

# **The AAC-RERC Writers Brigade**

**Augmentative Communication Inc.**

**Johana Schwartz, Lateef McLeod  
Sarah W. Blackstone**

## Introducing Johana

AAC-RERC Project  
Manager/Team Leader



# AAC-RERC



SPREAD THE WORD

# The Writers Brigade

# Origins of Writers Brigade

- Writers Brigade will
  - Develop technical writing skills
  - Address employment concerns
  - Build capacity
  - Expand dissemination efforts of the AAC-RERC partners

**“When you enter the letters AAC-RERC into a search engine, top results always point to the work of the Writers Brigade.”**

**“That’s a good outcome!”**

**Frank DeRuyter, 2008**



# Examples of Outcomes

## THE AAC-RERC WRITERS BRIGADE:

JOHANA SCHWARTZ, SARAH W. BLACKSTONE  
AUGMENTATIVE COMMUNICATION, INC.

### PURPOSE

To enhance employability for writers who rely on AAC systems, by hiring them to write and disseminate current information about ongoing research and development activities underway within the AAC-RERC to a variety of audiences.



### TARGET POPULATION

- Writers who rely on AAC systems

### FEATURES

#### On the job training in:

- AAC research & development projects
- Working with Editors
- Meeting Deadlines
- Preparing a resume
- Learning & using technical writing skills
- Composing business letter
- Working with publishers
- Building networks

#### Paid for work:

- Articles
  - \$50 for completed draft
  - \$25 to submit for publication
  - \$50 when published
- Other assignments
  - \$50 for first assignment (bio)
  - \$50 for surveys, etc.

### COLLABORATORS

- Augmentative Communication Inc.
- Children's Hospital Boston
- Duke University
- Penn State University
- University of Nebraska
- Temple University
- University of Buffalo

### PUBLICATIONS

More than 100 publications in the following print and online publications:

#### Print publications:

- Alternatively Speaking*
- Augmentative Communication News*
- Advance Magazine*
- SpeakUP*
- Perspectives: ASHA SID 12*
- Fresno Bee / LA Times*

#### Online publications:

- AAC-RERC e-newsletter
- AT Journal
- CONNSense Bulletin
- ACOLUG
- Other list serves
- PRC list serv

**RERC ON  
COMMUNICATION ENHANCEMENT**

# Today's Handouts

## AAC-RERC Bibliography

*Alternatively Speaking*  
Volumes 9#2 and 9 #3.



# Alumni Accomplishments

■ Bill Geluso

*Life-long learning*

*Volume 9 #3*



*The Learning Experience*  
*Learning from Role Models*  
*Learning in Cyberspace*

*Williams Thrives on Evolution of  
AAC by Rebecca Barbush*

# Alumni Accomplishments

## ■ Tracy Rackensperger

*Community Supports*

*Volume 9 #2*



*Community Support and AAC*

*On the Balance*

*Learning through Trial and Error*

*The Journey*

*Transitions to Independence*

# Tracy's outreach!

- *As I continue to write publications, the knowledge gained from being in the WB will continue to be valuable... when I write material, the Institute's Assistant Director gives me feedback on multiple drafts. We go through almost the same process as WB members do with Johana.*



# Goals: Building Capacity

- Participants will increase technical writing skills ✓
- Participants will build connections with researchers ✓
- Participants will develop other skills that make them more employable. ✓

# Pamela Kennedy

- Writing about AAC  
TECHConnect
- Networking opportunities



*WORKING ON THE AAC TECH  
CONNECTIVITY PROJECT MADE ME  
SELECT THE DEVICE AND THE  
ASSOCIATED PAPERWORK EASIER.  
MY SGD WILL BE HERE THIS WEEK.*



# Pamela Kennedy

## ■ Augmentative Communication News



February 21 - 23, 2008

New Orleans, LA

more info: [www.ussaac.org](http://www.ussaac.org)

Support AAC communities affected by hurricanes in LA, MS and TX. Work with USSAAC members, as well as professionals and families from affected areas before, during and after the conference

## Augmentative **ACN** Communication News

December 2007/January 2008

Volume 19  
Number 4

### Upfront



them? for people who rely on augmentative and alternative communication (AAC)? The right answer is not "Huh?"

Then, go to the next important step. Ask yourself, "Do I have a plan?" "Do the people I care about have a plan?" Odds are that you, like me, care about a substantial number of people who rely on AAC.

