

Message from the ISAAC President

Tracy Shepherd

My first ISAAC Communicator as President and I am beyond thrilled to be working with all of you over the coming two years given all the exciting events and projects that are being planned.

Social media is such a powerful tool, and when I announced the first day of my Presidency, the support and encouragement I received worldwide was absolutely heartwarming. Here is the post and the photo for those who would like a laugh!

“Today is an important day for me. I am now the President of [ISAAC International](#). What a journey it has been since my first ISAAC conference in 1992 in Philly. I joined this incredible organization as a new grad presenting my thesis work about Blissymbolics. Over the years I have been lucky enough to attend, present and even organize ISAAC conferences. More importantly, I have met so many fantastic people from around the world who continue to enrich my life. It is with great joy (and a little apprehension)

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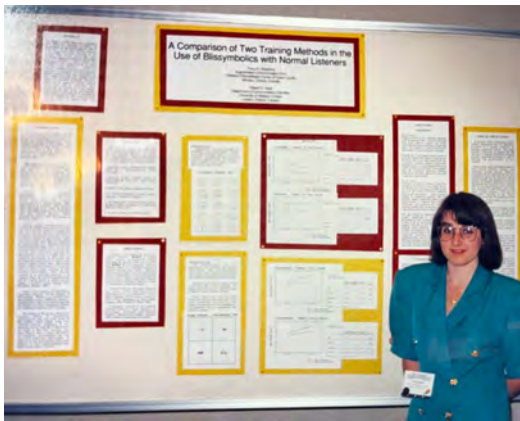
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that I move into this important position and it is my hope that in these next two years we will continue the amazing work of ISAAC together. Wish me luck.”



Please also feel free to read more in my interview with Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital available [here](#).

Enough about me... what has ISAAC been up to?

AAC Awareness Month in October saw our first discussion series, “Show Your Voice,” with global participation. This event could not have happened without the work and dedication of our moderators who literally dropped everything to pull together three amazing and essential panel discussions:

B-J Dee-Price of Australia moderated a panel called, “Show Me YOUR AAC Sensitivity” and “I’ll Show You My Voice” – Communication in Health Care Settings. This topic illustrated how much work remains to inform and educate within health care settings about AAC. Panelists for this conversation included: Sharon Carthew, Jemma Anderson, Sheridan Forster, Kevin Williams, Max Price, Liam Goldfinch, Carolyn Harris, and Kate Turpin.

Kathy Howery from Canada and her panel discussed “Dis/Ableism in AAC?! What are you talking about?” This conversation created a space for all involved to learn together and open our minds to how we can all do better. Thank you to panelist Karen Congram, Tracy Rackensperger, India Ochs, Gayle Porter, and Nicola Gorge.

Sarah Blackstone (USA) curated a group of leaders to discuss, “Communicating in Times of Crisis: From the front lines of disasters, conflicts and pandemics.” These days we all need to support one other and this group shared so many ideas and resources. Our appreciation to Liz Begley, Stephanie Ekis, Sobha George, Mara Hernandez, David Niemeijer, and Alina Smyczek.

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ISAAC members, please take a listen to these conversations on the Members Only section of the ISAAC website [here](#). They truly are remarkable, and I feel enriched for having participated. I hope to hear more on these topics at our upcoming ISAAC Conference Cancún in July.

Looking ahead, ISAAC is gearing up with three major initiatives, including a website review and redevelopment and back-to-back in-person conferences Cancún, Mexico in 2023 and Rome, Italy in 2024. Our ISAAC family has not been together in person since we met on the Gold Coast, Australia in 2018, and it is long overdue to sit together, share ideas, develop new partnerships and perhaps enjoy a beverage (not to mention the dancing!).

The success of the ISAAC Connect virtual event in 2021 provided much learning on the virtual aspects of events. Our next challenge is to incorporate that learning into providing quality hybrid approaches which we will hear more about as the conference planning progresses.

Other changes include welcoming new Editors Rose Sevcik and Mary Ann Ronski. The AAC Journal is in good hands moving forward. I would also like to express our gratitude to our outgoing editors for all the time and effort they contributed to ensuring our journal continued to be a key contribution to the field of AAC worldwide. Thanks so much to Rajinder Koul and Ralph Schlosser.

Lastly, ISAAC held a virtual Council Meeting in September where our 2022 – 2025 Strategic Plan was completed and it can be found [here](#). We have lofty plans and all ISAAC members and Chapters can share accomplishments over the coming months to help up realize the goals we have set out.

