

# CALLER

## THE COMMONWEALTH

Virginia Relay: Telecommunications services for people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind or have difficulty speaking

Spring 2019

## Welcome, Karen Brimm and Rhonda Jeter to VDDHH!

Virginia Relay welcomes two new members to the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) team: Karen Brimm, community services manager and Rhonda Jeter, business manager.



**Karen Brimm, M.A., RID Ed:K-12**, earned associates degrees in ASL-Deaf Studies and ASL-English Interpretation from J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, where she is now an adjunct instructor. She also holds a bachelor's degree in Interpreter Training from Troy University, and was a member of the inaugural cohort earning a Master of Interpreting Studies and Communication Equity from St. Catherine University.

Her professional experience includes interpreting and as a support service provider (SSP), office management and teaching. She serves on boards for the Virginia Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (VRID) and the Virginia Association of the Deafblind. She is also a long-time special events volunteer for the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Richmond.

Recently, Karen became a mentor through the Virginia Department of Education Educational Interpreter Grant. Along with administering the Virginia Association for the DeafBlind (VADB) Facebook page, Karen also curates her "Gish Girl" page where she collects information on interpreting, ASL, education and encourages the thirst for knowledge. In her spare time, she attempts to finish existing quilting projects before starting new ones.



**Rhonda Jeter**, is joining VDDHH from the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) where she served as director of independent living. Her 15-years of experience will be a huge asset to VDDHH, including her knowledge of program evaluation, developing federal and state reports, overseeing budgets and fiscal operations, and supervising administrative staff.

Rhonda has also worked as a certified vocational rehabilitation counselor for four years and as a counselor and peer mentor for individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. She holds a bachelor's degree in Business Management from Radford University and a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from Virginia Commonwealth University. In her free time, she enjoys biking, golfing and long walks.

## Check Out the Newest Virginia Relay Partners!

### Ashleigh At Lansdowne

Leesburg, VA  
[rui.net/ashleigh](http://rui.net/ashleigh)

### Virginia Career Works

Fredericksburg Center  
Fredericksburg, VA  
[www.vec.virginia.gov](http://www.vec.virginia.gov)

### Heatherwood Retirement Community

Burke, VA  
[rui.net/heatherwood](http://rui.net/heatherwood)

### Bay Lake Retirement and Assisted Living Community

Virginia Beach, VA  
[rui.net/bay-lake](http://rui.net/bay-lake)

### The Towers Retirement and Assisted Living Community

Richmond, VA  
[rui.net/the-towers](http://rui.net/the-towers)

### Shenandoah Podiatry

Roanoke, VA  
[shenandoahpodiatry.com](http://shenandoahpodiatry.com)

### Apprentice Salon Training Clinic

Richmond, VA  
[apprenticerva.com](http://apprenticerva.com)

*Learn more by visiting:*  
[varelay.org/programs.htm](http://varelay.org/programs.htm)

# Bridging the Communication Gap in the Workplace

For CapTel® users, talking to friends and family over the phone is simple and accessible. But what happens when they get to work and don't have access to their captioned telephone?

"Unfortunately, so many businesses and government offices are not familiar with CapTel," explains Teresa Ritzert, Virginia Relay Advisory Council (VRAC) representative for Captioned Telephone Service Relay users. "This drastically impacts the employment opportunities for those who are Hard of Hearing or late-Deafened, like myself."

Because CapTel phones are compatible with both analog and Internet-based phone lines, virtually any workplace is able to use the technology.

Virginia Relay's service provider, Hamilton Relay, also offers a workplace solution. Hamilton CapTel for Business, Interconnected by Tenacity™, provides employers with a solution for telecommunications access that seamlessly integrates into existing Cisco® VoIP networks and utilizes features built into the Cisco Unified Communications Manager. For more information, visit [HamiltonCapTel.com/biz](http://HamiltonCapTel.com/biz).

**If your hearing loss is keeping you from effectively communicating at work, speak to your supervisor about captioned telephone service. For more information about CapTel, visit [VARelay.org](http://VARelay.org).**

*Before I was able to use a CapTel phone at work, email was really the only way I could communicate with people," says Teresa Ritzert. "When I started working for a church as director of education, I was able to set up internet-based captioned telephone service. It was an integral tool that allowed me to perform my job duties without difficulty."*



## Ankita Gopal Receives 2019 Hamilton Relay Scholarship

Hamilton Relay, Telecommunications Relay and Captioned Telephone Service provider for the commonwealth of Virginia, has awarded a \$500 scholarship to Ankita Gopal of Winchester from Model Secondary School for the Deaf. The Hamilton Relay Scholarship opportunity 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 is the contracted service provider and is one of several ways the company gives back to the communities it serves.

