

Monthly Communicator

Chris Christie, Governor

Kim Guadagno, Lt. Governor

Elizabeth Connolly, Acting Commissioner

David Alexander, Director

Director's Corner

Better Hearing and Speech Month

May is **National Better Hearing and Speech Month**. The NJ Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DDHH) is pleased to support this annual observance. The purpose of Better Hearing & Speech Month is to raise awareness about communication disorders and to promote intervention that can improve the quality of life for those who experience problems with hearing, speaking, or understanding. It also encourages people of all ages to have their hearing tested. This is becoming more important as current research indicates that hearing loss is becoming more common among aging baby boomers, as well as young people due to noise exposure.

The theme for 2015 is "Early Intervention Counts." Hearing loss can present barriers to a child's development of communication skills. The goal of early intervention services is to develop and foster these skills. Communication can be developed through the use of sign language, spoken language or both. Early intervention may also include services for additional special needs the child may have, as well as provide support for family members. DDHH has many resources and knowledgeable staff able to assist celebrate this year's theme and to raise awareness about hearing loss and early intervention services.

DDHH staff work collaboratively with the Department of Health and Senior Services, Early Hearing Screening and Statewide Parent Advocacy Network to provide workshops and resources for parents and service providers. For more information about the DDHH programs or if you are interested in having the division host an awareness activity as part of Better Hearing and Speech Month, please contact us at 609-588-2648.

Great Adventure

A reminder that Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Day is approaching. It is scheduled for Saturday, June 6, 2015. DDHH staff are working with New Jersey Association of the Deaf and Six Flags Great Adventure to ensure this is an educational and fun filled day for all. For more information or to see a list of organizations selling tickets, please click [HERE](#).

DDHH Staff Member Jason Weiland, Recipient of the Champion Award

DDHH staff are often invited to serve on state advisory groups with the goal of enhancing awareness of the needs of people who are Deaf and hard of hearing. One of our staff, Jason Weiland, serves on the Cultural Access Network Project which strives to enhance cultural accessibility for people with disabilities. This project, which is a co-sponsored program of the New Jersey State Council of the Arts and New Jersey Theatre Alliance, presented Jason with this year's "Champion Award" in recognition of his outstanding advocacy for cultural access for people who are Deaf and hard of hearing. Congratulations Jason!

- David Alexander, Ph.D., Director

Community Outreach for the Older Adults of Newark

By Traci Burton, DDHH Field Representative

The Center for Geriatric Health at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center not only provides medical and transportation services for the seniors of Newark, they also provide community outreach. Their outreach includes educational programs, such as inviting me to present to the group of the Bethany Baptist Senior Center. On Tuesday March 10, 2015 the attendees learned of various services available to those living with hearing loss in New Jersey, such as the Equipment Distribution Program, the New Jersey Hearing Aid Project and the Assistive Technology Loan Program. The participants enjoyed a demonstration of some of the assistive devices that may help improve the quality of life, such as a door knocker, amplified and captioned telephones, and personal amplifiers for face-to-face/small group conversations and the television. Some of the participants were not comfortable raising their concerns to the room at large, so I entertained questions one-on-one after the presentation.

This is the second time the Center for Geriatric Health at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center has asked me to speak to the older adults of Newark. On Tuesday September 30, 2014 I gave a similar presentation to the residents of James C. White Manor.

NJ DDHH and Meridian Health Partner for First Ever Health Fair

By Jason Weiland, Field Representative

On March 28, New Jersey Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Meridian Health System partnered to host the first Accessible Health and Wellness Fair for the Deaf and hard of hearing. After recognizing the need for accessible health information for this community, the event was hosted at the Ocean County College Gymnasium from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

More than 80 attendees were in the audience for four presentations (memory loss, healthy heart, cancer guidelines, and joint replacement) from Meridian Health staff. There were also 20 exhibitors that included Meridian Health, NJ CapTel, NJ Association of the Deaf, NJ Deaf Senior Housing, Bridge to Employment, Union County College, and Ocean County College. Meridian also provided more than forty free health screenings related to blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose/diabetes, and stroke risk management. ASL interpreters and open captioning were provided throughout the day. The Interpreter Training Program at Union County College and Ocean County College provided student volunteers to assist with different functions. I helped planned the event with Jessica Ansbach and Darryl Hughes from Meridian Health along with Eileen Forestal, Lori Timney, and Joleen Marsillo who are members of the Meridian Health Citizen Advisory Council (CAC).

NJ DDHH, Meridian Health, and the CAC plan to consider collaborating on other projects to promote access to health and wellness information. The group is also looking at establishing monthly workshops related to a variety of topics that focus on the health and wellness of the Deaf and hard of hearing community.