As the calendar year comes to an end, I would like to offer my best wishes to all of you. Many of us will be taking a bit of a break to “recharge our batteries” and to celebrate various holidays with family and friends. Stay well and I look forward to a productive and joyful 2023.

[Tracy Shepherd](#)

ISAAC President

From the Executive Director



Franklin Smith

Welcome to the December 2022 edition of The ISAAC Communicator.

As the final issue of The Communicator for the year, this is naturally the time when I look back at the year in its entirety, as a means of ensuring that not only do the operations of ISAAC continue to closely link to our governance imperatives, but that as an organization we are always focused on providing the best possible ongoing support to all of our global AAC stakeholders.

2022 was both a challenging and exciting year. Just when we thought, as 2021 was ending, that the global COVID pandemic was abating and 2022 would be the year we could present an in-person Conference Cancún, the increased transmissibility of the Omicron variant of COVID made those plans impossible, requiring us to postpone one more time to 2023.

As you will see on [page 7](#), plans for Conference Cancún are now in “high gear”!

ISAAC was able to achieve many successes in other areas during the year. Our Executive Board (EB) members were able to travel to Toronto this past July, to hold our by-law mandated once yearly in-person EB meeting. The EB and key staff were able to successfully and effectively plan governance and operational achievements over the course of the coming few years, including our latest strategic plan, Conference Roma in 2024, our new website, and other critical aspects of the organization.

Looking back at the year also would not be complete without recognizing the tremendous successes of our AAC Editors, Ralf Schlosser and Rajinder Koul. Ralf and Rajinder were a highly effective team, and on behalf of the entire organization, I would like to thank them once again for their dedication and excellence with respect to the AAC journal. We are thrilled to be welcoming MaryAnn Ronski and Rose Sevcik as our next AAC journal editors, and we here at ISAAC International are looking forward to their coming term as editors, and in collaborating with them directly on social media and communications on behalf of the journal, in conjunction with our publishers, Taylor & Francis.

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From the Executive Director ...continued



ISAAC Membership 2023

Membership renewal notification emails have already been sent to all ISAAC-Australia, ISAAC-Canada, ISAAC-US (USSAAC), and ISAAC International members.

As in previous years, these members can make use of our [online membership portal](#) to renew an existing membership, or take out a new membership. The ISAAC office will be sending out membership renewal reminders as well, later this month and into January and February of 2023 as well.

Specific membership renewal information is available on the ISAAC website for each of the above as follows:

ISAAC-Australia: [2023 Membership Form](#)

ISAAC-Canada: [2023 Membership Form](#)

ISAAC-US (USSAAC): [2023 Membership Form](#)

ISAAC International (English): [2023 Membership Form](#)

ISAAC Internacional (Español): [2023 Membership Form](#)

2022 Special Meeting of the ISAAC Council

The ISAAC Council held its 2022 Special Meeting on Friday, September 23rd, 2022, beginning at 11:00 am (11:00h) Toronto time.

At that meeting, among other actions, the Council received the [2021 audited financial statements for ISAAC](#) (posted in the Members Only area), as well as the [2022-2025 version of the ISAAC Strategic Plan](#).

From an operational perspective, having Council buy-in to both these critical organizational deliverables ensures that we will be able to meet our operational goals, consistent with approved governance requirements.

On behalf of the ISAAC staff, I would like to thank the Council for their investment in these important governance aspects of the organization, which are key to ensuring our continued operational success!

The ISAAC Council looks forward to holding its next meeting, the 2023 ISAAC Council Meeting, next year in Cancún, México, during Conference Cancún. An official meeting notification, including the date, time, and specific location will be released next year, in accordance with the ISAAC by-laws.

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From the Executive Director ...continued



ISAAC International Website Redevelopment

As announced in the March 2022 issue of The Communicator, ISAAC International has embarked on a website redevelopment project.

We are now actively working with our external web design company to completely re-design the ISAAC International website, ensuring that web accessibility remains a key driver in our design efforts. We also plan on ensuring that the website experience we present is one that can be tailored to suit the needs of our many stakeholders. We look forward to providing our stakeholders with more information (including visuals) about this in the new year.

I would like to offer a tremendous vote of thanks to all of ISAAC's volunteers around the

Messages from ISAAC's President and Executive Director are available in French, Italian, and Portuguese translation on our [website](#).

world, for ensuring that our organization is able to effectively meet the many challenges facing us all, in different parts of the world. An especially hearty thank you goes to our amazing Council and Executive Board, for their commitment and tireless efforts on behalf of the organization.

