

CALLER

THE COMMONWEALTH

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

Spring 2017



Thank You Arva Priola!

When Arva Priola, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Coordinator of the disAbility Resource Center, lost her hearing in 1989, she retired from teaching and began researching ways to help herself through this difficult time. She discovered the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) and within a month she had started a local chapter, the Hearing Loss Association of Rappahannock. It was here that she met Faith Smith, who offered her a job at the disAbility Resource Center doing outreach for Virginia Relay's Technology Assistance Program (TAP), helping people obtain specialized telecommunication equipment throughout Virginia. Just when she thought her life was over, she realized it had just begun.

Arva, who retired at the end of 2016, has accomplished much in her 20-year career, receiving multiple awards and honors for her work and advocacy, including a commendation from the Virginia General Assembly. But of all her achievements, three stand out. First is the Visor Alert Program, which helps people with hearing loss during traffic stops by enabling communication with law enforcement. Virginia adopted the program statewide after running a pilot program in 2002. Second are the guidelines for communications access in hospitals, which were established by House Bill 1956 and passed by the General Assembly and signed by the governor in 2015. Third is establishing the Virginia Relay Advisory Council alongside Cheryl Heppner.

"Virginia Relay and TAP keep us connected to the world and prevent us from becoming isolated," says Arva. "And I am honored to have had the opportunity to work with them to help touch so many lives."

And while it was a difficult decision to retire, she knows that this is not the end but rather another new beginning. So how does she plan to spend her retirement? First on her list is visiting her new grandson, Landon, in Washington, and secondly to breed her French bulldogs whom she loves very much.

We at Virginia Relay would like to wish Arva all the best and let her know that she always has a home here.



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Contact VDDHH Outreach Specialists

If you or someone you know has difficulty using a telephone, your local Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) outreach specialist can be a valuable resource. Through a personalized evaluation, your outreach specialist can determine which assistive technology services and equipment are best suited for your needs, and if you qualify to receive equipment through the Technology Assistance Program (TAP).

In addition, VDDHH outreach specialists can also demonstrate proper equipment use, highlight key features of various devices, and identify available vendor options and discounts.

To speak to your VDDHH outreach specialist, contact your local outreach office:

Eastern Shore Center for Independent Living
Belle Haven | 757-414-0100

Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Henrico | 804-726-6615

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Center
Roanoke | 540-342-0031
Winchester | 540-662-4452

Northern Virginia Resource Center for
Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons
Fairfax | 703-352-9055

disAbility Resource Center
Fredericksburg | 540-373-5890 or 540-373-2559

Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired
Richmond | 804-371-3140

Don't Miss Celebrate Communication 2017!

On Saturday, April 22 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Northern Virginia Community College, the Northern Virginia community will turn out to attend the 2017 Celebrate Communication information fair.

With over 40 vendors, attendees will receive free information on a wide variety of resources, including state and local government programs, cutting-edge technology for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, ASL and Cued Speech, hearing dogs, and much more.

Virginia Relay is proud to again be a sponsor of this event. Please be sure to visit our booth to learn more about the many services we offer.

Thank you to the Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons for organizing the event and Northern Virginia Community College for hosting it. This is always such a fun event and we can't wait to attend!

Your Lifeline to Savings

For those who don't already know, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has a program in place to help make communications services more affordable for low-income consumers.

This program, called Lifeline, is available to qualified Technology Assistance Program (TAP) applicants. You may be eligible to receive monthly discounts on your landline, wireless, and broadband services.

You can learn more about the FCC's Lifeline program here: www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/lifeline-support-affordable-communications

If you aren't sure if you qualify for a Lifeline discount, or need assistance applying, please contact your local TAP outreach specialist.



Celebrate Communication



While Text-to-911 Has Made Strides, It's Still Best to Call

Text-to-911 technology is becoming more prevalent in Virginia and beyond, but it's not everywhere yet. As of August of last year, 27 of Virginia's 95 counties (or 28 percent) had deployed some form of text-to-911.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released an order in 2015 that aimed to make text-to-911 more available, but progress has been slow.

Because 911 was originally designed for voice usage, making text-to-911 available nationwide involves each individual 911 call center implementing its own system to accommodate texting.

If you live in an area that has not yet adopted text-to-911, we encourage you to contact your local 911 call center. Text-to-911 may be here soon, but it's not here yet.

To learn more about text-to-911, visit www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/text-911-quick-facts-faqs or www.vita.virginia.gov/isp/default.aspx?id=6442473870

Catching Up with Our Outreach Coordinators

At Virginia Relay, we have two outreach coordinators—Frazelle Hampton and Paul Stuessy.

Frazelle oversees all Captioned Telephone Service (CTS) outreach and Paul is in charge of all Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) outreach.

In these roles, they are responsible for educating the public and potential Relay users and referral sources on the wide array of services available through Virginia Relay, and installing communication equipment in individual homes.

To accomplish this, they spend about 75 percent of their time on the road attending trade shows and other events, and making house calls.

Both Paul and Frazelle have been in their current positions for about two years.

"There's nothing like helping someone who hasn't been able to use the phone for years talk to their granddaughter again," says Frazelle.

Paul agrees. "The work I do is a labor of love," he says. "I wake up in the morning wondering who I am going to help make life better for that day."

We cannot thank them enough for all their hard work!

If you or someone you know is interested in learning about Virginia Relay, feel free to contact them at the numbers below.

Paul: 804-616-4876 (VP)

Frazelle: 804-726-6615 (Voice)



Virginia Relay outreach coordinators, Frazelle Hampton and Paul Stuessy, snap a quick selfie at the Richmond Women's Health & Fitness Expo on February 4. The expo was hosted by WTVR-6, a local news station in Richmond.



Frazelle puts up her dukes at the 9Round kickboxing booth at the Richmond Women's Health & Fitness Expo.



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Visit us at www.varelay.org

Virginia Relay Advisory Council (VRAC)

Consumer Members:

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

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)

Mary Nunnally
Representing Hearing Relay users

Betti Thompson (Chair)
Representing Internet (IP) Relay users

Barclay Shepard
Representing Hearing Relay users

John Slone
Representing Video Relay 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.

Paul Stuessy
Hamilton Relay

Upcoming Events

Celebrate Communication

April 22 | 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Northern Virginia Community College
8333 Little River Turnpike, Annandale

VDDHH Hearing Aids Focus Group

April 29 | 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Café 1602
1602 Rolling Hills Drive, Henrico

Independent Living Expo

May 13 | 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Fredericksburg Expo & Conference Center
Fredericksburg



Find Us on Facebook!

Virginia Relay has a Facebook page! Just type "Virginia Relay" in Facebook's search field and click the "Like" button at the top of our page to get regular updates of Virginia Relay news, events, and more.