



WORLD

Technology News and Commentary for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People

MEET TDI'S

Class of '22

TDI WELCOMES A NEW GENERATION OF SCHOLARS AND ADVOCATES



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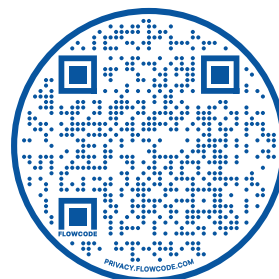


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WHAT WE DO

“TDI shapes the Nation’s public policies in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to advance the interests of the 48 million Americans who are deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened, deafblind, and deaf with mobility issues.”

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WORLD

Volume 53.2

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Shaping An Accessible World

Board Views



JAN WITHERS

*TDI President and Board Member,
Southeast Region*

TDI is leveraging its scholarship program to inspire young people to consider a future as advocates in promoting equity in Information and Communication Technology.

TDI Scholarships for High School Seniors Nurturing a New Generation of Advocates

When we established this initiative in 2019, our hopes were to be able to award these scholarships on an annual basis, but we were unsure if we could continue because it was obvious we would need adequate, ongoing funding. I am thrilled to say it has been a resounding success, with a wonderful slate of bright and talented scholarship recipients each year and...drum roll...the first crop of scholarship recipients now beginning their senior year of college! Being able to award scholarships annually has been made possible by the generosity of our partners in the telecommunications industry.

Although scholarships clearly are intended to help defray the high cost of a post-secondary education and provide recipients the opportunity to achieve their educational goals, they can do so much more.... The process of learning about and then applying for a TDI scholarship engages not only the young applicant but also their peers, family members, and teachers. Through this process, they learn about TDI and its critical work in shaping the nation's public policies in information and communications technology (ICT) with the ultimate goal of achieving communication equity for all.

This exposure is particularly important if we are to attract and nurture a new generation of advocates. In 2020, when TDI CEO Eric Kaika recruited several Deaf and Hard of Hearing college-age interns, he had numerous in-depth conversations with them about accessibility in ICT. He was surprised to learn how unfamiliar they were with the history of communication barriers, the dedicated and heroic work of advocates to develop technological and

policy advances, and the Americans with Disabilities Act as a major force in the pursuit of full accessibility across the nation.

Through their internships at TDI, these young people came to recognize that despite the numerous advances in the past half-century, true communication equity for all remains elusive. And the risk of falling further behind their hearing peers is very real when so much of the new technology is being designed and developed without any input on accessibility with increasing pressures to weaken federal accessibility laws.

Nevertheless, many young people such as the 2019 TDI Scholarship recipient Zach Chylla have displayed an aptitude for finding technological solutions which support their communication in a variety of environments. They certainly are role models for striving to connect with others through creative uses of ICT and self-advocacy. I am pleased that we were able to catch up with Zach and find out how he is doing. Below is his comment when we reached him:

"I was originally at Indiana University, but since transferred to The Ohio State University! My major is Strategic Communications and I am looking to work in the advertising/marketing industry. Last summer in 2021, I spent two months living independently in Tel Aviv, Israel while working as a Global Marketing Intern for an AI-automated sports technology company called Pixellot. This summer, I am currently working as the Account Strategy and Management Intern for a full-service advertising agency in Cleveland, Ohio called Adcom where I

Our Quest for Access



ERIC KAIKA
Managing Editor

“It’s truly exciting to see the wonderful things happening at TDI as it enters an era of expansion and transformation.”

Our ‘Senior Year’

Now in TDI’s fourth — or as some may joke, senior — year of providing scholarships I’m feeling nostalgic about a lot of things. The students who received TDI scholarships during our inaugural year are now approaching commencement. Looking through each of the columns I wrote for TDI World magazine that featured scholarship recipients, it was fascinating to see how much has changed since the “freshman year”.

I am truly appreciative of the scholarship committee for their hard work in reviewing the many applications we received, as well as Angela Rogers for helping drive the awareness of TDI’s scholarship. We received a record number of submissions this year!

This year’s diverse group of deaf and hard of hearing high school seniors were selected based on community volunteerism, academic performance, and leadership skills. The 2022 recipients are Parker Noffke of Rochester Institute of Technology, Julia Poole of University of California, Celilo Bauman-Swain of University of Southern California, Antonio Fiorentino Wong, of Villanova University, and Sofia Miracco of University of California, Berkeley.

Other exciting news from TDI is the selection of the 25th TDI conference which will be held in our backyard — in College Park, Md. — on July 27-29, 2023. The 24th conference in Summer 2021 was such a success that we’re excited to host the next one already. The 2023 one will take

on a hybrid format: both virtual and in-person. With conference planning well underway, check our website (tdiforaccess.org) for updated information in the near future. Speaking of the conference site, we’ll be hosting TDI’s annual holiday party at the same hotel to give everyone a sneak preview of what’s to come in the summer of 2023.

As always, during our conference, TDI will announce the new directors of the board. We will have three elections taking place later this year, Northeast, Southeast, and West regions. Be sure to help spread the word and nominate any outstanding individuals that can help TDI’s mission of fostering full accessibility, equity, and inclusion in information and communications technology (ICT).

Relatedly, there’s the TDI Awards, which we’ll also start accepting nominations for later this year. Be sure to check TDIConf.com for all the latest news.

