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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.

## Changes In The Air and On The Ground

2010!! A brand new year with a chance to do something good or better than the previous year. Many of you made resolutions to improve yourselves such as stop smoking, cut down on eating and drinking, get more exercise, be more careful with your money, and so on. What a great opportunity to make changes.

At NCDHH, we, the staff, are also looking at how to improve or make better our services. To do that, we have been working on reviewing our mission statement. Right now, our mission statement is:

‘The mission of the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is to improve the quality of life for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people of all ages by providing assistance, advocacy and access to services and information.’

The staff has decided that this statement no longer accurately reflect what we are doing. We also do not have a vision statement. The mission statement tells us and you what we do and why. A vision statement tells us and you what we hope NCDHH will look like in the future. Discussion is ongoing but I can tell you that this is an exciting time for the staff because they can visualize changes that need to happen, ensuring the new vision and the mission statements come true.

We also needed to look at issues that are facing us. Some of these issues require cooperation and collaboration with other agencies such as the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, the Nebraska Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services. Organizations such as the Omaha Chapter of Hearing Loss Association of America, the Nebraska Association of the Deaf, Hands and Voices of Nebraska, and Nebraska Registry of Interpreters, to name a few, all play a vital role in resolving the issues.

To that end, we are working on plans to begin or continue efforts to:

- Increase the numbers of interpreters in Nebraska and especially the western part of Nebraska and the rural areas
- Ensure quality of interpreting by hiring only licensed interpreters
  - Increased services to late-deafened people including the senior citizens and military veterans returning from the battlefields.
  - Increased services to people with hearing loss
  - Support interpreters in their efforts to maintain skills by offering workshops
  - Work closely with parents of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children
  - Work closely with agencies and programs to make sure the Deaf and Hard of Hearing people who have to deal with social and mental issues (Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, substance abuse, and meaningful and quality counseling) are able to access such programs and be given effective and quality communication.

The major barrier to our attempts to develop the plans and move forward is the State’s economy. As many of you know, Nebraska is still recovering from the economic depression of the past few years. NCDHH has had to cut its budget and have had to reduce its staff. That means we have to be more creative in how to move forward and how to meet the many needs of our Deaf and Hard of Hearing people in Nebraska. With your help and the willingness of the NCDHH staff, we can do it.



Dr. Peter Seiler  
Executive Director

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## NCDHH Calendar of Upcoming Events

Additional information on the listed events can be found online at [www.ncdhh.ne.gov/calendar.html](http://www.ncdhh.ne.gov/calendar.html).

### **January**

- 26, 12:15pm-1:15pm, 'Encouraging Consistent Hearing Aid Use in Infants', Lied Learning & Technology Center, Omaha, Mary Pat Moeller, Ph.D., Director of Center for Childhood Deafness.  
26, 5:00pm-6:30pm, Sign Language Club, NCDHH Scottsbluff Office, Nancy Marsh, Field Representative for NCDHH

### **February**

- 1, 6:00pm-8:00pm, Sign & Dine-Grand Island, Fazoli's, Kay Darnall  
2, 5:00pm-6:00pm, Sign & Dine-Ogallala, McDonalds, Norma Hamm, ESU 16  
3, 6:00pm-8:00pm, Sign & Dine-North Platte, Burger King  
5, 1:00pm-3:00pm, Interpreter Review Board Meeting, NCDHH Lincoln Office, Lori Burrage, Business Manager for NCDHH  
5, 6:00pm-8:00pm, Sign & Dine-Lincoln, Spikes Bar & Grill, Vicki Campbell  
16, 2:00pm-4:00pm, Mental Health Advisory Board Meeting, NCDHH Lincoln Office, Peggy Williams, Mental Health Specialist  
18, 1:15pm-2:15pm, Hearing Loss Support Group-Gothenburg, Ear/Hearing Defects/Wax, Stone Hearth Estates, Donita Mains, Field Representative for NCDHH  
23, 1:30pm-2:30pm, Hearing Loss Support Group-North Platte, Ear/Hearing Defects/Wax, First Lutheran Church, Donita Mains, Field Representative for NCDHH  
23, 12:15pm-1:15pm, 'Overview of Stuttering Diagnosis and Treatment Stuttering: Challenges in Treatment', Lied Learning & Technology Center, Julianne Svingen, M.S., Speech-Language Pathologist  
23, 5:00pm-6:30pm, Sign Language Club-Scottsbluff, NCDHH Scottsbluff Office, Nancy Marsh, Field Representative for NCDHH

### **March**

- 2, 5:00pm-6:00pm, Sign & Dine-Ogallala, McDonalds, Norma Hamm, ESU 16  
3, 6:00pm-8:00pm, Sign & Dine-North Platte, Burger King  
6, 6:00pm-8:00pm, Sign & Dine-Grand Island, Fazoli's, Kay Darnall  
9, 12:15pm-1:15pm, 'Bilateral Cochlear Implants/Bimodal Stimulation', Lied Learning & Technology Center, Carisa Reyes, Au.D., Cochlear Implant Audiologist  
12, 8:30am-11:30am, NCDHH Full Commission Board Meeting, NCDHH-Lincoln Office, Lori Burrage, Business Manager for NCDHH  
13, 2:00pm-4:00pm, 'There's an Alligator Under My Bed', Rose Theater, Omaha, interpreted theatrical performance  
18, 1:15pm-2:15pm, Hearing Loss Support Group-Gothenburg, New Equipment/Cap Radio/Phone, Stone Hearth Estates, Donita Mains, Field Representative for NCDHH  
19, 9:00am-3:00pm, Scottsbluff Annual Spring Wellness Festival, Western NE Community College, Nancy Marsh, Field Representative for NCDHH  
19, 7:00pm, 'Nobody's Perfect', Lied Center for Performing Arts, Lincoln  
23, 1:30pm-2:30pm, Hearing Loss Support Group-North Platte, New Equipment/Cap Radio/Phone, First Lutheran Church, Donita Mains, Field Representative for NCDHH

#### NCDHH Staff

Dr. Peter Seiler, Executive Director  
Lori Burrage, Business Manager II  
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Donita Mains, Field Representative III  
Nancy Marsh, Field Representative II  
Dala McNew, Interpreter/Program Assistant  
Ben Sparks, Public Information Officer  
Norman Weverka, Field Representative III  
Peggy Williams, Mental Health Specialist  
Cindy Woldt, Staff Assistant II

