

## Turning 40

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Things happen when you turn 40. People celebrate you, although your party is a lot calmer than earlier ones. You get wiser and bolder. Your favorite songs from high school are only played on oldies stations, and trips to the gym involve much less Spandex.

But turning 40 also signals a maturing of one's basic understandings of life and work and what *really* matters. Priorities become deeper, clearer, and their significance is more intense. And you wonder how it all happened so quickly.

So it is with AER as it turns 40 this summer. Our association has incubated, evolved, spread its wings, and matured. We have progress and mission ahead. Together we continue to learn what it takes to become an association that embraces both opportunity and challenge. And we, too, ponder how the time passed so quickly.

In the years leading up to 1984, our field's leaders who sought to join our two predecessor associations into one did so with a solid commitment to bring together under one umbrella the separate arenas of rehabilitation and education of children, adults, and seniors who are blind or visually impaired. It was an immense challenge, but an unmistakable opportunity to change a system and improve the services it provides.

Through countless diplomatic discussions and sensitive compromises, one constant remained—the strong belief that we, as service providers, have more in common with each other than we have factors that separate us. With foresight and hope, in Nashville in the summer of 1984, AER was born. Fast forward four decades and AER continues our founders' purpose and practice of bringing together people, ideas, action, learning, voices, and energy in a community focused on excellence in services to people who are blind or visually impaired.

At its core, AER holds those same elements of collaboration, cooperation, and systems-change thinking that led to the birth of AER those forty years ago, forging from those elements the strong alloy we know as AER.

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Congratulations, AER! Thanks for the decades we've shared and "Hail!" to the ones to come.

The Executive Editors

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