

# The Standard-Bearer

DECEMBER 2006



**National Accreditation Council**  
for Agencies Serving People with Blindness or Visual Impairment

[www.nacsb.org](http://www.nacsb.org)

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## THE NEW NAC

### **A Message from the President of the NAC Board, Dr. Oestreich**

It is still the National Accreditation Council (NAC). This Council is, and always has been, its members.

But it is more.

The members believe in and pay dues to the organization, but they are especially valuable because they have taken on as one of their core values, serving people with blindness and vision loss in conformance with a set of professional, time-tested and peer-developed standards. Every five years these organizations invite a team of their peers to come to their service centers, clinics and schools to review their compliance with the standards and to stand the tests of comparison and self-improvement.

There is more.

Why is this titled the "New NAC?" This is why: NAC has upgraded and updated its standards, codified its peer review procedures and, perhaps most importantly, achieved a stronger emphasis in its reviewing and reporting policies on consumer input and satisfaction.

There is more.

NAC has spent a great deal of its history worrying. NAC has worried about the validity of the review process, about the integrity of its reporting, about its relevance to the new century. NAC has worried about who is watching, whether it is a consumer group, a government agency or some organized and targeted opposition. NAC has worried too about its real or imagined competition.

Worrying is usually not a productive exercise. Why? Because it is difficult to plan while one is worried, fearful or feeling insecure.

The New NAC has stopped looking over its shoulder, stopped wondering what others think. It has, like a young person coming out of adolescence, begun to face the future with confidence, with

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# THE NEW NAC

## A Message from the President of the NAC Board, Dr. Oestreich

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growth and hardening security.

NAC is planning for its future rather than obsessing about its past. Oh, surely there needs to be response to positive contributions and criticism. Attention needs to be paid to those who bring ideas and lively disagreement to the table.

A wiser man than this writer once said, "You can really do something good and do it well in this world if you imagine that it will last another million years." Yes, Indeed.

It is time for NAC, after some forty plus years of existence, to plan for at least the first forty of those million remaining years.

We all need to dream about a clear future and about improving services for those who need our assistance and our support and our guidance. We need to stop being overly concerned about how big or strong or independent NAC is. We need to appreciate what we have, -- a tough bantamweight accreditation agent that is in love with its possibilities and proud of its culture.

You are welcome to participate in and celebrate all of the advantages of the new NAC. The board promises to make the best organization it can with loyalty to its mission and to its members and with credence that the core values of specialized standards, effective leadership and intelligent processes will continue to make the delivery of services to our members and to their consumers satisfying, effective and life-giving.

**Dick Oestreich**

**Chairperson of the Board of Trustees**



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT

**by Steven K. Hegedeos**



### THE NAC MISSION

NAC's mission is to develop standards which promote effective, sound, and publicly accountable programs of service for visually impaired children and adults; to ensure, through the peer-review/accreditation process that the standards are being met by those seeking accreditation; and to give public recognition to agencies, schools and programs which operate in compliance with the national standards.

### HISTORY

In **1966** NAC started as a national organization stationed in New York with the collective efforts of leaders in our field who published the Comstac Report (Library of Congress Catalogue # 66-28251) outlining the purpose and activities of a specialized accrediting agency.

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# EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT

by Steven K. Hegedeos

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In the **70** s and **80** s NAC was financially supported by the American Foundation of the Blind (AFB) and the National Industries for the Blind (NIB) and others.

By **1990** NAC was at a crossroads having to balance a variety of interest and the discontinuance of financial support for national agencies. The NAC Standards continued to be updated and outcome measures' became part of the mission.

During the past decade or so, NAC was sustained primarily by its membership of accredited agencies and schools. NAC is and has benefited from occasional contributions from single sources. However during this time membership was decreasing and the future was not certain.

In **1999**, the NAC Board with President, Rosetta J. Mauldin, PhD commissioned the Sterling Group for a strategic study.

