

DIRECTORS, 2023

Lewis Golinker, Advocacy
Alison Pentland, Public Information

Beth Christensen, Membership

Betsy Caporale, Education

Carole Zangari, ISAAC Liaison

**OFFICERS, 2023**

Amy Goldman, President
Tracy Rackensperger,
President-Elect
Yoo Sun Chung, Past
President
Sarah Blackstone, VP
Finance
Tina Moreno, VP People
who use AAC and their
families
Amy Sonntag, Secretary

September 2023

Dear Friends:

USSAAC is busy! I hope you read this issue of the "President's Newsletter" – it is chock full of information and news about YOUR organization and the volunteers who help keep us growing. As always, let me know if there's other news you'd like to hear about (president@ussaac.org).

Development Committee

Mini grants (up to \$1000) to amplify the voices of AAC users are offered through USSAAC's Development Committee. Congratulations to Hannah Foley and Ellyn McNamara on their approved mini-grant proposal "Paving the Path through Partnership". Their project is designed to prepare future educators with AAC information, and pairs special education students with people who use AAC ("AAC experts") who will share their knowledge, lived experience and expertise. A second submission is currently under review. To request a copy of the application form, contact president@ussaac.org.

Speaker Connection

USSAAC mourns the sudden, unexpected passing of Speaker Connection member Meggin Nunamaker. Throughout her time as a Speaker Connection speaker, Meggin presented to many different audiences for webinars, conferences, and university classes. Meggin told us about the impact of Speaker Connection, "After years of being told I can't do anything for paid work, since I joined the Speaker Connection, I have not felt so useful in years. It gives me the feeling that I have a purpose. Many people that know me have noticed a good change in me." It is a small comfort to know that Meggin felt this. We hope she also knew how much she instilled purpose in others. (Read Meggin's SpeakUp! blog from August 2023 at [How Does That Make You Feel? Examining Emotional Effects of AAC Usage - USSAAC](#))

Disaster Relief Committee

USSAAC's Disaster Relief Committee (DRC) connected with the University of Hawaii to find the 20+ AAC users known to them on Maui. While most people affected by the recent disastrous fires there are still dealing with basic needs like shelter, the DRC stands ready to help in the event AAC devices were lost or damaged.

USSAAC continues to participate in the weekly calls hosted by the Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies ([The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies](#)), a multi-agency collaboration focused on current and emerging disasters and people with disabilities. Our presence helps highlight issues regarding people with communication disabilities in emergencies and disasters.

Did you miss our September 20 webinar by Mariesa Rang and Sharon Mankey, "The 411 on Training 911 Responders"? It will be posted at [ISAAC – Archived Webinars for Members Only \(isaac-online.org\)](#) in the near future. In addition, you may want to check out the recently published article by Rang, Mankey and Dirette, "The Effect of a Specialized Training Program on the Knowledge of First Responders about People with Communication Disabilities", https://pubs.asha.org/doi/abs/10.1044/2023_PERSP-23-00009

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access (DEIA) Committee

USSAAC has created a new ad hoc committee to address this important topic. Tracy Rackensberg and Yoosun Chung will serve as co-chairs and welcome any USSAAC members interested in the topic (contact deia@ussaac.org) to join them. We anticipate one of the primary functions of this committee will be to maintain a repository of relevant resources that will be located at ussaac.org.

Member Finder

WHAAT! You haven't made your member profile YET?! Once we hit 100 (less than a third of our total membership!), all members with profiles at [Member Finder \(USSAAC\)](#) will be entered in a drawing for a \$25.00 gift card (Amazon or Starbucks). It just takes a minute – you don't even need to know your ISAAC number (just be sure to use the email on record with ISAAC).

Education Committee

Thanks to Betsy Caporale, Director, Professional Affairs, ASHA CEUs earned by ISAAC Cancun attendees have been submitted!

The Education Committee has an interesting line-up of webinars for the fall. October is Disability Employment Month (as well as AAC Awareness Month). Our presenters Leslie Kat Thornton and Julie Kegley on October 18, 2023 7:00 PM – 8:00 PM eastern will discuss SSI (Social Security Income) and SSDI (Social Security Disability Income) benefits and barriers to employment for AAC Users. Register for this webinar at https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_-hGqfHiITq-urDBE45UKyw

On November 8, 2023 7:00 PM – 8:00 PM eastern Dr. Mili Mathew reminds us that AAC includes "unaided" strategies and will speak about "Re-thinking the Role of Hand Gestures During Communication". Register at https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_x7AwJ9D7RYOGW42BA6aMpQ#/registration

USSAAC members receive the webinar registration links “early” (before they are advertised on social media) so sign up today as seats are limited. 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.

Public Information/Speak Up!

Alison Pentland (Director, Public Information) and Deirdre Galvin-McLaughlin (Editor, SpeakUp!) have been working hard laying the groundwork for USSAAC’s web “re-do”. This is a HUGE project and is taking longer than we hoped, but watch for our new colors and styles next month!

Learn your AAC history and read the SpeakUp! interview with Dr. Gregg Vanderheiden published earlier this month, one in our series on AAC Leaders and Legends at <https://tinyurl.com/mtzmpx3p>. And most recently, Thanh Diep shares her personal experience with obtaining insurance funding for a new SGD at <https://tinyurl.com/4zwzpejh>

Keeping in Touch

Attending Closing the Gap? Look for USSAAC members sporting their yellow badge ribbons (ask member Mike Hipple for yours!), and join Mike and others at the in-person meet-up on Wednesday, October 11 at 5:30, Directors Row.

Save the date! We will host a virtual opportunity for USSAAC members to gather and chat on November 1, 2023 at 8:00 pm eastern (5:00 pm pacific). Agenda and link to follow.

Happy AAC Awareness Month

October is AAC Awareness Month! This year’s theme from ISAAC International is “Say What?” Learn more about the 2023 celebration at [ISAAC – AAC Awareness \(isaac-online.org\)](https://isaac-online.org). FYI, many companies offer discounts and sales in October; we will post these on social media as we learn about them. How will YOU celebrate?

Best wishes,

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

Amy S. Goldman, President

Calendar Re-Cap

September 30, 2023 (on or about): USSAAC nominations opens for the following officers: President-Elect; Vice President, Finance; Director, Professional Affairs.

September 30, 2023: Deadline to apply for the Prentke Distinguished Lecture Award [ATIA 2024 Prentke AAC Distinguished Lecture Call for Nominations - Assistive Technology Industry Association](#)

October 2023: AAC Awareness Month

October 2, 2023: ATIA "Early Bird" Registration closes [Registration Information - Assistive Technology Industry Association \(atia.org\)](#)

October 2, 2023: Deadline to apply for [The McLean-Yoder Award for Professional Excellence \(asha.org\)](#) from the National Joint Committee for the Communication Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities ("NJC") honoring a team that exemplifies high quality communication services to individuals with severe communication disabilities.

October 11-13, 2023: Closing the Gap, Minneapolis, MN.

October 11, 2023: 5:30 – 6:30 PM. USSAAC Meet-up at Closing the Gap, Directors Row

October 18, 2023: 7:00 Eastern. USSAAC Webinar, https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_hGqfHilTq-urDBE45UKyw

November 1, 2023: 8:00 Eastern. USSAAC Virtual Membership Meeting (more info to follow)

November 8, 2023: 7:00 Eastern. USSAAC Webinar, https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_x7AwJ9D7RYOGW42BA6aMpQ#/registration

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

Stay up-to-date on USSAAC activities through social media - Follow, like, comment and share at <https://www.facebook.com/ussaac1>

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