We’ve also announced two newly created positions- the Director of Policy & Advocacy, and the Director of Programming. To apply, visit our LinkedIn page at: [LinkedIn.com/company/TDIforAccess](https://www.linkedin.com/company/TDIforAccess). These positions were designed to support the key fundamentals of TDI: our policy work and conference planning.

It’s truly exciting to see the wonderful things happening at TDI as it enters an era of expansion and transformation. Or as the seniors would do, toss their mortarboards in the air, celebrating a milestone and start a new chapter in their career (or their Masters).



CURTIS HUMPHRIES

Member-at-large

Humphries joins TDI Board of Directors as newest member-at-large

“Curtis’ acceptance of this appointment is a source of great honor for the TDI Board of Directors. He has had a long, storied career in telecommunications and business management, in both private and public sectors. He brings to the Board tremendous skills and knowledge. Along with a huge commitment to advocating for full accessibility in Information and Communication Technology. Please join me in giving Curtis a warm welcome.” said Jan Withers, President of TDI.

Curtis Humphries, starting his first term as a Director, commented, “For years TDI has worked behind the scenes to push life-changing access for

many people with disabilities. Now it’s time to ‘shout out to the world’ about the excellent work done by TDI’s hardworking team and board. I count it a joy to take part in their mission to assist 48 million deserving Americans today.”

TDI is the nation’s leading advocate for deaf and hard of hearing people’s equitable access. It strives to strengthen access to telephone, radio, television, wire, satellite, and cable networks. Additionally, TDI monitors and comments on federal policies and rules involving access to information and communication technologies and best represents the diverse DHH community in its policy comments.

TDI SCHOLARSHIPS Continued from page 2

help develop and implement campaign strategies for local companies. At school, I am involved in a few clubs including a very active role in a campus organization that helped raise over \$4,000 last year for the company called American Foundation for Suicide Prevention! It was a really neat experience that goes towards something really important.

I am so grateful to be a recipient of this scholarship because I used the money to purchase state-of-the-art hearing technology so that I could have the best access to sound and every opportunity that college has to offer. It’s been difficult the past few years with being online and in person with professors wearing masks that cover their mouths, so this went towards helping me better

hear. I also would like to take a moment to recognize the hard work of TDI’s Scholarship Committee. Members of this committee spent countless hours poring over applications and giving careful consideration in selecting the eventual winners. Below are the committee members:

- **Mei Kennedy**, (Committee chair), Member-at-Large, TDI Board of Directors, Austin, TX
- **David Coco**, Central Region Representative, TDI Board of Directors, Austin, TX
- **Tina Childress**, Member-at-Large, TDI Board of Directors, Champaign, IL
- **Ann Rancourt**, Walk4Hearing Manager & co-founder HLAA Youth Professionals, Washington, DC

- **Sasha Ponappa**, CSD Unites Community Foundation Director, Long Island, NY

I am so pleased we have another crop of terrific TDI scholarship recipients this year! Mei noted: “*Our committee concurs that this year’s applicants demonstrated the talent and skills of youths throughout the country. Upon reviewing the applications, it was apparent that many had worked hard to overcome the effects of COVID.*” Please join me in giving a big thank you to these committee members and a big round of applause to this year’s scholarship recipients! To read about this year’s crop, see pages 5-10.



Celilo Bauman-Swain

Home: Vermont

High School: Champlain Valley Union High School

College Attending: University of Southern California

About Celilo:

Hi, my name is Celilo Bauman-Swain. I am a senior at Champlain Valley Union High School in Vermont. I was originally diagnosed with my hearing loss at the age of four years old. One of the interesting things about my backstory is how my diagnosis was so late because I have since met with an incredible amount of doctors who share this hypothesis that I was born deaf and yet I was a very communicative child even though my speech was delayed. The adults around me didn't necessarily have a concern about my communication because in my body language in the way I chose to interact with people. I always tried to invite others into my experience and because of that, I think it's definitely shaped my way of communicating and how I perceive what it means to communicate. I think another really important thing that has shaped how I view communication is my career as a cellist. I actually began playing cello before I was diagnosed as deaf which is another interesting thing about me because I learned to play cello through a very different lens and most of my peers the way I learned intonation. In the way I learned musicality was through my physical experience and not my ears. So I focused on the velocity of the vibrating strings to focus intonation. I focused on you know kind of dancing while I play to communicate my musical intentions and I think as I've grown older I'm really appreciated for this like diverse experience. I have with communicating and I hope to you know help support the mission of the TDI scholarship program by not only continuing my activism work as I do a lot of work around educational reform focusing on the experiences of deaf and hard of hearing students in Vermont, but also through displaying in whatever professional field that I go to which I hope

involves music and some capacity that there are a variety of ways to communicate that I do wish I had some of that in representation as a child because I felt like it was very binary you either signed or you spoke and as somebody who you know had a lot of speaking differences and for years had to be pulled out of school and missed a significant chunk of my education for speech therapy and also somebody who tried to connect with my local deaf community through sign language which I did and I'm incredibly grateful for. I've always felt like there was room for more and there is more room for expression in our community and I don't always feel like that was being represented so I hope I can share TDI's mission through my continued accomplishments of the musician and through my lifelong work as an activist.