In **2000**, the Sterling Group study was completed and published with input from interviewing over 70 leaders in the field. The synopsis report recommended:

- > Forge greater national partnerships
- > Create a new image
- > Modernize standards
- > Streamline the process
- > Develop new products
- > Spread the word

## The NEW NAC

**2001** The NAC office moved to Cleveland from Cincinnati Ohio where it was moved to in 1997 from New York. The Executive Directors were Alexander F. Handel (1967-73), Richard W. Bleecker, EdD (1974-83), Dennis L. Hartenstine (1984-91), Ruth Westman (1992-96), Gerald W. Mundy, EdD (1997-2001), and Steven K. Hegedeos became the sixth Executive Director on April 1, 2001. In July of 2001, Steven Obremski, Board President, and Steven K. Hegedeos presented NAC's plan at the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) Convention in Philadelphia. The consequence was that nine (9) NFB state representatives voted in favor of NAC compared to previous years' voice-votes that reportedly resulted in unanimous' opposition to NAC having any influence on the quality of services to people with vision loss.

**2002** NAC conducted a Summit meeting in Tampa, FL attended by 40 individuals representing the leaders in the field of vision loss rehabilitation who collectively recommended continuing NAC and expanding the NAC Board with national agency executive representation.

**2003** Based on the NAC Summit results, invitations were sent to the following eleven national organizations to join the NAC Board:

1. American Council of the Blind (ACB), \*
2. Association for Education and Rehabilitation (AER), \*

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# EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT

by Steven K. Hegedeos

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3. Blinded Veterans Association (BVA), \*
4. Council of Schools for the Blind (COSB), \*
5. National Assoc. for Parents of the V/I (NAPVI),
6. National Council of Private Agencies f/t Blind (NCPAB), \*
7. National Federation of the Blind (NFB)
8. National Industries for the Blind (NIB)
9. The American Medical Association (AMA),
10. The American Optometric Association (AOA) and \*
11. The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA).

To date the six (6) organizations have accepted and the invitation remains open to all the others.

In **2003**, NAC received word that a resolution publicized by NFB during the renewal of the federal Rehabilitation Act that both NAC and CARF were proclaimed as undesirable to our field:

NFB Resolution in 2003: "8. RECOMMENDATION: Amend Section 102(d) of the Act to prohibit state vocational rehabilitation agencies from limiting the choice of service providers to agencies recognized by any state or national accreditation standards or by use of approved provider lists.

**RATIONALE**: The principle of informed choice is a preeminent value in the Act.

Nonetheless, states often limit the exercise of informed choice by policies and practices resulting in the pre-selection of service providers. For example, some states restrict the scope of eligible providers to those having received accreditation from either the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) or the National Accreditation Council for Agencies Serving the Blind (NAC). Changes made in the Act in 1998 removed requirements for state standards in an effort to promote informed choice. Therefore, the amendments should now prohibit the use of any policies which continue to block this objective."

**2004** the NAC Standards were upgraded with the leadership team assembled by Dr. Richard Hyer, Superintendent of the Georgia Academy for the Blind. The team consisted of: Ms. Marie Amerson, Dr. Betty Bird, Mr. Carroll Jackson, Dr. Marje Kaiser, Dr. Elton Moore, Mr. York Hudgins, Dr. Tracy R. Williams and Steven K. Hegedeos. In addition Dr. Mark Wilkinson edited the final version of the entire set of Standards. The final gathering of the Panel was at the Lighthouse International in New York.

**2005** NAC reorganized the office operations and on-site accreditation review process and the Board accepted the 5-year progress report about the Sterling Group recommendations:

Summary of progress:

1. A productive 2002 Leadership Summit Conference
2. Installation of six national organizations on the NAC Board
3. The Standards were revised and simplified

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4. The accreditation process and the Handbook were updated
5. NAC presentations (at COSB, PA Assoc & Ohio Assoc.) resulted in the new members
6. The regular annual contributions increased from \$5K to \$21K.
7. Files and communications were converted to electronic mode
8. NAC achieved financial stability operating in the black
9. The "new image" marketing campaign is based on the assessed collective impressions that the NAC seal of approval represents confidence, comfort, acceptance and values to consumers.

**2006** realized a upturn in memberships and financial stability. Moreover, the Pennsylvania Association for the Blind applied for accreditation that might result in 15 to 30 additional individual members in 2007 and beyond. In addition the Blinded Veterans Association succeeded in passing two resolutions asking the VA to distinctly accept NAC in addition to CARF as a quality accrediting body for all their services and units. Finally, the Accreditation Handbook was redone and implemented (primarily by Dr. James Bemis) containing special emphasis on consumer input.

