



WORLD

Technology News and Commentary for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People



Congratulations to the Recipients of the TDI Scholarship Program!

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WHAT WE DO

“TDI shapes America’s public policy in telecommunications, media, and information technology to advance the interests of all people who are deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened, deafblind, and deaf+.”

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Sorenson VRS, inside back cover • Ultratec, back page

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Shaping An Accessible World

Board Views



JAN WITHERS

*TDI President and Board Member,
Southwest Region*

“Through TDI’s scholarship program, young people are exposed to the world of advocacy, in its many forms, for communication equity.”

Opening Doors to a New World

TDI’s Board of Directors and I are delighted to be able to offer scholarships to six outstanding young recipients in support of their higher education. And we are most grateful to our partners in the telecommunications industry for their generous contributions which make TDI’s scholarship program possible.

These scholarships not only help the students to defray the high cost of education but also open doors for them to the world of advocacy for communication equity. Think about it...these young people grew up in a world steeped in communication and information technology; they were almost literally born with a smart phone in their hands. However, they may not be familiar with the long, hard slog undertaken by determined, visionary Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, Deaf Plus advocates to attain communication equity, such as the invention of the TTY in the 1960s, the development of telecommunications relay services in the 1990s, and the passage of the 21st Century Communication and Video Accessibility Act in 2010. And they may not be fully cognizant of the

fact that we must continue to fight to ensure we are not left behind as new products and services proliferate daily.

Through TDI’s scholarship program, applicants as well as their friends, teachers, and families learn about TDI and its important work in advocating for effective policy and best practices in accessible communication and information technology and why it is vital that they themselves support TDI’s work, either directly or indirectly. They also learn of the various educational and career paths available and opportunities for internships and mentorships within industry, government, and nonprofit organizations where they could attain knowledge and hone their skills in promoting communication equity.

The 2020 TDI scholarship recipients exemplify the qualities essential for effective advocacy and leadership. We look forward to following their progress as they explore a world of opportunities, made possible by TDI’s scholarship program. Please join me in congratulating them! And you can read their profiles on page 6.





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Thank you for supporting TDI !

Our Quest for Access



BY ERIC KAIKA
Managing Editor

“They were chosen because we believe that these deaf and hard of hearing high school students are the future of our community.”

Commending the recipients of the 2020 TDI Communication Access Scholarship

I am honored and proud to be part of TDI's scholarship program and to introduce to you the well-deserved recipients of this award. Our second annual scholarship awards are made possible by generous contributions from our partners in the telecommunications industry and are awarded to youth in the deaf and hard of hearing community.

I would like to personally extend my congratulations to these young scholars. They were chosen because we believe that these deaf and hard of hearing high school students are the future of our community. TDI's mission to be an advocate for shaping an accessible world can only come to fruition through the actions of these young adults. Not only do we need them to be aware of the role that TDI plays in advocacy for our access needs in telecommunications, media, and information services, we need them on the frontlines to help us form solutions to new technological barriers.

Our deepest gratitude goes to Ultratec, Sorenson Communications, ZVRS/Purple, and Hamilton Relay for their support. These 4 companies have pledged their commitment to support the program on an annual basis. I am proud to recognize their partnership with us to celebrate the deaf and hard of hearing youth that will be the leaders of our community.

When we publicize our scholarship program, we engage with hundreds of schools for the deaf and public school districts that have deaf and hard of hearing students. These educational institutions learn more about TDI, and its advocacy role in the nation's capital - truly a win-win situation. I would like

to continue growing this scholarship program and reach out to even more schools and new students. Each new contact made is a benefit for us. You never know where we will find our next board member, TDI rep or maybe even our CEO.

I am constantly amazed as the newest technological marvel comes along. However, each new invention brings a caveat. How will this be accessible to us? This is where our deaf and hard of hearing youth can truly help us shape an accessible world. We must invest more in our future by engaging the youth of our community. We must identify and recognize those of us who have a passion, an interest or even a simple desire to help. With your contributions we can increase our scholarship awards and recipients and then perhaps we can begin to see an equal footing in our society.

TDI extends a heartfelt thanks to all the students who competed in the scholarship program this year and congratulate the scholarship recipients. It is my most fervent wish that they use the scholarship award to assist them in discovering their purpose in life. Scholarship awards are for the students not the school. Whether they apply the monies to a local community college, ivy league university or a year of travel, I sincerely hope that this award contributes to their self-discovery process and in turn assists them in engaging with our community. I look forward to the day when perhaps we will work together to blaze paths of success for themselves and for all deaf and hard of hearing people.



Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Resources and Guidance

**for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community, as well as Medical
Providers working with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Patients:**



CSD

<https://www.csd.org/coronavirus>



National Association of the Deaf

National Association of the Deaf

<https://www.nad.org/coronavirus>



National Deaf Center

<https://www.nationaldeafcenter.org/covid-19-information>



TDI

<https://tdiforaccess.org/covid-19>

SOPHIA BLESSING

Home: Ohio

High School: Wilmington High School

College Attending: Ohio University



Tell us about yourself:

In September of 2002, shortly after I was born, a nurse came into the hospital room and told my parents that I had failed the Auditory Brain-stem Response screening, then suggesting that I may be deaf. Since there was no history of hearing loss in my family, and neither one of my parents are hard of hearing, they were shocked. After sitting with my mother for a few minutes after they got the news, my dad left the hospital room and made his way to the church's chapel. He tells me that he knelt down, cried, and prayed for me. He then asked for guidance and returned to my mother. When they brought me home, my mother was still not convinced that I was deaf. When everyone including my father left the house, she got out pots and pans and banged them together, trying to create as much noise as she could, but I didn't cry or look towards the commotion at all. As her frustration grew, she lost hope. Both my mother and father began to wonder what my future would be like. Would they have to move into a deaf community so that I could have an easier life? They had no idea what their options were. But when they took me to the hospital again to learn more, they finally heard about the Cochlear implant.

Since being implanted at the age of one, Cochlear has given me a second chance to hear. I was given the opportunity to have a 'normal' childhood and attend school with other hearing students. In addition, I am able to play varsity softball, go to football games with my friends, and listen to my teachers lecture in class (even though lectures are not



always fun :)). Overall, my Cochlear implant has helped me to overcome daily obstacles so that I can have a better chance of succeeding in the hearing world.

After high school, I plan to go to college and study with a major in Communication Sciences and Disorders. I aspire to use this degree to become an audiologist so that I can work with families and children who are deaf like me. I want to help them break the same barriers that my Cochlear helped me break too. Even though eight years of college may seem laborious to most people, I am more determined than ever to have a career that makes me excited to wake up

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SOPHIA BLESSING Continued from page 6

in the morning. Also, during the upcoming summer, I plan to work with an educational audiologist and shadow the work she does.

Going to school as a Communication Sciences and Disorders major would help me work toward being an audiologist so that I can give parents the same hope for their child that my own parents felt when they heard about Cochlear. I also want to tell my patients that just because they are deaf does not mean that they have limitations for success. I want to help them be able to hear and I also want to teach them to embrace their deafness and use it to achieve their goals and dreams that they may have in life. I now realize that I shouldn't say that Cochlear gave me a second chance, I should say that Cochlear gave me purpose too.

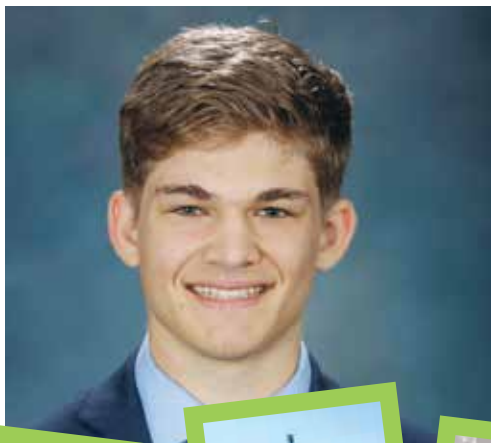
Essay:

Hi name is Sophia blessing and I am here today to talk to you about why I will be an advocate for greater access to communication technology. In high school I was an active volunteer for the Iowa of the school for the deaf and hard of hearing. Main focus is to teach children in place in here needs how to speak properly. I was a student there myself after 10 in Ohio Valley boys until I was five I transferred to a regular elementary school where I was only one that was deaf. For a while I spent my time wondering why I was the one that had to be in my family and the only one who is deaf in both my mom and my dad side the family. Without my input I will not be able to hear anything. I think your order in and looking each obstacle those are in my way I was able to realize how much I appreciate you that was not able to hear I will be a completely different person.

