

THE COMMUNICATOR

NEBRASKA COMMISSION FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Outreach Event: Deaf & Hard of Hearing Night at Lincoln Saltdogs

Another year, another ballgame in the books. This year, the entire NCDHH team was able to come out and enjoy a night at the ballpark as well as meeting folks in the community they may have not met face to face before. Our Advocacy Specialist, Cody McEvoy, threw out the first pitch this year. There was an outstanding performance by Renca Dunn for the National Anthem as well as a performance for the 7th Inning Stretch (pictured below). There were multiple different community organizations and informational tables offering services, resources and information for people interested.

As always, we are thankful to the Lincoln Saltdogs for allowing us to put on this fun community outreach event each year.



All of Us Must Lead

John Wyvill, Executive Director



There is a saying that is known in advocacy circles:

If not you? Who?
If not now? When?

It is extremely important that all of us must be advocates for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing Community in Nebraska. Working together we have been successful on a number of different fronts advocating for higher standards and training for education interpreters, requiring video remote interpreting companies to be licensed in this state, modest improvements in communication access at Husker football games via twitter captioning, more Nebraska VR counselors dedicated to working with our community, movie theaters providing open captioning, passing legislation to remove offensive hearing impaired language in our laws and state government, and providing hearing aid insurance for children in certain circumstances. All of these efforts, while significant, illustrate that there is still much to do.

Every day, we have to advocate for communication access. These advocacy efforts include when we travel and attempt to fly or check into hotels. For those of you that fly, how many times have you been offered a wheel chair when they learn you are deaf or hard of hearing?

A major point of emphasis is accessible medical care. It is very important that all of us advocate for appropriate communication access in a health care setting. This is not an Americans with Disabilities "issue"; it much more than that. This is a licensure issue involving standard of care with medical professionals and facilities when there is no informed consent due to lack of communication access. It is critical that all of us need to continue to work together in advocacy. To that end it is extremely important that if you do not have communication access you must raise those concerns with the healthcare professionals, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Licensure Unit and NCDHH. We all must lead in order to bring about appropriate communication access one day at time.

NCDHH Celebrates 40 years



Our 40th agency anniversary party was a great success! Community members, former employees and board members came out to celebrate four decades worth of advocacy and resources across Nebraska.

Upcoming Interpreter Workshops

Sharon Sinkler, Interpreter Program Coordinator

I hope everyone's summer has been going well and you have been able to get out and do some fun stuff while the weather is nice. Speaking of fun stuff...

On Friday, August 23rd from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at 4600 Valley Road, Room 4B in Lincoln, we are co-sponsoring a FREE workshop with Purple Communications. Participants will view the film, "The Hammer," as a group and complete a film guide. After the film, Deb Graegin (the presenter) will lead a group discussion and analysis about the film's implied meaning, emotional impacts and the film's perspective on d/Deaf, as well as what interpreters can take away from this experience to apply to their work. Space is limited to the first 30 registrants so please register soon at the following link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZOMATHEHAMMER>.

I am also excited to announce that we will be hosting a FREE interpreter workshop on Friday, November 22nd and Saturday, November 23rd at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO). Dr. Sabrina T. Smith has been involved in the interpreting field for over 20 years. She enjoys encouraging interpreters of all levels and mentoring people across the United States. Dr. Smith will present an ethics workshop on Friday evening from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. for 0.3 CEUs and then on Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., she will present a mentoring workshop for 0.6 CEUs. Special thanks to Dr. Julie Delkamiller at UNO for donating the space to host these workshops. Because this is a free workshop, no refreshments will be provided and a one-hour lunch on Saturday is on your own. A "Save the Date" flyer was sent out through our interpreter listservs and finalized details on a new flyer will be sent out as the date nears.

Thanks for all you do for us here at NCDHH, the Deaf community and all the other people you come in contact with through your work in the state of Nebraska. Have a safe and happy Summer!

