

CALLER

THE COMMONWEALTH

Virginia Relay: Telecommunications services for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind or have difficulty speaking

Fall 2017

Organizations Serving Virginia Relay Users



There are many organizations throughout Virginia that are dedicated to serving relay users and other Virginia residents. Read about some of them here and then experience the difference they can make for yourself.

The Association of Late-Deafened Adults (ALDA)

www.alda.org

ALDA is an association aimed at providing a stress-free communication environment for those with hearing loss. ALDA hosts small group meetings and their annual ALDAcon conference, which are accessible to all with hearing loss, regardless of communication preferences (ASL, lip reading, hearing aids, etc.).

The Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA)

www.hearingloss.org

HLAA is the nation's leading organization representing people with hearing loss and provides assistance and resources for people with hearing loss and their families. HLAA is working to eradicate the stigma associated with hearing loss and raise public awareness about the need for prevention, treatment, and hearing screenings. HLAA offers support networks, publishes magazines, presents webinars, and hosts the Walk4Hearing fundraiser event.

Here2Hear

www.here2hear.org

Here2Hear is an organization that provides a host of free and low-cost services and programs related to hearing healthcare for children and adults in the Richmond and Tri-cities area. Their mission is to improve hearing health by providing educational services, hearing aids, and resources to those in need.

The Speech-Language-Hearing Association of Virginia (SHAV)

www.shav.org

SHAV is an association of those who study and/or practice speech-language pathology, from students to professionals. SHAV offers webinars, conferences, and workshops to help further the study and prevention of communication disorders as well as advocates for the rights and interests of those with speech and hearing loss.

The Virginia Association of the Deaf (VAD)

www.vad.org

VAD has a mission to promote, protect, and preserve the rights and quality of life of Virginians who are deaf and hard of hearing. VAD hosts conferences every year in various cities throughout Virginia and offers Deaf Mother and Deaf Father of the Year awards to deserving Virginia parents.

The Virginia Association of the DeafBlind (VADB)

www.vadeafblind.org

VADB strives to promote public awareness and understanding of the communication needs and personal challenges of those who are DeafBlind. VADB hosts annual meetings featuring presentations about different services offered within the state, as well as award presentations, a free lunch, and time for socializing.

The National Association of the Deaf (NAD)

www.nad.org

The NAD is a civil rights organization of and for the deaf and hard of hearing community. The NAD offers many services, including youth leadership camps and educational advocacy programs, as well as an array of resources to help with learning ASL, emergency preparedness, and mental health services, among others.



National Association of the Deaf



Here2Hear



ALDA



Here2Hear Hosts 2017 Gala Benefit

Hamilton Relay and VDDHH were proud sponsors of Here2Hear's 2017 Gala Benefit. This event raised money for Here2Hear to continue their efforts within the Richmond and Tri-counties area. The organization aims to prevent poor hearing health by providing free and low-cost services, programs, and resources.

The event featured a night of dancing to live music, silent auctions held in ASL, and a wine tasting. Local artists also brought their original works to be seen and purchased, all to benefit a great cause.

As part of the celebration, Ron Lanier, director of VDDHH, was presented with the Outstanding Community Leader award for his dedication and hard work. The award was presented by Dr. Shantell Lewis, Here2Hear chair and VDDHH board member.

Congratulations, Ron!



Ron Lanier, director of VDDHH



Meet Our New VDDHH Staff Members!

We are happy to welcome two new employees to the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) family. Tressela Bateson is joining us as community services specialist. In this role, Tressela will be responsible for marketing VDDHH programs and services to employers, medical professionals, and police departments, among other community organizations. She will also be educating them on deaf culture and American Sign Language (ASL).

Tressela was born in West Virginia and raised in Midlothian, Virginia. She is a graduate of California State University, Northridge and received her master's degree in School Counseling and Guidance from Gallaudet University. Tressela spent much of her career in the counseling field in post-secondary and public mental health settings. She was the State Program Manager for the South Carolina Department of Mental Health, Deaf Services before deciding on a career change. She began teaching ASL at Clemson University, and later moved back to Virginia and taught ASL part time in Richmond, where she coordinated the Ethical Practices System for the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. Tressela enjoys being outdoors and water-related activities, is an avid Clemson Tigers fan, and loves cooking for and doting on her two teenage sons.

Brittany Howard is joining VDDHH as Technology Assistance Program (TAP) specialist coordinator. Brittany began learning ASL when she was in third grade so she would be able to communicate with some of her classmates who were deaf. She fell in love with signing, often staying after school to learn from her teacher and continuing ASL classes throughout high school. She even petitioned her high school to add more ASL classes once she finished the available curriculum.

Brittany continued with her passion for sign language, applying to Gallaudet University when she was a senior in high school. For a hearing student to be accepted into the predominately deaf school, the candidate needs to pass ASL proficiency tests to ensure he or she will be able to succeed in classes, which are taught completely in ASL. Brittany passed the tests with flying colors and graduated with honors from Gallaudet University in May 2017. Most recently, she worked as the deaf and hard of hearing outreach specialist at the disAbility Resource Center in Fredericksburg.