No one likes to think about CHEs. No one expects to be involved in one, but everyone should be prepared. Encourage yourself, your family and others to prepare.

A call to action

*Continued on page 2*

*Continued on page 2*

### Complex Humanitarian Emergencies (CHEs)

**World disasters and humanitarian emergencies: Unheard voices** with Anne Warrick

In today's world, global communication can inform us within hours of disasters and the humanitarian emergencies that arise thereafter. The Internet, television and radio report each unfortunate event, showing us pictures of devastation and human suffering. These immediate reports are followed by day-to-day descriptions of relief operations, rescue missions, the efforts and amazing resilience of people who have been affected by earthquakes, war, floods, draughts,

### inside this Issue

**Complex humanitarian emergencies (CHEs)**

*World disasters and humanitarian emergencies: Unheard voices*

**Perspective: Person with CCN**

*Next time, I'll be ready*

**Perspective: Family**

*A Gulf family's odyssey*

**Perspective: Educator**

*Rebuilding an infrastructure*

**Governmental**

*Some "need to know"*

**Resources & References**

bombs, shootings, hurricanes, fires, industrial accidents and so on. We hear worldwide outpourings of sympathy and support. Then, the media move on to other topics, taking away the world's attention just as the long-term recovery process begins.

Complex humanitarian emergencies (CHE) usually involve a cross section of the population: men, women and children across the age span, both able-bodied people and those with disabilities. Sometimes people are given warning, which can lessen the impact in a disaster. When warnings are late, absent or unheeded, however, or when the CHE becomes chronic, the casualties can be enormous.

*While no one can be truly*

*Continued on page 2*

# Job offers

- Consulting with and writing for Life Share Foundation
- Product presentations for DynaVox Technologies
- Children's book for News 2 You and USSAAC members

# Matthew Kim

Invited Speaker at the  
*9th Annual Conference of DAAC, the ASHA  
Division on AAC*

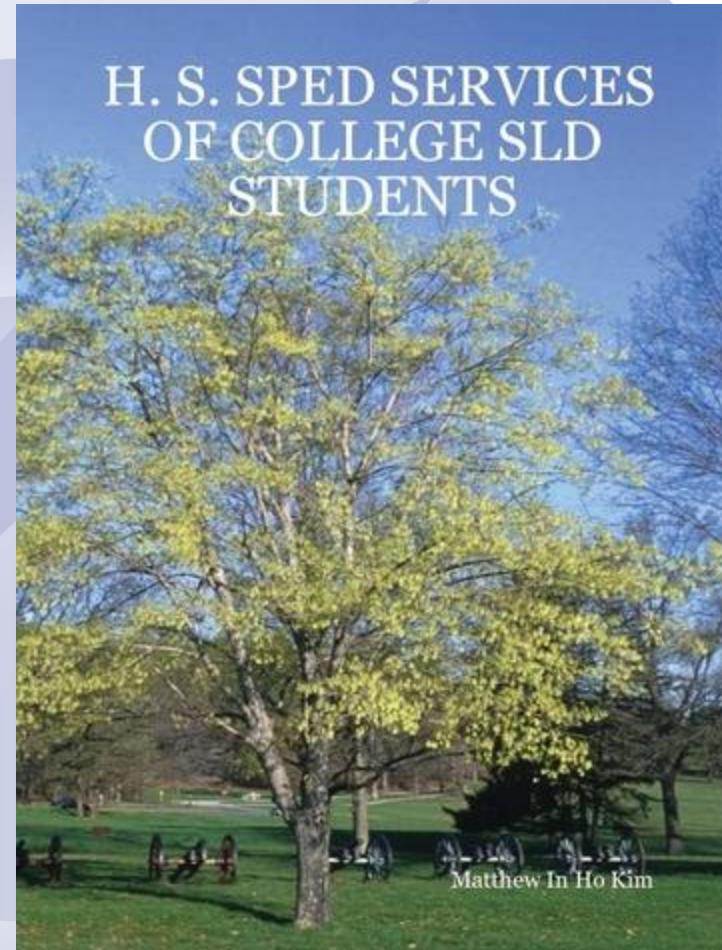
## **Toward Linguistic Competence in AAC: Building and Re-Building Language**

# Goal: Increasing # of publications

[www.lulu.com/content/789392](http://www.lulu.com/content/789392)