23, 5:00pm-6:30pm, Sign Language Club-Scottsbluff, NCDHH Scottsbluff Office, Nancy Marsh, Field Representative for NCDHH

### **April**

- 2, 6:00pm-8:00pm, Sign & Dine-Lincoln, Spikes Bar & Grill, Vicki Campbell  
5, 6:00pm-8:00pm, Sign & Dine-Grand Island, Fazoli's, Kay Darnall  
6, 5:00pm-6:00pm, Sign & Dine-Ogallala, McDonalds, Norma Hamm, ESU 16  
7, 6:00pm-8:00pm, Sign & Dine-North Platte, Burger King  
10, 2:00pm-4:00pm, 'The Bridge to Terabithia', Rose Theater, Omaha, interpreted theatrical performance

Would you like your event posted online and printed in the Communicator?  
Contact us at [www.ncdhh.ne.gov/calendar.html](http://www.ncdhh.ne.gov/calendar.html) today!



Information – Education – Advocacy – Support  
The Nation's Voice for People with Hearing Loss



Beth Ellsworth  
Field Representative  
Omaha Office

I have been involved in the local chapter of Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) for some time now and it dawned on me that perhaps this amazing organization is not known to everyone. The National HLAA is one of the leading organizations representing those of us with hearing loss. They are dedicated to working with those with hearing loss and their families to adapt to and make the necessary changes to living with hearing loss. Some of the many programs and services they provide are:

1. Education and public awareness
2. Advocacy and legislation to address issues
3. Communication access
4. Research

Studies have shown that many have a hearing loss but are unable (for a variety of reasons) to take the necessary steps to be able to fully participate in everyday activities. To address this long standing issue, the National HLAA is working to eradicate the stigma associated with hearing loss. To do this public awareness is critical! Hearing loss does not just happen when we get older; children, teenagers and adults can experience hearing loss too and the numbers are growing due to noise exposure. That topic will be addressed in a later article.

Hearing Loss of America – Omaha Area chapter is also working to eradicate the stigma of hearing loss and raise awareness about hearing loss. We meet the second Tuesday of each month and would love to have you join us! Our meeting is open captioned (Computer Assisted Real Time Transcription) so you can relax, read what is being said and meet others with a hearing loss. We are a great support group! The information is provided below.

Hearing Loss Association of America – Omaha Area  
2nd Tuesday  
6:30 p.m.  
Dundee Presbyterian Church  
5312 Underwood Ave.

HLAA has a website where you can find timely and reliable information; learn about annual conventions, sign up for chat forums and message boards, a magazine that is full of useful information (Hearing Loss Magazine) and so much more! Check out this amazing organization by going to the following web site: [www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org). If you do not have internet or access to a library computer please contact:

Marian Reyburn 402-393-8310; [reyburnhm@cox.net](mailto:reyburnhm@cox.net)  
Diane Muelleman 402-558-8524; [dmuelleman@cox.net](mailto:dmuelleman@cox.net)



Beth Ellsworth  
Field Representative  
Omaha Office

## Hiding Your Hearing Loss?

What is it about hearing loss that makes some people feel self-conscious and want to hide their hearing loss? I believe there are many reasons but I'll start with two for now.

First: Hearing loss requires the cooperation of others for effective communication to occur. Secondly: Many people don't want to be "a bother." Perhaps their experiences have led them to believe that other people don't want to take the time to communicate with those of us with a hearing loss.

Continued on Page 18

## NEWS FROM THE CENTRAL REGION

by Donita Mains



Greetings. 2009 certainly was a busy year.

During the late summer, I had the pleasure of meeting up with the Lion’s Mobile Screening Unit in Holdrege, Eustis, and Hayes Center. I handed out information about the agency as well as processed applications for free telecommunication equipment. I was also able to visit with the 4-Hers about noise exposure and give out ear plugs. Although it rained every day I was out at the fairs, I had a great time.

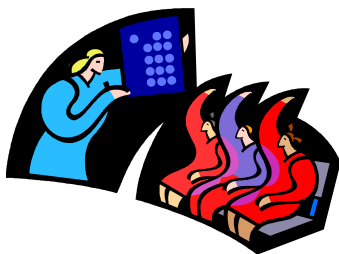
During the fall months there are several information fairs that I attend. I was able to go to Wauneta and the North Platte Senior Center for a fair. I also gave presentations at Elwood, Holdrege, Ravenna, Farnam, Eustis, McCook, Cambridge, and Minden as well as Park Ave Estates in Lexington, Hillcrest Nursing Home in McCook, Kearney Housing Authority, and Perkins County Health Systems in Grant.

There are two hearing loss support groups in the Central Region, one in Gothenburg and one in North Platte. Both meet once a month and cover a variety of topics. If you are interested in attending either of these, give me a call or check out the calendar page on the NCDHH website. [www.ncdhh.ne.gov](http://www.ncdhh.ne.gov)

As you can see, I have been busy with travel and presentations. I may be coming to your town soon!

## HOW LOUD IS THE CLASSROOM?

by Donita Mains



With school in full session, I am wondering how much the students are learning. Many school aged children miss out on much of their classroom instruction because they have difficulty differentiating between sounds in the classroom. On average, one pupil out of five has difficulty hearing the voice of the teacher over classroom background noise.

Noise not only is produced by the students and teachers but can also include noise from hearing or cooling systems, adjacent street traffic or passing trains, and classroom equipment (overheads, projectors, etc.).

According to Dr. Mark Downs, RNID (Royal National Institute for Deaf people) executive director of technology; “over 20% of children having their hearing checked had difficulty recognizing speech when there was background noise.”

It is important that schools ensure that their classrooms have the best possible acoustics in order to promote the best possible hearing conditions for the pupils. The ability to hear is particularly important to school aged children and is central to their learning.

How loud is a classroom? Listed below from the Workers’ Compensation Board of British Columbia are some average school noises. Noise induced hearing loss results from a combination of high sound levels and length of time exposed to sound levels above 85dB.

