

Dave Heineman
Governor

Mr. Dillard Delts
Chairperson

Dr. Peter Seiler
Executive Director

The Communicator

Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing



A newsletter surveying health, government and issues affecting Nebraskans.

NCDHH HITS THE ROAD

Field Representatives went to several Nebraska county fairs to provide information regarding NCDHH services to a record number of people. Approximately 400 hours of staff time were devoted to increasing awareness of NCDHH services and discussing how to personalize these services to people living in rural areas.

By attending fairs, Field Representatives got the chance to meet new clients, advise people on technology, and increase awareness of the issues involving hearing loss. The new consumers that Field Representatives encountered varied in age from the very young to the elderly. Many fairgoers collected information to share with family members and friends who have a hearing loss. Several clients returned more than once as questions and concerns came to mind. In spite of the record high summertime temperatures, the Field Representatives reported excellent attendance.



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Dr. Seiler, Executive Director, stated that attending county fairs was another way to get the message out to people who are experiencing hearing loss or who have a family member or friend with one. He said that the message was simple: "There is help and support for those with hearing loss and no one has to endure this alone." Dr. Seiler added that he appreciated the staff who attended these fairs because they gave up their weekends to serve the Nebraskans.



NCDHH Calendar of Upcoming Events

Additional information on the listed events can be found online at www.ncdhh.ne.gov/calendar.html

November

1, 2:00pm-3:00pm, **Scottsbluff Hearing Loss Support Group meeting**, “Tinnitus”, Scottsbluff State Office Complex, 4500 Ave. I, Donita Mains, (800) 545-6244

4, 1:00pm – 3:00pm, **Sign Language Interpreter Review Board Meeting**, Lincoln Medical Education Partnership, 4600 Valley Road, Classroom 4A, Traci Cooney, (800) 545-6244

4-5, **Nebraska Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf Fall Conference**, UNMC-Sorrell Center for Health Science Education, 42nd and Emile Street, Omaha, Gretchen Whitney, neridconference@gmail.com

12, 10:00am-2:00pm, **Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment Distance Courses**; an Overview of Interpreting for Students with Cochlear Implants, BoysTown, Christine Grassmeyer, (402) 452-5039

15, 2:00pm-4:00pm, **Mental Health Advisory Meeting**, Lincoln Medical Education Partnership, room 4A, 4600 Valley Road, Lincoln, Peggy Williams, (800) 545-6244 or peggy.williams@nebraska.gov

15, 2:00pm-3:00pm, **Kearney Hearing Loss Support Group meeting**, Northridge Senior Living, 5410 17th Ave., Kearney, Donita Mains, (800) 545-6244

15, 7:00pm-8:00pm, **Hearing Loss and the Professional**, University of Nebraska, Kearney, College of Education, Room B154, Donita Mains, (800) 545-6244

17, 1:30pm - 2:30pm, **Gothenburg Hearing Loss Support Group**, “Tinnitus”, Stone Hearth Estates, 110 20th Street, Donita Mains, (800) 545-6244

19, 5:00pm-8:00pm, **Omaha Association of the Deaf**, 4050 Hillsdale Ave., Barb Nacarelli, nac-cie@aol.com

22, 1:30pm-2:30pm, **North Platte Hearing Loss Support Group meeting**, “Tinnitus”, First Ev. Lutheran Church, 5th and Willow, Donita Mains, (800) 545-6244

NCDHH Staff

Dr. Peter Seiler, Executive Director
Lori Burrage, Business Manager II
Traci Cooney, Staff Assistant II
Beth Ellsworth, Field Representative II
Janet Killam, Field Representative II
Donita Mains, Field Representative III
Ben Sparks, Public Information Officer
Norman Weverka, Field Representative III
Peggy Williams, Mental Health Specialist
Cindy Woldt, Staff Assistant II

Chairperson’s Corner

Hello! As you may know the staff here at Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) have weathered some challenging times the past few years in the form of:

- The retirement of Director Tanya Wendel
- Appointment of Dr. Peter Seiler as the new Director of NCDHH
- Budget cuts
- Closing of the Scottsbluff office due to budget cuts
- Realignment of duties to better serve members of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities

Throughout these challenging times, the staff has remained focused and dedicated to providing the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities the best possible service!

I hope you will take a moment to commend the Commission staff members for their dedication in providing us all with the best possible service, thus allowing each of us to function effectively among our peers as citizens of the State of Nebraska!

In the coming months, I and some of my fellow Commissioners will be attending various community organization meetings. As Chairperson of the Full Commission Board, I welcome insight from each of you regarding ways to improve the service provided by NCDHH. Feel free to pull me or another Commissioner aside and let us know what we can do to help you!

Sincerely,
Dillard W. Delts

Hearing Loss and Emergency Preparedness

-Beth Ellsworth

With all of the flooding in recent months and the unexpectedness of disasters it is so important to prepare so we are not caught off guard. But what is necessary and what is not?

For those of us with hearing aids, cochlear implants and assisted listening devices it is crucial that they be stored in a container that will protect them. Also, getting in the habit of setting them near us so we can grab them is also important. For example, I used to keep my hearing aids in a container in another room at night but now I put them in a container next to my bed so I can get them without delay. The American Red Cross recommends storing an extra hearing aid (if possible, but who can afford an extra hearing aid or CI!) or cochlear implant with the emergency supplies.



Speaking of emergency supplies; here is a list of important items to include:

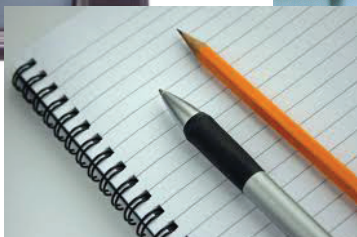
*Extra batteries for hearing aids, implants, light or loud phone signaler (it is a good idea to have at least one battery operated phone and signaler (light or audible)

*Keep one battery operated phone and signaler charged

* Have pen, pencil and pad of paper stored in a secure place. NCDHH has a terrific card that identifies emergency contact, communication tips, pictures and phrases for emergency personnel.