## Matt Kim's book

**Description:** This study surveyed eighteen college students with learning disabilities concerning their secondary special education services. The subjects were students registered with the Center on Disabilities at California State University, Northridge as having learning disabilities. The survey was designed to obtain information on college students with learning disabilities in their secondary schools. Most of the subjects who participated in the study did not receive any special education services during their secondary education. Only one male subject had an Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) and an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) during his secondary education





# Increasing # of publications

- Joe Hemphill's op ed articles in The Fresno Bee and the Los Angeles Times



# Los Angeles Times

**Letters to the editor:** Joe Hemphill, January 14, 2008

**Cutback plan may slice wrong way: “Governor's budget derails his lofty goals,” Jan. 11**

*Let's look at the governor's proposed cuts relating to people with disabilities. I am a senior citizen with cerebral palsy and need help in every aspect of my daily life. Does Gov. [Arnold Schwarzenegger](#) understand that I absolutely need someone to cook for me, feed, bathe and dress me? I have never been able do these things for myself. When I hear about cuts in programs for people with disabilities, I am frightened by the seeming lack of concern for those of us who cannot, through no fault of our own, help ourselves. Institutions would be the next step. I have lived in institutions. They are not the answer, and they cost far more. I do whatever I can to be independent and live with my disability. It seems that the governor and lawmakers insist on making that harder. Why are the disabled always the first group asked to balance the budget with their health and safety?*



*I now have more confidence in myself, and  
in my writing. I also gained credibility. I  
have discovered that writing is my voice  
and my passion.*

# Goals: Increasing employment

Rebecca Barbush: Writer

# How Far We've Come, How Far We've Got to Go: Tales from the Trenches



[www.aac-rerc.com](http://www.aac-rerc.com)

Michael B. Williams (ACI), a long time practitioner of the art of augmented communication uses historical biography to elucidate many of the key social and technological issues in AAC today.

[www.riverwalkjournal.org/  
vol4iss3/barbusheat.html](http://www.riverwalkjournal.org/vol4iss3/barbusheat.html)

## RiverWalk Journal

### A Table of Contents

#### Views and Mechanics

[Review of \*Nickel and Dime\*](#)

[Review of \*Night Shade\*](#)

By Elizabeth Murray

[Radical Influence: Review of \*Spoken Word\*](#)

[Revolution Redux](#)

By Romella D. Kitchens

Creative Nonfiction

[Toiling in the Garden of Memory](#)

By Madonna Dries Christensen

Poetry

[Watch Over](#)

By S.K. Tatiner

[The Frailty of Perfection](#)

By William R. Stoddart

[Eat Drink and Be Merry](#)

By Rebecca Barbush



#### Cover Art

"Riot of Flowers" By Dee Rimbaud

## Eat Drink and Be Merry

by Rebecca Barbush

I weaved my way around the stacks of exams on my office floor, wishing they were graded and organized neatly in the empty file cabinet. For the third or fourth time that week, I resolved to come in early the next day to start grading them. I left my cluttered office at the University of Pittsburgh before a student could catch me leaving my designated office hours early. My goal was to get home for my mother-in-law's TV cooking show; "Eat, Drink, and Be Merry" and hopefully I would learn along with her. Since I was an academic, cooking had never interested me. Besides I didn't have the time or patience for it. I never had an "Easy Bake" oven as a kid and exploring the domestic world had never occurred to me until I married a man whose mother was a professional chef, Maxine Gilman. Sometimes I got so mad at her for making everything . .

# Tom Younkerman

## Many Stories, One Voice

- ISAAC Writing Contest



*I learned that writing is a process, and that there is a lot of work involved in writing, but the end result is very rewarding. Working with an editor to complete each article was a joy.*





**AAC-  
RERC  
Writers  
Brigade  
honored by  
USSAAC!**



**Sometimes  
Inspirational**

**ALWAYS**

**A bit of a  
roast!**

# The Writing Process

- Multiple drafts
- Multiple edits
- Enliven technical writing
- Teach writing skills
- Learning how to prepare articles
- Interview researchers
- Organizing materials
- Conveying the “big” picture

# How Are We Doing So Far?

*Corpus of outcomes*

*Annual survey*

*Monitor progress and  
success*

*Outcomes Matter!*

- AAC-RERC Writers Brigade Manual
- Purpose to: Explore and explain, in depth and at length, the philosophy and strategy involved in creating and implementing a WB project.

