

Monthly Communicator

NJ Department of Human Services | Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

FEBRUARY 2015 | www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddhh/home/index.html

Chris Christie, Governor

Kim Guadagno, Lt. Governor

Jennifer Velez, Commissioner

David Alexander, Director

Support Service Providers New Jersey Sponsors Touch Cues Workshop

Submitted by Katherine Gabry, Program Director SSPNJ & iCanConnect/NJ

Support Service Providers New Jersey (SSPNJ) sponsored an *Introduction to Touch Cues Workshop* November 22 at the Joseph Kohn Training Center in New Brunswick. The workshop was attended by eight Deaf-Blind and 13 Support Service Providers (SSP). Interpreter support was provided by SSPNJ and the NJ DDHH.

“Using touch cues are important for Deaf-Blind people to know about,” says Jon Gabry, who has used touch cues for several years. “Someone draws on your back or your arm, and this gives you information that you can’t see: people, what people are doing, and things happening.”

Jon further explains, “I can’t see people or things in a room ... I can be eating chicken fingers and drinking a Coke, and my SSP can draw on my back to let me know where people are in the room, and what they are doing. It gives me the information that sighted people see.”

Jon used touch cues at the National Federation for the Blind’s National Convention in Orlando last year, where he was presenting about the iCanConnect program. “I could not see the audience or what they were doing,” he said. “While I was signing my presentation, my SSP drew on my back. I understood what my SSP said – what time it was, how people were behaving, and that the voice interpreter wanted me to slow down. These touch cues helped me to know this important information.”

SSPNJ’s November workshop was presented by Lori Amato. Lori has used touch cues and understands that this method of communication is very meaningful for Deaf-Blind. Plenty of



Lori and Jon using touch cues to know what’s going on in the Bergen Community College community center

time was built into the agenda so that everyone had the opportunity to practice their new skills.

All of the Deaf-Blind who responded to our survey after the seminar said they would like to use SSPs who know how to communicate using touch cues. Here are some other comments we received:

- I enjoyed the workshop today. It helps to learn about the touch cues.
- The workshop was very interesting. I would like to participate in a training program.

- I went to a workshop in NYC, and this has enhanced my knowledge. I believe it will take practice and working it out with my Deaf-Blind consumer. I am excited about this.
- I would like to get so much more information about touch cues! Haptics is an amazing concept that allows the Deaf-Blind client to have a better understanding about what is happening around them as it is happening. Another workshop is something I would like to attend and look forward to it being offered. It is so exciting to learn these concepts as they are starting to be taught on the East Coast.
- As an SSP, I would love to learn about touch cues. I really believe it will allow me to provide more visuals to my Deaf-Blind person. Please have more workshops on touch cues. Very excited to learn more.
- I thought this was a great introduction to touch cues, and I look forward to learning more. I am very happy that SSPNJ is offering these educational opportunities.
- I’m truly grateful this workshop was made available. I’m interested in studying this further.

Based on the enthusiastic responses, we hope to provide more training in touch cues in the spring. We hope you’ll be able to join us!



DIRECTOR'S CORNER

David C. Alexander, Ph.D., Director - NJ Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Governor Chris Christie in his [2015 State of the State Address](#) mentioned the importance of treatment for people with drug addictions. It is important that this treatment be accessible for people who are Deaf and hard of hearing. Two agencies have worked hard to address the issue of accessibility. This includes the "Signs of Sobriety" and the "Center for Family Services." Information about resources available from these two agencies is included in this issue. Additionally, DDHH advocates for access and expanding addiction services for adults with hearing loss by serving on the **New Jersey Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services Council**.

Also, I'm pleased to announce that the **NJ Hearing Aid Project** is continuing its second year of service to provide reconditioned hearing aids to eligible low income seniors who otherwise may not be able to afford them. My appreciation goes to our community partners, Montclair State University, Center for Audiology and Speech Language Pathology, and Sertoma, Inc. for working with DDHH to make this project possible. I would also like to give special thanks to HLAA-NJ for their efforts to spread awareness of the project and to assist in identifying new donation centers.

David C. Alexander, Ph.D., Director
NJ Division of the Deaf and
Hard of Hearing



Monthly Communicator

February 2015 Vol. 36 No. 2



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The Monthly Communicator is published by the New Jersey Department of Human Services' Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DDHH), a state agency. DDHH provides information, referral, and advocacy to service recipients. Information or articles provided by others does not imply endorsement by DDHH or the State of New Jersey.

We Welcome Your Articles and Ads

The Monthly Communicator is published 11 times per year. Deadline for submissions for the March issue is February 1 and should be e-mailed to: monthlycommunicator@dhs.state.nj.us.

The deadline for the **Monthly Communicator** is **the first of the month for the next month**.