### **2007**

#### Challenges that lie ahead:

1. Implementing a reviewer training program;
2. Continuing Standards Revision;
3. Further increasing membership and reaching out to hospital low vision clinics to offer accreditations;
4. Defining a business relationship with JCAHO, CARF, AER and others;
5. Securing a grant for standards revision, website innovations, including on-line OSPR reporting;
6. Serving VA facilities and programs with accreditation;
7. Achieving recognitions from Medicare for specialized standards; and
8. Serving as a national non-political catalyst for all vision rehabilitation service entities.

NAC's future looks brighter than it had been for decades and the value of the support from dedicated peer-professionals is beyond statistical measures. The collective measure of satisfaction from accredited agencies, schools and programs is above the 98th percentile.

NAC is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization and all contributions are tax deductible. The latest annual audit reveals that fundraising costs are less than 2% of the total operating expenses.

*Steven K. Hegedeos, Executive Director*

# NAC HELPS PAB PROFESSIONALIZE MOM & POP DESIGNATION

By  
**Neal J. Carrigan, B.S., M.S., S.T.D., President/CEO**



Back in the early 60s when I was still a student at the Overbrook School for the Blind in Philadelphia, my buddies and I would regularly hop on the #10 trolley, about a three block hike from the campus, and head on down to the Philadelphia Branch of the Pennsylvania Association for the Blind ("PAB") at 63rd & Lancaster Aves. to pick up a goodly supply of brooms, brushes, mops, ironing board covers, table cloths, and anything else that we could either tie together and sling over our shoulders or stuff in our trusty leather carry-all (and I do mean "all.") That's where the articles were manufactured in the on-site "sheltered workshop." And that's where I met, and still remember, some of the nicest, unassuming, mom-& pop folks I ever known. And, even though the prices they charged for their merchandise were absolutely rock bottom, we were just kids, and many times didn't have sufficient funds to pay the bill in full, at the time of purchase. Well, that didn't bother those folks; they just told us to "Be sure to bring in the difference the next time you stop by to pick up another supply." What we did with the articles was to travel the various Philly neighborhoods, selling the stuff, door-to-door, with a slight mark-up on each item. It was good advertisement for the PAB, and Overbrook School, and an absolutely wonderful way of earning some ready cash for the necessities of teenage life in the era of the Beatles. Back then, everything was lay-back and friendly, especially the folks at the PAB. Back then, there was nothing wrong with being a mom & pop operation; it went along with what people expected from an organization that funded their activities and actions mostly from what was in their heart, and not their profit margin — and they knew their stuff, too. No one could hold a candle to them, or the folks at the Overbrook School, when it came to conveying inexperienced blind and visually impaired children and adults into self-actualized, and fully functioning independent adults — a daily occurrence still performed, to this very day, by both entities.

The term "mom & pop" isn't one I've encountered more than once or twice, since coming to the PAB as CEO in 1999. When I have heard it used, it's been in reference to the "old days, back when." Things have changed across the Commonwealth's 31 Member Agencies' the term used these days, more often than not, is "professional," and rightly so. Just in the seven or so years I've been associated with PAB I've been witness to, and participated in such professional initiatives as strategic planning, standards development, field staff and "professional staff" training and certification. The trek to a fully and easily recognizable professional organization moves on, even today, with the imminent "accreditation" in Administration of the PAB Executive Office, and ultimate accreditation of all 31 PAB Member Agencies in the areas of Specialized Services ("SS") and Prevention of Blindness" Services ("POB"). All of this, being made possible, through a close and newly established affiliation with *The National Accreditation Council for Agencies Serving People With Blindness or Visual Impairment ("NAC")*.

In my estimation, and that of everyone with whom I've spoken about this project, this is the sine-qua-non of all that should be done — and done well — in taking the PAB to the next requisite

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# NAC HELPS PAB PROFESSIONALIZE MOM & POP DESIGNATION

By  
**Neal J. Carrigan, B.S., M.S., S.T.D., President/CEO**



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step on the never-ending road to a full, and up-to-date determination of statewide agency professionalism. We at the PAB are absolutely delighted in knowing that we are striding on the right path in striving to provide the very best services to the people of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. We will be second to no one in the United States in doing what we have been doing since 1910 to that end.