Medford Leas Pathways to Learning Program

By Traci Burton, Field Representative

On Wednesday March 18, 2015 Medford Leas, an older adult community in Medford, New Jersey, hosted a Pathways to Learning Program – Modern Hearing Instruments: What’s Right for Me? Residents, staff,

and members of the community attended the event and enjoyed learning about the various aspects of hearing loss from keynote speaker Debra A. Winters, Au.D, FAAA.

After the keynote, participants visited The Exhibition, at which I hosted an information table. Visitors learned about the [NJ Hearing Aid Project](#), the [Equipment Distribution Program](#), the [Assistive Device Demonstration Centers](#), and the [Assistive Technology Loan Program](#). In addition, the CapTel and amplified telephones, smoke detector with flash, and a Pocket Talker Pro were on the table for demonstration.

Training for Deaf Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Volunteer Advocates

By Catie Purrazzella, Service Coordinator

Domestic violence and sexual assault survivors who are Deaf often face unique circumstances not encountered by domestic violence (DV) and sexual assault (SA) advocates who provide outreach, empowerment, community education, and training services for survivors. However, Deaf cultural awareness and fluency in American Sign Language among advocates is often missing. Deaf survivors have different experiences than hearing survivors. This is due to the lack of communication with hearing providers, the lack of access to the outside world, and the small, tight-knit culture of the Deaf community. These factors impact the Deaf survivor's decision on whether to use services.

To advocate for better access to services, DDHH is collaborating with the NJ Coalition of Battered Women, the NJ Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Woman Space, and two Deaf community leaders, Michelle Cline and Annmarie Buraczkeski to provide free DV and SA training on May 29 -31 in Hamilton, NJ. Presenter Keri Darling, Director and Trainer of Deaf Vermonters Advocacy Services, will cover DV and SA topics that impact Deaf and hard of hearing individuals. Training participants must be fluent in American Sign Language as the training is provided in American Sign Language. Parts of this 18 hour training can be applied to the state-required minimum of 40 hours of training to become a volunteer advocate. For more information about this training please go to the following [link](#).

[Registration](#) deadline is May 23, 2015 but seats are limited.

Please refer all questions to: NJDeafAdvocacy@gmail.com

Communication Access Advocacy

By Cathy Grehlinger, Coordinator, Communication Access Services

There is no replacement for effective self-advocacy when making a request for communication access for a medical appointment. However, individuals may be turned down when requesting a qualified sign language interpreter, CART services or an assistive listening system from a doctor's office. In such cases I am often contacted to provide advocacy support. The following is an example of a real case that Services Coordinator, Catie Purrazzella and I worked on together regarding the need for a qualified sign language interpreter for a Deaf patient with a serious medical issue. The situation involved an appointment with a specialist where potential surgery options were to be discussed. The doctor questioned his obligation to provide an interpreter. Information on the ADA was shared with the doctor, as well as an explanation of the role of an interpreter. After providing this information, the doctor ultimately agreed to provide an interpreter for the appointment. Even though there was not much lead time before the appointment date, we were able to secure the service of an interpreter for this very important appointment.

DDHH Equipment Distribution Program

by *Ira Hock*

The New Jersey Department of Human Services' Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing operates an Equipment Distribution Program (EDP) to ensure that New Jersey residents with hearing loss have access to telecommunications and safety devices. To find out if you qualify and to learn more about the EDP, which includes CapTel phones, smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, baby alert systems, amplified phones, and artificial larynx devices contact 800.792.8339 or click [HERE](#).

People with hearing loss who do not qualify for a CapTel phone from the DDHH program may be eligible to receive one at no cost directly from CapTel. Application forms are available at the following [link](#). However, the latter is only for Internet based models, not the 840 which requires analog service.

DDHH has receives a number of calls from individuals who received Captels in New Jersey and who are now moving out of state. Please call 888-995-6170 with any questions you may have pertaining to the need to re-register your phone in your new state of residence.

Other Organizations Serving People With Hearing Loss

Community Emergency Response Team Training for the Deaf Counties: Passaic, Bergen, Morris, Essex & Sussex

Dates: Monday, May 4; Wednesday, May 6; Monday, May 11; Wednesday, May 13; Monday, May 18
Wednesday, May 20 at 300 Oldham Road, Wayne, NJ 07470

For more information, please contact Annmarie Buraczeski at aburaczeski@gmail.com .

Insert "CERT" on subject with your full legal name, home address, email address, VP number & text number.

News Links from Hearing Loss Association of America-NJ

*Submitted by Joel Strasser. APR, Fellow PRSA, Trustee, Public Information Officer, HLAA-NJ
(Joel.Strasser@hearingloss-nj.org)*

News, Views and Dates from HLAA-NJ for [May 2015](#)

HLAA-NJ [Chapter News](#)

Calendar of Events

Saturday June 6

**31st NJ Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Awareness Day**

**Six Flags Great Adventure
Jackson, NJ**

Ticket info: GATickets@aol.com

DDHH Regular Office Hours: Monday – Friday: 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM
Office Closed: Monday, May 25 – Memorial Day