Finally, I would like to extend my appreciation and recognition to the entire ISAAC staff team, based in numerous different locations throughout Canada, for their efforts, ingenuity, hard work, dedication, and good humour, all directed towards a single goal -- ensuring that our stakeholders and the field of AAC are well represented and supported globally.

As always, I welcome your thoughts and feedback. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly, at franklin@isaac-online.org, should you require any further information or assistance.

Regards and thanks,

[Franklin Smith](#)

ISAAC Executive Director

ISAAC Conferences



2023 and 2024 are going to be very special years for ISAAC International, and our stakeholders around the world.

For the first time in our organization's history, we are planning on holding two in-person conferences in two successive years. Conference Cancún planning is proceeding for 2023. Conference Rome (Roma), will be presented the following year, 2024, with precise dates still to be announced.

The ISAAC EB is committed to returning the organization to an even year biennial conference cycle, interrupted as a result of the global pandemic. As an organization, we will be able to meet this challenge, given the significant conference management experience we have gained since bringing primary responsibility for conference management in-house, beginning with Lisbon in 2014.



Conference Cancún

The Conference Cancún leadership team continues its work towards presenting our much anticipated in-person conference next year, July 24-27, 2023 (main conference), in Cancún, México.

The [Conference Cancún Call for Papers](#) has now closed, and ISAAC is thrilled with the nearly 400 proposals submitted, which are now being reviewed. ISAAC has committed to releasing acceptance notifications by February 28, 2023 (see the [Conference Cancún Abstract Submission Guidelines](#)).

We are also now heavily engaged with all of our local service providers, including the conference centre, hotels, and others, in order to make next year's conference a fun, safe, and enjoyable experience.

The **Conference Cancún online registration system is [open and available](#)** for registrations, and we look forward to finally welcoming the world to the 19th Biennial Conference of ISAAC next year in beautiful (and sunny) Cancún, México!

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ISAAC Conferences

Conference Rome (Roma)

ISAAC International recently released a Request for Proposal (RFP) to secure the services of a professional conference organizing company (PCO), to assist in the management and presentation of Conference Roma in 2024.

In total, five (5) excellent RFP responses were received, two from companies based in Canada, two from Italy, and one from the United States. The ISAAC Conference Roma selection team (consisting of six individuals, each with significant ISAAC conference history) reviewed and scored each RFP response, on the basis of 13 individual ranking criteria. Total weighted average scores were generated for each submission, and the team met individually with the two top candidates.

Based on this, we are thrilled to announce that ISAAC will now move to the next step in the process, which is the formalization of a service contract, with the winning proponent, Gruppo Symposia, based in



Rome, Italy. This company already possesses strong knowledge about ISAAC and our stakeholders, having already worked with our ISAAC-Italy chapter in the organizing of a number of local/national events there.

We look forward to a positive collaboration with Gruppo Symposia and ISAAC-Italy in the presentation of Conference Roma!

Be sure to keep up to date with the latest on Conference Roma on the ISAAC site [here](#).

We hope to see you there!

AAC Awareness Month



AAC Awareness Month this past October was a huge success!

Whether it was through telling us how you show your voice through the #AACAware22 hashtag on social media or participating in our “Show Your Voice” Discussion Series, the global AAC community came out to spread AAC awareness in October.

Show Your Voice Discussion Series

On October 26, ISAAC hosted a day of lively and engaging panel discussions about AAC planned by ISAAC’s LEAD Committee. It was a truly global experience as we explored topics important to AAC communities around the world. The discussions were moderated by AAC community experts from Canada, the US, Europe and Australasia.

The panel sessions included:

- 1: Dis/Ableism in AAC?! What are you talking about?** [ISAAC members can watch the recording here.](#)
- 2: “Show Me YOUR AAC Sensitivity” and “I’ll Show You My Voice” – Communication in Health Care Settings.** [ISAAC members can watch the recording here.](#)
- 3: Communicating in Times of Crisis: From the front lines of disasters, conflicts and pandemics.** [ISAAC members can watch the recording here.](#)
- 4. “Show Your Voice” People Who Use AAC Open Discussion.**

Bruce Baker Global Initiative Award Announcement

During the “Show Your Voice” Discussion Series, PRC-Salttillo CEO Dave Hershberger announced the recipients of the inaugural Bruce Baker Global Initiative Award.

The winners are announced in this [video announcement](#)! Congratulations!

