



WORLD

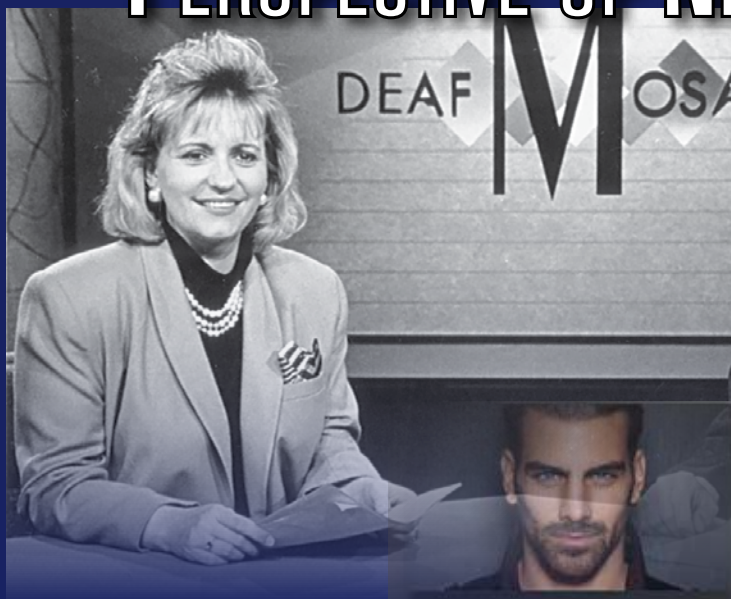
Technology News and Commentary for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People

PERSPECTIVE OF NEWS VIDEO ANCHORS

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THEN
AND
NOW

Starting on page 13



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

FEATURE STORIES

Perspective of News Video Anchors, Then and Nowpg 13

REGULAR COLUMNS

BOARD VIEWS by Sheila Conlon-Mentkowski, TDI Presidentpg 2

TDI Board Meeting February 2016 St. Augustine, FL

CAPITOL COMMENTARY by Claude Stout, TDI Executive Directorpg 4

Making Strides for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Women in America!

TECH BYTES by Al Noll, Software Engineer, IBMpg 22

IBM Mobile Technology Program Empowers Employees who have Disabilities

NOTEWORTHY NEWSpg 26

TDI IN ACTION September 2015 - January 2016pg 36

Thanks to These Advertisers:

**ALDA, pg 25 • Comcast, pg 29 • CSD, inside back cover
Hamilton Relay, pg 5 • Maryland Relay, pg 3
Sprint Relay, inside front cover • Sorenson VRS, pg 9
Ultratec, back page • Verizon, pg 12**

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Shaping An Accessible World

Board Views



**SHEILA
CONLON-MENTKOWSKI**

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

“We looked at TDI’s future and made projections and plans on what TDI needs to focus on as we prepare to find a replacement for Claude when he retires down the road in a few years. Those will certainly be big shoes to fill.”

TDI Board Meeting, February 2016, St. Augustine, FL

The TDI Board of Directors met in St. Augustine, FL in February of this year for one of its regular board meetings. We were very fortunate to have the meeting held on the campus of the venerable campus of the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind (FSDB). We were greeted by a wonderful sign (see page three gallery) outside the school’s history museum and in which we held our two-and-a-half-day meeting.

We had regular Board business and a strategic planning meeting led by the capable Fred Weiner one of our former longtime TDI Board members. We met our newest elected members, Cassandra Boryslawskyj, TDI Northeastern representative and Jan Withers, TDI’s Southeastern representative at the meeting and gave

them a brief orientation to TDI.

Nancy and Murphy, also gave us a brief history of the FSDB museum and invited us to browse when we were on break in our meetings.



Cassandra Boryslawskyj
NORTHEAST REGION
REPRESENTATIVE



Jan Withers
SOUTHEAST REGION
REPRESENTATIVE



Matt Myrick
MEMBER-AT-LARGE



Jarvis Grindstaff
MEMBER-AT-LARGE

We went on a tour of the campus in a large golf cart driven by a member of the FSDB staff and was also accompanied by Nancy Bloch both of whom expertly led us around the school’s campus and explained building purposes as we passed by. We were able to go into a classroom building and see some different subject matter classes in progress. We also saw the buses that take the students home on Friday afternoons. The buses sported photos of the school and its students, advertising FSDB on the move!

Friday evening, we went out to dinner at a nice restaurant near our hotel and

Continued on page 3



We are also starting to plan for the 2017 TDI conference which will be July, 2017 in Bethesda, MD so keep an eye out for more news on this upcoming conference!

BOARD VIEWS Continued from page 2

enjoyed the evening. Saturday was the all-day Strategic Planning meeting which Fred Weiner led, during which we looked at TDI's future and made projections and plans on what TDI needs to focus on as we prepare to find a replacement for Claude when he retires down the road in a few years. Those will certainly be big shoes to fill. We also voted on approving the new at large TDI Board members, Matt Myrick and Jarvis Grindstaff who we look forward to meeting at our next full Board meeting which will be this fall in October in Portland, OR.

Vice President Andy Lange and his wife Kelly graciously hosted us and other deaf from the community at their house around their fire pit. The fire was appreciated since most of us were a bit chilled by the cool weather. Andy and Kelly fed us well too. Sunday morning was a wrap up of action items and tasks to perform until the next Board meeting.

All for access,
Sheila Conlon Mentkowski
President, TDI
West Region Board Member



TDI Executive Director Claude Stout



Sign by Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind greeting TDI Board



TDI Board members Stephanie, Rebecca, and Andy



TDI Board members Cassandra and Jan



We were driven around in this golf cart on a tour of the campus



Enjoying the fire pit at Andy's

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Capitol Commentary



BY CLAUDE STOUT
TDI Executive Director

“It has become more important that we speed up the civil rights process to grant women in the deaf and hard of hearing population an equal standing today in the community.”

Making Strides for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Women in America!

TDI and Its Partners Make Genuine Efforts to Decrease Gender Inequality

It has become more important that we speed up the civil rights process to grant women in the deaf and hard of hearing population an equal standing today in the community. We bring into focus some positive changes made by TDI here from its founding in 1968 to what it is today as a leading national consumer advocacy organization. Also, we give spotlight on some wonderful things happening today with TDI's partners. Meanwhile, we also need to acknowledge the challenges that deaf and hard of hearing women have, and recognize opportunities that they can take to gain their rightful place in the community.

According to the U.S. Census, women make up fifty percent of the total American population, now numbering over 323 million. We have three women that now serve as Associate Justices of the U.S. Supreme Court. We may see a woman elected as our next U.S. President this coming November.

When we speak of inequalities between men and women in America, for this article we refer to employment and earnings, family life, and political participation. There was an article published on March 7, 2015 by Makers.com, titled 21 Facts You Never Knew About International Gender Inequality. Among the inequalities the article referred to were as follows:

- In 2015, only half of the world's working-age women are in the labor force, compared to 77 percent of working-age men. (U.S. Department of Labor)
- Women with full-time jobs still

earn only about 77 percent of their male counterparts' earnings. (White House)

- Around the world, only 22 percent of all national parliamentarians are female. That's double the number in 1995, but still a marker of slow change. (United Nations)
- By 2018, there will be 1.4 million open technology jobs in the U.S. and, at the current rate of students graduating with degrees in computer science; only 29% of applicants will be women. (Microsoft Research)
- Women currently hold 24, or 4.8 percent of CEO positions at S&P 500 companies. (Catalyst)

On April 14, 2015, a member of U.S. President Barack Obama's Council of Economic Advisers, Betsey Stevenson wrote a blog, titled Five Facts About the Gender Pay Gap. She said, "Women are less likely to have an offer of health insurance from their employer, have retirement savings plans, or have access to paid leave, and perhaps as a result, they are more likely to take leave without pay. ... Motherhood is associated with a wage penalty and lower future career earnings. ... (Thus), policies providing paid sick and family leave encourage women to participate in the labor force and therefore bolster their lifelong earnings."

To be candid, these statistics are not acceptable in today's society here in America and throughout the world. They do not reflect the actual make-up of the global population. It shows that a lot of women do not experience

Continued on page 6

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CAPITOL COMMENTARY Continued from page 4

equality in education, employment, politics, and civic activities. The percentages discussed here, covers all women, with or without a disability. Had studies been made to focus specifically on women with a disability, especially those who are deaf and hard of hearing, we can safely conclude that the results would be even more lopsided.

In the beginning, TDI was an all-boys network for many, many years. Not any more today, and hopefully it will remain so in the future. When TDI got its start in the late 1960's, we had deaf and hard of hearing men serving as members and officers on its Board of Directors, and as its Executive Director managing the day-to-day operations in the office. Also, when we had TTY agents, all of them men in the 1960's and 1970's, they installed the heavy TTY machines in homes of deaf and hard of hearing people all over the country. Their wives were very supportive for their work in the community. We must give credit to all the spouses of these pioneers such as Nancy Breunig, Dot Brenner, Sally Taylor, Jean Saks, Nancy Rowley, and many others. Without them, the TTY agents would not have been as successful in their work.

Today our nine-member TDI Board of Directors consists of six women and three men, all of them deaf or hard of hearing. Just about the opposite from thirty years ago, when we had six men and two women – all but one that were deaf or hard of hearing. Sheila Conlon-Mentkowski is our current Board President, the second deaf woman to have this leadership role after Lori Breslow, the first one. In addition to Ms. Conlon-Mentkowski, today, our six female TDI Board members include: Alexa Schriempf, Stephanie Buell, Rebecca

Rosenthal, CM Boryslawskyj, and Jan Withers. During TDI's forty-eight year history, twelve other deaf and hard of hearing women served on the TDI Board such as Lori Breslow, Judy Viera, Carol Sliney, Cheryl Heppner, Ellen Roth, Nancy Bloch, Pam Holmes, Nancy Breunig, Susanna Bourgeois, Diana Herron, Peggy Schmidt, and Susan Watson. All total, twenty women and fifty-five men served on the TDI Board, which means around 26 percent of the Board membership – current and past, have been women. The other two women were hearing – Pam Ransom and Toni Dunne. Ransom was the first woman president of TDI. Over the years, the TDI Board has recognized deaf and hard of hearing women such as Carol Sliney, Cheryl Heppner, Donna Platt, Nanci Linke-Ellis, Sheri Farinha, Pam Holmes, Patricia Hughes, Brenda Battat, and Judy Viera, for various awards at its Biennial Conferences.

We are pleased to see a good number of women executives in the human service fields within the deaf and hard of hearing community. Communication Service for the Deaf (CSD), Austin, TX, has three deaf and hard of hearing women in executive positions. Faye Kuo is its Chief Legal Officer. Brandi Rarus is its Vice President of Public Relations and Community Engagement, and Nikki Soukup is its Director of Program Operations. Deaf and hard of hearing women run six out of eight community service agencies for the deaf and hard of hearing in California. Sheri Farinha is the Chief Executive Officer with NorCal Services for Deaf & Hard of Hearing (NorCal), Sacramento. Dr. Patricia Hughes is the Chief Executive Officer with Greater Los Angeles Agency on Deafness (GLAD). Michelle Bronson is the Chief Executive Officer with Deaf & Hard of Hearing Service Center, Inc., Fresno. The other three are

regional directors reporting to GLAD as follows: Lisa Price (Center on Deafness- Inland Empire, Riverside), Renee Thomas (Orange County Deaf Equal Access Foundation, Cypress), and Julianna Fjeld (Tri-County GLAD, Ventura). Cheryl Heppner just recently retired after over twenty years as Executive Director with Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons.

In the relay services, TDI has enjoyed working with women such as Pamela Holmes, Director of CapTel Customer Service, at Ultratec, Inc., Angela Officer, Senior Implementation Program Manager and Kristine Smith-Shipley, National Marketing Manager at Sprint Relay. Sorenson VRS has twenty two deaf and hard of hearing women in leadership and management positions such as: Monica Parks - Center Director, Houston; Nic Zapco - Program Manager for eLearning; Christine Multra Kraft - Workshop Program Manager; Lisa Perry Burckhardt - Program Manager, ASL Language Mentorship Program; Wendy Adams - Center Director, Chicago; Jessie Adner - Center Director, Indianapolis; Rebecca Reihm - Center Assistant Director, Dallas Fort Worth; Susan Nelson - Center Director, Oklahoma; Jamie Speier - Center Director, St. Cloud; Dolly Dalal - Technical Support Supervisor, Rochester; Catherine Holt - District Manager (Utah, Idaho, Montana, Oregon); Helen Berry - District Manager (Delaware, South New Jersey, Pennsylvania, West Virginia); Jennifer Pfau - District Manager (Colorado, Wyoming, New Mexico); Kristy Mnich - District Manager (Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas, North Texas, Oklahoma); Lissette Molina - District Manager (Florida, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico); Jo Bienvenu - District Manager (South Texas); Kim Smith - Training and Workflow Development

Continued on page 7

CAPITOL COMMENTARY Continued from page 6

Manager; Emisha Sill - Customer Service Quality Assurance Supervisor; Silvina Marquez - Customer Service Shift Supervisor, Corporate; Laura Lowe, Operations Coordinator, Ann Arbor and Lansing; Katherine Woods - Operations Coordinator, Milwaukee and Ottawa; and Nancy Hajdamacha - Operations Coordinator, Burbank. Global VRS has Tanya Velasquez as its Customer Experience Advocate. We also have Lori Cienlinski who manages Wyoming's telecommunications relay service program. In addition, Convo Relay has four deaf and hard of hearing women executives as follows: Vanessa Scarna - Director of Experience Design, Christina McMurry - Director of Interpreting, Leila Hanaumi - Content Manager, and Elena Shapiro - Convo Support Manager. Furthermore, Purple Communications has four deaf and hard of hearing women executives as follows: Diana Herron - Sr. Director of Customer Care, Christy McBee - Professional Services Manager, Manisha Neubert - Chicago Center Supervisor, and Laura Goeb - Corporate Recruiter.

In the private sector other than relay services, we are pleased to see our own serving as managers and executives. Jenny Lay-Flurrie is Senior Director for Accessibility, Online Safety, and Privacy at Microsoft. Jennifer Vogel is Senior Technology Solutions Manager with Technology Department at AT&T. Overseas we have Lisa Åström, a Systems and Applications Expert with Omnitor in Sweden.

Among our Consumer Advocates in the trenches at the Nation's Capitol, we enjoy collaborating with Lise Hamlin, Director of Public Policy at HLAA, and Zainab Alkebsi, Policy Counsel - NAD. Nancy Bloch was the first female Chief Executive Officer with National Association of

the Deaf, serving for nineteen years. Brenda Battat served for twenty years in various capacities with Hearing Loss Association of America, first as director of public policy and state development, then Deputy Executive Director, and last as Executive Director. Other deaf and hard of hearing representatives in Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network (DHHCAN) include Michele Mulligan (CPADO), Mary Lynn Lally (GUAA), and Brigetta Bourne-Firl (ASDC). Susan Boswell, (AGBAD) works with us in another coalition - Deaf and Hard of Hearing Alliance (DHHA). Thirteen deaf and hard of hearing attorneys were inducted into the Supreme Court on April 19, 2016. You will be amazed to find that eleven out of them are women.