Ankita was awarded the \$500 scholarship after completing the application process, which included writing an essay on communication technology. Her college plans include a majoring in Computer Science at Rochester Institute of Technology.

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*“At Hamilton Relay, we are committed to promoting education in every state we serve,” said Eric Alvillar, Virginia Relay outreach coordinator. “We are proud to present this award to Ankita to further her education, and we wish her success in the years to come.”*

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## SallieMae Pauley Wins Hamilton Relay 2018 Deaf Community Leader Award



A Richmond native, SallieMae Pauley has spent her life advocating for reform, equality and civil rights within the Deaf community. She is a graduate of the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind and Gallaudet University, and is a member of both schools' alumni associations.

SallieMae is committed to communication accessibility. She regularly advocates for interpreters to be provided at community events, including Black Pride RVA and informational meetings held by the Greater Richmond Transit Company. In addition, she works with Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K) Virginia, which supports opportunities for children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing to have access to language development by the time they reach kindergarten, and volunteers with organizations such as Parent Child Advocate Program, District of Columbia Area Black Deaf Advocates and Virginia Association of the Deaf.

**Her hard work, passion and dedication makes her well deserving of this award. We commend and thank her for her efforts in her community and in the state.**

# Hearing Loss Support Group is a Valuable Resource for the Community

For two years, Longwood University has been holding monthly support groups for individuals living with hearing loss and their friends and families. The group is overseen by clinical audiologist, Mani Aguilar and meetings are led by graduate students of the university who are working towards master's degrees in speech-language pathology.

Each meeting of the support group starts with free hearing-aid checks and cleanings by the graduate students, and then features a presentation on a topic chosen by the group. They have covered a wide range of topics including laws related to hearing loss, how to choose a hearing aid, cochlear implants and new hearing technology.

"Each month's topic is selected based from the attendee's feedback, so they are able to learn more in-depth information that they are not only interested in, but can help them in their day-to-day lives," says Courtney Kaczmarek, Longwood University graduate student who helps run the meetings. "Plus, the attendees are able to interact with each other and realize that they are not alone in their hearing loss."

Because these meetings are free, individuals may choose to attend only one meeting or return each month, and are encouraged to bring friends as well. This is not only a great resource for those who attend, it gives the graduate students the hands-on experience they need to complete their degrees and be well prepared for their careers.

"We started this support group with the goals of both helping the community and enhancing the learning opportunities for our graduate speech-language pathology students," explains Mani. "In fact, the attendees enjoy knowing that they are helping graduate students further their education."

The hearing loss support group has been so well received that plans are already in place to continue the meetings during the 2019-2020 academic year.

"I was extremely impressed with the two young ladies who led the sessions this semester," an attendee wrote to Mani. "They were fully prepared each day and spoke clearly and with authority. They answered questions and were quite personable. They did not appear to be nervous at any session! I am looking forward to next semester."

"I have always had an interest in audiology, so I was excited to be given this opportunity," says Seraphina Chabinec, a graduate student who also helps lead the meetings. "One of the most important things that I feel our participants gained was a sense of community. We try to make the meetings a place where participants feel welcomed, and we always encourage them to share their own insight and experience, as it's valuable not only to us but to other participants."

**To learn more about the Longwood University Hearing Loss Support Group or for future meeting dates, email: [shls@longwood.edu](mailto:shls@longwood.edu).**



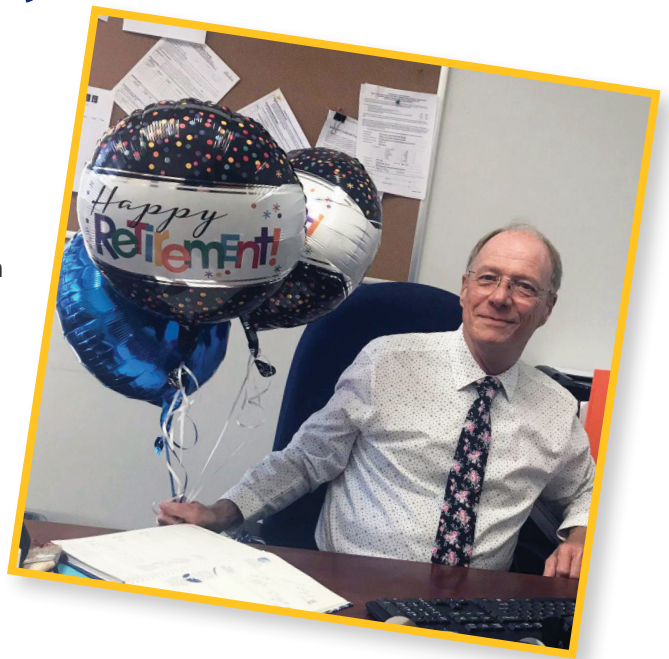
## Congratulations, Gary Talley!

