

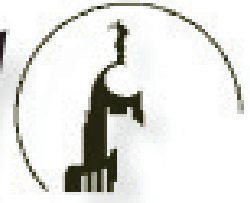
Pete Ricketts
Governor

Dr. Frank Turk
Chairperson

John C. Wyvill
Executive Director

The Communicator

Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing



Spring 2016

A newsletter surveying health, government and issues affecting Nebraskans.

Jr. NAD Ambassador Meets Governor Ricketts

Seward high school student, Isabella Graves, was recently selected as Jr. National Association for the Deaf (NAD) Ambassador. What an honor! Isabella, along with other members of NeAD and the Deaf community, met Governor Ricketts to congratulate her on Jr. NAD Ambassador. A big handwave to Governor Pete Ricketts for taking the time to meet and discuss the future of young Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nebraskans!

Isabella was also presented Legislative Resolution 432 presented by Sen. Kolterman. LR 432 recognizes Isabella as Junior NAD Ambassador and her bright future ahead.



From left: Dr. Frank Turk, Jonathan Scherling, Linsay Darnall Jr., Isabella Graves, Gov. Ricketts, Pete Love, John Wyvill, Dr. Peter Seiler



Left: Ms. Graves talking to Gov. Ricketts



Right: Ms. Graves pictured with Gov. Ricketts

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The Nebraska Way

by: John Wyvill, NCDHH Executive Director



Collaboration is defined as the process of two or more people or organizations working together to realize shared goals. In Nebraska, we work with a diverse group of stakeholders united with a common belief and ideal to make our state a better place for all Nebraskans. A few of these stakeholders include the Nebraska Department of Education, Nebraska VR, Nebraska Association for the Deaf (NeAD), Nebraska Hands and Voices, Nebraska Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (NeRID), Hearing Loss Association of American-Omaha Chapter (HLAA), and the Omaha Association of the Deaf (OAD). This all comes together with the understanding that we must be open and sharing our knowledge, all the while in maintaining our focus and be accountable for the work we do.

Collaboration in Nebraska involves the following:

Awareness: Working together for a common purpose, and create education on communication access and matters that affect the Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing

Motivation: Work to gain consensus in problem solving or development

Participation: A crucial aspect in collaboration, active involvement is a must

Mediation: Discussion, negotiation and compromise to find middle ground

Reflection: Consider alternatives on various topics

This collaboration can be seen in the work of the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Full Board. There have been three areas of focus: Education, Employment and Emergency Preparedness.

Education: Working together we are moving forward to raise the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) minimum standards for new educational interpreters, from 3.5 to 4.0. Working together we have passed legislation to require community interpreters to be licensed along with Video Remote Interpreters (VRI) providers. Working together, we also advocate for effective communication access for students in school.

Employment: Working to support the establishment of two vocational rehabilitation counselors dedicated to increasing the employment outcomes and enhanced earning potentials for our consumers. Working together with legal counsel and Disability Rights Nebraska, we have created workshops and an Advocacy Handbook to empower individual to improve their employment opportunities.

Emergency Preparedness: We have promoted fire alarm system for the safety of our consumers. We have also hosted a workshop, "Public Safety, Access & Advocacy" so our community can be better prepared.

As you can see from the NCDHH Full Boards area of focus, our annual report and our newsletters, working together we have accomplished a lot. Our work, though, is far from finished. To paraphrase the classic Robert Frost poem:

"We have promises to keep,
And miles to go before we sleep"

Our work continues as we work together to make Nebraska a better place, one day at a time.

Deaf History Month 2016



Deaf History Month 2016 was March 13-April 15th. We highlighted Nebraskans who have had an influence in the Deaf community. One of the individuals profiled was former NCDHH Field Representative and current Full Board member, **Norman Weverka**.

Norman Weverka, retired NCDHH Field Representative and current Full Board member, was born in David City, Neb. where his family lived on a farm. His father was deaf and his mother was hearing. Norm lost part of his hearing by the age of four, and by the age of twelve he wore hearing aids. By the age of sixteen, he was completely deaf.

In school, Norm was mainstreamed, attending the local public school. There were a lot of communication problems in school, he said. He received help from his mother on what he missed in class, since he could not fully understand everything the teacher was relaying in class. Norm graduated in the top 10% of his class.

After high school, Norm graduated with an associate's degree in Art; he enjoys graphic designing and carpentry. His first job was with a sign company. From there, he became a counselor with League of Human Dignity for four years. After that, he worked with the after school program at the Nebraska School for the Deaf (NSD) for five years. When NSD closed, he applied at the Commission, which was located inside NSD. Norm worked with NCDHH, continuing to advocate for Nebraskans who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing until he retired.

As a Full Board member, Norm says employment for Nebraskans who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing is a very big priority for him. "Today's accommodations," he says, "are not made for Deaf people. Not the way they were in the 1980s." Another issue important to him is deaf education and seeing improvement with education.

"There is nothing wrong with being Deaf. Deafness can go hand in hand with the hearing world," Weverka said.

Another profiled Nebraskan was **Linsay Darnall Jr.** Linsay was born to Deaf parents in Polk, Neb. He attended the Nebraska School for the Deaf and then went on to study government at Gallaudet University, before returning to Nebraska to continue his advocacy and community work.