In the field of education of the deaf and hard of hearing, during fall 2015 we were pleased to see Gallaudet University score an historical milestone, with Roberta Cordano, as its first deaf woman President. Heather Harker, a new Chief of Staff to Ms. Cordano, previously served as Chair of the Board of Trustees at Gallaudet. From NTID, we have Dr. Kathryn Schmitz, Associate Dean for Academic Administration (add a few more from NTID). Angela Officer was Chair of NTID's National Advisory Group. Dr. Roslyn Rosen recently retired after ten years as Director of the National Center on Deafness at CSUN. Cathy McLeod is now serving in this position. Other deaf and hard of hearing women are currently taking the helm as superintendents at some schools for the deaf throughout America: KaAnn Varner - Oklahoma, Janet Dickinson - Arkansas, Annette Reichman - Arizona, Shauna Bilyeu - Washington State, and Nancy Hlibok Amann - California (Riverside). Nancy Rarus retired as Principal of Kendall School, Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center. We must not forget many wonderful Jr. NAD female

advisors/chaperones, especially Ms. Rarus. She is currently President of the Deaf Seniors of America.

At the federal level, in the 1960's through the 1990's, we had Edna Adler in the U.S. Department of Education. She worked closely with Boyce Williams to ensure that the deaf and hard of hearing were getting quality vocational rehabilitation services to find jobs, and to provide the TV industry with some seed funding to caption some of their video programs. Charm Smith now works as Education Program Specialist for the Department. Vikki Porter works as a Visual Communications Specialist in the U.S. Accountability Office. Suzy Rosen Singleton was just recently appointed as the new Chief of the Disability Rights Office under Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau at the Federal Communications Commission. Claudia Gordon serves as Chief of Staff, Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, US Department of Labor. And Leah Katz-Hernandez works with our US President Barack Obama and outside visitors to the Oval Office as Receptionist of the United States, the White House.

We have had deaf and hard of hearing women serve on a number of federal advisory committees. Pamela Holmes, Gwendolyn Trujillo, Cheryl Kent, Nancy Bloch, and Donna Sorkin had served as members on the US Access Board. Holmes is now serving as a member of the National Council on Disability. Other deaf and hard of hearing women serve on the Disability Advisory Committee with the Federal Communications Commission including Lise Hamlin (HLAA), Zainab Alkebsi (NAD), Kari Cooke (NBDA), Jamie Taylor (Deaf Blind Citizens in Action), and Gay Jones (FEMA, USDHS).

CAPITOL COMMENTARY Continued from page 7

At the state level, we have deaf and hard of hearing women that administer the commissions or offices for deaf and hard of hearing in at least five states as follows: Sherri Collins (AZ), Deborah O'Willow (WA), Heidi Reed (MA), Loretta Sarro (DE), and Jan Withers (NC). Donna Platt serves as Emergency Preparedness Coordinator under North Carolina Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

An article, *The costs of inequality: For women, progress until they get near power* from Harvard Gazette, indicated that a major hurdle to women's greater participation and success in the labor force is the inflexibility of both traditional career paths and cultural familial roles. Usually, we do expect that working women be the family caregivers, or at least, prioritize childcare and elder care in their daily responsibilities.

We are glad that federal and some state governments offer family leave to its employees. Major employers are following its footsteps, for both women and men here in America, much thanks to the Family Medical Leave Act of 1993. It is a United States federal law requiring covered employers to provide employees job-protected and unpaid leave for qualified medical and family reasons. With more and more opportunities offered nowadays for telecommuting, more and more men choose to stay home as "Mr. Mom". Mobile technology helps us be more productive at home, and spend less time on the road.

Another approach, a recent Harvard report suggests, involves outing or removing bias and confronting it along with our family members, especially children before they enter the workforce. In one study, almost

a quarter (23%) of teenage girls preferred male political leaders than female ones. Only eight percent preferred women leaders. Forty percent of the boys surveyed preferred male leaders, while only four percent preferred women. We can change this mindset beginning at home by having conversations with our family members and friends about equal rights and its challenges for men and women. The study also reminded us to avoid using sexist language at home, in the workplace, and with our friends. Thomas Kinni wrote an article, *Outing Bias* about addressing gender inequality in the workplace. He recommends a few good books for this topic, such as Sheryl Sandberg's book, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*.

There are some good techniques/approaches, in what some would term them as a "gender equality nudges." We must take every opportunity to promote deaf and hard of hearing women and their contributions in our society as well as in the media. Schools, community service centers, and other civic groups can observe "National Deaf and Hard of Hearing Women Month" once a year. If you happen to be in the metro DC area, please do attend "Deaf Herstory," which is an exhibit on the ground floor of the Student Activities Center at Gallaudet University. This multimedia exhibit highlights the impact that deaf and hard of hearing women have made not only for Gallaudet, but also throughout America. On our website, www.tdiforaccess.org and in the 2016 Blue Book, you can learn more about how deaf and hard of hearing women contributed significantly to the TDI mission. When we do a survey, we try to collect demographic information from those who participate in it. We want to make sure a good number of deaf and hard of hearing women participate in the survey or

questionnaire. TDI seeks to observe best practices for equal employment opportunity (EEO). When we send out position announcements, we share our EEO policy with the general public.

In closing, this article seeks to give as much spotlight to the good work and potential of our deaf and hard of hearing women. This must not be taken as a slight to the good attributes and contributions of men who are deaf and hard of hearing. The same goes to our hearing friends and supporters (corporate sponsors, and allies such as interpreters, CART providers, parents, and siblings), either men or women. They do contribute significantly to the current make-up of the deaf and hard of hearing community. Last but not least, if there isn't a mention of certain deaf and hard of hearing women in this article, we offer our apologies.

Let us all remember that we are people first, regardless of gender, race, or ability, etc. TDI salutes deaf and hard of hearing women for their contributions to the deaf and hard of hearing community. They are truly capable of doing anything like their male counterparts, no less. All they need from us is to have equal access and opportunity! We must give them full support as they aim to prosper well in life, and to have full equality at home, in the workplace, and the rest of the community. Good luck and best wishes to our deaf and hard of hearing women friends! To all our women friends, thank you for helping shape an accessible world!



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A Partial List of Who's Who Among Women

Spouses Working Side-by-Side with TTY Agents from the middle 1960's through the 1970's:



Nancy Breunig, wife of H. Latham Breunig; Dot Brenner, wife of Stephen Brenner; Sally Taylor, wife of Paul Taylor; Jean Saks, wife of Andrew Saks; Nancy Rowley, wife of Clifford Rowley

Current Members of the TDI Board of Directors:



Sheila Conlon-Mentkowski; Alexa Schriempf; Stephanie Buell; Rebecca Rosenthal; CM Boryslawskij; Jan Withers

Former Members of the TDI Board of Directors:



Lori Breslow; Judy Viera; Carol Sliney; Cheryl Heppner; Ellen Roth; Nancy Bloch; Pam Holmes; Nancy Breunig; Susanna Bourgeois; Diana Herron

Former and Current TDI Board Presidents:



Lori Breslow; Sheila Conlon-Mentkowski

Members, Current and Past on Federal Advisory Committees:



Pamela Holmes, National Council on Disability; Gwendolyn Trujillo, U.S. Access Board; Nancy Bloch, U.S. Access Board; Donna Sorkin, U.S. Access Board; Lise Hamlin, HAAA - Disability Advisory Committee, FCC; Zainab Alkebsi, NAD - Disability Advisory Committee, FCC; Kari Cooke, NBDA - Disability Advisory Committee, FCC; Jamie Taylor, Deaf Blind Citizens in Action - Disability Advisory Committee, FCC

Past Recipients of TDI Biennial Awards:



Carol Sliney; Cheryl Heppner; Donna Platt; Nanci Linke-Ellis; Sheri Farinha



Pam Holmes; Dr. Patricia Hughes; Brenda Battat; Judy Viera

Executives in Post Secondary Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing:



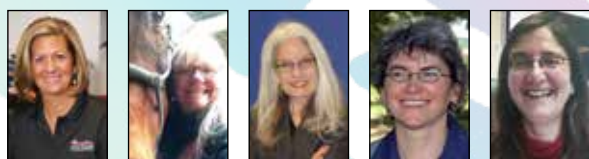
Roberta Cordano, first deaf woman President of Gallaudet University; Heather Harker, former Chair of the Gallaudet Board of Trustees, now Chief of Staff to President Cordano; Dr. Kathryn Schmitz, Associate Dean for Academic Administration, National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT); Dr. Denise Kavin, Special Assistant for Strategic Decisions 2020 Implementation, NTID, RIT; Angela Officer, former Chair of NTID National Advisory Group; Dr. Roslyn Rosen, retired as Director of National Center on Deafness at CSUN; Cathy McLeod, the new Director of National Center on Deafness at CSUN

Executives at the Federal Government Level:



Edna Adler, Administrator, Deafness and Communication Disorders Branch, U.S. Department of Education; Charm Smith, Education Program Specialist, U.S. Department of Education; Vikki Porter, Visual Communications Specialist, U.S. Accountability Office; Suzy Rosen Singleton, Chief of the Disability Rights Office, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, Federal Communications Commission (FCC); Claudia Gordon, Chief of Staff, Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, US Department of Labor; Leah Katz-Hernandez, Receptionist of the United States, the White House

Executives with State Commissions/Offices of Deaf and Hard of Hearing:



Sherri Collins, Executive Director, Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Deborah O'Willow, Executive Director, Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Washington State; Heidi Reed, Commissioner, Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Jan Withers, Director, North Carolina Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Donna Platt, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, North Carolina Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Executives in Secondary Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing:



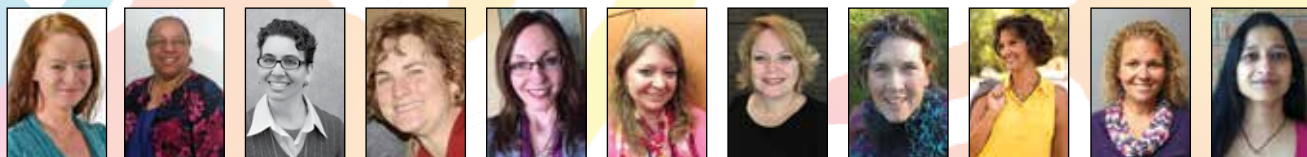
KaAnn Varner - Superintendent of Oklahoma School for the Deaf; Janet Dickinson - Superintendent of Arkansas School for the Deaf; Annette Reichman - Superintendent of Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind; Shauna Bilyeu - Superintendent of Washington State School for the Deaf; Nancy Nibok Amann - Superintendent of California School for the Deaf - Riverside; Nancy Rarus, retired as Principal of Kendall School, Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center

in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community

Executives in the Relay Service Industry:



Pamela Holmes, Director of CapTel Customer Service, at Ultratec, Inc.; Angela Officer, Senior Implementation Program Manager, Sprint Relay; Kristine Smith-Shipley, National Marketing Manager, Sprint Relay; Tanya Velasquez, Customer Experience Advocate, Global VRS; Vanessa Scarna, Director of Experience Design, Convo Relay; Christina McMurry, Director of Interpreting, Convo Relay; Leila Hanaumi, Content Manager, Convo Relay; Elena Shapiro, Convo Support Manager, Convo Relay; Diana Herron, Senior Director of Customer Care, Purple Communications; Christy McBee, Professional Services Manager, Purple Communications; Manisha Neubert, Chicago Center Supervisor, Purple Communications



Laura Goeb, Corporate Recruiter, Purple Communications; Monica Parks, Sorenson VRS Center Director, Houston; Nic Zapco, Program Manager for eLearning, Sorenson VRS; Christine Multra Kraft, Workshop Program Manager, Sorenson VRS; Lisa Perry Burckhardt, Program Manager, ASL Language Mentorship Program, Sorenson VRS; Wendy Adams, Sorenson VRS Center Director, Chicago; Jessie Adner, Sorenson VRS Center Director, Indianapolis; Rebecca Reihm, Sorenson VRS Center Assistant Director, Dallas Fort Worth; Susan Nelson, Sorenson VRS Center Director, Oklahoma; Jamie Speier, Sorenson VRS Center Director, St. Cloud; Dolly Dalal, Technical Support Supervisor, Sorenson VRS, Rochester



Catherine Holt, District Manager (Utah, Idaho, Montana, Oregon), Sorenson VRS; Helen Berry, District Manager (Delaware, South New Jersey, Pennsylvania, West Virginia), Sorenson VRS; Jennifer Plau, District Manager (Colorado, Wyoming, New Mexico), Sorenson VRS; Kristy Mnich, District Manager (Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, North Texas), Sorenson VRS; Lissette Molina, District Manager (Florida, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico), Sorenson VRS; Jo Bienvenu, District Manager (South Texas), Sorenson VRS; Kim Smith, Training and Workflow Development Manager, Sorenson VRS; Emisha Sill, Customer Service Quality Assurance Supervisor, Sorenson VRS; Silvina Marquez, Customer Service Shift Supervisor, Corporate, Sorenson VRS; Laura Lowe, Operations Coordinator, Ann Arbor and Lansing, Sorenson VRS; Katherine Woods, Operations Coordinator, Milwaukee and Ottawa, Sorenson VRS; Nancy Hajdamacha, Operations Coordinator, Burbank, Sorenson VRS

Executives with Community Service Programs for Deaf and Hard of Hearing:



Faye Kuo, Chief Legal Officer, CSD; Brandi Rarus, Vice President of Public Relations and Community Engagement, CSD; Nikki Soukup, Director of Program Operations, CSD; Sheri Farinha, Chief Executive Officer with NorCal Services for Deaf & Hard of Hearing; Dr. Patricia Hughes, Chief Executive Officer, Greater Los Angeles Agency on Deafness; Michelle Bronson, Chief Executive Officer, Deaf & Hard of Hearing Service Center, Inc., Fresno; Lisa Price, Regional Director, Center on Deafness- Inland Empire, Riverside; Julianna Fjeld, Regional Director, Tri-County GLAD, Ventura; Cheryl Heppner, Former Executive Director with Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons

Executives/Representatives with National Consumer Advocacy Organizations in Washington, DC:



Lise Hamlin, Director of Public Policy, Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA); Zainab Alkebsi, Policy Counsel, National Association of the Deaf (NAD); Nancy Bloch, Former Chief Executive Officer, National Association of the Deaf (NAD); Brenda Battat, Former Executive Director, Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA); Nancy Rarus, President, Deaf Seniors of America (DSA); Michele Mulligan, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network (DHHCAN) representative for Cerebral Palsy and Deaf Organization (CPADO); Mary Lynn Lally, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network (DHHCAN) representative for Gallaudet University Alumni Association (GUAA); Brigetta Bourne-Firl, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network (DHHCAN) representative for American Society for Deaf Children (ASDC)

Executives in Telecommunications and Information Services:



Jenny Lay-Flurrie, Senior Director for Accessibility, Online Safety, and Privacy, Microsoft; Jennifer Vogel, Senior Technology Solutions Manager, Technology Department, AT&T; Lisa Åström, Systems and Applications Expert, Omnicor



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PERSPECTIVE OF NEWS VIDEO ANCHORS



With the upcoming fall election dawning upon the United States of America, coverage is unparalleled. Not just in the world at large, but for the deaf and hard of hearing as well. TV history is filled with many changes over the past 50 years. Back in the 1960's when color TV was beginning to take off, those who worked in TV news usually had backgrounds in radio or newspapers. Video quality was a challenge, so lip reading was quite an effort. Captioning was very limited, if existent at all. Accessibility for the deaf/hard of hearing was severely limited, with many relying on friends/family members relaying to them what was happening.