**Gary Talley**, community services manager for the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH), has retired after thirteen successful years!

During his time at VDDHH, Gary championed emergency preparedness activities for Virginia residents who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, stressing the importance of accessible communication in critical situations. He also expanded sensitivity trainings to 9-1-1 call centers, law enforcement staff and first responders.

As a personal advocate, Gary brought a new prospective to VDDHH programs from the Late-Deafened adult community. His efforts over the past 13 years have helped VDDHH in our mission to break down communication barriers, and we thank him for his passion, intellect and fierce dedication.

**Congratulations on your retirement, Gary!**



## Outreach Highlight: DeafBlind EXPO 2019



Virginia Relay and TAP recently attended the DeafBlind EXPO on April 13th, 2019 co-hosted by the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) and DeafBlind Services. This event featured assistive technology, environmental modifications and service providers who assist individuals who are DeafBlind in maintaining their independence.

## Thank you, Barclay Shephard!

**Barclay Shephard**, member of the Virginia Relay Advisory Council (VRAC) representing hearing Relay users, has stepped down from the Council after many years of dedicated service!

As the manager of the Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS), Virginia's Assistive Technology Act program, Barclay was very involved with the assistive technology devices and services available to individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or have difficulty speaking. His experience on VRAC helped to further the advancements of specialized devices as new technology emerged and developed.

"My experience as a member of VRAC has been an extremely positive one," says Barclay. "I was able to see first hand how the diverse council members worked collaboratively to address the telecommunication needs of Virginians who cannot use a standard telephone. VRAC members are extremely passionate and represent the diverse communication needs of Virginians."

**From all of us at Virginia Relay — We thank Barclay for his time and service on VRAC, and wish him all the best!**





Providing Accessible Telecommunications Since 1991

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## Upcoming Events

### **Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Day**

**June 1, 2019**

Kings Dominion, Doswell

### **2019 Consortium on Aging**

**June 4, 2019**

Lynchburg University

### **Disabled American Veterans State Convention**

**June 6 - 9, 2019**

Roanoke

### **Art of Aging Expo**

**June 12, 2019**

Fredricksburg

### **Senior Day in the Park**

**June 13, 2019**

Danville

### **Senior Expo 2019**

**June 19, 2019**

Portsmouth

### **Opening Doors and Unlocking Potential**

**June 26 - 28, 2019**

Richmond

### **Camp Loud and Clear**

**July 26, 2019**

Appomattax

### **The Arc of Virginia 2019 State Convention**

**July 29 - 31, 2019**

Harrisonburg



### **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 on Virginia Relay news, events, and more.

## Virginia Relay Advisory Council (VRAC)

### **Consumer Members:**

#### **Paige Berry**

Representing Hearing Relay Users

#### **Kerry Byrne**

Representing Virginia Centers for Independent Living

#### **Alissa Conover**

Representing Virginia Association for the Deaf (VAD)

#### **Karen Darner**

Representing Speech and Hearing Association of Virginia (SHAV)

#### **Lisa Harbour**

Representing Association of Late-Deafened Adults (ALDA)

#### **William Hess**

Representing Voice Carry-Over Users

#### **Rebecca Ladew**

Representing Speech-to-Speech Users

#### **Jenny McKenzie**

Representing Virginia Association for the DeafBlind (VADB)

#### **Teresa Ritzert**

Representing Captioned Telephone Service Users

#### **Christine Ross**

Representing Video Relay Service Users

#### **Linda Wallace**

Representing Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) Virginia Chapters

### **Non-Voting Members:**

#### **Eric Alvillar**

Hamilton Relay

#### **Christa Cervantes**

Hamilton Relay

#### **Mary Nunnally**

Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services

#### **Eric Raff**

VDDHH Director