



WORLD

Technology News and Commentary for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People

The Challenge of Moving Up in the Corporate World

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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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Shaping An Accessible World

Board Views



**SHEILA
CONLON-MENTKOWSKI**

*TDI President and
Western TDI Region-Elected
Board Member*

**“What do I want my legacy
as a leader to be? I always
wanted to lead by example
and I hope I have.”**

How Important It is to be a Leader in Your Community?

Growing up in the hearing world, I was surrounded by hearing leaders, and in many places, the system seemed to be the “Old Boy’s Network.” Changes were made with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and other similar federal laws. It used to be, hire people like yourself, and to perpetuate the “Old Boy’s Network.” As I grew up, I realized I would have to take action personally if I wanted something to change to benefit myself and others. In my situation as a deaf person at that time, we were unable to fully access the telephone and television prior to relay services and captioning.

So how does one make change in policy? We saw marches, protests, petitions, over the years in different events, with civil rights marches on Washington, DC; the Vietnam protests, etc. In the early days of TV captioning, we deaf and hard of hearing consumer advocates learned the power of demonstrations and used this approach when TV networks were resistant to captioning their programming. Other ways to make change, to write testimony, letters to elected leaders give them our viewpoints.

While in law school, I worked for a federal regulatory agency and provided input into their 504 Rehab Act rulemaking. I helped write the regulations that would carry out and enforce the requirements of the Rehab Act. Then when I became staff attorney for the National Center for Law and the Deaf, I learned and experienced the power of coalitions and collaboration with other national groups of people who are deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, and people with all types of

disabilities.

One federal agency I worked a lot with was the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). I had the responsibility to read the Federal Register for notices of proposed rulemaking in the federal level for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. One day, in the fall of 1986, the FCC issued a notice there would be a public hearing for the deaf and hard of hearing in the area of telecommunication policy. I called the FCC point person in charge of the meeting to let him know I planned to attend and asked him if he would have interpreters at the hearing. He said no but said I could bring my own. I let him know he had the responsibility under federal law, the Rehab Act of 1972, to provide effective communication for individuals attending the FCC hearing. He told me he would have to check with his boss and get back to me. He got back to me and let me know he would be providing an interpreter. When I got to the public meeting, we found there was only one interpreter and the FCC representative said the interpreter needed a break but the meeting could continue. I stood up and said no, the meeting cannot continue, we all will take a break. Since then the FCC has provided accommodations during public meetings. Today we have captioning and ASL interpreters during public meetings.

What do I want my legacy as a leader to be? I always wanted to lead by example and I hope I have. I wanted to get involved with TDI because I felt deaf and hard of hearing people should have equal access to TV programming, emergency alerts, telecommunications via the necessary equipment and services which have

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BOARD VIEWS Continued from page 2

evolved over the years. Claude, Don, all the Board members and myself are working toward the goal of attracting younger members to TDI as we need those behind us to carry on our communication access work so our population is not left behind in the telecommunications environment. We need to pass the torch of access to our younger population so they too can lead and ensure access to communication is ongoing.

There is an often-quoted saying: "Nothing about us without us" that means we have to be involved in the policy and decision-making or nothing is going to change. Things won't change if you or I don't participate. We have to be active, not passive. Sometimes we do have to learn to shape and develop policy through citizen alert actions such as writing to our local, state, and federal legislators, state and federal regulatory agencies, TV networks, telephone companies, Internet providers, and the like. Others

can include attending meetings and testifying in public hearings. Letters to the editor of our local newspapers is another example of educating not only the newspaper but the local readers. If these actions don't work, then we can consider whether to start petitions, demonstrating, marching, protesting ...

Someone will benefit a great deal as a result of your leadership. Leadership occurs through a power of one, or a group. In this issue, you will be amazed reading some remarkable stories with some companies hiring and employing a number of deaf and hard of hearing individuals. Please understand this would not have been achieved without the good efforts of our deaf and hard of hearing leaders from the last one hundred plus years, etc. In 1908, Olof Hanson wrote a letter to Theodore Roosevelt, then President of US, asking that we participate with equal opportunities in the U.S. Civil Service Commission. Realizing that the obstacles he faced in convincing the world of his abilities extended to all deaf people, Hanson took steps

to bring about equality for his peers. In the letter to President Roosevelt urging the cessation of discriminatory practices preventing deaf people from gaining employment, including not allowing them to take the U.S. Civil Service Commission examination for federal government jobs, Hanson wrote eloquently: "My greatest obstacle is not my deafness, but to overcome the prejudice and ignorance of those who do not understand what the deaf can do." We stand on the shoulders of others who led the way in the past, and it is our responsibility to carry on their good work for our community.

How can you be a leader? One example is you can, after you read this issue of TDI World, share it with a person who is not a member of TDI. Tell them about TDI and what it has done for deaf and hard of hearing people over the years. Ask them to be a member and send in their payment. Thanks for being an example and helping TDI too!!!

*All for Access,
Sheila Conlon Mentkowski*

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Capitol Commentary



BY CLAUDE STOUT
TDI Executive Director

“We can no longer pretend that this is not a serious, rampant issue. We must address it as a “cradle to grave” national issue. Come to think of it, we have to solve it as a system change, otherwise we will head ourselves into oblivion.”

A Call to Action for Acceptable Hiring Results

In Employment for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in America

This is a unique opportunity to focus on the employment of the deaf and hard of hearing in America as the theme of this issue. We want to give a spotlight on who's who from our community who are employed with the thirteen companies in the article. We have them share their benefits and challenges from their work experience. We thank the thirteen companies for their help with answers to our four key questions, other information, and pictures for this issue. Other articles in this issue cover how to best - collaborate in the near future to steadily increase the percentage of deaf and hard of hearing population that have jobs in the private and public sectors. Don Cullen and Maggie Kopp have done a commendable job as co-authors of the article.

What distinguishes the thirteen companies from others in the workplace is their confidence and optimism that their deaf and hard of hearing employees contribute with unique, meaningful results for their companies' offering of products and services to their customers, and putting to practice their policies for diversity and inclusion throughout their corporate structure. We sincerely hope that this issue will inspire other companies to see the advantages there are to hiring a number of deaf and hard of hearing individuals for their key career positions, and to include them as an important sector of their competent, reliable workforce.

When I was growing up in the 1950's and 1960's, and entering college in the mid-1970's, there were a good number of jobs for the deaf and hard of hearing Americans. During that time, many became printers, post office employees,

computer systems analysts, federal government employees, and teachers and administrators in schools for the deaf. Today, we are in the Information Age, and opportunities for full-time vocations, I must say unfortunately are more limited for young deaf and hard of hearing aspirants.

The political and economic climate in the early 21st Century is different from the late part of the 20th Century. Our federal government functions much different for us today as compared to forty years ago, due to the severe recessions in the 1970's and 2000's, the end of the Cold War, debt and entitlement programs taking up a great portion of the federal budget, the September 9, 2001 terrorist attacks, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and competition in trade and labor from Germany, Japan, China and India.

We see there are some opportunities today for us to be engineers, architects, lawyers, software developers, ASL and Deaf Culture instructors, interpreter training program faculty members, customer service and marketing account managers in relay service, teachers and administrators in schools for the deaf, day-school programs, and local public school districts, social workers, mental health counselors, and specialists for community service centers, etc. Some of us manage to start and run small businesses, such as financial and investment services, dental work, funeral and mortuary services, restaurants, etc. Unfortunately, there are - few deaf/hard of hearing-run businesses throughout America. We can no longer pretend that this is not a serious, rampant issue.

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CAPITOL COMMENTARY Continued from page 4

A renowned disability leader, John Kemp recently contributed his thoughts for “Disability.blog,” in an article titled “Where Are the CEOs and Executive Managers with Disabilities?” He said as follows: “I cannot help but ask, how many corporate CEOs, presidents or high-level executives with disabilities easily come to mind? While we’re seeing broadened gender and ethnic diversity at the top of the ladder, people with disabilities are still lagging when it comes to making it to the C-suite. The lack of individuals in leadership roles is reflective of the employment woes people with disabilities are still experiencing. We’re still seeing an outrageously low labor force participation rate, the percentage of people who are working or actively looking for work, by individuals with disabilities. The February 2015 labor force participation rate for people with disabilities, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), was 19.8 percent, compared to 68.2 percent for people without disabilities. If well-educated, qualified individuals aren’t even in the workforce, how could they possibly climb the corporate ladder, or shall I say ‘ramp’?”

We do see many deaf and hard of hearing individuals that had to accept jobs that were not related to the training they have had before they got the job. I had a roommate from college who majored in biology, but he ended up taking a job with the US Postal Service. Back then, there were not many jobs available in fields of biology, and the good pay and federal benefits with the Post Office were too great for him to pass.

We will be celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act this summer. Definitely, employment in the last 25 years with this Act will be one of the

key issues we address as a disability community. We have to tackle this serious issue from a pragmatic perspective. There isn’t a responsible authority anywhere in the nation that can solve it overnight or even a year’s time with a magic wand, we all realize. We need all parties to pitch in their time and resources to address this important issue. We must address it as a “cradle to grave” national issue. Come to think of it, we have to solve it as a system change, otherwise we will head ourselves into oblivion. I would like to identify a number of key stakeholders that would need to factor themselves seriously into the debate on this topic:

Parents

They have the first and full responsibility in their children’s upbringing to provide love, nourishment, and guidance. It is important that they get pros and cons on options in hearing assistance, education, and communication, before they make a decision for each area. It is very important that they know they have rights and responsibilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, otherwise they will have a limited, active role to conduct in their children’s Individual Educational Plan processes. Their

children’s success in school from K-12, and post-secondary plans depend on their parents’ activism and vigilance.

Teachers and Administrators of K-12 and Secondary Educational Programs

We must hold them accountable to their obligations under current federal education laws to provide quality education in an accessible learning environment for their deaf and hard of hearing students. We fully expect them to provide full information to parents and to set aside sufficient funding every year to provide for their children’s accessible needs in the classroom, as well as extracurricular activities. We expect them to periodically update their curriculum for K-12, raise, and maintain standards of competency for their teachers, and provide technology and other resources that would better prepare their students competitively for college or the workplace.

Administrators, Faculty, and Staff of Post-Secondary Educational Programs

High school students have several options and can decide today to go to Gallaudet, RIT, CSUN, or other universities and colleges that provide adequate accessibility services.

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CAPITOL COMMENTARY Continued from page 5

These educational institutions must make sure that their instruction, curriculum, and other resources, including extracurricular activities, are updated regularly to reflect the labor market currently, and in five, ten, and twenty years from now. They must challenge their students to do their very best during their undergraduate and graduate stints. In the process, they get to develop and use their critical and analytic skills. Their faculty departments must actively be in contact with the outside business world for possibilities in internships and full-time employment for their students.

Federal, State, and Local Governments

At the federal level, we must work closely and frequently with U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) and U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL). We should request that these two national cabinet-level departments help co-host a national summit to address employment issues that people with disabilities generally face in their everyday lives. The national summit will go a long way if it has full endorsement from the White House and those on Capitol Hill, particularly the US Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP). In each of the 50 states, we need to work closely with state departments of education

and rehabilitation. A department of education in your state oversees the ongoing work of your local school district or a school for the deaf for quality education and appropriate accommodations for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The department of rehabilitation services in your state provides funding and support services for qualified deaf and hard of hearing high school graduates to attend college or to find a job. It is important that at the local level, we maintain relations with a Board of Education with a number of public school districts, or a Board of Directors with a school for the deaf/hard of hearing.

Chambers of Commerce

If we work with them on the important issue of hiring people with disabilities for any level of employment with a corporation or a small business, this will give us a jumpstart in awareness and sensitivity training for these business networks when they convene for seminars or conferences, or get information from the Internet. A panel of distinguished employees that are deaf or hard of hearing in a seminar or a conference would help increase their understanding on the advantages of hiring of people with disabilities for their companies or small businesses.


Corporations & Small Businesses

There are a good number of corporations and small businesses that have an impressive record in hiring of people with disabilities such as AT&T, Verizon, Sprint, CSD, Sorenson, ZVRS, Purple, Convo, Hamilton Relay, Ultratec, and etc. As this issue reflects, these companies find hiring of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing as the right thing to do, and they say it helps them stay in close touch with the needs and issues of their customers who are deaf or hard of hearing. Often, their employees

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CAPITOL COMMENTARY Continued from page 6

who are deaf or hard of hearing give valuable input on how best the companies or small businesses can put together accessible devices or services to meet their customers' needs. Some of them have advisory boards to stay abreast of the needs and issues of their customers with disabilities. About twenty years ago, Verizon established a Center for Customers with Disabilities in Marlboro, MA. This center has specialists to provide individuals with disabilities some customer care services for their Verizon products and services. AT&T took a step further a few years ago by establishing a Corporate Accessibility Technology Office (CATO). AT&T has this office to ensure that accessibility is observed throughout the whole corporate structure, including hiring for its vacant job positions, sustainability, customer care, and accessible engineering support for the products and services that are in the pipeline, etc.

