



WORLD

Technology News and Commentary for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People



NETWORKING

Toward an Accessible Life

By Jim House on Page 12

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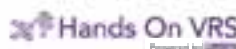
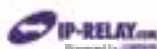
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TDI'S MISSION

"TDI provides leadership in achieving equal access to telecommunications, media, and information technologies for deaf and hard of hearing people."

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Board Views



BY DR. ROY MILLER
TDI President

I hope that the new fees will not be a terrible burden on any of our loyal members, but they will ensure the financial stability of TDI, thus allowing it to continue advocating for equal access to telecommunications, media and information technologies for deaf and hard of hearing people.

New TDI Membership Structure and Fees (Renew Now and Save!!!)

Absolutely nobody likes to do it, but there comes a time when an organization's fee structure must be revisited. And so it was with TDI. The membership dues were last raised in 1997, and they had been unchanged for years prior to that. During those thirteen years since the last fee raise, the Consumer Price Index had risen 36%, meaning that on average everything that TDI had to pay for (printing, postage, office rent, supplies, telephone and so forth) cost 36% more than it did in 1997. Something had to be done, and it was the responsibility of the TDI Board of Directors to do it.

When the cost of operations increases, for-profit companies compensate by raising the price of their products and services. They simply pass on to their consumers their added costs of doing business. Often they hike their prices on a fairly regular basis so the added costs are barely noticeable. For example, if an item costs \$100 and the store raises the price 3% (the average inflation rate for the past 100 years) to \$103, it doesn't draw a lot of attention. However, when a non-profit organization like TDI raises its membership dues only once a decade, the increase will necessarily be much larger and more noticeable. So, with that in mind, I have the unpleasant

task of announcing that beginning on January 1, 2011 the membership dues of TDI will increase.

Beyond simply increasing membership dues, the TDI Board reviewed the entire membership structure. As a result, several changes were made. First, currently TDI has "members" and "subscribers" with "members" receiving all the benefits of membership while "subscribers" receive only the TDI publications and nothing else. The Board felt that the term "subscriber" did not sufficiently recognize the contribution that those entities, mostly schools and libraries, were making to TDI and its mission. "Subscribers" contribute funds to the operating budget of TDI. They typically increase awareness of TDI and its mission among their users. In addition, they make TDI publications available to some persons who may not be able to afford membership in their own name. For these reasons, and more, the "subscribers" are an important part of the TDI family, and deserve a more appropriate label – one that recognizes their special contributions to TDI. Thus, beginning on January 1, 2011 the category of "subscriber" will be replaced by the new category of "affiliate member" of TDI.

Continued on page 3

TDI Membership Rate:

Effective January 1, 2011

	1 Year	2 Year
Individual – Regular (Age less than 60)	\$40.00	\$75.00
Individual – Senior Citizen (Age 60+)	\$30.00	\$55.00
Affiliate Member (Business/Nonprofit/School/Library/Government)	\$100.00	\$180.00
Lifetime (Individual - Any age)		\$1,000.00



Beat the increase! Renew at current rates today. See TDI membership form on page 27.

BOARD VIEWS Continued from page 2

A second change that was made in the membership structure was to eliminate the category of “Student.” This category was established back in the days when all memberships were mailed in to the TDI office, and it required that a person submit proof of their student status in order to qualify for the “Student” membership rate. While that was workable back in the “old days,” it will be nearly impossible to enforce after TDI unveils its new website and most people (hopefully) apply for and renew their membership online. This change will actually impact very few people as the number of “Student” members has been extremely small in the past.

A significant change concerns the issue of “Who is a member of TDI?” For as long as anyone can remember, the unit of membership in TDI has been the “residential household,” and that has been somewhat problematic for several reasons. One “household” may have only one person living there, while another “household” may have two (for example, a husband and wife), while yet another may have several people living there (for example, a husband, wife, three children, and grandma). This variable household size results in different people having different voting rights. For example, in

a one-person household, that person has one vote in TDI matters, but in a two-person household, each person has conceptually only one-half of a vote in TDI matters. This inequity needed to be resolved. Furthermore, what constituted a “household” was an issue subject to different views. There was general agreement that a husband and wife and their children constituted the core of a “household,” but did that term include distant relatives, partners, significant others, and so forth? Furthermore, the concept of “residential household” membership left open the possibility that in a household a husband could believe one way on a TDI matter but the wife could believe the opposite. What happens then? Who has the right to vote? In order to clarify matters the TDI Bylaws were changed, and the concept of “residential household” membership was replaced with the concept of “individual” membership. Starting January 1, 2011, every person who joins or renews their membership in TDI will be an “individual” member.

One important question could be asked about the change from “residential household” members to “individual” members, namely,

would that preclude spousal listings like “John and Janet Doe” in the Blue Book? The answer to that is “No,” for the membership application form has been revised to allow all members the right to list one other person living at the listed address. That person may be a spouse, partner, significant other or simply a roommate.

The last change in the membership structure was to add a long overdue “Lifetime Member” category. This will give people who want to show their strong support of TDI an opportunity to do so while eliminating the need to go through the renewal process annually or biennially. All lifetime members will receive all TDI benefits for their lifetime.

Therefore, with all those changes the new membership structure and rates are shown above.

As I said at the beginning, no one likes to raise fees, but sometimes it is a necessity. I hope that the new fees will not be a terrible burden on any of our loyal members, but they will ensure the financial stability of TDI, thus allowing it to continue advocating for equal access to telecommunications, media and information technologies for deaf and hard of hearing people.

Capitol Commentary



BY CLAUDE STOUT
TDI Executive Director

We are witnessing a remarkable transformation of the deaf and hard of hearing population with respect to online social interaction and personal relationships.

TDI is a Social Animal Too!

Are you on FaceBook? TDI is too! Check it out by searching “TDIforAccess” and catch up with TDI’s activities in Washington, D.C. Do you tweet on Twitter? Follow “TDIforAccess” and get news about TDI. What about YouTube? Search for “TDIforAccess” and watch our vlogs.