Kindly follow these guidelines for submissions:

- Should be less than two pages
- Plain font, such as NY Times #11 or similar
- Type flush left
- No art imbedded within
- Send as Word attachment or an e-mail itself
- Art, logos, photos may be sent as attached JPG
- Submissions are not normally repeated
- Content should be of interest to readers, events should be accessible to people with hearing loss, no direct selling products, but educational info about new technology is acceptable
- Editor has discretion regarding editing, without final approval of submitter



Housing News

NJ Deaf Senior Housing Raises Additional Funds

A holiday luncheon fundraiser on December 13, 2014 was sponsored by New Jersey Deaf Senior Housing (NJDSH) at the Bottagra Restaurante in Hawthorne. Deacon Tom Smith, Social Services Coordinator opened with a prayer. A festive buffet of Italian specialties was enjoyed by all. Debra Fleetwood was the emcee for entertainment by Henrietta Ridgway and Mildred Burdge who gave all a good laugh. Steve Toth was a volunteer interpreter. Many people from NJ and nearby states had a good time meeting old friends.

The success of the fundraising was increased by 50/50 chances and drawings for prizes. Door prizes included a Rubbermaid 28 Canister Set donated by Kevin Munn and 4 \$25 gift cards. Drawings were held for a Keurig Coffee Maker donated by Lucinda Brooks, Chung Williamson donated a

metal case with poker chips and Jane Cyran donated a Metal Rabbit Wine opener and a bottle of wine. The top prize of an Apple Air Pad 2 donated by Kathy Kady-Hopkins from ASL IRS was won by Bonnie Abols. Bonnie traveled all the way from Rhode Island and was very happy to be the winner.

The Board of NJDSH presented some of the new developments about Deaf Housing for NJ. Many in the audience are anxiously awaiting the ground breaking and then, opening day. Lila Taylor, President of NJDSH, reminded everyone who is interested to get on the waiting list. When the building is open, all units will need to be rented. If not enough Deaf, Deaf-Blind and hard of hearing NJ residents rent, then the units will be rented to people from NY, Pennsylvania and Connecticut. Hearing people also will be allowed to rent if not enough people with hearing loss enter.



iPAD Air Winner - Donated by ASL IRS Kathy Kady Hopkins, President from left - Lila Taylor President, Winner, Bonnie Abols, Volunteers, Jimmy Libman and Marjorie Kounouklos



NJDSH Board Members - from left Chung Williamson, Treasurer; Lucinda Brooks, Vice President; Jane Cyran, Secretary; Lori Timney, Webmaster; Lila Taylor, President; Tom Smith, Social Services Coordinator



Group photo from NJ School for the Deaf/Marie Katzenbach



Tips on How to Talk to Loved Ones about Hearing Loss

By Traci Burton, *Field Representative*

Often times we are told that we have a hearing loss because we may not notice it about ourselves, or we are in denial. It is a sensitive topic for many and experiencing a grieving process is common and normal. Hearing loss can be seen as a sign of aging and, therefore, difficult to accept. We seem to be more comfortable getting and wearing glasses than getting and wearing hearing aids! When a friend or family member is struggling with a hearing loss and missing so much because of it, a conversation is the best first step to helping them. Many sources offer suggestions on how to broach the subject with your loved one, and here are five tips from *Healthy Hearing* for having that conversation while being sensitive to their feelings.

Choosing the right place and time

To have a conversation about hearing loss, it's important to choose the time and location carefully. For many people, it is tempting to bring it up in the moment; for example, when your loved one has misunderstood three things that you have said in less than five minutes. But this is an important conversation to have, so it's best to plan for it. Invite your mother over for afternoon tea or ask your friend to come work on a project with you. It's also a good idea to choose a private, quiet place to talk. This is the best type of environment for people with hearing loss and it's also vital to create a comfortable space for a conversation that someone might not be especially keen on having.



Come from a place of love

This is vital. To have a successful and compassionate conversation with someone you love who has hearing loss, it's important to come from that place of love, rather than a place of frustration. For example, often times it's tempting to say "You know, you really need to have your hearing checked," when a loved one has asked you to repeat yourself too many times. But this can cause someone to be defensive, feel attacked and resent your future offers of help. Instead, handle the frustrating times with grace and plan a calm and loving conversation.

Assume they know

Oftentimes, people with untreated hearing loss do know deep down that they are having trouble hearing and need to seek treatment. The conversation might run more smoothly if you assume this. It's less likely that someone will be completely shocked that you have noticed he or she has hearing loss, so knowing this should give you courage to have the conversation. Surveys show that people are more likely to seek treatment when someone they love is affected by their hearing loss. A good conversation starter is, "I noticed recently that you have had the TV on very loud, and I'm wondering if you might be having trouble hearing."

Be empathic

Being empathic means you listen to your loved one's concerns. Avoid cutting him or her off, and let your loved one do most of the talking if he or she is up for it. Express that you understand your loved one's fears and concerns and do your best not to counter it with a "but." For example, "I understand you're concerned about looking old with hearing aids but..." Instead, it's important to start the conversation by letting your empathy and concern stand-alone before offering your opinions.

Offer your support and follow through

Your loved one may be nervous about seeking treatment. Offer to go to the audiologist appointment with him or her. You can ask questions, take notes and be a great source of emotional support in a time that is tough for many people.

Traci Burton can be reached at traci.burton@dhs.state.nj.us or 609-588-2648 with any questions.