Current & Prospective Employers

We must do a better job sharing human-interest stories with companies and small businesses on the success of deaf and hard of hearing Americans toward their respective employers' profitability in the marketplace. We work with them on giving every chance to their deaf or hard of hearing employees to move up on their career ladder. As Dr. Christian Vogler, Director of the Technology Access Program at Gallaudet, pointed out recently, we must figure out how we can minimize the problems that occur between those who are deaf or hard of hearing and others without a disability around the water cooler. We must collaborate with corporations and small businesses on how best we can make the working conditions as accessible/empowering as possible.

Connections are important to develop and maintain between employees and managers, and our upward mobility chances will increase, if we actively succeed in projecting ourselves with our skills and abilities when we interact easily with others in the office.

Adults and Youth

If you are -receiving services from Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and they do not meet your needs and expectations for a good degree with a college, a university, or a community college, let your VR counselors and their superiors know, and hopefully they will make sure you get a fair deal with their support. The same goes for getting the best deal in financing possible with a financial aid office with a college or a university. When you attend a college or a university, you must expect to have a good major in a field of study that would prepare you to compete successfully for an employment opportunity. Last but not least, you will need to demonstrate what is so special about you that the company should take into consideration for the position you apply for. You need to prove that your disability would not stand in the way of your becoming a valuable member of this company's workforce, and that you would be worth more in productivity than the salary and benefits they pay you, along with whatever accommodations they provide for your position. One's character, personality, good references on past work experience, articulation during the job interview, and "local connections" such as ties to a family member or a former colleague, are usually among the factors that determine whether the company would offer the position to you.

Public Officials

Always remember that we are first-class Americans. We vote for those whom we feel would represent us

well in public office. We see our paychecks deducted for income taxes to the federal and state governments. We pay property taxes to the local government. So when a public official like a US President, a Governor, a US Senator, a US House Representative, a Mayor, a City Council member, a County Commissioner, or a state legislator, makes a visit in your area, please do take part in the event, and let him/her know about your experience (struggles) in finding employment. The more of us that give them "the same story," the better it will be for us when we engage in a national effort in Washington, DC, and they will remember having received local "testimonials" from their constituents. This reminds me of an American idiom, "the squeaky wheel gets the grease." How true. When we make our issues as noticeable or loudest as possible, we will most likely get attention and hopefully some action.

National, State, and Local Consumer Advocates

TDI has limited resources, and it can only do so much on a national level for its members, and the general public in areas of telecommunications, media, and information technology. However, we are partners with other national organizations that have a broader mission, like Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA), National Association of the Deaf (NAD), California Coalition of Agencies Serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CCASDHH), Cerebral Palsy and Deaf Organization (CPADO), American Association of the Deaf-Blind (AADB), and Association of the Late Deafened Adults (ALDA). We must join forces, too with at least two key disability organizations – American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) and National Council for Independent Living (NCIL). We are members of

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Tech Bytes



DON CULLEN

Managing Editor, TDI World

Welcome to our
Tech Bytes section!
This section is TDI's
opportunity to share bite-
sized chunks of awesomely
interesting tech, apps,
and services that
we think you'd love
to know about!



DeafBlind user reading VRS response via braille display
Photo Credit: Deaf and Hearing Network (DHN)

CAAG VRS DB

The Video Relay Service has been a boon for the deaf – it has made amazing waves throughout the deaf/hard of hearing community in how it enables one to simply dial a 10 digit number and begin signing away, whether it be via a dedicated VRS device, or via VRS software on computers and mobile devices. This method has proven to be much more personal, efficient, and quicker than calling via relay using a text telephone device (TTY). However, while it's quite amazing how this innovation has pushed through communication barriers, not everyone is benefitting

from VRS – specifically, those that cannot see the screen. The DeafBlind found themselves largely left out.

CAAGVRS (which is rebranding to StarVRS) changed that and brought about yet another amazing innovation to VRS. The DeafBlind are finally able to use the Video Relay Service without making use of an intermediary. The first company to achieve this is CAAGVRS. CAAGVRS is calling this service “VRSdb.” Here's how it works: the DeafBlind consumer calls into the service using specialized software that

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How To Use CAAGVRS

Dial 855-877-2224 from any VP or VRS Software OR visit www.caagvrs.com to register for a CAAGVRS number and download our VRS Software “CAAG4you” then download our Mobile Apps at the App Store and Google Play!

Need Help Using CAAGVRS

Dial 855-807-2224. The options are the same as a Deaf person's for contacting Customer Care. Inside the software they can call a Customer Care Representative directly on video and the representative can type back in the same manner an interpreter would. Or they can e-mail Customer Care at vrscare@caag4.com



TECH BYTES Continued from page 8

has a high contrast interface and signs to the VRS interpreter who voices to the hearing consumer and then types back to the DeafBlind consumer who receives the information from the hearing consumer via braille display, has been a long time project of CAAGVRS that began in the early summer of 2014. The first ever VRS DB call was successfully completed by an alpha tester on Monday, January 5, 2015.

The DeafBlind community stands to have much to gain with this being as a great alternative for the IP Relay. With the achievement of functional equivalency by being able to use ASL to communicate via VRS and getting responses via braille, this means more calls will be done natively and comfortably. This means less reliance on intermediaries, allowing the DeafBlind to place calls anytime,

anywhere.

We asked CAAGVRS how a DeafBlind user would get started on using VRSdb. Jeremy Jack, CEO of CAAGVRS, happily obliged: "If a person is low vision and can see the

interpreter type then they can simply download the software with a CAAG VRS (Star VRS) number. If they rely on braille then they need to have JAWS on a PC with a braille display.

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DeafBlind user chatting via VRS
Photo Credit: Deaf and Hearing Network (DHN)

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StarVRS ★ db



Getting Our Hands On: The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Challenge of Moving Up in the Corporate World

BY MAGGIE KOPP AND DON CULLEN

We are in the midst of a massive global shift towards a technology-driven lifestyle, with innovators developing and releasing new products that are seamlessly integrated into everyday use. This shift ignited the founding of many new organizations and businesses endeavoring to ensure every individual has access and representation. Job titles such as Accessibility Coordinator, Disability Services Coordinator, and Chair of Diversity are now included as key members of boards and leadership teams. Most of the companies with a target audience of deaf and hard of hearing consumers now recognize that hearing loss in itself is a qualification or a key asset in the hiring process. Because deaf and hard of hearing people

face a communication barrier every day, they are the foremost experts on what is necessary for equality. This is also the case with any sort of advocacy service for the marginalized. Though an increasing number of deaf and hard of hearing people have secured positions in technological companies or are owners of such companies, there is still a long road ahead. How long and how bumpy this road will be is entirely up to the deaf and hard of hearing community, for they are the trailblazers.

Deaf and hard of hearing employees and leaders currently working in telecommunications, media, and information technology fields are now in a position where they can be agents of change. Because they have already gotten their foot in the door, they have the power to step beyond being merely employees and become leaders. To

understand where the deaf and hard of hearing stand in the workplace, TDI reached out to a number of companies. There is no better way to make sure companies meet the needs of deaf and hard of hearing customers than to have these same individuals in the workforce. Companies with the deaf and hard of hearing community at the center understand that it is vital to include them in business and strategic decisions.

Companies were asked to detail the benefits of hiring deaf and hard of hearing employees, reflect on what challenges arise, and describe how society can address problems of accessibility and opportunity. Companies were also asked to share some of their experiences in regard to key accomplishments by their key deaf/hard of hearing employees. Thirteen companies responded to our inquiry, and the response was great.



AT&T

At AT&T, leaders recognize that having differences within the company enables them to better serve their customers and achieve their business goals. They want the diversity of their employee base to mirror their customer base. Dimensions

of diversity go beyond race and gender and also include diversity of experience, perspective, and abilities. AT&T emphasized that it is important to know that teams of employees who come from different backgrounds achieve greater levels of innovation and success. The benefits of hiring deaf and hard of hearing employees bring new perspectives and knowledge to the workplace.

Matt Myrick, AT&T Principal-Product Development Engineer, says "There

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Matt Myrick
Principal-Product
Development Engineer
AT&T Corporate
Accessibility Technology
Office

Myrick shared his experience in working at AT&T:

When I first started working for AT&T in 2004, my contract was only supposed to be for a year. Here I am celebrating my tenth year anniversary. One of the greatest things I've encountered along the way is "patience." "Why 'patience'?" When I first started at AT&T as a Channel Manager (account manager/marketing) I had all these great ideas about promoting AT&T Relay services. I quickly learned all of the work related stuff I needed to understand in order to meet the contractual obligations; within a year, I began to think outside the box and lead a team of outreach specialist to promote telecommunications relay services. As my work performance improved and I developed relationships and started networking with people I never experienced before, I was able to contribute greatly. The point I am making is when you exercise patience in the workplace it opens the door to new challenges or

advanced assignments and it greatly contributes to viewpoints. Patience is the greatest distinction between an efficient employee versus an inefficient employee because when you face adversity you need to know how to use patience without being provoked.

One of my key accomplishments has been having the opportunity to work for a new organization named 'Corporate Accessibility Technology Office' which was established January 2013. My primary responsibilities are to ensure corporate compliance for accessibility. My job is to evaluate new or existing services that must come through our compliance "front door" to determine if the project is a covered service under the CVAA (21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act), for example, is the product operable without hearing, speech, low-vision or blind, limited cognitive, mobility, and dexterity. My role is to identify where the impacts are and what solutions AT&T can put into place to make our products and services accessible. My advice for anyone is to learn your job well and run where the opportunities are because there will always be new opportunities. Keep doing what you do best and ultimately it will lead you to great career opportunities. Be patient!



Daniel Solcher
Senior Consultant
Human Resources
Technology

Dan Solcher from AT&T also shares a unique perspective:

In 1993, on my first day of the job, my co-workers learned that I wore hearing aids and were very skeptical of me. They were wondering if I can talk, or do I sign? Do I use the phone, attend meetings, travel, etc...?

When I arrived, I remembered the office environment was so loud; everyone was talking on the phones, people talking across the hallways, even the phones were ringing all the time. When I approached my co-workers, I gave them the all-important "first impression" of myself, I immediately explained what I can do and what I can't do; that I can talk and attend meetings, but I need to see their faces to lip-read. I had to explain that I am not very good at hearing over the phone and I don't hear conversation over the cubicle walls. I told them that they can email me for anything.

But wait, it's 1993, Internet was something that only the nerds use, email was only a thing you see in movies, they had no idea what "email" was. Funny thing, as I went into their office, I noticed they had PC's on their desk, so I showed them the email program, and gave them a training on composing and sending emails. They began sending emails to communicate with me, later they started sending them to others. The rest is history. I like to think that I made a lasting impression on everybody about Internet and emails!!



The Team at CSD



Communication Services for the Deaf (CSD)

In recent years, we have seen a boon in businesses and organizations advocating and providing accessibility for the deaf and hard of hearing community. These companies have an obligation to build up deaf and hard of hearing individuals and establish a well-founded reputation. As Brandi Rarus, Director of Business Development, puts it, "We have to recognize that many of these employees might not have the same opportunities at another company, and if CSD is not willing to pave the way with deaf employees, how can we expect the same from companies that operate outside our community?" There is a lot of pressure on leaders to represent the rest of the community, because we must constantly prove ourselves to our hearing equals. The outlook for other deaf and hard of hearing individuals rests on the shoulders of the current leaders. Rarus believes that "the next step is understanding that deafness is not just a disability to accommodate but another type of diversity to embrace." The increasing amount of leaders and representatives in many fields means many of us already hold ourselves accountable for the good of our community.

Representation of deaf and hard of hearing in CSD's workforce



Administrative Employees
37 out of 74



Senior Leadership Team
9 out of 17



C-Level Leadership
4 out of 5



Christopher Soukup
CSD Chief
Executive Officer



Faye Kuo
CSD Chief Legal
Officer



Brad Hermes
CSD Chief
Financial Officer



Willie King
CSD Chief
Technology Officer



Brandi Rarus
CSD Dir. of Business
Development

There is inspiration to be found everywhere. Rarus shared quite a story about one of CSD's employees, Brian Jensen, who was a Human Resources Executive for several years: "Brian had hired thousands of people throughout his career but he had never hired a single deaf person. One day, quite suddenly he lost his hearing and became profoundly deaf. For the same reasons that he never hired a deaf person, he had no idea what services were available to help him continue to do his job in light of his sudden deafness. He ultimately

CSD Continued on page 21

"The next step is understanding that deafness is not just a disability to accommodate but another type of diversity to embrace."