We are witnessing a remarkable transformation of the deaf and hard of hearing population with respect to online social interaction and personal relationships. Twenty years ago, probably no one could have foreseen that we would be staying in touch with our friends and relatives on the Internet. Fifty years ago, the only way we could see our deaf and hard of hearing friends was to start up the car and drive to their house. If they were home, they usually opened the door wide and welcomed us warmly. Some of us even had to have our hearing parents call our deaf friend’s hearing parents to arrange social activities, including dates. Nowadays we can get in touch with our friends and relatives almost instantaneously, regardless of where they are. Just a few days ago, I was reunited with a former classmate on Facebook after thirty-six years. Last December, at an FCC Video Relay forum, people in the room sent out hundreds of tweets so that other advocates around the country could track new developments on Twitter as they were occurring during the forum.

Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other online social networks give us direct access to our friends and relatives. Even news organizations are looking for news on the social networks the same way that years ago they used to listen to police radio scanners. It does not cost anything to participate

in these social networks. Our ability to pass along interesting newspaper articles, short video clips and other items to a wide variety of people were very limited until social networks came along. Now each time we forward something, our contacts can forward it repeatedly to their networks of family and friends. Businesses, organizations, government agencies, schools, colleges and universities are embracing these online tools to promote their services and resources. TDI is joining in this exciting new experience.

TDI stays in touch with its constituents by sharing its legislative or regulatory advocacy work in the nation’s capitol. Our constituents and everyone else need to know what we do every day on their behalf. If we need some action from our members across America, we can use Facebook and Twitter to help get their attention, and encourage participation by members in our consumer advocacy campaigns in Washington, DC. Up to now, we have produced several vlogs to inform our members and friends about issues that are important to them, such as relay services, the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act, and other matters. It is TDI’s policy to present information on its vlogs using sign language, voice over, and captions in order to make our messages accessible to everyone. Our vlogs also help put a human face on our efforts.

TDI sees a great potential in the use of Facebook and other social networks. Possible future applications could include promoting fund raising efforts, such as walkathons, or hosting interactive discussions

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As of 1/1/2009, VRS and IP Relay users are required to register their address and to obtain a ten digit telephone number. Users can change providers at any time and retain the same number. Users should keep their address information updated for emergency 911 calls. For more details, please visit www.att.com/relay. ©2009 AT&T Intellectual Property. All rights reserved.

CAPITOL COMMENTARY Continued from page 4

on special access issues. Twitter could be used for reporting problems with captioning on TV programs or to highlight best practices in providing access. Future vlogs could cover daily reports from our biennial conference, or promote participation in TDI online surveys.

Finally yet importantly, social networking tools give TDI the capability to generate new members, and create interest and awareness on standing issues with federal agencies like the FCC, the U.S. Department of Justice, which oversees the Americans with Disabilities Act, or the U.S. Department of Transportation, which handles air travel access issues and next generation 9-1-1 concerns. And someday we may be able to offer online advocacy training workshops and emergency preparedness classes.

After all, TDI was established in 1968 for much the same purpose as social networks of today. More than 40 years ago, TDI was founded with the purpose of distributing used



TDI uses social media outlets like YouTube, above, to better communicate with and educate its members.

teletypewriters to deaf people so that they could interact over the telephone and to facilitate that interaction by developing a nationwide directory of

people with TTYs. Thus, TDI helped form an important social network among deaf people. Over the years, the directory has grown to accommodate businesses, libraries, government offices, and others who want to promote their products and services to people who are deaf or hard of hearing, first by means of the TTY and now by using email, fax, pager, captioned telephone, or videophone. We look forward to expanding our network with the new social networking tools that we find on the Internet.

Now you know that TDI is a social animal too! We care about you, and everyone is special to us in our work! We want to reach out to you, and to learn more about your everyday experiences concerning access or lack thereof in your community. Let us know how we can be of more help and support for you on the Internet.

Contribution Form



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Accessible Tech



BY JAMES HOUSE
TDI World Editor

For more than 40 years, TDI has been pushing the envelope to meet everyone's need for greater access to telecommunications and media.

Innovation + Creativity = Access

Cell phones are becoming mini-TVs. TVs are becoming computer monitors. On your laptop, you can do a video call to a deaf or hearing friend in one window while watching a captioned movie in another window. Does that make your laptop a computer, phone or TV? Telecommunications access is now blending together with media access. These latest trends in information technology certainly could be confusing for some people.

Technological innovation is an ongoing thing. In many cases, each bit of innovation brings us closer to accessibility. However, more often than not, vendors fail to include vital accessibility features until after receiving complaints from consumers. Retrofitting adds a substantial cost to devices, an unnecessary cost that manufacturers pass on to consumers. Some say let the marketplace dictate when to include accessibility features, and then to include only those that seem to be the easiest. This approach has resulted in a patchwork of accessible devices and websites, and we just do not know what we may find. For example, one nice surprise for me was finding out by accident that my laptop DVD player displays captioning. However, another laptop may not have this feature.

Over the years, TDI has played a role in shaping an accessible world, especially through the development of laws and regulations that have an enormous impact on our daily lives through technology. TDI also has consistently presented the message to industry that it is better to incorporate access features in the beginning when designing a product or service with input from qualified people with disabilities than to rely on a retrofitting strategy to deliver accessibility.

TDI also tries to communicate this message to today's students who will become designers of tomorrow. What at first seems to come to mind of many typical engineering students is "How spectacular can I make this gadget?" They may be thinking of bells and whistles, something like how many neat functions can they cram into a device that fits into the palm of your hand? This kind of innovation may generate sales over the short term, but once the early adopters have had their say, the sales may flatline unless there is an obvious benefit for others to buy.

Universal design is not necessarily designing something for everyone for it is true that one size does not always fit all. People buy things to meet their specific needs. By carrying a line of products with some diversity, you should be able to meet nearly everyone's needs.

Whoever asks the question, "How can I get more people to buy and enjoy this thingamajig?" could definitely be a winner. By focusing more on the usability of the device than the "shock and awe" factor, production goals will become more realistic. Successful people understand that they are not out to sell products or services per se, but provide solutions to specific problems. When designers become solution-oriented, the resulting products and services become more in harmony with the customers' needs.

The catalyst for accessible design began with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). This is not only a civil rights law, but it is also a law that inspires creativity and celebrates true access. According to Diversity, Inc., in a survey by the John J. Heldrich Center for Work Force Development at Rutgers University, the average cost of adapting the workplace to meet the needs of an employee with a disability

ACCESSIBLE TECH Continued from page 8

is \$500 or less. One example on the low-end of the spectrum, instead of buying a new hi-tech adjustable height desk for an employee using a wheelchair, one can easily implement a lo-tech solution with several small 2" x 4" pieces of lumber and raise the desk by putting them under the legs. In addition, three out of four employers who hired an employee with disability reported no need to make any workplace accommodations. Each individual solution is different and when all parties are involved, the outcome is usually successful.