Later on I decided I will pursue a career in last August I got excepted into Ohio University there I will major in communication sciences and disorders and then go to



graduate school as well and I finally turn my title is an audiologist how do you spire to work in the Children's Hospital and I have a key for greater communication access. Is it audiologist I will come across many patients with many different issues example and make me a patient who needs a new implant or a new hearing in they need to replace their current one. Personally I know that it's not easy times OK make sure to technology and often takes a long time to get approved in addition he can be really pricey. When I was in middle school I had a lot of difficulties with my cochlear implant because it was older the sound cut in and out the batteries don't last long in the song quality wasn't great I remember when my mom and I started looking into new employees and we knew it would take a while before I actually received one. In the meantime I still had to go to school in hopes of my evening would work correctly so that I could learn lessons being taught in class if you weeks later he came in and I was so excited I can't even explain to you the relief that I felt when I knew a long no longer have to worry about the reliability of my implant. Is experience alone made me realize that there is very limited access to communication process can take a long time in the computer as a mentor to students who need to hear the technology to excel in school. It's not the orders I can advocate for a quicker process I will give families the technology they need when they need it communication technologies this is insane securities have a huge impact on the lives of those who wear them. Don't have the technology they need in women's where they can do every day. It is important in the future processes change the child or family and child should not have to worry about their equipment function properly when they needed to for me the smallest ARM processor me the biggest difference everyone should be granted access because the sound is running is one of the greatest senses.



JULIO HERNANDEZ

Home: Georgia

High School: The Westminster Schools

College Attending: University of Pennsylvania



Tell us about yourself:

* I volunteer to gain a greater understanding of my community and to support people in need. As a hard-of-hearing person, I know what it's like to feel left behind by society; by volunteering, I empower those I am helping to feel valued and significant.

* Since my freshman year, I have work at Chick-fil-A. Through working, I've learned how to make and commit to a schedule that changes on a weekly basis; earn raises by demonstrating commitment and hard work; and connect with coworkers who have varying ages, spoken languages, educational background, and social classes. More importantly, I've learned how to deliver "second-mile service." For me, this is more than getting customers their food in under five minutes; it's opening ketchup packets for the customer with arthritis, carrying take-out orders to the car of the single-mom holding two babies, and taking orders past "closing time" if somebody has waited in a long time in line.

It's also important to me to serve not only customers but also coworkers. From giving coworkers rides home, to covering shifts, to simply smiling at work, I've helped contribute to my Chick-fil-A's truly kindhearted atmosphere, which I value as much as direct deposit I receive every other Thursday. Working in this atmosphere for so long has allowed me to take it with me when I clock out and show kindness, patience, and service in my every day life. In addition to shaping my personality, Chick-fil-A has provided me with new lenses to see the world with.

My hobbies are running, weight-lifting, watching political shows on Netflix, reading about current events, and spending time with my family.

I have a very analytical mind, and I enjoy problem-solving and working with others; I want to work in the field business, as I feel it is suited to my strengths and interests. In addition, I dream of one day working in the nonprofit sector as the CEO of the National Association of the Deaf or the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Next year, I am excited to participate in the University of Pennsylvania's Business Analytics and Deaf Studies program, which will help me achieve my career goals.

Essay:

From my being interrogated by other kids about my hearing aids as a toddler to giving a class presentation about my FM system in fourth grade to appearing on the cover of Hearing Health, I have always felt obligated to challenge the stigmas about deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals by sharing my own experiences. In the future, I hope to continue discussing these experiences with my hearing friends and peers, demonstrating through important conversations and meaningful interactions that deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals are valuable, capable, and able to communicate. Emphasizing the value of deaf and hard-of-hearing community is an important step towards increasing communication access because when society

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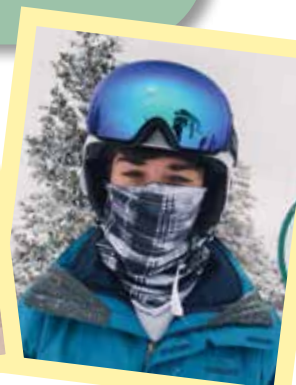


RILEY HERNANDEZ

Home: Georgia

High School: The Westminster Schools

College Attending: University of Southern California



Tell us about yourself:

I learned the importance of service to others at an early age. As a kid at a Catholic elementary school who attended Sunday school each week, I was instilled with the golden rule, “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Now, with more life experience and education than I had when I was just in elementary school, I truly see the value in serving others. I now know that living with a sole focus on myself is pointless; what good am I to the world if I do not help make it a better place? Through service to others, I hope that I can help make positive impacts in people’s lives. Even if my acts of service feel small, I know that giving is a cycle, and I know that even small acts of kindness can be significant and meaningful. In highschool, I have loved being a part of a service group called Young Men’s Service League. In this group, I have had the opportunity to serve many organizations in Georgia such as Sandy Springs Mission and Special Pops Tennis with my mom and brother. Additionally, I enjoyed the more hands-on service projects I have done throughout highschool such as working with Changing Lives in Guatemala to build a home for a family and installing a set of stone steps in a park for my Eagle Scout project. It is fulfilling to be able to look back and see that my efforts have resulted in physical things that will make positive differences in people’s lives. I have also spent my time in highschool playing tennis and running track. Since the day I turned 16, I have been working at Sweet Charlie’s (a rolled ice cream store), and now I am a shift leader. When I have free time,