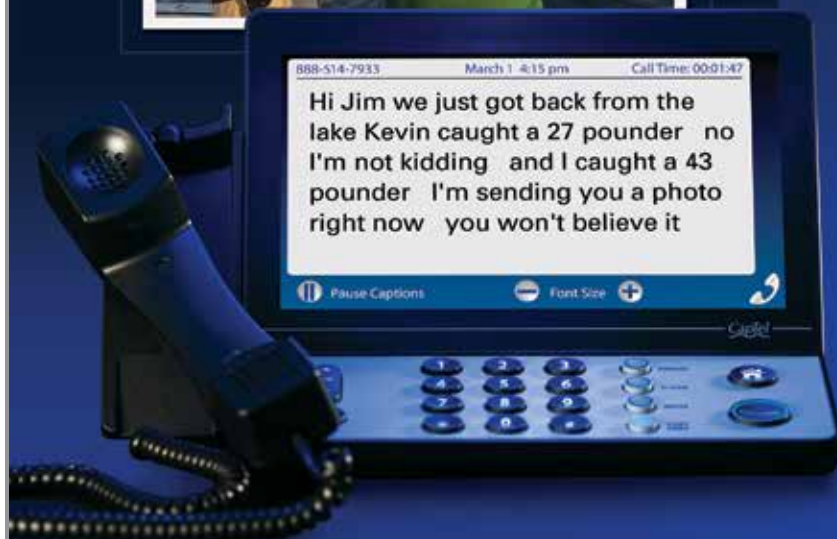
- Brandi Rarus, CSD

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Convo Relay

As the General Counsel and Chief Strategic Officer for Convo Relay, Jeff Rosen has seen many deaf entrepreneurs and leaders struggle to secure employment. Rosen believes that there are two critical things that we as a community need to do: “increase the push for more laws and policies protecting our right to access and convince the masses that they benefit from hiring us as employees and that it is not merely a service to include us in the workforce.”

Rosen remembers discovering a book in a library about the African-American struggle for equality and being able to relate to this experience as a Deaf person. Oftentimes, marginalized people will find fire from being oppressed and discriminated upon and this is true for Rosen. He found inspiration from the real experiences of other groups who went through their own struggles and overcame in many ways.

Convo Relay is unique in the VRS industry in that all of their top executives, including the CEO, are deaf, and they take great pride in being a deaf owned and operated company. By the word “deaf,” Convo pictures the full spectrum of people who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, while also being inclusive of cultural diversity.



Front row: Jay Kowalczyk, Vanessa Scarna, Michele Lapides, Nick Stark, and Azora Telford
Back row: Rosa Lee Timm, Wayne Betts Jr., Elvis Zorzona, Manny Johnson, Peter St. John, Robert Herin, and Leila Hanaumi

Rosen emphasized that “as a deaf and interpreter first company, talented individuals join Convo knowing that we or they will never consider compromising the deaf community for the sake of additional revenue because at the end of the day, Convo employees all return to their personal lives as part of the deaf community.”

“However,” Rosen adds, “Convo’s deaf and interpreter-centric approach has led to a positive, steady, and organically growing business because more and more consumers value products and services that are built by deaf people, instead of by hearing people for them.”

Convo is greatly concerned about challenges affecting deaf employees of VRS companies. The FCC has set

rates for VRS companies, which will greatly decrease every six months from now until 2017. With the exception of Convo, VRS providers have a hearing majority in executive and managerial positions. On the other hand, the majority of deaf/hard of hearing employees are in consumer facing positions, such as customer support and installers of videophones. When VRS providers make hard decisions about which employees they will cut to save money due to the rate cuts, deaf/hard of hearing employees have been predominantly the first to be laid off. Convo is calling on the FCC to immediately freeze the VRS rates to stabilize the quality of relay services and the livelihood of deaf employees in VRS companies.



Jarrod Musano
Chief Executive Officer



Wayne Betts
Co-founder, Owner,
Chief of User Experience



Jeff Rosen
General Counsel and
Chief Strategic Officer



Evan Winegard
Chief Financial Officer



Joshua Shaffer
Vice President of
Technology



Azora Telford
Vice President of
Interpreting



Samuel Rosario is a teacher for Global VRS' local Community Classes.



Andres Velandia works with Global VRS' Video & Marketing Team and Professional Development Team.



Brian Steinhoff is a recent addition in Leadership/Management. He has been hired on as Customer Care and Outreach Manager. His leadership and Management of the Customer Care Department will contribute greatly to ensuring our clients are supported by those native to their language and can support them the way they need to be.



ASL Services Holdings LLC / Global VRS

With people like Tanya Lee Velasquez (Customer Care Specialist, Deaf Advocate), Renee Carll (Deaf Culture and Linguistic Coordinator, Customer Care Specialist, Deaf Advocate), Samuel Ocana (Video & Media Coordinator, Customer Care Specialist, Deaf Advocate), Global VRS is able to keep their eye on the ball in regard to deaf leadership and advocacy. Gabrielle Joseph, Vice President of Operations at Global VRS, a trilingual VRS service under ASL Services Holdings, Inc., believes that “due to their language proficiency and strong cultural competence, we feel the best and most effective personnel to serve our Deaf and Hard of Hearing consumers are our Deaf staff.” Global VRS offered up some examples in where they benefitted from hiring/retaining deaf/hard of hearing talent for their key employment positions: interpreting, marketing, administrative, compliance, and customer care. One example as shared by Joseph stood out as demonstrative of leadership by the deaf/hard of hearing:

“We know in VRS the rules are constantly changing. Our Deaf team is included in discussions on regulatory changes so we can get firsthand feedback on how such changes (or proposed changes) would affect them personally as a Deaf caller. Such discussions help us to pave the way for Global VRS's responses to various FCC NPRMs, comments, and correspondence to make a better impact on the VRS services that are received by all Deaf.”

That kind of influence certainly would impact the deaf and hard of hearing community, and is an excellent



In order from Left to Right: Renee Carll, Samuel Ocana, and Tanya Velasquez

example to follow. Global VRS also proudly stated that their entire Customer Care team are deaf. Global VRS also emphasized advocacy; Global VRS has supported Tanya, Renee, and Samuel in coordinating a monthly local community workshop in Florida, Puerto Rico, and California. These monthly presentations aimed at grassroots self-advocacy are themed around “Stand Up For Your Rights,” which covers topics such as: “Know the ADA Law”, “Self-Defense/Awareness,” and “How to Protect Yourself from Identity Theft.”

Tanya described herself as a passionate business leader, and shared a tip: “The key to success is to focus our conscious mind on things we desire, not on things that we fear.”

The entire deaf team at Global VRS serves as a direct advisory to Angela Roth, President, and CEO of Global VRS. For that reason, Global VRS considers everyone in the deaf team to be in leadership roles.

Global VRS also identified a challenge many companies face, which Global VRS resolves to embrace: “The biggest challenge we notice for other companies in hiring/retaining Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals is to learn their Culture and treat them with the same respect as you would anyone else not just at work.” When we have a position in a company that strives to better serve people who are deaf and hard of hearing, we are able to roll up our sleeves and bring about change where necessary.



Hamilton Relay

Hamilton Relay serves individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing through Traditional State/711 Relay and IP-Captioned Telephone services. The personal experience and knowledge of the employees who are deaf or hard of hearing is invaluable for the company in many ways. Deaf and hard of hearing employees make a difference within the workforce, allowing the company to better understand the people they serve and contribute towards product development and community relations.

Jenny Buechner, Community Engagement Manager for Hamilton Relay, said, "Since our employees may be consumers of the services we provide, our employees' experiences support the company in better understanding our consumers across the country. Their personal experiences and knowledge allow us to enhance our products and services to meet the diverse needs of the community."

Outreach is a critical component of Hamilton's everyday efforts. By employing individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to conduct outreach operations, an instant connection and understanding is made. They are not just sharing a concept with the general public, but also the reality of their own personal stories and experiences, which can leave a profound impact in the community. Hamilton also conducts regular culture training sessions for employees who process calls as well as those in management and outreach so that they learn about and become aware of the community and the culture. "With this training initiative, we have seen a synergy established amongst our employees

A number of key deaf and hard of hearing leaders within Hamilton Relay are:



Ellen Rolader
Outreach Coordinator
Atlanta, GA



Cady Macfee
Outreach Coordinator
Topeka, KS



Jenny Buechner
Community
Engagement Manager
Madison, WI



Emilie Pennie
Outreach Coordinator
Boise, ID



John Fechter
State Outreach Manager
Minneapolis/St.
Paul, MN



Kenny DeHaan
Outreach Coordinator
Pittsburgh, PA



Lisa Furr
Account Manager
Tucson, AZ



Mitchell Levy
Product Development
Manager
Madison, WI



Paul Stuessy
Outreach Coordinator
Los Angeles, CA



Tearra Donovan
Outreach Coordinator
Las Vegas, NV

as well as with those we serve," says Buechner.

Dixie Ziegler, vice president of Hamilton Relay, started with the company in 1994, when the relay industry was fairly new in the United States. As Hamilton has expanded over the years, Dixie has worked closely with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing within Hamilton as well as within the community. She picked up many signs along the way and developed a deep appreciation for the community and the culture. Later in 2004, Dixie gave birth to a beautiful set of twins and much to her surprise, her son, Noah was diagnosed with hearing loss. Fortunately, given her experience, she is able to provide the necessary resources for her son to succeed in this world as an individual who is hard of hearing.

When asked about challenges in hiring qualified deaf and hard of hearing individuals, Buechner said "there are always challenges in hiring individuals, regardless of their ability to hear. Hamilton seeks to hire qualified individuals who can represent our company and our level of commitment to our customers. When hiring an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing, Hamilton works with the individual to ensure they have the skills and accommodations needed to succeed in their job."

Additionally, Hamilton's employees who are deaf or hard of hearing demonstrate to the public that regardless of their hearing ability, or lack thereof, anyone can achieve their goals and be successful in all aspects of life.



Microsoft

The current Senior Director of Microsoft's Trusted Experiences Team for accessibility, online safety and privacy, Jenny Lay-Flurrie, started out at a call center, struggling to hear her phone calls and to communicate with her co-workers during meetings. Through this experience, she soon realized that advocacy was what she wanted to do. In an interview with Microsoft, Lay-Flurrie says, "It took me a long time to figure out my disability is a strength. We are born problem solvers, loyal, and driven. I wouldn't change my journey for the world – it's made me who I am – but there is a smarter way to do this. There are a billion people with disabilities in the world. We've got to get it right for them."

Lay-Flurrie created Microsoft's Disability Answer Desk (DAD), which provides top-notch live support for free to customers with a disability. She also chairs the Microsoft Disability Employee Resource Group, an affinity group that brings together multiple employee disability communities to form a single overarching group representing disabilities at Microsoft. This includes a strong community of deaf/hard of



hearing across Microsoft that call themselves 'Huddle'. Lay-Flurrie also has been recognized by the United States White House as a Champion of Change.

Lay-Flurrie like many at Microsoft, believes that diversity enriches our performance, our products and services, the communities where we live and work, and the lives of our employees. Lay-Flurrie added "we provide an inclusive environment where everyone can do their best work and put simply, Microsoft is stronger when we expand opportunity and we have a diverse workforce that represents our customers."

Lay-Flurrie shared a story on the

official Microsoft blog that serves as an excellent reminder that if the deaf and hard of hearing run into an obstacle, they shouldn't let it stop them. Instead, they should dismantle the obstacle and overcome it! Without further ado, here's the story:

"Young Fira, Jenny's daughter, came to her mother and Tom McCleery (Jenny's fiancé) and explained, in her boisterous 6-year-old language (and accompanied by her impatient 6-year-old sign language) that the family's black cat Marmite wanted to go outside.

"Then let her out," they said.

Time passed. Quite a bit of time. They heard strange noises coming from downstairs. Finally, McCleery went to check on the little girl.

"You're never going to believe this," he told her mother when he returned.

Fira hadn't been able to work the door lock. But the black cat was insistent — she wanted out — and Fira had to liberate her. She fetched scissors from the kitchen and used them to remove each screw from the door lock. If she couldn't get the door unlocked, she'd just remove the deadbolt entirely.'