The   
Writers  
 Brigade



# Introducing

**Lateef McLeod**

- Networking in the AAC-RERC WB

**Sarah Blackstone**

- Looking ahead

# Any Questions or Comments?



# AAC-RERC Writers Brigade CSUN Presentation

By Lateef H. McLeod

# Life Post AAC-RERC Writers Brigade

- Freelance writer for AT Network
- Consumer Consultant for Dynavox Technologies
- Tutor for College Track
- Wrote a poetry book
- Performed in Sins Invalid
- Spoke at last years USAAC Bubbly Ball and Bridge School's AAC By the Bay Conference

# AT Network

- Met editor Martin Sweeny when speaking at Bubbly Ball
- Offered me the job on the spot
- Wrote three articles for the organization so far
- All articles are posted on their website: [atnet.net](http://atnet.net)

# Dynavox Technology

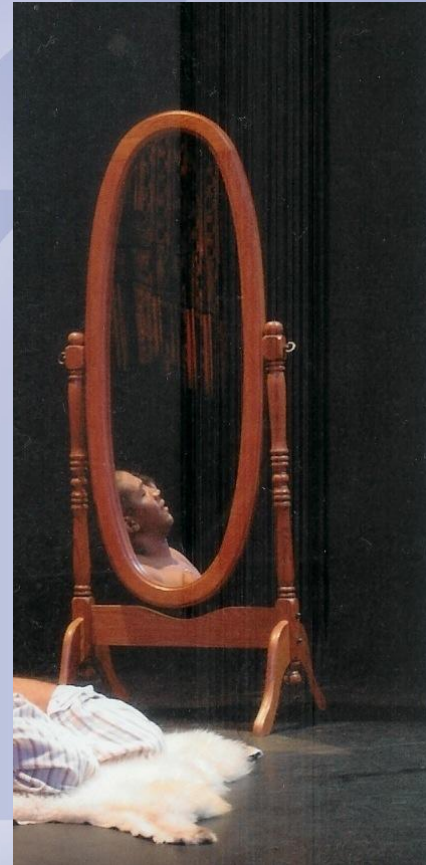
- Handed my resume to a sales rep in the Dynavox Technology booth area at CSUN
- Stayed in contact with them and was offered consumer consultant job
- Job duties include presentations at conferences and workshops
- Was a plenary speaker at the AAC By the Bay Conference when I spoke in front of two hundred and fifty people

# College Track

- Tutor high school students at an after school program in East Palo Alto
- Help them with their math and English homework
- At site Monday and Wednesday from four p.m. to seven p.m.

# My Poetry Book

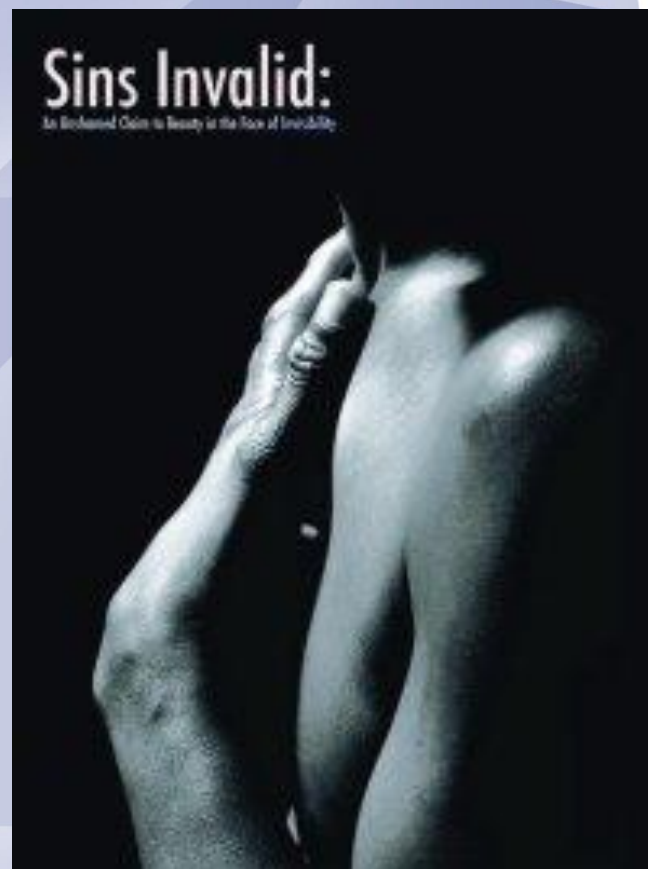
- Book is entitled A Declaration of A Body of Love
- Selling it now at [cafePress.com](http://cafePress.com) for \$13.50
- Go to link: [www.cafePress.com/lateefsbok](http://www.cafePress.com/lateefsbok) to buy book





# Sins Invalid

- The performance was last year in November dealing with disability and sexuality
- Performed two of my performance poetry pieces for the show
- Pieces dealt with body image and sexuality



# Hope you enjoyed the presentation

■ Any Questions?