HLAA-NJ Boosts 2015 Scholarship Grants to \$1500 for Applicants From NJ High School Seniors with Hearing Loss



Applications are now being accepted from high school seniors with hearing loss for as many as four HLAA-NJ scholarships to be awarded this year to students pursuing higher education. With funding made possible in part by the successful **Garden State Walk4Hearing** in October, up to four scholarships of \$1,500 each are being offered to successful candidates.

HLAA-NJ's scholarship program is designed to encourage and support young students by publicly celebrating their successes and achievements with hearing loss. Aligned with the HLAA-NJ goal to bring awareness to life challenges of hearing loss, the application requires a thoughtful essay on how hearing loss has impacted the student's life, and how its challenges have been met.

Scholarship winners will be announced in May, and an award ceremony and celebration open to all will be held in June (TBA).

All students with the following qualifications are encouraged to apply: 1. high school senior between the ages of 17 and 20, 2. New Jersey resident, 3. wear hearing aids and/or cochlear implants, 4. acceptance into

a college, university or vocational school by June 1, 2015.

The official application can be found online at www.hearingloss-nj.org, and can only be submitted online. The application deadline is May 1, 2015. No late applications (received after midnight May 1) will be accepted.

An early start is encouraged since the application involves documentation and preparation of an essay.

Questions concerning the application forms or scholarship process are welcome and may be addressed to Alice J. Glock, HLAA-NJ Scholarship Chair at alice.glock@hearingloss-nj.org.

Used Hearing Aids, More Donor Collection Points, Senior Recipients, Sought for NJ Hearing Aid Project

Previously-owned hearing aids, additional donor deposit collection drop-off locations as well as eligible recipients for donated and reconditioned hearing aids are now being sought as the **New Jersey Hearing Aid Project (NJHAP)** enters its second year of operation. Individuals with hearing loss who may have upgraded their hearing aids and find themselves with older devices they no longer use may donate them to the program. At the same time, the program seeks to expand its reach and availability throughout New Jersey, and seeks additional organizations with locations where donated hearing aids can be collected for processing. These can include such facilities as audiologist's offices, public libraries

and churches/synagogues or other faith-based organization facilities. Also, potential recipients for the free refurbished hearing aids are welcome to apply, and eligibility requirements and guidelines are provided below.

The New Jersey Hearing Aid Project (NJHAP) is a collaborative project of **Hearing Charities of America/Sertoma, Montclair State University** and the **New Jersey Department of Human Services' Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing**. NJHAP provides free refurbished hearing aids for eligible low-income seniors, through the development of a state-wide hearing device bank. Eligibility criteria includes: Resident of New Jersey, 65 years of age or older, income of less than \$26,575 if single; \$32,582 if married. The hearing device bank will provide devices at little or no cost and as resources are available support the services required to properly dispense and use the technology.

Although HLAA-NJ is not an official sponsor, we do support the program by spreading the word and employing our grassroots efforts to find donation centers as well as encourage our members to donate old hearing aids.

Tax receipts are available for used hearing aid donors. Once the donor completes the online donation form, at www.hearingaid donations.org/donate/, the donor may print an acknowledgment of their donation. Also, if the donor includes their contact information in the package to be mailed with the donated hearing aid(s), **Hearing Charities of America/Sertoma** will send an acknowledgement letter to the donor. Due to IRS regulations, they cannot assign a value for the donated hearing aids, as that is the responsibility of donor. Also, please



note that the IRS requests a third party evaluation for items valued in excess of \$5,000.

Although there are several programs that offer limited assistance, the vast majority of people who need hearing aids must go without them because of their high cost. The division receives thousands of inquiries for information, but one of the most common requests is from those seeking hearing aid assistance. Very few insurance companies provide coverage. Many people with hearing loss are over 65 and Medicare also does not provide coverage. It is hoped that this program will help bridge the gap. The division's participation in the project includes establishing eligibility guidelines and determining which applicants will be approved to obtain the hearing aid.

Potential applicants should contact:

**New Jersey Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
NJ Hearing Aid Project
PO Box 074
Trenton, NJ 08625-0074
Phone: (609) 588-2648
Fax: (609) 588-2528**

For individuals who meet eligibility requirements and are currently registered with the **New Jersey Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled (PAAD)** program, please request Eligibility Application Form A.

For individuals who meet eligibility requirements and are NOT currently registered with the New Jersey PAAD program, please request Eligibility Application Form B.

Sertoma, Inc. is composed of more than 500 clubs across the country, and has as its primary goal to reach those affected by hearing loss and communicative disorders. Sertoma's members do this through educational programs such as **Sertoma SAFEears!®**, scholarships, and the Adopt-An-Agency program. Sertoma is the founding partner of Hearing Charities of America.