Ingenuous! This serves as an excellent reminder that if the deaf and hard of hearing run into an obstacle, they shouldn't let it stop them. Instead, they should dismantle the obstacle and overcome it!



Communication Access Ability Group (CAAG) / StarVRS

Further, some companies also pointed out the importance of diverse perspectives from within the community. The Communication Access Ability Group (CAAG) Marketing & Outreach Services



From left to right, back row: Amanda Tuite, Linda Belk, Teri Wathen, Mark Dickson, Brian Determan, Dave Hancock, Sandi Salisbury, Teresa Dell, and M. Cody Francisco

From left to right, front row: Kecha Ray, Sara Filippone, Rita Wedgeworth, Rachel Lowenstein, Cristina Munoz, and Sonia Quintero



Purple Communications

Purple Vice President of Sales Mark Bella says, "Hiring deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals makes sense for our business as they not only provide unique insight and feedback about our products and services, but being a part of the deaf community – and being Purple customers – they also understand what's most important to our users. Their passion, commitment, and understanding of what our customers want definitely sets us worlds apart from the competition and really elevates our customer experience – which is our number one priority."

Bella also adds, "Purple has a rich history of promoting equal communications access, as well as civil rights for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals."

This is in addition to Purple supporting deaf schools and organizations across the United States and educating companies about the importance of providing equal communication. In doing so, Purple feels that this ultimately leads to equal employment opportunities.

When asked whether or not Purple faces challenges in recruiting potential employees, Bella says, "While it's

far more effective to recruit Deaf candidates by attending Deaf events and job fairs, we also utilize Facebook and other social media outlets to reach our more than 25,000 followers. At Purple, we believe the more reach we have, the more qualified candidates we attract – and this is important. Along with our excellent products and services, our employees consistently set us apart from the competition, making us number one in the VRS industry."

in addition to their leadership roles at Purple, they also are leaders in the deaf community. Alana Beal is the president of Deaf Women United. Jerry Nelson is a board member for the National Association for the Deaf. Sam Holden is the California Bay Area Chapter President for the Black Deaf Advocates, which is part of the National Black Deaf Advocates, and also on the board of the NorCal Center on Deafness.

Here are some of the deaf/hard of hearing leaders at Purple Communications:



Norman Chan
Senior Director of
National Accounts



Sam Holden
Senior Regional
Manager



James Parker
Director of
Major Accounts



Jerry Nelson
Director of
Corporate Accounts



Mariana Fourquet
Senior Regional Manager,
Spanish Accounts



Mark Stern
Director of VRS Product
Management



Mark Bella
Vice President
of Sales



Alana Beal
Director of Deaf-Owned
Businesses

AT&T Continued from page 11

are various skills one can bring to the workplace. Having the desire and passion to become a dynamic employee is to differentiate oneself and stand out as an exemplary employee. Deaf and hard of hearing employees that are fluent in sign language actually have an additional channel of interpersonal skills. They bring an

additional perspective to the table that others may not have."

AT&T has raised a very good point. While there are challenges that pose barriers to the deaf and hard of hearing in obtaining employment, those barriers are steadily eroding, only to reveal another barrier. That barrier is constantly changing demands for different sets of skills. This means

the deaf/hard of hearing cannot simply rely on the same set of skills for a lifetime. They must constantly adapt, and refine their already-existing skills as they pick up new skills to stay relevant in a turbulent world of constant innovation. Remaining relevant goes both ways; companies need to change their perceptions of the deaf/hard of hearing, and would-be leaders need to adapt to stay relevant.

Where Are the CEOs and Executive Managers with Disabilities?



Originally posted at: Disability*Blog
(<http://bit.ly/1AjOxuU>)

BY: JOHN D. KEMP, PRESIDENT
AND CEO OF THE VISCARDI CENTER

As we prepare to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the passage of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on July 26, I cannot help but ask, how many corporate CEOs, presidents or high-level executives with disabilities easily come to mind? Although I use four prostheses and steer a large not-for-profit in the New York metro area, I can only rattle off a few CEOs with a disability. While we're seeing broadened gender and ethnic diversity at the top of the ladder, people with disabilities are still lagging when it comes to making it to the C-suite.

The lack of individuals in leadership roles is reflective of the employment woes people with disabilities are still experiencing. While the road towards this landmark anniversary includes many accomplishments, the employment of people with disabilities continues to be an area where we've barely moved the needle. We're still seeing an outrageously low labor force participation rate, the percentage of people who are working or actively looking for work, by individuals with disabilities. The February 2015 labor force participation rate for people with disabilities, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), was 19.8 percent, compared to 68.2 percent for people without disabilities. If well-

educated, qualified individuals aren't even in the workforce, how could they possibly climb the corporate ladder, or shall I say 'ramp'?

Let's look at ADA25 as a means of drawing attention to this continued challenge. If you are an employer, we need your "buy in." You hold the keys to unlocking employment opportunities at all levels for people with disabilities. There is more untapped, educated talent out there than ever before. Embrace it. Recruit and hire people with disabilities. Advance those already within your organization and diversify your thought leadership.

Seek resources to assist you. There is a plethora of free resources available to employers such as the Employer TA Center— short for the National Employer Policy, Research, and Technical Assistance Center for Employers on the Employment of People with Disabilities. The Employer TA Center is a free resource for employers seeking to foster a workplace culture inclusive of people with disabilities. Funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) under a cooperative agreement with The Viscardi Center, the Employer TA Center delivers technical assistance to employers seeking to recruit, hire, retain and promote qualified employees with disabilities through publications, training, webinars, a workforce recruitment program (WRP) and the Employer Assistance

and Resource Network (EARN) website, AskEARN.org.

Putting more people with disabilities to work is beneficial to all. There is much to be said about the power of work. The confidence and self-worth, the way in which others view us and we view ourselves, and the independence that comes along with earning a paycheck. All of which translate into active participants in our communities who have the financial resources to care for themselves, and their families, and reduces the need for services and supports from governmental and human services organizations.

If you are a working individual with a disability, you, too, have an important role to play. I implore you to stand up and be counted. Take pride in your disability and the value you bring to the workplace each and every day. If you haven't already done so, I encourage you to choose to disclose your disability. As long as you're qualified, push for advancement. You rightfully belong in C-level and executive management positions. Remember, you serve as a mentor, a role model and instill disability pride in our younger generations.

I want to see every individual with a disability who wants to work have the chance to be employed. I want to be able to name many CEOs and high-level business professionals with a disability. I can only hope it doesn't take another 25 years to come to fruition.



John D. Kemp is the president and CEO of The Viscardi Center, a network of nonprofit organizations that provides a lifespan of services that educate, employ, and empower children and adults with disabilities.



Sorenson Communications / CaptionCall

Sorenson Communications and CaptionCall hire employees who can effectively manage the day-to-day duties of the job. As a result, over the years, engaging people who are deaf and hard-of-hearing has proved invaluable, as these employees are members of

native language. By having deaf employees, Sorenson can produce the proper kinds of devices and modes of communication so that our customers can have access to the full and functionally-equivalent communication they need to enhance their lives."

Sorenson makes efforts to respond to deaf employees' preferences of what they like or don't like in equipment, features, and services, regardless of where the feedback comes from, whether it be from an employee, customer, or stakeholder. Sorenson holds it paramount for employees to work toward the goal of providing "functionally-equivalent"

his wife. The cowboy told Burdett that his English skills were not good and that he didn't graduate from high school. "My father taught me how to buy and sell cattle and horses and how to be a good businessman. But, because my wife's English skills are good, I have to rely on her to place my business calls over the TTY for me. I don't like that because other business people know my wife; they don't know me." Burdett then showed him the videophone that had just been introduced and which the state agency was using. Burdett demonstrated the VRS technology by going into his office and by placing a point-to-point call to the cowboy in the other room. "The cowboy understood.

Here is a brief list of Sorenson's top deaf/hard of hearing employees:



Ron Burdett
Vice President
of Community
Relations



Richard Bowers
CaptionCall Trainer



Lance Pickett
Senior Technical
Support Manager



Kevin Teese
CaptionCall
Outreach Specialist



John Hood-Fysh
CaptionCall
Outreach Specialist



James Laffer
Account Manager



Mark Call
Regional Director,
Western Region



Karen Keefe
Outreach Specialist
and Account
Manager

the communities the company serves. Sorenson lays claim to being the largest private employer of the deaf in the United States, with 54 percent of its non-interpreter employees being deaf or hard-of-hearing. Sorenson Communications Director of Public Relations Ann Bardsley affirms saying "our deaf employees provide first-hand, critical feedback on the communication needs and wants of the deaf community. Sorenson Communications remains the leading provider of VRS because we continually respond to customers' needs."

Ron Burdett, Sorenson Communications Vice President of Community Relations, adds "Sorenson needs deaf employees in order to understand our customers'

communication product and services.

Burdett notes: "Our deaf and hard-of-hearing employees grow up in and come from various kinds of situations. This helps them become very tolerant, understanding, warm, and willing people who help bring success to the company. In return, they certainly are thankful for Sorenson, which, for some employees, brings them out of oppression. By gaining empowerment, they show they can do anything except hear."

We asked Burdett to share a funny and inspiring story. Burdett happily obliged. This is from back in the days when Burdett was the director of a branch office of a state agency for the deaf. One day, a deaf cowboy came in, along with

You could see his eyes light up," Burdett says.

A few months later, the cowboy returned to Burdett's office and told him, "When I got a VP, I started making my own business calls. People became familiar with me. My business increased and I was able to network. I can call anyone! And guess what?! Now I don't have to rely on someone else to place my calls for me. So I fired my wife!"

This and other stories of empowerment let Sorenson employees know they are making a difference in the lives of deaf people.

A good sense of humor always helps companies to retain a sense

CSD Continued from page 12

lost his job, largely because he had no idea how to even help himself. Brian spent a number of years looking for another position, and was told by a HR colleague that there was “no chance” that a company would hire a deaf person like him into any leadership position. The only company that gave him this chance was CSD. Brian was as surprised to learn that not only was CSD willing to hire a deaf person, but CSD actively sought to hire deaf people. Brian initially came to CSD’s HR department, because of his background in Human Resources. But Brian’s story was so compelling and that influenced his career in ways so profound that he has since become the Director of Emerging Markets at CSD. In his new capacity, Brian has developed programs that consult employers on hiring and retaining deaf individuals, as well as expanding our text-based service programs to benefit other non-signing deaf like himself.”

One of the biggest challenges that CSD sees is overcoming a general lack of awareness. Many employers have encountered deaf and hard of hearing employees yet still have no idea that simple accommodations can go a long way. There are many misconceptions about the ability of a deaf person to do their job well. Many employers do not realize that there are services like VRS or CapTel that can help a deaf person communicate, or that there are tax incentives to providing sign language interpreting. Unfortunately the stigma of a “disability” is a difficult one for society as a whole to overcome, and it will take a lot of work on the part of the deaf individual, companies and organizations like CSD to affirm the role of a deaf person in the workplace. The time is right for everyone to have a serious and open dialogue with employers about hiring deaf and hard of hearing people. Diversity and inclusion initiatives are programs that have been implemented in many

organizations. Those programs are critical to a safe and equal workplace, but many do not factor for deafness. Many employers have agreed that diversity is essential, and that there has to be a concerted effort to hire diverse individuals to create a stronger workforce. Conversations are starting to ignite among major companies, with executives beginning to recognize the value of diversity. The next step is to understand that deafness is not just a disability to accommodate but another type of diversity to embrace.

Iso shared some statistics about CSD:

Rarus pointed out that “we have to recognize that many of these employees might not have the same opportunities at another company, and if CSD is not willing to pave the way with deaf employees, how can we expect the same from companies that operate outside our community?” This is precisely what companies should be doing: setting an example.

CAAG/STAR VRS Continued from page 17

Manager, Cody Francisco, says that their employees “include non-signers to native American Sign Language users as well as those who were raised in mainstreamed and residential programs which gives CAAG insight of the whole deaf experience.” Francisco joined CAAG in 2012 as a Deafness Resource Specialist and has since then been promoted to the Management Team as the Manager of Marketing & Outreach Services.

CAAG tries to encompass the entirety of the deaf/hard of hearing experience. There are deaf consumers, and then there are consumers with hearing loss. The cultural perspectives between those two communities substantially differ. Francisco shared an example: one of their Deafness Resource Specialists and another Hearing Loss Resource Specialist were having a fifteen-minute conversation with each

other. Both were getting increasingly confused as the conversation went on. At one point they finally realized they were having two entirely different conversations.