Today, you can turn on any TV channel, press a button, and see closed captioning for nearly any program. Closed captioning not only includes deaf and hard of hearing viewers as full participants in the information age, but also extends its value far beyond its origins. Closed captioning features prominently in public environments and public events, accompanies classroom lectures and web content, and even aids ESL students in learning English. Many everyday home consumers appreciate the widespread availability of captioning, its quality, and its convenience. While there is still much work ahead of us to ensure full compatibility and accessibility to

captioning (especially on the internet), media has never been more accessible than at any time in history.

Before Internet

However, the story is entirely different when it comes to sign language-based media – especially news. With many whose primary language is sign language, it is all the more imperative to convey timely news to those who rely on it for their day-to-day lives. Several people were key to making that possible:

- Karen Meyer of ABC in Chicago, Illinois
- Peter Wechsberg of KRON in San Francisco, California
- Jane Norman of KRON in San Francisco, California & Deaf Mosaic in Washington, D.C.
- Dr. Gilbert Eastman of Deaf Mosaic in Washington, D.C.
- Mary Lou Novitsky of Deaf Mosaic in Washington, D.C.
- Gregg Brooks of Theta Cable TV in Santa Monica, California
- Henry Stack of KGW in Portland, Oregon
- Cynthia Saltzman-Roberson of WTOP in Washington, D.C.
- Timothy Medina of WTTG/WJLA in Washington, D.C.

Because those people strove to bring the news to the public using sign language, information became much more accessible to millions. To learn more about their impact, read on for their backgrounds.



Karen Meyer
Chicago, Illinois

Studio: ABC 7, 1991-2014

High School Education: Evanston High School

College Education: Eastern Illinois University
Loyola University Chicago

Karen Meyer

In addition to reporting two segments a week for Chicago's ABC News affiliate, ABC7 reporter Karen Meyer taught at DePaul University, where she's also the coordinator of the Office of Students with Disabilities, and owns a consulting firm that specializes in

ANCHORS: THEN AND NOW Continued from page 13

disability issues. Meyer was one of the few known deaf broadcast reporters in any large TV market, and is one of the few TV reporters dedicated to covering disability issues. In November 2011, Meyer, was awarded with a Chicago/Midwest Emmy for Outstanding Achievement for News Specialty Assignment Report/Series, an honor that joins more than a dozen other distinctions she has earned, such as awards from the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, the National Rehabilitation Association and Easter Seals, among others. Meyer was selected as one of the Chicago Tribune's "Remarkable Women" in 2012. She was recognized as "One of the 100 Women Who Are Making a Difference in Chicago" by Today's Chicago Woman magazine.

Meyer served as Executive Director of the National Center for Access Unlimited (NCAU), a firm that assists corporations in complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990-92). From 1988-90, she worked in the Illinois Attorney General's Office as deputy chief of the Disabled Persons Advocacy Division.

Earlier in her career, Meyer was the coordinator of health education for disabled persons for the Chicago Department of Health (1983-85) and contributed to Jewish Family and Community Services as their Children's Program Director (1978-79) and as a social worker (1976-78).

A long-time advocate for the disabled, Meyer was appointed by President Clinton to be the Vice Chairperson of the President's Committee on Employment for People with Disabilities in 1994. Meyer after reporting for more than 20 years, retired on September 28, 2014. (ChicagoTribune.com, 2011 & abc7chicago.com, 2014)

Jennifer Graves, WLS-TV Vice President/News Director at the

time of Meyer's retirement, said in a statement: "Karen Meyer has never met a challenge she couldn't handle. As a person who is deaf in a hearing world, she overcame obstacles to achieve immeasurable success. She has worked tirelessly at ABC 7 to shed light on issues pertaining to people with disabilities -- reporting stories often ignored by other media outlets. During her career she's been honored with countless awards not only for her reports, but for her leadership and service. I cannot thank Karen enough for that commitment. She will be missed."



Peter "Wolf" Wechsberg
San Francisco, California
Studio: KRON 4

News Reporter Time Period: 1960's

High School Education: New York School for the Deaf
College Education: Gallaudet University

Peter "Wolf" Wechsberg

Peter "Wolf" Wechsberg was born in Birmingham, England during the WWII Air Raids. His family later moved to America, where he attended New York School for the Deaf, graduated from the theatre program at Gallaudet University, then attended USC, and an underground film school Cinema Lab where he received "The Most Outstanding Filmmaker" award.

With help from then Governor Ronald Reagan, Wechsberg created a daily television news show, NewSign 4, for KRON in San Francisco. He was a field reporter and anchorman, bringing the news to everyone in sign

language. While with KRON, he won an Emmy Award for his pioneering news show, and another for his documentary, "My Eyes Are My Ears."

His mother, Renée Lawrence, a member of the Royal Ballet, Oxford University graduate with a Masters Degree in English and later a nurse, desired the best education and ample opportunities for her deaf son. Therefore, she and her husband, Max Wechsberg, decided to move to the USA. Max was an Auschwitz escapee, Army Chief Interrogator, successful businessman, Vice President of White Stag, and brother to the famous author Joseph Wechsberg who wrote "The Merchant Bankers" and "Murderers Among Us" with Simon Wiesenthal. Through real world experiences Max taught Wechsberg how to face every obstacle with strength and character.

Wechsberg began working in the mainstream film industry by shooting documentaries, industrial films, and even a top-secret CIA film where they blindfolded him during transport to and from the location! He shot commercials for Rolls Royce, McDonald's, Sprint, Harley Davidson, and many others. He is a member of National Theatre for the Deaf.

Quitting his secure job in Portland, Oregon as a communication designer for US First National Bank, Wechsberg shot the first feature film produced in sign language, "Deafula" (1975). Over the years he continued working on scores of projects, everything from commercials to features, enabling him to purchase 35mm cameras, a Steadicam, aerial image optical printer and post editing equipment. In addition to "Deafula," Wechsberg is also known for his work on Think Me Nothing (1975), and I Love You, But (1998).

Over the years he continued working on scores of projects, everything from commercials to features, enabling

Continued on page 15

ANCHORS: THEN AND NOW Continued from page 14

him to purchase 35mm cameras, a Steadicam, aerial image optical printer and post editing equipment. He has been an actor, producer, director, cinematographer, stunt cameraman, aerial cinematographer - hanging out of a Huey helicopter to get the shot, editor, negative conformer, visual effects producer.

Although the main body of his work is with hearing productions, his heart still belongs to the deaf world. Together with his two sons and wife, Margaret (Sych CLU '87), they are now in production of Peter's fifth deaf feature film, "King Peddler." Currently, his film "I Love You, But..." is playing nationwide in IMAX theaters which is mixed in MUSIC QUAKE - a special 5.1 surround sound mix with powerful low frequency tracks to let the audience FEEL both real life and cinematic vibrations (patent pending).



Dr. Jane Norman
San Francisco,
California & Washington, D.C.
Studio: KRON 4 & Deaf Mosaic (Gallaudet University)
News Reporter Time Period: 1960's
College Education: Gallaudet University

Dr. Jane Norman

In 1985, while working in the National Captioning Institute marketing department, Dr. Jane Norman was contracted by Gallaudet University's television department to re-design the pilot, Images into the Emmy-award winning Deaf Mosaic, a television

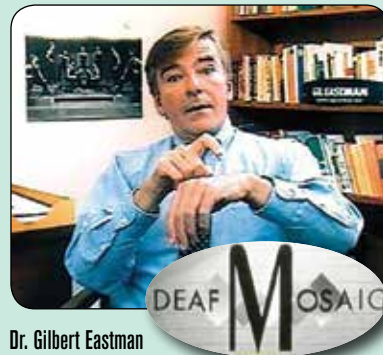
magazine format series that aired nationally for ten years.

Dr. Norman joined the Communication Studies Department in the fall of 2002 after serving as faculty and chair in the Television, Photography, and Digital Media department at Gallaudet University. Prior to this she was faculty in the Gallaudet's Theatre Arts department where she formed the first Gallaudet University touring company.

She has also received Emmy awards for her work with NewSign 4, KRON-TV 4, San Francisco, and Rainbow's End, a national PBS children program series. (Gallaudet.edu, 2016)

Dr. Norman taught courses at Gallaudet University such as: Mass Communication, Images of Deaf People in Media, Public Relations, and special topic courses related to the media. She also served as the keynote speaker at the International Deaf Film Festivals in Rochester, New York; Toronto and Japan and was one of the invited speakers at the Berkeley Deaf Film Festival at the University of California, Berkeley's Pacific Archive. In 2011, Dr. Norman served as president of the film screening judging board at the Deaf film festival Clin d'Oeil in Reims, France.

As producer and director, Dr. Norman created the concept of the Festival unit that became an integral part of the University's successful 1989 DEAFWAY and model for the following 2002 DEAFWAY. In 2002 she coordinated the DEAFWAY Film Festival. In 2006-2007, Dr. Norman served as Gallaudet University Academic Affairs Diversity Fellow. In 2010 she served as the producer and director of the 2010 competitive WORLDEAF Cinema Festival. Since 2007, Dr. Norman has focused on creating the Gallaudet University Museum and serves as its director and curator.



Dr. Gilbert Eastman
Washington, D.C.
Studio: Deaf Mosaic (Gallaudet University)
Mosaic Time Period: 1985-1995
College Education: Catholic University of America

Dr. Gilbert Eastman

Born into a hearing family at West Hartford, Connecticut in 1934, Dr. Gilbert Eastman attended and graduated from the American School for the Deaf in 1952. After graduating from high school, Eastman moved to Washington, DC where he graduated from Gallaudet University in 1957 and earned a Master's degree in Fine Arts in Drama from the Catholic University of America at Washington, D.C. in 1963. With a few exceptions, he remained on the campus of Gallaudet University for 35 years as a professor in the theater arts until his retirement in 1992.

"Deaf Mosaic," Gallaudet University's monthly magazine program hosted by Mary Lou Novitsky and Eastman, was the only nationwide program about the Deaf community.

During these years, Eastman distinguished himself as a teacher, actor, stage manager, translator, director, and playwright for more than 50 stage plays. Among his original plays, "Sign Me Alice," which dealt with a young deaf woman's struggle for language identity, was an instant hit with deaf audiences in 1973. Eastman inspired students to go on to successful



ANCHORS: THEN AND NOW Continued
from page 15
careers in professional and community theater.

Eastman was also a founding member of the National Theatre of the Deaf. He wrote the popular book, "From Mime to Sign," and has presented courses and workshops throughout the United States, Canada, Sweden, France, Italy, and Cuba.

Eastman, in addition to Mary Lou Novitsky, was a co-host for the popular deaf community television magazine program, "Deaf Mosaic." For this work, the Washington, D.C. Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences recognized him and Mary Lou Novitsky with an Emmy Award. His alma mater also honored Eastman by presenting the Laurent Clerc award to Eastman in 1993 for his outstanding social contributions in the interests of deaf people.

He founded and chaired the Department of Drama (later renamed Theatre Arts) at Gallaudet College, and taught drama and "Visual-Gestural Communication"—his specialty and innovation—until 1992. Fondly recalled as a warm, congenial person, he was also an unforgettable teacher who made his classes challenging and fun.

Mary Lou Novitsky

Mary Lou Novitsky was born in 1954



Mary Lou Novitsky
Washington, D.C.
Studio: Deaf Mosaic (Gallaudet University)
Mosaic Time Period: 1985-1995
College Education: Gallaudet University

in Pennsylvania and is congenitally deaf. Novitsky has a Bachelor's degree from Gallaudet University and was also a staff member in the Department of Television, Photography, and Educational Technology at Gallaudet University for over fifteen years with varied responsibilities, including producer, writer, and camera operator. While in this position, she was the co-host of Deaf Mosaic, the Emmy award-winning magazine program featuring stories about deaf and hard of hearing people from all walks of life, involved in all kinds of unique, as well as ordinary, activities and pursuits. Novitsky has numerous other awards and honors for her work on Deaf

Mosaic. She was also one of the instructors on "Ready! Set! Sign!"

"Deaf Mosaic," Gallaudet University's monthly magazine program hosted by Novitsky and Dr. Gilbert Eastman, was the only nationwide program about the Deaf community.

Gregg Brooks

Gregg Brooks was born deaf in northern California. Upon his graduation from Gallaudet University in 1965, he landed his first job as the book cataloguer at the Walt Disney Studios' library, then went on to Hanna Barbera and RKO Pictures before moving to Paramount Pictures Corporation, where he has worked since 1987 as an archivist.

In 1973, Brooks was hired by Theta Cable in Santa Monica, California, where he worked for five years signing the evening news. Brooks received an Emmy Award and was recognized for his achievements as a newscaster.

Brooks was the first deaf person to graduate from the prestigious American Film Institute in Beverly Hills, and he has worked for many years in the library of Disney

Continued on page 17



Gregg Brooks
Santa Monica, California
Studio: Theta Cable
News Reporter Time Period: 1973-1978
College Education: Gallaudet University

ANCHORS: THEN AND NOW continued from page 16

Productions. He was the consultant on several TV shows, such as "James at 15," where he utilized deaf actors.

Brooks is an accomplished actor, performing at the Deaf West Theater twice, as well as in a number of other plays over the years. A note of interest - In the 1958 production of "Around the World in 80 Days" at the California School for the Deaf in Berkeley, not only did Brooks have the lead role as Phileas Fogg, but he also enjoyed the experience of working on the play alongside stage Bernard Bragg, who was a deaf actor.



Henry "Hank" Stack
 Portland, Oregon
 Studio: KGW 8
 News Reporter Time Period
 High School Education
 College Education

Henry "Hank" Stack

Henry "Hank" Stack, profoundly deaf since he was six, signed the morning news on KGW News channel 8 for 31 years. He also taught American Sign Language at Portland Community College, was one of the professors at Gallaudet University, and was one of the founders of Northwest Theatre of the Deaf.

Stack said he had always wanted to catch the news on television but it was difficult for him to understand the words of the fast talking announcers. He broached the idea of a news

program for the deaf to KGW. The station went with it and encountered very few challenges, such as for instance, the taped announcer in the background had to be slowed down from a speech rate of over 90 words a minute to about 60, to stay with the news signer. Stack came in to the studio at 7:15 a.m. to rewrite the news, leaving out about one-third of the words used by the announcer since American Sign Language was very efficient in conveying concepts and did not need to use filler words.

Response from the deaf persons around the state was tremendous, according to KGW. But the real surprise, according to Stack, was the response there from hearing people. "We've had nothing but a good response from hearing people. The service of giving the news to the deaf also brings the problems of the deaf to the public, something I didn't expect when I started." (Lincoln Star, 1972)



Cynthia Saltzman-Roberson
 Washington, D.C.
 Studio: WTOP 9
 News Reporter Time Period: 1972-1981
 High School Education: Vestal High School
 College Education: Gallaudet University
 American University

Cynthia Saltzman-Roberson

Cynthia Saltzman-Roberson grew up in Jackson Heights, New York. She later moved to Binghamton, NY in 1966 and graduated from Vestal High School in 1968. It was very fortunate

she met Father Thomas Coughlin in Binghamton, New York at a deaf club, where he subsequently encouraged her to apply to Gallaudet University, where she was accepted. She was a dramatics major, and by senior year, she knew that she wanted to be in television more than anything in the world. On a field trip to WTOP, she left her name and was sure it would be pocketed and forgotten.