- Prepare in advance:
- Contact the American Red Cross in your area and talk with them about your needs in the event of an emergency.
- Contact your TV stations and keep on them to broadcast all news and emergency information in open caption format
- Be an advocate and tell hotels and places you stay what you will need. For example, televisions with closed captioning, amplified phone, visual and audible alarms

This is just a start to what needs to be done to prepare for an emergency. To learn more contact the American Red Cross at www.Prepare.org If you do not have internet please contact me for a written copy of the American Red Cross guidelines specific for hearing loss. I would be happy to work with you in making a plan!



**American
Red Cross**

Hearing Loss Among Military a Silent Epidemic

Carole Daman

-Editor, Sertoman

*The men will cheer and the boys will shout, the ladies they will all turn out
And we'll all feel gay when Johnny comes marching home.*

These lyrics from the famous Civil War song, When Johnny Comes Marching Home, speak to the celebration of soldiers returning home from war. But according to experts, an epidemic number of soldiers serving in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan miss those cheers and shouts. That's because they return home with what the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs calls the #1 disability among troops serving in the war on terror – hearing damage.

War has always been a noisy affair. Tanks, heavy arms fire and even helicopter turbines take their toll on soldiers' hearing. But the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan produced a new and even more dangerous threat - the Improvised Explosive Device, or IED. The powerful blast created by an IED causes violent changes in air pressure that can rupture the eardrum and break bones inside the ear. Even more dangerous than the power of an IED is its unexpectedness. Soldiers travelling along a road often don't expect an IED to explode next to their vehicle and many are not wearing the earplugs issued to them that offer at least a little protection to their hearing.

How serious is hearing damage sustained by our soldiers? Of the estimated 1.3 million troops who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, nearly 70,000 are on disability for tinnitus, a potentially debilitating ringing in the ears, and over 58,000 more are on disability for hearing loss. Experts predict it could take decades before the true toll becomes clear. And in addition to the personal price these soldiers pay, the dollar cost to our country is staggering. In 2011 alone, disability payments to soldiers with hearing damage are projected to reach \$1.1 billion.

Hearing damage is not just a challenge to be dealt with when soldiers return home or a financial outcome of war; it is a very real battlefield threat. Soldiers must be able to communicate and react quickly to protect both themselves and their unit. When a radioed command to "fall back" is heard by a soldier with hearing damage as "attack", his response can threaten his life and the lives of his fellow soldiers. Air Force Colonel and ENT specialist Dr. Joseph Brennan saw firsthand in Iraq how dangerous hearing loss on the battlefield can be.

"There was a soldier who was in two IED blasts. The second explosion blew out his ear drums and he couldn't hear a thing," Brennan said. "The soldier's unit was on a roof top in a firefight and bullets were buzzing by the soldier's head. His sergeant had to run out and tackle him to get him out of the line of fire because he couldn't hear his comrades yelling for him to take cover."

The military takes the battlefield threat posed by hearing damage seriously and has worked in recent years to equip soldiers with improved earplugs, better instruct them on hearing protection and provide faster identification of soldiers suffering hearing damage. For the first time in American warfare, hearing specialists or hearing-trained medics are now stationed on the front lines instead of just at field hospitals, and administer hearing tests to soldiers before they go out on patrol and when they return to base if they were exposed to bombs or gunfire.

But until a way is found to eliminate the dangers of battlefield noise, too many Johnnies (and Joans) will miss out on the cheers and shouts when they come marching home.

Individuals with Partial Hearing Loss May Benefit from Hybrid Cochlear Implant

Chicago -

Northwestern Memorial physicians participating in an investigative study

Hearing loss can affect anyone at any time. But it can be especially frightening for someone who suddenly starts to lose hearing during adulthood. Tom Groves, 77, first noticed his diminishing hearing when he was in his early 40s. He was unable to hold conversations with large groups of people, found it nearly impossible to socialize in high-background noise environments like restaurants and couldn't enjoy radio, TV and movies unless they were captioned. Now, Groves is hearing much better than he has in 30 years, thanks to an experimental hybrid cochlear implant.

Northwestern Memorial Hospital is one of nine centers in the U.S., and the only in Illinois, that is participating in a study investigating the effectiveness of a new cochlear implant device that aims to restore hearing for individuals with high-frequency hearing loss and functional low-frequency hearing.

This group of patients doesn't meet the criteria for conventional cochlear implants because they have near perfect residual hearing in low pitches that allows them to perform well on tests used to determine candidacy for traditional implants. However, their hearing in high pitches is so poor that a hearing aid is not helpful, making them ideally suited for the hybrid implant, which addresses both issues.

The hybrid cochlear implant works in the same way as traditional cochlear implants, stimulating nerve endings in the cochlear so that high-pitched sounds can be heard. In addition, it also involves amplification for low-pitched sounds, similar to a hearing aid. Like traditional cochlear implants, the hybrid version is worn outside the ear and converts sounds into acoustic and electric signals.

"The surgical implantation of cochlear devices is typically done on an outpatient basis, and usually with non-serious complications, aside from mild discomfort following surgery," said Northwestern Medicine otolaryngologist Alan Micco, MD, co-investigator of the study and chief of otology/neurotology at the Feinberg School of Medicine. "A few weeks following surgery, the activation process and fine-tuning take place to determine what audio thresholds work best for the individual, and sounds can usually be perceived shortly thereafter."

Post-activation evaluations take place at three, six and 12 months following the initial activation process to assess progress of the cochlear implant. An audiologist will also test the implant to determine if participants are able to understand words, sentences in noisy and quiet environments, as well as experience music recognition.