Linsay is very involved in the Deaf community, including Nebraska Association of the deaf, Nebraska School for the Deaf Alumni Association, and the National Association of the Deaf Region II. He also works with Jr. National Association of the Deaf Nebraska chapter, and co-founded the Nebraska Deaf Heritage Museum and Cultural Center. Linsay founded Darnall Consulting LLC in 2006 to work with Nebraska agencies and entities in education and advocacy for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Thanks for all you do for the state of Nebraska and beyond, Linsay!



Legislative Update

by: John Wyvill



The Nebraska State Legislature is known as the “Unicameral”. We remain the only state in the country that has implemented this one house body. There are 49 members of the Nebraska Unicameral, known as Senators. Each of the Senators represents approximately 35,000 citizens. The Unicameral meets once a year. The long session, for ninety days, is held in odd years and the short session, held for 60 days, is held in even years.

Even with the short session the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing have been working on a number of different legislative matters:

LR 412: Senator Watermeier introduced an interim study on ways to improve communication access for movie theaters in Nebraska to ensure all Nebraskans can fully experience the movie theater experience. Stay tuned for more details as we work this summer and fall on this study.

LR 463: Senator Campbell introduced an interim study to examine ways to improve the hearing aid coverage and cost for Nebraska families.

LB 938: Legislation introduced by Senator Smith to have the Nebraska Public Service Commission to plan, coordinate, manage, maintain and provide funding assistance for a statewide 911 service on a statewide basis. This includes implementation of text to 911, which is a public safety item of critical importance to the Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing Community. We will be monitoring this status of this legislation closely, especially in light of NAD’s lawsuit in Arizona.

LB 688: Legislation introduced by Senator Bloomfield that would require all driving tests to be given in English only. NCDHH reached out to the sponsor to request clarification to ensure that those written test administered by the Department of Motor Vehicles continued to provide ASL interpreters for those that request them.

LR 432: was introduced by Senator Kolterman to honor Isabella Graves the newest Junior NAD Deaf Ambassador from Seward, Nebraska. This recognition is covered in more detail in other parts of this newsletter and the NCDHH Facebook page.

Letter of Support: NCDHH wrote a letter of support in favor the need for statewide ADA coordinator in Nebraska State Government. Disability Rights Nebraska is spearheading the advocacy efforts to restore this position to ensure that people with disabilities have access to state services and to ensure uniform accessibility in those services.

2015 Annual Report: The NCDHH 2015 Annual Report was finalized and is available on our website, www.ncdhh.nebraska.gov. Our annual report highlights some, but not all, of the work we have done in our efforts to continue to advocate for Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing Nebraskans.

Collaboration is our Secret Weapon

by: Opeoluwa Sotonwa, Executive Director, Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Article submitted on behalf of NCDHH Board Chairman Dr. Frank Turk



I receive many questions about how Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has progressed in the last two years. My answer in one word: Collaboration! We forged new partnerships because we know we cannot overcome our challenges alone. We can scale to new heights by developing partnerships because it is where the air of possibility is freshest and where we have the farthest vision for equality in Missouri.

From the get-go, the MCDHH staff works as a team by putting our hearts and passion into what we do; we go above and beyond in meeting constituents' needs. Our working mantra is "never turn anyone back without a satisfactory response to their requests." When an issue comes up that requires policy or legislative change, we immediately spring into action by not only looking into both short- and long-term solutions but also looking at issues proactively. For example, when it came to our knowledge that Missouri police are having difficulties in communicating with Missourians who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, we worked with the Missouri Sheriffs' Association. We now have a Memorandum of Understanding to train law enforcement in Missouri about best practices in communicating with Deaf and Hard of Hearing people. We will be doing this on a continued basis. We continue to develop relationships with important key players in the communities.

In Missouri, like in many other states, budgets are tight. Instead of waiting for more funds to become available for our rapidly growing list of programs, we came up with another plan. MCDHH has started partnering with private organizations to fund some of our programs. For example, in March, we will be joining Aetna Better Health of Missouri and other partners across the state to offer no cost Mental Health First Aid Trainings to Deaf and Hard of Hearing Missourians. We will conduct trainings across all Missouri regions that will provide unique platforms for community needs workshops and networking luncheons. We are also working on our second training for aspiring Deaf interpreters. The training is offered at no cost and funded by private organizations and institutions of higher learning.

We have also made notable progress on the legislative front. I made it my personal mission to go through every bill introduced at the Capitol. I analyzed if each would impact the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community and testified by giving information, supporting, or opposing any bill that was relevant. We've authored bills like House Bill 1696, which will enable MCDHH to provide grants to organizations that provide support services to Deaf-Blind people in Missouri. HB 1696 scaled through the House Committees without a single opposition. At the public hearing, the room was filled with Deaf-Blind Missourians who gave resonating testimonies about the importance of having an SSP. The statements represented a community that has worked tirelessly to support this bill so that Deaf-Blind people can participate more fully and equally in Missouri. We are also working with the legislature to pass HB 1904, a bill that will change the laws regarding 911 emergency communication services, establish the Missouri 911 Service Trust Fund, and ensure primary access and texting to 911 services.

We have developed strategic partnerships with other disability groups that have turned out to be mutually beneficial. Choosing to work together is not optional if we want to create lasting change in our collective community. Together we must embrace and champion diversity because it makes us stronger.

I will end this piece with my favorite African saying: "In this world, if you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, then we must go together." The challenges of inequality we face are real, and we must continue to collaborate to find solutions to our problems. The challenges we face may be daunting, but they are not insurmountable. Remember, we are stronger when we speak with one accord; we are mightier when we walk in unity!