I like to listen to music and create drawings and paintings for fun. In school, I have found an interest in science, and I have enjoyed my AP Biology and AP Environmental science courses. Next year, I will attend the University of Southern California. As a Health and Human Science major, I will continue to learn about science as well as the cultural, social, economic, and ethical factors that influence health. My ultimate career goal is to become a health provider of some sort. I am not sure exactly what type of doctor I would like to be, but I know that I would be very happy in a career that would allow me to pursue my interest in science as well as allow me to make positive differences in the lives of my patients.

Essay:

I have bilateral hearing loss; without assistance, I simply cannot communicate with others as well as someone without a disability can. I know I am just as capable of achieving my goals as a person without a disability with or without my hearing aids, but my wearable technology has given me the ability to communicate “normally.”

Unfortunately, hearing aids are not a solution for every person with a hearing disability. For completely deaf individuals, hearing aids would be useless. However, many deaf people can still communicate with sign language. This method of communication is still limited, however, because

Continued on page 13



MARA LAND

Home: South Dakota

High School: Baltic High School

College Attending: Gallaudet University

Tell us about yourself:

When I was in kindergarten, I was diagnosed with hearing loss and was told nothing could be done to help me. Needless to say, school was difficult for me and I didn't perform very well. I was very tired at the end of the day from straining to hear and I missed quite a bit of instruction and other students' conversations. I was either in trouble for not following instructions, which I didn't hear, or worried that I would be in trouble for doing something wrong because I didn't hear instructions. The good news in all of this is that when I started learning American Sign Language (ASL) in 8th grade from a deaf mentor, my situation improved significantly. In 10th grade, my school provided me with an ASL interpreter. Suddenly, for the first time, I wasn't exhausted from trying to listen and figure out what was being said as I could completely and more easily access communication through ASL. My grades went up. To my great surprise, I scored the highest in my class on the ACT and I received a perfect score in the reading section on the ACT. I became a member of the South Dakota Association for the Deaf (SDAD) in 2017 and started to interact more with the Deaf community as I felt welcomed and included. I have been helping SDAD with fundraising efforts and participating in deaf events. I have also been very active in helping SDAD with various legislative testimonies to improve the situation for other deaf children in schools.



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MARA LAND Continued from page 10

Also, I have presented to our school board with the hope of educating the district about language and communication needs for all of our deaf and hard of hearing children.

What I have learned is that I am not alone and that my experiences have shaped me. Many people who are deaf and hard of hearing have never been exposed to ASL. Often, they later discover that their hearing technology no longer benefits them and wish they could communicate in ASL. Also, many children lack mentors and language support at school to help them navigate the nuances of living with hearing loss. As a result of the support I was provided through deaf mentoring through a community-based service, I want to enter a field that helps other deaf and hard of hearing people. I am considering a degree in social work, public policy or a health-related degree as I love biology, genetics, policy and law, and, most of all, I love helping. I have been a peer mentor at the Baltic High School for 3 years and I thoroughly enjoy working and helping the younger students. I have done volunteer work with the Communication Services for the Deaf (CSD) in hosting reading programs at the local library. I am also a part time swim instructor and have worked here in South Dakota as well as at the Texas School for the Deaf. In May, I will become a certified EMT and will be one of the few EMTs in South Dakota fluent in ASL. I am accepted to the Honors Program at Gallaudet University and I look forward to the academic challenge and the fully immersive ASL community there in Washington, D.C.

Essay:

