

# 2026 Virginia AER Conference

**Navigating Possibilities, Embracing Community**  
CONFERENCE AT A GLANCE

**March 25-27, 2026** OFFICIAL  
(subject to change)

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## Wednesday, March 25, 2026

### **8:30: Registration opens**

- Located in: Front by entrance

### **9:30-11:00: Session #0 Bonus General Session (1.5 Credits)**

Space Camp: Dan Oates

- Located in: 207

### **12:00-2:00: Session #1 General Session (2 Credits)**

Sit down for lunch, Welcome

AER Representatives: Jennifer Burke and Angie Mathews

Kathy Malone (Deputy Commissioner of DBVI)

Keynote: Sam Seavey

- Located in: 101 A&C

### **2:10-3:50: Session #2 (1.5 Credits)**

- How Does the Recent Release of PROWAG Affect APS and What's New with APS Technology
  - Located in: 205
  - Presented by: Chris Holloway
- Empowering Adults to Navigate Strategies for Independence: A Round Table for Vision Rehabilitation Teachers
  - Located in: 101 E
  - Presented by: Gillian Pilcher
- Updates from the Virginia Department of Education: Supporting Students with Visual Impairments

- Located in: 101 F
- Presented by: Amy Scott and Lia Mason
- Have Questions? We Have Answers! Let's Collaborate
  - Located in: 207
  - Presented by: Tish Harris, Rick Bradley, Liang Liao, Meg Walker
- Virginia's Medicaid Waivers
  - Located in: 101 A/C
  - Presented by: Love Kingsbury

**4:00-5:30: Session #3 (1.5 Credits)**

- Unlocking Independence: Supporting the Transition to Guide Dog Travel
  - Located in: 205
  - Presented by: Leslie Hoskins and Alyssa Otis
- DeafBlind Perspectives in a Hearing and Sighted World
  - Located in: 101 E
  - Presented by: John Winstead
- Here's What is Ahead for Next Year! Embracing Families with Student Programs!
  - Located in: 207
  - Presented by: Tish Harris, Caroline Rammacher, Rick Bradley
- Unlocking Independence: SMART Technology Solutions for Wheelchair Users with Visual Impairments
  - Located in: 101 F
  - Presented by: Lindsey Sharpe
- The Things You Find in Your Student's Brailier
  - Located in: 101 A/C
  - Presented by: Erin Weaver

Dinner On Your Own

# Thursday, March 26, 2026

Breakfast – on your own

## **8:50-10:20: Session #4 (1.5 Credits)**

- Beyond Sight: Uncovering Strength Through Questions, Motivation and Skillful Adjustment
  - Located in: 205
  - Presented by: Jimmy Morris and Lauren Beall
- Southside Outta Sight: Empowering Each Other
  - Located in: 101 E
  - Presented by: James Nester and Margie DeMars
- Math Manipulatives for All Learners at All Levels
  - Located in: 207
  - Presented by: Jim Franklin and Susan Franklin
- Enhancing Independence for Children Age 11 to 17 with Visual Impairments Through Guide Dog Partnerships
  - Located in: 101 F
  - Presented by: Bonnie Archibald
- Breaking Barriers, Building Futures: How BIT's Apprenticeship Program Empowers Talent with Disabilities in Tech
  - Located in: 101 A/C
  - Presented by: Mike Hess

## **10:30-11:30: Session #5 (1 Credit)**

- Making the World More Accessible for Everyone
  - Located in: 205
  - Presented by: Darren Gladstone and Shanell Matos
- How Does Brain Based Visual Impairment Impact Adults Differently from Children?

- Located in: 101 E
- Presented by: Valery Kircher
- Fun with Book-making
  - Located in: 207
  - Presented by: Becky Peek and Stephanie Crosen
- Exploring Virtual Training Programs for Visually Impaired Participants
  - Located in: 101 F
  - Presented by: Joseph DiNero
- From Potential to Performance: How NSITE's Building Professional Behaviors Transforms Work Readiness through Behavior Change in the VR Space
  - Located in: 101 A/C
  - Presented by: Marianne Haegeli

**11:30-2:00: Session #6 (2 Credits)**

- 11:30-12:30 Lunch Buffet, AER Awards and Diamond
- Exhibitors
- 12:00-2:00 Low Vision and Accessibility Showcase
- Open to the public
- 12:00-2:00 VA AER Silent Auction (Final bid-1:30)

**2:10-3:40: Session #7 (1.5 Credits)**

- Samuel D. Seavey IV of The Blind Life YouTube Channel--The Future of Orientation and Mobility: From Smart Canes to Robots
  - Located in: 207
  - Presented by: Sam Seavey of The Blind Life YouTube Channel
- Ask the Eye Doctor: A Conversation with Dr. Crews About Vision, Eye Care, and Common Procedures
  - Located in: 101 E
  - Presented by: John Crews, O.D.

- Calendar Systems: A Gateway to Language and Literacy Part 1
  - Located in: 101 F
  - Presented by: Hilary Hodes and Ira Padhye
- Empowering Through Partnership: DARS & DBVI in Action
  - Located in: 205
  - Presented by: LaSonya Jackson, Karla Lesher and Traci Branch
- Navigating Possibilities with GREAT Rewards
  - Located in: 101 A/C
  - Presented by: Tish Harris, Caroline Rammacher

**Break (20 mins)**

- Door Prizes, Giveaways

**4:00-5:30: Session #8 (1.5 Credits)**

- Samuel D. Seavey IV of The Blind Life YouTube Channel--AI and Assistive Tech: The Smart Revolution for the Blind and Visually Impaired
  - Located in: 207
  - Presented by: Sam Seavey of The Blind Life YouTube Channel
- Gut Check: Metabolism + Immunity + Mental Health
  - Located in: 101 E
  - Presented by: Kelsey Jones
- Calendar Systems: A Gateway to Language and Literacy Part 2
  - Located in: 101 F
  - Presented by: Hilary Hodes and Ira Padhye
- DeafBlind Communication with the Public
  - Located in: 205
  - Presented by: Dona Sauerburger

## Friday, March 27, 2026

### **9:00-11:00: Session #9 Breakfast, VAAER General Meeting, General Session (1Credit)**

9:00-10:00 – Breakfast

9:30-10:30 – Business Meeting

10:30-11 – Keynote: Kristin Smedley

- Located in: 101 A/C

### **11:00-12:30: Session #10 (1.5 Credits)**

- O&M Roundtable
  - Located in: 205
  - Presented by:
- Time to THRIVE! 1000x Success With the THRIVER Formula, continued
  - Located in: 101 E
  - Presented by: Kristin Smedley
- Finetuning IEP Goals, Data Collection and Progress Report Writing for Students with Vision Impairment
  - Located in: 101 F
  - Presented by: Becky Peek
- Voice Accessibility: A New Friend on Your iPhone
  - Located in: 207
  - Presented by: Nitesh Rathod and Harini Mohan
- From Classroom to Career: Fostering Resilience and Opportunity with Project RISE
  - Located in: 101 A/C
  - Presented by: Joe Orozco