Automotive Class.....	83 dB
Band.....	88 dB
Metal working.....	84 dB
P.E. (gym).....	89 dB
Woodworking.....	86 dB
Bus .....	83 dB
Cafeteria.....	83 dB
Classroom.....	90 to 110 dB depending on activity



## NCDHH Continues to Make Great Strides in Assuring Equal Access to Mental Health Services

# Report on Mental Health in Nebraska



Peggy Williams,  
NCDHH Mental Health Specialist



As I look back on 2009 I am happy to report that the goals I outlined for the year have been achieved thanks to a grant NCDHH received from The Omaha Enrichment Foundation. The purpose of the 2009 grant was to continue to build services; resources and accessibility related to the effects of domestic violence and sexual assault by having an advocate training program for Deaf women.

The training, attended by 14 Deaf women in Douglas and Sarpy Counties was held on November 7th and 8th at the Lied Learning and Technology Center in Omaha. This was the first training of its kind in the State of Nebraska for Deaf people. The training offered gave Deaf participants skills in assisting Deaf victims of domestic violence/sexual assault. Keri Darling, Director/Trainer of Deaf Vermonters Advocacy Services in Barre, VT presented the 2-day training. Her emphasis focused on giving Deaf victims of domestic violence/sexual assault the help they need through peers, someone that understands their language, culture and barriers that they encounter on a daily basis.

For the next phase in completing the domestic violence/sexual assault training, a grant was submitted to The Omaha Enrichment Foundation for 2010 in an effort to ensure that both professional sign language interpreters and domestic violence/sexual assault programs

receive training necessary to create accessible services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people living in Douglas and Sarpy Counties. Providing training to professional sign language interpreters will ensure that the interpreter has the skills necessary to interpret for Deaf and Hard of Hearing victims of domestic violence/sexual assault as well as have a greater sensitivity and appreciation for confidentiality for these individuals. Also, the training will give the shelters and providers the education and training needed to domestic violence/sexual assault services so that their awareness and education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communication, culture and social needs will ensure that this population is receiving the best possible services.

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Dr. Seiler, Executive Director for NCDHH and I have met with administrators from Boys Town National Research Hospital and Dr. Prickett from the Iowa School for the Deaf to discuss residential behavioral treatment for Deaf and Hard of Hearing youth and adolescents in Nebraska. The meeting was very productive in that staff and all three programs agreed to develop a grant proposal to fund a unit for deaf and hard of hearing youth with severe behavior issues. This will be a long term project. We hope to open this unit sometime in 2011 or 2012.

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Vicki Steinhauer-Campbell was appointed to serve on the NCDHH Mental Health Advisory Committee. Vicki has been serving on the committee as a Technical Advisor representing Vocational Rehabilitation. Continued on page 19

# Track & Field Deaflympian Twins Talk About Growing Up Hard of Hearing

by Norman Weverka



Craig & Michael, shown in the center, of the 4x4 team that won Silver.

**What are your names?**

Craig and Michael.

**Nice to meet you both. My name is Norm Weverka and I was born in David City. I grew up between Bruno and Brainard. I went to the East Butler High School and graduated in 1967, so I'm a little older than you both. Where were you born and where did you grow up?**

**Michael:** We were born in Schuyler and grew up there until about 8th grade. Then we went to David City, graduated from high school there and currently our parents live there.

**Both of you have hearing loss, is that right?**

Yes.

**When did you first experience hearing loss?**

**Michael:** Kindergarten.

**What happened? Was there a cause?**

**Michael:** They think that we were born with it. Genetics.

**Did you have a history of hearing loss in your family?**

**Michael:** No, we're the only two. We do have an uncle with hearing loss, his is probably due to his age.

**When you first noticed your hearing loss, how did that make you feel. When did you first realize it?**

**Michael:** We first realized it in Kindergarten with the new hearing aids. It didn't bother us too much. We adapted to the change and carried on. It helped to have a brother to hang out with.

**So you really didn't feel alone because you had that bridge of communication already? Talking about hearing aids, how did you react to questions about your hearing aids or the fact that you were different from other kids?**

**Michael:** I just explained that this was normal and this is how we are.

**Craig:** I agree.

**Tell me a little bit about barriers that you experienced while you were growing up.**

**Michael:** Communicating with teachers and other students. It was always just a little harder to catch everything that they were saying. We had to ask people to repeat a lot, which wasn't a big deal. People were understanding. My friends understood. In sports, our father was our coach. He had to do a lot of yelling. That was sometimes difficult. In soccer and basketball there's a lot of background noise. We had to make sure that we were paying attention to the coach and teammates that were giving out signs for plays.

**Craig:** I guess I never really regarded being hard of hearing a barrier. It was just something that I had to deal with.

**Tell me about your education. Where did you start school, when did you graduate.**

**Michael:** For high school, we graduated from St. Thomas Aquinas in David City.

I went to Concordia University. I'll be graduating in December with a business degree with concentration in marketing.

**Craig:** I graduated from Emporia State University in Kansas. I graduated last may with a degree in business management.

**Congratulations! Did you find any barriers while at your Universities?**

**Michael:** It was hard for some people to understand that they needed to speak directly at me. I had ask them to repeat a lot. Once I got to know them, they were more understanding. I actually had less barriers in college than in high school, I felt.

**Craig:** I would say the same. People at first would look at you a differently, but once they got to know you as a person they were understanding.

**Were did you go for your elementary education?**

**Michael:** We both went to Richland District 1, between Schuyler and Columbus. It was a K through 8 school. There were about 86 students there in total, a very small school.

**Ok, so it was a small rural school? How many were in your class then?**

**Michael:** There were 12, give or take 2 on any given year.

**Do you think that you really benefitted from having a small class size? Do you feel that you received a better education that way?**

**Michael:** Yes, we got a lot more 1 on 1 with teachers. They got a Phonak. They made sure that we were able to sit close to the front of classes. They made sure that speakers would wear microphones, things like that. It was very helpful.

**Craig:** The 1 on 1 attention was the best part. The teacher had time to focus on you.

**Michael:** I would say, yes, we did get a better education.

**Ok, I would agree that that would benefit you, having the smaller classes. You were also involved with the Deaf Olympics recently. What was that like?**

**Michael:** That was a culture change. We had never been around a huge group of Deaf people ever in our life. We started learning Sign. That was the biggest challenge. We started hanging out with Deaf people. We learned a lot of Signs. It was one of the greatest experiences that I will ever have in my life.

