standing committees at [Committees - USSAAC](#) and join one (or more) today! I will be featuring the work of these committees in this and future letters.

Committee highlight: Education Committee (Chair: Betsy Caporale, USSAAC Director Professional Affairs; members Stephanie Meehan, Wendy Quach, Richard Hurtig, Gretchen Cole-Lade). The Education Committee is already developing a robust schedule of webinars! As a reminder, ASHA CEUs are FREE to members (and \$25 to non-members). Our first webinar of 2022 will be on March 23, 2022 at 7 PM eastern. The presenter, Ann England, MS CCC will describe the work in California to scale the implementation of the identified 28 evidence-based practices for autism that includes AAC. Register today at https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_d7TXEpttS9qhi7r2CIHCew (members are given early registration information; seats are limited).

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In addition, hold April 27, 2022 for a USSAAC webinar, “Exploring AAC Access to Swearing, Expletives, and Slang” – a topic of high interest!

Help wanted! USSAAC is looking for an “editor-in-chief” for our SpeakUp! blog. Duties include recruiting bloggers, distributing draft blogs to editors for review, corresponding with bloggers and distributing the approved blog for posting. Our thanks to outgoing editor Christina Byun.

As you know, USSAAC has an active Disaster Relief Committee, co-chaired by Liz Begley and Sarah Blackstone. USSAAC signed on to the written testimony submitted to the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management by the Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Planning and the World Institute on Disability on [FEMA’s Priorities for 2022: Stakeholder Perspectives](#).

USSAAC signed on to an important piece of proposed legislation in Virginia, HB 1047. Unfortunately the bill was defeated, but if passed it would have done the following: ensures a student who needs or uses AAC cannot be denied access to regular classrooms or age-appropriate academic instruction on the basis that the student needs support with AAC; prevents the use of IQ scores to decide whether the student can be provided with AAC at school; and ensures school staff are provided timely training in how to support a student’s use of AAC, and in how to design instruction to accommodate their unique communication access needs.

Did you know? USSAAC is a founding member of the North American Alliance for Communication Access. The NAACA partnership includes leaders from CATIC in Mexico, the United States Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (USSAAC) Board of Directors, and Communication Disability Access Canada (CDAC) in Canada. Updates to follow <https://www.facebook.com/North-American-Alliance-for-Communication-Access-NAACA-104524812009078>

A final reminder: Join /renew today at [Membership - USSAAC](#).

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy S. Goldman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Amy S. Goldman, President