News

Communication Matters



Communication
Matters
more than just talking



Communication Matters International AAC Conference 2022

The Communication Matters annual [International AAC Conference](#) took place at the University of Leeds from 11-13th September 2022.

Over the course of two and a half days, participants enjoyed a diverse programme of presentations, posters and an extensive exhibition from AAC supplier companies.

In recent years we have seen attendees from outside the UK and this year was no exception with presenters and delegates from 14 other countries - Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, South Africa, Sweden and the United States - making this a truly International Conference. We were delighted to welcome all delegates including the 40% who were first-time attendees.

We were successful in gaining grant funding to subsidise places for AAC users, parents,

carers, personal assistants and family members to attend. We were thrilled to have 27 AAC users join us this year with many of them also presenting.



Our opening Keynote Speaker was Richard Cave (left). Richard is a Speech and Language Therapist and PhD candidate. He currently works with the MND Association, providing training and practical support for communication technology and voice banking. He presented an interesting reflection on “The digital divide - how new technology may be increasing the digital divide, and how we can help to reduce it.”



Source: @beth_moulam

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The closing Plenary address was delivered by Beth Moulam. Beth is a high-tech communication aid user who graduated from the University of York in Social Policy, and in 2021 she realised a lifelong dream to become a Paralympian, representing GB in Tokyo at boccia. Beth delivered a moving and inspiring presentation on “Transferring AAC skills into sporting success.”

You can view the full conference programme and download a book of abstracts from our [conference website](#).

The social programme at conference is equally as important as the academic programme giving all delegates the opportunity to catch up with old friends and colleagues and make new connections. This year the theme was ‘Sustainability’ with a ‘Preloved’ fancy dress party. There was excellent food, live music, a pub quiz, a short play, a comedy set, and of course, the traditional CM conference disco. Here’s a snapshot of what you missed!

The next Communication Matters Annual AAC Conference will be held at the

University of Leeds from 10-12th September 2023. So, if you’re not able to make it to ISAAC 2023 in Mexico, you are very welcome to join us in the UK! Registration will open in Feb/March 2023. We look forward to meeting you.



All photographs by the official
Communication Matters Conference
Photographer – Jacob Lowe (Instagram
@wxridplexure)

Receive updates about our events!

Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). If you would like to be added to our mailing list please email

admin@communicationmatters.org.uk.

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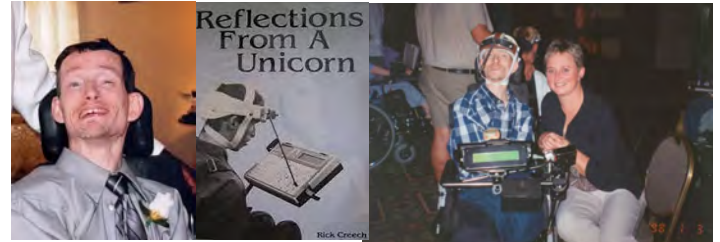
Remembering Rick Creech

By Juan Bornman

Trailblazer. Advocate. Pioneer. Son. Husband. Father of three boys. Grandpa. Licensed minister. Son of God. Family man. Poet. Speech-language therapist. Magna Cum Laude Alumnus from East Carolina University. Board member. Research specialist. AAC user. Unicorn.

I was totally star struck when I met Rick and his devoted wife Yolanda, in August 2003 at the Pittsburgh Employment Conference (PECS). Here in front of me was the man who exemplified how to turn disability into ability. Rick started using a speech generating device (the Handivoice) in the early 80's making him one of the first (the first?) augmented users. As a young speech therapist, the poems from his book *Reflections from a Unicorn* made a deep and lasting impression on me and dare I say countless other students and professionals from all over the world. I was in awe of how he considered his headstick to be his "unicorn head." This mythical creature (which incidentally is present on the

duVenage family crest (my maiden name), made me feel connected to him in some way.



But Rick wasn't simply a unicorn because of his "unicorn headstick." Unicorns are rare, powerful, and imaginary – which means that they are capable of anything. Unicorns are linked to goodness, freedom, happiness, and gentleness. They are said to have amazing speed and agility - all characteristics that I discovered when I eventually I plucked up enough courage to speak to him. Imagine my surprise when, in his "Huge Harry" Dectalk voice he jokingly explained "I've got independence, a job, a van, a wife and kids, the whole catastrophe!" During the next few days, which I will never forget, I had a glimpse of his humour, his passion, his unique perspective, and I understood why he described himself as a "alpha augmented communicator" which meant that his skill and experience with using AAC systems to communicate, were masterful.