A few months post-surgery, a recipient is happy to have some of his hearing restored. "I'm very excited and encouraged by my experience with the implant. I know I'm hearing better than I have for many, many years, and for that I'm very grateful."

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**Donita Mains,
Field Representative III**

Greetings!

It was a hot summer and I am so glad it is fall. And the activities continue. The summer was very busy for NCDHH and you know if you tried to call your local field representative that we were out of the office quite a bit.

I hosted informational booths at the Lincoln County Fair in North Platte and the Deuel County Fair in Chappell this year. Norm and I had a booth at the State Fair in Grand Island on Older Nebraskans Day. I was also at Rail Fest in North Platte again this year. Getting the information out to individuals about hearing loss services is important.

Again this year, the North Platte Telegraph hosted a Senior Lifestyles Information Festival and the attendance was great. The Kearney Hub hosted one in October and I had a booth there too.

There is exciting news about Hearing Loss Support Groups around the area. The support groups meet once a month to get some educational information and network with others. In my area there is one in Scottsbluff, North Platte, Gothenburg, and two in Kearney. You can check out the dates and times on our website. Beth Ellsworth also facilitates groups in Grand Island, and Omaha. We look forward to setting one up in Lincoln soon!

Let me know if you have questions about hearing loss services or if there is a wellness fair, etc in your area that we can be part of.



**Norman Weverka,
Field Representative III**

In July, I had a booth at the Nemaha, Pawnee and Saunders County Fairs. It was very hot during the first two fairs and the attendance was not as expected, however several people came to the booth asking about our agency's services. More people came toward the evening when the heat went down a bit. The Saunders County Fair had a big attendance due to cooler weather and a lot of programs going on.

I provided information and services on Senior Citizens Day at the Lancaster County and Nebraska State Fairs.

The statewide Nebraska Law Enforcement Training in Grand Island was held in August. I also taught a sign language Class for UNL Up-bound program for new UNL students for six weeks.

Lastly, NCDHH hosted a booth at the famous Husker Harvest Days. This drew a huge crowd from all over the midwest. Over 6,000 ear plugs were given out each day, however they ran out in the afternoon. I made a trip to Hasting where we did a presentation at the Goldbeck Towers. The room had at least 50 people with hearing loss and there were a lot of questions about our services.

Report on Mental Health in Nebraska



Peggy Williams,
NCDHH Mental Health
Specialist

Since the last newsletter was published, I have been busy providing training to a variety of agencies and programs. In January, 2011 we received a grant from the Omaha Enrichment Foundation to conduct training for mental health and substance abuse providers. "Treatment and Delivery of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing" was held on Thursday, September 22nd. The purpose for this training was to educate licensed mental health practitioners and substance abuse providers in Douglas and Sarpy Counties on clinical issues, testing, diagnoses, treatment planning and utilizing sign language interpreters in treating Deaf and Hard of Hearing people. Twenty-one mental health and substance abuse professionals and interpreters attended the workshop.

Dr. Tom Haley, a licensed psychologist and certified rehabilitation counselor in the state of Nebraska, Dr. James Haley, a licensed psychologist and nationally certified counselor and Dr. Ron Lybarger, licensed psychologist and holds degrees in Sign Language interpreting, addiction studies and counseling psychology were the presenters. Richard McCowin, a Deaf consumer from Omaha spoke about his personal experiences receiving services.

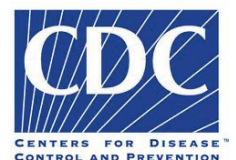
I have had the opportunity to provide an assortment of training during this past year to a variety of agencies and programs on topics pertaining to mental health and substance abuse services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people as well as domestic violence and the Deaf community. These agencies and programs consist of St. Elizabeth Hospital, Kaplan University, Doane College, The Friendship Home, Greater Nebraska Regional Sertoma Conference, University Sertoma, Women's Center for Advancement, Nebraska Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Coalition, NE Sertoma and the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska.

If you would like to schedule training for your agency or program, please email me at peggy.williams@nebraska.gov. I will be happy to make arrangements with you to provide the necessary training for your program.

Have a beautiful fall and enjoy the warmth of the sunshine!

Congenital cytomegalovirus (CMV) infection during pregnancy is a preventable risk factor for hearing loss among children.

A 2005 HealthStyles survey by CDC found that only 14% of female respondents had heard of CMV.





**Beth Ellsworth,
Field Representative II**

As I write this the weather has turned and it's nearly fall. I hope everyone had a wonderful summer! It was a busy time at NCDHH. There were many fairs and a new support groups were formed. One began in Grand Island at Primrose Retirement Community for people who have a hearing loss or are deaf. We meet the 3rd Tuesday of each month and at our September meeting three top areas of concern are:

*Finding user friendly assistive listening devices for group settings. Background noise is a big concern! The loop system was identified as the best option after discussing other kinds of assistive listening devices such as the pocket talker and FM system.

*The high cost of hearing aids and the fact that they are only covered by Medicaid. NCDHH had a task force on this several years ago but met with much resistance. Is it time to revisit this? One idea is for all of us to write to AARP and let them know of our need. Yes, it's true that hearing loss happens also to younger people but AARP may be the force we need to address this issue.

*Communication strategies and tips that will create an environment that includes those who have a hearing loss or are deaf. One big frustration that was expressed by all is the frustration of asking for what is needed (asking for face to face or that others not cover their mouth, etc.) only to have to repeat it again a minute later.

There is so much that can be done to make living with a hearing loss less frustrating! Education to provide awareness is a big need that NCDHH continues to work on. What else would you like to see NCDHH focus on to create awareness? I'd love to hear from you!



**Ben Sparks,
Public Information Officer I**

NCDHH Establishes Two Internships for Students in ITPs.