**WHEN: Friday, November 22, 2019;
6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.**

**Saturday, November 23, 2019;
9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

(1 hour lunch break, on your own)

WHERE: Omaha (more details to come)

**WHAT: Friday—Ethically Speaking: A Discussion
of Ethics in Interpreting (0.3 CEUs)**

**Saturday—Mentoring 101: The Basics
of Mentoring (0.6 CEUs)**



Presenter Biography: Sabrina T. Smith, PhD

Sabrina Smith has been involved in the interpreting field for over 20 years. She is Nationally certified through RID: CI and CT, as well as NITC Master and Ed.K-12. She works as an educational interpreter and has been interpreting in the school system for over 17 years in elementary, middle and high school settings. She also works as a video relay interpreter with Sorenson Communications where she has been employed over 10 years. She enjoys encouraging interpreters of all levels and mentoring people across the United States. She works as a freelance interpreter, an instructor at local community colleges, and as a performing arts interpreter for theatres and concert venues in her area.

Deaf & Hard of Hearing Awareness Day



**SEPT
22**

**Henry Doorly Zoo
Wild Kingdom Pavillion
10:00am**

**Join NCDHH & NeAD for fun, games, and animals!
Sign Language Interpreters available**



BOSS OF THE MONTH

For August 2019 is awarded to

Todd Honas



Todd Honas is in his junior year at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and a walk-on for the Husker Football program as a wide receiver. From Aurora, Neb., Todd grew up in a household with a deaf mom and a hearing dad, and has a bilateral sensorineural hearing loss. Todd wears hearing aids and was raised on captioned television, ASL, reading lips, and other things specific to a Deaf household. Being a part of the Husker football team has meant adaptability with his teammates and coaches, and explaining what he can and cannot hear, based on the environment he is in. He remembers his first game running out of the Memorial Stadium tunnel, it was so loud his hearing aids shut off, all he could feel was the vibration of the crowd on his shoulder pads.

The best advice he has received was being told to not let anyone tell you you can't have anything that you're willing to work for. There were critics in his ears but over time, you prove people wrong with your performance despite any disability or deficiency others may say you have. He says it all starts with trusting and believing in yourself first. Todd is involved in Nebraska Hands and Voices and Lincoln Deaf Club.



A Formal Farewell

Teresa Hevner, Lead Advocacy Specialist

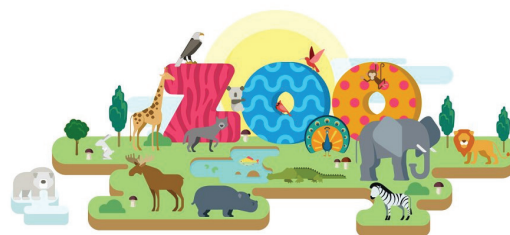


As you all have probably guessed from the title, I will be stepping away from my role at NCDHH. It is a bitter-sweet goodbye, as I have learned so much from this position, and have met so many amazing individuals during my two years here. While at NCDHH, I have experienced some extremely unique cases and work with a variety of agencies, organizations, and individuals. I was also able to learn so much about the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. I was allowed to learn American Sign Language,

Deaf Culture, and listen to experiences that shaped individuals in so many ways. I have been able to work in fields related to medicine/medical care, law enforcement, employment, and housing. These opportunities have allowed me to discuss communication access, effective communication, barriers within the realm of communicating, and technological assistance (both positive and negative). I have also been able to travel, both in and out of Nebraska. I have been able to attend events like the State Fair, Husker Harvest Days, and the National Association of the Deaf's Biennial Conference. Moments which allowed me to grow both professionally, and personally.