Tell us about yourself:

I have played cello since the age of four years old. I have been a part of the Vermont Youth Orchestra Association since 2nd grade, and have been a member of Burlington's Back to Bach group for the past three and a half years. Last summer I represented the United States internationally as one of the six cellists in the youth orchestra at the Verbier Festival, one of the most notoriously difficult programs for musicians to get into in the entire world, and will be representing the United States once more this upcoming summer in Carnegie Hall's National Youth Orchestra, as the only musician accepted from Vermont. I have won the Hermance Recital Competition prize and the Ruby Holland Charitable Foundation Scholarship based on musical merit.

Since tenth grade, I have been legislating the Act 1 Bill as one of the two student representatives in the entire state, alongside numerous local and national human rights groups and representatives. The bill aims to mandate Ethnic Studies in public schools and revise the state's Educational Quality Standards. I have used this opportunity to elevate the experiences of Deaf and Hard of Hearing students like myself to the state-wide stage.

I have been an avid participator and leader in local student-led social justice organizations. Most notably as a longterm member and leader of the Racial Alliance Community, an interracial coalition of students whose objective is to make our school district more equitable, by mandating Ethnic Studies, hiring more BIPOC teaching faculty and creating an equitable environment to retain them, instituting a Restorative Justice guided approach to the existing disciplinary system, and broaden the current Anti-Bias, Anti-Racist and Trauma Informed Response courses and mandate them for all faculty and staff in the district.

I have been a member of the Academic Leadership Club, and as a part of my community service hours, have been a Teaching Assistant for the class US & The World for the past year.



Antonio Fiorentino Wong

Home: Pennsylvania

High School: Upper Darby High School

College Attending: Villanova University

About Antonio:

I have always taken the services available to me for granted. Reading TDI's history and vision, I realize how fortunate I am to be living at this time as a hearing-impaired person. In 1968 TDI provided groundbreaking access for deaf and hearing-impaired individuals with TTY. TDI has continually advocated for communication accessibility. Thanks to TDI's mission, I enjoy easy access to speech through closed captioning and hearing aid compatible technology. Decades ago deaf and hearing-impaired individuals did not have such easy access to communication. TDI's commitment is unwavering, as they focus on increased awareness, new policies, and innovative technologies to provide equitable communication access for all individuals.

While I never have used TTY, I see how TDI's policies have impacted my life. I am a direct beneficiary of TDI's advocacy. Having a sensorineural hearing loss from birth, I have been using hearing equipment all my life, both hearing aids and an FM system. My hearing equipment has enabled me to have the best educational experience possible and to thrive socially, just as a child with normal hearing would. I have requested and used closed captions in classroom settings and online. My current hearing aids are compatible with my cellphone. Thanks to TDI's hard work, I use communication technology daily, considering it commonplace and natural.

As I enter Villanova University's College of Engineering, I see myself aligned with TDI's vision. Technology is constantly evolving. As an engineering major with a hearing loss, I am excited that TDI will continue to strive to provide complete access for all people. My unique perspective will guide me to conscientiously include full access for all people for anything I design. Throughout my studies I will continue to

educate those around me about hearing loss and advocate for inclusion in technology and communication. I am grateful for TDI's contributions and see myself contributing to TDI's vision for equitable access in an ever-changing world.

Tell us about yourself:

I enjoy reading, playing and listening to music, being outdoors, biking, swimming, playing frisbee, tennis, and volleyball. I have participated in many extracurricular activities, both in and outside of school. I also have consistently volunteered in the community throughout my high school career.

School Extracurriculars:

Marching band- fall 9th, 10th, and 11th grades. Played trumpet and Mellophone (our band won states fall 2018)

Concert band- 9th through 12th grades, all year; lead trumpet junior and senior years (play French horn as well)

Wind ensemble- (by audition only) 9th through 12th grades, all year; lead trumpet junior and senior years

Jazz band- (by audition only) 9th, 10th, and 12th grades, jazz band season; trumpet (currently lead trumpet)

Jazz ensemble- 12th grade, lead trumpet

Indoor drumline- 10th grade season; vibraphone (undefeated 2020)

Orchestra- 9th through 12th grades, all year; violin

Varsity Swim team member- 11th and 12th grades

Varsity Diving team member-12th grade

Varsity Tennis team member-12th grade

National Honors Society member (11th and 12th grades)

Robotics Club member (10th grade)

Cubing Club member (9th and 10th grades)

Math Club member (9th - 12th)

Cyber Security team member (11th and 12th)

PMEA District 12 and Region 6 Band member (12th grade-trumpet) by audition

Awards:

Delaware County Science Fair 2019 - First Place Physics Division D AND DOW Chemical Special Merit Award (9th grade)

Upper Darby High School Distinguished Honors Award (9th, 10th, and 12th grades)



Sofia Miracco

Home: California

High School: Sage Creek High School

College Attending: UC Berkeley

About Sofia:

From the age of 4, I have worn a hearing aid in my left ear and mainstreamed with an FM system and other accommodations in order to get access to my education. Even though I desperately tried to hide my disability amongst my peers over the years, my parents along with my special education advocate have constantly highlighted to my teachers through IEPs about what hearing loss is and what it means to a student in a classroom environment and the importance of technology. It was surprising to learn how some educators were indifferent to my disability because it was not visually seen. When the FM system did not work properly, I became the “tech person” to troubleshoot. Although I did not appreciate it at the time, I tried to make excuses on how I did not want to use the FM and CART technology in my classroom because of issues that would come up. I wanted to downplay my hearing loss so badly as I did not want to stick out amongst my peers and that I would tell my parents that “I was just fine without it”.