For more than 40 years, TDI has been pushing the envelope to meet everyone's need for greater access to telecommunications and media. TDI is always developing new ways to communicate with our

members and friends. For example, TDI recently began producing "Its Our World Too!" video blogs (or vlogs) to explain recent events or activities of government regulators and industry leaders. Since not all of TDI's members use sign language, the Board of Directors and TDI staff agreed that each vlog had to be made totally accessible with captioning and voice over in addition to sign language. When TDI posts a new vlog on the web, we send out an eNote announcing the vlog and providing the YouTube link.

The ADA is a law that promotes creativity. It usually does not specify exactly how one is to do things in order to provide accessibility, but it tells us to get the job done with whatever resources we have. The US Department of Justice is responsible for enforcing most of the ADA, and



like TDI, the agency prefers to work with entities and provide resources to help them understand the spirit of the law in order to comply with the letter of the law. When it comes to providing access, it all simply boils down to just doing the right thing.

TDI works with consumers, government officials and industry leaders in promoting access to telecommunications, media and information technology. Please join TDI and help us shape an accessible world with you.

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MARYLAND



NETWORKING

Toward an Accessible Life

JIM HOUSE
MANAGING EDITOR

In the past several years, social networking has entered a new dimension. With the advent of FaceBook, Twitter, YouTube and other online forums, people are connecting – and reconnecting in many ways. Building upon our past relationships, these new online social networks allow people to connect on many different levels. When I say “building upon past relationships”, I can point to the example that I recently connected with about a dozen classmates from my

elementary school years – at a school 3,000 miles away. Little did we know back then that we would be able to find each other on the computer in later life.

Our social sphere is shaped by our family, friends, coworkers and peers who belong to the same organizations as we do. When I was in college, my career counselor advised me to network. Use people that you already know as links to get a better job. The theory is that the more people you meet, the better your chances are of finding that dream job.

Online social networking can put deaf people on an equal footing with people

who are hearing. When you try to make new contacts, the social networks minimize chances for a blooper or awkward exchange occurring as it sometimes does when you meet a hearing person for the first time. Unless you tell them up front, with online networking no one has to know you have a hearing disability.

With the recent activities in Congress surrounding H.R. 3101, more people were able to participate in the debates, review the facts for themselves, and through online networking encourage their elected representatives to support

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the bill on the floor. Last summer, TDI conference planners took the opportunity to give people who attended the TDI conference the hands on experience of visiting Congress representatives and asking them to co-sponsor or support H.R. 3101. That might seem like an ordinary advocacy day where dozens of people visit the Capitol as part of an organized outing, but looks can be deceiving.

The group from the TDI Conference not only carried the message "we need equal access," but they also carried the voices of an army of people like you and me, unseen but heard from across the country. Through online social networks, those of us who could not go to the Capitol in person kept up with the news concerning this legislation that will expand our hard-fought access on legacy telephone services and TV captioning to the new Internet-based telecommunications and media applications. Many people spend a certain amount of time every day to review the news that comes through the online social media networks. The news often takes on a special meaning for them because it came from their friends on Facebook or Twitter, not from strangers they only know from TV. Whether there is a hearing at the Federal Communications Commission building or in a Congressional office building, the online social networks can bring the issues to people almost real-time, in a way that email never can achieve. Here are two examples.

TAYLER MAYER is probably 'the king' of deaf online media. Tayler is the person behind TaylerInfomedia, a web development company (www.taylerinfomedia.com). Between clients, he has produced websites benefiting the deaf community: Relay Review, Gallaudet President Watch, CalDeaf.com, deafologue, DeafThat!, DeafRead (www.deafread.com), DeafVIDEO.TV (www.deafvideo.tv) Deaf-Tube (www.deaf-tube.com), and Fomdi, a theatrical captioned movie database at



TAYLER MAYER'S EMPIRE

www.taylerinfomedia.com is the brainchild of Tayler Mayer (left).

Mayer has produced several websites benefiting the deaf community including:

- Relay Review
- Gallaudet President Watch
- CalDeaf.com
- Deafologue
- DeafThat!
- DeafRead
- Deafvideo.tv
- Deaf-Tube
- Fomdi

www.fomdi.com.

The DeafRead blog collects online blogs from deaf people. The DeafVideo and Deaf-Tube vlog websites empower the deaf community through posting sign language video blogs from people who have webcams but maybe not the technical knowledge to run a blog website. After four years online, Tayler reports that DeafRead receives an average of 1,000 hits a day, while his other website, DeafVideo has logged an average of 3,750 hits a day during the three years since its launch. Those two websites are his main avenues for sharing information, but sometimes he uses Facebook and Twitter to direct traffic to websites in the TaylerInfoMedia online empire.

JAMIE BERKE is another avid blogger who knows the value of online social networks. For years, she moderated the captioning website at www.captions.org and a public captioning listserv on Yahoo. These activities and her current stint as the Deafness Guide on About.com (<http://deafness.about.com>) grew out of her advocacy experience with Caption Action from 1989 to 1991. Back before the Internet even existed, she along with Stuart Gopen and Andrea Shettle initiated a petition and letter drive that amassed reams of signatures,

and encouraged Hollywood studios to caption their home videotape movies voluntarily. Studios were not required to caption movies, but they learned about the strong passion for captioning from that nationwide grassroots effort.

With the backing of Robert Goodwin, Ms. Berke revived Caption Action in response to Netflix's initial refusal to caption its downloadable videos. Coincidentally, the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act was introduced about the same time. Sensing a bigger opportunity, they expanded Caption Action's mission to push the legislation. Caption Action 2, became a blog that educates and informs about the importance of online captioning. Hottest topics at first seemed to be about representatives who did not support H.R. 3101, mostly because they did not see the need as we do. In the final version of the bill, the requirement to caption television programming on the Internet remained intact while the requirement was dropped for captioning direct-to-Internet videos.

"Social networking has been THE key to success for Caption Action 2," asserts Jamie Berke. She adds,

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“Caption Action 2 started as a FaceBook cause after H.R. 3101 was introduced. Then the blog started in early July 2009. The ‘deaf grapevine’ is now online, so advocacy efforts have to be online as well.”