General questions about NJHAP can be answered by telephone at: 609-588-2648, with application forms available at: www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddhh/home/hearingaidproject.html Alternately, information is also available from Trish Breed at Sertoma, at tbreed@sertomahq.org

NJ Reelabilities Film Festival Featured "Lost and Sound" Viewing, Discussion

After Arlene Romoff, HLAA-NJ past president, and author of two books recounted her experiences with Cochlear Implants (CI), was a discussion following two showings of **"Lost and Sound"** in November, held at two locations, including **JCC MetroWest**. It attracted a small group of about 10 in West Orange and played to over 100 attendees in **Montclair State University (MSU)**. The film, shown with open captions, was about three people who



rediscover music after losing their hearing. The showings, on November 15 and 19, were also co-sponsored by HLAA-NJ. The November 19 showing also included discussion participation by Nancy Williams, HLAA-NJ member, pianist and founding editor of the online magazine, **"Grand Piano Passion."**

According to Mrs. Romoff, "I was actually delighted that the film focused on two CI users, and also on one person with sudden single-sided deafness. Hearing loss films typically focus on sign language users, of which I'm not, so this was a really nice change of pace."

Nancy Williams, on the other hand, always had a hearing loss. She was an accomplished business person whose Web site, **"Grand Piano Passion,"** focuses on her finding music again after 25 years, which was similar to the scenario of the film itself.

Fran Prezant, an MSU professional dealing with other aspects of hearing loss and a third discussion panel participant, brought a totally different personal perspective about her mother's experience addressing the impact of hearing loss.

Mrs. Romoff also noted that "There were psychology professors at the MSU screening and they asked about counseling for people with hearing loss. And, I was able to address that, and delighted to be able to do so. I have extensive knowledge and experience with counselors for people with hearing loss. Very few understand what is 'normal' for people with hearing loss, aside from the concerns that the general population has. So, this is something psychologists don't realize, the behavioral traits of people with hearing loss, which could be construed as 'abnormal' for a hearing person."

<p>DONATE A HEARING AID All used hearing aids are accepted.</p> <p>Fill out the form below to the best of your ability. Be detailed and include with your shipment. All donations are tax deductible and you will receive a letter of acknowledgment.</p> <p>NAME: _____ ADDRESS: _____ CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____</p> <p>EMAIL: _____</p> <p>HOW MANY HEARING AIDS DID YOU DONATE? <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p> <p>SHIP A HEARING AID</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Package your hearing aid in a sturdy, crush-proof container along with the form above. Detach the label (see reverse), fill in the return address and add appropriate postage. Affix the label to your package and ship! <p>It's that easy!</p>	<p>A PROJECT OF</p> <p>HEARING CHARITIES OF AMERICA www.hearingaidofamerica.org</p> <p>Hearing Aid DONATION CENTER</p> <p>SPONSOR</p> <p>Sertoma www.sertoma.org</p> <p>SERTOMA</p> <p>NEW JERSEY HEARING AID PROJECT PARTNERS</p> <p>The New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing</p> <p>Montclair State University</p> <p>HEARING CHARITIES OF AMERICA A PROJECT OF THE HEARING LOSS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA</p> <p>Donate Today! 818-523-8203 www.HearingAidDonations.org</p>
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HLAA-Newark To Hold First Meeting As Newly Launched Chapter on March 7

First meeting of HLAA's newly organized chapter serving the Newark-Union-Essex areas of New Jersey will be held **Thursday, March 7, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:45 p.m.** at the **Union Public Library, 1980 Morris Avenue, Union, NJ, (next to City Hall and Dunkin' Donuts)**, according to Latisha Porter-Vaughn who will serve as president, Shelly Simpson as vice president and Angela Hodges, administrator. The general public as well as all interested persons with any level of hearing loss seeking a local support group in the Newark area are invited to attend and join. To get onto the new chapter's mailing and distribution list, please contact: *Latisha.porter-vaughn@shu.edu*.



Rashaun L. Boyd

Guest speaker at the inaugural meeting will be **Rashaun L. Boyd**, 16-year old Plainfield native diagnosed with moderate to severe hearing loss at the age of four, who will share her interests and experiences growing up amidst school and pre-college pressures, isolation, bullying and the everyday issues that generally accompany and impact deaf and hard of hearing people and children like himself.

Rashaun is a sophomore who attends **Mountain Lakes High School** through the **Lake Drive Program**. He is an honor-roll student, and he hopes to someday become an engineer. He does excellent in school academically, but as most of the deaf and hard of hearing students are, it is difficult to have a social life other than social media since everyone lives so far apart. Rashaun's hope is to bring other deaf and hard of hearing teens and young adults together in a social setting outside of social media to meet and network and share mutual interests.

For further information about HLAA-NJ, contact Joel Strasser at *jjas888@aol.com*, or *Joel.Strasser@hearingloss-nj.org*.

Help is Closer Than You Think...



Narcotics Anonymous Meeting in ASL

In addition to a wide variety of services for substance use disorders for the deaf and hard of hearing, **Center For Family Services** program sponsors a **Narcotics Anonymous** meeting conducted in **ASL** -

Thursdays
from 7:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Living Proof Recovery Center
108 Somerdale Road in Voorhees.