"I started trying to break down communication barriers when I was in third grade and I'm excited to continue doing so as TAP specialist coordinator," says Brittany.

Welcome to the VDDHH family, Tressela and Brittany!



Tressela Bateson



Brittany Howard





VDDHH Turns 45!



Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

In celebration of 45 years of serving Virginia's deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, and DeafBlind communities, the Virginia Department of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) held an anniversary open house at their central office this past September. They opened their doors to the public for two days, inviting community members to meet their staff, learn about their history and services, and enjoy light refreshments while mingling with friends and neighbors.

In 1972, VDDHH was established as the Virginia Council for the Deaf (VCD) after members of the Virginia Association of the Deaf passionately lobbied to convince lawmakers that Virginia needed an agency to serve its citizens who are deaf. This anniversary celebration paid tribute to several of the individuals who were instrumental in the founding and early survival of the agency. Over 150 people came out to help VDDHH celebrate this great milestone.



1970 1972 1978 1980 1986 1988 1990 1991 1996 2000 2003 2004



- 1972** The Virginia Council for the Deaf (VCD) is created by the General Assembly of Virginia.
- 1973** J. Rex Purvis is appointed to serve as the part-time executive secretary of the VCD.
- 1974** Fred P. Yates, Jr. is appointed to serve as the first fulltime executive secretary of the VCD (later retitled director).
- 1978** The Interpreter Services Program is established.
- 1986** The Outreach Services Program is established.
- 1988** The Technology Assistance Program (TAP) is established

- 1990** The Virginia Quality Assurance Screening is established.
- 1991** Virginia Relay is established and AT&T is awarded the first state contract to provide relay services in Virginia.
- 1996** The Outreach Services Program is privatized. State contracts are awarded to local nonprofit organizations to provide outreach services across Virginia.
- 2002** The Virginia Relay Advisory Council is established.
- 2003** Visor Alert, a partnership between the VDDHH, the DMV and law enforcement, is launched.
- 2004** Sprint Relay is awarded the state contract to provide Captioned Telephone Service in Virginia.
- 2005** The Statewide Interagency Team was formed to support and improve services among four key agencies.



Never Miss a Word of a Conference Call Again

Remote Conference Captioning (RCC) is a Hamilton Relay service that enables relay users in Virginia to participate in multi-party conference calls. Real-time captions are transmitted over the Internet and displayed on a computer or mobile device. The relay user can scroll up to review past comments and even print out a copy of the conference call transcript.

To utilize RCC, visit www.hamiltonrelay.com/rcc and complete an RCC Scheduling Request Form.



Eric Raff (deputy director of VDDHH), Jeanne Lavelle (president of VAD), and Ron Lanier (director of VDDHH) enjoying the festivities at the VDDHH 45th Anniversary Open House.



2010 2011 2012 2015 2017



Andrew Parker Leitner Receives Hamilton Relay \$500 Scholarship

Virginia Relay has selected Andrew Parker Leitner as the 2017 Hamilton Relay Scholarship winner! Andrew, a graduate of Woodgrove High School from Round Hill, Virginia, has been given \$500 to put towards his college education.

Andrew was awarded the \$500 Hamilton Relay Scholarship after completing the application process, which included writing an essay under the topic of communication technology. Andrew is now studying Civil Engineering at George Mason University.

"Hamilton takes pride in recognizing outstanding leadership and promoting education," said Frazelle Hampton, Virginia Relay Captioned Telephone outreach coordinator. "We are excited to have the opportunity to contribute to furthering Andrew's education and wish him success in reaching his personal and professional goals."

The \$500 scholarship is available to high school seniors who are deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind, or have difficulty speaking. A recipient is selected within each of the states where Hamilton Relay is the contracted service provider and is one of several ways the company gives back to the communities they serve. To learn more about how you can enter to win the scholarship in 2018, visit varelay.org and follow @VirginiaRelay on Facebook.

- 2011** Hamilton Telecommunications is awarded the state contract to provide Captioned Telephone Service in Virginia.
- 2012** The i Can Connect (iCC) program is implemented in Virginia (later transferred to the Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired in 2016).
- 2015** Hamilton Telecommunications replaces AT&T as the provider of relay services in Virginia.
- 2017** The Outreach Services Program is restructured, separating TAP and Community Services into two distinct programs.

RTT Update from the FCC

Last December, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted rules to facilitate a transition from TTY technology to real-time text (RTT) technology. RTT is a technology that is meant to improve communication for those who are deaf or hard of hearing by using mobile phones to transmit text.

RTT messages can be sent instantly without needing to press “send” or wait for the message to be delivered. Simplifying the conversation to better resemble a face-to-face interaction, the message receiver can read the text as it is being typed and can respond at any point, versus the turn-taking of TTYs. The use of RTT has additional benefits over a TTY, such as the use of emojis and all text characters, removal of sounds and ringtones, and ability to speak in foreign languages.

To learn more about RTT, the timeline for the phased rollout and how you can begin using RTT, visit www.fcc.gov. Until RTT advances in the marketplace, Hamilton Relay continues to provide TRS services, including TTY, to consumers.