Jamie and Robert maintain Caption Action 2 at <http://captionaction2.blogspot.com> as well as tweets on Twitter in addition to FaceBook. Videos, television and TV shows online were important milestones for Caption Action and online video series is the next logical goal for Jamie. Based on her past successes in Tinseltown and other accomplishments over the years, we know she will do well in boosting the number of captioned video series.

So far, we have just barely scratched the surface on the power of online social networking. As you can see elsewhere in this issue, TDI was created to distribute used teletypewriters (TTY’s) and a directory of TTY numbers to facilitate social networking among deaf people. Over the years, technology has changed, and TDI has consistently incorporated emergent technologies into its networking toolbox such as TDIforAccess in FaceBook, Twitter and YouTube. As you read other articles, you will see other organizations touting its online social network activities, such as Northern Virginia Resource Center’s history. Also read about the experience of the Coalition of Organizations for Accessible Technology (COAT) – an experience that included the creation of a formidable coalition consisting of over 300 organizations using primarily online tools that resulted in its recent success in getting a Congressional bill passed in just three short years. Indeed, online networking is effective and here to stay, and TDI invites you to join us online and help shape an accessible world!

“Social networking has been THE key to success for Caption Action 2.”

– Jamie Berke



Jamie Berke (above)
is the deafness guide on About.com.

FROM BBS TO EMAIL NEWS:

For Over 18 Years, Help Is Only a Keystroke Away



BY CHERYL HEPPNER
AND DEBBIE JONES

NVRC News grew from our taking over a bulletin board service (BBS) called TEDI-Net that had been operated by one of the nation's first volunteer relay services. This organization was phased out when Virginia set up its own state telecommunications relay services approximately 18 years ago, and NVRC was asked to take over its TEDI-Net.

Computers and Internet connections were still in the rather primitive stage, so the BBS had only about 30 participants. Many of them were government employees using their work computers. Operating the BBS taught us three very important things. One was the speed and ease with which BBS information could be sent to several people at the same time, even using a dial-up connection. The second was



how powerful the network of individuals using the BBS could be. Everyone could share information, ideas and concerns. Third, that collaboration helped tremendously to solve problems, learn about new developments and provide leads to previously unknown resources.

The TEDI-Net was eventually replaced with our e-mail news service using America Online (AOL). As more individuals began to get online and learned about our news service, the subscriber list grew and we discovered

tools that are even more valuable. One was the ability to send out action alerts to an ever-larger group of people. Another was the ability to use the service to evaluate our programs and services with simple online surveys. To me, the most useful tool was the dialogue with readers who sent comments, asked questions, offered advice and gave compliments. It helped us keep my fingers on the pulse of the community we serve on a daily basis. Moreover, it gave us a lot of insight about what NVRC needed to be ready to do to continue meeting their growing and changing needs.

Editor's Note: TEDI-Net was moderated by Randy Mays, a volunteer with TEDI and then NVRC. The BBS had a captioning subgroup led by TDI's own Jim House who was with WJLA TV for several years. Then he handed the reins over to Jamie Berke who converted

Continued on page 18



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Continued from page 14

the subgroup to a stand-alone Yahoo discussion group. Today, as a thriving forum moderated by David Pierce, a video producer from Texas, the Yahoo Captioning group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Captioning/> welcomes professionals, consumers and students alike.

LISTSERVS

Subscribing to listservs on various topics has also given us perspective on what current hot topics are as well as an early warning system about new issues affecting our community and whether they are common across the U.S. or just regional. It has also helped us identify subject matter experts to go to when we need specific expertise or opinions.

WEBSITE

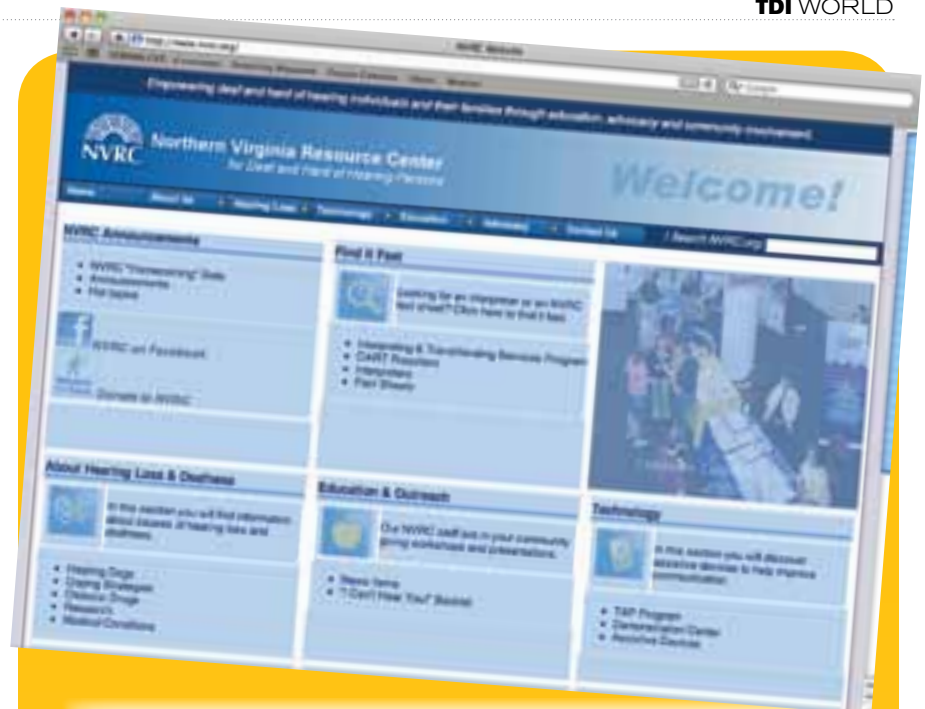
Our website, now in its fourth incarnation, has been phenomenal in helping us get information to the public and do it in a much more efficient way. As an example, it contains many of our fact sheets and our databases of area organizations serving individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families, as well as area providers for sign language interpreting and CART and accessible places of worship. Instead of individuals having to call or email us to get this information, they can download and print it straight from our website at www.nvrc.org.

FACEBOOK

This year we began building our visibility by establishing a presence on Facebook and we have seen steady growth there. What is interesting is that many of the people who get our email news also follow us on Facebook and seem to enjoy both.