For more information contact:
856-874-8229 or 856-874-8230 Video Phone
856-428-8373 TTY
856-428-0949 Fax
Email: *rndhh@centerffs.org*; *www.centerffs.org*



Counseling Services

Recovery Network for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Hearing Loss Mobile Counseling Services



Center for Family Services program offers mobile counseling services to the Deaf and hard of hearing at New Jersey licensed substance abuse treatment facilities. Assistance is available for all levels of care for clinical services. ASL fluent staff provides services that can include assessment with referral and case management as a way to provide the best level of communication between the client and service provider. For more information please contact RNDHH at:

856-874-8230 Video Phone
856-428-8373 TTY
856-874-8229 Voice 856-428-0949 Fax
Email: *rndhh@centerffs.org* *www.centerffs.org*



Signs of Sobriety, Inc.

Services for individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing seeking
Alcoholism and Drug Addiction Services

Interpreted 12 Step Meetings in New Jersey

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) - A Twelve Step meeting for people to share their experience, strength, and hope in an effort to overcome their misuse of alcohol. There are no dues or fees. The only requirement to attend is a desire to stop drinking.

Narcotics Anonymous (NA) - A Twelve Step meeting for people to share their experience, strength and hope in an effort to overcome their misuse of drugs. There are no dues or fees. The only requirement to attend is a desire to stop using drugs.

Twelve Step Meeting (12 SM) - A 12 Step Meeting using the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous to address the problems of addictive behavior. There are 12 Step Meetings for addiction to alcohol, specific drugs, gambling, compulsive shopping, overeating, etc.

Al-anon - 12 Step Meetings for people who are effected by a loved ones addictive behavior.

North Jersey Area:

Wednesday 7:30pm

Butler, NJ
Assembly of God Church
30 Manning Ave
Open, Speaker

Monday 7:30pm

Women's Big Book
First Presbyterian Church
3550 Nottingham Way, Hamilton NJ
AA: Women's, Open, Big Book

Wednesday 8pm

Pennington Weds. Night
Trinity United Methodist Church
1985 Pennington Rd, Ewing NJ
AA: Open, Speaker

Central Jersey Area Cont:

Thursday 8pm

St. Paul United Church of Christ
62 South Main Street
(School Bldg behind The Church)
Milltown, NJ
(732-828-0020)
AA: Open, Speaker, Non-Smoking

Saturday, 3:30pm

Venture to Help
Ewing Presbyterian Church
100 Scotch Road, Ewing, NJ
AA: Open, Speaker

Sunday 7:30pm

Southern Ocean County Hospital
Route 72
Manahawkin, NJ
AA: Open, Step

Updated: 1/13/15

Abbreviations:

O - Open (Everyone Welcome) **C** - Closed (For Alcoholics/Addicts only)
I - Interpreter provided for deaf members **ASL** - mtg. conducted in American Sign Language **D** - Discussion, **SP** - Speaker, **ST** - Step, **TP** - Topic,
B - Big Book or Beginner, **NS** - No Smoking, **WC** - Wheelchair Accessible

This 12 Step Meeting list was updated 1/15. If you have any questions, notice mistakes, or are aware of other 12 Step Support Groups that provide special communication access for people with hearing loss please notify Signs of Sobriety, Inc. If you plan to travel or are interested in 12 Step Meetings in other states please call SOS office at 609-882-7177. For more information visit our website at www.sosnj.org.

To Arrange interpreter or communication services at a meeting in your area email Lisette Weiland, NIC: Lweiland@sosnj.org or call 609-369-1985 (voice or text)

100 Scotch Road + Second Floor + Ewing, New Jersey 08628

Voice: (609) 882-7677 + TTY: (609) 882-7177 + Fax: (609) 882-6808

www.sosnj.org



Over-the-Counter Dietary Supplements for Tinnitus

Do They Really Help?

By Robert M. DiSogra, Au.D.

I have been an audiologist for over 35 years and, almost every day, I work with patients that have tinnitus. In most cases their condition is caused by sensorineural hearing loss. For these patients, I typically advise the following treatment regimen: consider the proven tinnitus management therapies, try hearing aids, avoid loud noises, and have an annual evaluation to monitor their loss.

The best treatment plans for tinnitus – the methods that most reliably help patients manage their condition – require time, patience, and personal commitment. Tinnitus management is not easy, but when seen to completion, these treatments can truly reduce the burden of tinnitus.

Unfortunately, there are many companies and products that dubiously offer an “easy” solution to the problem

of tinnitus. I am referring to over-the-counter (OTC) dietary supplements that report to provide tinnitus relief and even a cure for tinnitus. Over the years, there has been a proliferation of advertisements for these products on television, radio, in newspapers, and, in particular, on the internet. But the promise of an easy fix is a false one. Patients who self-medicate to manage their tinnitus symptoms, without consulting an audiologist or ENT, are making a big mistake.

OTC Tinnitus Products: Many Options, None of them Good

In my research, I have identified 53 over-the-counter products that misleadingly claim to either temporarily or permanently relieve tinnitus. These products include herbal supplements, vitamins, and homeopathic remedies, sold as pills, powders, liquids, sprays,

and teas. All are available without a prescription. None have been clinically proven to directly impact tinnitus.

