



Pennsylvania - Delaware Chapter  
Association for Education and Rehabilitation  
of the Blind and Visually Impaired

## Proposed 2025 Nomination Slate Penn-Del AER Board of Directors

The 2025 Nomination Slate of [Officers](#) and [Directors-at-Large](#) details are included in this document. Nominations from the membership floor will be accepted at the business meeting. The Penn-Del AER members will vote at the General Business Meeting, which is scheduled for Thursday, May 1, 2025, after the Midnote session.

### Current Board Members Continuing Terms

#### Eastern District:

Maria Lepore-Stevens, Past-President  
(2025-2027)

Jamie Maffit (2023-2026)

Vince McVeigh, Treasurer (2024-2026)

Lachelle Smith (2023-2026)

**Central District:** Becky Knaub (2023-2026)

#### Western District:

Greg Lazur, President (2025-2027)

Deb Miller (2024-2027)

Ashley Popojas, Secretary (2024-2026)

#### Delaware District:

Shawn Musgrove (2024-2027)

Ashley Spinden (2024-2027)

## Nominated Officer – President-Elect

### **Deb Miller, First Officer Term, Western District**



Deb Miller is a Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments and a Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist at the Western PA School for Blind Children in the Outreach Program. She received a BA in Elementary Education from Westminster College and her M.Ed. through the Vision Studies Program from the University of Pittsburgh. She received her second master's degree from the University of Utah in May 2024 to be certified as a Teacher of Students who are Deafblind. Deb began her career in Colorado Springs, CO as a TVI/COMS and worked as a Certified Low Vision Therapist as a part of the Colorado Low Vision Clinic team. She was also a board member of the Colorado chapter of AER. She has been employed with the Western PA School for Blind Children since 2010 as a TVI/COMS. For the past 12 years, Deb has collaborated with the Western PA School for the Deaf where she developed her interest in teaching children who are deafblind. She is a part of the Deafblind Resource Team for both WPSBC and WPSD. Deb is also passionate about making the Expanded Core Curriculum meaningful to students educated in their home districts. She helped to create the Expanded Core Together program at WPSBC to build a community for students who are blind and visually impaired while focusing on ECC skills.

## Nominated Directors-at-Large, Terms Ending June 30, 2028

### **Matthew Love, First Term, Delaware District**



Matthew Love is from Smyrna, Delaware. He is currently at Kutztown University studying Special Education: Visual Impairments and 4th-8th Grade Mathematics. His goal academically is to receive a PhD. in Special Education. One of his biggest achievements was being a Keynote Speaker/ Student Leader for the Kent County Transition Fair and Delaware Transition Conference respectively in 2019 and 2021. He will be starting graduate school this fall. Matt previously served as a Student Representative on the Penn-Del AER Board.

### **Tessa McCarthy, First Term, Western District**



Dr. Tessa McCarthy is an Associate Professor at the University of Pittsburgh, where she has been teaching O&M courses for a decade. She is certified as both a teacher of students with visual impairments and an orientation and mobility specialist, with experience as an itinerant teacher and at a school for the blind. Dr. McCarthy holds degrees from the University of Kentucky, the University of Louisville, and Vanderbilt University, where her dissertation focused on teaching street-crossing skills to blind students using verbal rehearsal and graduated guidance. Dr. McCarthy has been a member of AER since 2003 and a member of Penn-Del AER since 2015. She resides in Pittsburgh with her husband, their nine-year-old son, and two dogs.

### **Katie Morris, First Term, Eastern District**



Katie Morris is a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS) at Overbrook School for the Blind, currently in her third year in this role. She provides guidance and support to students with visual impairments, helping them navigate and interact with their environment independently and safely. In addition to her work at Overbrook, she is an active member of the Deafblind Resource Team at the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, where she offers specialized Orientation and Mobility services to Deafblind students, ensuring they receive the tailored support they need to develop mobility skills and independence. Before becoming a COMS, she worked as a Special Education Learning Support Teacher for students in kindergarten through third grade, where she developed and implemented strategies to support diverse learners in the classroom. This experience has provided her with a strong foundation in creating inclusive educational environments. She also worked with older adults with visual impairments, helping them maintain or regain their independence through personalized mobility training, enhancing their confidence and safety in daily activities.

Katie earned her Master's degree from the University of Pittsburgh, where she further developed her expertise in orientation and mobility. Prior to that, she completed a dual major in Special Education and Elementary Education at Kutztown University, equipping her with a well-rounded approach to teaching and supporting diverse learners. She is deeply passionate about inclusive education and empowering individuals of all ages and abilities to live independently and confidently in their daily lives.

