

# CALLER

THE COMMONWEALTH

Virginia Relay: Telecommunications services for the deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind and speech disabled

Spring 2013

## FCC Requires Changes for CapTel® 800i and 840i Customers

A recent ruling by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requires changes in the way all IP-based captioned telephones work. If you are a current user of the CapTel 800i or CapTel 840i model telephone, you will now need to press the "CAPTIONS" button to turn the captions on at the start of every call. Whether you are placing or receiving a call, the captions will no longer come on automatically. The "CAPTIONS" button will turn off again every time you hang up the handset.

If you use a CapTel 840i, the phone's answering machine will still record voice messages. If you need captions while listening to your messages, just press the "CAPTIONS" button while playing back each of your messages.

The FCC is requiring this change to protect the TRS Fund, which pays captioning services under the Americans with Disabilities Act. By asking users to turn the captions on before each telephone call, the FCC believes it will reduce the chance of people accidentally using the captioning service if they do not need it, thereby protecting the funds for people who really do need captions.

For specific questions or assistance with your CapTel phone, please contact Marta Cagle at 800-552-7917, or contact CapTel Customer Service at 888-269-7477.



## Words from a CapTel Customer

A Virginia Relay Outreach Specialist recently received the following letter from Karlene Hoffman, who recently received her first CapTel phone:

*"I am writing in regards to the CapTel phone I applied for at dRC in Fredericksburg, Virginia. First, I would like to thank Arva Priola for making this possible. I love it. Also, it seems to make the party I am calling more comfortable when speaking to me. Since my voice is pretty good, I do not need a TTY and it saves time with the typing and relay process. The new phone was easy to set up and I like how you can fix it to the way you want. I like the big touch buttons and the phone book, and how you can adjust the settings. Now I am beginning to feel better about making a landline call. Thank you so much."*

Sincerely,  
Karlene Hoffman



**For more information on the new FCC ruling for internet-based captioned telephone calls, visit [www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-takes-steps-protect-ip-based-captioned-telephone-service](http://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-takes-steps-protect-ip-based-captioned-telephone-service)**



## Get Step-by-Step CapTel Instructions Now

- **Making CapTel Call:**  
[www.captel.com/customer\\_service/Dialing-a-Phone-Number.pdf](http://www.captel.com/customer_service/Dialing-a-Phone-Number.pdf)
- **Answering CapTel Calls:**  
[www.captel.com/customer\\_service/Answering-an-Incoming-Call.pdf](http://www.captel.com/customer_service/Answering-an-Incoming-Call.pdf)
- **Reading CapTel 840i Answering Machine Messages:**  
[www.captel.com/customer\\_service/Playing-Answering-Machine-Messages.pdf](http://www.captel.com/customer_service/Playing-Answering-Machine-Messages.pdf)

### Find Us on Facebook!

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

 Virginia Relay  
DIAL 7-1-1

 VDDHH  
A Commitment to Communication - 40 Years Strong

 Virginia Relay  
CapTel

# Virginia Relay Advisory Council (VRAC)

## Voting Members:

**Eileen McCartin, Ph.D., VRAC Chair**  
Representing Association of Late Deafened Adults (ALDA)  
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**Carl Amos, Ed.D.**  
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camos@dcc.vccs.edu

**Robbin Blankenship**  
Representing Speech-to-Speech (STS) Relay Users  
robbinblankenship@gmail.com

**Traci Branch**  
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Traci.Branch@drs.virginia.gov

**Ann Cutshall**  
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**Feta Fernsler**  
*Vice Chair*  
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**Abra Jacobs**  
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**Helen Justice**  
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**Valerie Luther**  
Representing CapTel Users  
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**Kathi Mestayer**  
Representing Virginia Chapters of the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA)  
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**Brenda Seal, Ph.D.**  
Representing the Speech and Hearing Association of Virginia (SHAV)  
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**Barclay Shepard**  
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**John Slone**  
Representing Video Relay Users  
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## Non-Voting Members:

**Marta Cagle**  
Hamilton Relay Outreach Coordinator for Virginia  
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**Christa Cervantes**  
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**Under Recruitment**  
AT&T Channel Manager  
Virginia Relay, VRAC Liaison

**Brenda Neely**  
Center Manager, AT&T Norton Center  
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**Gary Talley**  
VDDHH Outreach Manager  
Representing VDDHH Outreach Programs  
gary.talley@vddhh.virginia.gov



## Virginia iCanConnect Website now Live

Last fall, Virginia Relay and the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing introduced iCanConnect, a new program established by the Federal Communications Commission to provide a wide range of communications tools—including screen enlargement software, screen readers and Braille displays—at no cost to qualified applicants who have combined hearing and vision loss.

A new website, [www.iCanConnectVirginia.org](http://www.iCanConnectVirginia.org), is now live for anyone who would like more information about this program. The site features eligibility information, a list of the available equipment, frequently asked questions, and contact information for interested applicants.

To qualify for iCanConnect, applicants must be verified as deaf-blind by a practicing vision- or hearing-related professional and be enrolled in a federal low-income program or have an income below 400 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines.

To learn more or to apply, visit [www.iCanConnectVirginia.org](http://www.iCanConnectVirginia.org), call 1-800-552-7917 (v/tty) or email [frontdsk@vddhh.virginia.gov](mailto:frontdsk@vddhh.virginia.gov).



## Thank you, Matt Myrick!

This month, Virginia Relay will be saying a bittersweet goodbye to AT&T Channel Manager Matt Myrick. After almost nine years with Virginia Relay, Matt has accepted a well-deserved promotion to become an Accessibility Solutions Engineer for AT&T. In his new position, he will be inspecting all of AT&T's new products and services to help ensure they are compliant with FCC standards before they are released to the public.

Matt will continue to live in the area in his new job, and he is excited for the new perspective and opportunities his new position will offer. But he will miss getting to travel and meet Relay users across Virginia. During his time with Virginia Relay, Matt has seen the program grow stronger, thanks to the dedication of its outreach team.

"The programs we've launched over the years would not have been successful without the support of our contract outreach managers," he said. "Virginia Relay is considered a model for a lot of other states, because it has some of the best staff and CAs in the country."

Matt says his favorite part of working with Virginia Relay has been the people he's met along the way.

"I'm so grateful to have worked with great people like Clayton Bowen, Ron Lanier, and everyone at VDDHH," he said. "Working with them has been a real pleasure and has made me grow in a professional way. I've really enjoyed working with them over the years, and I want to say thank you for all of the support they've given me over the years."

Join us in thanking Matt for the great service he has provided to the Virginia Relay program, and wishing him all the best in his next endeavor. Congratulations, Matt!



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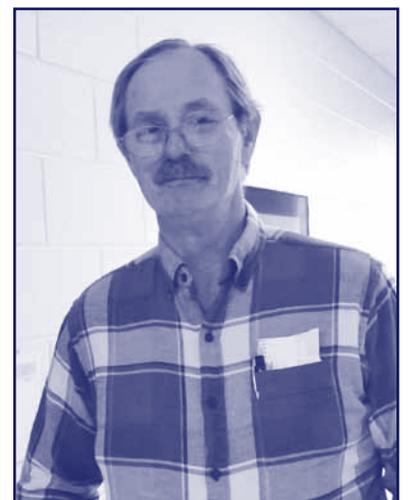
## Volunteer Spotlight: David Benson

The Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing's network of outreach providers often rely on the help of volunteers to help all Virginians learn more about hearing loss and ways to communicate with those who are deaf or hard of hearing. We wanted to introduce you to one of these exceptional volunteers who is dedicated to assisting new Virginia Relay users and their families and friends.

