



WORLD

Technology News and Commentary for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People



TDI 22nd Biennial Conference Bethesda Maryland July 27-29, 2017

COVERAGE BEGINS ON PAGE 7

Photos by Steve Brenner

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Dulles, VA
Permit No. 163

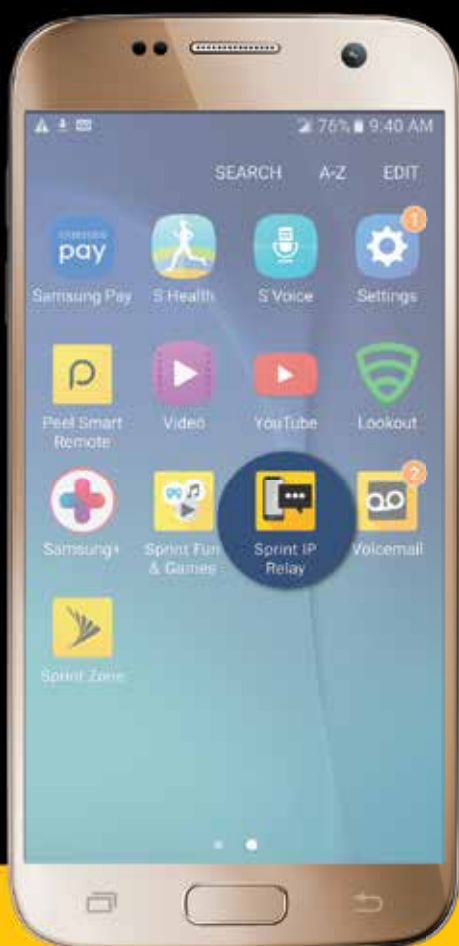
Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc. (TDI)
P.O. Box 8009
Silver Spring, Maryland
20907

ALSO INSIDE:

FCC Chair Pai's Keynote Address – page 7
CSD CEO Soukup's Keynote Address
– page 12

Mobile. User-friendly.

Download the **Sprint
IP Relay** app today!



Making a call just got easier
for people who are **Deaf**,
DeafBlind or **Low Vision**, or
have a **Speech Disability**.

New users: Tap **Register for
Sprint IP Relay** to sign up
to get a new 10-digit phone
number

Download the Sprint IP Relay app!



sprintrelay.com/iprelay

* International calls are not allowed.

Sprint IP Relay Service is a free service offered to individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind and have a Speech Disability that allow them to place relay calls over the Internet between locations in the United States (not including territories). Sprint IP Relay does not provide a standard telephone number. Sprint IP Relay can be used for emergency calling, such as emergency calls may not function the same as traditional landline services. By using Sprint IP Relay for emergency calling, you agree that Sprint is not responsible for any damages resulting from errors, omissions, malfunctions, interruptions or failures in accessing or attempting to access emergency services through Sprint IP Relay whether caused by the negligence of Sprint or otherwise. Other restrictions apply. For details, see sprintrelay.com © 2017 Sprint. Sprint and the logo are trademarks of Sprint. Other marks are the property of their respective owners.

TDI'S MISSION

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

FEATURE STORIES

**Opening of the 22nd Biennial TDI Conference, The Innovative Advocate:
Staying Ahead of Communication Technology pg 7**

JULY 27, 2017 10:00 AM FCC TOWNHALL..... pg 10

Keynote by Christopher Soukup, CEO of CSD pg 12

**Friday's Keynote Presentation: Haben Girma,
"The Universal Benefits of Accessible Design" pg 12**

President's Reception pg 16

2017 TDI Biennial Awards pg 23

REGULAR COLUMNS

BOARD VIEWS by Sheila Conlon-Mentkowski, TDI President pg 2
Still a Long Way to Go

CAPITOL COMMENTARY by Claude Stout, TDI Executive Director pg 4
The Wisdom Of The Crowd

FORWARD TOGETHER by Tayler Mayer pg 6
Our Voices Were Seen

TDI IN ACTION March-May 2017 pg 27

Thanks to These Advertisers:

**ALDA, pg 15 • Hamilton Relay, pg 3 • Maryland Relay, pg10
Sprint Relay, inside front cover • Sorenson VRS, inside back cover
Ultratec, back page**

Contact TDI WORLD editor for reprints of articles in PDF format.

TDI WORLD is published quarterly by TDI to provide information about telecommunications, media and information technology access for people who are deaf, late-deafened, hard of hearing and deaf-blind. You may freely copy and distribute all or portions of TDI WORLD for non-commercial use with credit given to TDI. TDI has no affiliation with any company advertised, and the mention of company names, products and services in the articles herein comes solely from the authors' own experiences and does not imply accuracy nor endorsement by TDI. Furthermore, TDI does not warrant any products or services mentioned in TDI WORLD to be in compliance with any applicable federal, state or local disability access laws and regulations or industry standards.



Volume 48.2

Editor-in-Chief: Claude Stout

Managing Editor: Tayler Mayer

Publication Production: Electronic Ink

TDI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

NORTHEAST REGION

Cassandra Boryslawskyj (CT), Treasurer
Cm.Boryslawskyj@tdiforaccess.org

SOUTHEAST REGION

Jan Withers (NC), Vice President
Jan.Withers@tdiforaccess.org

MIDWEST REGION

John Kinstler
jkinstler@tdiforaccess.org

CENTRAL REGION

Mark Seeger
mseeger@tdiforaccess.org

WEST REGION

Sheila Conlon-Mentkowski (CA), President
Sheila.Conlon-Mentkowski@TDIforAccess.org

MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

Matt Myrick
mmyrick@tdiforaccess.org

Jarvis Grindstaff, Secretary
jgrindstaff@tdiforaccess.org

TDI OFFICE STAFF

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Claude Stout
Executive.Director@TDIforAccess.org

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Tayler Mayer
PubRel@TDIforAccess.org

uCaption Project Manager

Eric Kaika
ekaika@tdiforaccess.org

BUSINESS MANAGER

John Skjeveland
Finance@TDIforAccess.org

TELECOMMUNICATIONS FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING, INC. (TDI)

P.O. Box 8009
Silver Spring, Maryland 20907
www.TDIforAccess.org

TELEPHONE:

Phone (Voice/Video): 301-563-9112
TTY: (301) 589-3006

To subscribe to **TDI eNotes**,
send an email to
PubRel@TDIforAccess.org

Follow **TDIforAccess** on



Shaping An Accessible World

Board Views



**SHEILA
CONLON-MENTKOWSKI**
*TDI President and
Board Member, West Region*

**“The more things
change, the more they
stay the same.”**

Still a Long Way to Go

Well, it is over and done with, and I am now taking a deep breath after the successful conclusion of the 2017 TDI Biennial Conference, “The Innovative Advocate: Staying Ahead of Communication Technology”. What a whirlwind multi-day TDI conference at the end of July!

Here is a quick overview of the TDI Conference. The TDI Board met prior to the start of the conference, Wednesday, July 26th and worked on TDI items. We had a number of public members in attendance who asked for time on the public agenda. It was also pointed out that three people who are or were TDI Executive Directors were present in the room: Claude Stout, Al Sonnenstrahl, and Tom Mentkowski.

The Board appreciates input from members on behalf of TDI. We held TDI’s Business meeting during the Thursday night President’s Reception, where we recognized outgoing Board members, Andrew Lange, Vice President, Member at Large, Stephanie Buell, Treasurer, and Rebecca Rosenthal, Secretary, presenting each with a TDI service plaque. The new officers are Sheila Conlon Mentkowski, President, Jan Withers, Vice President, CM Boryslawskyj, Treasurer, and Jarvis Grindstaff, Secretary.

We also acknowledged Matt Myrick as the Co-Chair of the Program along with Claude for their hard work in putting the Conference program together with assistance from Jarvis Grindstaff, and TDI staff, Tayler Mayer and Eric Kaika. We announced the results of two regional elections: Mark Seeger and John Kinstler whose board terms will be effective after the conclusion of the 2017 TDI Conference. They replaced Rebecca Rosenthal and Stephanie Buell.

A conference would not be successful

without volunteers! We thanked Zainab Almohsin who is a Gallaudet intern this summer with TDI, and comes from Saudi Arabia; Ronald and Agnes Sutcliffe, Dot Brenner, Gary and Donna Viall, and Paul Daniels. We also thank Stephen Brenner for taking photographs of the conference.

During the Conference, we tried out some new ideas:

- Schedule At-A-Glance where the three day conference could be viewed on two pages with the usual more detailed explanations spelled out on the following pages in the Program Book.
- There was a tExpo, in addition to the usual exhibit booths, where companies were given an opportunity to demonstrate their products or services.
- A TDI passport that conference attendees could get stamped by each exhibitor while visiting the exhibit booths and put into a drawing once they obtained all the exhibitor stamps in the passport book. There were a number of prizes available for the winners!
- CSD contributed major social media support services during the conference. They filmed live a selection of key Conference activities, and broadcasted them on the Internet on its Facebook page, and also TDI’s Facebook page. CSD live streamed TDI workshops, plenaries, President’s Reception, and various luncheons. The videos, produced by CSD, are archived on the TDI website for members to watch if they missed the topic or presentation.

We are also seeking evaluation of the Conference from the attendees and exhibitors to see what worked, what did not work, and any input that might




Living Well with Hearing Loss

Recipe for Staying Connected

This Recipe Serves: You, your family and friends **Difficulty Level:** Simple

Ingredients

- 1 Hamilton® CapTel® phone
- 1 High-Speed Internet Connection
- 1 Phone Line
- A desire to stay connected and live well

Directions

Visit: HamiltonCapTel.com/LivingWell
 Find the "Staying Connected" solution that is right for you.
 Select your Hamilton CapTel phone (840i or 2400i).
 Connect your Hamilton CapTel phone upon arrival.
 Surprise your family and friends with a phone call.
 Enjoy the clarity of seeing every word of your conversation.
Now you're staying connected and living well!



Hamilton® CapTel® 2400i

For more Living Well with Hearing Loss recipes, visit:
HamiltonCapTel.com/LivingWell

The Hamilton CapTel phone requires telephone service and high-speed Internet access. WiFi Capable.

090817

Internet Protocol Captioned Telephone Service (IP CTS) is regulated and funded by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and is designed exclusively for individuals with hearing loss. To learn more, visit www.fcc.gov.

Copyright © 2017 Hamilton Relay. All rights reserved. • Hamilton is a registered trademark of Nadelco, Inc. d/b/a Hamilton Telecommunications. • CapTel is a registered trademark of Ultratec, Inc.

Capitol Commentary



BY CLAUDE STOUT
TDI Executive Director

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

- Margaret Mead

The Wisdom Of The Crowd

This fall, my wife Judy and I have been enjoying watching a few new programs on TV. I encourage you to tune into a new TV series, *Wisdom Of The Crowd* on CBS. This program is about Silicon Valley tech innovator Jeffrey Tanner, who had been driven by a need to find his daughter’s killer, which has taken crowdsourcing to a new level. He founded a new company to create a digital platform for people around the world to publicly share and evaluate evidence for criminal investigations. He uses the software as the foundation to launch a new company with a staff of passionate specialists -- including the original police officer, whom had searched for his daughter’s killer -- ultimately managing to revolutionize crime solving in the San Francisco Bay area. A great TV program, which I strongly recommend you try.