One Door Closes, Another Opens

by: Peggy Williams, Mental Health Specialist



It is with a heavy heart that I announce I will be retiring effectively July 1, 2016 from the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. I will be leaving my position as Mental Health Specialist exactly 35 years to the day that I began my career with the Commission.

How it Started

As I look back on my overall journey working with people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind, it quickly takes me back to the steep hill I was sitting on with my mother in Ft. Smith, Arkansas, June 1972, watching my little brother's baseball game. For some reason I looked to the bottom of the hill and saw a young boy with braces on both legs and using crutches in an effort to walk up the hill. I was overwhelmed with so many emotions, however, I couldn't take my eyes off his incredible determination to make his way to the top of the hill. I was 22 years old and this was the first person with a disability I had ever seen. From that day forward I was on a mission, to somehow figure out where I needed to go, who I needed to talk to and what I needed to do to find employment working with people that experienced disabilities.

Where it Began

Four weeks after my moment of clarity on "The Hill", I moved to Conway, Arkansas and applied for a job at the Arkansas Children's Colony, a residential facility for, (at that time, called Mentally Retarded children) and was hired for a position in the Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Blind program teaching young adults basic skills such as cane travel and cooking. When I began working in this program, there were not any deaf residents in the classroom, but I worked with several Deaf-Blind students, none of which had any level of communication skills. I soon learned about a Pastor who was a child of deaf adults (CODA), and was teaching a beginning American Sign Language (ASL) class at his church in Little Rock once a week. I drove to Little Rock for this 8-week class and everything that I learned I brought back to the Colony and taught the students in my classroom. What a remarkable experience I had seeing these students communicate for the first time in their lives. Shortly after I finished this class, a student from the Arkansas School for the Deaf was transferred to the Colony. Following a weekend home with his family, he came back to the Colony and proceeded to tell us about his experience going deer hunting with his father, getting his first deer and how they had to "gut" the deer when they arrived home. I sat in awe watching him describe in ASL, his experience with his first deer. Today, I can close my eyes and still see him signing this incredible experience. This was my beginning but in no way was it the end!

The Rest of the Story

In May 1975 I received a call from my brother who lived in Lincoln, NE asking me to move here. I had never visited him in Lincoln and actually had never heard of anyone that lived in Nebraska, nor did I know exactly where Lincoln was on the map. Geography was definitely not my favorite subject in elementary school! Well, for that matter, for those who work with me know that math wasn't either! I was one week from becoming 25 and not a care in the world. My brother's girlfriend flew to Fort Smith, helped me pack as much as I could in the back of my 1972 Maverick, leaving the "Land of Opportunity" to the "Good Life" in Nebraska.

I moved to Lincoln in June 1975, leaving behind a group of special needs adults that I loved and of course my mother, grandparents and wonderful friends. Growing up in the foothills of the Boston Mountains was pretty hard to say good-bye to as well. I have never been a risk taker, so this was definitely taking me out of my comfort zone, but knowing my brother was here I knew that things would be OK.

Peggy Williams cont.

For the first few years I was here I worked for Lincoln Telephone and Telegraph (LT&T) and went to school at the University of Nebraska majoring in Special Education. In April 1978 I accepted a job at Services for the Visually Impaired (SVI) (now titled the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired) as the receptionist and later became the agencies Deaf-Blind Coordinator.

During the time I worked at SVI I had the opportunity to meet two Deaf leaders in the community. Dr. George and Eleanor Propp. SVI sent me to a media conference the Barkley Memorial Center was coordinating and Dr. Propp lead the conference. I was so excited to meet Dr. Propp but was a little nervous that my signing skills were not very good. On break, Dr. Propp was visiting with people from the conference and I wanted to introduce myself to him. I went in the restroom and practiced fingerspelling my name, P-E-G-G-Y D-E-G-A-R-M-O for 5 minutes. I got the courage to walk up to Dr. Propp, shake his hand and finger spell my name, (shaking the whole time) and let him know that it was nice to meet him. A couple of months later, I met Eleanor Propp at a good-bye party for a Deaf-Blind client of mine at Lincoln Public Schools. At this time I had only had the one beginning sign language class and after meeting Dr. Propp and Eleanor I was on a mission to find a sign language class or two. I later attended a 4-week counselor program for the Deaf in Monmouth, Oregon. This intense training strengthened my signing skills and was the beginning of learning about deaf culture and hearing loss.

Coming back from this training, I began an advanced sign language class at Southeast Community College (SECC) taught by Bub Haun. I had a Deaf teacher in Oregon who was fantastic, but Bub was really special. He used humor to teach and was very encouraging to me to not give up. This is when I first learned about the Nebraska Commission for the Hearing Impaired (NCHI) as Eleanor (Elly) Propp was the coordinator through the Commission for the sign classes at SECC.

I learned from a friend of mine that worked at the Commission that a Field Representative position was going to be open. This was my chance. I wanted to get this job more than anything I ever wanted. I applied for the job and on July 1, 1981 (16 months after the Commission was established) I walked in the doors of the Nebraska Commission for the Hearing Impaired, along with Tanya Wendel, who would be setting up the office at the Nebraska School for the Deaf in Omaha. Within a year, my position as a Field Representative was no longer a job but a career, a career that I didn't think I could ever see myself changing.