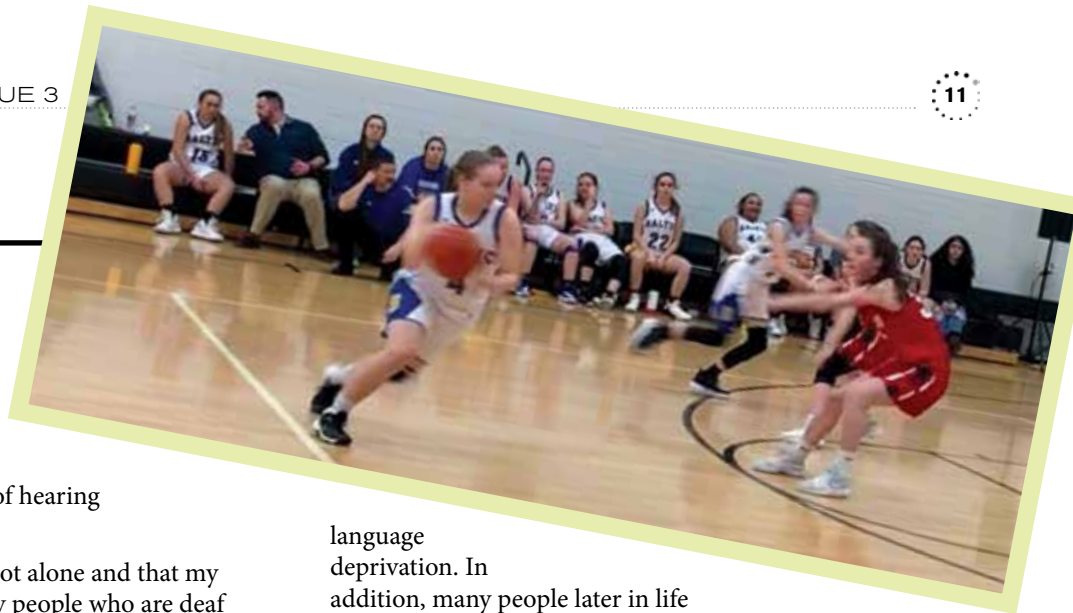
Many hearing individuals, including medical and education professionals, often misunderstand our disability because it is “invisible” and believe that hearing technologies and surgeries resolve the hearing loss. As a result, we spend a lot of time, too much time, explaining ourselves and our need for better communication access. These challenges start early and linger long. As a result of my personal experiences living with hearing loss, the three areas that have risen to the top as essential for all deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened and deaf-blind people are bilingual education, individual mentoring for advocacy support and policy changes.

While research shows that being bilingual increases academic performance, research also shows that children with minimal hearing loss can experience serious social and educational delays due to ineffective communication and

language deprivation. In addition, many people later in life realize that their hearing technology no longer works well and wish they had learned or could learn ASL. Diagnosed in kindergarten with hearing loss, I was told nothing could be done to help me. I was becoming a statistic about underperforming. Out of desperation, I started to seriously learn ASL. My situation improved significantly. Every child or adult with hearing loss must be given access and tools to learn ASL (visual or tactile). To get to that, it requires changes in state laws, local school policies and access to the language. It's a reason why I helped with state testimony to advance deaf education bills. I plan to continue to push for bilingual education.

Next, the Deaf Mentor Project research shows that those families provided a deaf mentor had better outcomes in all areas. When I discovered ASL through a local deaf support agency, I was also provided a deaf mentor and it changed my personal trajectory. I knew nothing about closed captioning or my basic communication access rights. I learned how to navigate school and life with hearing loss. At school, I mentored a deaf-blind student. I saw firsthand that his teachers couldn't communicate properly with him. I was able to advocate on behalf of this student. Making a difference in his life was the result of a mentor making a difference in my life. All deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened and deaf-blind individuals need to have the support of a mentor. Delivery of mentoring and advocacy services is through policies at the federal and state level, backed with funding. I plan to continue to mentor and advocate for children, especially, and testify whenever possible for supportive legislation.

Finally, effective policies overarch all areas for the population impacted by hearing loss. I have testified for the LEAD-K and other deaf education bills in our state. Also, I have presented to our school board about school policies, the need for a qualified deaf educator, problems with one-size-fits-all amplification and to address the rising numbers of students with hearing loss. I have met with our federal legislators to address and ask support of the Cogswell-Macy Act. I will continue to do this same work.





MOLLY JO MCEVOY

Home: Nebraska

High School: Ralston High School

College Attending: Gallaudet University

Tell us about yourself:

Volunteering has always been a passion of mine, especially when it includes Deaf individuals and youth. I strive to be a role model to the children I have volunteered with. I have over 190 hours of community service recorded and more than half of those hours contributed to helping Deaf children. I have maintained a part-time job at Moylan Ice-Plex since November of 2018. I plan to pursue a degree in either psychology, or a double major in government and education through Gallaudet University. Whichever degree path I decide to pursue, I hope to work with Deaf children and continue to inspire them to reach their maximum potential and to find the ability in their disability.

Essay:

Communication access shouldn't be a luxury for some Deaf individuals. All over the world, deaf individuals lack communication access. Communication access is an essential key to unlocking an individual's maximum potential in life.

I grew up mainstreamed in Nebraska, in the school system with an interpreter. No matter how skilled my interpreter was, I still was unable to receive an education that was equal to my other classmates due to a lack of direct communication with others in the classroom. I fought for years throughout my educational career starting in 5th grade, for equal access to education, which included qualified interpreters. I had the opportunity to take a class at Iowa School for the Deaf this year, and that's when I finally understood how beneficial communication access was, especially direct communication.