Consumer Support— in ASL!

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is becoming more accessible to those who are deaf or hard of hearing. The FCC introduced the ASL Consumer Support Line, designed to facilitate calls in ASL. Now when filing an informal complaint or exchanging consumer information, you can be connected with a consumer specialist at the FCC via Direct Video Calling (DVC) to be assisted in ASL. Reach the support line at 888-4-FCC-ASL (888-432-2275) or 202-810-0444 from 9:30 AM to 5:00 PM EST, Monday through Friday.

There’s an App for That!

Mobile technology is making it easier than ever to stay connected to what matters to you. Here are a few useful smartphone apps you can download today.

SoundHound

Music-lovers, rejoice! The SoundHound app is great for concerts and parties where everyone is singing along. If you are hard of hearing and have difficulty understanding the lyrics to your favorite songs either at home or at a crowded event, try SoundHound. Just tap the screen when a song is playing and the app will recognize it and display the lyrics in real-time, karaoke style!

Live Caption

This \$5 download will caption in-person conversations for you. The app uses your smartphone’s microphone to listen to the person speaking and displays the captions right on your screen.

Braci

Not being able to hear alarms can be dangerous. The Braci app lets you record the sounds of your fire alarm, intercom, doorbell, and even a crying baby and constantly listens for the sounds when in “detection mode.” When heard, the app will use your phone to let you know what needs your attention.

Ava

Much like Live Caption, the Ava app captions live conversations instantly on your smartphone. Ava, however, captions group conversations so you can keep up with multiple speakers at once. Once each person downloads the app, you’ll feel more connected than ever to group discussions.

Hamilton® CapTel® App

Hamilton CapTel for Smartphones turns your mobile phone into a captioned telephone! Read word-for-word captions of what’s being said during phone conversations while you listen and talk with people on the go. The Hamilton CapTel app is available for Android and iPhones with iOS 10. The app for iOS 11 devices is coming soon!

CapTel is a registered trademark of Ultratec, Inc.



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Visit us at www.varelay.org

VRAC Update

At the fall meeting of the Virginia Relay Advisory Council (VRAC), we said a bittersweet farewell to our current chair and one of our original members, **Betti Thompson**. Over the past 15 years, Betti has served in council seats representing a number of relay users, as well as served as a technical consultant to the council, making numerous recommendations and suggestions for new relay services and technologies.



Betti Thompson

Betti began her career with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Center (DHHSC) in Roanoke in the early 1990s, beginning as a community support person, then an outreach specialist and contractor, and eventually became the organization's director. Under Betti's leadership, DHHSC is now the largest VDDHH community services organization.

Betti has been a revolutionary for relay technology, helping to create Virginia Relay Text Messaging before smartphones were a standard in our lives. She also advocated for the creation of toll-free incoming international relay calls, and set the bar high for community outreach events for both professional and relay consumer audiences.

We thank Betti for her countless contributions to VRAC, Virginia Relay, VDDHH, and the deaf and hard of hearing communities. Her presence will be greatly missed!

As we said farewell to Betti, we also had the privilege of welcoming three new members to VRAC. **Kerry Byrne** represents the Virginia Centers for Independent Living in Richmond. She has a degree in ASL interpretation and formerly worked for a non-profit training service dogs for people with disabilities.

New member **Rebecca Ladew** of Berryville, Virginia represents Speech-to-Speech (STS) relay users. Rebecca is renowned nationally as an advocate for STS relay and has served on several FCC disability councils.

Paige Berry, representing hearing relay users, is recently retired from the Helen Keller National Center for the Deaf and Blind and was also a principal partner with VDDHH in the iCanConnect grant that provides technology to persons who are DeafBlind. We thank all three for lending their expertise and knowledge to our council!

Virginia Relay Advisory Council (VRAC)

Consumer Members:

Mani Aguilar, Au.D., CCC-A
Representing Speech and Hearing Association of Virginia (SHAV)

Paige Berry
Representing Hearing Relay users

Kerry Byrne
Representing Virginia Centers for Independent Living

Lisa Harbour
Representing Association of Late-Deafened Adults (ALDA)

William Hess
Representing Voice Carry-Over users

Rebecca Ladew
Representing Speech-to-Speech users

Valerie Luther
Representing Captioned Telephone users

Jenny McKenzie
Representing Virginia Association of the DeafBlind (VADB)

Renay Miller
Representing Virginia Association of the Deaf (VAD)

Barclay Shepard
Representing Hearing Relay users

John Slone
Representing Video Relay Service users

Linda Wallace
Representing Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) Virginia Chapters

Non-Voting Members:
Gary Talley
VDDHH Outreach Programs

Christa Cervantes
Hamilton Relay

Frazelle Hampton
Hamilton Relay

Diane Devaney
Devaney & Associates, Inc.

Mary Nunnally
Representing Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services

VRAC is looking for new representatives to fill these vacancies:

- Internet/Wireless Relay user
- Captioned Telephone Service user
- Video Relay user

To inquire about joining VRAC, please contact Eric Raff at 804-404-9090 or Eric.Raff@vddhh.virginia.gov.