Elly Propp became my mentor and to this day I will be forever grateful to her. It would take a book for me to write about all the incredible things she taught me about culture, language and working within the Deaf community. One particular thing she taught me was how to not depend so much on my hearing, but how to depend on visual clues. Any time we were in a car together, she would point out a person walking on the sidewalk, have me look at that person and then look back within a split second. She would then ask me to explain to her about that person, color of hair, clothes, height, etc. After a period of time I learned how to be a visual person. Elly's husband Dr. George Propp played a very important role in getting legislation passed to establish the Commission and once established, he become one of 9 board members for the Commission appointed by the Governor. With Elly and George it wasn't just about work. They opened the door to their home to me and so did their four children: Conrad, Margie, Lorelei and Greg. Being fairly new in Nebraska, having this family take me under their wings was a blessing and provided me with the much needed family in Arkansas I was missing. Today, their daughter Margie follows in her father's footsteps and is the vice-chairperson on the Commission board.

Peggy Williams cont.

I would like to share a little about how things have changed, not only with the Commission but improving the lives of Nebraskans who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. When Tanya Wendell and I started the Commission, there was one office, the Lincoln office. The original Field Representative for the Commission, Suzanne Shackelford covered the entire state of Nebraska. Tanya was hired to open a Commission office in Omaha, housed at the Nebraska School for the Deaf in the Administration Building. Since that time, the Commission has expanded in establishing an office in Kearney, North Platte and Scottsbluff.

As times change so does technology. In the early 80's there were about nine hours of television closed captioning available, and special decoders had to be used in order to receive the captioning. Today, the captioning chip is built in to your television set and about anything you want to watch is captioned, including going to the movie theatre. What about the old TTY's/TDD's that many of you used? Today, it is Video Phones, Captioned telephones, Video Relay Services and Video Relay Interpreters. Elly Propp had insight in the mid 80's about future technology that would provide people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing the ability to communicate via video. It's here Elly, you were right!

I have been so blessed in many ways to witness first-hand the many program developments, legislation, and services the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has worked hard to accomplish over the past 35 years. I have been fortunate to have worked with previous and current Executive Directors, Jaime Galloway, Tanya Wendell, Steve Larew, Dr. Pete Seiler and John Wyvill, as well as each and every employee, past and present who have worked at this agency and has aided in my growth and development, I will leave with a little piece of all of you. Thank you!

I would like to thank the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community for coming in to my life and allowing me into yours. Words do not express what all of you have meant to me and how rich my life has been because of you. Thank you for all the special "gifts" you have given me over the years, your friendship, love and trust.

I heard a comment recently, "In an Ending there is also a Beginning"! My beginning is not going to be walking out the door and closing this chapter of my life, my beginning will continue to be part of the community I so cherish and be available to do whatever I can to continue to make a difference in Nebraska being the "Good Life" for all Nebraskans who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

I'll never forget that "hill" on that hot June day in my hometown. It made me who I am....and I'm so grateful!"

SAVE THE DATE!

It's Party Time!

Peggy's Retirement Party will be on Thursday, June 23

Location: NCDHH Lincoln Office, Conference Room 4A

(4600 Valley Rd. Lincoln, NE)

Time: 2:00-4:00p.m.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Night at the Lincoln Saltdogs Game! July 13, 2016

Come one, come all and enjoy America's favorite pasttime. This year will be the third annual Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Night at the Lincoln Saltdogs home game. The purpose for this event is to raise awareness for Nebraskans who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, show how anyone can enjoy the great game of baseball, and have a little fun in the process.

NCDHH will have an informational booth with our services as well as a silent inning, games in between innings and more! The Lincoln Saltdogs will donate a portion of the ticket sales to the Nebraska Association of the Deaf, you can buy tickets following the link and information below. We hope to see you there!



NAD Nebraska Association of the Deaf

Wednesday, July 13 • 6:35pm

TEXAS AIRHOGS vs LINCOLN SALTDogs

www.saltdogs.com/nad

Lower Reserved • \$11/Ticket

CLICK TO BUY

Nebraska Association of the Deaf

Deaf & Beyond: My Personal Journey

by: Brenda Chappell, Field Representative



I read a letter from a mother shaming a company for its slogan: "Hearing Brings Joy." I have seen this slogan on an advertising board by traffic many times. I shake head and drive on. After reading the letter, it got me thinking. I thought, "Deaf doesn't bring joy?" I move on with my routines daily, I never stop and think that my deafness doesn't bring me joy.

Imagine one morning on a weekend I get up and cook large, delicious breakfast. I sit down and watch my favorite show on TV for an hour. I clean house a bit and get ready to go shopping. I go out and greet my neighbor with a hand waving. I get in my car and drive to a grocery store. I pick up a cart and put food in. I smile at other customers and nod in greeting to the familiar workers. I pay for my food at a cashier. I bring them to my car and open the trunk. Suddenly a stranger runs to me, hugs me, and cries on my shoulder. She tells me how she is sorry. I wonder, what she is sorry about. She tells me that she is sorry that I suffer so much and how I must have been living in a darkness. I look at her puzzled. What is she talking about? Suffer- what? What darkness? I feel fine, thank you very much. Then she says that she couldn't imagine what it must be like to be deaf.