It is not only in the educational system where access to communication is lacking, but it can also be shown in healthcare as well. For example, last year, I was in a car accident

and was transported to the emergency room by ambulance. The hospital was unable to find an interpreter to come in, then attempted to use Video Remote Interpretation (VRI), which ended up not working. I was left with my only option of my mother sacrificing to interpret for me, however, at this time she was extremely emotional and couldn't play her role as a mother, and had to be an interpreter for me instead. My mother isn't a qualified interpreter, to this day I am still lacking information from that night, in regards to my health, and police involvements and reports due to no communication access.

I will be attending Gallaudet University next fall and have not decided between 2 majors, however, both majors relate to communication access for Deaf individuals. I'm considering Psychology with a minor in Biology, I would hope to work in a



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MOLLY JO MCEVOY Continued from page 12

medical research facility researching Deaf children, including the effects of language deprivation, and the importance of communication access with the least barriers such as sign language. The other major I'm considering is a double major in Government and Education, which then I would hope to become an educational advocate for deaf children in regards to communication access and providing the correct necessities to help a child succeed in the most efficient way.

Deaf people are just as equal as anyone else, except we are shown that we are less than others due to others not providing access to communication, whether it's in the educational system,

healthcare system, or anywhere else where communication is essential. With access to communication, we are able to thrive and find all the abilities in our disability. Communication access is a necessity, and should not be a luxury.

**RIILEY HERNANDEZ** Continued from page 9

most of the general population does not know sign language. Because of this, it can be hard for deaf individuals to receive a message from a general member of the population. Of course, one solution to this problem would be for everyone in the population to learn sign language. While I think that that solution would be beautiful, it is unfortunately not very realistic. But what if members of the general population could communicate messages in sign language to a deaf person without even knowing it? I have an idea for a piece of wearable technology that would accomplish just that.

I imagine a special type of glasses be made to help assist deaf people in receiving messages from others. You may be wondering, how will glasses help someone whose problem is the fact they can't hear? These glasses will have lenses that allow a user to see normally through them because their purpose is not to alter the vision of the user. What will make these glasses special is the fact that they will have a built in microphone and will be equipped with virtual reality technology. This microphone will receive audio input from a person speaking, and will feed the speech into a built in

translation program that will recognize the spoken words. The words will be translated and displayed through the glasses as sign language with the virtual reality technology. The sign language motions would be pre recorded loaded onto the glasses so that no internet connection would be necessary. With these glasses, a deaf person could receive a verbal message from someone and see it through their lenses in the form of sign language motions. A nice thing about these glasses is that they would come with the translation software built in to help avoid data privacy concerns. Because the glasses would function independent of the internet, users would not have to worry about messages they hear being able to be recorded and monitored by someone else. If they were to wear these glasses, they could see the sign language motions as well as hear the verbal messages, so they could learn to associate verbal phrases with signed motions. These glasses would allow them to have greater access to receive messages from members of the general population. I hope that one day they could really be engineered and make a positive difference in the lives of deaf people.

**JULIO HERNANDEZ** Continued from page 8

recognizes our promise, it becomes more likely to provide us with adequate accommodations and resources, which can help us reach our full potential.

In addition to showing the world that people like me are valuable, in the future, I plan to spread the message that communication is a fundamental human right. I believe that using social media to share the story the deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals and campaign for their rights will generate enough public support to lobby governments around the world to make hearing technologies, American Sign Language classes,

and ENT visits more available and affordable. Next year, as a Penn student, I will take a advantage of University resources and a network of talented students to help share this important message. I also hope to approach and write to corporations and advocacy groups, asking for their support.

Finally, while pursuing a minor in Deaf Studies and American Sign Language at Penn, I plan to volunteer at the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf and the Deaf Hearing Communication Center in Swarthmore, where I hope to help run advocacy initiatives and workshops that provide open and equal communication among deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing individuals.





TORY VILLOTTA

Home: Nebraska

High School: Blair High School

College Attending: Southwest Minnesota State University

Tell us about yourself:

I like to volunteer because, while facing struggles I am still extremely lucky and it gives me the opportunity to give back. The past couple years, I have been working at the Blair YMCA in the childcare part of it. I just recently stopped working there and started to work at a preschool. My jobs that I have had, really helped me know what major I want to go in to. I play competitive softball so I travel around all summer and then the past four years, I would come back and play high school softball since Nebraska plays in the fall. I plan on going into Elementary Education with an emphasis on Deaf Education and a minor in Coaching. I wear hearing aids in both ears and will continue to do so throughout my life, so I want to use that to my advantage to help other people!