Now, as an adult with bilateral hearing loss I cannot emphasize the value of technology in my day to day listening environment as hearing aids and a cochlear implant are no way near a perfect solution and no one can understand how much hearing loss strains our brain power. Ever since my accident, I have had to master the most important skill set-my visual perception. It was something I always possessed but never really developed until I became deaf. Struggling to hear people forced me to rely on body language and visual learning to understand the world around me. I feel the need for technology is so important to help access the hearing impaired’s needs in telecommunications, media, and information services in our day to day lives.

More needs to be done to educate our educators, friends, and peers in creating awareness of this hidden disability as people associate hearing loss with older people. I have faced ridicule amongst my peers and been coined “deaf friend” which at first I did not find offensive but now over time I found to be wrong to put a label on a person with a hearing disability. As I am becoming more mature with my disability, I am learning how important the advocacy my parents and special education advocate provided for me not just about hearing loss but also the importance of technology in the world of hearing loss. Now, the baton has been passed on to me as a young adult to advocate more for myself and feel more confident about my disability as I transition to college.

Tell us about yourself:

My name is Sofia Miracco and I have been diagnosed with hearing loss since I was 4 years old in my left ear and I have identical twin sisters who also were diagnosed since the age of 1 year old with severe to profound deafness. Additionally, we all share the same inner ear malformation associated with sensorineural hearing loss called EVA which can result in our hearing fluctuating at any given time without notice. Although I have had a lifetime history of hearing loss, I never allowed my hearing disability to interfere with my goals. The difference, however, between myself and other highly academic students is that I have to push and work harder than a non-hearing impaired student to achieve my goals as a hearing-impaired student in a listening and speaking world. Learning through listening has not been easy, and yet, I have continued to persevere. Now, as an 18-year-old, I am self-driven, embrace learning, and am thankful for each opportunity to further my education. My work ethic and commitment to learning have been some of the cornerstones of my life and I am proud to say that I have earned a 4.03 GPA having taken honors, AP as well as college courses in Italian.

Approximately two years ago, I lost the hearing in my better ear due to an accident. This, in turn, forced me to listen with only the ear that did not provide much functional hearing. A year later, I underwent surgery for a cochlear implant to assist in access to sound. Unfortunately, the etiology for my hearing loss has caused my progress in understanding speech with my new device to develop slower than anticipated. While many students would have given up, with the help of my family and advocates, I have persevered, and engage in weekly Auditory Verbal Therapy and daily practice to improve my listening skills with my cochlear implant.

It is with this same passion that I have had in school and in the community that I plan on attending UC Berkeley this fall in the College of Letters and Science to pursue a degree in biology/business and to continue my community service to helping underprivileged children.



Gavin Morrobel

Home: New Jersey

High School: Scotch Plain-Fanwood High School

College Attending: Rochester Institute of Technology

About Gavin:

I was born with a disorder called Usher syndrome; which means I was born deaf, am legally blind due to an eye condition called Retinitis Pigmentosa that will continue to cause me to lose more vision, and I have severe balance issues. This requires a number of accommodations for my specific communication access needs as well as to allow me to access curriculum materials for school. My parents made that I had access to the specialized teachers, therapists, and even personal trainers that I needed. I have bilateral cochlear implants, which gives me access to the hearing world, but I still have communication access needs and I had to learn young to be a strong advocate for myself. Leading up to my senior year in high school I have tried to positively impact the disability community by speaking and raising awareness about having a disability that affects communication access. When I speak to parents with young children, they are grateful that they can see that a positive future for their child. When I speak to teachers, they appreciate that I have helped them understand why they need to ask the person with a disability what their needs are instead of doing what they think will help them. And when I talk to members of the community or advocate for towns to recognize awareness days, they express their gratitude for the opportunity to help raise awareness. I plan to continue to do this throughout college and following graduation to raise awareness and demonstrate that I will be a contributing member of our society with independence, a job, and a social life.

I have always identified as a member of the disability community and have never considered it to be a negative term. My parents made sure I knew that I was loved and accepted for who I was. They knew I had to learn how to

advocate for myself in an able world that was not always friendly to those with disabilities. To be able to do that, I had to accept and understand my challenges so I could advocate for the accommodations I needed to do the same things as my seeing/hearing peers. They believed that acceptance and understanding would help me develop the confidence I needed to be successful, rather than trying to hide it from the world. Throughout my life they have understood the importance of being exposed to others whose experience would be like mine. I have many friends and teammates without disabilities but having the support in my life of others who understand what it is like to be me has been really important. My parents have done everything they can to support me themselves but they also understood how important it was to have peers who understood me and mentors and role models to guide me.