Oh, dear! Now I get it. It reminds me that this is a classic response when people encounter deaf people. But I don't appreciate to have my blissful morning ruined by this lady who gave me a wet shoulder. She reminded me that my deafness doesn't bring me joy. When I am moving on my daily life, I don't think of myself as a deaf person. I think of myself as Brenda. I feel content and confident. I don't sit and mourn my hearing loss. When someone asks me if it is hard to be deaf, my usual response would be "No, deafness doesn't bother me at all, but what is really making my life hard is the way the world treats me." The world is not completely deaf-friendly. For an example, some apartment buildings have intercoms. I can't speak to contact my deaf friends so I text on my iPhone instead. In times of emergency I would see an unusually large group leaving and not know what's happened, but my instinct tells me I better follow them. I would find out later what the emergency was about, but at least I am safe. Once, I watched a movie about a city where all the residents suddenly became blind and they struggled to survive through. I wonder what would happen if they become deaf suddenly. What would they do? I am sure seasoned deaf people would help the novices. They would show them how to survive in soundless world. The inventors would be forced to invent accommodations to meet their needs in everything. They would create more than intercoms with video, set up captioning boards everywhere for emergency, make open captions for all movies on DVD and in the theaters, install signaling systems with flashing lights in every house, produce better safety gears, and more. I believe the general population has a powerful and amazing mind to create anything. We have everything. We put people in space. The computers are becoming smaller and smaller. The smartphones are becoming thinner and thinner with much better picture. Scientists discovered cures for many diseases. There is research for energy conservation. There is no limit to what minds can do and they can make accommodations to fit to every need of all populations if they choose to.

Even now there is a study called "Deaf Gain." It would be surprising for the general population that there are benefits and advantages of being deaf. For an instance, deaf drivers are better than hearing drivers. Why is that? There are a few reasons – less distractions, use eyes more. The professionals are studying deaf people to see how they live in order to benefit hearing people in society. For an example, widening a sidewalk so a couple of pairs can walk beside companion in opposite sides without having to create a single line or move to grass to make room. How about the babies learning sign language to communicate before their voices are developed? What about people who lost their voice? They can communicate with sign language. What about Nyle Dimarco, a top model who is deaf, in Dancing with the Stars? How can he dance without hearing music? They can learn something from him. They can learn many invaluable lessons from deaf people.

Now lastly, does hearing really bring joy? If it is true, then why are there so many sad people out there? Every individual in the entire world has experienced sorrow and more than 98% of them are hearing. How can hearing prevent or lift them from sorrow?

There is so much more than one way to make lasting joy in life. There are many positive people with missing limbs out there. I have a good life. I have a family who loves me. I have friends who appreciate me. I don't see myself as a broken or disabled person. I don't go outside thinking I am deaf. I see myself as a person of different culture and language who continue to be resilient in this life. And I have joy.

Want to Learn American Sign Language?

by: Crystal Pierce, Interpreter Program Assistant

Lately many people have contacted NCDHH expressing an interest in learning American Sign Language (ASL). Many have found it difficult to finding a place that offers ASL lessons or classes, especially for children. Today, I wanted to help guide you in your search to start your journey of learning ASL. Please understand these are a few available options, but this is not an all-encompassing list. Also keep in mind the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) is not promoting and/or endorsing any program, person, entity, or website etc. The information below is being provided as an information resource.

Colleges and Universities:

There are a few colleges and universities in Nebraska which offer courses of ASL. Typically these courses range from beginning to advanced levels. More information such as class schedule and fees can be found by visiting the college websites or contacting the facilities directly.

University of Nebraska Omaha: Omaha	Southeast Community College: Lincoln
University of Nebraska Lincoln: Lincoln	Concordia University: Seward
Wayne State College: Wayne	Nebraska Christian College: Papillion
Northeast Community College: Norfolk	Central Community College: Kearney
Western Nebraska Community College: Scottsbluff	

Churches:

A select few churches in Nebraska offer ASL or sign language classes for its church members. These classes may or may not be open to the general public. For more information about the church's classes please contact them directly.

Christ Community Church: Omaha	Bethlehem Deaf Lutheran Church: Omaha
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Nebraska Statewide Regional Programs:

Occasionally, various Nebraska Regional Programs provide ASL classes. Often these classes are offered and designed for parents of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children, but may be open for the general public. For more information contact your local Regional program or you can check with the specific programs listed below.

Southeast Nebraska Regional Program: Lincoln	Metro Regional Program: Omaha
Central Western Partnership: Scottsbluff	

Tutoring:

NCDHH has a list of people who provide tutoring of ASL. Be aware that each individual has their own terms and conditions for class/group size, age range, and area where they providing tutoring. If you are interested in contacting a tutor, please contact our office at NCDHH; I have permission to provide their information. I can provide this information directly to those interested.