In FY-05/06, alone, under contract with PA Dept. of Labor & Industry ("L&I"), Office of Vocational Rehabilitation ("OVR"), Bureau of Blindness & Visual Services ("BBVS"), PAB has provided SS & POB services to an astounding 138,748 children & adults — and this at an also astoundingly low combined subsidizing cost to the state of \$3.40 per person. Non-subsidized service units and costs to PAB are actually thousands of individuals and many thousands of dollars higher than these numbers; and the quality of service provision to those individuals is just as high as though every cent was paid for by the tax payer. And, after all, even though we are state-of-the-art professionals, isn't that what a "Mom & Pop" shop is really all about???

## A MESSAGE FROM JUDY TEREZHALMY, NAC EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT



October 30, 2006

In September of 2006 I completed a full year of service to NAC.

It has been a rewarding learning experience, as well as a satisfying introduction to all that is possible to accomplish for people who are blind or have low vision. Although I have spent 14 years in health care services previous to coming to NAC, learning about the field of Vision Rehabilitation was a new direction for me.

It has been an eye opening recognition of the value that a group of dedicated volunteer professionals, joined in a common cause, can make in educating and improving the quality of life for those we serve. The Standards set by NAC brings clear direction for reviewers, agencies, schools and consumers toward the best possible outcome of service.

I have actively participated in the arrangements needed to bring about an On-site Peer Review (OSPR) from the initial contact to the accreditation deliberation. I was given the opportunity to witness first hand the process of reviewing an agency and I have read every OSPR report that has come through our office. I am becoming more proficient in the office and accounting procedures of NAC and I have become familiar with hundreds of people involved in the NAC process. I better understand the value that NAC brings to the field and its importance as a management tool.

I am looking forward to serving NAC in the years to come.

*Respectfully,*

*Judith G. Terezhalmly, NAC Executive Assistant*



# **A RESOLUTION ABOUT NAC BY THE BLINDED VETERANS ASSOCIATION**

## **RESOLUTION 38-06**

**WHEREAS**, fundamental to the comprehensive rehabilitation of veterans who are severely visually impaired or blind is the development of wholesome and healthy attitudes about blindness, the acquisition of adaptive skills to overcome the handicap of blindness and reintegration into the family and community, **AND**

**WHEREAS**, the Department of Veterans Affairs ((VA) pioneered the comprehensive residential Blind Rehabilitation Center (BRC) approach to the delivery of such comprehensive services to facilitate adjustment to and acceptance of sudden and traumatic loss of vision, **AND**

**WHEREAS**, the VA BRC model has evolved to include the comprehensive rehabilitation of veterans whose visual impairment and blindness may be associated with aging, **AND**

**WHEREAS**, the VA is Internationally recognized as the premier provider of comprehensive blind rehabilitation services, **AND**

**WHEREAS**, non VA blind rehabilitation programs have recently begun to seek referral of visually impaired and blinded veterans away from VA Blind Rehabilitation Services (BRS) in an effort to obtain VA contract funding, **AND**

**WHEREAS**, America' s visually impaired and blinded veterans have earned the right to have access to the highest quality blind rehabilitation services available, **AND**

**WHEREAS**, only in rare instances would referral to a non VA BRC be appropriate, **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Blinded Veterans Association, in convention assembled in Buffalo, New York on this 19th day of August 2006, that visually impaired and blinded veterans only be referred to VA BRC' s for comprehensive residential blind rehabilitation services,

**AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that should it ever be necessary to refer a visually impaired or blinded veteran to a non VA BRC, that Non VA BRC should be accredited by either (NAC) the National Accreditation Council for Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped or CARF, the Commission For Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, and that employ Blind

# COUNSELING: LOST ART, LOST VALUE

Richard P. Oestreich, PhD, President, NAC Board of Directors

People with disabilities have been lucky and unlucky in the United States. They are lucky that we have developed public policy and accessible programs over the years that have been of assistance to many of them, changed many lives, in fact. They are unlucky because we constantly change the rules, the techniques we use, the values that we cherish and the presumptions that we make about service provision. We find ourselves unhappy with what we did last year or last week. Our lack of trust in what we have done causes us to respond to the philosophical winds that blow constantly. Each fresh breeze seems to carry with it an altered technique or even an altogether new profession.

Our obsession with heightened ability in our games of sport, in our university classrooms and on our televised award programs causes us to continually expect more from those whose ability is less than heroic. We cannot, it seems, settle back and allow ourselves and our consumers to be human. Our labels and our rules take us all to places not only unknown but also often ineffective.