CAAG is proud to have an excellent balance of deaf/hard of hearing management staff. One of the founding partners, Dave Hancock, has been hard-of-hearing since he was a toddler. CAAG started out as an interpreting agency on the second floor of his house in 2001. As they expanded, adding Support Services, VRI, and VRS services, they then moved to their current headquarters. CAAG VRS is currently in the midst of rebranding themselves as StarVRS.

CAAG also recently added VRSdb (Video Relay Services-DeafBlind), the first of its type in the VRS industry. History was made on January 5, 2015, when the first live Video Relay DeafBlind calls were successfully

made. Through VRSdb, a DeafBlind consumer calls into the service using specialized software and signs to the VRS interpreter who voices to the hearing consumer and then relays back information to the DeafBlind consumer via a braille display. The value of this service cannot be understated: for the DeafBlind Community, this is a long past overdue solution for functional equivalency for DeafBlind individuals.

On being asked about how many deaf/hard of hearing employees CAAG had, Francisco estimated the number to be at “25% of CAAG employees.” There are many qualified deaf/hard of hearing candidates out there that have applied with Communication Access — we’d select them all if we had available positions. Having deaf/hard of hearing employees has allowed the company to grow on so many levels, personally and professionally.”



The Team at Sprint Relay



Sprint Relay

It has proven to be important for Sprint to embrace diversity and accessibility needs within their organization. For the past 25 years, Sprint has served as the nation's largest 711 Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) serving the deaf and hard of hearing. Sprint Relay service currently provides services in 33 states, exclusively for the federal government, as well as New Zealand.

Today, Sprint Relay employees experience their products and services first hand as many of the employees of Sprint Relay are deaf and hard of hearing. Employing persons who understand product and technology needs personally has ensured that the company's offerings remained relevant.

"The deaf and hard of hearing are our customers and our harshest critics," said Kris Smith-Shipley, National Marketing Manager for Sprint Relay. "We believe it is our responsibility to advocate for new services that continue to push

the envelope on the latest accessible technology and services."

More than a year ago, Sprint launched an Employee Resource Group across the entire company called the "Real Deal," which stands for Resourceful, Empowering, Awareness, and Limitless (REAL) for Disabled Employees Accessing Life (DEAL). The group encourages Sprint Employees with any type of disability as well as any friends or colleagues of people with disabilities to share common experiences and work together at Sprint. The sponsor for the Real Deal program is Mike Ellis, Director of Sprint Relay. The President of the Real Deal is John Moore, Customer Relations Manager for Sprint Relay. Thousands of people across the Sprint organization have benefitted from Real Deal Employee Resources.

Sprint Relay is no exception when it comes to remaining competitive in hiring and retaining deaf and hard of hearing personnel. Fortunately, Sprint's own technology has created new jobs for employees who can stay connected through new and exciting Internet based services such as IP Captioned Telephone Service, IP Relay, and Video Relay Services.

Sprint has a large group of deaf and hard of hearing managers at all levels of the organization who started as supervisors, moved into entry

management positions, and have advanced to mid-level and officer positions within the company. The tenure for the majority of Sprint Relay managers is more than 20 years of service.

"The depth and knowledge of our Sprint Relay team members is impossible to quantify," said Smith-Shipley. "Having management who understands how and why decisions get made as well as walking in our customers shoes has helped us remain relevant in today's marketplace. Hiring the best, including people who are deaf and hard of hearing, to work alongside peers who can benefit from their collective experience and knowledge, is the key to Sprint Relay's success."

Smith-Shipley concludes, "In terms of a suggestion on how to address challenges, these are not issues unique to being deaf or hard of hearing. Any individual contributor or team must continue to demonstrate the value they offer back to the business. Hiring the best, including people who are deaf and hard of hearing, to work alongside peers who can benefit from their collective experience and knowledge, is the key to success. Sprint's understanding of our business and their ability to embrace diversity, has realized tangible benefits, and has been critical to Sprint Relay's success."

SORENSEN Continued from page 20

of humanity, and goes a long way in developing a strong relationship with consumers, employees, and stakeholders.

We asked Sorenson if they had identified any challenges that affects

recruitment rates of hiring/retaining deaf and hard of hearing individuals, and if they had any suggestions on how society could best address those challenges. Bardsley replied, "Like other large companies, Sorenson Communications and CaptionCall look for workers who are service-oriented, enthusiastic, and passionate

about working for organizations that are making a difference in the way people communicate. Sorenson and CaptionCall encourage all workers – whether deaf, hard-of-hearing or hearing, to develop these qualities and bring to our companies skills in their area of expertise. We are always looking for good workers!"



Time Warner Cable

Companies now understand that these individuals truly do bring a unique perspective to the table because of their disability, and not in spite of it. Jennifer Reid, a hard of hearing technical support agent at Time Warner Cable, Inc. stands out to her supervisor Geraldine Beaty: "She gives 110% to show she is no different from anyone else. She is driven to be the best." Though Reid does not hold a leading position within Time Warner Cable, it is great to see that her employers hold her in such high regard.

Time Warner Cable Inc. is among the largest providers of video, high-speed data and voice services in the United States, connecting 15 million customers to entertainment, information, and each other. Time Warner Cable Business Class offers data, video and voice services to businesses of all sizes, cell tower backhaul services to wireless carriers and enterprise-class, cloud-enabled hosting, managed applications, and services.

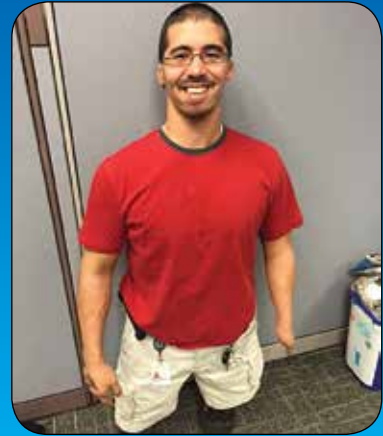
Time Warner Cable has three deaf/hard of hearing technical support agents: Jennifer Reid, Raymond Kawasaki, and Robin LeMaster. Supervisors have mentioned how patient these employees can be with customers who have disabilities and elderly customers, who sometimes require more time to understand the technical issues they are having.

One of the special abilities Time Warner Cable says Jennifer has is reading lips. Jennifer learned to do this at a young age, honing the skill as she has continued to lose her hearing.

Beaty shared this as a testimonial for Jennifer: "Jennifer works very hard to



Jennifer Reid



Raymond Kawasaki

excel in her position. She goes above and beyond to prove she is capable of handling her position proficiently. Jen has a fantastic personality and builds great rapport with customers. Jen can be very loud when she is on the phones due to her hearing loss; however, she balances it with her bubbly personality. Her peers have great respect for her. The advantage of having Jen on the team is that she gives 110% to show she is no different than anyone else. She is driven to be the best. Jen never uses her hearing as an excuse. It has been a real pleasure to work with her."

A testimonial was also shared about Robin from Supervisor Myra Steffey: "Robin is extremely thorough with her customers. She listens more attentively, asks good qualifying questions and confirms what she has heard. Many agents jump to conclusions, but not Robin." LeMaster had to re-train for her role about a year ago. She entered the training class, graduated, and has been extremely successful in the transition. LeMaster is extremely thorough with her customers and is a two-time 2014 winner of the Directors Luncheon quarterly award, which honors agents in the top ten percent.

Kawasaki was featured in a profile video produced by the company that has been shared with employees across the enterprise, and featured externally

on the company's corporate blog, "Untangled."

The biggest issue Time Warner Cable faces in hiring employees who are deaf or hard of hearing in the Call Centers is that most of these positions require taking phone calls, so candidates who struggle with hearing loss usually tend to look for jobs that are not so reliant on having to hear customers.

Shelley Loo, manager of public relations at Time Warner Cable, also shared that there is "an employee network group headed by Time Warner Cable, TWC Able, dedicated to understanding how disabilities affect every aspect of the business, removing barriers, and increasing awareness of disability-related issues to our employees, customers, partners and suppliers."

Jerrell Moore, Time Warner Cable's VP of Diversity and Inclusion, also further iterated the value of hiring the deaf and hard of hearing: "Hiring employees who are deaf and hard of hearing adds highly-motivated people to the workforce (high engagement leads to increased productivity) and it supports an inclusive culture that attracts and retains talent. Additionally, high employee engagement leads to an enhanced customer experience which usually results in better sales and customer retention."



Ultratec / CapTel

People who are deaf or hard of hearing have been integral to the design and development of Ultratec products ever since the company was first established in 1978, as pointed out by Jackie Morgan, Ultratec Director of Marketing. She further adds that “over the course of the company’s 35+ year history, Ultratec and CapTel employees who are deaf or hard of hearing have contributed at all levels of the corporation, from assembly workers and shipping supervisors in our manufacturing facilities, to managers in our customer service and outreach/marketing departments, up to the executive level directing the international sales and development programs.”

In addition to employing talented and skilled professionals, Ultratec and CapTel benefit from their deaf and hard of hearing employees by having a genuine connection with the deaf and hard of hearing community. Employees with hearing loss personally understand the communication challenges customers face every day, and are dedicated to helping remove those barriers to communication. John Kinstler, CapTel Outreach Marketing Manager, quipped, “Not sure if this is actually funny but I do get this a lot, customers finding out that I have a hearing loss and turn to their family members saying, ‘See! This guy knows what I am talking about!’”

In many cases, Ultratec and CapTel employees have been instrumental in helping create entirely new fields of technology, such as Voice Carry Over, Turbo Code, Public TTYs, and

Captioned Telephones.

In addition to having an on-staff ASL interpreter available, other hearing co-workers at Ultratec and CapTel are conscientious about the communication needs of employees with hearing loss, which can range from simple strategies such as facing people when speaking and making sure meeting rooms are well-lit to conversing in sign language or using instant messaging and texting to help aid daily communications. Ultratec and CapTel also provide employees with accessible telecommunications options, like Captioned Telephones, Assistive Listening Devices, and even TTYs. All corporate office smoke alarms and emergency notification devices rely on visual alerts.

Morgan also pointed out that the Ultratec corporate headquarters is designed with large, beautiful open spaces that facilitate sign language conversations across the floor. Visitors to the building have commented on the open design of Ultratec’s headquarters, without ever realizing the open space serves the functional business purpose of facilitating communications. Whether Ultratec realizes it or not; this in part touches on the DeafSpace concept as developed by Robert Sirvage, a researcher at Gallaudet University.

Ultratec and CapTel are fortunate to have excellent reputations within the deaf and hard of hearing community, so recruiting high-caliber candidates has never been an issue. Ultimately employees are selected based on their talent, experience, and abilities, not on their hearing level.

Teri Allen, CapTel Customer Service-Shift Lead, has worked at CapTel for over six years. Teri said “The one thing that I really appreciate of my employer is the accommodations. My bosses know sign language so we can communicate in that method so we both can understand what is being communicated between each other.



John Kinstler
CapTel Outreach Marketing Manager



Teri Allen
CapTel Customer Service Shift Leader



Pamela Holmes
Director of Consumer & Regulatory Affairs &
CapTel Customer Service



ZVRS

Jackson Busenbark, ZVRS Director of Corporate Communications, feels that ZVRS has continued to gain a critical

perspective on the market it serves. Well-intentioned strategic decisions can be made that have no positive impact on the community; hence, Busenbark feels that it is important that members of our community be a part of key decisions. Further, the company sends an important message to the community that it values hiring deaf and hard of hearing employees at all levels, including the executive level.

Busenbark says "because the deaf/hard of hearing are serving members

of a community that ZVRS is a part of, it puts ZVRS in a unique position as fully-vested stakeholders. The deaf/hard of hearing are also hired for their resourcefulness and spirit of innovation to further bridge the gap between our community and the hearing world."

Busenbark also adds "Volunteerism is highly encouraged of all ZVRS employees. As a result, ZVRS' deaf and hard of hearing employees are

ZVRS Continued on page 26

Here are some of the key deaf and hard of hearing employees of ZVRS:



Members of the Z Team pose for some smiles. From left: Asad Moosa, Jillian Watkins, Jennifer Sanabria and Jaeson Turner



Tim Rarus
Vice President of
Marketing
Austin, TX



Phil Bravin
Vice President of
Business Development
Chester, VT



Chris Wagner
Vice President of Sales
Clearwater, FL



Dawnmarie Caggiano
Senior Dir. of Marketing
Clearwater, FL



Jared Evans
Systems Administrator
Clearwater, FL



June Park
Logistics Senior
Team Leader
Clearwater, FL



Corey Burton
Customer Relations Team
Leader
Clearwater, FL



Rogelio Fernandez, Jr.
Regional Outreach
Manager
Austin, TX



Jenny Locy
Regional Outreach
Manager
Clearwater, FL

ULTRATEC/CAPTEL Continued from page 24

We don't have 'lost translations' when conducting business and we can all be on the same page."