Deaf Events/Deaf Community:

One of the best ways to learn ASL is getting involved and immersed in the Deaf community. There are several Deaf Clubs and Deaf groups in Nebraska which meet on a regular or semi-regular basis. These

American Sign Language cont.

clubs and groups along with other Deaf community groups have various events throughout the year. Information can be found on social media sites or by contacting NCDHH or other individuals involved with the group. Below I listed a few of these Deaf community groups:

Omaha Deaf Club: Omaha	Lincoln Deaf Club: Lincoln
Nebraska Association of the Deaf: Statewide	Lincoln Association of the Deaf: Lincoln
Deaf Grassroots Movement: Statewide	Deaf Night Out: Lincoln
Deaf and Hard of Hearing Support Group: Scottsbluff	

Instructional Materials/Videos:

Instructional materials and videos can also be used as an independent study. At times you can find some of these at your local libraries, though most local libraries selections are minimal. NCDHH has a specialized media center with a wide range of information under the topics of American Sign Language, interpreting, Deaf Culture, Hard of Hearing, children’s materials, and Deaf-Blind. Products come in a variety of forms including: books, DVD, CD, VHS, games, and book/DVD sets. Nebraska residents can borrow any of the media center products for up to 5 weeks free. Products can be picked up in the NCDHH Lincoln office or mailed out to your residence. The only possible cost is if the products are returned to the Lincoln office by mail, the cost of postage is the lender’s responsibility. To explore our selection of materials you can call, come in to the Lincoln office, or look online at ncdhh.ne.gov and search “media center”.

If you are more interested in purchasing instructional materials and videos to do an independent study, there are many companies which sell the same or similar products. Do know, especially for an ASL independent study including a product that has a video demonstrations of the signs, is highly recommended since ASL is a 3D language. It is very challenging to sign with your hands in 3D space when looking at a 2D, frozen picture in a book. Below are listed a few places to find instructional materials for independent

NCDHH Media Center Loans	Sign Enhancers
Harris Communications	Dawn Sign Press
Signing Time	

studies.

Websites:

Today there are more and more websites that provide ASL videos with the use of video dictionaries, ASL lessons etc. This way people are able to see how the sign is produced including the movement and placement. Many websites are very good, but proceed with caution searching for websites. It is recommended to research and carefully select a reputable website prior to starting your lessons. Listed below are a few websites to get you started:

www.lifeprint.com	www.handspeak.com
www.signingsavvy.com	www.aslpro.com
www.deafinx.com	www.signlanguage101.com

Hearing Aid Donations Needed

by: Susanna Fuehrer, Hearing Aid Bank/NSTEP Coordinator



For more than 100 years volunteers with the Sertoma Foundation have been serving communities across the United States to provide for the needs of communities on a local and global scale. The Sertoma Foundation as well as the Lions Club have concentrated their humanitarian efforts in the areas of Speech and Hearing.

In late 1981 the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing with the Nebraska Gateway Sertoma Club, The Nebraska Lions Foundation and Barkley Memorial Center of the University of Nebraska- Lincoln began a collaborative effort to create the Hearing Aid Bank. These joint ventures are known locally as the Sertoma Hearing Aid Bank (serving ages 18-64) and Lions Hearing Aid Bank (serving ages 65 and up). Both organizations raise money to support their individual Hearing Aid Banks through private donations, fundraisers and support from individual clubs. Hundreds of Nebraskans per year have reaped the benefits of their tireless efforts.

Due to continuous, positive outreach efforts and collaboration, the increase in applications has also resulted in supply of hearing aids critically low. Donations of all unused or old hearing aids are needed! These donations will be refurbished and distributed to those who apply for hearing aids, through the hearing aid banks. Without these valuable donations, we are unable to provide hearing aids to those who are in need. A donation of hearing aids is tax deductible, with receipts provided.

Donations can be mailed to the NCDHH Lincoln office (address is on the back page of this newsletter), or to the Barkley Memorial Center in Lincoln. If a mailing option is unavailable, please call the NCDHH office and we can arrange a representative to pick up the hearing aids. Any questions please contact us at (800) 545-6244, or my direct line is 402-471-3067.

What's Happening Way Out West

by: Brittney Graham, Field Representative



Support groups are a great social tool for people who are experiencing something that can be difficult to overcome. A group of people come together to discuss their experiences, share ideas and provide emotional support for one another. Joining a support group has many benefits, but the biggest advantage is knowing that you are not alone. Being in a support group can also help you develop new skills to relate to others. In addition, the members of the group who have the same problems can support each other and may suggest new ways of dealing with a particular problem.

With all of this said, NCDHH has brought back the Hearing Loss Support Group at the Panhandle Independent Living Services (PILS) the last Thursday of each month at 2:00pm. I hope to have one in Oshkosh, Chadron and Sidney by the summer months.

If you or someone you know could benefit from these support groups or have any questions at all please contact Brittney Graham at 308-633-3751 or email brittney.graham@nebraska.gov.

Mobile Apps & Resources

by: Beth Ellsworth, Field Representative



Below is a summary of apps for smartphones based on the HLAA, Hearing Loss Magazine, titled "Mobile Device Apps for People with Hearing Loss"

FaceTime: This is an app that is included on various iPhones & iPads. Individuals can see the person they are talking with.

Google Hangouts: With this app up to 10 people can talk/communicate with each other at the same time. If you have an iPhone or iPad you can download this at your app store. If you have an android device you can download the app at Google Play.

Skype: With this app face-to-face conversation is available. This app can be downloaded to Apple or Android Mobile phones. Video calls can be one on one or more than one on laptops or desktop computers. Most of these are free however audio long distance options may incur cost.

Mobile Captioning: Similar to real-time caption services, ClearCaptions, CaptionCall Mobile and Hamilton Mobile Captel now have new captioning apps that can be added to mobile devices or tablet. These devices are a bit different. Rather than the communications assistant (CA) typing the communication, the voice is recognized. The software then transcribes the CA's spoken information for relay to the screen of the mobile phone or tablet used by the person with hearing loss. The communication is through software through the relay service using a CA. In this software the voice is recognized. This occurs because the CA has "trained" the software to identify the voice and then ", "repeats (shadows) what he or she hears from the hearing person" (Nov/Dec 2015 HLAA article).