What we have lost, it appears, is the belief in the listening ear and in the efficacy of good counsel. It is in the craft of counseling, after all, where this all began. When asked my profession, I first and foremost reply that I am a counselor. For nearly any personal, vocational, social, environmental, political or any other human problem which needs resolution, part of that resolution will be achieved through some form of counseling. When there is a tragedy, whether in New York City or Oklahoma City or in a school in Littleton, Colorado, the first thing officials do is call in the counselors. Thank God for that.

My plea is that we renew our respect and love for that profession and for the efficacy of good counseling for adjusting to, dealing with, coping with and otherwise solving human problems.

In my life I have not signed up for counseling services. I never made an appointment (like I do with the dentist) to receive counseling services. I never had to, not because I did not need counseling but because it has always been close at hand. I have been lucky in being able to get in the car or on the phone and find someone to talk to in my profession. The healing for me has not always been instant but it was indeed always assured. I do that reaching out when I need to even to this day. Sometimes I don't even realize that I am in need of counsel and that I am intuitively finding help.

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# COUNSELING: LOST ART, LOST VALUE

Richard P. Oestreich, PhD, President, NAC Board of Directors

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Here are some of the principles that have been the foundation of my own practice of counseling and what I look for in counselors whom I revere.

- > Life at its apex is about making someone else look good, bringing out the best in someone. Managers and friends and spouses sometimes forget that not all of life is a competition pitting oneself against everyone else to appear better, smarter, more quick witted or more prepared for a situation.
- > Let older people talk. Even from among those who have lost their memory, their sophistication and especially their position and rank, lessons can be learned. Listen! They also need reassurance and validation.
- > Realize what is the biggest thing on your plate. We all get way too involved in trivia and side issues. We forget that the trees we are hugging, stripping, chopping down or picking fruit off of are part of a large and well-populated forest.
- > Learn to trust in the future and in your ability to handle what it will bring. As the John Lennon song says: *"Life is what happens while your e planning something else"*. Advice about living in the present and not worrying about the future resurrects so many clichs that it is useless to go on about it.
- > Do not let people succeed in bringing you down who are not important in your life. Take seriously criticism from a good friend but not from a person who is speaking out of his or her own insecurity or a need for superiority.
- > Invest in your children. I have been unsuccessful in investing in anything more sophisticated than a savings account. I have failed in every other kind of investment I can think of. My best investment has been in my kids.

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# COUNSELING: LOST ART, LOST VALUE

Richard P. Oestreich, PhD, President, NAC Board of Directors

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- > Enjoy your work, your home and your friends. It is important to be in the right place. While work will always be, -- well, work; if you are in the right setting, it can be enjoyable and fulfilling. It is also often the commodity that has yielded the resources to purchase your home. Enjoy that place that you have worked so long and hard for. Your friends are indeed the reason for life. They range all the way from spouse to neighbor. Appreciate those relationships.
- > Know when to walk away from a bad thing. Too many of us have wallowed in unhappiness and anxiety, remaining too long in a marriage or at a job that is destructive and unfulfilling or demeaning.
- > Bury your regrets and grudges. None of them add to your mental or physical health. Forget those old slights and that long ago unfairness. Get over it. Since life is a series of adjustments anyway, -- adjust. Adjust your thinking, your behavior and your outlook. None of them is sacred after all.
- > Recognize and continue to wrestle with your dark side. We are all made up of the ying and yang of goodness and evil. Denying the dark side of our personalities denies a part of your being. Learn to forgive yourself and others and to tolerate that ungainly aspect that we all carry with us.
- > Appreciate the value of persistence and determination. As one sage has said:  
*"Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not. Nothing is more common than unsuccessful people with talent. Genius will not. Unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not. The world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent."*
- > Watch some baseball. It is an analogy for life.
- > Lastly, appreciate the entity that is the counseling relationship. It is valuable. It offers someone a piece of you. It may be the best gift that can be given whether in a work setting or a personal one.

**Richard P. Oestreich PhD**  
**Board President, NAC**

## NAC 2006 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## OUR MISSION...

- ¥ to develop standards which promote effective, sound, and publicly accountable programs of service, which help visually, disabled children and adults achieve their full potential,
- ¥ to ensure, through the accreditation process, that the standards are being met by programs of service which seek accreditation, and
- ¥ to give public recognition to those agencies and schools, which operate in compliance with the standards for accreditation.

The 2006 NAC Audit Report  
was compiled by  
George Csatory CPA, Inc.

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