Allen also added that she did not "have to constantly worry about what would happen if my cochlear implant goes dead, if I need to miss work or what accommodations that they need to do until it is fixed. I can continue to work as if nothing happened and use the CapTel phone for all of my daily work."

This is a prime example of equal access: being able to work at the same level as everyone else. Allen, in being deaf and being a shift leader, also serves in a deaf leadership capacity for those working with her. In doing so, she is doing her bit to level the playing ground. This is the key to what TDI is encouraging the deaf and hard of hearing community to do; don't just wait for others to become leaders and level the field for you; become a leader and level it for others.

John Kinstler, CapTel Outreach Marketing Manager, has worked in the telecommunication industry for over 20 years and currently works as CapTel Outreach Marketing

Manager. He has been with the companies for fifteen years. John felt it was imperative to also point out that through the development years, Ultratec and CapTel have been cognizant and listened to consumer feedback and wishes. Ultratec and CapTel have always led the way with emerging telecommunication trends to keep people with hearing loss at the forefront of telecommunication access.

Pamela Holmes, Director of Consumer & Regulatory Affairs & CapTel Customer Service, has worked for the companies for 28 years. She started her career at Ultratec coming from the field of deaf education and began as an Area Sales Coordinator, then Assistant Director of Consumer & Regulatory Affairs for Ultratec. This was during the era when portable, electronic TTYs were still very new to the consumer base and the public-at-large. Over a number of years, her service to the company was heavily in the area of ADA implementation, community and government affairs, and FCC initiatives including petitioning the FCC to allow captioned telephone technology such as CapTel as a reimbursable relay service. Since 2003,

her role shifted to development and operations of the CapTel Customer Service department.

Holmes described the environment at Ultratec and CapTel quite well: "I greatly appreciate working for an employer who is dedicated to products, services, facilities, and work environment that provide 'seamless access.' The accessibility is there yet transparent in some ways. It is an attitude that provision of access is a way of operation and of 'the right' business practice."

Holmes shared advice on one of the challenges deaf and hard of hearing employees face in moving up: "Communications in the work place is a two-way responsibility. The person with a hearing loss needs to make their needs known and not assume others know what their needs or desired accessibility provisions are vs. what the perceived needs may be in the eyes of others not with hearing loss. What may or may not be important to you as a person with hearing loss, another party without hearing loss may assume is what you need."

Excellent advice, indeed!

ZVRS Continued from page 25

hugely proud to be an active part of numerous local, state, and nationwide organizations. Examples of board membership of ZVRS employees include but are not limited to: National Council of Hispano Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Florida School for the Deaf and Blind, Texas School for the Deaf Foundation, numerous local agencies, advisory boards of numerous interpreter training programs, local and state associations of the Deaf, and the National Association of the Deaf (NAD)."

Busenbark suggested the lack of knowledge as to the deaf and hard

of hearing people's abilities, as well as the minimal cost of reasonable accommodations and other resources as the biggest challenge that affects recruitment rates of hiring/retaining deaf and hard of hearing individuals. "Awareness is key," Busenbark adds, "so the public needs to be made aware of in regard to numerous technologies that exist, aside from VRS and VRI."

Busenbark also cites a lack of access to education and occupational training which persists to this day, although NAD has taken diligent steps to address this as well as other obstacles. Busenbark concluded saying "ZVRS salutes TDI for bringing to light the

plight the Deaf and Hard of Hearing are experiencing in the workplace and looks forward to continuing the company's collective efforts to bridge the gap with the hearing world."

Advocacy. That is exactly what the deaf and hard of hearing community needs to be doing if we want to increase the numbers of deaf and hard of hearing people in the technological workforce. We are developing products that will give the deaf and hard of hearing equal access to technological marvels, but who is advocating for equal access to job opportunities within the technology field?

Conclusion

A few companies we contacted realized that deaf and hard of hearing representation was conspicuously absent from their personnel, and thanked us for bringing that to their attention. Although it is unfortunate that many companies have not yet integrated deaf and hard of hearing professionals into their management, it is a good sign to see that they are now aware of this issue.

Although hearing loss should not be a barrier in a job search, many deaf and hard of hearing individuals have had to work harder to secure a leadership position. This is especially so in the area of technology, where the workplace is still primarily sound-driven, with customer support phone calls, voice commands, and company meetings attended by a majority of hearing people using spoken language. While many businesses are making admirable efforts to make certain the deaf and hard of hearing are getting the job opportunities they're qualified for, we've got another long road ahead of us before the numbers become at all proportionate.

We, as deaf and hard of hearing people, have come a long way, and surely our progress will continue with increased numbers of deaf and hard of hearing workers. With constant advocacy and leadership, we'll see changes not only in companies with a lack of deaf and hard of hearing individuals, but also in the advancement of current employees into leadership positions where they can actually make a difference. Accommodations are making it possible for us to advance beyond entry-level positions and start taking charge of things that matter. The FCC recently instituted regulatory changes to ensure there is quality captioning on all television content, voice recognition software is slowly but surely getting more accurate, and employers are aware of the various modes of accommodation needed to

make us welcome in the workplace. Today, thanks to the breakthroughs made thus far with captioning, VRI services, and amplified headsets, there are more deaf and hard of hearing leaders than ever. These breakthroughs did not come to fruition as a result of sitting back and waiting for the world to provide us with accommodation and opportunity. They came from our hard work, determination, and persistence.

Yet in a world where cars can drive themselves, technology is still evolving. The government is finding it challenging to keep up with the rapid developments of technology, so as a result, considerations tend to be not made for the deaf and hard of hearing by innovators. It is becoming increasingly evident that we must be our own champions. As technology continues to develop and change, people who either struggle to or simply cannot hear, we will continue to fall behind unless we work together and take matters in our own hands. Leaders and companies are where we need to start in the ongoing battle for equality, especially when it comes to management. Deaf/hard of hearing management is few and far in between. This is more than making sure companies provide sufficient accessibility or simply having deaf and hard of hearing staff. This is about eliminating communication barriers and the disability stigma surrounding qualified potential leaders, and enabling them to move up. Further advances in technology will only continue to be made, and if we remain stagnant, we have no hope of succeeding in the workplace. Establishing a vision and necessitating involvement will bring about change.

Starting now, we can pave the way of increased job opportunities not only for the deaf and hard of hearing, but also for persons with disabilities, which make up a compelling nineteen percent of American citizens. We are not the pioneers, thanks to those who have fought before us and those

who have educated society before us, but that does not mean our job is done. It is our duty and our right to get our hands on job opportunities, promotions, and new innovations to keep up with the evolving field of technology, not just to survive, but also to ensure a level playing field in this new world of technology.

We must demand involvement from the deaf and hard of hearing community and increased awareness from companies. We are the next generation of leaders. We owe it to ourselves and to our future leaders to continue the fight in whatever way we can. This is more than an obligation. Leadership and advocacy is necessary for our survival in this new world of technology. Let us stand on the shoulders of some of the companies featured here and expedite crucial efforts to pave the way for not just an accessible future, but also a fully integrated and inclusive one. The future is in our hands; what we do with it is up to us.



Maggie Kopp, the lead author, is a second year student at Gallaudet University double majoring in

English and Government. She is the Lifestyle Editor at Gallaudet University's student magazine "The Buff and Blue."

Don Cullen, the co-author, is the Public Relations Director at Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc. (TDI).

He is also the Managing Editor of two publications: the Blue Book, and the TDI World Magazine.



Noteworthy News

HARVARD, MIT SUED OVER LACK OF CAPTIONING ON VIDEO COURSES

Posted on February 12, 2015 by Michael Levenson and Steve Annear via The Boston Globe

A national advocacy group filed federal lawsuits against Harvard and MIT on Thursday, accusing the universities of discriminating against people who are



Massachusetts
Institute of
Technology

deaf and hard of hearing by failing to caption their vastly expanding array of online courses.

"Just as buildings without ramps bar people who use wheelchairs, online content without captions excludes individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing," said the lawsuits filed in US District Court in Massachusetts by the National Association of the Deaf.

The class-action suits accuse the universities of violating the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act

and the 1973 Rehabilitation Act by denying people who are deaf and hard of hearing access to thousands of videos and audio recordings that the universities make available free to the public.

The association is targeting Harvard and MIT because both are globally recognized leaders in offering massive open online courses, known as MOOCs, that provide educational content to the public that was

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NEW DEVICE ALLOWS DEAF PEOPLE TO 'HEAR WITH THEIR TONGUE'

Posted on January 19, 2015 by Matthew Sparkes via The Telegraph

Dr. John Williams, a professor of mechanical engineering; Dr. Leslie Stone-Roy, a professor of neuroscience; and JJ Moritz, a graduate student.

Cochlear implants are expensive, invasive and are occasionally unsuitable for elderly patients - so scientists are working on a device which sends small electric shocks to the wearer's tongue and allows them to 'hear' sounds.

Cochlear implants have had great success in restoring hearing to deaf patients, but the surgery is invasive, expensive and not everyone is a suitable candidate.

Now a team from Colorado State University are working on a device which will allow deaf people to 'hear' simply by touching their tongue against a small Bluetooth-enabled device.

"It's much simpler than undergoing surgery and we think it will be a lot less expensive than cochlear implants," said John Williams, associate professor in the Department of

Mechanical Engineering.

"What we are trying to do is another form of sensory substitution. Cochlear implants are very effective and have transformed many lives, but not everyone is a candidate. We think our device will be just as effective but will work for many more people and cost less."



Williams has spent much of his career developing electric propulsion systems for spacecraft, and therefore was exposed to lots of powerful vacuum devices used to simulate conditions outside our atmosphere, which eventually caused him to develop tinnitus.

It was while reading up on cochlear implants that he decided to create a new, less invasive version of his own.

Cochlear implants take sound from outside the body, convert it into an electrical signal, and transmit it directly to the auditory nerve. The

new mouthpiece system works in a similar way, taking audio from an earpiece microphone and sending it to the mouthpiece via Bluetooth, but then transmitting the signal instead to the many sensitive nerves found in the tongue.

Dr. Williams and graduate student JJ Moritz have spent a year testing prototypes and have now filed a provisional patent and launched a start-up company to bring it to market.

It will require practice for the user to interpret the signals sent to the tongue as sound, but Leslie Stone-Roy, assistant professor in the College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, believes it can be done with a couple of month's practice.

"We have a remarkable amount of plasticity in our brain even as adults," she said. "We now know that is able to make changes and adapt to changes in incoming information, especially stimuli that are of importance to the individual."

The current prototype is a large device, but researchers believe that it will eventually be built into a tiny unit which can be worn invisibly in the mouth.

Source: <http://bit.ly/17Ysdjb>

Noteworthy News

NOTEWORTHY NEWS Continued from page 28

traditionally available only to enrolled students. In 2013, both Harvard and MIT launched edX, a pioneering nonprofit partnership that offers online classes.

“We think they’re in the best position to make the necessary changes and, when they do, it will send a powerful message to all other colleges and universities as we enter an era when online education is becoming the norm, and not the exception,” said Christine M. Griffin, executive director of the Disability Law Center in Boston, and a co-counsel in the case.

The online material is available on YouTube, iTunes, and other online sources, and includes lectures by professors as well as campus talks by prominent figures such as President Obama and Bill Gates. Some of the videos lack captions, the lawsuit says, while some have captions that are inaccurate.

Jeff Neal, a Harvard spokesman, said the university cannot comment on ongoing litigation, but said Harvard understands the importance of making online courses inclusive.

“Expanding access to knowledge and making online learning content accessible is of vital importance to Harvard and to educational institutions across the country,” he said.

Neal said Harvard is expecting the US Department of Justice to issue proposed rules this summer to provide “much needed guidance in this area.”

“We look forward to the establishment of those new standards and will, of course, fully comply once they are finalized,” he said.

Kimberly Allen, a spokeswoman for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said the university had not yet received the lawsuit.

“However, MIT is committed to making its educational material accessible to our students and online learners who are deaf and hearing impaired,” she said. “For example, in MIT OpenCourseWare, we include subtitles for all the new course videos that we publish as well as all the most popular OCW courses.”


The National Association of the Deaf has taken similar actions to force the captioning of other online content.

In 2011, it sued Netflix for failing to caption movies and other material that it streams online, a case that was settled when the company agreed to add captions to all of its on-demand streaming content by Sept. 2014.