Real-Time Voice Recognition: Live Caption is an app that is available on smartphones and tablets. This is a voice recognition app where the person speaks into the mobile device and the voice is transcribed into real-time text. This can also be adapted so the person can speak directly into the Bluetooth mic that has been paired with the mobile device.

Let Me Hear Again: This app has many different features. This app converts the voice into text in face-to-face communication (and can be transcribed in 41 different languages). In addition, instructions and directions can be transcribed into text messages for later retrieval. This app is also able to save class lectures to the phone as text. To learn more about this app go to: https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=appinventor.ai_drsharonbaisil.LetMEHearAgain_Free_US

Transcence: The difference between this app and the one above is that this app transcribes speech from more than one person onto a screen in near real time, thus allowing for group conversations. This is done by connecting to several different phones to retrieve what everyone is saying. Using the voice recognition software, a different text is assigned to each person using a different color for each person's speech bubble.

RogerVoice: This app is not yet available but has unique features. In this app people with a hearing loss receive calls on their smartphone and get instant transcriptions no matter what the person's language. The down side is that errors are more prevalent. This app is more effective with simple conversations such a making an order on the phone or setting up an appointment.

VoxSci for Mobiles: This app transcribes voicemail messages into text then sends the message to the mobile device &/ or as an email attachment (MP3). An app that is related is called the GLIDE. This app can leave video messages that are live or kept for later.

To learn more about this technology please go to www.hearingloss.org or get the Nov/Dec Hearing Loss Magazine and check out the article.

If you have any questions please contact me at 402-682-7129 or beth.ellsworth@nebraska.gov or our Lincoln office at 402-471-3593

The Quest for Fun Under the Sun

by: Kim Davis, Field Representative



Looking for some fun under the sun? Here are some miscellaneous nationwide camping events organized for those who are deaf or hard of hearing. NCDHH does not provide endorsement of these camp activities. You may wish to explore further on the credibility the camp, its host, location and accurate dates:

YOUTH CAMPING

Aspen Camp (Colorado)
See website for three optional dates available
www.aspencamp.org/summercamp

Camp Anderson (Nebraska)
July 10 – 16, 2016
Contact your child's Nebraska Regional Program provider for additional information
<http://nrpdhh.site.esu9.org/regions>

CNI Cochlear Kids Camp (Colorado)
June 23-26, 2016 and August 4-7, 2016
www.thecni.org/cochlear-kids-camp

Deaf Film Camp (New York)
August 7 – 19, 2016
www.deaffilmcamp.com

Discover Your Future (Washington D.C.)
June 25 – July 3, 2016
www.gallaudet.edu

Explore Your Future Program (New York)
July 9 – 14, 2016
July 16 – 21, 2016
www.rit.edu/ntid/eyf

Immerse Into ASL! (Washington D.C.)
June 5 – July 3, 2016
www.gallaudet.edu

National Deaf Girls Basketball Camp (Maryland)
June 18-22, 2016
www.nationalgirlsbasketball.com

YOUTH CAMPING (Continue)

NAD Youth Leadership Camp (Oregon)
July 22 – August 18, 2016
www.nad.org/leadershipcamp

TechBoyz Camp (New York)
July 23 – 28, 2016
www.rit.edu/ntid/techboyz

TechGirlz Camp (New York)
July 23 – 28, 2016
www.rit.edu/ntid/techgirlz

Teen Institute Camp (Missouri)
June 12-18, 2016
www.deaflead.com/teen

Young Scholars Program: Exploring the Sciences (Washington D.C.)
June 25 – July 3, 2016
www.gallaudet.edu

ADULT / FAMILY CAMPING

Aspen Camp of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (Colorado)
August 5 – 9, 2016
For hearing parents & deaf children only
www.aspencamp.org/familycamp

DeafBlind Retreat (Washington)
August 28 – September 3, 2016
www.deafblindhh.org/seabeck

National Campvention of the Deaf (Kansas)
June 12 – 19, 2016
www.nationalcampventiondeaf.org

Outdoor Family Skills Camp (Nebraska)
May 14 - 15, 2016
Contact your child's Nebraska Regional Program service provider for additional information
www.nrpdhh.site.esu9.org/partners

CHILDREN OF DEAF ADULTS CAMPING

KODA Camp – Midwest (Wisconsin)
June 26 – July 29, 2016
<https://kodacamp.wordpress.com>



iCan Connect

by: Kristi Berst, Assistive Technology Partnership



Another way to connect. . .

Communication is essential to being independent at home, participating in the community, and being productive at school or work. Modern technology has expanded the way most people communicate in their day-to-day lives. For people who experience a combined vision and hearing loss, specific and specialized equipment may be necessary to make a phone call, send an email or access the internet.



In July 2014, the [Assistive Technology Partnership](#) became the certified agency in Nebraska for [iCan Connect: The National Deaf Blind Equipment Distribution Program](#). The focus of ICC is to ensure that individuals, with limited incomes, and who experience a combined vision and hearing loss, can access telephone, advanced communications and information services.