Days after Roberson's graduation, Hurricane Agnes swept the Washington, D.C. area, and Roberson got her chance. Rep. Charles A. Vanik (D-Ohio), who had several hard of hearing/deaf staffers at the time, called local television stations to complain that his staffers were anxious about the flood and couldn't understand the warnings on television and radio. WTOP immediately called Roberson for help.

"They picked me up at 5:30 one night and at six, I was on camera," said Cynthia, "People were shoving pieces of paper at me. I didn't know what I was doing but I got through it, and so many people liked the idea that I've been on ever since."

Roberson has been very supportive of the idea of captioned news broadcasts, saying "Television just can't do enough for the deaf. It's a big part of every American's life, but it's completely lost on us."

A reader wrote a letter to WTOP:

"While watching 'Eyewitness News' at 6 p.m. on Channel 9 June 23, I saw something that should be a part of all newscasts. On this occasion, Channel 9 used a young lady who was quite adept in use of sign language for the deaf. WTOP is to be commended for this service. Until this date the only media the deaf could utilize was the printed page and now, thanks to WTOP, there is one more. Bringing the news to all people as it happens is one of the greatest responsibilities

ANCHORS: THEN AND NOW continued from page 17

of any television station. Although we are not deaf, we say thank you Channel 9, and please don't wait for another emergency to bring this service back into your newscasts."

The station received so much favorable response to the signed broadcast that Roberson was retained to sign a regular five-minute news program every weekday morning on "CBS Morning News."

Roberson co-produced a rock music show performed by Gallaudet University students on August 25, 1974 called "SONG, SUNG, SIGNED". Thanks to the production, she won a local Emmy award.

At Gallaudet University during her time there, Roberson won the Most Promising Actress award for her performance in "Everyman," and also appeared in "An Experience in Compassion" and "R.U.R." She put together numerous shows after "Good Vibrations" productions with the National Park Service, various schools, shopping malls, and more. In the early 80's, she played the part of "Sarah" in "The Children of a Lesser God" at the Hayloft Theatre in Manassas, Virginia. She was a Theatrical Consultant for her community theatre in McLean, Virginia on "Children of a Lesser God" in the early 2000's.

She was a consultant and co-host for the Neighborhood News Conference (WDVN-TV) program "Hearing Impaired on Employment and Education" in summer 1979.

Roberson was a Social Studies teacher for four years at the Model Secondary School for the Deaf in Washington, D.C. in the mid 1970's. The Library of Congress at one point during the 1970's via Gallaudet University hired Roberson to instruct 12 of their staff in sign language in order to make communication between their staff and the deaf/hard of hearing sign language

users more effective. She taught sign language at National Institute of Health, and also taught adult evening programs at many other places.

She volunteers with the Gallaudet University Alumni Association. She currently teaches American Sign Language at a deaf-friendly elementary school in Virginia. She occasionally puts together shows, with the most recent one being for Gallaudet's 150th Reunion with former members of "Good Vibrations."



Timothy Medina
Washington, D.C.

Studio: WTTG 5

News Reporter Time Period: 1970's

College Education: Gallaudet University

Timothy Medina

In the 1960's Timothy Medina started to lose his hearing. Medina was 17 when he lost his hearing as a result of a scuba diving accident that left his ears permanently damaged by infection. Medina learned how to communicate by sign language. After graduation from high school, he immediately went to Washington, D.C. to learn sign language before starting classes at Gallaudet University. Medina graduated from Gallaudet in 1972 with degrees in Psychology and English. After Gallaudet, Medina became a sign language instructor for the National Association of the Deaf. Eventually he became a newscaster for WTTG Channel 5 in Washington, D.C. for over 11 years where he would give the news for five minutes in

sign language and speaking. Many people, both hearing and deaf, loved to watch Medina come on at 12:25 pm when he would provide 25 minutes of news condensed into five minutes without any commercials. He was a familiar figure in Washington, DC, and always found time to give back to the community.

At the time, according to National Association of the Deaf, 40 to 45 commercial television stations across the country broadcasted captioned/ sign language programs on a regular basis for deaf viewers, which included news, variety, religious, and education programs. In addition, 133 stations of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) were carrying a captioned version of the ABC Evening News on late night broadcasts.

Medina encouraged television programmers to see their medium in silence. He told an interviewer "I would want to get them to see programs without the audio. They could see how little one can get out of them that way," while also adding that most educational, entertainment, and even musical programs can be presented in sign language. "Musically, we do rhythmic signs, and the whole body flows with the music." Medina estimated his potential local deaf audience to be about 164,000 viewers.

During the height of the dangerous cocaine epidemic in the 1980's where many police officers were being targeted by "crack" drug dealers, Medina hosted a fund-raising event at a Capitol Hill nightclub where proceeds were split between purchasing bulletproof vests for the D.C. police Department and supporting the U.S. Deaf Olympic teams. This was on top of his long list of accomplishments which also included selling cars and teaching sign language for several years to the U.S. Secret Service at the White House. Despite a busy life, Medina was one

Continued on page 19

ANCHORS: THEN AND NOW continued from page 18

of those people who would set aside time to help others less fortunate than him. He would advocate on a pro-bono basis for those who could not speak for themselves in front of work supervisors and judges alike. In 1981, Medina received the GUAA Outstanding Young Alumnus Award for his prior achievements and efforts.

After Internet

With the advent of the internet, the dynamics of deaf reporters changed entirely. Deaf self-starters went one step further; instead of simply joining a mainstream company, they started their own media networks, with a few being dedicated to bringing news to the deaf. Videos were available to anyone who were able to access internet videos via a wide array of devices, such as smartphones, tablets, laptops, and more.

Networks such as H3 World TV (also known as H3 Network Media Alliance), BSL Zone, iDeaf News, Daily Moth and more were born bringing a wide array of sign language based videos. Social media and video streaming services such as YouTube helped to link the sign language community together, especially during events going “viral” (meaning to become popular quickly), such as when Nyle DiMarco was on the 22nd season of *Dancing With the Stars*.

H3 World TV

H3 Network Media Alliance, a not-for-profit organization, was



founded in 2009 to broadcast video programming of special events on the internet so Deaf and hard of hearing people around the world can view and be part of these activities. H3 has covered many major events worldwide including the Deaflympics, the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), International Committee

of Sports of the Deaf, and “Travel with Dawn” series exploring China, Hong Kong, and South Africa. H3 is also an associate member of World Federation of the Deaf. H3’s programming initiatives are funded through combination of advertising, sponsorships, contributions, contracted production and support services, and grants.

H3 Network Media Alliance broadcasts all its original programming in International Sign. International Sign is an international auxiliary language used by WFD and the Deaflympics. WFD estimates a potentially larger audience of 70 million Deaf people worldwide - providing more exposure than any of sign language in a specific country or region could offer.

**BSL Zone**

The British Sign Language Broadcasting Trust (BSLBT) commissions television programs made in British Sign Language by Deaf people for Deaf people. BSLBT was set up in 2008 as an alternative way for independent broadcasters to meet their regulatory duty to provide programming in British Sign Language (BSL).

BSLBT was initially established as a private company, with a Board of Directors drawn in equal numbers from the broadcasting world and from the Deaf community. In January 2012 it achieved charitable status, retaining the commitment to an equal mix of Deaf and hearing Trustees. The board of BSLBT is made up of nine people: four Deaf trustees, four hearing trustees and an Executive Chair. The Chair and the Trust have a small team of staff.

Independent broadcasters with

between 0.5% and 1% of audience share are able to choose either to source and broadcast programs presented in sign-language themselves or to contribute £20,000 each per year to BSLBT to make programs in sign language for the Deaf audience.

BSLBT’s income in 2011 was £1 million, and contributions from broadcasters are expected to remain broadly at this level for the foreseeable future. Having secured charitable status, opportunities now exist to seek additional funds to expand BSLBT’s work in line with its mission.

Within its first five years of operation, BSLBT established an impressive track record of commissioning high-quality programs for broadcast to the Deaf community. Commissions have ranged across genres including drama, sports, children’s programs, and chat shows. The quality of the output has been recognized with a number of awards.

BSLBT is held accountable by Ofcom for the delivery of signed broadcast programming and this arrangement is reviewed periodically. Ofcom is the British version of the United States’ Federal Communications Commission and regulates TV programming in Britain. At the last review in 2010 Ofcom gave unqualified support for the work BSLBT had achieved and for its continuation. BSLBT, in addition to the obligations it shares with all other broadcasters, has a responsibility to address the needs of the users of Britain’s fourth indigenous language, BSL, and of Deaf BSL television programmers.

iDeaf News

iDeaf News provides live and pre-recorded video news via the Internet specifically oriented to the interests and education of deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) people. They believe in the universal value of education and work to provide relevant news to their



ANCHORS: THEN AND NOW continued from page 19

viewers.

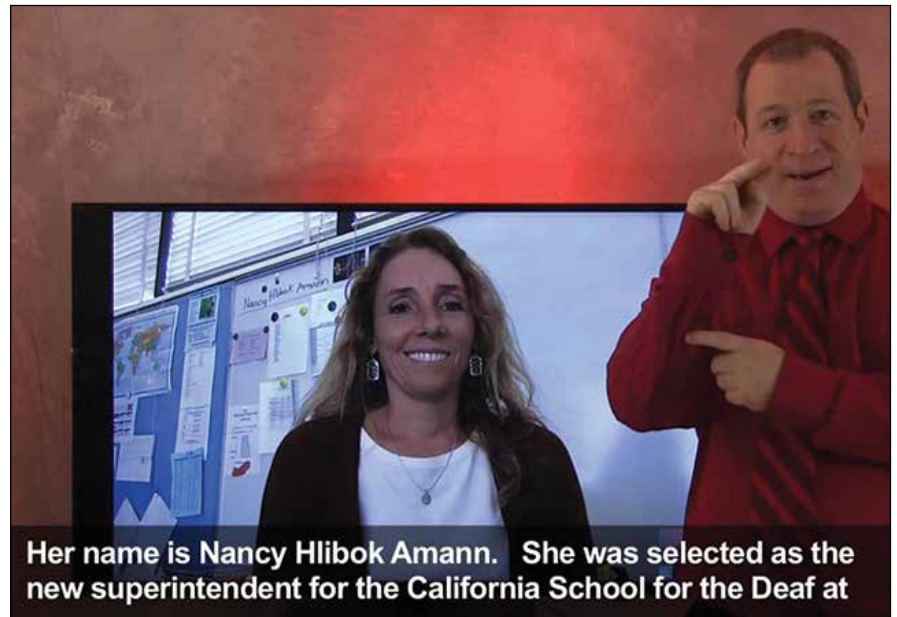
Through their news programs, they hope deaf and hard of hearing people throughout the United States and, eventually, the world, will enjoy and benefit from news pertinent to their lives as deaf and hard of hearing people. Providing news gleaned from all over the world which is related to the deaf and hard of hearing's concerns and interests is their focus and our mission.

iDeaf News also believes in assisting members of the deaf and hard of hearing community who endeavor to stay abreast of not only the general news they watch via networks and cable news programs, as well as news that's relevant to their daily lives and livelihood as deaf and hard of hearing people.

iDeaf News seeks and collects news related to deaf and hard of hearing events around the world and provide them via webcast using high quality video. Through news programs that present the rich and varied experiences and events in the deaf and hard of hearing community, they hope to ensure positive self-images are developed which carry over into the classroom, home, workplace, and community.

With a staggering amount of over 115,000 subscribers on Facebook, iDeaf News has proved to be popular in the deaf and hard of hearing. This became clear when iDeaf News became the target of an acquisition. iDeaf News announced in February 2016 the acquisition by ZVRS of iDeafNews in a statement:

"Today, a historic partnership is announced between iDeaf News and ZVRS! Since 2010, iDeaf News has been the premier source for current news and topics about and for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. With this new relationship between



Seth Gerlis reporting on Nancy Hlibok Amann's appointment as Superintendent for CSD

ZVRS and iDeaf News, we are excited to bring even more empowered access to the community we serve!"

iDeaf News also released a video by iDeaf News founder, Seth Gerlis, announcing the acquisition along with ZVRS CEO Sherri Turpin. The video announced the acquisition of iDeaf News, while also making clear that it was with the intention of supporting Seth Gerlis as a Deaf business owner of iDeaf News. Community reaction to the acquisition was generally positive.

ZVRS is a nationally recognized provider of VRS services that enable deaf and hard of hearing individuals to communicate with hearing people worldwide. Through its ZVRS business unit, the Company provides videophone hardware, software, and accessories designed to enable a real-time video connection with certified ASL interpreters who relay conversations between parties. The Company's Stratus business unit provides interpretation services to the healthcare, legal and enterprise markets – connecting clients with interpreters in over 180 spoken and signed languages on an on-demand basis.

Daily Moth

The Daily Moth delivers news in video using American Sign Language. The deaf host, Alex Abenchuchan, covers trending news stories and deaf topics with a twist of humor and deaf culture. Abenchuchan went to the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind and is an alumnus of Gallaudet University with a degree in Religious Studies. The Daily Moth posts daily recaps of major news events on its website, social media, and email newsletter during the weekdays.

With over 4,000 subscribers on YouTube and nearly 50,000 subscribers on Facebook, the Daily Moth has been trending among many in the signing community – especially with Abenchuchan's successful fundraising effort in where he was able to raise over \$25,000 within four months to keep Daily Month running for another year.

Abenchuchan started the Daily Moth to cover trending stories and Deaf



Continued on page 21

1. What makes Daily Moth unique compared to others also serving news to the deaf/hard of hearing community?

I'm the only person doing all the shows, I write, shoot, and edit the videos, so there's a consistent personality along with the ever-changing news cycle. I also provide news in both the hearing and Deaf worlds and extra content such as Deaf business features, interviews with notable Deaf people, and #DeafBing -- a humorous look at Deaf people's unique tendencies.



Alex Abenchuchan of Daily Moth reports on Nyle DiMarco on the Dancing with the Stars series

2. What are some of the top challenges Daily Moth has encountered in bringing news to the deaf/hard of hearing community?

Not all of the major organizations in our community have an active social media presence, so it makes access to quick, reliable information harder. I see that changing, though, as more of us realize the power of quick information. During several protests in our community in the past year, organizations have set up Facebook pages and it's been very helpful with news reporting and identifying sources to interview.

3. What are some of the unexpected accomplishments Daily Moth encountered in bringing news to the deaf/hard of hearing community?

Facebook's LIVE video feature is a major development that will positively impact our community and our ability to report information. When I do LIVE coverage, I see that many appreciate it as it makes them feel they are "there" and not missing out. When I started out doing Moth, I never thought it'd be possible to provide live coverage.

4. Which one or two news reports is Daily Moth most proud of covering and bringing to the deaf/hard of hearing community?

I'm proud to cover Deaf activism -- protests about audism, #DeafTalent roles in Hollywood, Nyle DiMarco's impact, and LEAD-K legislation.