As I watch this program on TV, I cannot help but realize we do have this kind of mechanism at TDI, as well as in the deaf and hard of hearing community. This concept really works wonders as we try to gain full access in the general community. Let me give you examples of how it has worked in recent years for us:

We had a highly successful TDI Biennial Conference in North Bethesda, MD last July, possibly the best we ever had. Part of the reason was because CSD helped produce live videos of some key plenary sessions for TDI and CSD to post on our respective Facebook pages. The feedback we received was huge from a large number of Facebook users across the nation that watched the videos. At one point, a video went viral and was watched over 200,000 times in response to the holograms delivered in sign language (Prsonas).

This past summer, a coalition of national, state, and local organizations of, by, and for the deaf, and interpreter referral agencies sent an Open Letter to

RID. The coalition letter, in principle, asked RID to be more transparent and timely with the deaf and hard of hearing community on its plans to revive its certification systems back into full operation for interpreters (RID members) across America. RID responded back, thanking the coalition for its concerns, and then described its plans to bring the system back into full active mode within a specific time frame. RID pledged its commitment to keep the deaf community informed from time to time on its plans in certification and skills maintenance for the interpreter profession.

When we had the terrorist attacks in New York City, and Washington D.C. on September 11, 2001, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network (DHHCAN), in collaboration with Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons (NVRC) did a survey on emergency communication access or the lack thereof, as experienced by deaf and hard of hearing Americans prior to, during, and after the attacks. Thanks to the substantial input from over 3,000 responses, the report with a set of recommendations was released three years later in 2014, and today one of the benefits we enjoy is seeing sign language interpreters on TV doing their part as government officials give briefings on the hurricane that went through their jurisdictions.

In the last twenty years, TDI has made over 1,500 to 2000 filings with the FCC, and a few other federal agencies. It has been our approach not to file them alone. We coordinate the filing drafts with other organizations like NAD, HLAA, CCASDHH, NASADHH, CPADO, ALDA, AADB, DSA, DHHCAN, CSD, and a few others. We invite them to give us input, and to indicate whether they like to sign-on to

Continued on page 5

CAPITOL COMMENTARY Continued from page 4

these documents with us. It produces a win-win situation, because sometimes we add some more perspective to the issue, work out some internal differences, and/or make compromises along the way. As a result, the documents were produced much better, than when they were first circulated with our sister consumer groups. It conveys the impression to government and industry that we have an united voice on certain issues and topics. From time to time, they tell me that it makes their policy decisions easier to make.

While we commend a number of good interpreter referral agencies across the nation for its work to provide us interpreter services for community based situations, we must give recognition to a new, fast-appealing concept that empowers us deaf and hard of hearing consumers, when we need to have interpreting services in the community. Vineya (CSD in Austin and nationwide) and Linguabee (from its base in California) go the extra mile in coordinating their interpreting services. They produce a list of qualified interpreters, post it on their websites, and let their customers pick whom they want to provide services in the community. After the interpreter services are conducted, the customers follow up with input/ratings on their interpreters. Either company retains a record of the customers' preferences and ratings, and they adjust whom they offer publicly to the community. In this process, the interpreters have the incentive to continue improving their expertise and skills, etc.

Parents of deaf and hard of hearing children strive to get the best for their children in child development, communication, and education. In recent years, a group called LEAD-K (Language Equality & Acquisition for Deaf Kids) from California has gained recognition nationally for its work. The group's focus has been to

promote language equality, a basic human right for all deaf/hard of hearing babies by advocating for deaf/hard of hearing children to have access to both American Sign Language and English. Its mission is twofold: 1) to raise the awareness and understanding of the general public, parents, and the education system of the deaf/hard of hearing child's experience in language learning, the role of visual learning for a deaf/hard of hearing child and how that impacts their educational success; and 2) to work with other partners to change public policy related to the education of deaf/hard of hearing children who use ASL and English, both or one of the languages toward their readiness to enter kindergarten. The ultimate goal is to provide parents as much unbiased information and support so that they can make informed decisions for their children.

Two years ago, Nyle DiMarco won the Dancing with the Stars competition. He didn't achieve this milestone by himself. The competition's voting results were based on both the judges' ratings, and the votes that were made by phone/ the Internet from those who watched the show on TV. Mr. DiMarco won the contest, simply because he had the most votes from the TV viewers, definitely a great number of them coming from the deaf and hard of hearing community.

Margaret Mead was a well-known American cultural anthropologist in the 1960's and 1970's. She gave numerous speeches in colleges and universities across the nation. When I was a student at Gallaudet in the middle 1970's, she gave us an inspiring lecture. One of the memorable points she made was as follows: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

If you continue to be frustrated with provision of interpreting services at the hospital via VRI, mobilize yourself as with a few others to go visit a hospital

administrator. See if the meeting of the minds produces you an agreement, if not, work with the local media (either a local newspaper or TV station reporter) and see if he or she can produce some coverage to bring light to this issue.

If a deaf and hard of hearing kid attends a public school district, and is not receiving satisfactory interpreting or computer-assisted real time captioning services in the classroom, and the parents are not going anywhere in the Individual Education Plan process for their kid(s), ask for a time to appear before a school board during its regular meeting, to discuss the issue with them. Ask them for some resolution, to the benefit for the students' learning process.

If you notice there is not enough accessibility (visual paging/alerts) at the airport or in the cars of light rail transportation in downtown where you live, ask for a meeting with the members of the local authority board that oversees the airport or the light rail system. See if it makes headway for your access needs. If you do not speak up, they won't know you have certain needs to use their services while traveling. You pay property and income taxes, tell them you want to get your money's worth!

Let us continue to be motivated by what that can be achieved. When he was running for President of the United States in 1968, and unfortunately, before he was cut short by assassination, Robert Kennedy said, "Some men see things as they are, and ask why. I dream of things that never were, and ask why not."

Let us consider making success via the groups/coalitions and the social media activities. They will move us forward, even while one can do his or her part in the community, it pays to have a good number of us to take part together as a group. We make progress earlier and fast when we function as a group. Thank you for all you do in your local communities, and together, we will move mountains!

Forward Together



BY TAYLER MAYER
Managing Editor

**“Our work must not only
keep up - but keep ahead
of the curve.”**

Paying Membership Dues Online is Back!

Instead of mailing in your membership dues, enjoy the instant convenience of paying online by credit card. Go to our website and click on “Join Now”

<https://tdiforaccess.org>

Our Voices Were Seen

The 22nd Biennial TDI Conference’s record attendance may be attributed to a number of factors: the conference location, host of speakers and heightened interest in advocating for technology access.

The conference was held in North Bethesda, Maryland, a short driving distance from Washington D.C., home to several federal agencies and other organizations we work with, particularly the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The hotel and conference center was accessible by public transit, the metro station being on the corner of the hotel property. We are working toward hosting the 23rd Biennial TDI Conference in Washington D.C. and hope you will join us.

Bringing together a dream group of keynoters is no easy task. The first keynoter, because most of our work is with the FCC, was Chairman Pai Ajit. Worth noting is Mr. Ajit is the first Republican chairman to join us, in decades, at the conference. Taking the audience by surprise during the keynote was his heartfelt relationship with the deaf community through his aunt, who was deaf. Read about his deaf aunt in his keynote printed in this issue.

Coming from Apple, Sarah Herrlinger shared the holistic approach Apple bears toward accessibility. She shared an inspiring quote by Cordelia Dillon: “Accessibility is a blueberry muffin. You can’t push the berries in there afterward.” Ms. Herrlinger also added in her keynote: “Accessibility has to be thought of up front, early and often.” CSD Chief Executive Officer, Chris

Soukup delivered a visionary keynote challenging those who hold the “two world” concept, stating that “we are in an era where we want inclusivity and accessibility to be built in from the getgo so that the deaf experience is valued, so it’s respected even with its diversity.” Our fourth keynoter, Haben Girma, is the first DeafBlind to graduate from Harvard Law School. Girma noted that the benefits of accessibility can reach 1.3 billion persons with disabilities worldwide.

As I’ve written in this column, our advocacy work for accessibility has not slowed. As technology is rapidly changing and emerging - exponentially, our work must not only keep up - but keep ahead of the curve. The technology pace is exciting to many of us, if not bewildering, and if we are to be able to use products and services, we must share with corporations, federal agencies, and organizations how our needs should be met with “Universal Design” as the guide, where new products are designed for everyone.

Finally, I present the most important part of the conference, and without this person, the conference wouldn’t have been successful. You are this person. Thank you for joining us at the 22nd Biennial TDI Conference. Without you, we wouldn’t have a conference, nor would we have an advocacy organization fighting for technology access. Thank you for your membership, and all the ways you have showed your support, whether it may be by donating, sharing feedback, or spreading the word about TDI’s proud work. Thank you sincerely for your support.



Opening of the 22nd Biennial TDI Conference, The Innovative Advocate: Staying Ahead of Communication Technology

The TDI 2017 Conference themed *The Innovative Advocate: Staying Ahead of Communication Technology*, was held in North Bethesda at the Marriott hotel. As President, I opened the conference on Thursday morning, July 27th. I welcomed the attendees, introduced the TDI Board members, and Claude Stout, our Executive Director. Claude came up to introduce FCC Chairman Ajit Pai as our first keynote speaker.

Chairman Pai gave an overview of the actions taken by the FCC over the past two years, noting the collaboration between TDI and its sister agencies. He said his job as Chairman of the FCC is easy due to dedicated staff such as Karen Peltz Strauss and the Disability Rights Office staff.

Chairman Pai recognized TDI's nearly 50 years of advocacy in telecommunications, improving captions, Text-to-911, emergency alerts, and VRS interoperability. He noted the establishment of the FCC's Disability Advisory Committee of which Claude was the first Chair.

Mentioning an example for consumer

response by setting up the Direct Video Calling, ASL using consumers could call the FCC and use ASL to communicate with a FCC representative one-on-one. Trials the FCC is authorizing to determine if these should continue and be paid out of the TRS fund: 1) Deaf interpreters (CDI) in VRS calls to work with VRS interpreters; 2) skill-based interpreters who specialize in areas such as legal, medical, financial, and business calls; 3) and allowing VRS interpreters to work from their homes.

Chairman Pai ended his speech by sharing a personal story with us. He had an elderly aunt from India, who was deaf, in the 1930's. His family developed home signs to communicate with his aunt, his father's sister. If she were alive today, he said, she would be amazed to see the technology available for deaf people to use to communicate with hearing people. Chairman Pai, pausing to hold back some tears, shared that the story always moves him to cry. He closed, "In America, we can work on improving American lives through technology for our families. We can achieve that challenge if we work together."



Excerpts from the Keynote Address of FCC Chairman Ajit Pai

Opening Ceremonies of the 22nd
TDI Biennial Conference
North Bethesda, MD
JULY 27, 2017

[SIGN initial greeting: "Hello. Thank you for that wonderful introduction. I'm happy to be here."]

... I'm grateful to TDI for inviting me here. It truly is an honor to be with you this morning. This week marks the 27th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. But TDI's pedigree is far older. For nearly half a century, TDI has been at the forefront of every major advance in telecommunications access—including closed captioning, hearing aid compatibility, relay services, and access to emergency services. Thanks to your efforts, there is now greater recognition of the importance of accessibility by design of products and services.

Thank you to the many other advocates and innovators with us today who have made significant contributions to improve the lives of those with disabilities. For example, I see that Dr. Christian Vogler of Gallaudet's Technology Access Program is here today. He is not only helping to develop better technology but also to shape better policy. About two years ago, Dr. Vogler and his team patiently walked me through some of the advantages of real-time text. Seeing this in-person—the ability to have a conversation in a natural way without having to wait for the other person to receive messages and

PAI EXCERPTS Continued on page 8

PAI EXCERPTS Continued from page 7

respond—gave me a deeper appreciation of the potential of this technology...