David Benson began volunteering with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Center (DHHSC) in Lynchburg, Virginia in February 2012. DHHSC provides no-cost assistive devices for qualified applicants who are deaf or hard of hearing. David's duties include keeping the center well stocked, testing all new equipment before it is put on a shelf for distribution and reordering when necessary. He also files, answers phones, prepares applications to be mailed, fills out warranty cards and warranty repair cards. He also accompanies and assists Outreach Provider Margaret Bryant on road trips and home visits, often planning, packing, and setting up equipment for exhibits. David volunteers as often as he is needed—last year he worked a total of 360 hours!

"David is great at speaking from personal experience as a hearing aid wearer and educating others about the care and maintenance of their aids and illustrating how to hold a phone for maximum benefit. He is smart, funny, loyal and a good friend," says Margaret.

"I first came to DHHSC to get a captioned telephone and a signaler, both of which have been very helpful for me," says David. "As a retired person, volunteer work gives me something to do and DHHSC is very near and dear to my heart. I get to meet new people and travel all over southwest Virginia to help other people who are hard of hearing find the equipment that meets their needs."



## Save the Date: Virginia Veterans Conference coming November 9

As an extension of the telecommunications equipment distribution program for military veterans, the disAbility Resource Center in Fredericksburg, Virginia will be hosting a state-wide conference for veterans and their families living with hearing loss on November 9, 2013. This event will feature a full day of informational presentations designed to educate and empower veterans who are coping with the impact of hearing loss.

Speakers at the event will include a physician and an audiologist who will discuss the causes of hearing loss and treatment options, including current available technologies such as implantable hearing aids, external hearing aids and cochlear implants. Other discussions will include a panel of veterans who will share their personal experiences adjusting to life with hearing loss, and a demonstration of hearing service dogs.

Hamilton CapTel and the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing will introduce attendees to the latest assistive technologies including phones and alerting devices. Representatives from other local companies and organizations that serve people who are deaf and hard-of-hearing will also be available to answer questions and distribute information.



**For more information about this conference, please contact Arva Priola at [apriola@cildrc.org](mailto:apriola@cildrc.org).**

Virginia Veterans Conference  
November 9, 2013  
8:30am – 5:00pm  
John F. Fick Center: 1301 Sam Perry  
Boulevard; Fredericksburg, VA 22401



## Veterans Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program a Success

Last fall, Virginia Relay and the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) announced that military veterans living with a hearing or speech loss are now automatically eligible for telecommunications equipment through Virginia's Technology Assistance Program (TAP). Since that announcement was made, TAP has received more than 100 applications from veterans requesting telecommunications equipment, proving that this program is fulfilling a vital need in Virginia.

Adaptive telecommunications equipment, including text telephones (TTY), captioned telephones (CapTel) and other devices are available to individuals who meet the following qualifications:

- A veteran with a hearing or speech loss and proof of an Honorable Discharge
- A veteran with a hearing or speech loss and documentation of a service-related disability rating from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
- A surviving spouse or child of a veteran who was killed in the line of duty and has a hearing or speech loss
- An active member of the Virginia National Guard who has completed the required initial active-duty service

To learn more about VDDHH, Virginia Relay and TAP for veterans, call 1-800-552-7917 (v/tty) or visit [www.vddhh.org](http://www.vddhh.org).



## Learning to Hear Again: Brenda Estes Adjusts to Life with a Cochlear Implant

Virginia Relay Outreach Provider Brenda Estes first experienced hearing loss after a bout of the measles at the age of six. Her hearing then declined dramatically in February 1990, when overnight she went completely deaf in her right ear and lost approximately half of her hearing in her left ear.

Now, after more than 20 years of living with profound hearing loss, Brenda is looking forward to recapturing the sounds she grew up with after undergoing cochlear implant surgery last December.

"As someone who spent hours at the oceanfront and on the water growing up, I missed hearing the ocean waves gently lapping and crashing along the seashore. Gospel music had always touched my soul and now I can't understand the words and barely hear the beats. Out of all the sounds in the world, those are the two I would love to hear clearly again."