ANCHORS: THEN AND NOW Continued from page 20

topics with a twist of humor and deaf culture in new shows posted Mondays through Thursdays. He believed that the deaf community faced many barriers and misconceptions. To that end, Abenchuchan works to change this by taking back representation, by knowing what's going on in the world, especially events that directly impact the way of living for the deaf.

And now...

Thanks to the internet, it is clear that the emergence of reporters using sign language along with the increasingly widespread access of captioning of traditional news sources combined is helping make the deaf and hard of hearing community more informed about the world now than any other time ever in history. Many in the deaf and hard of hearing community like to

watch some of their own people on the news, no different from the Spanish hearing community preferring to watch Telemundo, BET for the African American community, and so on. This shows since time immemorial the deaf and hard of hearing community evidence remarkable tenacity in that the community bands together and strives to inform itself using every venue available, particularly the internet.

Tech Bytes



GUEST WRITER: AL NOLL
IBM, Software Engineer

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!

IBM Mobile Technology Program Empowers Employees who have Disabilities

Even with the rise in popularity of social media, IBM employees still rely on email, texts and instant messaging as their most essential communication tools. These tools are extremely important for deaf and hard of hearing people. Before mobile technology ownership and use exploded, deaf and hard of hearing people had to either find or stay where the computer had a hardwired connection to an Ethernet port. Mobile technology, in so many ways, empowers deaf and hard of hearing people to communicate, regardless of where they are—and without the desktop computer.



I use the iPhone® to stay connected to IBM via emails, Sametime (instant message) chat, and texting. When I cannot be around my PC (i.e., traveling), I have no other way of contacting my co-workers because I cannot call them (nor can they call me), but they can reach me via Sametime on my iPhone. In addition I can do real time captioning via CaptionFirst Inc. from my iPhone. And, my co-workers can text me.

- Darlene Steiner Ericson, Senior Project Manager, IBM Global Technology Services

For more than 15 years, IBM employees who are deaf or hard of hearing or who have any other disability have been able to use wireless mobile devices to increase their productivity and improve

Continued on page 23



TECH BYTES Continued from page 22

collaboration. The IBM Wireless Mobile Devices Distribution program was established in 1998, is funded through IBM Human Resources (HR) central fund for people who have disabilities, and is the vehicle for providing mobile technology to employees who have disabilities. The goal is to accommodate deaf and hard of hearing employees, as well as employees with other disabilities, when they are away from their desks or on the road.

History

At IBM, communication is the most important key to workplace success for all employees. From the early 1970's to late 1990's, IBM provided two TTYs (teletype device) to all new deaf and hard of hearing hires, one for office and another for home.

As TTY's began to become outdated in the mid-1990's due to the emergence of modern technologies such as e-mail, texting and instant messaging, Al Noll, a deaf advocate and software engineer at IBM Poughkeepsie, began to explore a new technology. Wynd Communications was the first company to introduce and market a wireless, two-way mobile email service called Wyndtell for deaf and hard of hearing people. Wyndtell initially was supported on the BlackBerry® RIM 950 handheld cellular telephones. Wyndtell's 2-way pager was a revolution over the outdated TTY and it shaped the way the deaf and hard of hearing people communicate. Wynd Communications' marketing for the deaf and hard of hearing community was a big success.

In 1998, Al, due his longtime interest in helping improve accessibility for all deaf and hard of hearing IBM employees, worked with Millie Desbiens, IBM diversity program manager at that time, to create a

The wireless device program has been very important to me. First, it allows me to have the latest technology in smartphones used by my peers, managers, and executives early in the adoption curve. Secondly, it allows me to discretely access the CaptionFirst service during meetings or conference calls with international speakers. Thirdly, in my day-to-day job as the global liaison to the Cloud, Analytics, and Systems Middleware brands, I am able to test and discuss our mobile sales enablement being deployed to our Enterprise sellers firsthand. In addition, as the business unit's global representative for SalesConnect, I am able to experience the mobile app version being developed to better represent our sellers requirements as this tool is being deployed.

What is key about this program is having terrific IBMers like Al Noll and Millie Desbiens to manage the program and make receiving, using and even upgrading the smartphones, efficient and easy for the end user. It is a terrific benefit for the Persons with Disabilities community.

– Donna S. Potter, Program Director, Enterprise Sales Growth Initiatives in IBM Sales and Distribution

new purchase order with Wynd Communications. Together, they launched the "IBM BlackBerry Distribution Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing IBM Employees," so any deaf or hard of hearing IBM employee could request a BlackBerry for their communication needs.

The move to Verizon Wireless

Fast forward: Wyndtell was acquired by GoAmerica in June of 2000. GoAmerica continued to offer two-way mobile products and services, and later changed its name to Purple®

I have very limited mobility and use an electric wheelchair. Therefore it's difficult to cart around a laptop to meetings. I use the smart phone that I received through this program to take notes in meetings and be able to check and send email when I'm away from my desktop. I am able to take notes down for action items and send them to myself in an email, all through the phone.

– John T Olson, Ph.D., Senior Engineer and Scrum Master Data Protection and Efficiency team in IBM Systems

Communications after a series of mergers in 2008. Purple continues to offer mobile video relay services, but no longer offers two-way mobile products. Millie and Al saw how valuable the two-way mobile communication program was for deaf and hard of hearing IBM employees. They collaborated to continue the program, rename it: "Wireless Mobile Device Distribution Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Employees," and create three new purchase orders with Sprint™, T-Mobile® and Verizon Wireless™. The purchase orders for three providers was necessary because of the coverage options that were being offered throughout the areas where IBM employees were working. For example, employees at the IBM Burlington facility could choose from only one provider in their area – Sprint – and employees at IBM Tucson had more choice in coverage with T-Mobile and Verizon.

At the same time as the expansion to three mobile providers occurred, the program was expanded to include any IBM employee who was deaf or hard of hearing and IBM employees who had other disabilities.

Continued on page 24

TECH BYTES Continued from page 23

Beginning in late 2013, Millie and Al re-evaluated the program and agreed to consolidate from three purchase orders to one purchase order. Verizon Wireless became IBM's exclusive provider due to its wide-coverage in the United States, and, for the most important reason of all: it offers the unlimited data plan.

Unlimited data plan

An unlimited data plan is so important because of the video capabilities of mobile devices. While transmitting video by mobile device can be "expensive" in terms of data charges, it is invaluable for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Because people who are deaf and many who are hard of hearing communicate using sign language (such as American Sign Language or ASL), video chatting, such as FaceTime®, Skype™ and GLIDE™, has become popular. Video chatting enables face-to-face communications between sign language users and this has never before been possible over a communications device.

Another huge benefit of the video capabilities inherent in today's mobile telephones is the ability to take advantage of Video Relay Services (VRS). Because the conversation between the VRS user and a communications assistant (CA) flows much more quickly than with a text-based TRS call, VRS has become enormously popular.

Some IBM participants in the IBM Wireless Mobile Devices Distribution program use upward of 30GB a month in data. Therefore, an unlimited data plan was essential in guaranteeing the capabilities and benefits of video through mobile devices.

iPhone – the most popular choice

When the IBM Blackberry

When I am not at my desk and I need to make a phone call to participate in a work-related meeting (i.e., conference call), without a live interpreter around, I click one VRS provider app on the iPhone to make a call to connect to a video remote interpreter. The interpreter and I become the participants of the conference call, all on the phone. This connection brings convenience and reasonable accommodation to my needs at work.

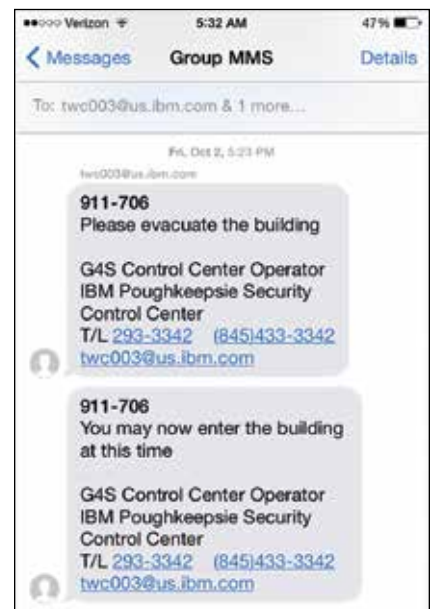
- Bill Huber, Cloud Software Engineer, IBM Cloud

Distribution Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing IBM Employees program was launched 1998, it was specific to all BlackBerry models only. After the program was found to be so successful for deaf and hard of hearing IBM employees, some IBMers were able to switch to other wireless mobile devices, such as the iPhone and Android™ (Samsung™ Galaxy) when they were eligible for upgrade. Today 90% of eligible employees choose iPhone because of IBM's many work-related apps such as Traveler, Verse, Connections, IBM Chat, Bluepages+ and many others that work well with the iPhone's iOS.

Benefits

The wireless devices provided to the employees offer the same features as a normal phone, with the addition of an emergency alert system for those who can't hear an announcement or fire alarm. Some IBM command centers, such as IBM Poughkeepsie Security, have set up a broadcast message system to send a message to the wireless mobile devices of all deaf employees at facilities that are being evacuated (actual fire alarm, fire drill, etc.) although they still emphasize that it does not replace the buddy system.

Another important safety benefit of mobile technology is the deaf and hard of hearing community's ability to take advantage of 911 emergency services for the first time. Text-to-911 is the ability to send a text message to reach 911 emergency call takers



from a mobile phone or device. It will soon be widely available in the United States. Currently, Text-to-911 is only available in certain markets where 911 call centers exist, including New York's Dutchess County and Rockland County which launched the capability in late October, 2015.

The advantages mobile devices hold for people who are deaf or hard of hearing reach far beyond safety concerns. Today, more and more apps for wireless mobile devices enable the deaf and hard of hearing to do almost everything the hearing community does, from ordering pizzas, texting with auto mechanics, doctors, nurses, and family members, to calling Uber™

Continued on page 25

TECH BYTES Continued from page 24

I use my iPhone to receive emergency weather updates regarding the IBM Littleton office (tornado warnings, office closing due to snow).

- Adam Skwersky, Senior Software Engineer, IBM Systems Middleware.

drivers. Even hearing aids (for people who have some hearing loss) are exploiting the advanced features of mobile devices. Some of the latest hearing aids have enhanced their performance and usefulness by pairing directly with smartphones, TVs, MP3 players and computers through Bluetooth® or the iPhone.

Some deaf and hard of hearing IBMers in this program, who frequently use CaptionFirst for the real time captioning service, always have a captioning session up and running on their wireless mobile device while participating in a meeting.

With an estimated 33 million deaf and hard of hearing Americans, it should be no surprise that more and more of these individuals are getting wireless mobile devices as their main communication tool to communicate with anyone.

And, while the benefits far outweigh the disadvantages, there are still aspects of mobile technology that are not accessible to deaf people, such as keyless or voice-activated systems.

Centralized fund

As a part of IBM's commitment to diversity and equal opportunity, IBM created a centralized fund (also known as cost recovery), that covers the cost of disability accommodations for any employees who has a disability. The fund is administrated by HR, removes the financial burden of accommodations from the departmental level (note that this has

the added benefit of removing any budgetary issues when departments are interviewing and hiring employees who may have accommodation needs) and facilitates any necessary adjustments.

"The central accommodation fund is one way to remove those barriers," said Al Noll, "I am very appreciative

that IBM, and in particular the HR department that holds the budget for special accommodations for persons with disabilities, gives us the opportunity to have wireless mobile devices such as these to help us perform our jobs better—and, even more importantly, break down barriers so that we can communicate with everyone."

About the Guest Authors

Al Noll began his career at IBM in 1984 after two six-month co-ops while an undergraduate at Northeastern University. In addition to his day-to-day software engineering work at IBM Systems, he provides consulting advice to assist IBM in improving accessibility for deaf and hard of hearing IBM employees. Al has been deaf since birth.

Frances Hayden is a Technical Writer and longtime member of the IBM Accessibility group.

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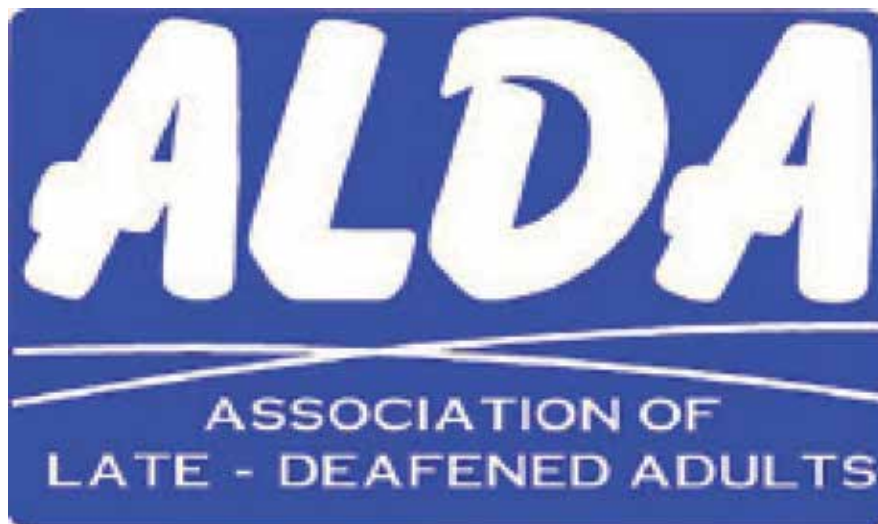
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Noteworthy News

At the conclusion of every season, we post noteworthy news from that season. Here's what popped up on our radar!

THIS 18-YEAR-OLD CEO IN POLAND IS MAKING THE FIRST SIGN LANGUAGE MESSAGING APP FOR DEAF PEOPLE

Source: *Business Insider*
(*BusinessInsider.com*)

Date: 2/1/2016

Author: Matt Weinberger

Over the weekend, 18-year-old Polish entrepreneur Mateusz Mach went to his high school's senior prom.

Today, on Monday morning, Mach announced that his app, Five, had raised the equivalent of about \$150,000 in funding — no easy feat



Five CEO Mateusz Mach

in Poland, where venture capital cash can be hard to find even for seasoned entrepreneurs.

Five started as a silly app, designed by Mach and developed by a bunch of freelance coders, that lets you and your friends send one another custom hand signs, like the kind rappers throw.

(Mach is a big hip-hop fan — he says his prom was fun, but was disappointed that they didn't play the new Kanye West single.)

Now, thanks to this cash influx, Mach is turning Five into something seriously useful: "The world's first messenger for deaf people," as Mach puts it. And the new, improved Five is coming to the United States this

NOTEWORTHY NEWS Continued on page 27

CBC ANNOUNCES PILOT PROJECT TO MAKE PUBLIC RADIO AVAILABLE TO DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING

Source: *Broadcaster*
(*BroadcasterMagazine.com*)

Date: 2/1/2016

CBC is pleased to share details of its pilot project to make Canadian public radio available to an estimated 1-3 million* Canadians who are otherwise unable to listen. With the help of a grant from the Broadcasting Accessibility Fund, CBC will make text transcripts of CBC Radio One's The Current available to the public on CBC.ca on a daily basis, and will film, edit and post one American Sign Language interpreted radio documentary from the program on CBC.ca each month, starting today.