I am so very thankful my time with NCDHH and am going to miss my co-workers and clients immensely. However, I will be able to take so much of what I have learned with me. I will be moving to Colorado to pursue my Audiology career. I am so excited to take with me the resources I have gained in this position, and share them with new individuals. Though I will miss NCDHH, and the community who surround it, I am pleased to have been a part of this "family" for a while. I want to thank the staff for all they have done to support me. I would also like to thank my clients and the community for their willingness to share so much with me. Lastly, I can say with full belief that you all have proven that "Nebraska Nice" is, in fact, a true statement!

Scottsbluff Deaf & Hard of Hearing Awareness Day 2019!



**Deaf & Hard of Hearing
Awareness Day**

**Saturday, September 7
1:00-4:00pm
Riverside Discovery Center**

**Crafts & Activities throughout the day
Meet at The Stage (in between Discovery Building & splash pad)
Meet an animal
Ticket Information: Sign in sheet at the gate - please note if you are a zoo
member or non zoo member**

Contact: Brittney Isom 308-633-2751 brittney.isom@nebraska.gov / Sara Peterson 308-641-1402 speterson@esu13.org



Danger Signs of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Kim Davis, Advocacy Specialist

There have been alarming news within the Deaf Community of other states regarding carbon monoxide poisoning from keyless vehicles being left running in a closed attached garage of homes. This article serves to encourage our Nebraskans who are Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing to take precaution and extra necessary measures to prevent facing the same tragedy that may include serious side effects, or worse, death.



An unattended running keyless or keyed vehicles in a closed space causes danger for carbon monoxide poisoning. Any fuel-burning appliances that are either functioning ineffectively, is malfunctioned or being used improperly can cause carbon monoxide poisoning. Some such fuel-burning appliances can be furnaces, space heaters, fireplaces, stoves, hot water tanks, clothes dryers, generators or grills.

For those of you who have fuel-burning vehicles and appliances, you may wish to take extra measures to protect yourself and others from life threatening dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning within your home. A couple of such measures you can take may be:

- Having a qualified service technician service your fuel-burning appliance annually.
- Knowing what appliances need to be cleaned, repaired or replaced, or used in appropriate areas when operating.
- Purchasing a Carbon Monoxide Alarm Signaler or Detector made specialized for individuals who are Deaf, Deaf Blind or Hard of Hearing.
- Double-checking that the vehicle is no longer running once you are parked and ready to exit the vehicle.

There are several types available for visual/audible/tactile signalers that stands alone or may act as a detector and/or transmitter compatible with the type of signaler system you currently have. It is encouraged that you contact either the manufacturer or vendor that are well versed with specialized visual/tactile/audible Carbon Monoxide products to aide you in selecting the most effective one for your place of residency.

Here are vendors that sell specialized products. Seek “Carbon Monoxide” as the keyword:

- ADCO Hearing Products, www.adcohearing.com
- Harris Communications, www.harriscomm.com
- HITEC Group International Inc., www.hitec.com
- LS&S Group, www.LSSproducts.com
- Hear More, www.hearmore.com
- Teltex Inc., www.teltex.com

Additional publications of interest:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov/co

Relevant Signs of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning:



Headache



Weakness



Nausea or Vomiting



Shortness of Breath



Blurred Vision



Loss of consciousness

School Safety Procedures

Jessica Larrison, Education Advocate



Many schools have plans set in place for safety purposes, whether it is a weather alert, a lock down, lock out, evacuation, or shelter. These plans are wonderful. Typically, they have a document explaining what to do or where to go depending on the alert and are placed in every classroom in the building. But our Deaf and hard of hearing students who do not hear the announcement over the speaker. They will only get a notification from the lights flashing, with many still “in the dark” about what kind of alert is happening. Most elementary kids are with a staff member at all-times but as they grow up and become more independent they will start going to class to class freely. This is where problems can occur if we do not have a system set up that tells us what alert is going on and what plan should be taken.