During the Summer, NCDHH and Metro Community College established two internships for students in Interpreter Training Programs. The intent of these internships is to provide supplementary "real-world" interpreting experience while still under the guidance of a licensed sign language interpreter. This experience will help interpreters achieve certification and reduce the shortage of qualified interpreters here in Nebraska.

This year's interns were Diedra Schaub and Doreen Opp. Under the supervision of Ben Sparks, they were given the opportunity to interpret for Deaf staff in various capacities. These opportunities ranged from client meetings and presentations to booths at county fairs.

"I couldn't have asked for a better place to learn about Deaf culture!" -Diedra Schaub

For more information on setting up an internship, please contact Ben Sparks at (800) 545-6244 or ben.sparks@nebraska.gov

Interpreter Spotlight: Connie Herndon, Region IV Representative

How long have you been a certified interpreter? I received my RID Certificate of Transliteration in 1997 and my RID Certificate of Interpretation in 1998.

How did you become interested in the field of interpreting? During the last semester of my senior year of college, I took a sign language course from my piano instructor, a concert pianist who was deaf. Growing up in Germany in a family of musicians, she was educated in an oral environment and learned to play the piano even without hearing it. She decided she wanted to learn sign language and worked with an insightful teaching team who provided opportunities to me and my classmates to meet and interact with the Deaf Community. I immediately fell in love with the language, the culture, and the people.

What is the most frustrating part of the profession? The rewards and joys far outweigh any frustrations. Lack of awareness of the abilities and the needs of Deaf students and employees by administrators, lack of respect for the work interpreters do by hearing consumers, and interpreters' own lack of pride in their profession are frustrating challenges I encounter on a regular basis. Tactful education remains on the interpreter's job description!

Can you describe a highlight of your interpreting career? Meeting Deaf people and becoming an interpreter changed who I am. That critical impact is THE highlight of my career and has taken me places I never imagined.

Who are the interpreters that you admire the most? I admire interpreters who love their work, continue to grow, support colleagues, and keep "Deaf Heart" central to all they do.

One interpreter who sent chills down my spine and warmed my heart at the same time was Lillian Beard (1908-2010), a Texas interpreter with adoptive Deaf parents who served on RID's very first board. Her pioneering leadership in the profession, her selfless work and her long career inspire me. What an amazing life she led! What an awesome legacy she has left for us!

What is something that readers would be surprised to learn about you?

My brother is hard of hearing. His audiogram reveals that he has been moderately to profoundly deaf since early childhood. However, that diagnosis wasn't confirmed until after I had already become an interpreter. He excelled as an ASL student, but lives in the hearing world. He's an award-winning journalist in Kentucky.



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MEDIA CENTER STAFF PICKS

By: Ben Sparks



The Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has purchased dozens of new items for the Media Center just in time for Fall reading and viewing! We have items for children, adults, students, teachers, and parents. Maybe you're searching for a book to do a school report? Maybe you are looking for a resource to help you do research on hearing loss and youth? Many popular culture items have been brought into inventory such as I'll Scream Later, by Marlee Matlin as well as specialized items such as the Signs For Recovery DVD or The Consumer Handbook on Tinnitus. Chances are, we have a new item that will satisfy any question or concern about hearing loss.

The cost? They're FREE for Nebraska residents to check out. All you need to do is set up an account, which only takes a minute or two. Media Center materials can even be mailed, with the understanding that the borrower is responsible for the return postage and has to follow the same guidelines as any other borrower.

Deaf Culture: The Deaf History Reader: The incisive articles collected here include an exploration of the genesis of the Deaf community and early evidence of the use of sign language; a comparison of a failed, oralist school for deaf students in Virginia to the success of the American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut; the development of Deaf consciousness among people who carried a dominant gene for deafness; a biographical sketch of Mary Ann Walworth Booth, an accomplished deaf woman who lived on the Western frontier; an account of Deaf agency in the Indiana Institution and the Evansville Day School; the early antecedents of mainstreaming deaf children despite the objections of their parents; a profile of Alexander Graham Bell that contrasts his support of eugenics to his defense of Deaf rights; the conflicting actions of supervisors of the Pennsylvania Society for the Advancement of the Deaf; and finally, the critical role played by deaf people in the Chicago Mission for the Deaf's success in maintaining the Deaf community for more than five decades. The remarkably rich range of topics treated in The Deaf History Reader assure its future status as a standard resource for all Deaf scholars and students.

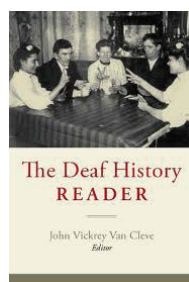
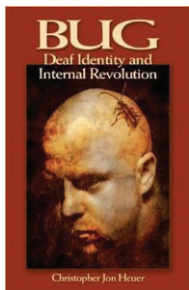
Hearing Loss: Noise Induced Hearing Loss in Youth Caused by Leisure Noise

Young people tend to listen to loud music in almost every environment, individually using their personal music players, as well as in groups in nightclubs and concerts festivals. As a consequence, an increase in prevalence of noise-induced hearing loss in adolescents and young adults is assumed. This books assesses the current scientific insights regarding the role of leisure noise exposure in the development of temporary and/or permanent auditory deterioration in young people.