**Craig:** I would say the same thing. It was a great experience to meet new people, Deaf people, and foreign people. Everybody was nice. It was incredible to travel half way round the world and compete against people from different countries. I was amazing. I can't even describe it.

**I can imagine. Was that the first time you were really exposed to Sign Language?**

**Michael:** Yes. We started learning Sign at our first Camp in June.

**Craig:** We got some books and started practicing ourselves, but learning that way didn't even compare to being around Deaf people and culture.

**I can imagine. Meeting a lot of foreign signers. Every country typically has its own sign system so that can be a challenge also. Communicating with Deaf and Hard of Hearing from other countries can be easier because you both know ways to break down communication barriers. It might be a little easier to communicate with the Deaf or Hard of Hearing than it would be a hearing person.**

**Michael:** I totally agree.

**Craig:** I met a German. A really nice guy. Even though I didn't know German, we became good friends over our trip. I really hope to meet up with him again sometime down the road.

**What kind of technology do you use? I know you use hearing aids, but what other kinds of technology do you use for communication and to be more independent?**

**Michael:** Cell phones. We text every now and then. Just recently a Phonak representative provided us with new hearing aids

right before the Deaf Olympics. They have bluetooth MP3 players which I've been using a lot. I listen to music a lot and it works really well with my phone.

**Craig:** It also picks up smaller sounds. I use a cell phone to text also. I really benefit from that technology

**Is there any other technology that you use?**

**Michael:** We use captions sometimes, especially for movies.

**Do you think that finding work will be difficult because of your hearing loss?**

**Michael:** I think so. Some employers might be hesitant to hire someone with less hearing. I think that my work ethic will counterbalance my hearing loss. I think that I may have some challenges in some areas though, yes.

**Craig:** Yes, a little. I think that I can counterbalance that by working harder. I think employers and employees will see that and will want to hire me. There's probably going to be some difficulty though.

**What kinds of misunderstandings about hearing loss that the public has would you like to see changed?**

**Michael:** I feel that sometimes the hearing community doesn't feel that the Hard of Hearing can be athletes that are equal to

them, can't be as good as them. The Hard of Hearing can do anything that a hearing person can do. We're normal people.

**Craig:** I agree. There's a stereotype that the Hard of Hearing aren't able to do things as well as the Hearing, but we can do things just as well, if not better, than the hearing community.

**Suppose you weren't able to use hearing aids anymore for communication. What changes would you need to make to be able to communicate?**

**Michael:** Learn Sign! Absolutely. I would be taking classes left and right! That would be the biggest change. Learning to sign fluently.

**Craig:** A videophone is something that I would need to communicate. I would have to rely on other senses. I still rely on what hearing I do have.

**Is there anything else you'd like to add to the interview, a specific quote?**

**Michael: I would like to say is that you can't let being Hard of Hearing hinder you. You can't let it be your main focus. You have to go out there and live life.**

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# Interpreter News **neRID** n e b r a s k a

NCDHH would like to congratulate the Nebraska chapter of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf for their recent accomplishments!

NeRID's Fall Conference was a great success with well over 50 interpreters state-wide participating. Two of America's best presenters provided a great amount of information that was applicable to most situations that interpreters encounter.

Crom Saunders was able to share with interpreters "what's new" in American Sign Language. He was able to help interpreters understand "what those kids are saying." He also dissected technical vocabulary into its linguistic roots. For example, the word 'photosynthesis' has no specific sign. Crom was able to show how interpreters can break words apart and 'create signs' without losing the concept. Using 'photosynthesis', Crom explained that 'photo' is Greek for 'light' and that 'synthesis' is Latin for 'process'. Putting the two parts together creates the word photosynthesis, a system in which plants process light into usable energy.

Chris Grooms provided several workshops related to interpreting in medical settings, from basic understandings of ethics to advanced interpreter issues related to emergency room interpreting. His knowledge and strong background in the area provided an environment in which interpreters could improve their own skills and abilities.

The 2010 Region IV RID Conference has been scheduled for Omaha, bringing the opportunity for even more learning and networking for the Midwest's interpreters. Region IV covers 13 States and 3 Canadian Provinces. The Conference has been scheduled for August 5-8, 2010.

For more information regarding neRID, you can contact Connie Herndon, President of neRID, via email at [connieherndon@gmail.com](mailto:connieherndon@gmail.com) or visit their website [www.nebraskarid.org](http://www.nebraskarid.org).

## INTERPRETER TOOLBOX

### Workshops

Boystown National Research Hospital is offering **Sign-to-Voice Interpreting: Interpreting for Child Signers**, April 17, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. CST.

'This video conference will focus on what skills are necessary to be able to effectively interpret for child signers. We will look at a variety of child signers and identify the differences in their communication styles and how to approach the S-V task during the assessment process. We will provide strategies for coping when information is missed and what to do to prepare to take the EIPA S-V portion of the EIPA.'

As always, check the Interpreter Development tab at [www.ncdhh.ne.gov](http://www.ncdhh.ne.gov) for up to date interpreter workshop information.

### Websites

Looking for CEUs? [www.dcmp.org](http://www.dcmp.org) is a website which hosts the popular 'Signs of Development' Online Library. Continuing Education Units are available through their website for a reasonable cost. This website is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and is administered by the National Association of the Deaf.

Are you an educational interpreter or the parent of a Deaf or Hard of Hearing student? [www.esu13.org/nrp/resources.htm](http://www.esu13.org/nrp/resources.htm) is a website providing information relating to the Nebraska Regional Program for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. On the Resources page you can find a listing of scholarship opportunities aimed at Deaf and Hard of Hearing High School seniors.



# Sioux City Native Named President of Gallaudet University



SIoux CITY -- Gary Lipshutz wasn't surprised when Dr. Alan Hurwitz was named president of Gallaudet University.

"He's truly amazing," said Lipshutz, a classmate of Hurwitz at old Central High, Class of 1961. "I remember being in his parents' home when we were kids. They didn't have a phone."

Hurwitz and his parents were deaf. Had no need for one.

The boy with no phone assumes his post next month at Gallaudet, which is touted as the world leader in liberal education and career development for the deaf and hard of hearing. The Washington, D.C., school, chartered in 1864, is the only institution where every graduate's diploma is signed by the presiding U.S. President.

Hurwitz comes from the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology in New York, where he has taught and served in leadership roles since 1970. He's currently president.