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We have often heard that what truly matters in life is the “dash”: the dash between the day you were born and the day you die. 22 March 1954 - 31 August 2022. In Rick’s case he lived the 68 years that represent his dash to the fullest. In a field of horses, he was a unicorn. And so, even although the AAC field has lost our unicorn, we will not be sad, as Rick’s faith as captured by the words “To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord” (II Corinthians 5:8).

AAC Journal

ISAAC International is pleased to welcome the 2023 incoming *AAC Journal* Editors. MaryAnn Romski, Ph.D (left) and Rose Ann Sevcik, Ph.D (right) will assume the editor positions in January 2023.



We want to congratulate and thank the 2019 - 2022 *AAC Journal* editors, Ralf Schlosser and Rajinder Koul, for their many contributions to the Journal over the past four years, and to the field of AAC. Ralf and Rajinder worked very hard during that time and were successful in improving the impact factor of the Journal.

MaryAnn holds a Ph.D in speech language pathology (SLP) from the University of Kansas. She is an ASHA-certified SLP and Regents Professor of Communication, Psychology and Communications Sciences and Disorders at Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA. She is also Director of the Center for Research on Atypical Development and Learning (CRADL).

Rose Ann holds a Ph.D. in developmental psychology from Georgia State University. She is Regents Professor of Psychology at Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA and Co-Director of the Center for Research on the Challenges of Acquiring Language and Literacy (RCALL). She is a Fellow of ISAAC, ASHA, the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), and the Association for Psychological Science (APS).

More information is available on the ISAAC website [here](#).

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ISAAC Singapore



ISAAC Singapore is excited to announce the launch of our official website!

<http://isaac-singapore.org>

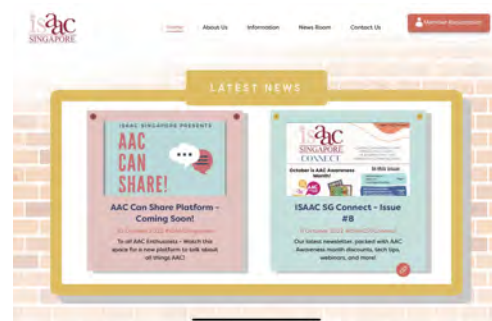


ISAAC Singapore is the official Singapore chapter of the ISAAC community. We are a community-run society that strives to increase Awareness of AAC use, be an Advocate for the AAC community, and encourage Collaboration amongst all stakeholders, including persons who use AAC, family and caregivers, professionals, and more!

The development of the official website was initiated to foster greater awareness of AAC

and encourage better connection amongst the AAC community in Singapore.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt thanks to the team at Elves Lab for designing our site.



Please feel free to check out our [News Room](#) for the latest news!

Or take a look around and leave us a note to tell us what you think!

If you are interested to sign up for membership with ISAAC Singapore, please visit us at: <http://isaac-singapore.org/MemberRegistration>.

Details regarding the range of benefits for our members, membership registration form, and payment information are available.

Thank you for supporting ISAAC Singapore!

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'Twas the Night Before Christmas

By Chelsea Hagan

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through
the house,

Not an AAC device was lit up, not even its mouse.

The AAC devices were all stacked in the corner,
charging with care,

In the hopes that *St. F. Hall Roe (inventor of the
AAC board) wouldn't trip on them there.

The children were all nestled snug in their beds,

While visions of AAC devices, with real voices,
danced in their heads.

And Mama in her onesie, and I on my phone,

Had just settled down to binge on the Game of
Thrones.

When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,

I hit the mute button and cursed my full bladder.

I flopped out of bed and yelped as I stepped on
some Lego.

I felt the Canadian icy wind as I threw open the
window.

The satellites casted a bright light on the new,
yellow crusted snow.

I thought to myself, what an eerie hauntingly glow.

That's when I saw a snowdrift, and an Uber's
headlight beams.

And then a door opened, and out jumped the nerdy
AAC Device team.

With a little old driver holding an AAC Device and
cursing the snow.

I knew in a moment it must be St. F. Hall Roe.

Shaking his head, with fists in the air, as mad as a troll.

He called the AAC team by their professional roles:

"Now, SLP, now OT, now PHYSIO, and SPECIAL ED.
TEACHER!

On CONSULTANT, on PROGRAMMER, and BIOMEDICAL
ENGINEER!

WAIT! The list is so long, I can't call you all by name,
It is giving me a pain in the frontal membrane."

"Now, get me out of this yellow, crusted snowdrift, get
me out quick.