One in four students graduating this year will have measurable hearing loss. -US Department of Health

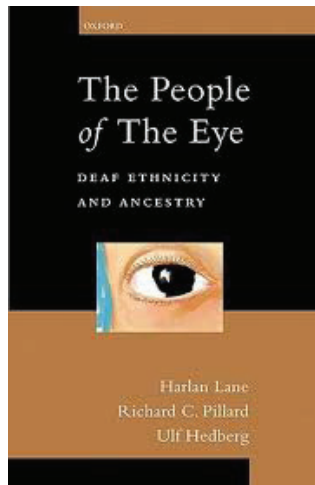
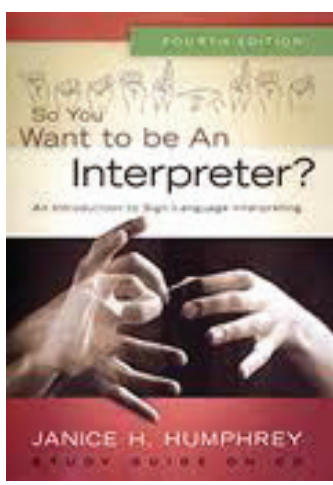
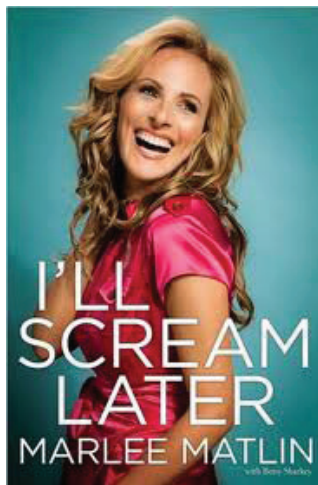
Interpreting: RID's Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI) Sample Written Test DVD

This material is NOT for those wishing to take the NIC written test. This package contains written English and taped ASL versions of the multiple choice sample test developed by the CDI Task Force. These sample questions are excellent indicators of the types of questions found on RID's Certified Deaf Interpreter Written Test.



"This book really opens your eyes to Deaf history in America. It shows that we can do so much!"

-Norman Weverka



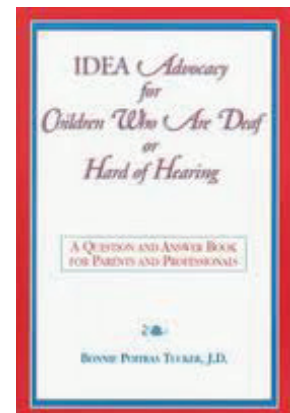
Parents & Professionals: IDEA Advocacy for Children Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing Empowers parents in obtaining necessary and appropriate educational services for their children who are hearing impaired according to the most recent legislation. Outlines in simple, understandable language, the rights granted to deaf and hard-of-hearing children by the 1997 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Cochlear Technology: Surgical Consent; Bioethics and Cochlear Implantation

With the rate of cochlear implantation reaching 80% to 90% of all deaf children, some as young as five months old, **Surgical Consent: Bioethics and Cochlear Implantation** arrives at a critical juncture. This comprehensive collection features essays by Priscilla Alderson, Inger Lise Skog Hansen, Hilde Hauland, volume editor Linda Komesaroff, Paddy Ladd, Harlan Lane, Karen Lloyd, Eithne Mills, Paal Richard Peterson, Gunilla Preisler, Kristina Svartholm, and Michael Uniacke. These worldwide renowned ethicists, educators, and Deaf leaders express their diverse perspectives on the bioethics of childhood cochlear implantation according to their discipline and a number of themes of inquiry: human rights, medical and social ethics, psychology, education, globalization, identity, life pathways, democracy, media, law, and biotechnology.

Drawing on current research, this volume presents the varying reactions around the globe to the high rate of implantation. These views contrast sharply with the medical perspective of deafness overwhelmingly promoted through the media and by the cochlear implantation industry. At the same time, the contributors aim to disrupt the binaries that have long dominated the field of deafness — speech versus sign, instruction through speech and sign systems versus bilingual education, and medical intervention versus cultural membership in the Deaf community.

Surgical Consent begins and ends with the voices of Deaf people. Their articulate and, at times, raw insights clearly delineate the issues of power, positioning, and minority-majority group relations that are inherent in the dominant hearing culture's understanding of diversity and globalization.



Norm Weverka - Role Model/Advocate for People Who Live With Hearing Loss

-Carol A. Cisco, Editor, Pawnee Republican

Norm Weverka is just like any one of us. He likes Sudoku puzzles, he is proud of his Czech heritage, and he takes his work seriously.

He works for the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, traveling showing people that they can cope with hearing loss and advocating for issues that affect Nebraskans who are deaf or hard of hearing. He spent three days at the Pawnee County Fair, spreading awareness about the services and technology available to the hard of hearing.

Sometimes, what's needed is a good role model to show people that deafness doesn't have to be a handicap. Norm's role model was his father, who lived and farmed between Bruno and Brainard, Nebraska. His father was deafened overnight at the age of 13. He was able to attend the Nebraska School for the Deaf for one year, but when his father died, he became responsible for his mother, seven sisters, and one brother.

Norm's father and mother met during World War II when they worked at a factory making munitions for the war. "My mother saw my father working at the factory and asked why he was working by himself. They said he was deaf and she fell in love with him, they dated and married," Norm retells.

Norm learned how to survive hard times, too, and beyond that, he learned how to thrive.

"I don't miss hearing. I just don't know what hearing is any more. I kind of grew out of it," Norm explained. "It's a good thing I can see. I don't think I could stand being blind. Helen Keller, who was deaf and blind, was once asked which she would prefer, to be deaf or blind, and she chose blind because deafness impacts communication."

Norm attended school with hearing children and did well enough. His brother who was born deaf didn't have a chance to establish spoken language and attended the Nebraska School for the Deaf. When Norm saw what the school was like, he wanted to go there too, but his parents said his grades were good enough in the public school. "Being deaf, I saw the value of a school for the deaf," Norm recalls. "It was not just a school, it was a visible community. People saw that the deaf were able to succeed."

Norm has worked at the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing for 21 years now. He understands the obstacles that can be faced by the deaf and hard of hearing in a hearing world. He wants to help other people with hearing loss gain more independence and have access to a full life. The commission helps people with hearing loss get free assistive technology so they can use the phone and advocates for them in situations where their hearing loss interferes with their activities.