FUTURE GOALS

We are currently in the process of rebuilding our website, which could die at any moment due to server failure. One of the goals is to add staff blogs and we will significantly beef up our advocacy section.



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- CART Reporters
- Interpreters
- Fact Sheets

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- Hearing Dogs
- Coping Strategies
- Ototoxic Drugs
- Research
- Medical Conditions

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

Our NVRC staff are in your community giving workshops and presentations.

- News Items
- "I Can't Hear You!" Booklet

TECHNOLOGY

In this section you will discover assistive devices to help improve communication.

- TAP Program
- Demonstration Center
- Assistive Devices

COMMUNITY

- Celebrate Communication

ADVOCACY & ACCESS

In this section you'll find ways to advocate for yourself.

- Action Alerts

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A NEW FACE AT TDI

TDI has appointed Robert McConnell as its new Member Services and Advertising Manager, carrying on an important role for the organization, its membership and its publications. Having grown up with a keyboard in his hands, Robert is no stranger to accessible technology - and he's still holding on to his BlackBerry. Even in his boyhood days, McConnell found ways to make his world more accessible via technology.

One of Robert's first computing memories is logging into the now-defunct CompuServe online service on his parents' then state-of-the-art IBM-PC XT in 1987. In a few months, he had figured out how to enable his PC's modem to communicate with TTYs and made his first call to his father at work via the state relay service - all from his PC's command line. From there, he quickly transitioned to dialing into local Bulletin Board Systems (BBSes), which were computer systems run by local computer hobbyists. BBSes were an embryonic form of what the Internet would end up becoming two decades later, being the first services to provide text-mode chats, interactive games and file sharing via one's own computer. At the age of twelve, Robert was operating his own BBS - aptly named 'The Genie's Lamp,' due to the phone flasher that he had hooked up to his phone line so he would know whenever someone was calling in. Two decades later, McConnell is still on the cutting edge of accessible technology.

As a product of the Model Secondary School for the Deaf and Gallaudet University, McConnell has shown his commitment in a variety of roles to aid the deaf and hard-of-hearing community worldwide. As an undergraduate student at



Robert McConnell

Gallaudet, McConnell served as Student Government President and was instrumental in establishing Gallaudet's first-ever Diversity Week, along with chairing two college student leadership conferences and helping reunify a fractured university campus after the 2006 protests. Additionally, McConnell also interned for the Gallaudet Interpreting Service and in the office of Gallaudet's Vice President of Administration & Finance.

After graduating from Gallaudet, McConnell went to work in the Netherlands for a technology firm specializing in total conversation solutions for deaf and hard-of-hearing. While now based back in the United States, he has continued to advocate for equal rights to telecommunications for deaf and hard-of-hearing

individuals in the Netherlands and Belgium - including text and video relay solutions. Toward this goal, he has presented at the DeafNation World Expo on the state of Deaf Telephony in Europe, discussing the possibilities that lie ahead for Europe's deaf and hard-of-hearing population. With a deep commitment to all individuals with hearing loss, McConnell has dedicated his career to ensuring that Deaf people will never be overlooked again.

"This is a golden opportunity to see TDI grow and prosper through its tireless work in advocacy. We will continue to exceed the expectations of our members and the TDI Board," Robert says. He adds, "I am truly excited to help realize TDI's bright future!"

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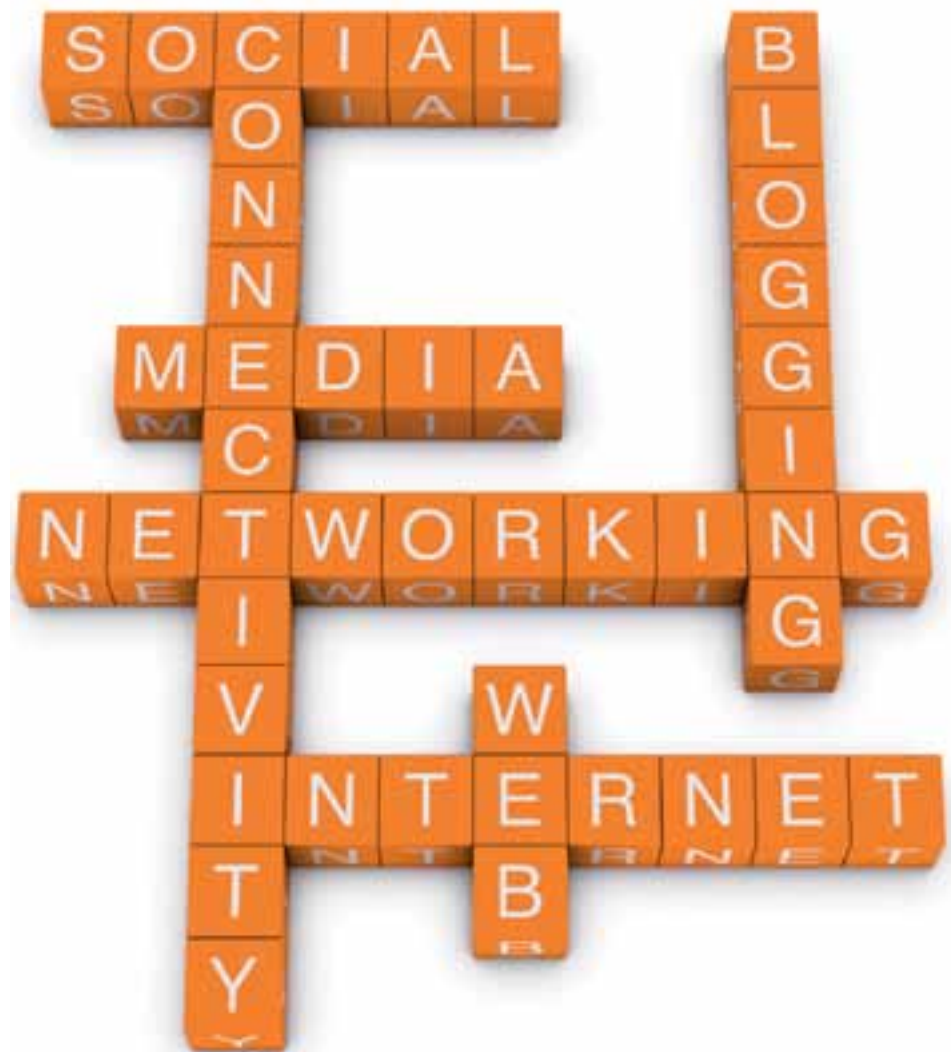
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Providing Equal Access to Telecommunications
For People who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Blind, and Deafblind

COAT and Electronic Social Media

BY JENIFER SIMPSON, AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (AAPD)

When AAPD committed itself to using the new electronic social media as a way to organize and empower the disability community, I decided to take the charge very seriously. Since AAPD is a founding and steering committee member of the Coalition of Organizations for Accessible Technology (COAT) I immediately volunteered to be that sort of contributor to our overall advocacy and outreach effort. It has been both a learning experience and a success, I believe.