OTC tinnitus products are often based on folklore, anecdotes, or traditional Chinese medicine, and routinely contain ingredients that have not been scientifically-evaluated for their efficacy or safety. 90% of the ingredients in OTC tinnitus products have absolutely no peer-reviewed research to substantiate their use for tinnitus relief. Reported research on the remaining 10% of ingredients is often outdated. Some companies promote data that is over 50 years old, and which has since been revised, corrected, or outright contradicted.

Websites and advertisements for OTC products typically do not include citations to support the manufacturers’ miraculous claims. It is not unusual to read ambiguous statements, like “helps reduce ear noises” or “studies have shown a reduction of ringing in the ear.” The challenge is to find the actual “studies” being referenced. In many cases, the reported research was not published in a peer-reviewed journal and is therefore not reliable. I have yet to find an over-the-counter tinnitus-relief product that has been tested and verified in a double-blind, clinical study, using commonly accepted clinical research methods.

Not only are OTC tinnitus remedies unproven to be effective, they also may be unsafe. Many products contain ingredients that could, in fact, be detrimental to patients. Of the 53 products I examined:

- 19 have ingredients identified as being potentially poisonous to humans
- 25 should be avoided by patients with cardiac conditions because they may affect blood pressure or may negatively interact with the frequently prescribed anticoagulant drug warfarin
- 22 should not be used by pregnant women or nursing mothers—by the manufacturers’ own suggestion
- Two should not be given to children—also by the manufacturers’ own suggestion
- 11 products contain quinine—which can cause tinnitus!

Patients can expect to pay upwards of \$50 per bottle (a one month supply) for these supplements. Most manufacturers recommend a three month minimum supply. That's \$600 a year, with absolutely no guarantee of efficacy or safety!

The Placebo Effect

A few patients anecdotally report tinnitus improvement after the use of supplements, but it is likely that the perceived benefit is mostly due to the placebo effect. The placebo effect is an often-observed tendency for patients to feel better when they believe they are taking an effective treatment, even if the treatment is, in fact, a sugar pill or a sham.

If a patient tells me they are getting relief from an OTC tinnitus product my response is simple: "Congratulations!" I'm truly glad they feel better. But, because there is no scientific evidence for OTC tinnitus supplements, I am skeptical that these products had any direct impact on the patient's improvement. I typically suspect some other variable was involved: stress reduction, diet, exercise, better sleep, etc.

Without being able to show efficacy across many patients in controlled clinical trials, any reported tinnitus improvement from OTCs should be regarded as anecdotal, rather than definitive proof. Anecdotes simply are not reliable metrics upon which to base a medical recommendation for other patients struggling with tinnitus.

Government Regulation

Some patients may assume that supplements are safe because no prescription is needed for their use. In truth, it is impossible to fully determine the safety of supplements because of very weak federal regulation.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) are responsible for ensuring that nutritional supplements are safe. The National Institutes of Health, Office of Dietary Supplements, provides general scientific guidance on these products. Nonetheless, manufacturer claims about the safety and efficacy

of OTC supplements do not have to be proven because the FDA classifies dietary supplements as food, not as drugs. Consequently, OTC tinnitus-relief products do not go through the same rigorous scientific scrutiny as pharmaceutical drugs.

Under the *Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994 (DSHEA)*, supplement manufacturers themselves are responsible for ensuring the safety of their products, before they go to market. (The FDA is responsible for taking action against any unsafe dietary supplement products only after consumer complaints are filed.) However, the DSHEA includes a legal loophole that manufacturers can use to minimize their liability, in the



form of a general disclaimer: "These statements have not been evaluated by the FDA. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease." Every product I found used the DSHEA disclaimer. In effect, supplement manufacturers can put any number of ingredients into their product, without having to prove the actual benefits or safety.

"Contact Us"

Sometimes you can learn a lot about a product just by asking for more information.

In March 2013, as part of my research, I contacted 25 random manufacturers of OTC tinnitus relief products. I used the "Contact Us" tab on their websites and requested the following information:

1. The name and credentials of

the senior investigator/researcher/nutritionist/herbalist/advisory board members who made the decision to include the ingredients listed in the product

2. A reference list of published articles showing the efficacy and safety of each ingredient in the product, as it pertains to tinnitus

3. Any consumer/medical reports of the long-term effects of continuous use of this product

Only two companies responded to my request. One company reported that it was "too busy" to answer my inquiry. The other firm informed me that it had discontinued its tinnitus relief product "because it just didn't work."

Conclusion

I understand the allure of an easy, quick fix—the secret herb, oil, mineral, or extract that will permanently solve your tinnitus. But unfortunately, this is a false promise. (If/when there is a true cure for tinnitus I would venture to guess that it will be the lead story on the evening news.) My colleagues and I share your frustration and hope that one day we have a real cure for the problem of tinnitus.

In the meantime, I urge those of you with tinnitus to seek professional otologic and audiologic intervention to manage your condition. There are a variety

of proven treatment and management strategies that provide real benefit and can lower the impact of tinnitus in your life. While the outcomes of these therapies vary by patient, they all offer more scientifically-proven benefit than any OTC product.