In 2013, the association announced that it was working with Apple to ensure that television shows and movies offered by iTunes would include captions or subtitles by June 2015.




The suits against Harvard and MIT were filed on behalf of four people who are deaf and hard of hearing — including C. Wayne Dore of Amherst

NOTEWORTHY NEWS Continued on page 30



ACCESSIBILITY

Comcast Accessibility Center of Excellence

Comcast customers seeking assistance for accessibility support now have a valuable new resource at their disposal: Comcast's Accessibility Center of Excellence (ACE).

Comcast ACE will provide customers who rely on key services—including closed captioning and video description services—direct access to a specially trained customer support team dedicated to accessibility support.

Customers can reach Comcast ACE directly by phone at

855-270-0379

9:00 AM to 10:00 PM Eastern
seven days a week.

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and Lee and Diane Nettles of Westfield — who say they tried to use the universities' online classes, but were unable to understand them because of the lack of captioning.

"All they have to do is provide accurate captioning to such online educational content, yet they provide no or inaccurate captioning which is contrary to these schools' ideals of excellence and service to all," Howard A. Rosenblum, the association's chief executive, said in a statement.

Source: <http://bit.ly/1Cj7YXn>

BANK OF AMERICA SETTLES DISCRIMINATION CASE INVOLVING DEAF CUSTOMER

Posted on March 3, 2015 by Deon Roberts via The Charlotte Observer

Bank of America will pay \$155,000 to



settle allegations the Charlotte-based bank ignored a deaf customer's request that it communicate with her solely via email as she sought a mortgage modification she was ultimately denied, the Minnesota Department of Human Rights announced Monday.

In her complaint with the Department of Human Rights, the customer, Kathryn Letourneau, said she had

requested the bank use only email to communicate with her during the modification process, the department said. The bank initially honored her request but then stopped honoring it in the months immediately before it decided to deny the modification, the department said.

Bank of America initially honored a deaf customer's request to communicate with her solely via email as she sought a mortgage modification, but then stopped honoring it in the months immediately before it denied the modification, the Minnesota Department of Human Rights said.

Mark Lennihan AP

The denial of the modification "was attributable to Bank of America's refusal to reasonably accommodate the deaf customer's request to communicate by email," the department said.

"Next year marks the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. All businesses that serve the public must ensure that they are providing reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities," Kevin Lindsey, commissioner for the Minnesota Department of Human Rights, said in a statement.

The settlement resolves a "probable cause finding of discrimination" by

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A Division of ASL SERVICES HOLDINGS LLC, an FCC eligible provider

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CAPITOL COMMENTARY Continued from page 7

two coalitions, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network (DHHCAN), and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Alliance (DHHA). DHHCAN has a subcommittee on employment issues for the deaf and hard of hearing. This group can do a number of things, among them would be to develop a position paper, and to visit a number of key contacts in DC to discuss the topic, like National Governors Association, National League of Cities, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the US Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, U.S. Department of Education, and U.S. Department of Labor. We encourage chapters or state associations with our sister consumer groups to engage in discussion on this topic with their

respective contacts in state and local governments and local chambers of commerce. By having an exploratory meeting with a President of a college, university, and a community college may generate some positive results. If you come to the meeting as a part of a coalition that involves parents and general community leaders, more power to the cause!

Since the early 1900's, employment has been an enormous issue for us (going back to the letter from Olof Hanson to US President Theodore Roosevelt about our participation in the US Civil Service Commission) and this will require a set of solutions, none of them simple. Our accessible world would not matter if many of us continue to struggle to find a good job, and to bring enough food to the table for our families. We cannot live off of the access we have to a television

with captions, a videophone, or a captioned phone. We need to make a good living to enjoy the best there is in American life. When we see a significant upsurge in the employment ranks with the deaf and hard of hearing, there is no doubt that we see a substantial decline with the disability and unemployment benefits from the entitlement programs. Call it if you may, reinventing government, and the workplace.

As the saying goes, "It takes a village to raise a child." Let me rephrase as follows: "It takes a community to empower both its citizens with or without a disability." Let us work together to make the next 25 years much more productive with the ADA in employment. Give us a full chance, and you will find us highly productive in the workplace.

TECH BYTES Continued from page 9

If additional equipment or software is needed (a webcam, a PC, JAWS, or a braille display), we work together with iCanConnect or similar state programs to get them everything they need if they qualify."

If you have a computer and access to internet, feel free to see an exclusive video by Deaf and Hearing Network (DHN) in where interviews, demo, and a testimonial are shared in regards to VRSdb at <http://bit.ly/1K5LGM7>. In that video, an interview is conducted by Melissa Yingst Huber (DHN Anchor) with Kim Powers-Smith. Kim is a CAAG VRSdb Beta Tester, and also is the president of the Texas Deaf-Blind. Powers-Smith exclaims saying "Oh it was so cool! It was good to have that access and the privacy was so important compared to using an interpreter. I fully understood everything. It was clear communication and we really became in-sync going back and forth."

The service appears to be taking off, as Huber (DHN Anchor) in the video says "CAAG primarily serves customers in Texas where its headquarters is located. By creating this new service they have gotten customers from across the country they wouldn't have reached otherwise." Jack in the video adds "Throughout this process we've had more and more people join every day wanting to be beta testers."

In the DHN video, Jeremy Jack pointedly says "Really, the deafblind community is diverse and each person's vision is different. It depends on their own needs. Until this service deafblind people who sign always rely on an SSP to use tactile signing to communicate. But now they have complete independence. No longer depending on someone to do it for them. They can call all-day, all-night, any time. It's totally up to them."

Kim in the video happily agreed: "YES! I will be calling, calling, calling, and calling, 24 hours a day! I'll be making calls around the clock now! Haha!"

NOTEWORTHY NEWS Continued from page 30

the Department of Human Rights, the department said.

Bank of America spokeswoman Jumana Bauwens said in an email that the bank does not discriminate. She also said the bank complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and similar state laws prohibiting disability discrimination.

It's not the first discrimination complaint the bank has faced.

The list includes a 2012 settlement with the U.S. Department of Justice to resolve claims the bank discriminated against mortgage loan borrowers on the basis of disability and receipt of public assistance. In November, a federal regulator cited that settlement as among other factors in its decision to lower Bank of America's rating for community lending and investing from "outstanding" to "satisfactory."

Source: <http://bit.ly/1Cq2WeM>



Registration is Now Open for the TDI 2015 Conference!

TDI and ADA: Leveraging 25 Years of Achieving Access

For your convenience, online registration for the TDI 2015 Conference in Baltimore, Maryland is now open! You can register online at www.tdiforaccess.org/conference!

If you're unable to register online, please feel free to call us at (301) 563-9112 (VP/Voice) or (301) 589-3006 (TTY), and we can work with you to get you registered!

You are invited to join us in the "Charm City" at this exciting conference. The conference will take place on August 19-22, 2015, at the Hyatt Regency Baltimore Hotel in historic Baltimore, Maryland.

The Hyatt Regency Baltimore Hotel is an AAA Four Diamond hotel on Baltimore's picturesque Inner Harbor. The urban contemporary hotel offers a luxury gateway to "Charm City," along with the remarkable Pisces lounge, a luxury venue that overlooks the Inner Harbor.

Guests can breathe easy thanks to all

Wed., Aug. 19, 2015

(12 PM EDT)

-to-

Sat., Aug. 22, 2015

(11PM EDT)

**Hyatt Regency
Baltimore Hotel**

300 Light Street
Baltimore, MD 21202



of the guestrooms being nonsmoking rooms. The Hyatt Regency Baltimore Hotel even offers Respire guestrooms for a Hypo-Allergenic stay. Additional accommodations that the hotel offers are fee-based high-speed Wi-Fi internet, flat screen television with cable movie channels, and wireless keyboard. The hotel also has an outdoor pool with sundeck, and a 24-hour gym. We will be providing a link in the next issue that will allow you to go ahead and place reservations at the hotel. We will also provide the link via email.

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The conference will include award presentations, exciting workshops, exhibits featuring state-of-the-art technology for everyone's telecommunication needs, and unique networking opportunities.

This will be the 21st Biennial TDI Conference held during the 47 years since TDI's establishment in 1968. The Conference Planning Committee, chaired by Claude Stout, TDI Executive Director, is working hard to make this Conference a huge success.

FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler will be giving a keynote address on the morning of Thursday, August 20. Sprint Relay Senior Program Manager Angela Officer will be also giving an inspiring speech for our Professional Motivational Luncheon on Friday, August 21. On Saturday morning, August 22, Convo Relay CEO Jarrod Musano will also be providing a keynote address.

On Friday night, TDI will be hosting an optional tour at the National



Aquarium. Getting a glimpse of the enormous lagoon style tank is always a thrill—which includes seeing the sharks and rays gliding through the water. Of course, who can forget the seahorse, the corals and of course, the electric eel! In addition, this year, they have opened an exhibit called “Living Seashore.” In this exhibit, you are actually encouraged to touch creatures such as moon snails, stingrays, and jellyfish!

TDI will also reserve a section at the Baltimore Orioles vs New York Mets game for Wednesday night on August 19. Attendance is optional. As soon as we've finalized arrangements, we will provide links so they can purchase tickets and enjoy the game in the company of other deaf and hard of hearing baseball fans.



Baltimore is the largest city in Maryland with over 600,000 in population. It is located in the central area of the state along the Chesapeake Bay. It is home to the John Hopkins University, and also to the Baltimore Orioles. Areas of interest include the National Aquarium, Fort McHenry, and Oriole Park at Camden Yards, B&O Railroad Museum, American Visionary Art Museum, and more. Taking a cruise on the Chesapeake Bay during sunset is certainly not an experience to be missed! You will enjoy it and be glad you came!

We'd absolutely love to see you there!



**FCC Chairman
Tom Wheeler**



**Sprint Relay Senior Program Manager
Angela Officer**



**Convo Relay CEO
Jarrod Musano**



TDI hosted TDI's annual TDI Holiday Party on December 11, 2014 in where key consumers and advocates, representatives from several industries, and agents of the government attended to celebrate the holidays.

Federal Communication Commission staffers such as FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler, FCC Commissioner Karen Peltz Strauss, and FCC Disability Rights Office Chief Gregory Hlibok attended the event.

Among the industry representatives, such as Convo Relay Vice President of Technology Joshua Shaffner, Sprint Relay National Director Michael Ellis, Sorenson Communications Chief Marketing Officer Paul Kershnik, TCS Associates Vice President of Business Operations Jessica Aiello Moseley, CTIA Director of State Regulatory & External Affairs Matt Gerst, CBS Vice President of Captioning and Video Description Mark Turits, also showed up to the event and enjoyed their time there.

Representatives from advocacy organizations also attended. Among those were Art Roehrig representing American Association of the Deaf-Blind (AADB), National Association of the Deaf (NAD) President Howard Rosenblum, Michele Mulligan representing Cerebral Palsy and Deaf Organization (CPADO), Gallaudet University President Dr. T. Alan Hurwitz, and Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) Director of Public Policy and State Development Lise Hamlin.

Claude Stout, Executive Director, TDI said, "We had a wonderful holiday party on the night of December 11, 2014 in downtown Washington, D.C. We had over 130 people at the party, and we were deeply honored to have the presence of the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, Mr. Tom Wheeler. Wheeler stayed on with us for about a good forty five minutes, and he had a great time meeting some



Four TDI Board members - Becky, Alexa, Sheila, and Bernie get together for a smile before the camera! (Credit: Stephen Brenner)

key leaders and advocates from the deaf and hard of hearing community. Last, but not least, we extend our deepest thanks to over thirty companies and non-profit groups for their sponsorships for the Holiday Party. It was a great celebration for year 2014 in which we experienced constructive and meaningful collaboration and partnership between national consumer groups, government, and industry. The kind of access we enjoy today would not be possible without the synergy brought forth from the total team effort by these three crucial stakeholder entities. TDI says again to all, much thanks!"

It was clear from the event that people were indeed very much in festive spirits! TDI extends its gratitude to our members, supporters, and friends throughout America and overseas. We thank you for your support during the calendar year 2014, and we look forward to another great year in 2015. We at TDI hope you enjoyed your holidays with your family, friends, and loved ones. May all of your travels be safe, and please stay in touch with us during 2015!

Thank you for helping us shape an accessible world together!