Essay:

I believe that my planned major of Elementary Education with an emphasis on deaf education and a minor in Coaching will help me advocate for better communication. When my family and I moved into the town we are still living in now, I was in 2nd grade and there was only one other hearing impaired student in the school district. My family and I had to push through a lot of obstacles to obtain what was necessary for my hearing loss. I know that other families in my community are pushing through the same obstacles we did, 10 years later. In order to eliminate that



struggle for others, we have to start by opening up the

line of communication between the school administration and the impaired student. For me, growing up with my hearing loss allowed me to become a stronger person. With the struggles I faced in school and the lack of support I received from the district, it taught me to become an advocate for myself. While advocating builds character, no young student should be forced to do it alone and especially in school. I believe that if a school district has 15 or 1 impaired student, someone should be there to advocate for them. No matter what the impairment is. I want to become that person. Being an elementary school teacher allows me to form a connection with the student at a young age. Trusting the person you are communicating with is so important. When you trust them and and you know they went through the same thing you did, you just know they will do everything in their power to help you. With the experiences I went through, I will push for more attention to be focussed on impaired students. I will not stand for people saying their differences don't matter because they are doing well in school. I will make sure every student has someone to advocate for them and put them in the best possible position to succeed until they can do it for themselves, and even after that.



TDI In Action

June – August 2020

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

Ex-parte on the COVID-19 Relay Emergency Waiver and Declaratory Ruling Petition

CG Docket Nos. 03-123, 10-51, and 10-210

Conditional Certification for Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR)-

Based IP CTS Offerings

CG Docket Nos. 03-123 and 13-24

■ (June 15) TDI, NAD, HLAA, and GU-TAP met with FCC officials to discuss COVID-19 Relay Emergency Waiver and Conditional Certification for Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR)-Based IP CTS Offerings.

We tried to encourage the Commission to temporarily suspend user registration to the relay database in order to allow deafblind users to immediately use the relay. Deafblind users seldom pass verification on their first attempt.

We also tried convincing the Commission to consider allowing necessary software for deafblind users to use the relay system to be reimbursable. Because an out-of-pocket software is needed for

DeafBlind to use the relay, they are denied functional equivalency. The Commission continued to decline the option.

Finally, we urged the Commission to continuously evaluate all IP CTS (including ASR-based) using the same criteria during their conditional certification period. Additionally to expand their testing regime to conclude more gender, racial, age, geographical origin, and other diversity testing metrics. And to report their findings for further evaluation and feedback.

<https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/10615286809570/2020.06.15%20Relay%20Emergency%20Waiver%20and%20IP%20CTS%20Ex%20Parte%20final.pdf>

Advanced Communication Services

Petition for Rulemaking to Update the Commission's Rules for Access to

Support the Transition from TTY to Real-Time Text Technology, and Petition for Waiver of Rules Requiring Support of TTY Technology

CG Docket No. 16-145 CG Docket No. 15-178

■ (July 31) TDI, NAD, HLAA, ALDA, CPADO, AADB,



TDI In Action

June – August 2020

Continued from page 15

DSA, NCSA, DHH-RERC, and IT-RERC filed comments on three petitions from non-Tier 1 mobile providers concerning the deadline for providers to support RTT on IP-based networks.

We implored the Commission to act swiftly and decisively to ensure that all responsible parties fulfill their obligations. Without RTT access, deaf and hard-of-hearing people will not be able to reach 9-1-1 using TTY or other direct connectivity. Deaf and hard of hearing people must be able to directly with 9-1-1 services without going through relay.

We reminded the Commission that the petitioners are the ones who proposed the deadline — three and a half years ago. The failure to meet this deadline cannot be blamed on vendors or anyone else other than the petitioners.

Additionally, some of the petitioners have not even taken the initial step of retaining a vendor to help deliver FCC, in which they requested an indefinite deadline.

TDI and the consumer groups find this behavior completely unacceptable and urge the Commission to enforce compliance by September 1. Under no circumstances should the Commission grant waivers that are lengthy or indefinite.

<https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/10731868226405/2020.07.31%20RTT%20Carrier%20Deadline%20Waiver%20Request%20Comment%20final.pdf>

Implementation of Section 716 and 717 of The Communications Act of 1934, as Enacted by the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 CG Docket 10-213

■ (August 4) TDI, NCSA, ALDA, NAD, DHHCAN, CPADO, NASADHH, DSA, HLAA CueSign, CCASDHH, and IT-RERC filed comments on the Commission's findings in its 2020 biennial report to Congress required by the Twenty-First Century Communications and Accessibility Act of 2010.

