

# 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



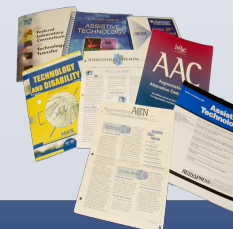
### 3. Build Employment Skills & Networks

- 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

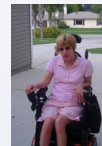
- 4.1) Publications in
  - Magazines
  - Newspapers
  - Journals
  - Newsletters
  - Online resources



## 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](mailto:pamkennedywb@gmail.com)

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