He termed the new job "surreal."

"This is surreal since it will be a major move for both Vicki (his wife of 44 years) and me -- just like a new chapter in our book of life," he wrote in an e-mail. "This will be an exciting opportunity for me to lead one of the oldest liberal arts universities in the nation and move forward to become a

premier liberal arts university with strong focus on careers for deaf and hard of hearing people."

Hurwitz's education trek had its own challenging period in Sioux City. He transferred to old North Junior High from the Central Institute for the Deaf in St. Louis, Mo. Went from a class of six to one of a few hundred. And went into it without the aid of an interpreter or note taker.

Teachers talked too fast. He couldn't understand classmates.

So, Hurwitz made two demands: He asked to be positioned in the front row so he could see his teachers. And, according to Lipshutz, Hurwitz asked teachers to face the class when they spoke.

He read lips to succeed. He also made himself meet with each teacher after class to make sure he understood what assignment they wanted. The boy spent most evenings in the library working to stay on pace.

His parents, Harold and Juliette Hurwitz, encouraged their son. Harold, a Sioux City native, worked 20 years for Sioux City Furniture Co. as an upholsterer and then for Metz Baking Co. Juliette was a quality assurance assembler at Wincharger for 25 years. The couple moved to Kansas City, Mo., in retirement. Juliette died in 1991; Harold died nine years ago.

"I was lucky to have a very supportive family," Hurwitz wrote. "Both of my parents were deaf so I was able to socialize with them and their deaf friends in the community. My mother was constantly exposing me to successful deaf role models. She always shared wonderful reading materials about them with me; and saying that if they can do it, then you can do it."

When not playing cards or watching movies at the Deaf Club in Sioux City, Hurwitz studied, played softball, basketball and golf and ran track. He made the track and golf teams at Central but didn't make the cut on the basketball hardwood. So, he played basketball at the Jewish Community Center.

He carried the Sioux City Journal for 4 1/2 years and spent many mealtimes at Coney Island downtown.

After graduating, Hurwitz attended Morningside College for two years and transferred to Washington University in St. Louis. He earned a degree in electrical engineering and worked five years for McDonnell Douglas.

At that point, he added a master's in electrical engineering and was appointed to a faculty position at the institute in Rochester, where he's been teaching and advising deaf and hard of hearing students in engineering and computer science fields.

Continued on Page 19



Dala McNew  
Interpreter/  
Program Assistant

**Hello! I'm back!!** For those of you that I have not met yet, my name is Dala McNew and I am the Interpreter/ Program Assistant for NCDHH. I was deployed to the Helmand Province in southern Afghanistan for a year with an Army Reserve unit out of Hastings, NE. Ben Sparks has been doing a wonderful job, from what I understand, covering my position in my absence.

It has been a long, interesting year for me with many challenges and adventures. Days were often long and hot. We had about one month of very hot temperatures. The average, according to my thermometer, was 122 with the high being 132! Now that's hot! Our mission consisted of receiving, storing and shipping ammunition to outlying bases. I couldn't have asked for a better group of Soldiers to lead. We were successful with our mission because of all their hard work.

Since I left, the face of NCDHH has changed significantly with a new director, Dr. Peter Seiler. I have met with him and am very excited for the upcoming goals that he has planned for the Commission. We have discussed some of my goals as well and I hope to be able to accomplish these goals with the same sense of "teamwork" used overseas. Some of these goals may be limited by the economy and the budget this year for NCDHH. Together we are looking at backup plans to accomplish these goals.

This year, one of my personal goals here at the Commission is to do a better job of getting information out to interpreters about opportunities to earn CEUs. I know that area interpreters are very busy and the opportunities in which they have to earn CEUs can sometimes be very limited. My hope is to flood them with opportunities so that every interpreter may find a workshop or lecture series to fit their schedule and that they may obtain their required CEUs to maintain their certification level.

Another goal of mine is to go through the media center and remove outdated material. Depending on the budget, I would like to slowly replace the VHS tapes with DVD media. A lot of people find materials that they would like to check out but no longer own a VHS player. This will take time as items in the media center are copyrighted and can not be automatically transferred to a DVD. The item must be bought in its original format and THAT takes money. Your patience with this process is appreciated.

I am very happy to be back and am slowly getting reintegrated back into "civilian" life. If anyone needs assistance with interpreter issues, the media center or any other questions, don't hesitate to contact me at [dala.mcnew@nebraska.gov](mailto:dala.mcnew@nebraska.gov) or by telephone V/TTY 402-471-3593 or by VP 402-206-2978. I look forward to seeing you!

### Updating our Records

NCDHH needs your assistance in keeping our records up to date.

- Have you recently moved?
- Would you prefer to not receive this newsletter?
- Are you receiving more than one copy of this newsletter at your address?

If you answered yes to any of the above three questions, please contact the Lincoln office (contact information is listed on the back cover).

### 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!

# New Cell Phone Technology Allows Deaf People to Communicate Anytime, Anywhere

By Anne Ju, Cornell University, Chronicle Online

For those who are deaf or hard of hearing, cell phone use has largely been limited to text messaging. But technology is catching up: Cornell researchers and colleagues have created cell phones that allow deaf people to communicate in sign language -- the same way hearing people use phones to talk.

“We completely take cell phones for granted,” said Sheila Hemami, Cornell professor of electrical and computer engineering, who leads the research with Eve Riskin and Richard Ladner of the University of Washington. “Deaf people can text, but if texting were so fabulous, cell phones would never develop. There is a reason that we like to use our cell phones. People prefer to talk.”

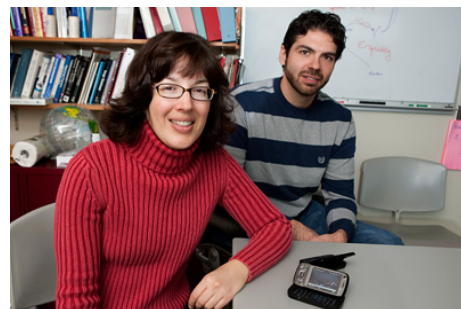
The technology, Hemami continued, is about much more than convenience. It allows deaf people “untethered communication in their native language” -- exactly the same connectivity available to hearing people, she said.

Since the project, Mobile ASL (American Sign Language), started four years ago, the researchers have published several academic papers on their technology and given talks around the world. The first phone prototypes were created last year and are now in the hands of about 25 deaf people in the Seattle area.