Norm Weverka, right, explains through his sign language interpreter intern, left, about free phone equipment available to Nebraskans with a hearing loss.

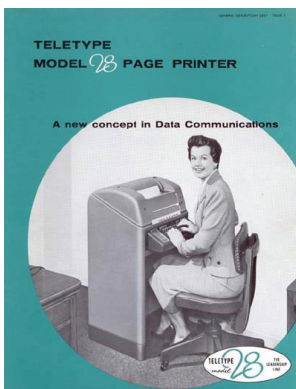
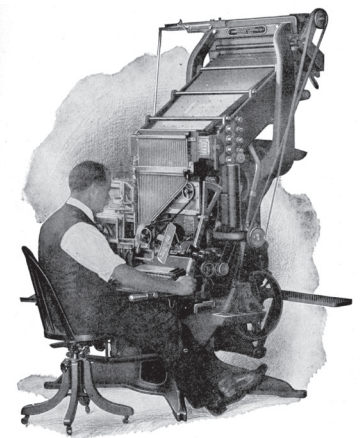
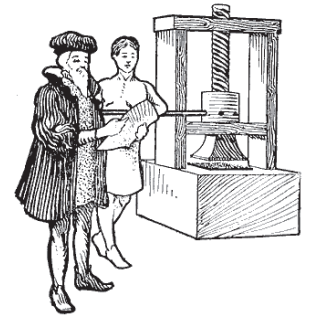
Watching the World Change Onscreen

Janet Killam

The Information Age has witnessed increases and decreases in accessibility to news and information. At first, people relied on images and the printed word in newspapers and magazines for information. This data was slow to spread but was accessible to people with hearing losses. Even with “silent film”, accessibility was not an issue with script being shown on the silver screen.

With the advent of television and radio came a time of inaccessible media to people with hearing losses. The aural, spoken word took hold via television and radio waves.

The chase was on for an inexpensive accessible communication media. This surge in research and invention led to the development of TTYs in the 1960’s by Western Electric for use by news media and later adopted by the Deaf community as a way to communicate using typical household telephone lines. This new technology started out as noisy, bulky machines, and through miniaturization, dwindled in size to pocket-sized wonders. In 1973, the engineering department of the Public Broadcasting System started work on the closed captioning system. They are credited with developing the same system we use today, as well as the first encoders/decoders used to create and view closed captioning. Gone were the days of travelling to a person’s home to share information.



Wireless devices, such as alpha-numeric pagers, freed people with hearing loss from landline telephone systems. The communication barrier was beginning to crumble. The speed of information flow increased year by year with the invention of each new gadget. Texting and emailing has become a preferred method of communication for many. Cell phones double as videophones. Children using “electronic tablets” such as the iPad can, at the touch of a button, call parents using video technology using their own choice of communication, whether it is sign language, voicing, or a little of both. Consumers with dual sensory losses can easily adjust font sizes to meet their needs while viewing text.



Robert Barker/University Photography

With the passage of H.R. 3101, the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act, the government is promising an increase in accessible programming regardless of format. Televisions are no longer the sole source of entertainment and news. Online sources were not covered by accessibility and closed caption-

ing regulations. Leaders in hearing loss communities are currently working together with industry leaders like Sony and YouTube to ensure that progress will not leave anyone behind again.





Interpreter News



One of the Midwest's trusted methods of measuring interpreter's skill is coming to an end. Dr. Seiler received information that the Kansas Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing will no longer be providing Quality Assurance Screening Test, QAST, materials as of January 1, 2015. KCDHH is the agency responsible for the creation of testing stimuli for the QAST.

The NCDHH Full Board, working cooperatively with the Interpreter Review Board, is in the process of establishing a task force to review available testing methods. The NCDHH Full Board voted to establish a task force that includes representatives from each of the following groups: Interpreter Review Board, Interpreter Issues Committee, Nebraska RID, Nebraska Association of the Deaf, Deaf-Blind Community, Oral Deaf Community and the Hearing Loss Association of America.

Some focus has been spent on the Board for Evaluation of Interpreters, BEI, developed by Texas' Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services and the University of Arizona.

The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, RID, the National certifying body, maintains a strong and vibrant evaluation process as well as a system of tracking required Continuing Education Units. NCDHH has been a Sponsor for RID CEUs for years and will continue to support their education and testing systems for sign language interpreters.



Interpreter Toolbox



Workshops

The Nebraska chapter of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, NeRID, will be hosting their Fall 2011 Conference November 4 & 5 at the University of Nebraska's Sorrell Center for Health Science Education, 42nd and Emile Streets, Omaha, Nebraska.

Two tracks of workshops will be offered. The first track, presented by J. Randy Thress, will focus on interpreting in the medical field through two workshops, "Introduction to Medical Terminology" and "Medical Anatomy". The second track, presented by Jonathan Scherling, will focus on interpreters in the educational environment through two workshops, "Regional Signs for Interpreters in Nebraska's Public Schools" and "Making the Good Life Better for Nebraska's Deaf Students".

For more information, please visit www.nebraskarid.org.

The University of Northern Colorado, Mid-America Regional Interpreter Education Center, is hosting an Institute for Legal Interpreting April 11-14, 2012. This conference will be covering topics such as

- The intersection between legal and healthcare interpreting
- Collaboration between Court Interpreting Managers/Administrative Offices of the Court and practitioners
- Skills development workshops with a track for CDIs
- ...and more

For more information, please visit www.unco.edu/marie/institute_for_legal_interpreting.html.