... I'm excited to be with all of you this morning. That's not just because I believe in your mission. It's also because we gather at a time of unsurpassed possibility for Americans who are deaf and hard-of-hearing.

Think back to 1968, when TDI got its start. You were using 18-wheelers to schlep discarded teletypewriters that weighed hundreds of pounds to the homes of deaf and hard-of-hearing people. And you were doing it so that your community could have telephone access, which everyone else had been enjoying for decades.

Today, we have mini-computers that fit in our pockets. These devices can wirelessly download life-changing applications. Instead of waiting decades to access essential communications, accessibility tools are beamed to our phones in a matter of seconds...

... One look at the lineup for this week's conference reveals that we are on the cusp of many others. For example, there are discussions teed up on the Internet of Things and self-driving cars. And I know I'm not the only one excited by the session on holograms of sign language interpreters. The last time a hologram got me that fired up, I was a kid watching R2-D2 project that iconic image of Princess Leia for the first time.

The FCC is determined to be TDI's partner and meet this moment. And so this morning, I'd like to walk through the Commission's multi-part strategy for improving the lives of Americans with disabilities through communications technology.

The first part of this strategy is pretty straightforward: to uphold our legal obligations to promote accessibility and to advance new rules when appropriate. I've only been Chairman for six months, but we've already taken multiple steps to meet this charge.

One area where I'm excited that we've made progress is in improvements to video relay service (VRS). I recently saw

a great example of the power of VRS. In San Francisco, there's a Neopolitan pizza restaurant called Mozzarella. It's become notorious not only for having some of the most popular pies in the area, but also for being owned by a deaf entrepreneur and operated by an all-deaf staff. One of the biggest reasons Mozzarella has been able to flourish is that video relay service allows them to take carry-out and delivery orders by phone—a must for any pizza joint. Instead of a ring, flashing lights signal incoming calls, and the relay service is so seamless that customers often don't learn they've ordered from a deaf-run business until they pick up their food.

In March, we adopted new rules to improve the quality and efficiency of video relay services to ensure that that deaf users experience telephone service that is functionally equivalent to voice services. ... Among other things, we set up a skills-based routing trial that I first pushed for more than four years ago. With skills-based routing, a VRS user can ask for a specialized VRS interpreter who is trained in areas a typical interpreter might not necessarily be equipped to translate—notably legal, medical, and computer issues—which I hope will bring increased functional equivalency to some of life's more sensitive conversations. And we are also launching a second trial to track the ways that qualified deaf interpreters assist hearing interpreters.

The FCC's order also requires the public release of each VRS provider's speed-of-answer history in order to help users comparison shop among VRS services. And it allows hearing people who know ASL to obtain ten-digit video phone numbers for direct-dial video calls to deaf friends, family, and colleagues...

... We are also serious about VRS interoperability, because deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals should be able to make calls through any provider to any provider. Consumers have been waiting nearly a decade for such full interoperability. We're happy about the steps the Commission has taken this year, it's finally becoming a reality.

In addition to relay services, we're

exploring ways for you to have more direct access to communications with the people you call. For example, we are looking at advances in automatic speech recognition programs as a less expensive and superior supplement, and perhaps replacement, for communication assistants who relay text communications...

... Of course, advancing the public interest doesn't always require adopting new rules. That's why part two of our accessibility strategy is encouraging the private sector to make accessibility a priority, rather than an afterthought.

On this front, one of the most encouraging developments we've begun seeing—perhaps more important than any particular technology—is the fact that devices like smart phones have begun incorporating accessibility principles from the get-go. Accessibility by design helps those with disabilities stay as current as everyone else when digital, Internet, mobile, and other technologies are developed. It's also so much easier and cheaper than retrofitting products after the fact.

The most effective driver of accessibility by design is a functioning market where industry works to meet consumer demand. When you consider an estimated 48 million Americans have a hearing disability, roughly 15% of the population, the market incentives are already pretty strong. And while government is no substitute for private-sector leadership, we can encourage and engage with industry.

The FCC's Disability Advisory Committee, of which TDI and many of you are active members, provides a great example of how this can be done. The DAC, as it is known, just began its second term. It's exploring a wide variety of issues, including ways to measure the quality of VRS and other relay services; how to support real-time text in emergency communications systems and relay services; and how to make real-time text accessible to deaf-blind individuals.

Our DAC membership is impressive and diverse, and I want to personally thank

PAI EXCERPTS Continued from page 8

Claude Stout for his magnificent service as co-chair of the inaugural term of the DAC. We look forward to making use of the DAC's expertise many issues, like the impact of network transitions on Americans with disabilities and access to 911 emergency services as Next-Generation 911 is rolled out.

In addition to direct engagement, the FCC promotes private-sector innovation by shining a spotlight on industry leaders. This June, I was honored to present the Chairman's Awards for Advancement in Accessibility... With these awards, the FCC recognizes outstanding innovations by individuals, organizations, academics, companies, and governments—innovations that improve the lives of those with disabilities. One of this year's honorees actually speaks directly to the challenge of accessibility by design. The "Teach Access" initiative is bringing together industry, academia, and advocates to expand the quality and quantity of undergraduate technology programs that teach the fundamentals of accessibility. This effort is especially exciting to me because its founding members include both major technology companies and university partners such as the National Technical Institute for the Deaf.

... A third way that the FCC aims to promote accessibility is to lead by example. We are seeing real success with our direct video calling program—also called DVC. About two years ago, the FCC became the first federal agency to use interactive broadband video to handle calls to our customer call center from individuals who use American Sign Language. These calls are more private, and more than half of the issues raised during these calls are resolved right on the spot. Unsurprisingly, the number of people who use DVC to reach us has increased significantly...

...To help encourage corporations and government agencies to use DVC technologies, I have tasked members of the FCC's Intergovernmental Advisory Committee, made up of state and local governments, with looking into potential applications for direct video calling

to better serve their deaf and hard-of-hearing constituents. For example, state and local governments can use this feature for telehealth calls, contacts to public-transit centers, and governmental information 311 lines... To me, this is what the future is all about—exploring ways that people with disabilities can benefit from using off-the-shelf, mainstream technologies, rather than specialized ones...

Bottom line: When it comes to accessibility, the FCC is practicing what we preach.

The fourth and final piece of our accessibility agenda might not strike you at first as relevant to accessibility. But our work to bridge the digital divide is critically important to Americans with disabilities. We are aiming to connect every American with digital opportunity regardless of who they are or where they live.

This matters a lot if you have a disability. For you can't take advantage of many of the latest accessibility tools if you can't get online. Think about real-time text, for example. RTT is essentially the migration from an old platform, like SMS or TTY, to a new, Internet Protocol-based platform. People who are deaf and fluent in ASL cannot access VRS or video remote interpreting if they can't get high-speed Internet in their homes...

...Another big reason we need to think of the digital divide as an accessibility issue is that Americans with disabilities disproportionately find themselves on the wrong side of that divide. An April 2017 analysis by Pew found that Americans with disabilities are about three times more likely to say they never go online than those without a disability. More than 40% of Americans with disabilities don't have broadband at home. This is unacceptable. And so I promise you this: under my leadership, there is not now, and there will not be, any higher priority at the FCC than making sure every American who wants Internet access can get it.

I'd like to close on a more personal note. Earlier, I spoke about how we are living in a unique time—a time in which we can lift up the lives of those who are deaf

or hard-of-hearing.

When I think about this opportunity, I can't help but think about my aunt—my father's oldest sister. She was born deaf in India in the 1930s. As you can imagine, promoting accessibility in communications for people like my aunt wasn't exactly a high priority in those days, particularly in a poor developing country.

But somehow, she managed. She invented her own sign language. She had signs that "named" each of her six siblings—some based on how they walked, or combed their hair, or other characteristics. Her siblings, in turn, each learned her personal sign language. But of course, few if any outside of the immediate family did. Even I remember having to have an aunt or uncle translate when she interacted with me. So her world was much more limited than that of my dad or his brother or other sisters.

Sometimes, I think about how much richer her life would have been if she had lived to see today—if she could have enjoyed some of the technologies and services I've mentioned. What I wouldn't give for her to have the opportunity to use today's advances! What thoughts could she have expressed? What memories could she have built through movies and TV shows? What greater understanding could she have had of the larger world? What deeper connection could I, her nephew, have had with her while she was alive? Her name was Mohini Pai, and I will always remember her and the moral of her story.

Today, we in America have that opportunity. We have the opportunity to help improve the life of anyone with a disability through communications and technology.

Let's make sure we don't let this opportunity pass—for our aunts, our parents, our siblings, our spouses, our children, our friends – and ourselves. We will only meet this moment by working together. So let's go ahead together. [SIGN: Let's go ahead together.]

TDI BIENNIAL CONFERENCE 2017 BETHESDA, MARYLAND JULY 27, 2017 10:00 AM FCC TOWNHALL

In keeping with the tradition of many TDI Conferences, the first day included an "FCC Town Hall" – with the addition of one person outside of the FCC. Midwest Representative Steph Buell introduced the panelists who shared what they've been doing over the past two years since the last TDI Conference.

Panelists in order of their summaries included:

- Karen Peltz Strauss, Deputy Chief of the Consumer Governmental Affairs Bureau
- Suzy Rosen Singleton, Chief for the Disability Rights Office otherwise known as DRO
- Eliot Greenwald, Deputy Chief for the Disability Rights Office
- Robert McConnell, Telecommunications Accessibility Specialist with the Disability Rights Office
- Dr. Christian Vogler (not with the FCC) from Gallaudet University's Technology Access Program

Peltz Strauss reviewed the vast changes

in technology we have experienced from the onset of the ADA and the original relay systems (which were initially formed as de-facto charitable operations) using TTYs, and how we have since evolved Internet-based communication mediums, including text-to-911 and video communications. Such advances have dramatically changed the way everybody communicates. She noted that TDI has been a leader in moving away from "indirect access" to an environment rich in promise for "direct communication." Peltz Strauss feels that we are in a better place today due to all of our hard work – and the Government and Industry now better understand the importance of including accessibility in their design stages – when accessible design is more easily achieved than if access features are added later.

Strauss explained that one of the duties of the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau (CGB) is to oversee disability policy for areas within the Commission's jurisdiction. One of the federal advisory committees that CGB runs is the Disability Advisory

Committee (DAC), which consists of about 60 stakeholders. Some of the duties that CGB is responsible for carrying out to bring about greater accessibility are rulemakings, handling informal complaints, preparing consumer guides, coordinating outreach activities, liaising with state, local and tribal governments. In addition, CGB has been developing educational materials (including ASL videos) to provide the public with accessible information about the FCC's programs and services.

Two particular programs were highlighted, first, the "iCanConnect" program (<https://www.icanconnect.org> / <https://www.fcc.gov/general/national-deaf-blind-equipment-distribution-program>), which allocates approximately \$10 million dollars a year from the TRS Fund for the National Deaf Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP). To date, the NDBEDP program has provided equipment for over 5,000 people. In August 2016, the FCC made the NDBEDP permanent, added three more territories, and authorized

FCC TOWNHALL Continued on page 11

More ways to say "I love you."

If you, or a loved one, is Deaf, hard of hearing, Deaf-Blind, or have difficulty speaking, Maryland Relay offers many calling options to keep you connected by phone.

Plus! You may qualify for a free TTY, VCO phone, Captioned Telephone* or other assistive device through the Maryland Accessible Telecommunications program. Free training may be available upon request.