Standard videoconferencing is used widely in academia and industry, for example, in distance-learning courses. But the Mobile ASL team designed their video compression software specifically with ASL users in mind, with the goal of sending clear, understandable video over existing limited bandwidth networks. They also faced such constraints as phones’ battery life and their ability to process real-time video at enough frames per second. They solved the battery life problem by writing software smart enough to vary the frames per second based on whether the user is signing or watching the other person sign.

Because ASL requires efficient motion capture, the researchers had to make video compression software that could deliver video at about 10 frames per second. They also had to work within the standard wireless 2G network, which only allows transmission of video at about 15-20 kilobits per second.

Continued on Page 18



Robert Barker/University Photography

**Sheila Hemami, professor of electrical and computer engineering, and graduate student Frank Ciaramello have created cell phones that allow deaf people to use sign language in real time.**



Robert Barker/University Photography

**Frank Ciaramello signs into one of the phones.**

## 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)
- TTY's
- Personal Listening Devices / Pocketalkers



Have you seen Personal 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.

## How Safe Is It To Shovel Snow At My Age?

By Janet Killam

You probably say, "Oh no, not again," after a snowfall or city streets get plowed. We all know that we are required to scoop our sidewalks within 24 hours or we could get a ticket. I would like to explain how to reduce the physical stress that clearing your sidewalk can induce. Following some simple procedures will help reduce the chances of physical injury or a heart attack.

According to an article from [www.mothenature.com](http://www.mothenature.com), at least 75,000 heart attacks occur each year during or shortly following strenuous physical exertion. Many of these heart attacks and deaths occur among people over age 60 that have been shoveling snow.

To avoid the problem...

- Get an annual checkup before snow flurries begin. Ask your doctor about snow shoveling.
- Avoid smoking or drinking caffeine for at least one hour before and after shoveling.
- Eat lightly and stretch out before shoveling.
- Let morning snow go. Take your time getting around to shoveling and take a warm shower one or two hours before shoveling.
- Dress in layers. Dress so that you can take off a layer easily if you feel overheated.
- Work smart. Start slowly and work your way up to a faster pace. You should take a 5 minute break from shoveling every 15 to 20 minutes.
- If you can't finish the job, ask for help!



# MEDIA CENTER STAFF PICKS

By: Ben Sparks



Wintertime brings to mind times of curling up with a nice warm blanket, a cup of hot cocoa, and a fascinating book or movie. Read about Kenny Walker or Lou Fant or watch a video about classifiers or fingerspelling while the snow piles up outside. Share an evening with your family and friends playing a game based on sign language and hearing loss information.

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: 'An Introduction to the Deaf Community'**

This thirty minute narrated and open-captioned videotape provides a basic overview of Deaf people in America, their language and their culture. The program is designed to help the viewer realize that pre-conceived notions and ways of thinking of Deaf people as a member of a unique minority group.

The tape also provides information about national and international organizations of and for Deaf people, employment opportunities, communication accessibility, resources to contact for further information. A special feature of the

tape is a list of some easy to follow, non-threatening communication tips and pointers. These tips and pointers can be extremely beneficial when communicating with a Deaf person.

## **Hearing Loss: 'Assistive Devices: Doorways to Independence'**

Hearing impairment presents many daily challenges, communication being the biggest challenge of all. Today, technology is available that can assist people who are deaf or hard of hearing in meeting this challenge.

This videotape serves as a comprehensive introduction to various devices and systems that can help people who are deaf or hard of hearing live independent and productive lifestyles at home, work and play. These auditory, visual, and vibrotactile technologies are designed to improve speech reception and recognition as well as awareness of important environmental sounds and situations.

Available with open or closed captions, this program is a valuable resource for consumers and professionals and is designed for use in many settings, including clinics, rehabilitation centers, senior citizen centers, nursing homes, graduate training programs, and professional libraries.

## **Interpreters: 'Interpreting in Legal Settings'**

People learn a skill better when they can observe it being per-

formed by others. In this three-part series of materials - each with a book and video - the viewer sees unscripted, unrehearsed interpretations in settings that are normally restricted or difficult to arrange.

Helpful discussion starters and full transcripts of the interpreted dialogues turn these observational tools into practice tools. The materials offer abundant opportunities to discuss and analyze the interpretations and to create interpretations from either the videotaped information or the printed English.

## **Parents: 'Families with Deaf Children' or 'Families with Hard of Hearing Children'**

If your child has just been diagnosed with a significant hearing loss, these videotapes are designed for you.

The best guides through this journey of discovery will be other parents of Deaf or Hard of Hearing children. These videotapes, produced by BoysTown, are designed to provide answers when you need them. Each of the parents in these tapes has experienced what you might be feeling, and has found answers. They each had different feelings and made different choices, but all of them saw their children as individuals who could succeed as members of families and communities.

Continued on Page 19

**REPORT FROM  
SOUTHEAST  
NEBRASKA**

**Norman Weverka,  
Field Representative III**



This last quarter of 2009 turned out to be a busy time for me. The Husker Harvest Days drew a large crowd of farmers and other interested parties to our booth. We provided over 3000 earplugs to the attendees and ran out after the second day. Several people won our donated Door Prizes. Thankfully, the weather was cooperative this year.

I have continued to be involved with in-service training for the Lincoln Police Department and Lincoln Corrections.

The majority of my time has been spent advocating for parents with Deaf children. I have been involved with many meetings. I have received an alarming amount of complaints from parents throughout southeast Nebraska. Some complaints were resolved, yet some are still being followed-up.

Currently, I am networking with other agencies in the hopes of developing a group home for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. We are now in the research phase, trying to source funding and staff and developing a picture of what unique needs will need to be satisfied.

**New Services Will Support Families of Youth with Behavioral Health Issues**



The Department of Health and Human Services announced that Boys Town will started up new services on January 1st that can help hundreds of Nebraska families. These new options are available as a result of LB 603, passed in 2009, which focused on improving access to behavioral health and other services for children and teens.

“Boys Town has a proven track record for providing these services and the professional resources that will greatly assist families of youth with behavioral health issues,” said Kerry Winterer, CEO of the Department of Health and Human Services. “These services will be important in our continuing to fulfill the mission of DHHS. This has come about through the leadership of Governor Heineman and the Legislature’s recognition that these are critical services.”