Tell us about yourself:

I am very excited to share that I accepted an early admission offer to attend the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) in fall 2022 to study Business. I was also offered and accepted the opportunity to pursue a Combined Accelerated Bachelor's/Master's Degree as an Accelerated Scholar. In March I qualified to attend the state conference for the Future Business Leaders of America club and was a finalist in the International Business category. Recently, after going through the application process and finalist interview, I was offered a spot in RIT's Disability Leadership and Scholarship Program. To me, having a disability has meant opportunity. Throughout my life, my parents have encouraged me to be active and get involved in the community despite my challenges. I was once asked if I would change having Usher syndrome if I could and my response was that I would not. I wouldn't be the person I am today and I wouldn't have had the opportunities that I have had in my life. I have participated in mainstream and adaptive sports programs at state and national levels. I was a cross country runner and varsity swimmer and currently swim for a Paralympic Sports Club. I hold the American record for the 100 back in short course yards.

Since 2015 I have been a Student Advocacy and Awareness Ambassador for Ava's Voice, a non-profit organization aimed at empowering youth with Usher syndrome. I have had the opportunity to raise awareness and educate families and communities by speaking at workshops, conferences, high school and university classes, and at teacher trainings. I had the opportunity to speak at the CHC Golf fundraiser in 2016. I have participated on panels and presented with my family on 'Advocating as a Family' to talk about my experiences. My brother, Ethan, who also has Usher syndrome, were featured in Sense Stories, a video journalism series created by the Usher Syndrome Society to educate the world about Usher syndrome.



Parker Noffke

Home: Wisconsin

High School: Robert M. La Follette High School

College Attending: Rochester Institute of Technology

About Parker:

I will be creating easier access to communication through the products and solutions from my computer science-related occupation. I represent a deaf individual and advocate for communication needs in my own life, which increases public awareness.

Since I am pursuing a career path in the computer science field, I will have the opportunity to develop new technology, making sure to include accessible communication features. For example, I could help create AI systems that provide a text-to-speech option of what the camera is seeing, like Seeing AI. This means a group of people can now understand their surroundings and communicate better because of fresh, innovative technology from computer science. There is a wide variety of uses for computer programming as its applications are featured in things like websites, smart devices, the internet, professional company systems and software, and more. As a deaf person myself, I can make sure newly developed technology includes the needs of all people and are therefore more accessible. These developments will benefit from a diverse group of creators as each person can make sure needs are met so the result provides fair accessibility for all, so communication can also be equal. Thus, making everyone's potential a reality.

In my own personal life, I have struggled with obstacles for communication since I was born deaf. I have worked to overcome these hurdles by self-advocating for myself to have greater ease of communication and take control of my life. Therefore, I am a role model for others, increasing the awareness of the deaf and hard-of-hearing community and their needs. Just recently, I had to advocate for testing accommodations for my four AP tests. At each test, I made

sure to voice my needs, so I received closer seating to the proctor and a written transcript of the instructions. Also, I speak up for my needs in the classroom, such as asking the teacher to repeat if I can't hear, requesting closed captions, wearing clear masks for a time, and asking for material posted online so I can look back on it for a better understanding. My school's teachers met these necessities and therefore they learned the importance of equal ease of communication. My school has a small but significant deaf community, so the staff have cultivated an inclusive classroom for us. Even earlier, my family had to push for insurance approval for cochlear implant surgery for my brother. This opened the doors for my brother, me, and many other people to be able to afford cochlear implant surgery, so that we were able to hear and learn to speak. I will continue this advocacy in the future to ensure the needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing people are well-respected and met. This helps make society become more familiar with the etiquette and importance of providing effective communication solutions for everyone.

Tell us about yourself:

For school, I'm motivated to get the best grades because I know they matter, and they are reachable through effort. I have taken nine AP Classes and I made sure I did well in every one of them. I have excelled in high school by maintaining a cumulative 4.0 GPA and achieved a 35 composite on the ACT.

I am a member of my school's National Honor Society (NHS) where I participate in efforts to improve our community on a local level, like fundraising through working concession stands at the Kohl Center for Badger basketball games.

As a member of the cross country team at LaFollette High School, I found myself immersed into the culture of Lancer Distance Crew (LDC). LDC is the group that trains year-round through cross country, track and field, and more five to seven days a week. I formed close connections with my teammates as we all pushed each other to be the fastest we could be. I'm having great success in the sport because of all the hours and effort I put in. I have qualified for several state championships, won countless individual medals, and took home team championships on many levels of competition. Running has become a big part of my identity and helped me develop a strong work ethic for life in general.

I am an Eagle Scout in Boy Scouts with several Eagle Palms and 51 merit badges. I have learned a lot from it whether it was at National Youth Leadership Training, being the Senior Patrol Leader on a campout, teaching other Scouts as a Troop Instructor, mentoring Scouts in the outdoor code and practicing with them Leave No Trace Principles as the Outdoor Ethics Guide. I have also enjoyed many campouts and activities like hiking at Philmont Scout Ranch with my troop on Black Mountain, one of the hardest hikes in New Mexico, during a thunderstorm and succeeded.



Julia Poole

Home: California

High School: Acalanes High School

College Attending: University of California

About Julia:

As a person with a severe hearing loss, I constantly face my own struggles in communicating with others. From a young age, I learned to advocate for myself, whether it was a teacher failing to add closed captions to a video or my boss mumbling her directions indistinctly through a mask. As a result of my challenges, however, I have become assertive, compassionate, and empowered, and I use this skill set to advocate for others.