To learn more about the program and the application process, contact:
Kristi Berst, (402) 595-1613, kristi.berst@nebraska.gov

Denial & Why Treating Hearing Loss is Important

by: April Emeigh, Field Representative



Denial is a very common response for individuals with a hearing loss. According to the Hearing Loss Association of America, it is estimated that about 20 percent of Americans report some degree of hearing loss. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association reports that only 20% of individuals who could benefit from treatment actually seek out treatment. There are various reasons that a person with a hearing loss may not want to seek treatment such as embarrassment or shame. Another common barrier to seeking treatment for hearing loss is financial cost. With some of the reasons that PREVENT individuals from seeking treatment for a hearing loss, here are several reasons why you SHOULD seek treatment for a hearing loss.

For your loved ones:

Untreated hearing loss can put a lot of strain on relationships with loved ones. Communication can become incredibly difficult for individuals with a hearing loss. This means that communicating with the people we spend the most time with, the people we most care about, becomes incredibly challenging. This can put a great amount of strain on our relationships, some of which could be reduced by treating the hearing loss. Kochkin and Rogin (2000) found that individuals with a treated hearing loss and their families found that their relationships were improved as a result of hearing instruments.

For your mental health:

Individuals with an untreated hearing loss can experience social isolation as it becomes more difficult to communicate with others. Anxiety about social situations may prevent the individual from reaching out and interacting with others. The inability to hear someone speak may be construed as rude and may affect social relationships. Social isolation can lead to depression and other emotional symptoms in the person with a hearing loss. Kochkin and Rogin (2000) also found that the individual with a hearing loss experienced improved quality of life, emotional health, social interactions, and physical health as a result of treating their hearing loss.

Setting up an appointment with an audiologist to have your hearing tested is the first step in treating your hearing loss. Your audiologist can tell you about different treatment options that may be available to improve your hearing health. If cost is a concern, consider applying for our hearing aid banks to receive reconditioned hearing aids at very little (or no) cost. You can also contact your local Field Representative with NCDHH to find out about assistive devices and other types of equipment that may aid your hearing.

For references and additional information please contact me at april.emeigh@nebraska.gov or (800) 545-6244.

Hearing Loss & Cognitive Decline in Adults

by: Kathy Scusa, Field Representative



A Summary of a Study and Journal Report

Authored by senior study investigator and Johns Hopkins otologist and epidemiologist Frank Lin, M.D., Ph.D.

Hearing loss is prevalent in almost two-thirds of adults older than 70 years and remains under-treated. Anyone with hearing loss or suspected hearing loss should be proactive in addressing any hearing declines over time. The study estimates that as many as 27 million Americans over age 50, including two-thirds of men and women aged 70 years and older, suffer from some form of hearing loss. Only 15 percent of those who need a hearing aid get one, leaving much of the problem and its consequences untreated. Although the study did not find a significant association between hearing aid use and rate of cognitive decline, the study author is convinced that addressing hearing loss could have an impact greater than just improving quality of life. Older adults with hearing loss have a rate of cognitive decline that is up to 40% faster than the rate in those with normal hearing. Those with hearing loss also appear to have a greater risk for cognitive impairment. The study research demonstrates significant associations between greater hearing loss and poorer cognitive function on verbal and nonverbal cognitive tests. Communication impairments caused by hearing loss can lead to social isolation and loneliness in older adults. Hearing loss is independently associated with accelerated cognitive decline and incident cognitive impairment in community-dwelling older adults, possibly through social isolation or cognitive load. It is unsure if wearing hearing aids and use of technology could affect cognitive decline. (JAMA Internal Medicine Website: <http://archinte.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=1558452#qundefined>)

Perspective of an Older Adult who Lives with Hearing Loss:

“When you are hard of hearing you struggle to hear;
When you struggle to hear you get tired;
When you get tired you get frustrated;
When you get frustrated you get bored;
When you get bored you quit.”

Quitting life in this way is self-imposed social isolation. Social Isolation leads to cognitive impairment, depression, cardiovascular disease and physical decline. This in turn can lead to increased memory loss or dementia, increased falls and increased motor vehicle accidents. Avoid withdrawal by continuing social interaction! Assistive technology helps you continue with social interaction. The bottom line is don't ignore hearing loss! Get tested and get hearing aids. They may just keep you living longer and will definitely improve your quality of life.

Know Someone Who Deserves Recognition?

NCDHH started Boss of the Month as a means to highlight a member of the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Hard of Hearing community, or stakeholders that we work with.

If you would like to nominate someone for Boss of the Month, please email Executive Director John Wyvill at john.wyvill@nebraska.gov

A list of previous honorees can be found on our website at www.ncdhh.nebraska.gov/Publications/botm.html

Social Media and Technology

NCDHH

Nebraska Commission
for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing



Media Center

Interested in learning more about...

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Deaf Culture

Hearing Loss

And more!

Available to Nebraskans, NCDHH has a free media center loan program. Available materials include books, videos, and teaching materials on topics from American Sign Language, deafness, interpreting, hearing loss, and more

Browse and Submit Your Request at:

ne.gov/go/ncdhh-media

or by phone:

(800) 545-6244

ncdhh.nebraska.gov



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Submit an Article Idea!

NCDHH welcomes ideas and articles for consideration and insertion into future issues of the newsletter.

Please submit articles to:

NCDHH Newsletter Ideas
4600 Valley Road, Suite 420
Lincoln, NE 68510-4844

or e-mail them to:
ncdhh@nebraska.gov

Articles submitted are not necessarily the views of NCDHH. The NCDHH newsletter is published four times annually.

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