Two of the new services included in LB 603 will be available for parents, guardians and caregivers through Boys Town:

- The Nebraska Family Helpline at (888) 866-8660 provides a single point of contact available 24/7 that’s operated by trained personnel and supervised by licensed behavioral health professionals. Helpline operators will screen calls for immediate safety needs, identify the potential level of the behavioral health crisis, make recommendations or referrals to appropriate resources, and help the caller connect to emergency resources or providers as necessary.
- Family Helpline operators will connect eligible families to Family Navigator Services. These services, available within 24 to 72 hours after the Helpline referral, will help the family identify existing community-based services and provide family peer support by people with personal experience with children and teens with a severe emotional disorder.

“Boys Town’s number one priority is helping families and kids,” said Father Steven Boes, Boys Town President and National Executive Director. “The Helpline and Family Navigator services give families that are struggling to meet their children’s behavioral health needs an opportunity to get the right assistance at the right time.”

## Captel? What's that?



Beth Ellsworth  
Field Representative  
Omaha Office

There is a new phone out called the Captel 800i. There have been TV advertisements about it and many people are interested. What is the Captel 800i and how does it work?

The Captel 800i is a captioned telephone that prints what is spoken so there is no more guessing or asking for repeats. When you call on the Captel 800i the captions are automatic and the person calling the Captel user calls directly without going through a service number. The captions can be turned on or off and the captioned print can be adjusted by font size and color. This phone also is able to store 95 frequently called numbers and names.

**IMPORTANT: High Speed Internet is REQUIRED with Captel 800i but you do NOT have to have a computer.**

Also, The Captel 800i does NOT work with digital PBX (Private Branch Exchange) phone systems found in some business settings and residential facilities unless an analog port is available in the PBX network.

The Captel 200 is the original Captel and it has some different features. First, and most importantly, **this phone requires an analog line so if you have cable or digital phone service this phone will not work for you.** With this model, when someone calls the Captel user, they call a toll free number and give the number they are calling. The service places the call and connects the captions.

If you would like to learn more about either Captel phone, have questions, or would just like to learn more about what is available, please contact me at the NCDHH Omaha office.

You may also go to the web site to find the Field Representative in your area. <http://www.ncdhh.ne.gov/> Click on "services" (on the left) then click on "service map". I look forward to hearing from you!



Captel 800i



Captel 200



Nancy Marsh  
Field Representative II  
Scottsbluff Office

## Apply online for Nebraska Public Assistance Benefits

Since September 2008 on line applications have been available for the public to apply for most benefits including Aid to Dependent Children – Assistance to the Aged-Blind and Disabled- Medical Programs and Childcare.

[www.ACCESSNebraska.ne.gov](http://www.ACCESSNebraska.ne.gov) is Nebraska's online system offering a screening tool for selection of benefits you might be eligible for before you start your application.

Depending on how familiar you are and the type of computer you are using, this application can take between 40 and 60 minutes. You will need to have all your information ready before you start to cut down on the time it takes to fill out the application. Older computers may not be compatible with the application and wireless may drop the connection. All Health and Human Service Offices have computers for consumer use. Other sites are being asked to participate as well, i.e. senior centers.

Below are the steps to complete the application process:

1. Connect to the web site
2. Complete screening tool
3. Decide on your user ID and password
4. Follow the prompts to enter information
5. Review answers
6. Print application if you want
7. Submit application
8. Telephone Interview will complete the process
9. You will receive a phone call or be asked to call the office to complete the approximately hour long interview

General Tips for Telephone Conversation:

1. Use your amplified telephone
2. Once on the phone identify yourself as a hard of hearing person
3. Ask the speaker to slow their rate of speech, enunciate their words and pause between important information
4. You may ask for a different speaker that has a different voice pitch if needed
5. If you don't have an amplified telephone ask if the Health and Human Service Office has one for you to use to accommodate your hearing loss
6. Make use of the Nebraska Relay Service
7. You may ask for a face to face interview if attempts to use the telephone have failed, they must provide this accommodation for equal communication access to their services.

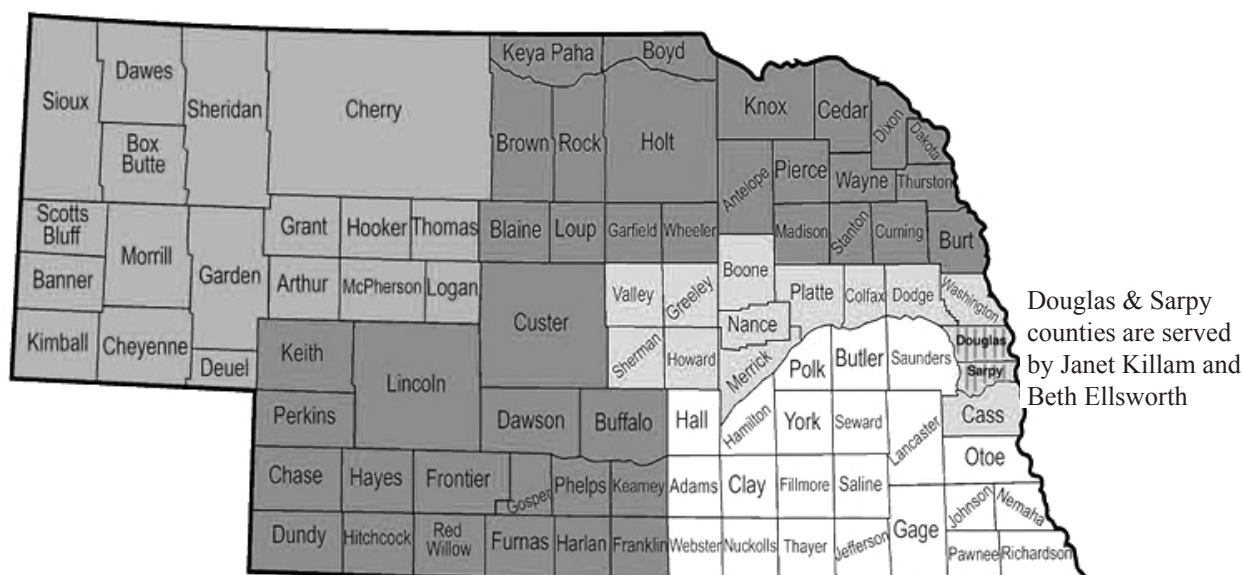
[www.accessnebraska.ne.gov](http://www.accessnebraska.ne.gov)





## Two Field Representatives Have New Regions

Recently, the field representatives for the eastern and the northeastern regions traded responsibilities. For those of you in the northeast region of Nebraska, including Norfolk and South Sioux City, Beth Ellsworth is now your representative. If you live in the eastern region, including Fremont and Columbus, your new representative is Janet Killam.