I had a chance to talk to Mike Brummer with Metro Regional Program about his principalship practicum and he discussed a project about safety alerts that are visible for students and adults who are Deaf and hard of hearing. During this project, he has come across different systems that schools for the deaf use that really benefit students. One system is a message board through a TV system: when the alert goes off the TV will display an alert symbol so the students know what kind of plan needs to happen for them to be safe. The Rocky Mountain Deaf School in Denver, Colorado had a light system: blue mean change of classes, green mean a message is on the message board, and red mean emergency and to check the message board immediately. The Kansas School for the Deaf have a visible light system in all of the classrooms, dorm, and even bathrooms. These are just some examples of ways schools can address the concern, worry, and fear from students and parents of Deaf and hard of hearing individuals. I want to thank Mike Brummer for allowing me to use his photos and to get more information on what other schools are using to support our Deaf and Hard or Hearing students. Do you know your child’s procedures for emergency notifications in the classroom? If you don’t, and would like assistance, please feel free to contact me at jessica.larrison@nebraska.gov



Hearing Loss in Children

Kathy Scusa, Advocacy Specialist

Hearing loss in children is common, affecting between 1 to 5 out of every 1,000 babies. (Numbers vary depending on the study being used.) Although many things can lead to infant hearing loss, about half the time, no cause is found. Some common causes of hearing loss in children occur if the child:

- was born prematurely
- stayed in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU)
- had newborn jaundice with bilirubin level high enough to require a blood transfusion
- was given medications that can lead to hearing loss
- has family members with childhood hearing loss
- had certain complications at birth
- had many ear infections
- had infections such as meningitis or cytomegalovirus
- was exposed to very loud sounds or noises, even briefly



Newborn hearing screening identifies most children born with a hearing loss. Infant hearing screenings became widespread with The Newborn and Infant Hearing Screening and Intervention Act of 1999. As of June 2018, 43 states, The District of Columbia and Puerto Rico mandate newborn hearing screenings. Today, in the United States, 97 percent of newborns receive infant screenings for hearing loss. This allows health care workers to identify possible hearing loss early on. With early diagnosis, more intervention can occur before the child is through critical phases of language development, allowing them to develop language at the same rate as hearing children. In some cases, hearing loss is caused by things like infections, trauma, and damaging noise levels. The hearing loss problem doesn't emerge until later in childhood. Researchers believe that the number of children who have hearing loss doubles between birth and the teen years. So, it's important to have kids' hearing checked regularly as they grow.

Hearing loss can affect a child's ability to develop speech, language, and social skills. The earlier children with hearing loss start getting services, the more likely they are to reach their full potential. Once a child has a diagnosis of hearing loss it is up to the parents to decide how to proceed with services for their child. That can be starting to learn sign language with them, getting hearing aids or cochlear implants, or starting speech therapy. However parents decide to proceed it is very important that the child's communication skills develop at the same age as they would in hearing children. With intervention, children diagnosed with hearing loss can be developmentally on par with their hearing peers. Without intervention, the cost is tremendous, falling behind in language development, social interaction, education and emotionally lagging.

I won't debate what is the best course of action for parents to take. The decision that's right for the child and the family is up to the parents! Whether they decide to learn ASL, get cochlear implants or fit the child with hearing aids, parents will do what they feel is best for their children. If you would like to discuss anything hearing related or NCDHH's programs and services, please contact me at my North Platte office phone number (308) 535-6600 or you can email me at kathy.scusa@nebraska.gov. I look forward to serving you.

Article Sources:

- <https://www.healthyhearing.com/report/52595-New-study-looks-at-outcomes-for-kids-with-hearing-loss>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/hearingloss/research.html>
- <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/hear.html>

Auditory Fatigue and Hearing Loss

Brittney Isom, Advocacy Specialist



Many people are worn-out after a long day of meetings, family gatherings or other functions that requires attention and concentration. Now add hearing loss to that equation. Auditory fatigue is a condition caused by the increased effort to listen and understand due to hearing loss. According to Healthy Hearing, the brain plays an important role in our ability to hear, understand and speak. The sensory hair cells of the inner ear are responsible for translating the noise the outer ear gathers into electrical signals, which they send along the auditory nerve to the brain. Each

hair cell is responsible for translating a specific pitch or frequency. When these cells die or are damaged, the auditory system loses the ability to translate that frequency, causing the brain to work harder to process incoming information (Clason, 2017).