COAT has developed a strong online presence. We have a FaceBook group that anyone can join, where you can add and see photos of what we are up to, start discussions, publicize events and activities and just check in to see what is going on. Our FaceBook group focuses obviously on communications technology accessibility since that is what the Coalition is all about but the "Comment" features allow for a lot



of conversation and friendliness! We started this FaceBook group in the summer of 2009, and now have more than 510 COAT friends. One of the more interesting features of a FaceBook group is the ability to mail out to all the members and we have used this for our Action Alerts and Announcements, particularly concerning the legislation we are striving for.

We update this FaceBook group at least two or three times a week and include items that point to the URL for the full

story on the COAT website. However, we encourage all the FaceBook COAT friends to contribute, discuss and otherwise engage. Since a significant number of these COAT FaceBook friends are people who would not have known about COAT's agenda for accessibility of communications technology we are providing a great service to both the disability community and others by this means.

Recently I added the Poll application or widget to the COAT FaceBook page. There is a poll anyone can take that asks you to reply "Yes" or "No" to the following question: "Industry reps constantly say making technology accessible shackles them

Continued on page 24

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Continued from page 22

and stifles innovation. What do you think?" Take the poll at <http://apps.FaceBook.com/opinionpolls/index.php?pid=1274154452> and see the results! Since this is new, I am not sure how this will work out, but like with all new things, it is a project in process!

Before we created a FaceBook group, we were twittering about COAT activities. The COAT Twitter name is @coataccess on www.twitter.com. The tweeting started about a year ago and we now have over 870 "followers" of COAT on the tweetfeed. We have tweeted almost 2,500 "140 character or less" messages on this and many of them are read and retweeted many times over. @coataccess also re-tweets other groups' news since we follow TDI (@TDIforAccess) and National Association of the Deaf (@NADtweets) and other disability advocacy groups that have an account on Twitter.

One of the more fun things I did was tweet my way through the "ADA in the Digital Age" House Hearing on April 22, 2010 so people received "live news" if they were following along on Twitter. Interestingly, the captioning feed online broke down so people watching or listening to the online hearing online missed some of the conversations. However, those who were following along on Twitter.com did receive the live tweets, as a quasi-substitute for the captioning online! @Coataccess is tweeted at least every other day and there is a feature where anyone can go read all the tweets at once if they want to catch up on news of that topic.

Conversations also develop via Twitter.com participants and it is great to see so many people announcing what they are doing to support HR 3101 or S. 3304 when we put out a twitter asking people to participate. Sometimes people ask a question about the legislation and I am able to answer it right away. Since I am the main twitterer for COAT, I also announce things I see that COAT affiliates are doing. What I do is go take a look at



"I think the main purpose of these electronic social media tools is to keep ourselves informed and to stay connected in new ways."

– Jenifer Simpson

a COAT affiliate website and if I see something interesting I will tweet it, as in "COAT Affiliate XYZ has an auction" or "COAT affiliate sent letter re HR 3101" or an announcement like "COAT welcomes latest affiliate Wyoming Blind Citizens" or whatever. This is a way to build up our community and let the world know who we are. Like FaceBook, Twitterworld has millions of participants and you just never know who is getting the messages and learning about us, our concerns, and what COAT stands for! I see this as a great way to publicize the efforts of our marvelous disability coalition.

I also have my own personal tweet, @jeniferjs, which covers more general things that I am interested in. For instance, I will talk about my garden, or cooking, or my son with cerebral palsy,

or re-tweet some juicy item about the best and worst of "The Real Housewives of NJ" or whatever. Sometimes I re-tweet a @acoataccess tweet onto this Twitter feed, so it is another way to let the world know about our technology accessibility agenda. I personally have over 750 followers and follow about the same number of people. I find Twitter a great way to learn what news is trending and what people are generally thinking.

Before FaceBook and Twitter, we started with the COAT website at www.coataccess.org. This is the granddaddy of our online electronic presence. It houses all our white papers, press releases, notices, announcements etc. This archives is a veritable mine of

Continued on page 26

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Continued from page 24

COAT's activities since its inception in March 2007, and includes a search feature that will take you to an item of interest. The website format is a blog-style so there is a continuous stream of new information added to the website. What I do is Tweet and FaceBook to the stories on the website as well, pointing to the URL (using the tiny URL makers) to make sure people know what is going on.

For instance, a recent story, "Report Finds Five State Benefits' Websites Inaccessible to People with Disabilities," at www.coataccess.org/node/9811 was also tweeted and put up as an announcement on Facebook. Within hours, there are hundreds more readers of this story. Of course, there is a list of all our affiliates on the website, with their own website URL, if they have one, and this includes our "International Friends of COAT." Because of the forward thinking on the COAT agenda, there is little doubt that what we are doing will have a global impact, so it is great to know we have such Friends!

As an additional service to COAT affiliates, I also take all the COAT website updates and news and put them out to the private, members' only COAT affiliate email list about once every 10 days. This is all the stories and news, with the Headline, and the website URL. There are many people who are not active via FaceBook or Twitter, so this is one other way to be sure our COAT affiliate representatives get the news, know what's going on and participate. This email list is through Yahoo, and sometimes some interesting conversations develop about these items! We know that many members take up these news items and repost them in affiliate newsletters for further circulation.

COAT's website at www.coataccess.org also includes an online petition for

COAT: AN ADVOCATE FOR ACCESS



COAT uses its web site to advocate for legislative and regulatory safeguards that will ensure full access by people with disabilities to evolving high speed broadband, wireless and other Internet Protocol (IP) technologies.

individuals to show their support for the legislation we are advancing and to date, since inception of the petition feature over a year and a half ago, we have garnished 8,000 signatures! I cannot wait for the day when we reach 10,000 signatures, I can print this off as a giant scroll and we can publicize that!