While I have had to fight for my own needs and speak up for myself since elementary school, my self-advocacy expanded to assist others in high school. In ninth grade, I received a Girl Scouts Silver Award for my project designing pre-literacy kits for preschoolers with speech and developmental delays in the West Contra Costa Unified School District. I worked more than 50 hours to create 25 therapy kits each consisting of curriculum-based books, activities, homework, crafts, and manipulatives for teachers to use.

During my junior year, I co-enrolled in an American Sign Language (ASL) class at my local community college because I wanted to broaden my understanding of deaf culture and expand my ability to communicate with those in the deaf community. My teacher was deaf, and at first it was difficult to communicate with him. In pushing through this communication roadblock, I gained tremendous respect for the deaf community and increased my awareness about deaf culture. The assigned reading and video material enlightened me about the adversity the deaf community faces on a daily basis, such as hearing the doorbell, calling someone, or grocery shopping, and also the courage and resilience it takes to overcome these challenges.

I also participated in many leadership events through Best Buddies, a program that helps students with special needs connect with other students in high school. At the Valentine's Day party, I bettered my understanding of the experiences of students with special needs by working with a blind student and helping him draw through my eyes by using a hand-over-hand technique.

During summer 2020, I served as a Virtual Youth Mentor with Community Reading Buddies, an organization based in Oakland, CA. I mentored 1st-3rd graders to develop their literacy and communication skills by stimulating their passion for reading.

I also advocated for others who may not be able to speak for themselves through Blueprint, our award-winning school newspaper. As an award-winning staff writer, online feature editor, and senior coordinator, I wrote many articles highlighting the struggles and strength displayed by those who face adversity, including a feature article about students with 504 plans.

I take pride in my advocacy because I know personally what it is like to face communication challenges and I hope to alleviate these struggles for other people by dedicating my future education and career to speaking up for others. While I attend the University of California, Santa Cruz, I will major in Community Studies, which ingrains community service and field study into the coursework. Through this program, and in my residential college, John R. Lewis college, I will continue to educate myself on social justice issues. I hope to use this education to continue to advocate for the deaf and hard of hearing communities.

Tell us about yourself:

I love baking, hiking, photography, traveling, exploring nature, and spending time with my family and friends.

My academic and career interests include English, Environmental Studies, and Community Studies. I hope to apply my education initially by working in the Peace Corps, followed by nonprofit or activism work in the social justice or environmental sectors.

I have a demonstrated track record of high academic achievement in a challenging curriculum of AP and Honors classes. My academic GPA is 4.28.

I have also received recognition for a number of accomplishments. These include:

Acalanes High School Volunteer Award 2021: In recognition of my 20+ hours of community service

2nd Place in the News Category of the California Press Women Communications Contest: Award for news article in award-winning school newspaper Blueprint.

Looking Back ...

The TDI Scholarship program started in 2019, which means the first group of scholarship recipients are now starting their 4th year at college. TDI contacted them to learn about the latest in their pursuits, here's what some of them had to share:

Zach Chylla

I was originally at Indiana University, but since transferred to The Ohio State University! My major is Strategic Communications and I am looking to work in the advertising/marketing industry. Last summer in 2021, I spent two months living independently in Tel Aviv, Israel while working as a Global Marketing Intern for an AI-automated sports technology company called Pixellot. This summer, I am currently working as the Account Strategy and Management Intern for a full-service advertising agency in Cleveland, Ohio called Adcom where I help develop and implement campaign strategies for local companies. At school, I am involved in a few clubs including a very active role in a campus organization that helped raise over \$4,000 last year for the company called American Foundation for Suicide Prevention! It was a really neat experience that goes towards something really important.

I am so grateful to be a recipient of this scholarship because I used the money to purchase state of the art hearing technology so that I could have the best access to sound and every opportunity that college has to offer. It's been difficult the past few years with being online and in person with professors wearing masks that cover their mouths, so this went towards helping me hear better.

Malia Zornoza

I am in my fourth year, which will be my last, at Gallaudet University, and I have been doing very well at school.

I am studying for a Mathematics B.S. and am working at Gallaudet as a Student Ambassador. I also play on both Women's Basketball and Volleyball teams and worked as a tutor through the COVID years.

The scholarship has eased my finances to pay for Gallaudet University expenses. Thank you for your financial support, and it is deeply appreciated.

Jose Uresti

My experiences after receiving the 2019 TDI scholarship were a huge factor in helping my university expenses. I'm grateful for this scholarship. I struggled to find a scholarship, and my former club sponsor, at the time I was the president, sent me this opportunity. This scholarship enhanced my overall life wellness and provided items needed for college classes. I have been involved in numerous organizations. I met my city mayor and I was a community volunteer at events such as McAllen Holiday Parade, Dragon & Dino, and Christmas Toy Drive for Kids. As a prospective college student, I suggest you be as involved as possible and your future will be great.

Currently a student at Stephen F. Austin State University (Texas).

Mohamed Abanoor

Currently a hard-of-hearing third-year Northeastern University student. He is studying for a masters degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice and will graduate in August 2023. He is also working full time as a police cadet in the Boston Police Department.