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*"As someone who spent hours at the oceanfront and on the water growing up, I missed hearing the ocean waves gently lapping and crashing along the seashore."*

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The decision to have surgery wasn't easy for Brenda. She spent years researching cochlear implants, meeting with other recipients, attending workshops, and talking with several surgeons before deciding to move forward with the procedure last spring. First she underwent several audiological exams to determine that she met the criteria for a cochlear implant, and then met with her surgeon to discuss the pros and cons of the procedure and what to expect as a result. Most cochlear implant recipients also receive a series of diagnostic tests and psychological counseling before surgery.

The surgery itself was an outpatient procedure that lasted about three hours as the implant was inserted in a small incision behind her ear. Just two weeks later, Brenda received her external processor – a small, lightweight device that fits over the earlobe just like a hearing aid. The external processor was activated that day, its small magnet joining with the magnet inside the implant, and Brenda immediately started picking up some new sounds.

"I was expecting everything to sound like Donald Duck or Mickey Mouse, but that hasn't been the case, simply because my hearing nerve and brain haven't recognized voices yet," she said. "Instead, some of the sounds I've been able to distinguish are water running from a faucet, crinkling of coarse paper towels, kitchen and bathroom exhaust fans, musical melody and beats, heels clicking on linoleum floors...sounds that I haven't heard in the newly implanted ear in close to 35 years!"

Every cochlear implant recipient's experience is different, and it will take time to see just how much hearing Brenda recovers, but for now she is very pleased with the sounds she is hearing and confident that she will continue to improve. If she gains enough hearing to where she no longer needs to rely on speech reading, she would love to become a sign language interpreter.

"I can't explain how overwhelming it was to be able to hear a recording of my cousin's band and to be able to pick out the guitar, vocalist and drums," she said. "And to hear my service dog shake his fur dry when he comes in from the rain brings a smile to my face. Who cares if he's spraying water in my house; I can hear it! Everyday sounds that I haven't heard in years are slowly re-entering my life and for that, I'm extremely grateful that technology like the cochlear implant is making this possible."

Brenda uses a CapTel 840i at home and a TTY in her office. She looks forward to the day that she'll only need the CapTel to help her with those words she misses and can eliminate the TTY altogether.

"My CapTel phone enables me to enjoy telephone conversations with ease and confidence. Talking to my grandchildren would not be possible without it. My family and friends love it because I no longer ask them to repeat what they're saying, or to speak slower or louder."

Brenda recommends that anyone else considering a cochlear implant do their research and keep their expectations realistic. "Please remember that a cochlear implant won't give you perfect hearing. When you take the external processor off, you're still deaf and that will never change," she said. "You also must be willing to do your audio rehabilitation, including listening to audio books, listening to music and exploring environmental sounds, all to help your brain and auditory nerve learn how to process sounds."

"Do I wish I'd done the surgery sooner? No. It took years of research to decide the time was right for me. I found a surgeon and cochlear implant audiologist that I felt had the skills and compassion I was looking for. Once I made that decision, I moved full steam ahead. This new chapter in my life is just beginning. Each day brings new sound awareness and will undoubtedly have a positive impact on my life and the lives of those around me. For now, I'm treasuring this journey."



## Upcoming Events

### **VDDHH/HLAGR Technology Focus Group**

**April 13**  
Richmond, VA

### **VDDHH Outreach Contractors Meeting**

**April 15**  
Richmond, VA

### **Virginia Relay Advisory Council Meeting**

**April 16**  
Richmond, VA

### **Celebrate Communication**

**May 11**  
10am – 3pm  
George Mason University  
4400 University Drive, Fairfax, VA  
*For more information about this conference, please contact email [info@nvrc.org](mailto:info@nvrc.org) or visit [www.nvrc.org](http://www.nvrc.org).*