### **Holly Russell, Second Term, Western District**



Holly Russell has worked as a Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments and Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist in the field of visual impairment and blindness for 32 years. She is currently working at Western PA School for Blind Children, serving as the Middle School Principal and supervisor of the Outreach Program. She also works with families and children in the VisAbilities Clinic and is part of a multidisciplinary team working with children and their families to conduct assessments and recommend vision adaptations and services.

Holly graduated from the University of Pittsburgh Vision Studies Program in 1993. She also earned a master's degree in education and a bachelor's degree in child development from the University of Pittsburgh. Holly has served as president, past-president, and conference planning chair for the Pennsylvania-Delaware Chapter of AER. In 2016, Holly was honored to receive the Penn-Del AER Richard L. Welsh Service Award. Holly's greatest joy comes from working with children and families, along with spending time with her own family, especially her husband and two daughters.

### **Mark Steciw, Second Term, Eastern District**



Mark Steciw has worked in the field of blindness and visual impairment for over forty years. He began his professional career as a teacher of students who are blind and visually impaired with additional significant disabilities. He was also an administrator for programs serving this population. Mark worked as a pre-school vision itinerant for the School District of Philadelphia. He has had the unique experience of being the low vision educational specialist at the William Feinbloom Rehabilitation Center at the Eye Institute in Philadelphia. While in that role, Mark was involved in various research projects including contributing to various publications and the development of the Pepper Visual Skills Test for individuals with macular degeneration. He was an adjunct faculty member at the Pennsylvania College of Optometry (now Salus at Drexel University) where he taught courses in the TVI Preparation Program.

Mark served as an educational consultant in visual impairments at the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN-East) for almost thirty years. During this time, he served on a panel that was responsible for developing the national certification test for teachers of students with visual impairments through

the Educational Testing Service (ETS). Mark was the recipient of the Eleanor Long Educator of the Year (ELEY) Award in 1997. Mark has presented at various national, state and regional conferences. He was one of the “founding fathers” of the Summer Academy for Students with Visual Impairments He is currently on the Board of Directors of the Overbrook Friedlander Programs and has previously served as a board member of Penn-Del AER. He has been actively involved as a member of the Penn-Del AER conference planning committee for many years. Mark has been married for forty years and has two children and seven grandchildren.

### **Marie Vater, First Term, Western District**



Marie Vater is a TVI and COMS currently working with the Allegheny Intermediate Unit in the Pittsburgh area. She is also a freelance braille transcriber with a certificate from the NFB/NLS Literary Braille Transcribing Program. She received her BS in mathematics from Duquesne University. She graduated in 2022 from the University of Pittsburgh’s TVI, COMS, and Master of Education programs, having benefited from Penn-Del AER’s Student Scholarship. Marie is a born-and-bred Pittsburgher who has only ever wavered in her loyalty to the Steel City when she completed her O&M internship at the Gulf Coast Blind Rehabilitation Center of the Biloxi VA Medical Center in Biloxi, MS. She is passionate about promoting braille literacy, implementing effective strategies for math education for students who are totally blind, and teaching street crossing skills to children and adults with visual impairment. She also cares deeply about encouraging children and adults with visual impairment to become and stay physically active by promoting students’ self-advocacy regarding their inclusion in general education physical education classes and neighborhood sports groups, and by volunteering for several local blind sports organizations. Marie is also involved with the Autistic Self-Advocacy Network and has a particular passion for working with students who are blind who have autism as an additional disability.

### **Heather Saus, Student Representative**



Heather Saus is currently a student at the University of Pittsburgh, pursuing certification as a Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) and a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS). She holds a bachelor's degree in Deaf Education with dual certification in Elementary Education and later earned a master's degree in Special Education. Heather has been an itinerant Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing at the Westmoreland Intermediate Unit for the past 22 years.

Her passion for the field of visual impairment was sparked when she joined the DeafBlind Resource Team, an experience that inspired her to embark on a new professional journey. Committed to supporting students with sensory disabilities, Heather values collaboration, advocacy, and fostering independence. She is honored to serve as a student representative on the Penn-Del AER Board and looks forward to contributing to the advancement of services for individuals with visual impairments.

The Pennsylvania-Delaware Chapter of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) supports professionals who provide education & rehabilitation services to people with visual impairments.

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