Learning to Use a Hearing Aid

from www.hearingloss.org

Adjusting to a hearing aid takes time, determination and patience. But, a hearing loss is more conspicuous than a hearing aid. Learning to use hearing aids is a process. Don't expect to buy the aid, put it in your ear, and walk out of the dispenser's office cured. Successful hearing aid use will take patience and education. Working with your dispenser, you will see gradual, increasing benefits.

Don't give up too quickly. Since part of you doesn't want to wear the aids anyway, it's easy to put them away in the drawer at the first frustrating experience. Make full use of the trial period and give hearing aids a serious and sincere try.

Here's some advice from successful hearing aid users:

- Use positive thinking to welcome the new sounds you are starting to hear again rather than resisting them.
- Ask your dispenser how long to wear your aid in the beginning.
- If you are having problems, no matter how small, go back to your dispenser. The hearing aid may need only a simple adjustment.
- If you don't like what you are hearing, don't be afraid to discuss your reactions with the dispenser.

Thinking about getting rid of your TTY?

Janet Killam

Do you have a TTY in your home, but haven't used it in a while? With the increase in use of videophones, many people are faced with the decision of whether or not to keep their landlines and TTYs.

In my opinion, the best choice is to keep all your options available. Keep your TTY handy in case your videophone breaks down and leaves you without a way of calling out for assistance.

If you decide you no longer need a TTY in your home, but don't know what to do with the one you have, there are a variety of options. Nursing homes, homeless shelters or other humanitarian services can certainly use this technology.

I'm impressed by how prevalent TTYs have become. I recently visited a nursing home that had a TTY available despite the fact the facility did not have any deaf residents. Hopefully in the future videophones will be as easily accessible.



Get up to date Deaf/Hard of Hearing News in your Inbox!

Keep up with upcoming activities through the weekly E-Communicator. The E-Communicator is delivered to e-mail inboxes once a week. If you don't currently receive our weekly newsletter, visit <http://www.ncdhh.ne.gov/newsletter-subscription-page.html> to sign up today. There, you will have the option to sign up for our other updates as well, such as NCDHH mental health news.

Spread the word about your events & activities!

Have You Ever Wanted to Try a Personal Listening Device?

Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) has an Equipment Loan Program that is available to residents of Nebraska.

The items that we have in the loan program are:

- Amplified Telephones (both cordless and corded)
- TTYs
- Assistive Listening Devices / Pocketalkers

Have you seen Assistive Listening devices but you weren't sure if they were a right match for your hearing loss? NCDHH administers a program for all Nebraskans in which you can "check out" equipment, free of charge, to try before a purchase. We understand the investment that these pieces of equipment require. We want to ensure that all Nebraskans can evaluate equipment that suits their needs without financial burden.

Steps to follow if you would like to borrow a piece of equipment from our equipment loan program.

1. Contact NCDHH office that is closest to you, locations are listed on the back page of this publication.
2. Ask to speak with a Field Representative, tell them you are interested in borrowing a piece of equipment from our loan program.
3. The Field Representative will obtain the following information from you in order to complete the loan:
 - a. Full name
 - b. Mailing address
 - c. Home phone/cell phone
 - d. Email address - optional
 - e. Secondary contact person's name and contact information, including a phone number.
4. The Field Representative will contact the Lincoln office and make your request.
5. If you are in one of our offices speaking to a Field Representative, they will ask that you wait for just a few minutes so that the loan agreement can be obtained from Lincoln for you to sign and date.
6. If you are calling from home, or meeting with a Field Representative outside of the office, the loan agreement will need to be mailed, faxed, or emailed to you. You will need to sign and date the loan agreement and return to the Lincoln office.
7. Once a signed loan agreement is received in the Lincoln office, you will be mailed the piece of equipment that you requested.
8. At the end of the loan period it is your responsibility to mail the equipment that you borrowed back to the Lincoln office.



Free Telephone Equipment for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nebraskans

The Public Service Commission and the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing jointly administer this program. The goal of this program is to provide financial assistance to persons with disabilities. This assistance allows these persons to obtain specialized telephone equipment such as amplified telephones, amplified cellular phones, TTYs and signaling devices.

One of the questions that we receive is, “Can I get a cell phone through the program?” The answer is yes, from a state approved vendor. Currently, telephones and plans are available through Sprint and Jitterbug. NCDHH and the Public Service Commission are recruiting additional cellular providers for the NSTEP voucher program. The process is quick and easy. If you denote that you would like to receive a cellular phone on your NSTEP application, you will receive step-by-step instructions on how to proceed with your order.

Sprint and Jitterbug offer equipment and programs to meet your needs. Jitterbug products are designed for ease of use and clarity. Sprint offers an array of equipment that will meet most needs with “data only” plans, texting, internet access and more. The equipment offered by both companies are hearing aid compatible, with rating ranging from M3/T3 to M4/T4. One recommendation is, before you redeem your voucher, go to a Sprint store and review the equipment on display. Make note of which model best meets your needs and apply for it through the NSTEP process.

The program will issue a voucher to approved applicants for the purchase of specialized telecommunications equipment. A list of approved vendors is included with the application package. Applicants can choose to have the equipment set up and training on the use of equipment if requested. If you are not sure what phone works best for you contact, NCDHH for an appointment to test equipment to determine what best meets your needs. NCDHH can assist you in processing your application and help you select the correct equipment for you.

To qualify for NSTEP, you must meet the following requirements:

- You have a certified hearing, visual and hearing, or speech disability which prevents you from using the telephone effectively;
- You are three years of age or older, and can demonstrate the ability to use the equipment
- You must have phone service or have applied for phone service in the state of Nebraska at your place of residence
- You are a current resident of the state of Nebraska;
- You have not applied or reapplied in this program in the last five years

For more information, please call (800) 545-6244.