Hosted by veteran journalist Anna Maria Tremonti, CBC's award-winning radio program The Current is the number-one radio interview program in the country, reaching nearly 2.3 million Canadians each week. It is a meeting place of perspectives, ideas and voices, with a fresh take on current issues that affect Canadians.

"At The Current, we strive to bring

our audience stories that encourage them to think about our world and our society in ways they might not have considered," said Anna Maria Tremonti. "This project will give people who are Deaf or hard of hearing the hearing impaired an opportunity to join us in that process and to be part of a larger conversation about what is happening around us. I am delighted to be part of the effort to open that door to this important group of Canadians."

"This is a first for CBC Radio and unique in Canadian media," said Heather Conway, executive vice president, English Services, CBC. "By forging a deeper connection between traditional radio and the digital sphere, CBC is leading the way in providing all Canadians with unprecedented ways to access vital, distinctly Canadian radio conversations."

CBC produces a number of internationally renowned, award-winning documentaries each year, many of which are broadcast on The Current. By offering these

documentaries in ASL-interpretation, CBC expects to engage and entertain Deaf audiences in an exciting new way, in many cases in their preferred language (ASL) for the first time.

Daily transcripts of The Current will be easily accessible through the program's website for Canadians to read, print and share. In addition to benefitting the Deaf and hard of hearing community, transcripts will also boast significant benefits to society in general. Many listeners contact The Current each month to request program transcripts. The requests come from a wide variety of Canadians including post-secondary students and professors, new citizens looking to enhance and develop their working English, and engaged listeners simply wanting to learn more. Making transcripts available on a daily basis will benefit an array of citizens with and without disabilities.

CBC seeks to serve and include all Canadians and is constantly working to make all its media platforms accessible for everyone.

Noteworthy News



The Five hand sign app on Android and Apple Watch.

summer, he told Business Insider.

“It will be a proper company,” Mach says.

When Five was first released to the world in 2015, Mach was expecting people to use it on their Apple Watches and phones as an easy, funny way of communicating simple concepts. For instance, Mach and his friends used it to communicate how far away they were, using a commonly-accepted translation for each hand sign.

But soon, deaf users started coming to Mach, thanking him for making an app that actually let them communicate in American Sign Language (ASL). For something like 80% of the deaf community, Mach says, typing isn't a natural mode of communication, since they lack any kind of internal “voice.”

And so, seeing opportunity, Mach hit the road, winning local startup competitions and attracting some media interest as a promising young entrepreneur. Once he had a little bit of buzz, he started hustling for investment cash, which isn't easy for a CEO when you're still in high school and don't have a network of contacts.

“I simply messaged almost every venture capital firm in Poland,” Mach says.

The meetings with the investors themselves were very stiff and formal, contrary to how Mach imagines Silicon Valley venture capital pitch sessions go — “They wore suits and et cetera,” instead of hoodies and t-shirts, he says. Similarly, those venture capitalists are often tied up with nationalized funds from the European Union, Mach says, meaning that it's a lot more complex and difficult to get cash in Poland than in California.

Getting the money required Mach to really immerse himself in business plans, pitch decks, term sheets, and all the other stuff that CEOs of promising new startups have to deal with. He had to show the stuffed shirts that he was up to the challenge of running a company, despite his age and inexperience.

“I think when investors look at an 18-year-old boy, they can't say they trust him,” Mach says.

Now, with the money locked in, and investor and designer Piotr Polaski brought on as a co-founder, Mach says that Five is going to focus on hiring ASL experts to build out the app's features. And he's secured a partnership with the United Nations, including the employment of a New York-based ASL interpreter, to help with the development and distribution

of Five in the United States.

Through all of this, Mach plans to continue his studies even while serving as CEO of Five: He'll graduate from his International Baccalaureate high school program this spring, and he plans on enrolling as an economics major at the Abu Dhabi campus of New York University later this year.

Juggling the demands of entrepreneurship with a college education may be difficult, but Mach says that he fully intends to finish out his degree, no matter what precedents were set by the likes of Mark Zuckerberg and Bill Gates, who never graduated college.

“I don't believe in the college dropout philosophy,” Mach says.



Air Canada has until December 15 to formalize its new policy on blind and/or deaf passengers and educate employees.

AIR CANADA ORDERED TO STOP FORBIDDING DEAF-BLIND PEOPLE FROM FLYING SOLO

Airline forced passenger to travel with an attendant and that's discrimination, regulator says

*Source: CBC News: Business (CBC.ca)
Date: 12/09/2015*

Canada's transportation watchdog has chided Air Canada for what it calls a discriminatory policy prohibiting people with certain disabilities from flying alone.

The Canadian Transportation Agency ordered the airline to officially change its guidelines requiring people who are

Noteworthy News

NOTEWORTHY NEWS Continued from page 27

both blind and deaf to travel with an attendant.

The ruling came after a complaint filed by Carrie Moffatt, who learned of the policy when she booked a flight from Vancouver to Victoria in September 2013.

Moffatt is legally blind and deaf but can read text and communicate orally by phone. She complained to the transportation agency after Air Canada refused to change its rules.

"When we first encountered this it seemed like it was just something that they'd overlooked, that somebody had just put in place years and years ago and had just forgotten about," said Amita Vulimiri, a lawyer with Community Legal Assistance Society who provided Moffatt with legal advice.

"But when we did point it out to them we had to litigate for pretty much a year before they agreed to change their policy."

Deaf-blind people are the only group with a disability that Air Canada defined as exclusively non-self-reliant, meaning they are required to have an attendant, Vulimiri said.

"A quadriplegic would not have been subject to this type of scrutiny by Air Canada," Vulimiri said. "It's only deaf-blind persons."

Instead of being able to fly alone, Moffatt would have had the responsibility of finding her own attendant to accompany her, her lawyer said.

On flights within Canada, the company provides an extra seat for free, but that is not the case for international flights, she said.

In its April interim decision, the transportation agency found that deaf-blind people have the right to travel independently and to decide for themselves whether they are capable of doing so.

The airline drafted a new policy after the agency ruled earlier this year in Moffatt's favour and gave Air Canada until Dec. 15 to formalize its policies and procedures and educate employees.

"Our current policies already allow passengers who are partially deaf and blind to fly without an attendant if the passenger has sufficient residual hearing or vision to be able to receive and understand safety instructions during all critical phases of the flight," an Air Canada spokesman said in a statement.

NOTEWORTHY NEWS Continued on page 30



A DEAF WOMAN'S 911 TEXT HELPED SAVE TWO KIDS

Source: AJC (AJC.com)

Date: 01/06/16

A metro Atlanta police department's text-to-911 feature helped a deaf woman flag police after noticing two young children alone in a car, the department said.

A deaf shopper at North Point Mall in Alpharetta contacted 911 Monday after noticing two young children alone in a car in the parking lot. A screenshot of the text conversation has gone viral on Facebook, with more than 6,300 shares since being posted later that same day.

A police officer arrived on the scene and discovered two small children that had been left in the car for almost an hour, an Alpharetta Public Safety Department spokesperson told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

The department released the depiction of their conversation (see left).

An officer who was dispatched later found that the kids had been left in the care of a 15-year-old, Fox 25 reports. Police say they'd been left inside the car for almost an hour.

No arrests in that case were made. But the Text-to-911 program is being praised for heralding a new – if essential – way to contact the police.

Alpharetta's public safety department is the first adopter of Text-to-911 — a technological program that allows cell phone users to text messages to 911 in lieu of calling — in the metro Atlanta region.

The Text-to-911 is not available in most parts of the U.S. Authorities still advise people to contact 911 with a voice call, if possible.

Noteworthy News

DEAF COMMUNITY SEEKING CLOSED-CAPTIONING DURING MOVIES

Miss San Antonio hopes for closed captioning options at all Santikos locations

Source: KSAT (KSAT.com)

Date: 12/17/2016

Author: Stephanie Serna

SAN ANTONIO - It's the day that many "Star Wars" fans have been waiting for, the release of the 7th installment in the main "Star Wars" film series. However, not everyone will get to enjoy the entire film because they won't be able to hear it.

Miss San Antonio Emma Rudkin, who is deaf said she is disappointed that there won't be accommodations for her to help hear the movie at the Palladium.

Rudkin said she was told at the Palladium Theater that they had listening devices for the hearing impaired, but they don't have readers with closed captioning.

Santikos released this statement on Thursday afternoon:

"Santikos Theatres has always had a good relationship with the deaf community. For the last year-and-a-half we have had 'Open Captions' at the Santikos Rialto for films requested by the DNOSA, a local deaf and hard of hearing organization. This Saturday at 7:15 there will be a showing of Star Wars: The Force Awakens at the Santikos Rialto in open captions and we are the only cinema chain in San

Antonio doing this. At all of our locations there are hard of hearing listening devices and at select locations there are readers that sit on the cup holders for the deaf that are available at Guest Services in our lobby's."

However, Rudkin said the listening devices that are available at all Santikos theaters, which look like headphones, only help people who have mild hearing loss. But for someone like her, who can only hear half the alphabet, it's difficult to really take in the entire movie.

"I'm a little disappointed in the fact that it's only at one theater at a certain time," said Rudkin. "The whole point is that you don't want it to be something that I am singled out or discriminated against."


KSAT has been told that Santikos is in the process of getting the captioning option at all of its theaters and it is evaluating the best options for captioning that will work with the digital projectors that it has.

However, the theater chain said it is too early to give a timeline.

"I've been trying for six years for this to happen so I hope that they follow through with providing a captioning system (At the Palladium)," said Rudkin.



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.

Noteworthy News

NOTEWORTHY NEWS Continued from page 28

Moffatt said she was disappointed that the process with Air Canada took two years to resolve because the airline refused to change its policies that were clearly discriminatory.

“Deaf-blind people are capable of being independent and living full lives. Air Canada’s policies and practices did not recognize this,” Moffatt said in a statement. “The majority of deaf-blind people do not live in total silence or darkness.”

At the time of the complaint Moffatt was an articling student and asked community legal assistance for help. Now she is a lawyer.

Air Canada has submitted an amended version of Vulimiri said that to her knowledge Air Canada was the only airline in North America to have such a policy.

Air Canada said in a statement that the transportation agency found that the company’s policies meet the needs of those who are partially deaf and blind, but that the written procedures needed to be updated to reflect the actual practice.

Spokeswoman Angela Mah said Air Canada will be adjusting its written procedures to be consistent with its practice, in compliance with the agency’s ruling.

Vulimiri said the airline eventually allowed Moffatt to travel independently on the September flight, in violation of Air Canada policies and only after she was classified as blind, but not deaf.

Air Canada removed a note from her file saying she had a hearing loss, meaning she was then unable to inform the flight crew of her impairment — information the crew needed, Vulimiri said. Its disability policy to the transportation agency but the airline has yet to update the

guidelines posted on its website.

IS TECH HELPING DEAF SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS SUCCEED?

Source: PCTech Magazine (PCTechMag.com)

Date: 12/07/2016

Soon after customers arrive at Mozzarella for the first time, they notice something’s different about the restaurant: Virtually every staffer is deaf.

Owners Russ and Melody Stein are also deaf, and have run their San Francisco restaurant since 2011. The business is thriving because customers love the food and the Steins have overcome obstacles deaf people can face when they become small business owners — particularly lingering stereotypes and prejudice, and fewer resources than hearing entrepreneurs have.

“We have the same skills as a hearing individual,” Russ Stein says.

Running Mozzarella comes naturally to Melody Stein, whose family is in the restaurant business.

Deaf people have the same ambition and ability to be entrepreneurs and business owners as those who hear, says Tom Baldrige, director of the business administration program at Gallaudet University, the largest educational institution serving the deaf and hard of hearing. There’s a growing interest among Gallaudet students in entrepreneurship, matching the increase in business schools across the country. The university is expanding its entrepreneurship offerings beyond courses, and giving students experience in running businesses like campus coffee shops.

“A lot is happening right now beyond



Melody and Russ Stein, owners of Mozzarella (Photo Credit: AOL)

a few courses in entrepreneurship. We’ve hired a consultant who’s going to guide us (and) infuse corporate entrepreneurship into all the academic disciplines,” Baldrige says.

The hearing world is still catching up to the idea of deaf business owners. The Steins have encountered discrimination from people who hear and don’t want to make accommodations to help those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The couple has run into resistance when they asked for help at local government offices, including times when they were trying to get permits required for running a restaurant.

“We have had our rough moments,” Russ Stein says. “There have been times when I had to ask for interpreters, and I was made fun of; I was looked down upon.”

Vendors and other business owners who can hear are often startled or feel awkward when they first meet the couple. Some have assumed that because the Steins are deaf, they didn’t know what they were doing, Russ Stein says. Some have been impatient about using pen and paper to communicate, or have said offensive or inappropriate things.

“People ask, ‘how do you drive?’” Stein says.

NOTEWORTHY NEWS Continued on page 31

Noteworthy News

NOTEWORTHY NEWS Continued from page 30

But most vendors adapt to working with the Steins. Mozzarella's wine vendor has become a true colleague, helping them learn more about the restaurant business.

And customers, most of whom can hear, seem happy to write their questions about items on the menu. Some seem awkward when they first come in, but they soon relax and enjoy their meals.

"They learn to overcome their fear," Melody Stein says.

Many deaf owners have dealt with prejudice, including hearing people believing that the best careers for deaf people are teaching or counseling other deaf people.

Mara Ladines, who owns By Mara, a clothing manufacturer and store in New York, wanted a career in fashion design, but some counselors in college tried to steer her toward being a graphic designer, a job that would require less communication with others.

"They believed a deaf individual can't get a job in the fashion industry," she says.

Ladines insisted on taking design courses and got jobs in retailers including clothing store H&M. In 2008, she began designing T-shirts and other clothes with a logo that shows the American Sign Language sign for "I love you." She started the business online and it has grown to the point where she could open the store last spring; many of the people who walk in are hearing, and Ladines is able to communicate with them and make sales.

Ladines wants to keep building her business, but she's frustrated by a lack of resources. She wants to find a mentor who understands the deaf culture.

"It seems that most hearing individuals don't understand that a deaf individual can own a business," she says. "I feel I was born as a natural business owner."

With email an integral part of any business, deaf owners communicate with vendors, bankers, customers and government offices. The Internet makes phone service easier — companies known as video relay services allow deaf people to communicate in sign language with an interpreter who then speaks to a hearing person via phone. These services are free.

The Small Business Administration started a videophone service this year enabling deaf owners to communicate via sign language with agency employees and making it easier to get help and information about loans and other SBA services. Previously, owners had to use teletype services that were slower and didn't offer the human interaction video relay does.

But owners say the Internet isn't as accessible as it could be. Few videos and online seminars designed for small business owners are captioned or interpreted. It's frustrating to Melissa Greenlee, who runs deaffriendly.com, a website that helps deaf people find services and companies that accommodate their needs.

EXCHANGE: SPECIAL BACKPACKS HELP DEAF EXPERIENCE MUSIC

Source: *The Washington Times*
(washingtontimes.com)

Date: 02/27/16

Author: Jarad Jarmon

MATTOON, Ill. (AP) - A tool used normally by DJs to feel intense bass without doing long-term hearing damage will now be used by deaf and hard of hearing at Williams Elementary School to experience music in a different way.