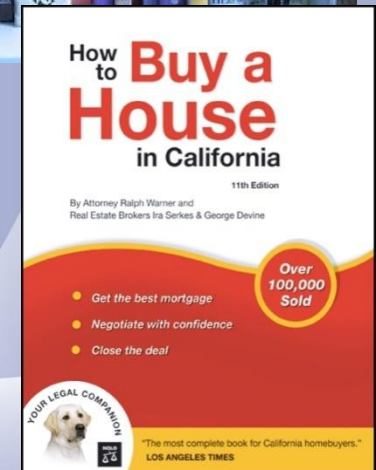
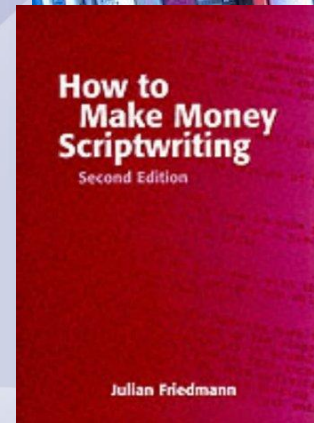
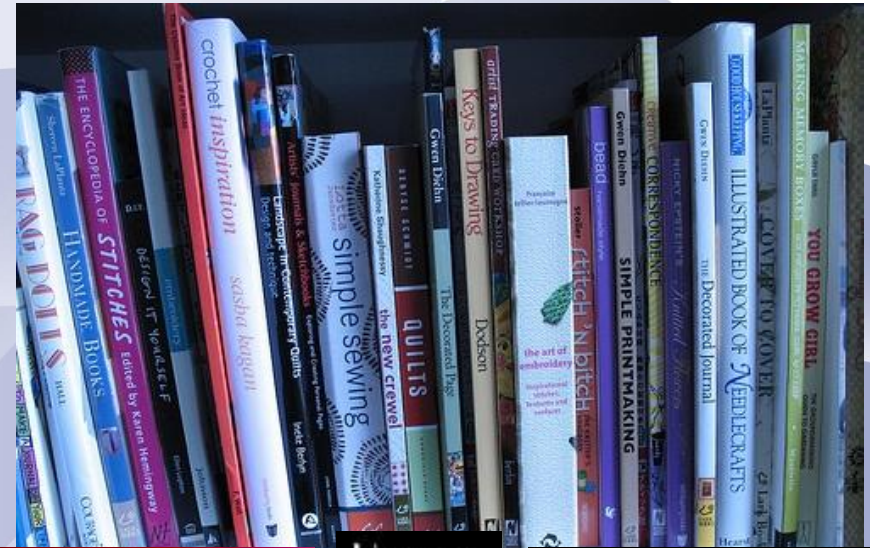
# Sarah's Turn



# WB Manual

- Purpose
- Plan
- Possible outcomes

**Your ideas?**



# New WB Cohorts

- Recruitment
- Process
- Target populations
- Target publications
- Follow Along
- Possible new formats

## Your ideas?

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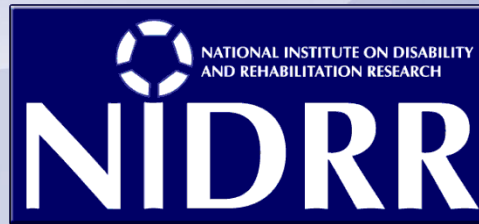
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**RERC ON  
COMMUNICATION ENHANCEMENT**



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**This work has been funded in part by  
the National Institute on Disability and  
Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) under  
Grant #H133E030018**

# The AAC-RERC Writers Brigade

To contact ACI:

[www.augcominc.com](http://www.augcominc.com)

To contact the AAC-RERC:

[www.aac-rerc.com](http://www.aac-rerc.com)

To contact the Writers Brigade:

[johana.schwartz@stanfordalumni.org](mailto:johana.schwartz@stanfordalumni.org)