SCAM ALERT

TDI would like to inform its members about the existence of unauthorized, potentially misleading websites that look similar to our official website.

To ensure that you are accessing the correct information, please visit our official websites:

✔ [TDIforaccess.org](https://tdiforaccess.org)

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✔ [TDIBlueBook.com](https://tdibluebook.com)

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TDI In Action

April – June 2022

TELECOMMUNICATIONS RELAY SERVICE

Application of NexTalk For Certification as a IP Captioned Telephone Service Provider: CG 03-123

■ (April 11) Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA), with the assistance of TDI's legal representation, filed a comment to the Federal Communications Commission expressing their concerns about the Commission's approach to reviewing and approving the Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) - based provider certifications.

In previous comments with similar ASR-provider certification applications, we continued to raise concerns related to minimum requirements that ASR providers should have included available information for ASR offerings to the public. NexTalk is the next one that we currently see that is similar to previous applications.

We had that concern that the ASR solutions may overtake the human captioners without having the commission to handle the quality, privacy, and other tradeoffs in using ASR. Thus, this application that NexTalk proposed bypasses the existing requirements to ensure the quality of captioning simply because it uses ASR.

Thus, we urged the Commission to review NexTalk's application carefully, specifically, the SpeechPath (NexTalk's speech to text functionality). NexTalk should have high-quality settings for the SpeechPath for hard-of-hearing users so they can easily participate in telephone conversations. Not only that, the Commission should examine NexTalk's unclear claims that it ensures "90% accuracy out of the box" and "generally testing around 85 to 95% accuracy for business calls" without offering the methodology for proof of accuracy.

We again urged the Commission to create a viable oversight regime and develop metrics to ensure a viable level of quality and privacy from all IP CTS providers. Also, we urged the Commission to adopt a robust policy to ensure that diverse modes of delivering IP CTS, including switched, hybrid human-ASR, and other humans-in-the-loop models, remain viable until the Commission ultimately adopts metrics and standards.

<https://tdiforaccess.org/fcc-filing-application-of-nextalk-for-certification-as-a-ip-captioned-telephone-service-provider/>

Application of Rogervoice for Certification as a Provider of IP Captioned Telephone Service: CG 03-123

■ (April 14) Hearing Loss of America, with the assistance of TDI's legal representation, filed a comment to the Federal

Communications Commission about Rogervoice's application for certification.

We are still concerned with the Commission's approach to reviewing and approving the ASR-based provider certifications without first creating the technology-neutral minimum standards and ensuring that sufficient information is available to the public regarding each provider's ASR offerings. That also applies to similar applications like Rogervoice.

We expressed our concerns that the cheap ASR solutions will overtake the human captioners without the Commission making sure that all requirements are met in the ASR offerings. Still, we repeatedly stated that we did not oppose the Commission's approval of the applications that have a similar quality to the ones already certified. However, we urged the Commission to consider Rogervoice's application and the quality it offers such as speech-to-text functionality. In addition, we noticed that Rogervoice offers CA-assisted services in France but only seeks conditional certification for ASR-only calls. The Commission should carefully look over Rogervoice's application and redacted parts to ensure it meets the standards.

We again urge the Commission to adopt a robust policy to ensure that

diverse modes of delivering IP CTS, including switched, hybrid human-ASR, and other humans-in-the-loop models remain viable until the Commission ultimately adopts metrics and standards.

<https://tdiforaccess.org/fcc-filing-application-of-rogervoice-for-certification-as-a-provider-of-ip-captioned-telephone-service/>

Application of Global Caption, Inc., for Certification as Provider of Internet Protocol Captioned Telephone Service: CG 03-123

■ (May 9) HLAA, with the assistance of TDI's legal representation, filed a comment to the Federal Communications Commission about Global Caption, Inc.'s application for the certification as a Provider of Internet Protocol Captioned Telephone Service.

We remained concerned with the Commission's approach of reviewing and approving the ASR-based provider certifications without setting up the minimum standards and gathering enough information available for the public related to each provider's specific ASR offerings. We had been raising that concern with similar applications to this application.



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We had seen similar ways that Global Captions, Inc. did that are similar to other applications by trying to bypass many of the existing requirements intended to ensure the quality of human-captioner-based IP CTS through the use of an ASR-only solution. Hence, we urged the Commission to carefully evaluate the Global Caption's application and make sure that they meet the low minimum requirements before granting approval. Moreover, the Commission should make sure that the Global Caption's speech-to-text functionality has high quality to ensure that the hard of hearing users are able to make and receive calls but also can rely on Global Caption's caption accuracy and readability. Also, the Commission should pay attention to the Global Caption's confidential portions that highlight key parts that are impossible for us and the users to evaluate.

The Commission should read some certain parts of the Global Caption's claims related to technology carefully. While it is true that the automated systems can eliminate the need for a human being to listen to a call, the systems may require the capture and analysis of sensitive conversation content that raises questions about how data is collected, stored, and retained. The Global Caption said that they would not save the content of any calls, nonetheless, we asked the Commission to make sure that the agreement ensures that vendors' practices related to customer data are up to par with the Global Caption's promise.