Sprint
Relay

jitterbug

NCDHH Board News

The Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Full Board held elections at the September 9th meeting. NCDHH would like to recognize the following for their current and future work, providing advocacy, communication access and information to enhance awareness and services for improving the quality of life for all who experience hearing loss:

Mr. Dillard Delts, Chairperson
Ms. Diane Muelleman, Vice Chairperson
Ms. Amy Kasch, Secretary

NCDHH Full Board Meeting

December 9th, 2011

Time: 8:30 am

Omaha State Office Building
1313 Farnam, Classroom G
Omaha, NE

For more information, please contact Lori Burrage by phone at (800) 545-6244 v/tty or by email at lori.burrage@nebraska.gov.

NCDHH Interpreter Review Board Meeting

November 4, 2011

Time: 1:00 pm

Lincoln Medical Education Partnership
4600 Valley Rd, Classroom 4A
Lincoln, NE

For more information, please contact Traci Cooney by phone at (800) 545-6244 v/tty or by email at traci.cooney@nebraska.gov.

These meetings are open to the public. NCDHH encourages anyone to attend who wants to know more about our agency.



Do you have difficulty hearing a one-on-one conversation? Do you have your television volume up too high?

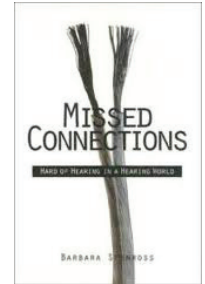


If so, you may benefit from the use of an Assistive Listening Device (ALD). Equipment has been designed to not only increase the *volume* of the sounds in your vicinity, but you can also adjust the *pitch*. Contact a Field Representative at one of our offices. They can prepare a 90-day loan to ensure a device will meet your needs.

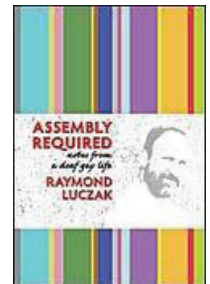


Continued from Page 11

Missed Connections: Hard of Hearing in a Hearing World; Self-help for people with hearing loss, their family and friends. Few physical problems are as poorly understood as hearing loss. In *Missed Connections*, a new kind of self-help book that combines sociological reporting with personal reflection, Barbara Stenross examines the nature of hearing loss and assesses the technologies and strategies that can improve communication at home and in public. Recounting the stories shared in a support group she found while trying to help her hard of hearing father, Stenross describes how “missed connections” are caused by “bluffing” and silence on the part of hard of hearing people and the misunderstandings of their friends and family members. Practical issues, such as how people with impaired hearing can continue to use the phone, what assistive technologies can help in public and private, and why hearing aids can’t always do enough, are also covered.



Assembly Required: Notes From a Deaf Gay Life; Raymond Liczak shares stories from his days growing up as a deaf gay man in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula and learning signs in secret, trying to follow music on the radio in order to be cool like his hearing classmates, and feeling clueless whenever gay cultural icons like the Village People, Queen, and Bette Midler were promoted in his small hometown. After he graduated from high school and enrolled at Galaudet University, he discovered gay literature and came out soon after.



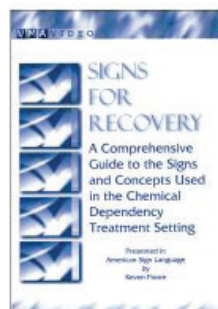
Sign Language: Beginner: English Idioms;

Don’t ‘miss the boat!’ How do you interpret English idioms using ASL? What if your client was a Deaf child who will see these idioms on a written test? Jenna Cassell and Joni Dunn show how to do both!

Intermediate: Signs for Recovery

A Comprehensive Guide to the Signs and Concepts Used in the Chemical Dependency Treatment Setting

The purpose of this DVD is to provide an understanding of the specialized signs and concepts used in the chemical dependency and substance abuse treatment setting.

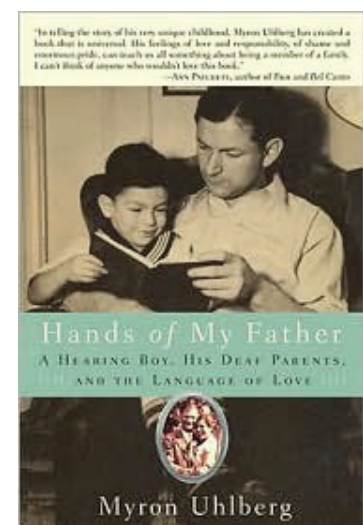


Children of Deaf Adults: Hands of my Father; Both heart-tugging and hilarious, Myron Uhlberg’s memoir tells the story of growing up as the hearing son of deaf parents and his life in a world that he found unaccountably beautiful, even as he longed to escape it.

“‘Does sound have rhythm?’”, my father asked. ‘Does it rise and fall like the ocean? Does it come and go like the wind?’”

Such were the kinds of questions that Myron Uhlberg’s deaf father asked him from earliest childhood, in his eternal quest to decipher, and to understand, the elusive nature of sound. Quite a challenge for a young boy, and one of many he would face.”

“As a CODA myself, I found myself nodding my head as I read, reflecting on similar experiences both heart-breaking and hilarious.” -Ben Sparks





**Nebraska
Commission
for the Deaf and
Hard of Hearing**

4600 Valley Road, Suite 420, Lincoln, NE 68510-4844

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articles for consideration and
insertion into future issues of
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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 neces-
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NCDHH Street & Electronic Address

Lincoln Office

4600 Valley Road
Suite 420
Lincoln, NE 68510-4844

Omaha Office

1313 Farnam-on-the-Mall
Omaha, NE 68102-1836

North Platte Office

200 S. Silber Avenue
Room 207
North Platte, NE
69101-4298

V/TTY: (402) 471-3593

VP: (866) 875-2931

V/TTY TOLL FREE:
(800) 545-6244

E-mail:
ncdhh@nebraska.gov