1. Sheila Conlon-Mentkowski, TDI Board President introduces FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler. (Credit: TCS Associates) 2. Matt Gerst and Laurie Ellington - CTIA mingling with Bruce Cox - NextNAV, and Eliot Greenwald - FCC, CGB Credit: TCS Associates) 3. Stephen Brenner and Michelle Mulligan watch FCC Chairman Wheeler give remarks. (Credit: TCS Associates) 4. Phil and Myra Aiello are with TCS Associates, the leading sponsor for the party (Credit: Stephen Brenner). 5. Greg Hlibok, Chief of Disability Rights Office, FCC with his wife, Charmaine. (Credit: TCS Associates) 6. FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler gives his remarks while Jackie Lightfoot interprets. (Credit: TCS Associates) 7. The audience gathers to hear the FCC Chairman give his remarks. (Credit: TCS Associates) 8. Mike Maddix and Paul Kershnik - Sorenson Communications with Jeff Rosen, Convo Relay. (Credit: TCS Associates) 9. Dr. Irene Leigh, Alfred Sonnenstrahl, and Karen Peltz-Strauss. Peltz-Strauss and Sonnenstrahl worked closely in consumer advocacy in the late 1980's and the early 1990's. (Credit: Stephen Brenner)



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TDI In Action

December 2014 - February 2015

AADB = American Association of the Deaf Blind

ALDA = Association of Late Deafened Adults, Inc.

ASDC = American Society of Deaf Children

CC – closed captioning

CCASDHH = California Coalition of Agencies Serving Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc.

CGB = Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau

CPADO = Cerebral Palsy and Deaf Organization

CTS – Captioned Telephone Service

DHHCAN = Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network

DRO = Disability Rights Office

E-911 – Enhanced 911

FCC = Federal Communications Commission

FNPRM – Final Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

HLAA = Hearing Loss Association of America

IP – Internet Protocol

NAD = National Association of the Deaf

NBDA = National Black Deaf Advocates

NG-911 – Next Generation 911

RERC-TA = Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center on

Telecommunication Access

SCAT/SCABT = Speech Communications Assistance By Telephone, Inc.

SoA = Speed of Answer

TAP = Technology Access Program at Gallaudet University

TDM = Time Division Multiplexing, a method of handling electronic communications

TIA = Telecommunications Industry Association

TLPC = Samuelson-Glushko Technology Law & Policy Clinic

TRS – Telecommunications Relay Service

VRS – Video Relay Service

TRS

- (Jan 5) NAD, TDI, DHHCAN, HLAA, CCASDHH, CPADO, AADB, DSA, TAP filed a comment in the FCC rulemaking on rates for interstate inmate calling services. <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=60001011977>

Captioning, Subtitles, and User Interfaces

- (Nov 3) TDI, NAD, HLAA, ALDA, CPADO, DHHCAN, CCASDHH, AADB, SCT, and TAP filed reply comments the FCC's rulemaking related to IP video clips. <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=60000978473>
- (Nov 26) TDI, NAD, HLAA, ALDA, DHHCAN, TAP filed an ex parte explaining the importance of accurate closed captioning accuracy metrics and to avoid any "grade-inflation."

<http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=60000988629>

- (Dec 9) NAD, HLAA, TAP, TDI met with the FCC along with closed captioning providers to discuss metrics for determining the accuracy of live captioning on television. <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=60001008913>
- (Dec 12) TDI had a call with the FCC related to certifications of adherence to the Commission's Best Practices for ensuring the quality of closed captions. <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=60001009823>
- (Dec 19) TDI, NAD, CCASDHH, CPADO, ALDA, DSA opposed Joy Ministries Evangelistic Association, Inc.'s petition for exemption from the closed captioning rules. <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=60001010345>
- (Dec 19) TDI, NAD, CCASDHH, CPADO, ALDA, DSA opposed First Baptist of Fort Smith's

petition for exemption from the closed captioning rules. <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=60001010349>

- (Dec 19) TDI, NAD, CCASDHH, CPADO, ALDA, DSA opposed Diocese of Gaylor's petition for exemption from the closed captioning rules. <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=60001010352>
- (Dec 19) TDI, NAD, CCASDHH, CPADO, ALDA, DSA commented on Cruise'n with E-Rider's petition for exemption from the closed captioning rules. <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=60001010353>
- (Jan 20) TDI, NAD, HLAA, ALDA, CPADO, DHHCAN, AADB, SCT, TAP filed a comment in the FCC rulemaking on improving the quality of closed captioning related to shifting from the traditional video programming

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TDI In Action

December 2014 - February 2015

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distributor centric model to one that apportions responsibility for the provision, delivery, rendering, and quality of captions between distributors and other entities in the video programming ecosystem. <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=60001014790>

- (Jan 30) TDI, NAD, HLAA, ALDA, CPADO, DHHCAN, AADB, SCT, TAP filed a reply comment in the FCC rulemaking on improving the quality of closed captioning. <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=60001024984>

- (Feb 13) TDI, NAD, CPADO, DSA opposed several closed captioning waivers.

* *Opposition #1 Link:* <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=60001016631>

* *Opposition #2 Link:* <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=60001016633>

* *Opposition #3 Link:* <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=60001016638>

* *Opposition #4 Link:* <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=60001016640>

* *Opposition #5 Link:* <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=60001016641>

- (Feb 13) TDI, NAD, CPADO, DSA commented on Mohawk Valley Living's closed captioning waiver request. <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=60001016639>

Emergency Accessibility

- (Oct 30) NAD, AADB, CPADO, TDI met with several commissioners offices as well as the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau to discuss wireless e911 location accuracy. <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=60000978499>
- (Nov 7) TDI, HLAA, ALDA, NAD participated on panels at the FCC's Wireless Emergency event.
- (Dec 15) TDI, TAP, NAD, AADB, CPADO, ALDA, HLAA, CCASDHH, DSA, DHHCAN filed a comment in the FCC rulemaking on E911 wireless indoor accuracy. <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=60001009745>
- (Dec 24) TAP and TDI met with the FCC to discuss E911 wireless indoor accuracy. <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=60001010778>

[view?id=60001011078](http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=60001011078)

- (Jan 20-22) TDI and NAD met with five different Commissioner's offices to discuss wireless e911 location accuracy. <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=60001015692>

Other Issues

- (Nov 13) NAD, TDI met with members from different bureaus to discuss the FCC's open internet proceeding and stressed the need for transparency related to broadband speeds and more. <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=60000986040>
- (Feb 5) HLAA, ALDA, NAD, TDI, DHHCAN filed comments in the FCC rulemaking on hearing aid compatibility. <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=60001014196>
- (Feb 6) TDI supported NAB's request for a 30-day extension to the NPRM on defining MVPDs. <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=60001014792>
- (Feb 20) HLAA, ALDA, NAD, TDI, DHHCAN filed reply comments in the FCC rulemaking on hearing aid compatibility. <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=60001018790>



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 Zip/Postal Code: _____ USA? ☐ YES ☐ NO Country: _____

Main Phone: () _____ ☐ Video ☐ TTY ☐ TXT ☐ Voice ☐ Captioned ☐ FAX
 Alternate Phone: _____ ☐ Video ☐ TTY ☐ TXT ☐ Voice ☐ Captioned ☐ FAX
 Mobile Phone: _____ ☐ Video ☐ TTY ☐ TXT ☐ Voice ☐ Captioned
 Website Address: _____

Check all items that you want to allow to be listed in the Blue Book:

- ☐ Name ☐ Mailing Address ☐ E-Mail Address ☐ Website Address
☐ Main Phone Number ☐ Alternate Number ☐ Mobile Number

If you do not check any items above, your information will not be listed in the Blue Book.



May we send you TDI eNotes, our free TDI E-Mail newsletter? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes: ☐ Send to my E-Mail address ☐ Send to another E-Mail address: _____

Select One TDI Membership Rate:	1 Year	2 Years
Affiliate (Business/Nonprofit/School/Library/Government)	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100.00	<input type="checkbox"/> \$180.00

Indicate here the TDI Membership Rate that you have selected above: \$

(Outside USA) Add additional \$15.00 for International Shipping: \$

Additional Tax-Deductible Contribution to TDI (Fed Tax #35-1146784): \$

THANK YOU!

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Street & Unit Number: _____ City: _____ State/Province: _____

Zip/Postal Code: _____ USA? ☐ YES ☐ NO Country: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Email Address: _____

Main Phone: () _____ ☐ Video ☐ TTY ☐ TXT ☐ Voice ☐ Captioned ☐ FAX

Alternate Phone: _____ ☐ Video ☐ TTY ☐ TXT ☐ Voice ☐ Captioned ☐ FAX

Mobile Phone: _____ ☐ Video ☐ TTY ☐ TXT ☐ Voice ☐ Captioned

Website Address: _____

Additional Person's Name Desired in Listing (If Any): _____

Phone: _____ ☐ Video ☐ TTY ☐ TXT ☐ Voice ☐ Captioned ☐ FAX

Date of Birth: _____ Email Address: _____

Check all items that you want to allow to be listed in the Blue Book:

- ☐ Name ☐ Mailing Address ☐ E-Mail Address ☐ Website Address
☐ Main Phone Number ☐ Alternate Number ☐ Mobile Number ☐ Additional Person's Number



If you do not check any items above, your name and information will not be listed in the Blue Book.

May we send you TDI eNotes, our free TDI E-Mail newsletter? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes: ☐ Send to my E-Mail address ☐ Send to another E-Mail address: _____

Select One TDI Membership Rate:	1 Year	2 Years	LIFETIME
Individual-Regular:	<input type="checkbox"/> \$40.00	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75.00	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000.00
Individual-Senior Citizen (Age 60+)	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30.00	<input type="checkbox"/> \$55.00	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000.00

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Additional Tax-Deductible Contribution to TDI (Fed Tax #35-1146784): \$ _____

THANK YOU! GRAND TOTAL: \$ _____

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Card Issued by: <input type="checkbox"/> American Express <input type="checkbox"/> MasterCard <input type="checkbox"/> Visa
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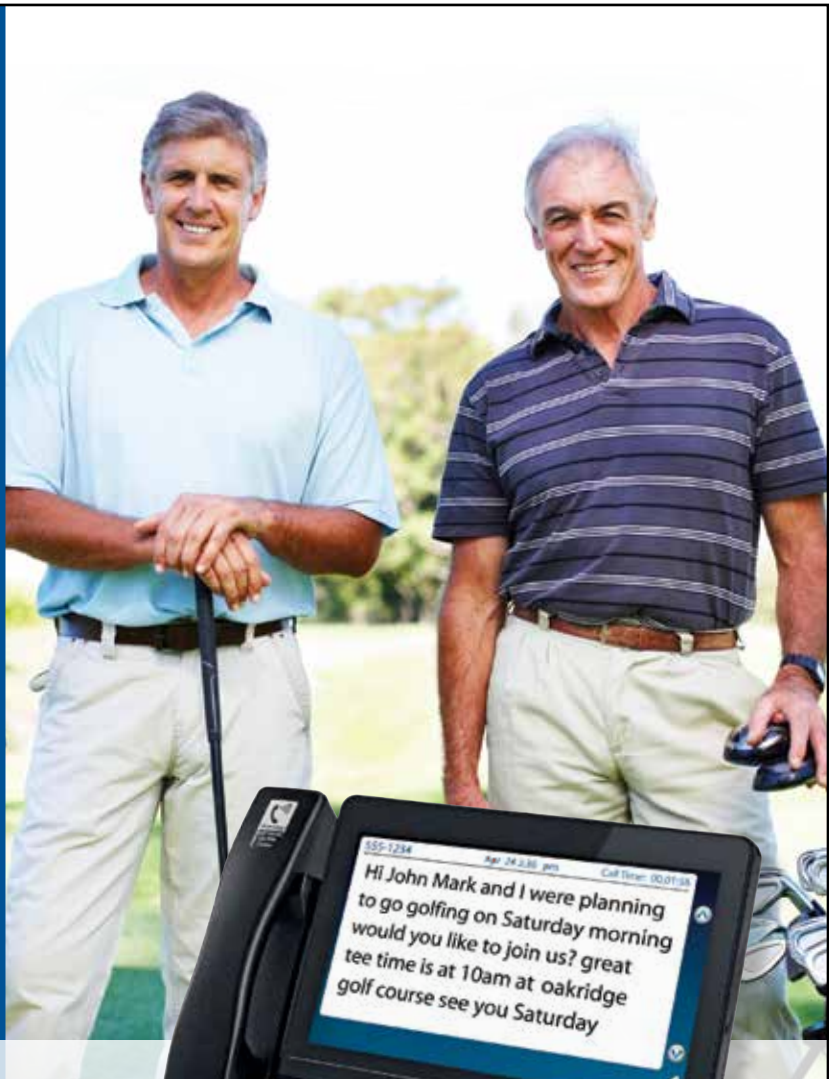
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