Dr. Robert M. DiSogra is a licensed audiologist who has maintained a private practice in Freehold, NJ since 1985 (Audiology Associates of Freehold, PC). He lectures nationally and internationally and has published numerous articles on tinnitus/ototoxicity, as well as adverse drug, herbal medicine, and nutritional supplement reactions. This article was featured in Tinnitus Today, Vol. 39, Number 3 Winter 2014. Dr. DiSogra offers additional resources on OTC tinnitus products on his Web site, www.audiologyfreehold.com/ingredients-notinotc-tinnitus-relief-products.



Burlington County Deaf and Hard of Hearing New Service Educational Initiative Bridge Classrooms Starting 2015-2016 School Year



Bridging the linguistic and conceptual gaps between Deaf and hard of hearing students (in grades K-8) and their hearing peers by providing them the opportunity to learn and socialize, while receiving the support necessary for full communication with their hearing peers in the general education setting.

What does Bridge Offer?

- Opportunity for students who are Deaf and hard of hearing to be taught in their unique learning style with the benefit of Deaf and hard of hearing student peers
- Small class size for LA and Social Studies provided in a pull-out replacement or resource support setting, instructed by a Teacher of the Deaf
- Educational Interpreter in the general education setting, assemblies and school-wide events
- Group speech language therapy sessions with other Deaf and hard of hearing students, conducted by a qualified Speech Language Specialist, trained in support and deaf awareness
- Classroom acoustic and equipment checks conducted by an Educational Audiologist
- Inclusion Support Teacher to work with the educational teams
- Academic support sessions guided by Bridge staff
- Collaboration of the Teacher of the Deaf and the General Education teacher



- Teacher to student ratio in the General Education classrooms 1:18
- Modern hands-on science labs and state-of-the-art technology labs
- Various special subject offerings are available
- All students receive Pre-Engineering instruction under the STEM initiative Project Lead the Way.

Candidates for Bridge

- Require multi-sensory reinforcement across the curriculum
- Could benefit, not only academically, but socially and emotionally from placement with deaf and hard of hearing peers
- Currently receiving, or willing to explore, sign support in the educational setting
- Slightly below grade level for language based subjects

Where is Bridge Offered?

- Eastampton Community School, Eastampton Township in the heart of Burlington County New Jersey
- Grades K-8 with a full day kindergarten

Open House:

Feb. 25, 2015 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Snow Date:

Mar. 3, 2015 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm
All are welcome ~ Come and meet the Bridge staff and enjoy a tour of Eastampton Community School
1 Student Drive
Eastampton, N.J. 08060
609- 267- 9172 - School Voice

Please R.S.V.P by **February 18, 2015**
Contact Nicole Margiotta,
Bridge Supervisor
e-mail: nmargiotta@bcsssd.k12.nj.us
609-702-0500 x7403 - Voice

Educational Services Unit In partnership with Burlington County Special Services School District 20 Pioneer Blvd., Westampton, NJ 08060

North Jersey Community Center of the Deaf, Inc.

proudly presents

Happy Valentine's Day

WINGO Affair

Saturday, February 14, 2015

6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Elmwood Park VFW Post 5084

6 Veterans Place

Elmwood Park, NJ

We will host **Best-Looking Valentine's Dress Contest** at 6:45 p.m. for cash prizes. First WINGO game will begin after 7 p.m. \$ 1,000 in cash given away based on 200 people attending.

Admission - \$ 10 for members and \$13 for non-members.

- Exciting Photo Booth
- Refreshments on sale
 - 50/50 chances
 - Cash bar

and NJCCD Affair BankNite.

Texas Hold 'Em Games: \$20 per player plus \$6 admission charge.

Chairperson - Susan Benenati

Co-Chairperson - Michelle Benenati and the Committee. For more information, visit www.njccdsite.org

Dear NJ Relay & CapTel



I've used CapTel for more than a year now and love my 800i phone. I was surprised to see recently that I had to register my phone. I use the Internet, so why do I have to do this? What's this all about?

Concerned about Privacy

Dear Concerned about Privacy,

We're happy to know you benefit from the CapTel service. Many CapTel users have recently seen a notice on their CapTel screens stating that they are required to register.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) issued new rules requiring consumers to register their Internet-based CapTel device to continue service even if they've used CapTel for years. Consumers who do not have Internet-based CapTel services are not affected by this new requirement.

The good news is that registration is easy. CapTel users can register several ways:

- Online at www.captel.com/register
- Over the phone at (877) 202-9578

The registration process requires users to provide their birthdate, the last four digits of their social security number, and other relevant data. All information is kept confidential and secure in accordance with FCC requirements. None of the information will be used for marketing or promotional purposes. If you are uncomfortable providing the information online, a registration form can be sent via U.S. mail.

If one chooses not to register, the captions feature on the CapTel phone may not be activated until the phone is registered. Users can continue to use the phone to make/receive calls, but will see no captions. So register, and continue using your CapTel phone as always, knowing that your information is secure.