With a grant from Illinois Alliance of

Administrators of Special Education, these Eastern Illinois Area of Special Education (EIASE) deaf and hard of hearing students will now have a way to experience and follow along with music in class without the need of hearing.

In their music classes, they will now be strapping on a backpack, SubPac, that produces heavy, deep vibrations that correlate with the music that is being played.

"We were having some problems with students in the music class not feeling connected," said Debbie Rotramel, EIASE associate director. "They weren't able to hear the music that the teacher played."

While other students would be able to interact and respond, the students with hearing issues were unable to join in, essentially, Rotramel said.

Alex Murrill, EIASE teacher, said they would sometimes have the student put their hand against the speaker as it played music, but it was not a really fluid way of giving the students the experience of music.

"The teachers talked to me about that and wondered if I could come up with any ideas so I started doing some research and I found what is called SubPac," Rotramel said.

At a frequency of 5 hertz to 130 hertz, these students will be using these packs to feel the music, instead of hearing it, to follow along and stay caught up with the class, which before was a challenge. The backpack produces a similar experience to that of shaking when music is loud.

Vivian Richey signed that it was similar to when a car starts and the music is loud, causing the car to vibrate.

"This gives them that experience so

NOTEWORTHY NEWS Continued on page 32

Noteworthy News

NOTEWORTHY NEWS Continued from page 31

that they can make that connection (to music)," Rotramel said.

When putting on the backpack, many of the students' faces lit up at having a tangible way of experiencing music. In some of the first tests of the equipment, many of the students would even dance with songs like "Watch Me (Whip/Nae Nae)."

"It's awesome," Jadyn Adams of Shelbyville said.

Jadyn said it was difficult to concentrate on what the instructor would say as well as listen to the music being played.

Currently, only two packs were purchased for the students, but Rotramel said she would like to get more in order for everyone in the class to experience it at one time.

"It just provides them another outlet to expand their knowledge and expand what they are learning," she said "We

talk about music. We refer to music. It is a big part of our lives and it is something that they don't understand because they don't experience it."

NEW TECHNOLOGY, CLASSROOMS PART OF RENOVATION AT SCHOOL FOR DEAF

Source: *The Times-Tribune*

Date: 12/30/2015

Author: Sarah Hofius Hall

SOUTH ABINGTON TWP. — In one new classroom, deaf students will produce newscasts and learn from a teacher 300 miles away. In other classrooms, middle school students will have their own dedicated space for learning.

Renovated classrooms and new technology mean additional opportunities for students at the Scranton School for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children.

NOTEWORTHY NEWS Continued on page 33



Jon Konzelman, director of The Scranton School for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Children, stands in a renovated classroom at the South Abington Township school.

(Photo Credit: Michael J. Mullen / Staff Photographer)

STAR WARS FOR THE DEAF AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

New Hawaii law requires movie theaters to provide open captioning for at least two showings per week.

Source: *Honolulu Civil Beat*

Date: 12/30/15

Author: Nathan Eagle

The deaf and visually impaired will have an opportunity to experience Star Wars: The Force Awakens on Saturday at Ward Theatres, marking the first movie showing to provide such accommodations as required under a new Hawaii law.

Kauai Rep. James Tokioka introduced the bill last session, which Gov. David Ige signed in June. The measure takes effect Jan. 1. The law sunsets in



State Rep. James Tokioka smiles on the last day of the 2014 legislative session, May 1.

two years, but the Legislature could choose to make it permanent.

The legislation requires anyone that operates a motion picture theater in

more than two locations in the state to provide open captioning during at least two showings per week of each motion picture that is produced with open movie captioning, a House news release says.

It also requires them to provide an audio description of any motion picture that is produced and offered with audio description.

"The law removes communication barriers and provides equal access to persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or have poor vision through reasonable accommodations at movie theaters," the release says. "It will also help seniors who have trouble hearing, as well as individuals who are learning English as a second language by providing the written dialogue on screen."

Noteworthy News



Jon Konzelman, director of the Scranton School for Deaf & Hard-of-Hearing Children, demonstrates technology in the school's communications classroom as he uses a Polycom distance conference hook up with a school in Pittsburgh.
(Photo Credit: Michael J. Mullen / Staff Photographer)

NOTEWORTHY NEWS Continued from page 32

"We're at a point where we're leading the way," said Jon Konzelman, director of the school. "Everything is done with the needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing children in mind."

Students have spent the fall using the newly renovated section of the former Lourdesmont School, which the deaf school purchased in 2010 and opened to students in 2011. The state gave control of the deaf school to the private Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf in 2009.

The initial renovation included classroom and other spaces, and the new renovation includes three middle school classrooms, a health classroom, a career exploration center and a communications classroom. The school paid for the \$800,000 renovation through private donations and grants. The renovation also gave the school space for physical therapy and an afterschool activity room for the school's 56 students. Another unused floor in the building also remains available for possible future expansion.

In the career exploration center,

students in the high school program will work on independent living and workforce development skills. In the communications classroom, students take an introduction to video class, taught by a teacher in Pittsburgh. Through advanced technology, the teacher can interact with the students, who can view anything the teacher is writing on an interactive flat panel in the back of the classroom. More distance learning opportunities with the two campuses are also planned.

Sarah Gerhold, an eighth-grade student, through a sign language interpreter, said she loves her new video class.

"It's really cool. I love the new room," she said.

TEXT TO 911 HELPS DEAF WOMAN IN DISTRESS

"If you don't have anybody to call for you and you have a cellphone, this will actually save your life," said the woman about Text-to-911

Source: NBC (NBCLosAngeles.com)

Date: 12/30/15

Author: Tony Shin

A deaf woman feeling symptoms

of a stroke summoned help by text messaging 911, becoming the first person in San Bernardino County to use the service since the county began utilizing it earlier this month, police said.

When Roseanna Raman needed help at home, she found herself in a dangerous situation.

"I can't hear nobody on the phone," she said. "I don't know why it popped up in my mind, 911. And I did it. So then I text them and they text back, just like that."

Within minutes, Raman was in an ambulance on her way to the hospital, where doctors made sure she was OK - and she was.

According to the San Bernardino Police Department, Raman was the first person to use Text-to-911 for what it was intended, since the county launched the new system on Dec. 10.

"Every community should be on board with this," said Lt. Richard Lawhead, spokesman for the SBPD.

On Wednesday morning, there was another incident in which a 15-year-old boy saved his father from suicide.

"Officers were able to respond, get the father into custody and saw that he was taken for proper medical evaluations," Lawhead said.

As of Wednesday, more than 20 San Bernardino County agencies are using Text-to-911.

Several agencies in Riverside County are also utilizing it, joining nearly 500 agencies across the nation.

Rama says it should be available everywhere, because there are millions who can't hear or speak.

"If you don't have anybody to call for you and you have a cellphone, this will

NOTEWORTHY NEWS Continued on page 34

Noteworthy News

NOTEWORTHY NEWS Continued from page 33

actually save your life,” she said.

DEAF JAMAICAN-BORN LAWYER HAILES PASSAGE OF DISABILITIES ACT

Source: *Jamaica Observer*
(jamaicaobserver.com)

Date: 02/11/16

DEAF Jamaican-born lawyer Claudia Gordon has hailed the passage of the Disabilities Act and called on Jamaicans to ensure that the legislation achieves its objectives of ensuring full inclusion and participation of disabled people in the society.

“The passing of the Disabilities Act is a proud moment in our history. For the first time in Jamaica, a law was passed to say that the time has come for persons with disabilities (PWDs)... to be fully included in society,” she said.

“You who are here are going to play a key role in taking the lead and making sure that the law...is more than just words...it is going to be challenging, but we can do it together,” she added.

Gordon, who is chief of staff in the United States Department of Labour’s Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programmes, was addressing a Disability Sector Advocacy Seminar hosted by the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities (JCPD) on Monday at Alhambra Inn in St Andrew.

The Jamaican, the first deaf, black female lawyer in the United States, lost her ability to hear at the age of eight. She migrated to the United States at age 11 and began attending a school for the deaf where she excelled.

Gordon went on to attend Howard University and graduated with honours. She was later enrolled at the American University’s College of Law, where she also graduated with honours and passed the Maryland Bar on her



Chief of staff, United States Department of Labour’s Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programmes, Claudia Gordon, makes a presentation at a Disability Sector Advocacy Seminar hosted by the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities (JCPD) on Monday at Alhambra Inn in St Andrew.

first attempt.

She also said the time has come for PWDs to move from the sidelines and become an essential part of the country’s labour force.

“Employment opportunities need to be a top priority on our list. We need to weave PWDs into the fabric of work here in Jamaica. I have a dream...that one day this beautiful island will benefit from the talent and the creativity and the contribution of the individuals with disabilities like myself,” she said.

She recommended that the Government establish a target of industries and sectors that should lead by example in employing PWDs.

“There should be incentive programmes for hotels that hire PWDs, and then recognise them as they have stepped up to the challenge of providing positive peer pressure to encourage others to step up as well to employ PWDs,” she further suggested.

The disability advocate also gave her commitment to assist Jamaica in achieving “model” status as an inclusive society.

She called on other stakeholders,

particularly the media and the church, to partner with the various disability groups to help to destigmatise the many myths and misperceptions about PWDs.

The Disability Sector Advocacy Seminar was aimed at exploring strategies to advance the work of the sector.

Executive Director of the JCPD, Christine Hendricks, said the council has begun work to strengthen its communication with the sector for a more focused and strategic approach to its advocacy efforts.

“We are looking at doing some publications, making the [Disabilities] Act simple, making brochures about accessibility. We are doing this to make sure that the information goes out there and we will also be doing a public education campaign so that the wider society is aware of what the Act says and ensure that persons are aware of their rights and responsibilities,” she said.

The Disabilities Act was passed in October 2014 and seeks to ensure full inclusion of PWDs in society. It is to be enforced by the JCPD.

NOTEWORTHY NEWS Continued on page 35

Noteworthy News

NOTEWORTHY NEWS Continued from page 34

ZVRS ACQUIRES IDEAFNEWS

Source: Don Cullen (doncullen.net/blog/)

Date: 02/10/16

iDeafNews has recently announced on 2/3/2016 the acquisition by ZVRS of iDeafNews. iDeafNews issued a statement:

"Today, a historic partnership is announced between iDeafNews and ZVRS! Since 2010, iDeafNews has been the premier source for current news and topics about and for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. With this new relationship between ZVRS and iDeafNews, we are excited to bring even more empowered access to the community we serve!"

iDeafNews also released a video by iDeafNews founder, Seth Gerlis, announcing the acquisition along with ZVRS CEO Sherri Turpin. In the video, Gerlis and Turpin are sitting next to each other, with an interpreter sitting behind Turpin. At the start and end of the video, Turpin signs, while for the large majority of the video, she speaks verbally while relying on the interpreter behind her to sign for her. Gerlis signs for the entire video.

Transcript of the video is below:

Sherri Turpin: <signing> Welcome! Did you have a good flight?

Seth Gerlis: Yes, I did. Thank you!

Turpin: <speaking> So, today's the day. Do you want to make the announcement?

Gerlis: Yes, I'll share the exciting news! Hello, this is Seth Gerlis, founder of iDeafNews. We're here in Clearwater, Florida at ZVRS headquarters with my friend and CEO, Sherri Turpin. iDeafNews has been delivering the news for six years. During this time, ZVRS has seen how our reach to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community has

expanded. Considering this growth, we feel it's the right time for ZVRS to acquire our business, so we may run iDeafNews together. Sherri strongly believes in supporting the growth of Deaf-owned businesses. In an effort to do that, she decided to acquire our company, and I want to thank her tremendously for that. Sherri, I have a question for you. How did you hear about iDeafNews, and what spurred your desire to invest in our company and support its growth?

Turpin: <speaking> Well, you're well known in this community. And while I haven't been here long, your name has come up time and time again. So I said, "I need to meet Seth!" Once I coordinated a meeting with you, it became crystal clear that you have an amazing business. Z wants to be known in the community as supportive on many levels, and in particular, it's important to me to support a Deaf business owner. Once I met you, I understood your vision and purpose. I had a huge desire for us to come together and partner, and take iDeafNews to the level that you and the community deserve. I couldn't be more honored for you to be a part of the family. I'm extremely excited about the future, and how limitless our potential is as we work together for the good of the community.

Gerlis: <turns to audience> Wow! Did you see that? I'm very excited as well! <turns back to Turpin> Do you have anything else to share with our viewers?

Turpin: <signing> Welcome to the Z Family. I look forward to our partnership.

Gerlis: Terrific! Wow! She's only been the CEO of ZVRS for six months, and she's already quickly picking up signs! I look forward to seeing what the future will bring!

Turpin: <signing> Thank you!

Gerlis: This is Seth Gerlis with

GOSHEN COLLEGE STUDENTS DESIGN ELECTRONICS TO AID THE DEAF AND BLIND

Source: WNDU (WNDU.com)

Date: 12/08/15

Author: Karina E. Flores

GOSHEN -- Goshen College students showed off the creations that they designed to help people with disabilities at an electronics show on Tuesday.

The bi-annual show focused on helping the blind and deaf.

The creations are projects stemming from a high-level electronics and robotics class. This year was the first year with a dedicated theme.

John Buschert, a physics professor, said that he told the students, "I'd like you to try to come up with a project that has something to do with accessibility - with helping handicapped people in some way or another."

Creations included "Heads Up," a hat designed to warn a blind person when objects are near his or her head; and a jacket for the deaf that vibrates in response to noises around it.

iDeafNews. See you soon. Until next time!

While this video announced the acquisition of iDeafNews, in the video, it was repeatedly stated that it was with the intention of supporting Seth Gerlis as a Deaf business owner of iDeafNews. With respect to Turpin and Gerlis, the acquisition means ZVRS is now legally recognized as the de-facto owner of iDeafNews, with Seth Gerlis operating iDeafNews. ZVRS is helmed by CEO Sherri Turpin,

NOTEWORTHY NEWS Continued on page 40



TDI In Action

September 2015 - January 2016

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

■ Participated in meeting on Capitol Hill, and ex parte meetings at FCC with Commissioners' Legal Advisors regarding Joint VRS Providers' proposal to freeze rates and introduce service enhancement. Filed comments on the Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking ("FNPRM") proposing (1) a partial freeze of the Tier I rate for Video Relay Services ("VRS") who provide under 500,000 VRS minutes per month; and (2) proposed enhancements to VRS, including skills-based routing and speed of answer.

■ Filed comments on RLSA rate proposal for TRS 2015-2016 fund year. Filed comments supporting the IDT petition for rulemaking to add intrastate revenues to the TRS contribution base. Advised TDI on proposed contract with Mitre regarding participation on advisory board for TRS National Outreach Program.

■ Filed comments with the Federal

Communications Commission (FCC) and meeting with FCC staff to advocate for the advancement and implementation of real-time text (RTT) services. TDI's advocacy was primarily in response to two petitions filed by AT&T in June 2015 at the FCC on this issue: a petition for rulemaking asking the FCC to allow service providers to substitute RTT for text telephone (TTY) devices for newly-deployed wireless IP-based voice services, and a petition asking for a temporary waiver of the FCC's rules requiring support for TTY technology on wireless IP-based voice services until AT&T is able to deploy RTT. AT&T's petitions argued primarily that RTT provides superior functionality and features to TTY, and that TTY does not operate reliably on newer IP-based platforms.

