



Conference Program

**Georgia Vision Educators Statewide Training**  
**All in This Together...Virtually!**

20<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference

October 2020 – May 2021

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## Welcome

Welcome to our 20<sup>th</sup> year of GVEST! While we are disappointed to not be able to gather together in person this year, we are grateful we will continue to provide professional development and networking opportunities for educators during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,

Zel Murray, GVEST Program Chair

## About GVEST

In 2000, the Georgia Department of Education introduced a new conference and called it Georgia Vision Educators Statewide Training, or GVEST. Now, GVEST continues as multiple agencies dedicated to serving students with sensory impairments collaborate to offer professional development training focused on the needs of this population.

GVEST provides an opportunity for Georgia's educators who serve students with visual impairments to have specialized training and to share effective practices and strategies specific to the needs of students with visual impairments. The annual GVEST conference typically takes place in Macon Georgia each October and provides workshops led by experts in the field of blindness.

## GVEST Program Committee:

GVEST would like to gratefully acknowledge the members of the conference planning committee along with Smokey Powell staff for their support and assistance in the planning and implementation of the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual GVEST program.

Greg Aikens  
Tara Bowie  
Sarah Bussey  
Dawn Day  
Heidi Evans  
Tracy Fitch  
Danny Housley  
Sharon Lyttle  
Zel Murray  
Shirley Robinson  
Martha Veto  
Carmen Willings

## Professional Development Credits

This year's conference, "All in This Together...Virtually!" will offer certificates of attendance for all attendees as well as ACVREP Continuing Education Credits for Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialists, Vision Rehabilitation Therapists, Low Vision Specialists, Rehabilitation Counselor, and Certified Assistive Technology Instructional Specialists.

At the beginning of each session, you will be given a beginning code and at the end of each session you will be given an ending code. Participants seeking ACVREP credits will need to complete and submit the required Google Form including the beginning and ending code to receive ACVREP credits and a certificate of attendance. This will also include a session evaluation form.

## GVEST Gold Sponsors

Please support our conference sponsors!



## **Keynote Speaker: Lex Gillette**

Lex Gillette is a globally recognized Paralympic track and field athlete for Team USA. Competing primarily in the long jump, Lex has amassed four Paralympic medals, four world champion titles, and he is the current world record holder in the event. He is the only totally blind athlete on the planet to eclipse the 22-foot barrier in the long jump. He is currently training for the 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Games where he aims to bring back gold for the United States of America.

Robbed of his sight during childhood, Lex Gillette was determined not to fall victim to a world consumed by darkness. With the aid of his mother, Lex was exposed to a diverse offering of resources and tools that were essential to his ability to achieve great things independently. “Elexis, it does not matter what anyone says. You decide what you can do, and no one else.” Those are the exact words spoken by Lex’s mother and were echoed in a 2016 Procter and Gamble commercial that featured both of them. Those same words have helped her son succeed in transforming what was once a tragedy, into a triumph. His athletic talents have been featured in media outlets including ESPN, Sports Illustrated, USA Today Sports, and People Magazine. He is a 2015 inductee in the ADN Hall of Fame.

Off the field of play, Lex devotes his time to positively enhance the lives of children nationwide. He serves as an athlete-mentor for Classroom Champions, an organization that pairs Olympians, Paralympians and professional athletes to K-8 students of schools in underserved areas within the United States and abroad. Through this program, Lex educates his students on the importance of skills such as goal setting, diversity, perseverance, teamwork, and healthy living. Lex and several of his students were featured in Fast Company in 2015 outlining the development of a Google Glass app that would give Lex access to more of the world, the same world that his students see with their eyes daily. It is during these early years when positive role models and strong guidance helped shape the trajectory of Lex’s life. His mission is to provide that same support for kids today.

Lex is a sought-after inspirational keynote speaker who empowers his audiences to gaze beyond the horizon and see more than what is in front of their eyes. There is no need for sight when you have a vision. That is the very phrase that has propelled Lex into a world of infinite opportunity. It is not our eyes that ultimately determine success in life. It is our ability to see a vision and do everything in our power to turn it into reality. During Lex’s presentation, you will laugh, you will cry, you will be inspired, and you will learn how to become a better version of yourself. With every stage that he graces, Lex is determined to do for his audience, what was done for him. That is, to Teach ... People ... To ... See.

## Agenda

### Friday, October 2, 2020

#### **FLY! Find Your Own Wings and Soar Above Life's Challenges**

**1:30-3:00**

Keynote by Lex Gillette, Paralympic Track & Field Medal Winner and World Championship Title Holder

Challenges come in many forms, and for Lex Gillette, the biggest one of all was losing sight. Fortunately, with the help of his mom and dedicated professionals, he was able to turn his tragedy into a triumph. In this 75-minute presentation, we will explore the resources and relationships that helped lead him down a successful path, and how employing certain tools can guide our thinking and actions in the pursuit to establish a solid foundation for the BVI community. We will discuss a number of ideas and tactics that can be implemented to help someone gain their wings and fly!