More recently, I formed a COAT group on LinkedIn, the website contact site for professionals at www.linkedin.com. Very quickly, we had over 50 individuals join, and there are some discussions, news items and other material available there as well.

I think the main purpose of these electronic social media tools is to keep ourselves informed and to stay connected in new ways. I do not think this is a substitute for good old-fashioned real-time meetings, phone calls and email conversations. These

new tools allow us to keep a record of what we are doing, allow others to know what we stand for, keep in contact with others and learn what everyone is thinking. It is thrilling for instance; that we have COAT FaceBook friends from Bangladesh; that we have Twitter followers who write for the *New York Times* or are moms in Arkansas; and that over 9,000 people read our Hearing Aid Compatibility white paper is also remarkable.

I hope this account encourages you to join on Twitter.com or become a FaceBook friend. If you are concerned about privacy and security, that is good. Do a little searching online with how to protect yourself and just take those steps for your own piece of mind. COAT takes all the steps it can to secure the COAT website and we use the privacy controls on FaceBook as appropriate. The rest of it is just fun!



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TDI In Action

September – November 2009

Telecommunications Access

- In early September through October and November, TDI and other parties held a series of high-level meetings on behalf of consumers at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The advocates met with Mark Stone, Deputy Chief and other officials at Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau and Sherrese Smith, Senior Legal Advisor for Media, Consumer and Enforcement Issues in Chairman Genachowski's office to discuss the need for a summit to address continuing problems with the iTRS and VRS numbering system. In addition, the consumer advocates conferred with Chairman Genachowski on issues such as TDI's petition on closed captioning quality standards, captioned telephone relay service, Next Generation 9-1-1, H.R. 3101, the National Broadband Plan (NBP) and the need to consider disability access issues in all aspects and actions of the FCC.
- On September 10, TDI, American Association of Deaf-Blind (AADB), Association of Late Deafened Adults (ALDA), California Coalition of Agencies Serving Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CCASDHH), Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA), National Association of the Deaf (NAD) and Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network (DHHCAN) filed reply comments with the FCC responding to Sorenson's petition for declaratory ruling or limited waiver of the Commission's rules on the iTRS numbering system. The Consumer Groups supported the proposal by Sorenson that the FCC allows the IP TRS providers

to assign numbers to their users from nearby rate centers in instances when geographically appropriate numbers are not available.

- Disability advocates, TDI, ALDA, NAD, HLAA, AADB, CCASDHH, DHHCAN and American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) jointly filed a letter on September 11 to FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski supporting Purple's petition for clarification of rules regarding marketing practices of VRS providers and conference calls, and whether calls made in either area are reimbursable from the TRS (Telecommunications Relay Service) Fund.



- During the month of October, Claude Stout and Jim House attended Snap!VRS/Viable Open House events at their offices in Rockville, Maryland and at their satellite center in Baltimore.



- On October 13, TDI, ALDA, NAD, HLAA, AADB, CCASDHH, DHHCAN and Communication Services for the Deaf (CSD) jointly filed comments with the FCC in response to the notice of inquiry regarding truth-in-billing issues. The Consumer Groups urged the Commission to take action to ensure sufficient access to information about communication services and products for individuals with disabilities and to provide greater outreach and education to

consumers, service providers and manufacturers about accessibility issues.

- TDI, ALDA, NAD, HLAA, AADB, CCASDHH and DHHCAN jointly filed an application for review with the FCC on October 19 opposing the CGB decision to dismiss in part a petition by Purple related to multi-party conference calls. We requested the FCC to reverse the Bureau's decision and issue a public notice requesting comment on the entire Purple petition.
- TDI issued an eNote on October 21, publicizing an update from T-Mobile regarding service outage for its Sidekick customers.
- TDI issued another eNote on October 22 to encourage everyone to register for a ten-digit telephone number before the November 12 deadline.
- TDI, ALDA, NAD, HLAA, AADB, CCASDHH and DHHCAN filed comments on October 27 and a supplementary petition on November 12 supporting CSDVRS' petition for expedited reconsideration and petitioned the FCC for an emergency stay of the FCC's August 11, 2009 public notice ordering removal of toll free numbers from the iTRS numbering database.





TDI In Action

September - November 2009

Continued from page 28

- On November 2, TDI, CCASDHH, and DHHCAN met at the FCC with officials of the Consumer and Governmental Affairs and Wireline Competition Bureaus to discuss:

1. 800 number issues with the iTRS numbering system
2. Granting hearing people ten-digit numbers for their video devices from the iTRS numbering system
3. Application for review regarding the CGB's dismissal in part of Purple's petition related to conference calls
4. Lack of an IP-Relay dial-around procedure if an IP-Relay user wishes to place a call through a provider other than the user's default IP-Relay provider
5. Purple's request to extend mandatory registration beyond the November 12 deadline

- On November 5, TDI and representatives from the American Speech, Language, Hearing Association (ASHA), HLAA, AAPD, DHHCAN



U.S. Representative Jay Inslee (D-Washington)

and CCASDHH met with Mark Stone, CGB Bureau Deputy Chief, Policy, at the FCC to discuss the supplemental petition seeking a mandate for a public switched telephone network (PSTN) based form of captioned telephone relay service.

- TDI and NAD met on November 9 with David Bahar, who is a Legislative Aide with the office of U.S. Representative Jay Inslee (D-Wash), to review a draft of a legislative bill aiming to reform how the FCC oversees the TRS program.

- TDI and NAD met with advisors to FCC Commissioners Clyburn and Copps on November 17 to discuss 800 number issues with the iTRS numbering system.



FCC Commissioner Mignon Clyburn

- On November 19, upon learning of the arrest of 26 people in several states for their alleged participation in VRS fraud schemes, TDI sent an email to key officials of the FCC thanking them for making clear that the VRS program remains an important form of relay service.



FCC Commissioner Michael J. Copps

- TDI, ALDA, NAD, DHHCAN, CCASDHH, AADB and HLAA submitted comments on November 30 with the FCC opposing the petition for clarification and declaratory ruling by Sorenson Communications. Sorenson asked the Commission to clarify that only one VRS provider would be allowed to assign ten-digit telephone numbers to any particular iTRS device and to each

IP address regardless of how many devices operate at that address.

Policy and Advocacy

- On September 9, TDI, NAD and CSD met with the new FCC Commissioner, Mignon L. Clyburn. We introduced our respective groups and gave a short briefing on our efforts for new leadership and additional resources for the Disability Rights Office (DRO) at the FCC.