Just dial 7-1-1 to make a Relay call.

Visit mdrelay.org or like us on Facebook to learn more.

Calling Options

- TTY (Text Telephone)
- Voice Carry-Over
- Hearing Carry-Over
- Speech-to-Speech
- Captioned Telephone*
- Spanish Relay

301 W. Preston Street, Suite 1008A
Baltimore, MD 21201
800-552-7724 (Voice/TTY)
443-453-5970 (VP)



*Available to qualified applicants



FCC TOWNHALL Continued from page 10

funding for a “Train the Trainer” program. Additionally, hearing aid compatibility (HAC) rules adopted this year will expand the number of wireless phones that are required to be hearing aid compatible.

Suzy Rosen Singleton highlighted three major areas of changes in the Commission’s rules:

1) Video Programming

A) Captioning. In 2014, the Commission adopted an order dealing with caption quality standards on television. The Order outlines four aspects of caption quality:

- i) Accuracy
- ii) Synchronicity - caption timing must match the timing of the dialogue
- iii) Completeness - captions must complete throughout the entirety of the program and not cut off for commercials or at the end of a program;
- iv) Proper placement of the captions so that they don’t cover important information that is already being displayed on the screen.

And in 2016, the Commission adopted an order pertaining to the “responsibility allocation.” In the past, only video programming distributors (VPDs) were responsible for closed captioning; now the responsibility

has been reallocated to include video programmers. This order also requires video programmers to register and certify that they commit to following the captioning responsibilities and if they are exempt, they have to state that exemption.

B) Electronic Newsroom Technique (ENT), which is an ongoing topic and challenge for TV programming. Enhanced ENT rules started June 30, 2014. The Commission is currently evaluating whether or not the enhanced ENT rules fulfilled the intention to expand the captioning of live news.

C) Video Clips on the Internet. In general, video clips of programming that was previously televised with captioning usually must be captioned if shown on the distributor or programmer’s own website, (not on a third-party website).

2.) Real-Time Text (RTT) - On December 2016, the Commission adopted an order waiving wireless carriers from the TTY support requirements to support RTT. The minimum functionalities required for RTT include interoperability, backwards compatibility with TTY, support for 911 communications, and the ability to originate and receive a call on the same line as a voice call. The four major carriers must make this available by the end of 2017 if they choose to support RTT instead of TTY technology. The carriers must either have an app that is RTT capable or at least one native embedded real-

time text capable handset by that deadline. Manufacturers’ deadline is December 31, 2018. For more information, visit www.fcc.gov/real-time-text.

3) Emergency Access –

A) Communication Access: Text-to-911, which allows individuals to send text messages to 911 rather than make a voice call, has been in place since December 2014. Unfortunately, this service has not been implemented uniformly. The US has around 6,398 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) (call centers), but only 956 PSAPs have actually implemented text-to-911. If you attempt to send a text to 911 and it’s not available in your area, the FCC requires you to receive an automated bounce back message from your telephone provider. If you don’t get a bounce back message, please contact the FCC. Next Generation 911 (NG911), which will incorporate video, voice, data and text into a single interface providing a single means of contacting 911 in call centers, hasn’t been implemented yet and looks like it will be quite a while. Where RTT is available, wireless carriers must support 911 calls via RTT within 6 months of a request from a PSAP.

B) Emergency alerts:

- i) Emergency Alerting System (EAS) – the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Excerpts from the Keynote Address of CSD Chief Executive Officer Christopher Soukup

“One World: Community
Ownership As a Catalyst for
Innovation”

22nd TDI Biennial Conference
North Bethesda, MD
July 28, 2017

Thank you. It's a thrill and an honor to be with you here this morning. I regard this as a unique opportunity to share with you some of the CSD's experiences and our journey through some critical elements as we talk about what our philosophy is in terms of cultural enrichment and our organization, what we have been seeing, and the context or environment in which we see some of the impacts and strategies that we look at in terms of our development of products and services, and how that connects with the larger scope of the deaf community in general...

... CSD was set up as an opportunity for encouraging all of our ... cultivating opportunities. When we look at the purpose of CSD, what it is we do, our overarching philosophy in terms of products and services. It's all coming from some 42 odd years' worth of our focus on the deaf community, the diversity within it, the similarities we have and our approach to what we are engaged in. ... We are in the era of huge massive personalization, and that's a reality we face. We have to consider ... our own individual experiences and journeys and how we want those to engage within the world, which is incredible, but it's also creating an ever-widening spectrum of deaf identities and intersections.

... We look now at the idea that 85% of children are being raised in

SOUKUP EXCERPTS Continued on page 13



Keynote by Christopher Soukup, CEO of CSD

BY ERIC KAIKA

Opening the second day of the 22nd TDI biennial conference, CSD's visionary Chief Executive Officer, Chris Soukup delivered a keynote presentation that spoke of "One World," a worldview that challenges those who hold the "two world" concept, stating a belief that we all are very much involved in, and not separate from the world we live in. The talk focused on technology as a transformational force, how it is changing the Deaf community, as well as the community's interaction with the world. What does this mean for our community, what does its future hold?

Soukup explained that with rapid technological improvements, we are now in the era of personalization. Our individual experiences and journeys, our Deaf identity, and how we engage within the world is unique, and we can now customize the best possible experience for ourselves on a personal level. Yet despite these advancements, so many in our community still experience inequities in employment, education, the political sphere, universal access, and other cultural and social elements.

Our community should not endure

these inconsistencies, the lack of resources and services, as we navigate globally. Regardless of where we are, our individual preferences for full access should follow us, as they do for the rest of the world. To uplift our community, we must be at a place of respect and appreciation of our individual identity and communication preferences. We need to challenge that concept of sameness, and to recognize and celebrate human diversity as fundamental with Deaf people very much a part of the fabric of humanity, which is the root of the One World concept Soukup mentions.

Soukup names the driving force of CSD as a "cultivator of opportunities" for Deaf people everywhere. Soukup also believes one of the most powerful ways of changing the community's mindset is to look at "whatever is more wherever possible" and "elevating success stories to prominence," which also changes public perceptions of Deaf people. There is always room to improve. There is always room for the next step and the next level, for ourselves as individuals and for us as a wider society. This attitude and belief will allow our community's values and contributions to be recognized by all.

SOUKUP EXCERPTS Continued from page 12

mainstream environments, and 90-95% of those young children are receiving cochlear implants. As we look at the world and its continuing evolution for how it is addressing our children, we need to examine the community's interface with that approach, the role of deaf people, of deaf organizations like CSD, and what our functions might be in supporting that evolution and those emerging identities of deafness. ... As we enter this era of personalization, considerations have to be where our similarities lie, when we look at advocacy efforts and standards, and contemplating where there are a thousand variations, for example, of solutions that are possible to support someone, what communication preferences should be entertained, what communication experiences should be considered. ... Deaf people are obviously individual, and we want that success, but also the success of our community. ... Where are we going? ... What is the deaf identity going to be as the future evolves? ... What will the world be making of itself? ... CSD's creativity and innovation is geared toward looking toward the future and insuring that we are ready as a deaf community to answer those challenges.

It is time for us to center our dialogue, which is really relevant ... at this particular time in terms of our sense of advocacy for communication access, advocacy for access to information, for looking at the world around us and navigating it. ... Our community still experiences oppression in some hideous ways, (in) employment, education, our standing in the community at large, and our cultural and social elements. ... When we contemplate our community, ... where we have great access to interpreting services and to other services, but 50 miles away, those people have a very different experience. There are not enough interpreters or ancillary services, thus we need to address those inconsistencies in access and geography. Deaf people should be able to navigate the global space with a similarity in their

experience of access, of resources and services that should be available to them consistently.

One of the foundational elements between CSD as a concept was the picture you see here, which is my grandfather and my father. My grandfather was a farmer in central South Dakota. One summer there was a devastating storm that took great toll on the farm so he went to the bank to ask for funds to rebuild, and his request was declined. The bank didn't feel that a farmer was sufficiently able, especially as a deaf farmer, to adequately bring back the farm's success. The communication that they used at the time was written note taking. But the barrier was the perception of the banking community. The barrier was the attitude. That's what the block was. In terms of what the wider community's view of what a deaf person could be, should be and was able to accomplish. Those are perceptual barriers exist to this day. How do we change that paradigm? In changing someone's perspective and changing the world's view of us and embracing us as equal and as a brotherhood, how do we do that successfully?

It has to happen. You can't otherwise elevate a community to a place of mutual respect and mutual understanding, appreciation of values, of contributions and of the purpose of the deaf identity in the world without changing that perception. ... The question, of course, is how do we accomplish that? ... We have a couple of ideas. CSD is engaged in concentrating resources around the goal we have of the future, working back from there, looking, for example, at individual and collective perceptions of who and what we are. ... And you might all agree that, for example, we are working fairly well in some regards, but when we look at things like education, access to the wider community, opportunities to be involved in the political space, career engagement, civic engagement, all of the varying perspectives within the community mean we have yet achieved consensus on our approach...

... Yes we do work with interpreters, and we work with call center operators and other services and providers. But they mediate between us and the mainstream world, which we are looking to navigate. When we think about how that impacts the perception, the wider community has of us, then it looks as they know deaf people's concepts, beliefs, and ideas that are not necessarily seen as valuable as the mainstream community, but they ought to be. We ought to be engaging on the same level with the same level of recognition and appreciation. Innovation should be looking to close those gaps between the two sets of people ... And if we can make that part of the facilitation, then we get as close as possible to removing the barriers between the groups and that necessary mediation. And we then position ourselves in a way that our platforms are valued equally, and seen through our eyes and the eyes of the mainstream world as ways that can successfully navigate the world and, therefore, we can be heard.

Obviously we are talking a lot about technology at the moment, but I think we need to consider the human element that is involved in technology. Technology is only as good as the people who are supporting and using it, who are at the forefront of that technology. Technology can be a booster for us to become stronger and better, and it can be a representation of self that is elevated by technology. But the solution itself is not technology, it's how we are using it.

... CSD applauds FCC for its efforts to establish direct video calling, and make this as the norm instead of mediated calls. ... We need to also create opportunities for deaf people to interact with other deaf people on the level of their language abilities and competence, such as looking at things like native language and employment possibilities mediated through that. And we must ask that direct communication between individuals via technology be viewed as a mediator, not as the mediated experience. ... It is also important to

SOUKUP EXCERPTS Continued from page 13

recognize that as members of the deaf community, we have intrinsic value. ... We have economic power. We are a large consumer market. We are formidable in terms of our economic power, but we have not emphasized that power and exercise this leverage sufficiently. Statistics show that between 1 and 1.5 million people use sign language as their primary form of communication. ... There are somewhere between 40 and 65 million people who experience some form of hearing loss in this community that are considered hard of hearing, and 70,000 more people who are deaf-blind. If we are looking at making a business case for direct video and say there might be a million people who might be users, that is potentially 20% market share. That is an opportunity to spend, say, a thousand dollars a year. That becomes \$200 million spread across this economic user base. That becomes a different justification.

