

The AAC-RERC Writers Brigade

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Introduction

The AAC-RERC Writers Brigade is a project of the RERC on Communication Enhancement (AAC-RERC). It was developed by Johana Schwartz and Sarah Blackstone in 2003 as a knowledge translation tool for the AAC-RERC, and in response to findings that people with complex communication needs often are unemployed or underemployed. David McNaughton and Pamela Kennedy are now implementing the Writers Brigade, with a special emphasis on internet publications.

Objectives

The AAC-RERC Writers Brigade has four major objectives:

1. Increase active participation of individuals who use AAC in the dissemination activities of the AAC-RERC
2. Develop technical writing skills of individuals who use AAC
3. Build employment skills and networks of individuals who use AAC
4. Increase public awareness and knowledge of AAC-RERC activities



1. Increase active participation of individuals who use AAC

- 1.1) Writers Brigade is managed by, and comprised of, individuals who rely on AAC.
- 1.2) Members of the Writers Brigade are paid to write articles about the AAC-RERC for both electronic and non-electronic media.



2. Develop technical writing skills of individuals who use AAC

- 2.1) Writers Brigade participants have had a variety of educational experiences
- 2.2) Manager (Pam Kennedy) provides scaffolded instruction to build the technical writing skills of participants



Scaffolded Support for Writing

- Identify a topic
- Gather information
- Write with an audience in mind
 - Multiple drafts
 - Multiple edits
- Maintain a positive attitude



3. Build Employment Skills & Networks

- 3.1) Employment Skills
 - Improved writing skills
 - Improved confidence
- 3.2) Employment Networks (2004-08)
 - Employed Full Time = 1
 - Employed Part Time = 5
 - Unemployed = 6 (5 not looking)



4. Increase public awareness and knowledge of AAC-RERC

- 4.1) Publications in
 - Magazines
 - Newspapers
 - Journals
 - Newsletters
 - Online resources



Selected Participants

Leigh Lightholder

Being a part of the WB has given me the opportunity to achieve my dreams and gain a stronger voice in the augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) industry



Godfrey Nazareth

Advances in technology, combined with the indomitable Human Spirit to persevere, innovate and overcome are making it increasingly possible to enable and empower individuals with disabilities. Becoming a member of the AAC Writers Brigade gives me a platform to contribute and share my unique perspective as a biomedical engineer on the cutting edge of science and a user of assistive technology.



Writers Brigade Manual

Step-by-step guide to setting up a Writers Brigade, available at <http://aac-rerc.org>



To Find Out More

- <http://aac-rerc.org>
- Email Pam Kennedy at pamkennedywb@gmail.com

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