### Friday, November 6, 2020

#### **No Need for Sight When You Have A Vision®**

**1:30-3:00**

Special Guest Presenter Lex Gillette, Paralympic Track & Field Medal Winner and World Championship Title Holder

Achieving goals requires establishing a vision and doing everything in our power to bring it into fruition. Blind since the age of eight, Lex Gillette was determined to not let that factor keep him from achieving his goals. In this 45 minute program, we will travel with Lex through many scenes of his life, feeling every emotion along the way. You will be taken on a journey of discovery that will reveal the lessons and ideas that have propelled him to athletic dominance in the long jump. Close your eyes, open your mind, and imagine your highest potential. Get ready to navigate down life's runway and ascend toward a vision of success.

NOTE: Additional recorded presentations will be available for vision educators to share with their students.

#### **Lex Gillette Bio**

Lex Gillette is a globally recognized Paralympic track and field athlete for Team USA. Competing primarily in the long jump, Lex has amassed four Paralympic medals, four world champion titles, and he is the current world record holder in the event. He is the only totally blind athlete on the planet to eclipse the 22-foot barrier in the long jump. He is currently training for the 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Games where he aims to bring back gold for the United States of America.

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offering of resources and tools that were essential to his ability to achieve great things independently. "Elexis, it does not matter what anyone says. You decide what you can do, and no one else." Those are the exact words spoken by Lex's mother and were echoed in a 2016 Procter and Gamble commercial that featured both of them. Those same words have helped her son succeed in transforming what was once a tragedy, into a triumph. His athletic talents have been featured in media outlets including ESPN, Sports Illustrated, USA Today Sports, and People Magazine. He is a 2015 inductee in the ADN Hall of Fame.

## **Friday, December 4, 2020**

### **Teaching Math Virtually**

**1:30-3:00**

Derek Smith, associate professor and Associate Dean in the College of Education of the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH)

Mathematics is a foundational content area for individuals who wish to pursue a wide array of professions. For students with visual impairments, the learning of math requires that general education math teachers and TVIs collaborate effectively to ensure that the student has access to the information while also ensuring conceptual understanding. This session will cover a wide array of pedagogical strategies, manipulatives, and tools to best support the math education of students with visual impairments. In response to the current situation requiring more "distance education", this presentation will also focus on how to engage students with visual impairments in mathematics education "at a distance".

### **Derrick Smith Bio**

Derrick Smith is an associate professor and Associate Dean in the College of Education of the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH). He started his educational career as the Secondary Mathematics teacher at the Alabama School for the Blind. Upon earning his doctorate in special education in visual impairments from Texas Tech University, he started his research and development career at UAH. Dr. Smith runs the STEM-VI Mathematics Research Laboratory where his team focuses on research on STEM education for students with visual impairments and blindness. As part of his work, he has collaborated on multiple National Science Foundation grants in STEM education for students with visual impairments as an education evaluator and principle investigator.

## **Friday, February 5, 2021**

### **Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Panel Discussion**

**1:30-3:00**

A variety of instructional and agency representatives from Vocational Rehabilitation and the Department of Education will participate in a panel discussion on the topic of pre-employment transition services.

## **Friday, March 5, 2021**

### **Teaching Street Crossings Remotely & w/Social Distancing**

**1:30-3:00**

Dona Sauerburger, O&M Specialist, author, and national presenter

Participants will learn strategies for remotely or from a safe distance teaching learners who are blind / visually impaired skills they need for uncontrolled crossing such as:

- Utilizing a phone to help learners understand concepts they need for assessing these crossing situations;
- Utilizing the phone and a stopwatch to help learners develop an intuitive understanding of their crossing time;
- Understanding how to use the APH program and a computer to play traffic sounds simultaneously to show learners how to compare crossing time with warning time of approaching vehicles
- Ways to practice social distancing while successfully using equipment to communicate and present visual targets to the student to assess and develop skills.

#### **Dona Sauerburger Bio**

Dona Sauerburger, COMS, has learned a thing or two in the 50 years that she's been providing O&M to people with visual impairments, and she's eager to share it with you and learn some more! She has done hundreds of presentations and workshops around the world and has written extensively on O&M topics, including co-authoring two chapters in the Foundations of O&M textbook – she is currently revising her book, "Independence Without Sight or Sound: Suggestions for Practitioners Working with Deaf-Blind Adults," which received AER's Bledsoe Award in literature in 1994.

## **Friday, April 9, 2021**

### **Educational Research and Optic Nerve Hypoplasia**

**1:30-3:00**

Amber Kahn, National Leadership in Sensory Disabilities Scholar

This presentation will include a review of the current literature on ONH, an overview of several educational research studies on ONH, and a discussion of implications and practical strategies for supporting learners with ONH.

#### **Amber Kahn Bio**

Amber is a National Leadership in Sensory Disabilities Scholar and doctoral candidate at the University of Northern Colorado. Amber's research efforts have focused on variables and experiences related to optic nerve hypoplasia, self-regulation, and challenging student behavior. Amber has 19 years of practical experience working as a teacher for students with visual impairments and orientation and mobility specialist in large and small metropolitan school districts. While the majority of her responsibilities



have been in the k-12 setting, she has experience working with adults as well as infants and toddlers receiving IDEA Part C services. Amber's extended responsibilities have included recruitment and retention efforts, mentoring and training new teachers, and serving as both the gifted education and assistive technology coordinator in her current position.

**Friday, May 7, 2021**

**Roundtable Discussion: Lessons Learned from the Field.**

**1:30-3:00**

This roundtable session will provide an opportunity for professionals in the field of VI education to interact around topics related to best practices, challenges and solutions in an age of online/distance learning.