When you look at ASL customer service, we suddenly have more market capital to consider in the equation. When we look at the deaf community's relationship to other elements of the mainstream world, each of those elements mean something as we build a business case for our value proposition. ... Technology is ever changing at higher and higher speeds. The graph on the right-hand side of the slide shows just the last few years of technology and it's changing at a vector of 42 times of what it was with its initial inception. We think about what we don't currently have and how fast the world is changing around us, and how life experiences are being impacted by these changes, by disruptive technologies, by innovation, by the new solutions by social media, by all of these elements on a global space. ... Look at what we have accomplished in the last ten years, the development of technology, its trajectory, social recognition now, gestural recognition, geo spatial technology, automated virtual reality -- augmented and virtual reality applications, and their elements, how we are managing

that, what we are looking at in the world around us and how it impacts it. ... It's amazing! These things are happening in our lifetime, which is really awesome, but we have to look at some fundamental changes, too about how we accept and support and perceive some of those opportunities for our community as a cultivating effort.

... The next wave of innovation is coming. We need to make sure it doesn't adversely affect elements we currently rely on. I saw some comments about the presentation yesterday in the Apple presentation talking about iOS updates and the fact that they sometimes include unintentional bugs that impact the functionality of other apps within the iOS space, that may affect communication apps. We need to be watching very carefully what this does. And shrewdly pushing for innovation and capitalizing on it and making sure that at the same time we protect the legacy elements we currently have so we are continuing to support those processes and those facts, so CSD is engaged in that enterprise as well.

As we ... are at a point where as a community, we can look at some technologies that have or are due to sunset and turn towards some of the new resources and the next generation software and technologies. ... As we look at the resources we still need to continue to support and watch them as they age out and make sure that we are investing in what new technologies are emerging that give us opportunities to change the quality of our life for the better for the deaf community. ... We talk about when we consider pluck life cycle -- product life cycle, responsibility and appropriate use of resources where new technology is concerned. The market is very quick to adopt the lowest cost solutions. When something comes out that we believe will save us money, we, and if we believe it will provide the same experience regardless, regardless of whether it actually did provide an equal opportunity, the wider world is looking to adopt those. We need to consider that our thoughts be involved in that picture

and that we are in the conversation so that the makers of new products are aware of their responsibility and the applications' overall effect.

When we look at those solutions and they are proven to work, they are validated with their support and that the solutions are going to be accessible for the entire community, that's fine, but if they are not tested well nor reliable enough, yet they ought not to be released into the space. The other consideration that I think we see fairly often is in things like video remote interpreting, VRI. We want consumer choice, an individual choice to be included, but it's sometimes taken away as we look at the technology. Think about what's happening in hospitals at the moment. Patients are being forced to use VRI regardless of whether that's the best method for them at that moment in time in a hospital scenario.

... We are in an era where we want inclusivity and accessibility to be built in from the get-go so that the deaf experience is valued, so it's respected even with its diversity. ... And where disability is concerned, we talk a lot about the function of disability as an identifier, as a marker. ... I was doing some research recently and found that most of the world looks at the concept of disability, and most -- everywhere in the world has some sense of and some experience of disability, but who defines disability? ... And when we talk about human diversity, how many we ignore the fact that we are all different. We are not all the same.

And that's the way it should be. Let me take you back to that rural farmer in South Dakota. He should never, ever have been made to feel less than or unvalued in that moment. That's what led to CSD and I appreciate the opportunity to be able to come here years later to talk you through CSD as an organization, our journey, our search for accessibility and our connection with you as a wider deaf community. Thank you.



Haben Girma responds to a comment by Dr. Christian Vogler, with Sheila Conlon-Mentkowski looking on.

Friday's Keynote Presentation

Haben Girma, "The Universal Benefits of Accessible Design"

BY SHEILA CONLON-MENTKOWSKI

I was fortunate to welcome and introduce Haben Girma, the first DeafBlind graduate of Harvard Law School and her faithful companion, Maxine, a German Shepherd seeing-eye dog. Girma shared her experience as a DeafBlind person in a presentation along with short video clips.

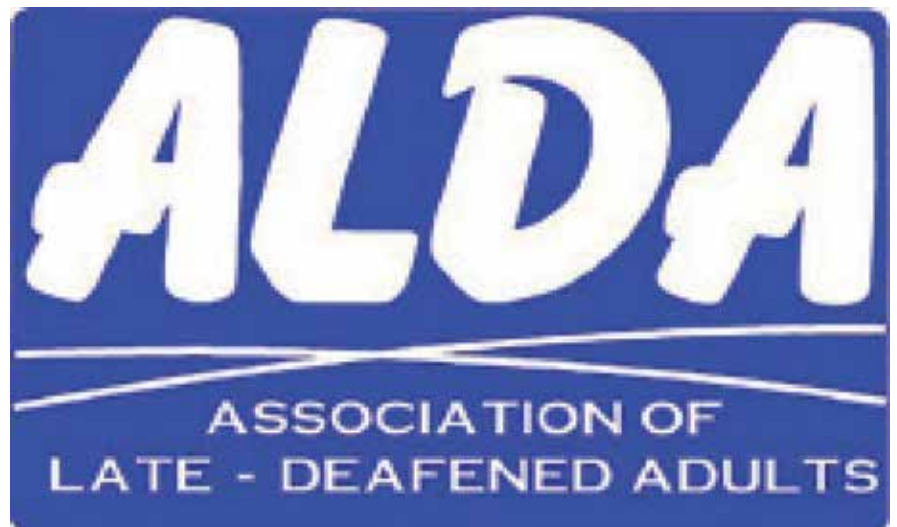
Girma described how she communicated with other people by demonstrating her dual keyboards, one for the other party to type in their conversation and her Braille display keyboard where she receives the brailled conversation. She showed the famous picture of President Obama using her keyboard to communicate with her.

As a disability lawyer, Girma provides training on disability and access issues all over the country. Her parents were refugees; her mother being from Eritrea and her father from Ethiopia. She has a positive attitude on approaching barriers and overcoming them. Girma also loves salsa dancing and demonstrated a video showing off her skills.

Girma discussed various accessibility features that she and others use to surmount daily barriers. She exhorted the participants to keep innovating as they approached barriers, to find ways to overcome the barriers and bring about positive results.

Noting the benefits of accessibility, she listed them as follows: they can reach 1.3 billion persons with disabilities

worldwide, increase content discovery, increase innovation in accessibility, as well as meet legal requirements, like the Americans with Disabilities Act in the United States. Girma suggested people plan for accessibility at every stage, to ensure web content is accessible, and to constantly engage with the disability community to ensure the product is finally accessible to all.





The hotel chef carves beef tenderloin for the reception attendees.



Jan Withers, Willie King, John Fuehter, Holly Bise, and Becky Rosenthal chat during the reception.



The TDI Board of Directors pose for picture with Claude, left to right: Andy Lange, Becky Rosenthal, Jarvis Grindstaff, Stephanie Buell, Sheila Conlon-Mentkowski, Claude, Matt Myrick, CM Boryslawskij, and Jan Withers.

President's Reception

BY SHEILA CONLON-MENTKOWSKI

The TDI President's Reception is an opportunity to mingle with attendees, supporters and sponsors. There was a 30 minute period of time set aside as a TDI Business meeting for me to introduce and thank outgoing TDI Board members: Stephanie Buell, Treasurer, Rebecca Rosenthal, Secretary, and Andy Lange, Vice President. Each was given a plaque to recognize their valuable service to TDI.

The remaining Board members were introduced: Jan Withers, CM Boryslawjy, Matt Myrick, and Jarvis Grindstaff. Two new Board members representing the Central and Midwest regions were introduced: Mark Seeger and John Kinstler whose terms begin immediately after the conference ends.

I shared an update with the members and supporters of what TDI accomplished in the past two years. Claude Stout's 20 plus years of dedicated service to TDI was recognized and he was surprised with

a congratulatory card and gift from the board.

The new officers for the next two years are me continuing as President, Jan Withers as Vice President, CM Boryslawskij as Treasurer, and Jarvis Grindstaff as Secretary. We also thanked Matt Myrick for his hard work as the Conference Chair along with Claude Stout, Tayler Mayer and Eric Kaika, and Jarvis Grindstaff for their work planning the three day conference.



Omniator's Gunnar Hellstrom, SignAll's Zsolt Robotka, Fidelity's Jeff Witt, and IDEAL Group's Steve Jacobs



During the President's Reception, Sheila announces two new TDI Board members



Sheila reports on TDI's 2015-2017 accomplishments.



AT&T's Linda Vandeloop, and Maryland Relay's Dominique Mattocks and Asia Johnson



Snapshots from The Conference

Photos by Steve Brenner



Clockwise:

Tyrone Giordano makes a point during the Facebook presentation and panel.

Taylor Mayer moderates the autonomous vehicles panel.

Steve Jacobs presents during the product announcement of uCaption technology.

Verizon's Zachary Bastian makes a comment on the autonomous driving panel.

Eric Kaika, Product Manager, uCaption gives a presentation announcing uCaption technology.

FCC TOWNHALL Continued from page 11

and the FCC will conduct a nationwide test of the EAS on September 27, 2017 and results of the test and its accessibility aspects will be reported at a future time.

ii) Wireless emergency alerts (WEA) – WEA is a public safety system that allows customers who own certain wireless phones and other mobile devices to receive geographically-targeted, text-like messages alerting them of imminent threats to safety in their area. Changes in 2019 include the following: increasing the message length from 90

to 360 characters for 4G LTE and future networks effective May 1, 2019, embedding phone numbers and URLs in the text message effective November 1, 2017, and requiring participating carriers to support transmission of Spanish-language text messages.

iii) Emergency alerts on television – On June 8, 2017, the FCC released a Public Notice to remind multichannel video programming distributors (MVPDs) of the July 10, 2017 deadline to pass through audible emergency information via the secondary audio stream on second screens devices, such as tablets, smartphones and

laptops. The purpose of this rule is to make sure that people who are blind or visually impaired have audible access to televised information about emergencies when such information is displayed visually, such as an on-screen text crawl. The requirement for second screen devices only applies when such information is delivered to subscribers who watch MVPD-provided scheduled programming over the MVPD's network as part of their MVPD services.

Eliot Greenwald explained that he works on TRS matters that the



Snapshots from The Conference

Photos by Steve Brenner

Clockwise:

Lisa Chiang is thrilled to win a T-shirt with Conference logo in front, and sponsor logos on back of shirt.

Attendees grab a bite, and also a refreshing drink in between the Conference activities.

from l. to r., FCC's Karen Peltz-Strauss, CEASD's Barbara Raimondo, and FCC's Elaine Gardner pose for picture.

Jim House presents on "Captions On Now" in one of the breakout workshops.

Apple's Sarah Herrlinger gives the keynote address titled "Accessibility at Apple: Innovating for All"

FCC TOWNHALL Continued from page 18

Disability Rights Office originates for Commission consideration. In November 2015, IDT (a provider of international calling) filed a Petition for Rulemaking requesting that the FCC consider including intrastate revenues within the contribution base for the interstate TRS Fund, and consider removing the requirement for video relay service costs to be recovered from only interstate and international revenue. Comments were sought and the matter is presently under active consideration before the Commission.

In June 2016, InnoCaption's conditional certification to provide

IP-CTS was reinstated.

In January 2017, the VRS Interoperability Order was adopted, which improves VRS interoperability by requiring address book portability among VRS providers, the enactment of the SIP standard for videophones, and moves toward establishing a Relay User Equipment specification for VRS providers and endpoints.

In March, the 2017 VRS Improvements Order was adopted, which includes a Notice of Inquiry that seeks feedback on quality metrics for the provision of VRS - including the accuracy of interpretation, synchronicity of interpretation, technical quality of video and voice transmissions, quantitatively

assessing interoperability, dropped and disconnected calls, the frequency and extent of service outages and how to address illegitimate/harassing VRS calls. The Commission welcomes feedback and input about these proposed metrics.