For more information, please visit www.captel.com/customer_service/kb/index.php/article/captel-registration-help or call (888) 269-7477.

Let us know if you have more questions.

Sincerely,
NJ Relay & CapTel



Accessible Health



Meridian's First

Health Fair for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Saturday March 28, 2015

12 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Free Health Screenings

- Presentations on Health Topics
 - Information Booths
- ASL Interpreters and CART provided - other accommodations available

Hosted at the Ocean County College Gymnasium
College Drive, Toms River, NJ

Info: jansbach@meridianhealth.com

Presented by:

Meridian Health's

Cultural Diversity and Community Outreach Departments

Meridian Health's

Deaf/Hard of Hearing Community Advisory Network (DHH CAN)

NJ Dept of Human Services'

Division of the

Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DDHH)

JOB OPPORTUNITIES



Allies in Caring, is a multicultural non-for profit organization dedicated to helping underserved individuals, who have emotional and behavioral problems, move toward recovery, health and greater independence through counseling, education and community support. We specialize in providing services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals and their families, and we are starting a program that will provide support to children and their families at home, school or other community-based settings in all NJ counties. Specific interventions include but are not limited to the use of: individual counseling sessions, family sessions, crisis intervention, consultation, creative intervention strategies, and relevant resources and referrals.

Programs we are currently approved for by the **Division of Children and Families**:

- **Intensive In Community Services (IIC)** - For children & youth with behavioral and emotional problems

- **Intensive In Home Services (IIH)** - For children & youth with co-occurring diagnosis; behavioral and emotional problems and developmental disabilities.

We are looking to hire and train individuals who are committed to using their skills and experience to make a positive impact in the wellbeing and development of children, youth and their families. Our open positions:

- **Licensed Therapists** –Provides ongoing clinical consultation to the child, family and team members and develops initial treatment plan; Assesses progress toward goals, coordinating supports and resources as needed. Must be fully licensed or have met requirements to be provisionally licensed with LPC, LMHC, LCSW and/or LMFT.

- **MA Level Therapists** – Models and implements treatment interventions; Provides psycho education to the child and family; Documents progress made. Must be a masters degree graduate in Psychology, Education, Social Work, Behavioral Sciences, Human Development or related fields.

- **Behavioral Assistants (BA)** - Provides one-to-one interventions according to treatment plan; Collaborates with other members of the treatment team and other professionals working with the family; Documents progress made. Preferably but not necessary bachelors degree graduate or student in Psychology, Education, Social Work, Behavioral Sciences, Human Development or related fields.

- **Mentors: Acts as a role model**; Stimulates the youth's learning and development by planning and participating in activities together; Helps child become familiar with resources(Publications, community activities, technology, etc); Documents progress made.

Because we care, we nurture personal growth, career development and general well-being, by offering the following:

- Competitive pay rates
- Flexible schedules
- Training and education
- Supportive team environment

Bilingual and/or multicultural is a plus.

All interested candidates must submit a resume and cover letter indicating desired position(s) via email at admin@alliesincaring.org.

Please check our website at www.alliesincaring.org to learn more about us.

Interpreter Positions Available

> Mountain Lakes School District

Lake Drive Program
2014 - 2015 School Year

Maternity Leave Position
Full Time Sign Language Interpreter
March through May 2015
Must be EIPA Certified

Also, openings for Substitute Sign Language Interpreters and Sign Language Interpreters for After-School Activities at Mountain Lakes High School. Must be EIPA Certified.

Please send resume to:

Julie Lazeration

Lake Drive Program
10 Lake Drive
Mountain Lakes, NJ 07046

jlazeration@mtlakes.org
or fax to: 973-299-9405

ASL Instructor Wanted

Sussex County Community College is in need of an instructor for the spring semester for ASL levels I and II. The spring semester starts **Monday, January 26** and ends **Friday, May 15**. Both courses are scheduled to run on Wednesday. The level I meets at 12:15 p.m. - 2:55 p.m. and the level II is at 6:30 p.m.- 9:10 p.m. It's important that the person interested in teaching is able to break down the information into small pieces to be presented and practiced in class. (The title of the text used is on the master syllabi.) Pay for level I adjunct faculty is \$690 per credit hour. One course is 3 credits or \$2070. Two courses is 6 credits or \$4140. We normally require a master's degree, why of course, the requirement is waived.

Contact: Agnes Tocket

Assistant Professor and Language Coordinator

Sussex County Community College

1 College Hill

Newton, NJ 07860

973-300-2752; atocket@sussex.edu



Monthly **Communicator**

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NJ Department of Human Services
Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
PO Box 074
Trenton, New Jersey 08625 - 0074

Calendar of Events 2015

Saturday, May 16

**New Jersey Deaf Senior Housing, Inc.
2015 Fashion Show & Gift Basket Auction**

Fundraising Event

12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The Molly Pitcher Inn

88 Riverdale Avenue

Red Bank, NJ

www.NJDSH.org



DDHH Regular Office Hours: Monday – Friday; 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM

Office Closed: Monday, Feb. 16 - President's Day