### **National "Say What?" Conference**

**May 15-18**  
Williamsburg, VA

### **Festival in the Park**

**May 17-19**  
Danville, VA  
*Festival in the Park is celebrating its 39th year and is held in the City's beautiful 97 acre historic Ballou Park, which provides a charming backdrop for this three-day event. The event features arts and crafts, entertainment, kids activities, children's rides and much more. For more information about this event, please email [specialevents@ci.danville.va.us](mailto:specialevents@ci.danville.va.us) or call 434-793-4636.*

### **Rolling Thunder Veterans Bike Run**

**May 26**  
Washington, D.C.

### **Memorial Day Ceremonies, D-Day Memorial**

**May 27**  
Bedford, VA

### **Aging Well in Mind, Body, & Spirit, the 2013 Virginia Conference on Aging**

**June 4, 2013**  
Lynchburg College Beard Center on Aging,  
Lynchburg, VA

### **Art of Aging Expo**

**June 12**  
10am – 2pm  
Fredericksburg Expo and Conference Center  
Fredericksburg, VA  
*The Art of Aging is a free expo hosted by Partners in Aging, Inc., and generous sponsors to help you explore your community all under one roof.*

### **Virginia Association of the Deaf Biennial Conference**

**June 21-23**  
Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center  
3740 Old Lee Highway  
Fairfax, VA  
*For more information about this conference, please contact Donna Kay Graff, Conference Chair at [NVAD2013VAD@gmail.com](mailto:NVAD2013VAD@gmail.com).*

### **Family Day Festival, D-Day Memorial**

**July 20**  
Bedford, VA

### **Department of Education's Opening Doors Conference**

**August 6-7**  
Charlottesville, VA

### **Virginia Veterans Conference**

**November 9**  
8:30am – 5:00pm  
John F. Fick Center: 1301 Sam Perry Boulevard  
Fredericksburg, VA 22401  
*For more information about this conference, please contact Arva Priola at [apriola@cildrc.org](mailto:apriola@cildrc.org).*

### **Veterans Day Ceremonies, D-Day Memorial**

**November 11**  
10am – noon  
3 Overlord Circle, Bedford, VA  
*Take time to honor all who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces during this special event. The program will include special music, guest speakers, and recognition of all veterans. Free admission.*



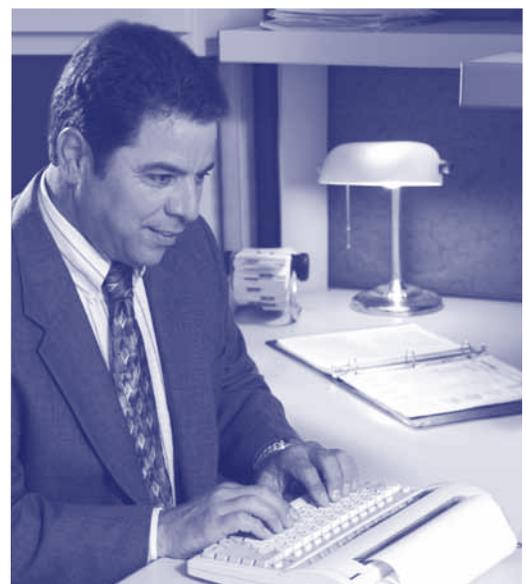
## Check Out the Newest Relay Partners!

The overwhelming success of the Virginia Relay Partner Program has made it impossible to allocate the necessary space in our newsletter to list every Relay Partner. Our newest partners, however, are listed below. You can view a complete list anytime at [www.varelay.org](http://www.varelay.org).

Attention Virginia Relay users: Make your next Relay call to a Relay Partner!

### **Federal Government**

**Basic Commerce & Industries, Inc  
Dahlgren Division**  
King George  
[www.teambci.com](http://www.teambci.com)  
540-663-3321



For more information on these events, contact VDDHH or visit the Virginia Relay Facebook page.

[facebook.com/VirginiaRelay](http://facebook.com/VirginiaRelay)