In the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking also included within this item, the FCC sought comment on several issues, including the following:

- Safeguards for use of enterprise and public video phones to ensure use by eligible users
- The matter of allowing call centers to register their numbers directly in the iTRS Numbering Database

Snapshots from The Conference

Photos by Steve Brenner



Clockwise:

This animated set up is part of the David Rose, Prsonas presentation on holograms and sign language.

Another slide from the David Rose, Prsonas presentation.

Dr. Christian Vogler makes a point during the Apps Ecosystem panel with ACT/the App Association's Brian Scarpelli behind the podium. Avonne Bell and Carl Szabo are the other members of the panel.

Suzy Rosen Singleton, Chief, Disability Rights Office, FCC gestures while watching a presentation.

VRSCA's Sharon Hayes pose for photo with FCC's Karen Peltz-Strauss.

FCC TOWNHALL Continued from page 19

for the provision of Direct Video Calling (DVC) services

- Per-call validation procedures, to ensure eligibility for compensation
- Funding for TRS-related research and development
- Non-service related giveaways by VRS providers
- Non-compete provisions in VRS CA employment contracts

In addition, the Order authorizes three pilot programs to improve the quality of VRS. 1.) VRS providers will be permitted to have a portion of their calls handled by communication assistants working from their homes.

This pilot program has a number of safeguards in place to ensure consumer privacy and prevent fraud, waste and abuse. 2.) Skills-Based Routing, where consumers may choose to be matched up with VRS interpreters who have specializations in at least one of three areas – legal, medical, and technical support. 3.) The use of Deaf Interpreters to facilitate VRS calls for individuals who may benefit from the provision of such services.

In two separate Orders issued soon afterwards, the Commission adopted rates for all relay services. The FCC also adopted a rule permitting server based routing of VRS calls (up until now calls were routed based upon the VRS endpoint's IP address). Server-based routing is key to

interoperability. Additionally, the 2013 VRS Reform Order initially required the FCC to contract for a neutral video communication service platform. Since the Commission never received any acceptable bids and the providers aren't interested in it, the FCC repealed the rule.

Robert McConnell explained how his role has evolved and that he is now one of the go-to individuals when there is a need to leverage technology to improve access to Commission programs and services. One of his main tasks is Direct Video Calling (DVC) so that consumers can communicate in ASL with someone at a business or government entity. McConnell shared that the FCC's DVC



Clockwise:

IBM's Andrew LaHart speaks about the Internet of Things as rest of the panel looks on, from l. to r. Verizon's Zachary Bastian, AT&T's Linda Vandeloop, WAVIO's Greyson Watkins, and CSD's David Bahar.

Members of the IP-CTS panel pose for picture, from l. to r., Ron Bibler (consumer), HLAA's Lise Hamlin, Clear Captions' Mike Strecker, Hamilton Relay's Dixie Ziegler, Ultratec's Pam Holmes, Sprint Accessibility's Mike Ellis, and CaptionCall's Cameron Tingey.

Members of the Facebook panel in action, from l. to r., Neil McDevitt, Jack and Ann Cassell, Melissa Locklear, Tayler Mayer, Tyrone Giordano, and Facebook's Chris Langston.

TDI's Claude Stout poses for picture with the president of Cerebral Palsy and Deaf Organization - Mark Hill.

FCC TOWNHALL Continued from page 20

service has seen a three-fold increase in the number of calls and a decrease in call length by 33% over the past 3 years. McConnell also stated that the FCC's construction of an open-source platform for direct video calling has been an ongoing effort that will remove technical barriers to entry for such DVC implementations while also providing employment opportunities, resulting in economic benefits for individuals with disabilities, while also ensuring equivalent access to telecommunications.

Dr. Christian Vogler updated us regarding the collaboration between the Gallaudet Technology Access Program, the Trace Center and

Omnicor in Sweden regarding Real-Time Text (RTT). Dr. Vogler mentioned that Norman Williams, Gregg Vanderheiden and Gunnar Hellstrom were all present and that they had tirelessly collaborated on the RTT project with the goal of finding a way to transition from TTY services to RTT. Dr. Vogler showed an example of RTT in a video clip and then explained how it is useful in emergency communication situations as well as many other applications. Real Time Text allows real time communication, where both parties may communicate simultaneously – instead of the “turn-taking” behavior common in most messaging applications. Currently VRS, caption telephones and voice telephone systems do not work together natively

- however, with RTT, such text calls will be handled in the exact same manner as voice calls presently are. Upon its implementation, any person using a regular telephone would also be able to use the text feature at the same time, which increases its powerfulness and accessibility, due to its inherent ubiquity. At present, the industry standards, specifications and best practices for real time text and accessibility for those who are deaf blind are being developed. Dr. Vogler clarified that upon the implementation of Real Time Text, VRS will not go away, nor will regular IP-CTS. RTT will work in concert with existing technology solutions and is a powerful solution that will provide greater choice to consumers.

Snapshots from The Awards Ceremony



Clockwise:

Drew Simshaw receives the Breunig Award from Stephanie Buell.

Gunnar Hellstrom giving acceptance remarks after receiving the Weitbrecht Award.

Norman Williams accepts the Saks Award from Andy Lange.

Dr. Gregg Vanderheiden, the recipient of the Peltz-Strauss Award, poses with Karen Peltz-Strauss.

Dr. Christian Vogler gives remarks after receiving the Saks Award.

Bob Mather gives acceptance remarks after receiving the Brody Award.

Gunnar Hellstrom poses with Matt Myrick after he receives the Weitbrecht Award.

(the picture in middle) Dr. Christian Vogler, Karen Peltz-Strauss, Dr. Gregg Vanderheiden, Paula Tucker, Gunnar Hellström, Dr. Judy Harkins, and Al Sonnenstrahl

2017 TDI Biennial Awards

H. Latham Breunig Humanitarian Award

DREW SIMSHAW

In recognition of his unique expertise and persistence fighting barriers in captioning on TV and the Internet, advanced communication services, and user interfaces covered under the CVAA, and the deployment of Real-Time Text. His foresight in advocacy that sets an example for the next generation of attorneys to carry the torch of full accessibility for all Americans.



James C. Marsters Promotion Award

CTIA – THE WIRELESS ASSOCIATION

In recognition of CTIA's many years of collaboration with TDI and other consumer groups on developing a one-stop website dedicated to mobile accessibility, its leadership in developing an online database, and its extensive collaboration with consumers in areas of accessible emergency communication such as Text-to-911, Real-Time Text, indoor wireless location accuracy, and hearing aid compatibility



Andrew Saks Engineering Award

DR. CHRISTIAN VOGLER & NORMAN WILLIAMS

In recognition of his impressive contributions to accessibility engineering, his instrumental role in the FCC's implementation of Real-Time Text as the text-based communication technology in the digital environment, his wisdom and passion for immediate solutions - led to increased options for deaf and hard of hearing people to summon help in emergencies, and set a working foundation for Next Generation 911 services.

In recognition of his numerous contributions in accessibility engineering in text and video telecommunications by people who are deaf and hard of hearing based on your innovative spirit since the DOS era and consistent efforts to integrate TTY technology with digital cellular phones including solutions for text and video communications have shaped the foundation for an accessible world.



Robert H. Weitbrecht Telecommunications Access Award

GUNNAR HELLSTRÖM

In recognition of his dedication in implementing Total Conversation, now an integral part of tomorrow's telecommunication technologies that allow for free exchange of audio, video, and real-time text by callers worldwide, and adopted for emergency calling applications. His contributions open up new possibilities for everyone to stay in touch.



Karen Peltz Strauss Public Policy Award

DR. GREGG VANDERHEIDEN

In recognition of his visionary contribution in the fields of technology and disability, including coining the term, "augmentative communications", his incredible grasp of human engineering enhancing the accessibility and usability of personal computers, web content accessibility standards, and interactive kiosks, your imprint as codified in Congressional legislation, and in the worldwide adoption of a Global Public Inclusive Infrastructure



I. Lee Brody Lifetime Achievement Award

ROBERT MATHER, ESQ.

In recognition of his lifetime of dedicated service to deaf and hard of hearing people as trial attorney in the US Department of Justice, responsible for developing regulations and enforcement of Titles II and III of the ADA, his outstanding leadership in crafting accessible solutions for state and local agencies and private entities to ensure compliance with the ADA, your service for the US Commission on Education of the Deaf, the US Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, and at the National Center for Law and the Deaf



Snapshots of The Board Meeting



Clockwise:

TDI Board in session

another picture of TDI Board in session

Taylor Mayer introduces Zainab Almoshin to the TDI Board.

The "Big Three": Two former Executive Directors - Tom Mentkowski and Alfred Sonnenstrahl with the current one, Claude Stout

TDI Board members pose for picture, from l. to r., Andy Lange, Sheila Conlon-Mentkowski, CM Boryslawskyj, Becky Rosenthal, Matt Myrick, Jan Withers, Jarvis Grindstaff, and Steph Buell

Sheila runs the TDI Board meeting while others look on.



Snapshots of The Exhibitors

RAFFLE PRIZE WINNERS

Gary Viall
Apple iMac

Ken Putkovich
Apple MacBook

Dana Mulvany
Apple iPad

Nancy Springer
Apple iPad

Jeff Beatty
White Apple Watch

Lillian Mittauer
Black Apple Watch

Norman Williams
Amazon Fire

Agnes Sutcliffe
Amazon Fire

Jack R Cassell
Amazon Fire

Lavonda Miller
Amazon Gift Card

Frank Folino
Google Play Gift Card

David Rosenthal
Amazon Gift Card

James M Lindsay
Target Gift Card

Mark Stern
Target Gift Card

Becca Dingman
Amazon Gift Card

A.J. Sondassi
Baseball Game Tickets

Steve Brenner
Baseball Game Tickets

David Birnbaum
Baseball Game Tickets

Mary Ann Lally
Gallaudet U T-Shirt

Nancy Kensicki
Gallaudet U T-Shirt

Sally K Flurer
Gallaudet U T-Shirt

Wendy Cheng
Gallaudet U T-Shirt

Clockwise:

Jackie Morgan, Pam Holmes, and John Kinstler pose behind the Ultratec exhibit.

Greyson Watkins and Spencer Montan pose behind the WAVIO table.

Clockwise:

Ron and Agnes Sutcliffe

Dot and Steve Brenner

Steve Brenner

Dot Brenner and David Rosenthal manage the conference registration desk.

The interpreters were great at the Conference, from l. to r., Diana Markel, Jennifer Furlano, Jay Krieger, Steph Sforza, Jamie Yost, Marianne Doremus and Ella Fagone

Center Image The crowd is jealous after Gary Viall wins the iMac computer. from l. to r., CM Boryslawskiy, Jarvis Grindstaff, Gary Viall, Andy Lange, Donna Viall, and Tayler Mayer. Gary was one of our Conference volunteers.



Snapshots of The Volunteers

Special Thanks
to our Interpreters!

Snapshots of The ASL Dinner



Clockwise:

I. to r. Nancy Cowles, Anita Rice, Steve Brenner, Vicki Lowen, Ann Meehan and Suzanne Dahan (Photo Credit: Dot Brenner)

Standing from I. to r., Allon Yomtov, Eric Kaika, Tayler Mayer, and Doug Ridloff. Seated from I. to r., Karry Kaika with Ria on her lap, Ray Conrad, Tom Mentkowski, and Sheila Conlon-Mentkowski

A snapshot from the PPT used by Rosa Lee Timms during her performance for the Saturday's dinner finale of the Conference

Doug Ridloff, the other entertainer asks crowd to applaud with their hands during the Saturday's dinner finale.