The Global Caption also seeks to provide ASR IP-CTS in carceral facilities where the hard of hearing or deafblind people reside, the Commission should evaluate that its application is complying with the Commission's policies including making sure that the users are not charged for calls. We did note and acknowledge that the Commission is doing a good job by encouraging the providers to offer services in carceral facilities. However, we reminded the Commission that a single IP CTS provider effectively may provide the only conduit an incarcerated person who is hard of hearing or DeafBlind has to communicate with family, friends, legal counsel, or anyone else. We did raise privacy concerns that the incarcerated people are closely monitored by the carceral officials so they need secure, private channels to communicate with legal counsel and clergy.

Finally, we also reminded the Commission repeatedly that they should focus on in-call switching functionality that allows the users to switch to Communication Assistants (CA) if having a problem with ASR. The Global Caption did not have communication assistants. Noted that all providers of ASR-

based IP CTS are required to have this functionality.

Overall, we expressed that the Commission should set up an oversight regime and develop metrics because metrics and standards for ASR are not part of the Commission's rules. The users of these providers will continue to have a lack of information about the quality and privacy features of the services they use. We also call for the Commission to urgently adopt requirements for carceral communications accessibility.

<https://tdiforaccess.org/fcc-filing-application-of-global-caption-inc-for-certification-as-provider-of-internet-protocol-captioned-telephone-service/>

ADVANCED COMMUNICATION SERVICES

Biennial CVAA 2022 Report: CG 10-213

■ (April 4) TDI, along with the tagged consumer groups filed a comment in the response to the Federal Communications Commission's Public Notice regarding the 2022 biennial CVAA report.

We appreciated the opportunity to revisit our previous 2020 comments and found that many of the accessibility points discussed still remain the same today. The Covid-19 pandemic revealed a lot of disadvantages that our communities suffered from such as inequitable access to emergency services, limited access in telehealth services, poor captions quality in video conferencing platforms including online videos, and limited access in apps to wifi. We recognized that the main problem is due to the Commission's limitations in rules.

The CVAA report only focused on a limited range of equipment and services, ignoring other inaccessible equipment and services that are outside of the report's parameters. We believed that the Commission should expand its statutory authority to be able to address the broader picture of accessibility. We also noticed that the Commission has limited performance objectives that pose a problem in increasing accessibility.

Now, we wanted a few things that need Congress's attention in the report.

1. severe lack of direct access to 9-1-1 emergency services
2. Podcasts and audiobooks are less accessible to the dhh communities due to a lack of transcripts or captions
3. expanding the Commission's authority to address the ever-changing advanced communications services and equipment

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The commenters would appreciate the Commission BOTH revisiting Section 225's function equivalence mandate to facilitate the development of interoperable next-generation relay services and adapting its advanced communications services performance objectives for modern multimodal services, issues previously addressed in comments submitted to the Commission.

<https://tdiforaccess.org/fcc-filing-biennial-cvaa-2022-report/>

Accessibility Advocacy and Research Organizations IVCS: CG 10-213 and CG 21-140

■ (June 21) TDI, along with the tagged consumer groups filed a comment to the Federal Communications Commission's Public Notice regarding the interoperable video conferencing services (IVCS).

The Commission finally addressed the issue of accessibility and usage of video conferencing services for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or DeafBlind and those with other

disabilities. Previously in 2011, the Commission established the Advanced Communication Services (ACS) rules but it was not meeting the standards for accessibility in those services. Fortunately, the Commission did have the statutory definition of the "service that provides real-time video communications, including audio, to enable users to share information of the user's choosing" (Congress' definition) that was covered under the ACS rules.

Thus, the Commission can adopt the meaning of that definition to include the VRS and/or video conferencing services capable of being used on different types of hardware and different types of operating systems. The ACS is able to cover this range of modern video conferencing services and equipment that are mainly used during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are thrilled that the Commission revisit this issue and start to set up rules that take the Congress's intent to ensure an accessible video conferencing ecosystem at the time the CVAA was passed.

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TDI In Action April – June 2022

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This action is essential to fulfilling the CVAA's overarching promise to ensure that all Americans, including Americans with disabilities, have access to what has become an indispensable mode of distance communication in the United States and worldwide.

So, that is why we lauded the Commission for finally addressing the most critical communication barrier that people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or

DeafBlind, as well as those with other disabilities faced during the pandemic, that is, equitable access to interoperable video conferencing services (IVCS). Not only the IVCS, but it also applies to a broader array of multimodal communications services, including the need for interconnection between these systems and telecommunications relay services (TRS).

We also recognized the issue of properly defining the meaning

of “interoperable” so that the Commission is able to use that word properly to include the necessary communication services and equipment under the ACS rules. Nonetheless, Congress clearly explains that the ICVS means “a service that provides ‘real-time video communications, including audio, to enable users to share information of the user’s choosing.’” Secondly, adopting the CVAA’s definition of “interoperable video conferencing services” is consistent with the CVAA’s goals of ensuring accessibility and usability. In another way, the Commission should use a definition of interoperable video conferencing services that ensure full access to these services under the Commission’s ACS rules. Finally, we believed that the Commission should swiftly apply the ACS rules to IVCS and implement the recommendations contained in the DAC’s TRS-Video Conferencing Report.

<https://tdiforaccess.org/fcc-filing-accessibility-advocacy-and-research-organizations-ivcs/>

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