- TDI hosted a meeting with representatives from the Norwegian Association of the Deaf, led by Paal Richard Peterson and Hilde Haualand on September 16. Our counterparts were interested to learn about TDI's work over the years in consumer advocacy, policy development with the FCC, and collaboration with industry and other consumer groups on technology and needs assessment.

- On October 23, TDI issued an eNote congratulating Dr. T. Alan Hurwitz, a former TDI Board Member, on his appointment as the tenth president of Gallaudet University.



Dr. T. Alan Hurwitz, tenth President of Gallaudet University and former TDI Board Member

- On November 3, Executive Director, Claude Stout spoke at Gallaudet to a graduate school social



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work class about TDI and its ongoing advocacy work in the nation's capital. He stressed the value of coalition work, using DHHCAN as an example. The students were in a course called Social Change, taught by Professor Dr. Martha Sheridan, a former ADARA representative in DHHCAN meetings.

- TDI was well represented at an AADB fundraiser on November 12 in Bethesda, Maryland.
- TDI issued an eNote on November 13, unveiling a new DHHCAN action guide on air travel for deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind travellers.

Media Access

- On October 28, TDI followed up on an email from a constituent to the FCC complaining about missing captions on its webcast video on September 25.
- In early November, Claude Stout and Jim House exchanged emails with Dr. Lauren Storck, who formed an online advocacy resource, called Collaborative for Communication Access for People with Hearing Loss. She wants to see more effort across America in captioning and CART for those who do not use sign language.
- TDI issued an eNote to announce inauguration of TDI's new vlog, "It's Our World!" This first vlog on November 5 focused on H.R. 3101, "21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2009."
- Jim House represented TDI at an event in Google's DC offices on November 19. As owner of



YouTube, Google announced that it was rolling out a program designed to insert captions on YouTube videos. Using automatic speech recognition, YouTube can generate a caption file that displays text for captioning along with the time code for display by matching the text in the file with the spoken dialogue. If no script was available, the speech recognition program can generate captions for you but accuracy would depend on several factors such as clarity of speech, background noises, etc. One caveat, the auto captions does not do capitalization or punctuation. Furthermore, YouTube can translate the captions into 51 languages. The consensus among TDI and other advocates is that it is a good step forward even if further work is needed.



Emergency Preparedness



- TDI and CEPIN announced in an eNote on September 15 new workshops during the National Preparedness Month. The CEPIN training classes were held in Olathe, Kansas, Ames, Iowa and Little Rock, Arkansas.
- In late September, the CEPIN team attended, presented and exhibited at the enABLED in Emergencies Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

National Broadband Plan



- On September 10, TDI through DHHCAN was represented at the FCC's Consumer Advisory Committee meeting, which covered FCC reform and the National Broadband Plan.
- TDI participated in the FCC's workshop on October 20 titled, Broadband Accessibility for People with Disabilities II: Barriers, Opportunities and Policy Recommendations. Comments gathered in this workshop helped assist the FCC in developing the National Broadband Plan.

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- On October 29, TDI signed up as a member of Broadband for America. This national coalition is pushing the federal government to come up with a national policy in broadband. Michael Powell, a former FCC Chairman, is Co-Chair of this coalition.
- TDI, ALDA, NAD, HLAA, AADB, CCASDHH, AAPD and DHHCAN jointly filed comments to the FCC on November 12, responding to its public notice for the National Broadband Plan. The Consumer Groups commented whether broadband technologies are available for us to communicate with emergency responders better when we make 9-1-1 calls, and whether broadband technologies works for alerting when there is an emergency.

Industry Collaboration

- Stout attended the Susan G. Hadden Awards reception in downtown DC on November 19. This reception honored Dr. Judy Harkins from Gallaudet and two other individuals who received the Hadden awards.



Social Media Becomes a Big Tool for Emergency Planners

This is how a recent blog post at the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) started:

“On Friday, September 17, 2010 at 8:37 AM, 23 Companies of Los Angeles Firefighters, 6 LAFD Rescue Ambulances, 4 Arson Units, 1 Urban Search and Rescue Unit, 1 Rehab Unit, 1 Hazardous Materials Team, 2 EMS Battalion Captains, 5 Battalion Chief Officer Command Teams and 1 Division Chief Officer Command Team, a total of 152 Los Angeles Fire Department personnel under the direction of Assistant Chief David Yamahata, responded to a Major Emergency Structure Fire at 614 South St Andrews Place in the Koreatown area of Los Angeles”

For firefighters and the folks who are immersed in the lingo of emergency management, this is an everyday occurrence that happens in major cities across the globe. But what made this unique was that the LAFD's Public Information Office also sent out a stream of updates on Twitter informing more than 8,600 residents, who, in turn kept others informed. Starting at 10:41am PST, PIO Brian Humphrey of the LAFD posted seven updates over the course of an hour on the firefighters progress against the fire and ended with:

UPDATE: 614 S St Andrews Pl
KNOCKDOWN; 152 FF's took just 62 minutes; No injury; Cause under investigation; NFD - Brian Humphrey###

However, the real value of the LAFD's presence on Twitter is on its community account, called LAFDTalk. With LAFDTalk, Brian is able to spend a great deal more

time talking to residents about the how the Fire Department responds to incidents, why they do things the way they do them, and how to be safe in emergencies/disasters.

The fire occurred in an apartment building in Los Angeles' Koreatown and most of the residents were Korean and spoke little English. The LAFD then tweeted a link to a post on its blog: all in Korean.

In an interview with LAist.com, Brian said the LAFD started thinking about social media in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 where it realized that the biggest challenge that faced survivors wasn't simply just food and water, but rather, the realization “they were dying a little bit at a time from a lack of information,” he said. “They thought they were on their own Gilligan's Island.”

And the relationship goes both ways. In an interview with Wired Magazine, Brian actively monitored Twitter for eyewitness accounts on flare-ups and wind changes and then relayed that to incident commanders in 2007.

As more and more departments start to look at social media sources like Twitter and Facebook, it's worthwhile for people who are deaf and hard of hearing to engage these groups. Not only do they learn a great deal about our community, but they can also tailor their responses and outreach activities to our needs as well.

To follow LAFD on Twitter:
www.twitter.com/LAFD for active incidents

www.twitter.com/LAFDTalk to participate in community discussions

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