Doug Ridloff

Rosa Lee Timms, the entertainer makes a comment while Claude Stout, Brenda Kelly-Frey, and Ann Cassell look on.

A dinner table crowd: from I. to r., Laurie Dowling, Tom Dowling, Peter Sepielli, Karen Sepielli, Donna Viall, Byron Hampton, Gary Viall, Jimmy Housie, and Karen Philo-House

Another dinner table crowd: from I. to r., Susan Mather, Richard Ray, Susan Bedrosian, Al Sonnenstrahl, Bob Mather, Lisa Chiango, Kay Tyberg, and Donna Platt.

One more dinner table crowd: from I. to r., Allen Markel, Bryen Yunashko, and Jay Krieger.



TDI In Action

March – May 2017

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

Captioning, Subtitles, and User Interfaces

■ (April 3) In August 2016, the Department of Justice (DOJ) sent a letter to UC Berkeley asking it to implement procedures to make publicly available online audio and video content accessible to people who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, and blind. Rather than comply with this request, UC Berkeley took the outrageous step of ending public access to these valuable resources, which include over 20,000 audio and video files, to avoid the costs of making the materials accessible. TDI signed on the letter, circulated by Gallaudet Technology Access Program Director, Dr. Christian Vogler, and joined by a number of academicians, and nonprofit consumer advocacy organizations, strongly objecting to UC Berkeley's choice to remove the content, and its public statement that disability access requirements

forced the decision. This was not the case. UC Berkeley has for years systematically neglected to ensure the accessibility of its own content, despite the existence of internal guidelines advising how to do so. Further, the DOJ letter left room for many alternatives short of such a drastic step. It was never the intent of the complainants to the DOJ, nor of the disability community, to see the content taken down.

<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2017/04/18/scholars-and-others-strongly-object-berkeleys-response-justice-department>

■ (May 9) TDI, NAD, HLAA, ALDA, CPADO, CCASDHH, NASADHH, and DHHCAN, and DHH-RERC respectfully comment on the Commission's Feb. 23, 2017 Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in the above-referenced docket ("NPRM"). In general, we are supportive of the NPRM's proposals to allow broadcasters to begin the transition

from ATSC 1.0 to 3.0. We agree with the NPRM's conclusions that ATSC 3.0 technology will allow broadcasters to roll-out features that will benefit consumers, including the millions of Americans who are deaf or hard of hearing. We note that our support is conditioned on the Commission's proposal to continue applying the Part 79 closed captioning rules to stations that undertake the ATSC 3.0 transition, which we strongly support. The captioning rules, which serve as "curb cuts" to the social, cultural, democratic, and economic benefits of broadcast television, have ensured equal access over the past quarter-century following the enactment of the Television Decoder Circuitry Act and the video accessibility provisions of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. The rules rest on an encyclopedic record of support and a long-standing spirit of collaboration between broadcasters and consumers who are deaf or hard of hearing to



TDI In Action

March – May 2017

Continued from page 27

ensure that broadcast television is accessible. As the Commission notes, the petition underlying the NPRM supports the technology-neutral nature of broadcasters' public interest obligations. We see no reason to depart from this approach in the context of closed captions and urge the Commission to adopt the NPRM's proposal. While our conversations with representatives of the National Association of Broadcasters and examination of the relevant technical standards leads us to believe that the transition can occur without disruption to closed captions, we urge the Commission to clarify or emphasize the following points: a.) We urge the Commission to clarify that broadcasters who undertake ATSC 3.0 transmissions must continue to comply with the captioning rules on their ATSC 1.0 transmissions and ensure that their ATSC 3.0 transmissions also comply with the rules. To the extent the ATSC 3.0 transition requires broadcasters to purchase new caption encoding equipment, it is essential that they do so while maintaining their existing ATSC 1.0 captioning workflows, planning accordingly for captioning costs associated with both activities. The Commission should make clear that it will presumptively deny waivers of the captioning rules related to costs or technical difficulties associated with new ATSC 3.0 equipment or maintaining ATSC 1.0 equipment. b.) We urge the Commission to make clear that MVPDs must comply with Rule 79.1(c)'s provisions for all streams that they pass through—whether ATSC 1.0 alone or both 1.0 and 3.0—so that consumers are able to view captions of broadcast channels on MVPD equipment regardless of

the underlying technical standard(s) being used to broadcast. c.) We note that the ATSC 3.0's standard for captions contemplates the use of image overlays in addition to text in captions. We urge the Commission to clarify that this capability does not absolve broadcasters of their fundamental obligation to transmit closed captions in textual format and clarify that image overlays should be used only for non-essential special effects and/or for specialized formatting of rasterized textual content, such as subtitles or open captions. Even where image overlays or rasterized textual content are used, viewers must always have the choice to access textual closed captions, instead or in addition, to facilitate the customizations required under Subpart B of Part 79 of the Commission's rules, which are critical to ensure equal access for viewers who are deafblind or otherwise visually impaired. We also urge the Commission to encourage the development of best practices for using image overlays and other new captioning technologies facilitated by the ATSC 3.0 transition, and to refer discussion of such those issues to the Commission's Disability Advisory Committee (DAC). and d.) the NPRM contemplates that broadcasters might charge consumers an additional fee for certain ATSC 3.0-based features, such as 4K resolution. Although no accessibility-related fees appear to be contemplated, we urge the Commission to clarify that any features with accessibility dimensions, including those necessary to comply with the closed captioning rules, must be provided to consumers without additional cost or request.

[https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/10509315914947/2017.05.09%20Consumer%20Groups%20Next-Gen%20Broadcasting%20\(final\).pdf](https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/10509315914947/2017.05.09%20Consumer%20Groups%20Next-Gen%20Broadcasting%20(final).pdf)

Telecommunications Relay Services

■ (March 7) TDI, NAD, and Technology Access Program – Gallaudet participated in a

meeting with Nicholas Degani, Senior Legal Counsel and Zenji Nakazawa, Acting Public Safety and Consumer Protection Advisor, both with the Office of FCC Chairman Ajit Pai. The Consumer Groups representatives expressed their support and gratitude for the proposed rules in the draft of video relay service ("VRS") Report and Order ("R&O"), Notice of Inquiry ("NOI"), Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking ("FNPRM"), and Order. Specifically, the Consumer Groups support the FCC's adoption of trials for skills based routing and deaf interpreters, making iTRS phone numbers available to hearing individuals to allow direct-dialed video calls with deaf and hard-of-hearing consumers, and at-home VRS call handling with proposed safeguards. The Consumer Groups representatives support the rule in the R&O to publish speed-of-answer performance data. They restated their continued support to strengthen speed-of-answer requirements and encouraged the FCC to adopt such requirements as soon as possible, which they acknowledge may be tied to VRS rates subject to comment in the FNPRM. In addition, the Consumer Groups representatives support the FCC's decision to seek additional comment in the FNPRM on VRS provider rates. As previously stated, the Consumer Groups want the FCC to sufficiently compensate all VRS providers and ensure competition in the VRS marketplace. Regarding the NOI, the

TDI IN ACTION Continued on page 29



TDI In Action

March – May 2017

Continued from page 28

Consumer Groups representatives applaud the Commission's decision to take steps to develop service quality metrics. Objective metrics will help to address the Consumer Groups' ongoing concern that service quality has and continues to decline. Better service quality would ultimately benefit both consumers and the FCC because it would mean less waste of time and funds due to poor service quality. Regarding the research and development ("R&D") Order, the Consumer Groups representatives welcome funding for R&D. They strongly encouraged the FCC to reach out to the deaf and hard-of-hearing community, academic research institutions, and VRS providers to participate in R&D, in addition to federally funded R&D centers. Participation by all industry constituents will improve the R&D process since all constituents may provide the FCC with valuable data. They noted that R&D monitoring in the proposed Order is open-ended and suggested the FCC consider identifying certain metrics to ensure the goals of functional equivalence are met.

<https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/1030745801475/TDI%20Ex%20Parte%20Letter.pdf>

■ (April 24) TDI, NAD, DHHCAN, HLAA, ALDA, CPADO, DSA, and CCASDHH submitted comments to the FCC for its Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FNPRM), as released on March 23, 2017. The Consumer Groups ask the FCC to provide adequate compensation to all VRS providers for their services. This compensation should include reimbursements for research and development and service

quality enhancements, which are critical to achieving functional equivalency. Because no proposed rates or methodologies can guarantee sufficient service performance until the Commission first defines what sufficient service performance entails, any rates adopted should be interim. The Consumer Groups support the Commission's proposed amendment to section 64.613 of the rules to provide that routing information provided to the TRS numbering directory may include Uniform Resource Identifiers that contain provider domain names rather than user IP addresses. Consumer Groups agree that it also may improve the efficiency, reliability and security of VRS and point-to-point video communications. Point-to-point calls that permit consumers who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, and deaf and mobile-disabled to communicate directly with their contacts are more efficient for the consumers because they can engage in direct conversations without the need for a third-party interpreter. A point-to-point call is more reliable and secure because the consumer is conversing directly with the consumer's contact. And, most importantly, point-to-point communication is the true essence of functional equivalency - of two contacts conversing directly via a telephone connection. Continued research and development for VRS services, software and equipment is essential to the ultimate goal of achieving functional equivalency. Innovation requires a flexible climate with sufficient resources, including financial and technical resources, to flourish. Therefore, research and development for VRS must be conducted on three fronts, with consumer input: (1) by VRS providers and equipment

manufacturers as part of their attempts to differentiate themselves in the market; (2) by academia; and (3) government-sponsored. (Research and development for other forms of TRS such as IP-CTS should receive equal attention.) To ensure functional equivalency for consumers, service and equipment improvements are made possible by supporting each of these fronts, not a single bubble. Therefore, Consumer Groups continue to insist that in addition to a budget for government-sponsored research and development, research and development must be an allowable/recoupable cost for providers. Further, the Commission should consider identifying certain research and development metrics to ensure the goal of functional equivalency is met. As always, we stand ready to assist in the accomplishment of these goals.

<https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/10424014647409/Consumer%20Groups%20Comments%20re%20VRS%20FNPRM.pdf>

■ (May 31) TDI, NAD, CCASDHH, DHHCAN, CPADO, and DSA submit these comments in response to the Federal Communication Commission's ("Commission") Notice of Inquiry on Service Quality Metrics for VRS (the "NOI") and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (the "FNPRM"), released on March 23, 2017. The Consumer Groups reiterate that the guiding principle for Telecommunications Relay Services ("TRS"), and Video Relay Services ("VRS") performance goals specifically, is functional equivalency as defined in their TRS Policy Statement: Persons receiving or making relay calls are able to participate equally in the entire conversation with the other



TDI In Action

March – May 2017

Continued from page 29

party or parties and they experience the same activity, emotional context, purpose, operation, work, service or role (function) within the call as if the call is between individuals who are not using relay services on any end of the call. Performance goals are integral to achieving functional equivalency. Further, traditional telecommunications services have performance metrics that must be met under state law. Functional equivalency demands that VRS also have performance metrics. While interrelated, the cost-effective provision of VRS should be a separate goal from any performance goal. The performance goals, however, must be achievable without compromising the cost-effective provision of VRS.