■ Filed comments and reply comments in response supporting AT&T's request that the FCC initiate a rulemaking regarding substituting RTT for TTY under the FCC's rules. TDI advocated that RTT is preferable to TTY on IP-based

platforms, namely because RTT maintains the conversational, real-time communication functionality of TTY, but (unlike TTY) RTT does not suffer from quality deterioration on IP platforms and RTT is already available on devices that consumers already own, like smartphones and tablets. TDI requested that the FCC take measures to ensure that RTT services are interoperable (by employing the RFC 4103 standard) and backwards-compatible with TTYs, and that any waiver of the TTY rules be for the minimum duration necessary for service providers to deploy RTT. TDI's comments were joined by several groups including National Association of the Deaf (NAD), the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center on Telecommunications Access (RERC-TA), and others. TDI's comments were impactful at the FCC – the FCC granted AT&T's waiver request in October 2015 subject to conditions intended to ensure interoperability and backwards-compatibility of RTT services, and

Continued on page 37



TDI In Action

September 2015 - January 2016

Continued from page 36

specified that the waiver would only be in effect until the FCC implemented rules allowing for “alternative IP-based wireless accessibility solutions” in addition to TTY (indicating that the FCC will conduct the rulemaking requested). The FCC’s order granting the waiver repeatedly quoted form and cited to TDI’s comments and reply comments.

■ Conducted meetings with FCC staff to reiterate TDI’s support for the advancement of RTT services in person. Joining the meetings were Claude Stout, Zainab Alkebsi of NAD, Christian Vogler of the RERC-TA, and Monica and Ben of SPB, and the meetings were held with senior staff of the Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau (CGB) and with staff from Commissioners’ and the Chairman’s office. The meetings were held on October 15, 2015, and SPB assisted TDI in preparing an ex parte summarizing TDI’s advocacy at the meetings that was submitted on October 19, 2015.

■ Filed comments on October 26, 2015 further advocating for advancement and implementation of RTT services. These comments were filed in response to an FCC request for input regarding “what IP-based real time text service would look like, including applicable standards, and . . . how it will be implemented.” In its comments, TDI reiterated its support for utilization of the RFC 4103 standard for RTT services to ensure interoperability, and addressed other technical and practical issues related to the deployment of RTT services. TDI’s comments were again joined by other advocacy groups.

■ (September 9) TDI, AADB, ALDA, CCASDHH, DHHCAN, DSA, HLAA, NAD, and RERC on TA filed reply comments supporting

AT&T’s request that the Commission initiate a rulemaking to facilitate the development and deployment of RTT services on IP networks. We asked that the Commission ensure that RTT services are backward-compatible with TTY and interoperable with RTT services on other networks.

<http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=60001299107>

■ (September 30) TDI, NAD, and RID filed an ex parte on the meetings that they had with the five Commissioner offices re: the Joint Proposal of All Six VRS Providers. We asked that the Commission move forward with a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (“NPRM”) to consider proposals recommended in the Joint Proposal and in particular a new speed-of-answer (“SoA”) benchmark and a trial for skills-based routing and deaf interpreters.

<http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=60001300997>

■ (October 19) TDI, Gallaudet TAP, and NAD met with the five Commissioner offices and the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau about AT&T’s petition on Real-Time Text. In the meetings, the Consumer Groups expressed support for AT&T’s request that the FCC initiates a rulemaking to establish RTT as a regulatory alternative to TTY technology. We also advocated that the Commission open and conclude the requested rulemaking expeditiously, and establish conditions to ensure backward compatibility and interoperability of RTT deployments.

<http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=60001304402>

■ (October 26) TDI, ALDA, CPADO, DSA, HLAA, NAD, and RERC on TA jointly submitted comments for the FCC’s proceeding on technology transitions. Consumer

Groups thoroughly agree with the Commission’s finding that the transition from TDM to IP-based networks presents opportunities to expand access to new accessibility solutions but also raises certain consumer protection concerns. We believe strongly that interoperability of accessibility services should be a primary consideration for the Commission with regard to the deployment of IP-based access accessibility services on IP networks, and advocate that the Commission adopt the IETF RFC 4103 standard for RTT services. We emphasize that the RTT to TTY transition must be sufficiently gradual to allow all users of TTY services to safely transition to other services, and testing should be performed to ensure that RTT can readily communicate with PSAPs.

<http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=60001305266>

■ (November 18) TDI and NAD participated in a roundtable meeting with Nicholas Degani, Legal Advisor to Commissioner Ajit Pai, representatives of VRS service providers, and Matthew Sandgren, Senior Counsel to U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch, R-Utah. Consumer Groups support Video Relay Service (“VRS”) rate stabilization until service quality standards are adopted to ensure that the burden of VRS rate cuts do not fall primarily on deaf and hard of hearing consumers and VRS interpreters. The May 8, 2015 GAO Report confirms that the Commission needs to establish performance goals and internal controls to oversee its national TRS Program.

<http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=60001312295>

■ (December 9) TDI, NAD, DHHCAN, ALDA, CPADO, DSA,

Continued on page 38



TDI In Action

September 2015 - January 2016

Continued from page 37

and CCASDHH jointly submitted comments in response to the FCC's FNPRM proposing a partial freeze of the Tier I rate for Video Relay Services ("VRS") who provide under 500,000 VRS minutes per month. Consumer Groups request that (1) the Commission consider refraining from rate decrease adjustments until the Commission addresses and adopts service quality standards to ensure that the burden of VRS rate cuts in any rate tier do not fall primarily on deaf and hard of hearing consumers and VRS interpreters, and (2) the Commission adequately compensate VRS providers in a transparent manner that reflects their business and technology development needs.

<http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=60001325812>

■ (December 24) TDI, NAD, DHHCAN, ALDA, CPADO, DSA, and CCASDHH jointly submitted comments in response to the FCC's FNPRM related to "VRS service improvements." The Consumer Groups urge the Commission to (1) impose a faster interim speed-of-answer standard to require that 80 percent of all VRS calls be answered within 45 seconds, measured on a monthly basis; (2) adopt a flexible 8 to 12 month trial of "skills-based routing" that provides for innovation in the types of skill sets provided by CAs; (3) authorize providers to use qualified deaf sign language interpreters, in addition to the hearing interpreters as communications assistants; (4) authorize the use of at-home interpreters under strict conditions regarding privacy of consumer communications; and (5) permit the assignment of ten-digit numbers for phones used by hearing individuals.

<http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=60001362842>

■ (January 19) NAD and TDI met with Karen Peltz Strauss and Robert Aldrich of the Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau, Gregory Hlibok of the Disability Rights Office, and Edward Smith from the Office of Chairman Wheeler regarding the above-referenced dockets, specifically in regards to the proposal to "freeze for a maximum of 16 months the rate of compensation paid to 'small' VRS providers, defined as providers whose monthly compensable minutes do not exceed 500,000 minutes." We encouraged the Commission to make progress on the GAO recommendation that the Commission establish performance goals and internal controls to oversee its national TRS Program. For some time, the Consumer Groups have advocated for service quality measures such as using a script to test the accuracy of VRS interpreters. The Consumer Groups previously proposed that the FCC commission a study "by an independent organization not affiliated with any stakeholder in the debate, to thoroughly examine user experience" such as quality. The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) has similarly suggested that the Commission take a more active role in measuring the quality of interpreting in VRS calls and publishing reports on the quality of VRS calls. Performance audits (announced or unannounced) are vital for checking quality levels.

<http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=60001379203>

Captioning, Subtitles, and User Interfaces

■ Conducted a joint meeting and drafting and filing a joint ex parte notice to the FCC with several national captioning organizations.

■ Captioning of Local Television

News: Ongoing efforts on improving the quality of local television news captioning, including facilitating various meetings with the National Association of Broadcasters, helping to conduct and analyze the results of a consumer survey on the Electronic Newsroom Technique, and drafting and submitting various related filings to the FCC.

■ Drafted comments regarding encouraging the re-approval of the FCC's IP captioning rules by the Office of Management and Budget.

■ Disability Advisory Committee: participated in several meetings of the FCC's Disability Advisory Committee and various subcommittees and working groups, including drafting a recommendation to form a joint agency task force to address problems with captioning in public accommodation.

■ (November 12) NAD, TDI, and HLAA met with five FCC Commissioner offices on the user interfaces topic. The Consumer Groups noted that "accessibility features" should be broadly interpreted to include the closed captioning display settings where users can easily adjust the caption's size, color, background, and more from the first level of a menu. Our petition urges the Commission to reconsider allowing voice commands and gestures as compliant mechanisms for activating captioning or accessibility features. We also discussed the need to ensure that customers who are deaf and hard of hearing have notice of the availability of accessibility features on devices and digital apparatus and how to access such features. We recommended notice on websites of MVPDs and equipment manufacturers, on a central website for all digital apparatus and navigation devices, on product packaging, and

Continued on page 39



TDI In Action

September 2015 - January 2016

Continued from page 38

through customer service.

<http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=60001308331>

■ (November 13) TDI, NAD, HLAA and Gallaudet TAP jointly filed a response report that largely outlined our opposing position against the filing made by National Association of Broadcasters on the electronic newsroom technique (ENT) captioning of local news, weather, and sports shows. We continue to push that the Commission phases out the use of ENT in markets outside the top 25 in favor of high quality real-time captioning, requiring broadcasters and other ENT users to submit ongoing progress reports over the transition period. We had indicated that there is no evidence that 'enhanced' ENT procedures implemented over the past year have yielded meaningful improvements. In particular, weather and sports programming, breaking news and live coverage, and anchor banter remain inaccessible for many. These problems have spilled over to the provision of emergency programming, where substantial accessibility problems unduly endanger the lives of Americans who are deaf or hard of hearing. Last but not least, we shared with the FCC some data and input from those living in the outside top 25 markets that participated in the consumer survey on ENT.

<http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=60001309321>

<http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=60001336553>

<http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=60001408061>

■ (January 14) TDI, NAD, and HLAA held meetings about TV closed captioning quality issues with

five FCC Commissioner offices and the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau. Consumer Groups reiterated several concerns they have expressed throughout this proceeding regarding the proposed shift from the long-standing video programming distributor ("VPD")-centric responsibility model to one that apportions the responsibility for the provision, delivery, rendering, and quality of closed captions between VPDs and video programmers. Consumer Groups reiterated the need for requiring VPDs to provide better customer service training and compliance processes, to provide phone and e-mail contact information dedicated to handling captioning complaints on consumer-facing web portals and on paper bills, and to provide appropriate staffing during evening and weekends—when many viewers watch programming. Consumer Groups again acknowledged their support for the Commission's goal of ensuring strong privacy protections for consumers who are deaf or hard of hearing, while also supporting the simplification of the captioning complaint process. Consumer Groups again stress that it is important that the Commission ensure that VPDs—with whom consumers have a direct relationship—remain the primary point of contact for captioning complaints, from receipt to resolution. Once some responsibilities for compliance with captioning rules are shifted to programmers, Consumer Groups also expressed support for requiring these programmers to certify that they are meeting those responsibilities, and for requiring that these certifications be made available on the FCC's website. Finally, Consumer Groups reiterated that a registry of programmer contact information will serve the public interest because it will put

those programmers on notice of their captioning obligations, help VPDs resolve captioning complaints from their customers, and assist Commission staff in initiating swift enforcement actions in the event of violations.

<http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=60001375865>

<http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=60001409967>

Other Issues

■ **Lifeline and Link-up Reform:** Filed written ex parte to support expanding the availability of broadband services under the Lifeline program.

■ **Hearing Aid Compatibility:** (October 27) HLAA, TDI, and NAD jointly submitted comments to the FCC on hearing aid compatibility issues. Consumer Groups' goal has remained unchanged: we want to see 100% of wireless handsets built to be hearing aid compatible. We understood that industry is proposing a modification of the HAC rule to require both manufacturers and service providers to increase the percentage of M- and T-rated HAC wireless handsets they sell to 66%. We still see the proposed 66% benchmark as just not enough. If adopted, industry's proposal would leave fully a third of wireless handsets potentially unusable for people with hearing aids or cochlear implants.

<http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=60001305326>

■ **Wireless Emergency Alerts:** (January 13) TDI, NAD, DHHCA, HLAA, ALDA, CPADO, DSA, and CCASDHH submitted the joint comments in the FCC's proceeding

Continued on page 40



TDI In Action

September 2015 - January 2016

Continued from page 39

to update the Wireless Emergency Alert ("WEA") system to improve its utility, better reflect the needs of alert originators and the public, and update the system to keep pace with rapid technological advancements. We indicated that the Commission should recognize that WEA messaging is especially critical for deaf and hard of hearing individuals. We pointed out that WEA provides this community access to an immediately available and reliable form of written emergency communications which oftentimes is more effective for emergency purposes than television or radio broadcasts or other forms of emergency notifications that benefit hearing individuals. The Consumer Groups support an increase for the number of characters for any future WEA messages from the current ninety to a maximum of 360. For all of

the four categories of alerts, Consumer Groups support rules that encourage WEA messages to be distributed via text and/or video in American Sign Language (ASL). FCC rules should specifically enable WEA messages to include URLs and telephone numbers, as well as interactive links, multimedia alerts, multilingual communications and communications in ASL.

<http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=60001375705>

■ **Hearing Aid Compatibility:** (January 28) HLAA, TDI, NAD, and RERC-TA jointly filed comments on the FCC's Hearing Aid-Compatible Mobile Handsets NPRM, which basically asks all key stakeholders on whether the FCC should adopt the Joint Consensus Proposal. The Consumer Groups and wireless industry representatives TIA, CTIA,

and CCA worked together to craft and submit to the FCC the Proposal. The Consumer Groups and the DHH Tech RERC support the Proposal and encourage the Commission to expeditiously consider and adopt the framework set forth in the Proposal. In particular, we urge the Commission to maintain the Proposal's timelines that industry and Consumer Groups agreed on during the negotiation process. Preserving that agreement would mean the Commission will consider 100% HAC achievability in the near future and on a schedule that industry has agreed is reasonable. Adopting the Proposal will increase the number and percentage of HAC phones available to people with hearing loss, and may ensure that all devices are HAC in the future.

<http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=60001386577>

NOTEWORTHY NEWS Continued from page 35

whom replaced Sean Belanger when he retired back in August 26, 2015.

Turpin was appointed CEO (August 26, 2015) well after ZVRS was acquired by Kinderhook Industries on February 10, 2015.

When Turpin became CEO, Chris Wagner, a member of ZVRS' Executive team, commented: "Sherri will bring a new perspective and energy to ZVRS. Her leadership and knowledge will move us to the next level, where our customers are the #1 priority."

With organizations like CSD, Michigan Deaf Association, and colleges like RIT/NTID congratulating iDeafNews and ZVRS on the acquisition, and general excitement from consumers on Facebook, it appears to be clear most in the deaf sector see this as a good move.

The image features a large, stylized 'TDI' logo on the left, set against a blue background with white and red circular patterns. To the right, a computer monitor displays the website www.TDIforAccess.org. The website has a red header with the TDI logo and navigation links. Below the header, there are several images and text blocks, including a photo of a person and a section titled 'TDI for Access'. At the bottom of the image, a white banner with black text reads 'Shaping an Accessible World'.



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