If we survive this night, maybe I will give you all a
peppermint stick."

As, tin soldiers, that all stand in a perfect straight line,
The AAC team started to march but staggered like they
were drunk on wine.

So, they mashed the snowdrift, they made it through.

Snow stuck to their bodies like sticky glue.

And then, cringing, I heard the opening of the front
door,

The stomping of boots on my antique silk rug, that lay
on the floor.

I drew in a breath and let out a long sigh,

And just like Tom Cruise, in skidded St. F. Hall Roe with
a twinkle in his eye.

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He boomed, “This is risky business, we can’t be seen.”

Then with a clap of his hands, he said, “Get busy AAC Team.”

The team dug out the tools, and quickly worked on the task.

They fixed the glitches, the programming, but the voices they saved last.

St. F. Hall Roe’s eyes turned a blazing, fiery red, and his smile not so merry.

His whole face suddenly looked... well frankly... quite scary.

Then he let out a thunderous, ear shattering shout,

“If you can’t get the voices right, GET THE — OUT!

The voices have no inflection, emotion, or tone.”

That’s when I heard the SLP let out a small, frightful groan,

“Well... you see sir, said the SLP. They haven’t been invented yet.”

Seething, St. F. Hall Roe said, “BUT WE HAVE ROCKETS ON MARS AND THE INTERNET!

I promised the children; NOW EVERYONE, TAKE A STEP BACK!”

The teacher, rolled her finger beside her head and whispered, “What a quack.”

Then what did I see, it was St. F. Hall Roe, jamming his finger deep into his nose,

And into the communication devices the wondrous magic did flow.

The voices rang out with emotions. Oh, how beautiful they sang.

St. F. Hall Roe smiled and said, “We’re done, lets get going gang.”

The AAC Team packed up their tools so lively and quick.

St. F. Hall Roe, chuckled, “Well done! You will all get an extra peppermint stick.”

Out the door they all fled with a bound.

I swear, as I watched, their feet barely touched the ground.

Then, St. F. Hall Roe stopped, his head over his shoulder, he looked at me.

He had a huge toothy smile; his face was shining with a joyful glee.

With a nod of his head, and a wink of his eye,

His finger flew across his AAC Device like a graceful butterfly.

I stood in the doorway, my teeth chattering from the cold.

I waited four minutes for his message to unfold.

Then, his device spoke, and it was saturated with inflection and delight.

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL, AND TO ALL A GOOD NIGHT!

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* F. Hall Roe was one of the [earliest pioneers](#) of AAC. In the 1920s, [he co-developed and used](#) one of the first manual communication boards.

Chapters



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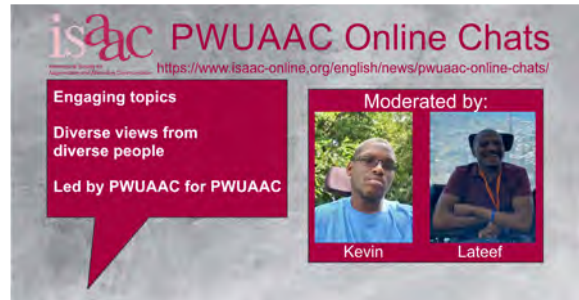
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Contact Us

Do you have a question or comment?
Please feel free to send an email to feedback@isaac-online.org

PWUAAC Online Chats



Visit [PWUAAC Online Chats](https://www.isaac-online.org/english/news/pwuaac-online-chats/) on the ISAAC website for information about the next scheduled chat.

ISAAC Webinars

As of January 2021, most ISAAC webinars and archived recordings are available as a benefit of membership, and accessed through the Members' Only portal. A limited number of [webinar recordings](#) will remain open to the public. Find out how to become an ISAAC member [here](#).



Our Vision & Mission



ISAAC's Vision is that AAC will be recognized, valued and used throughout the world.

ISAAC's Mission is to promote the best possible communication for people with complex communication needs.

ISAAC is a Non-Governmental Organization in consultative status with the United Nations Economic & Social Council.

Stay Connected

ISAAC Chapters and members worldwide are invited to submit items of interest from your country or region. News, AAC practice tips, research, personal essays, in article format or as a link to online articles or resources, will be reviewed and made available on the ISAAC website as appropriate. Please send articles and photos to [Nola Millin](#).

Stay Social

Stay in the loop! Follow ISAAC news & views in the AAC community on our social media!



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The ISAAC Communicator

Published four times each year. Comments welcome! Please contact [Chloe Leon](#), ISAAC's Publication Specialist.