We agreed that there have been improvements in accessibility and usability in many of the services and equipment, the findings didn't fully address the concerns raised by us.

We are concerned the commission is not collecting enough data to address the availability of RTT-to-RTT 911. RTT to 911 is the next step improving accessibility for deaf and hard of hearing people to reach emergency services. Furthermore, compliance by wireless carriers and other messaging

applications is not on track with current deadlines.

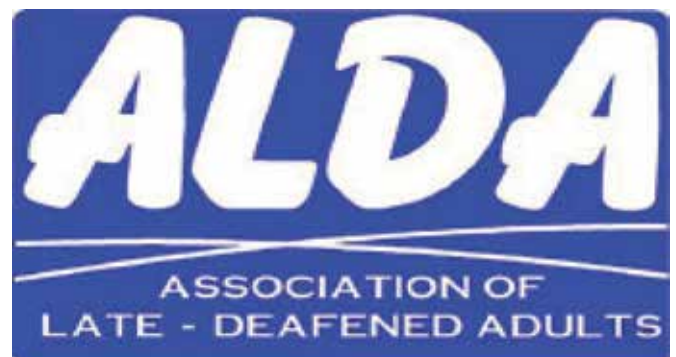
There is also the matter of DeafBlind individuals using relay services. Excessive registration requirements continue to impede their immediate access to the service. And when they do pass the registration checklist, they find they must purchase out of pocket software and/or equipment to effectively use the services. This is also compounded with the financial qualifications of the National DeafBlind Equipment Program.

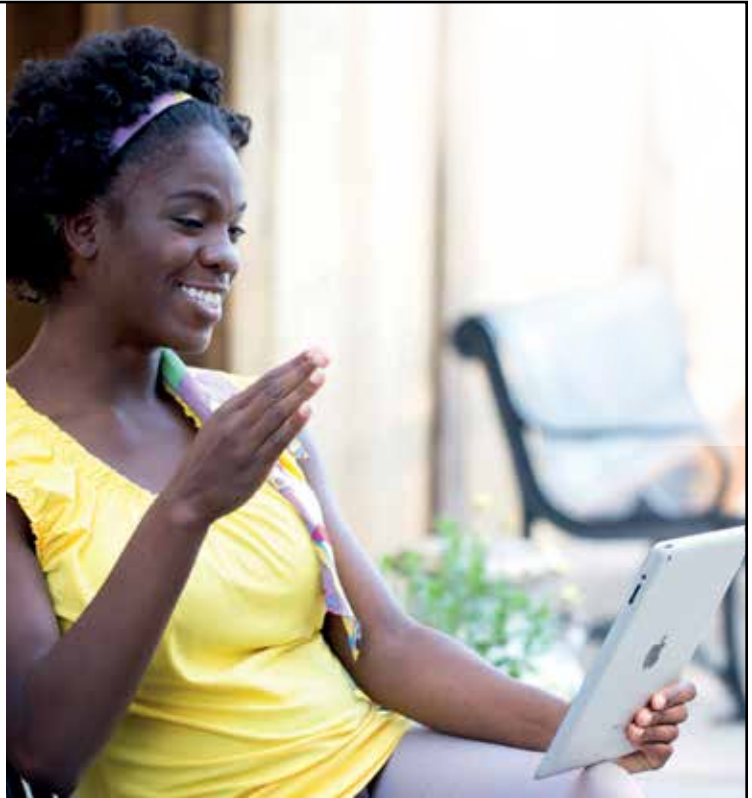
Other areas of concern are:

- The data caps and throttling practices by providers which affect accessibility,
- All mobile phones are not 100% hearing-aid compatible,
- Lack of training opportunities for to use devices from NDBEDP,
- Many smartphones do not meet the needs of d/hh with mobility disabilities — device size is often a barrier,
- Video conferencing and gaming, including virtual reality and augmented reality services continue to have accessibility gaps.

We noted our appreciation of the Commission's acknowledgment that although industry strives to include people with disabilities in their product and service design / development by including consumers in conferences, meetings, demonstrations and other forums. The Commission recognized that not all industry members engage with the disability community.

[https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/108050590610412/FINAL%20-%20TDI%20et%20al%20FCC%20Comments%20on%202020%20CVAA%20Findings%20Public%20Notice%20\(8-4-2020\).pdf](https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/108050590610412/FINAL%20-%20TDI%20et%20al%20FCC%20Comments%20on%202020%20CVAA%20Findings%20Public%20Notice%20(8-4-2020).pdf)





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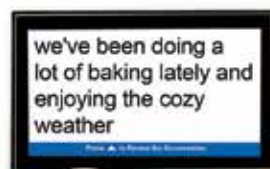
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