The Commission's performance goals should encourage "the use of existing technology" while at the same time "not discourage or impair the development of improved technology." Some in the TRS industry and government may consider existing technology as sufficient and may not see the value in emerging technologies, but existing technology has not achieved functional equivalence. Therefore, the performance goals should not only "not discourage or impair the development of improved technology" but should actively encourage and promote the development and use of new technologies to achieve functional equivalency. Emerging technologies often can be applied to VRS in ways not initially considered by their creators. The Commission should encourage such application as a method of improving service and even reducing costs of delivering VRS. Further, emerging technologies

that have universal design may avoid the need to develop "assistive technologies" to make emerging technologies accessible. The Commission should encourage direct communication solutions, but those solutions cannot replace VRS. Direct video services like FaceTime, Skype, etc. are a tremendous resource

for two or more individuals that can and want to communicate using sign language. Direct video services may reduce the use of VRS between persons that sign, but VRS will remain an important service that enables communication between those who are deaf and hard of hearing and those who are hearing and do not know how to sign. Email, short messaging services ("SMS"), instant messaging ("IM"), and chat services are great tools for deaf or hard of hearing to communicate directly with those who do not sign but for many people who sign effective communication is achieved through VRS or video services rather than email, SMS, IM and chat services because written English is their second language. These people rely on American Sign Language ("ASL") to communicate effectively, therefore, VRS cannot be replaced by text-based communications solutions.

The Consumer Groups generally support the proposed list of performance metrics in the FNPRM that would be used to measure functional equivalence. The Consumer Groups defer to the expertise of the working group on VRS performance metrics under the Disability Advisory Committee's ("DAC") Relay and Equipment Distribution Subcommittee to develop appropriate performance metrics. However, the Consumer Groups (and others) must have an opportunity

to review proposed metrics and recommend additional metrics or revisions to the proposed metrics. And, the review must not end at the establishment of the metrics. Rather, the metrics must be continuously evaluated based on experience with the metrics and advances in technology and adjusted accordingly with input from the Consumer Groups. The data on performance metrics should be collected and overseen by the relay service administrator of the Commission's Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau ("CGB"), perhaps with the assistance of the Wireline Competition Bureau's Industry Analysis Division.

The collection of this data is needed in part to determine whether providers are meeting their service obligations and to provide information that can be used to make gains towards, and ultimately achieve, functional equivalency. The Consumer Groups see the collection of this data as instrumental in verifying whether consumers are experiencing improvements to VRS. To the extent that some of the data is collected via consumer surveys, those surveys should be conducted either by, or in close consultation with, CGB and the DAC Relay and Equipment Distribution Subcommittee. The Consumer Groups strongly oppose the Commission contracting for these purposes with any third party that has no prior experience with TRS and working with deaf and hard of hearing constituent groups. The performance metrics for individual providers should be available to the public. Publishing the metrics will allow interested parties, such as the Consumer Groups, to take a more meaningful role in the continuing evaluation of performance

TDI IN ACTION Continued on page 31



TDI In Action

March - May 2017

Continued from page 30

metrics. Not only will such publication support future review and adjustment of the metrics, but it is also extremely important information that consumers must have when evaluating and selecting their provider(s).

The Consumer Groups are very concerned that Communications Assistants (“CAs”) receive harassing calls and that there are other “phony” VRS calls. The Consumer Groups cannot comment on the extent that such calls occur, as they do not have access to that data. At the same time, no legitimate VRS call should be inadvertently blocked or denied. To avoid such a situation the Commission must narrowly define harassing and other “phony calls” and establish procedures on how such calls should be handled by CAs and VRS providers while maintaining the call confidentiality rule. If such calls repeatedly come from a certain user, after notice to that user, that specific user may be denied service on a call-by-call basis. A temporary or permanent moratorium for such a user is not appropriate, because it could result in the inability of that user to make a VRS call in an emergency situation. Further, CAs must not be immune to criticism because it can be constructive and lead to improvements by CAs. Criticism does not necessarily equal harassment, but when it does, the Commission and VRS community must give CAs support and tools to combat the harassment. Any such support and tools must include a method to document alleged harassment and confirm that harassment occurred.

The FNPRM proposes to require users of public/enterprise video-phones to input the user’s iTRS number plus a

personal identification number (PIN) before making or receiving a VRS or point-to-point call. It does not say what the PIN would be, or how/when it would need to be changed. As the Consumer Groups have previously stated, “the Commission should continue to compensate public and enterprise-owned phones without requiring individual users to ‘log-in’ or register a business phone in the name of the individual employee.” The Consumer Groups still oppose this proposal in the FNPRM. The Consumer Groups question whether requiring a user’s iTRS number plus PIN would prevent enough waste, fraud and abuse as to justify the additional inconvenience of providing that information to make a call from a public/enterprise video-phone. Deaf and hard of hearing consumers should not be forced to log in with information they might not have readily available (such as a PIN) or information that is sensitive or that needs to be changed regularly. Such a requirement would be a move away from functional equivalency.

The Consumer Groups support amending section 64.613 of the Commission’s rules to allow all providers of direct video calling customer support services to access the TRS Numbering Directory (not just VTCSecure). The Consumer Groups supported the VTCSecure Petition and urged the Commission to (1) classify direct sign language (“SL”) customer support service, as defined by VTCSecure, as telecommunications relay service (“TRS”) before a provider of such service is permitted access to the TRS Directory and (2) require providers of direct SL customer support service to comply with consumer protection rules applicable to VRS providers

with access to the TRS Numbering Directory. As VTCSecure pointed out, approximately 10% of calls requiring VRS are made to approximately 100 telephone numbers. More specifically, the Commission found that of the top 100 telephone numbers, approximately 3 million minutes are terminated to government agencies including the Social Security Administration, Medicare, the Internal Revenue Service, and state agencies like the Florida Department of Children and Families, and approximately 2.7 million minutes are terminated primarily to large banks (e.g., Bank of America, Wells Fargo), technology companies (e.g., Apple, Dell) and service providers (e.g., eBay, GEICO, UPS, Southwest Airlines). By granting the requested waiver to allow direct SL customer support service, the Commission helped to (a) provide a call experience for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, or speech disabled equivalent or individuals with motor disabilities to that of a call between two hearing persons; (b) provide the full benefit of TRS to all parties on a call; and (c) motivate vendors to continually improve the calling experience. Consumer Groups commend federal government agencies for providing direct video connections with their customer service offices and want the ability to place a direct video call to commercial businesses that offer similar options.

However, Consumer Groups ask the Commission to ensure that the direct connections are an option to consumers, but not replace VRS. Consumer Groups recall that when TTY was the primary form of TRS used by consumers, some organizations would not take TTY



TDI In Action

March – May 2017

Continued from page 31

relay calls if they had a dedicated TTY line. Whether the TRS line is dedicated to a TTY or to a direct video line, there remain several risks including: 1.) no one will be available to answer it, 2.) consumers will not be able to hang up and call again to get a different customer service representative and 3.) consumers will not be able to have their call transferred to a supervisor. Although the Commission cited VTCSecure's "one hundred percent [agreement] that functional equivalence requires that deaf and hard of hearing consumers must be able to choose for themselves whether to call a customer support service line directly or using a VRS interpreter," nothing in the VTCSecure Waiver Order ensures that consumers retain that choice. To avoid the barriers that a required direct line could impose on consumers, it is imperative that the Commission prohibit the addition of direct video calling customer service numbers to the TRS Directory unless deaf, hard of hearing, deaf blind, or speech impaired individuals and individuals with motor disabilities have the choice to be able to call a company's customer service department using direct video calling, or call them via relay. VTCSecure explains one way to ensure such consumer choice, but does not commit to submitting

numbers in the TRS Directory that provide such choice. In short, the Commission should amend its rules so that all providers of direct video calling customer support services may only add a direct video calling customer service number to the TRS Directory if such number (1) offers consumers the option of choosing direct video calling or VRS or (2) is dedicated to a direct video line and separate from the company's customer service number for the general public. To the extent that a provider of direct video calling customer support services is a software platform and does not have the capability to ensure its business customers retain direct video calling and voice calling options, then the Commission could specify that a direct video calling customer service number must be removed from the TRS Numbering Database if the business does not offer consumers such options. The Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA") requires the Commission to ensure that deaf and hard of hearing individuals have nationwide access to the telephone system and network "in a manner that is functionally equivalent to the ability of an individual who does not have hearing impairment or speech impairment to communicate using voice communications services by wire or radio." Adopting direct video calling rules that ensure VRS users have the choice of using VRS

or making a point-to-point call to reach customer service departments would provide functionally equivalent communications to deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, or speech impaired individuals and individuals with motor disabilities.

The Consumer Groups support all kinds of outreach/marketing on the part of VRS providers or the businesses to engage VRS consumers. The Consumer Groups do not believe that non-service related inducements should be prohibited, although perhaps certain non-service related inducements should be excluded from reimbursable expenses. Any non-service related inducement excluded from reimbursable expenses needs to be specifically identified rather than a general exclusion for all non-service related inducements. The Consumer Groups do not agree that video game systems are necessarily a non-service related inducement. Specifically, VRS may be an integral component of the video game experience much like a chat room is for hearing video gamers. After all, relay service under ADA is necessary so that deaf and hard of hearing persons are part of the general community and whatever helps make that connection should be supported.

<https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/105302094415690/Consumer%20Groups%20Comments%20to%20VRS%20NOI%20%26%20FNPRM.pdf>

BOARD VIEWS Continued from page 2

be provided for improving future TDI Conferences. The Conference was accessible via a variety of communications: ASL interpreters, tactile interpreters, real time captioning, audio systems, and live

video streaming.

Now the focus turns to the 50th TDI Anniversary Gala which will be held in October 2018 in the DC metro area. Watch for ongoing announcements with more detailed information as this auspicious event approaches.

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

few pictures of the pictures of Andy, Steph, and Becky receiving Board service plaques



Highest-Quality Professional Interpreters™



Apply today!

www.svrs.com



© 2016 Sorenson Communications, Inc. All rights reserved. If you choose Sorenson as your default provider, you can port your existing 10-digit number to Sorenson from another provider or Sorenson can provide you with one for the geographic area where you live or work. If you later change your default provider, you can port your number to that provider. When selecting Sorenson, you must provide to Sorenson the physical address (i.e., the Registered Location) from which you are placing the call, so that Sorenson can properly route any 911 calls you may make. If you move or change your location, you must notify Sorenson immediately. You can update your Registered Location from your Sorenson videophone by calling 800-659-4810 or by visiting www.svrs.com/moving. Sorenson will confirm receipt of your Registered Location information. Emergency calls made via internet-based TRS may not function the same as traditional E911 service. For example, you may not be able to dial 911 if there is an internet-service failure or if you lose electrical power, and your 911 call may not be routed correctly if you have not updated your Registered Location. For more information on the process of obtaining 10-digit numbers and the limitations and risks associated with using Sorenson's VRS to place a 911 call, please visit Sorenson's website: www.sorenson.com/disclaimer. For information on toll-free numbering, please visit www.svrs.com/tollfree.

CONNECTING MADE EASY

Whether it's voice or text,
from across the street or
across the country, you can
rely on Ultratec technology
to keep you connected.



Also featuring TTYs

Ultratec

www.ultratec.com

1-800-482-2424 (V/TTY)

service@ultratec.com



CAPTIONED TELEPHONES THAT FIT YOUR LIFESTYLE.



CapTel 2400i
includes Bluetooth®
connectivity and
Speaker phone



THE WORLD LEADER IN TEXT TELECOMMUNICATIONS

CapTel is a registered trademark of Ultratec. Bluetooth® is a trademark of Bluetooth SIG, Inc.