### Western Region

Nancy Marsh

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ncdhh.lincoln@nebraska.gov



### Hiding Hearing Loss, Continued from Page 3

I certainly felt that way years ago. I would ask someone to repeat something they said and they would shrug their shoulders or look “put out”. I’ve also had positive experiences. For too many years I would not wear my hearing aid (much less two) and went through each day “faking it”, pretending I could follow conversations. When I finally started wearing a hearing aid (and then soon after two), my friends were thrilled and commented that they had known about my hearing loss and were glad that I was feeling comfortable with my hearing loss and wearing my hearing aids. I also found out that as I began to accept my hearing loss, I had positive responses. I would tell people that I needed them to look at me when they were talking and not to cover their mouth. Most everyone modified their communication to include me. I still run into those people who are in a hurry and impatient and will give me “that look” but most people do all they can to include me in their interactions.

What are your experiences? I would love to hear from you! Hearing loss is a growing problem for all ages today and many, as I was did, try to ignore their hearing loss. I would love to hear about your experiences and work with you to find solutions.

To contact me and learn more about the services and resources available to you call 402-595-3991 (local) or toll free or email me at [beth.ellsworth@nebraska.gov](mailto:beth.ellsworth@nebraska.gov). You can also contact me via video phone at (866) 225-7392.

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### New Cell Phone Technology, Continued from Page 11

This is a relatively small amount of information when compared with a YouTube video, which travels at about 600 kilobits per second. For further comparison, high-definition digital television images come in at 6-10 megabits per second.

Researching how ASL developed gave the team clues on how people use it, said Frank Ciaramello, a graduate student working on the project. They learned that deaf people often use only one hand to sign, depending on the situation, and that they’re very good at adapting as needed.

And they found that when two people are talking to each other, they spend almost the entire time focused on the other person’s face.

“The facial expressions are really important in ASL, because they add a lot of information,” Ciaramello said. They concluded that their cell phone video would have to be clearest in the face and hands, while they could spare some detail in the torso and in the background. Studies with deaf people who rated different videos on an intelligibility scale helped the researchers hone in on the best areas to focus in their video.

The researchers are now perfecting their intelligibility metrics while also looking for ways to bring down the cost of integrating the software into the phones. Making the phones as user friendly as possible is a key goal of the project, Hemami said.

“We don’t want people to use the technology and say, ‘This is annoying,’” Hemami said. “We want it to be really technology transparent. We want them to call their mother and have a nice conversation.”

Mobile ASL is funded by the National Science Foundation.

Media Center Staff Picks, Continued from Page 13

**Entertainment: 'The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes: The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle'**

If you love a good mystery then you'll love this series of tapes. Match wits with the greatest sleuth of all times. These tapes have been specially designed to allow you to try and solve the case alone with Sherlock. The details of each case are given in sections by Dr. Watson (Patrick Graybill) and then each step of the mystery is artfully unravelled by Holmes (Gilbert Eastman). What was it about that derby hat and the Christmas goose that drew Holmes to the case? Can you spot the details?



**Sign Language: Beginner: 'Fingerspelling: Expressive and Receptive'** Joyce Linden Goode introduces fingerspelled words as whole units, vocabulary anticipation and English pattern practice, the development of clear expressive skills and background information on loan signs and creative use of fingerspelling.

**Intermediate: 'Deaf Tend Your'** This book and video are designed to provide information about the non-manual aspects of ASL: what to do with your mouth when signing ASL! The book is packed with information and the video features Byron Bridges demonstrating appropriate mouthing. A MUST for interpreters and ASL students!

Mental Health Update, Continued from Page 5

tation for the past several years. Ms. Campbell's expertise in working with the Deaf will serve as a great asset to the committee. Ms. Campbell replaced Melinda Brown with Boys Town National Research Hospital on the committee. NCDHH would like to thank Ms. Brown for the 8 years of service, dedication and leadership she provided to the NCDHH Mental Health Advisory committee.

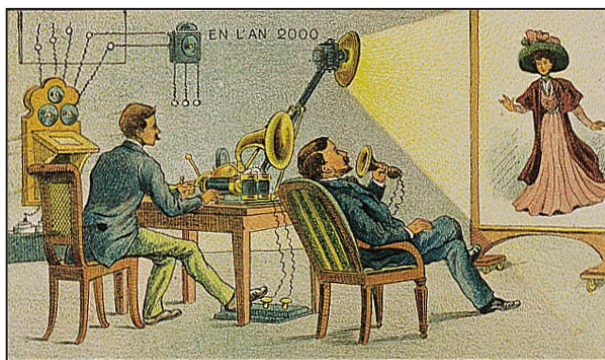
Sioux City Native, President of Gallaudet, Continued from Page 9

He and Vicki have two children. Their son, who is hard of hearing, is an attorney. Their daughter, who is deaf, works for a family service foundation.

As he prepares for his presidency to begin, Hurwitz reminded me that people with disabilities are capable of living independently and courageously once they get their education and support.

"They have heart and guts," he wrote. "Once a sense is missing, other senses pick up. For instance, deaf people are sensitive to visual images, light and vibrations. I like to believe they smell roses well."

-reprinted from the Sioux City Journal, written by Tim Gallagher



A few years ago they often derided turn-of-the-previous-century visions of communication through a video-phone, as in this depiction by Villemard created in 1910.



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

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## Change Service Requested

NEWSLETTER — Winter 2010

Is this address correct? If not,  
please let NCDHH know.  
Thank you for your help.

### 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.lincoln@nebraska.gov](mailto:ncdhh.lincoln@nebraska.gov)

Articles submitted are not neces-  
sarily the views of NCDHH.  
The NCDHH newsletter is pub-  
lished four times annually.

## NCDHH Street & Electronic Addresses

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