If you think you are experiencing auditory fatigue, there are different ways to help fight the exhaustion:

- Hearing aids or Assistive Listening Devices can help reduce listening effort and eliminate background noise.
- Take a break from the noise. This will give you a chance to regroup and give your brain much needed break.
- Take a nap. According to the National Sleep Foundation, a 20-30min nap can improve your alertness and performance. Along with the energy boost, you'll get the added bonus of quiet time. (Foundation, 2019)

Hearing Benefits of Performing Music

Aaron Rothenberger, Advocacy Specialist



One of the biggest complaints I hear from people at my booths and presentations is how hard it is to hear voices when there is a lot of background noise going on. They tell me that one on one they can hear just fine, but when there is a large group all talking at the same time, hearing is extra difficult for them. Researchers have been finding that there are ways to train yourself to make it easier to differentiate sounds in noise. Moreover, what they found might surprise you, but it makes a whole lot of sense when you think about it. People who play instruments and sing regularly can

hear in noise better than those who do not. There is a phenomenon called the Cocktail Party Effect or more scientifically Selective Attention. It is an ability to focus on one conversation amongst a large amount of competing noise. People who have had music training will likely be better at this skill since they are well-practiced in listening to the sound of their instrument while it is played with other performers.

“Music training ‘fine-tunes’ the nervous system. If the materials that you work with are sound, then it is reasonable to suppose that all of your faculties involved with taking it in, holding it in memory and relating physically to it should be sharpened.” Dr. Nina Kraus, director of the Auditory Neuroscience Laboratory.

The study also found that people who had some musical training many years ago still had some of the neurological benefits of music-making. If you played or sang as a child, your brain wired in the skill of listening in on your sound amongst other competing sounds. Although there are benefits to just listening to music, the biggest gain in hearing will come to those that participate in the making of music. Continued practice will only make you better at picking out the sound of your friend's voice while you are out to eat at a busy restaurant. As with many other skills in life, once every so often is not an effective way to wire your brain to hear sound. If you have trouble hearing in noise, consider picking up an instrument, or joining your local choir. Not only will it help you hear better, you might even pick up some friends along the way.

Omaha Native Robb Dooling cycles 545 mile ride

Cody McEvoy, Advocacy Specialist

A Deaf bicycle team from Washington D.C. with the team name “Flying Hands” just finished a 545-mile bike ride from San Francisco to Los Angeles, California for a fundraiser event supporting AIDS awareness. The AIDS/LifeCycle is an annual 7 day bike ride that raises support for awareness and services for HIV/AIDS. Some of you may know, Nebraska’s very own Robb Dooling who currently lives in Washington D.C participated in the cycling event. Robb Dooling has been heavily involved in cycling and promoting safety for bikers and commute in the city of D.C and being heavily involved in the legislation.



When asked one of the cyclist Torres on the team name “Flying Hands”, they wanted to have a Deaf-related team name and while using sign language, they founded the name. The jerseys worn by the Flying Hands team are also created by a Deaf artist searching through #DeafTalent by the name of Richard Bauman.



Flying Hands raised more than \$16,000 dollars for AIDS services and already looking forward to participating again in 2020.

The story can be found on the Daily moth via Facebook at the address <https://www.facebook.com/TheDailyMoth/videos/828341347536727/?v=828341347536727>

Don't forget to check out NCDHH on Facebook at:
www.facebook.com/nebraskacommissionforthe deafandhardofhearing/

We're also on Twitter! @NebCDHH

You can also find information on our website at www.ncdhh.nebraska.gov



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