

# CALLER

THE COMMONWEALTH

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

Fall 2020

## Meet The Newest DHH Specialist!



**Nini Phuah** is a native of California. Before moving to Virginia, she worked with the social services and human services agencies serving the Deaf and hard of hearing communities for more than eight years. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Design Studies with a minor in Criminal Justice and recently obtained a Juris Doctor from law school in 2017. One of her life passions is continuing to work with individuals with the diversity of disabilities. She spends her leisure time reading, writing, exercising and doing ministerial work.

**To contact Nini:**

**Voice/Videophone:** 276-206-2141

**Fax:** 484-924-0031

**Email:** dhsc.nini@gmail.com

## Check out the newest Virginia Relay Partners!

**Virginia Career Works**  
Norfolk  
[vcwhamptonroads.org](http://vcwhamptonroads.org)

**VN Engineers**  
Richmond  
[vnengineers.com](http://vnengineers.com)

**Virginia Career Works**  
**South Central Region**  
Charlotte Court House  
[vcwsouthcentral.com](http://vcwsouthcentral.com)

**Virginia Career Works**  
**Blue Ridge Region**  
Roanoke  
[vcwblueridge.com](http://vcwblueridge.com)

**Virginia Professional**  
**Hearing Aid Center**  
Richmond

**Virginia Career Works**  
Portsmouth  
[vcwhamptonroads.org](http://vcwhamptonroads.org)

**George Washington**  
**Regional Commission**  
— **Fredericksburg Area**  
**Metropolitan Planning**  
**Organization (FAMPO)**  
Fredericksburg  
[fampo.gwregion.org](http://fampo.gwregion.org)

# Covidwise App

Exposure notification apps are the latest in technology designed to help the fight against COVID-19. In the early months of 2020 both Google and Apple announced their collaboration to create an exposure notification app that could help protect communities while ensuring users privacy. This resulted in the creation of Covidwise – an app that Virginia encourages citizens and health centers to use.

Covidwise is a different kind of exposure notification app that keeps its users anonymous with the help of a smartphone's Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) technology. The Bluetooth wireless signal is instructed to "listen" for Bluetooth chirps emitted by nearby smartphones that have the Covidwise app. These chirps contain random codes that frequently change and contain no personal information such as

physical location, name, or phone number. Hearing this code allows the smartphone to know when a user has been near someone who recently tested positive for coronavirus. Once this information has been shared between the two smartphones, the app will alert the user with a message that simply reads – "You have likely been exposed."

The app can identify an existing case of COVID-19 with the help of a six-digit code that Virginia medical staff assigns to the patient. Once the patient plugs the code into their app, other Covidwise apps can read the diagnosis and send notifications to their users within 14 days of initial contact. However, users may receive notifications that have nothing to do with positive COVID-19 cases. The app can also help remind people to keep a social distance of six feet and avoid mingling around the same

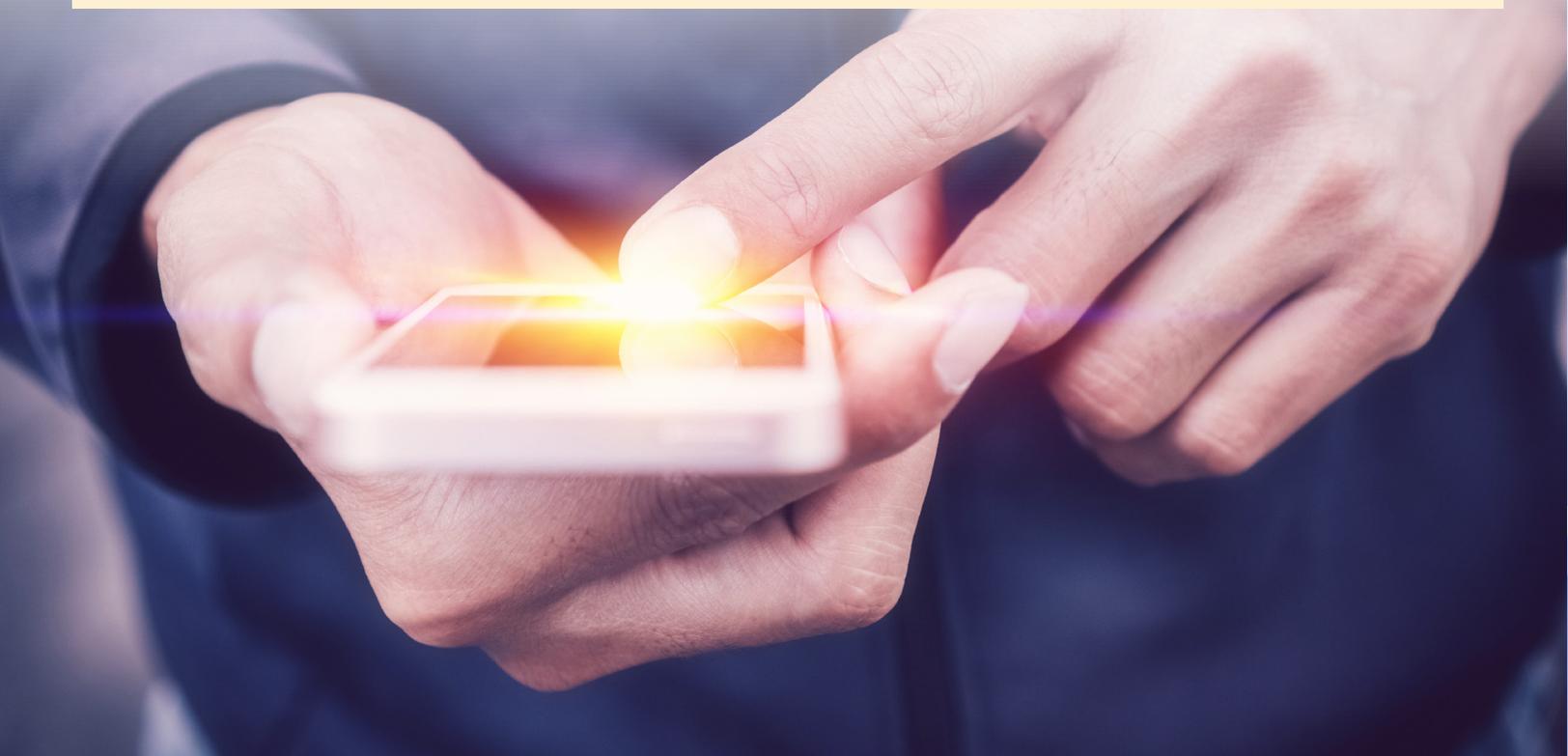
crowd for more than fifteen minutes. These reminders help ensure that the user is doing their part to limit chances of exposure and stop the spread of the coronavirus.

Other benefits of the app include limited strain on smartphone battery life, and compatibility with phones as far back as the iPhone 6S and Samsung Galaxy S5. Installation takes under a minute and runs in the background of active smartphones. Navigating the app is also simple and easy for users and becomes more effective as the amount of people downloading the app increases. One thing to note is that Covidwise is not able to work with apps from different states. Since there is no national app in place, those traveling out of Virginia will only receive notifications when near other Covidwise users from Virginia.

## How to use the Covidwise app:

1. Download the free app for iPhone or Android by visiting this site: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/covidwise/>
2. Once you opt-in to the notification system, the Exposure Notifications System will generate an anonymous token for your device. To help ensure these anonymous tokens cannot be used to identify you or your location, they change every 10-20 minutes.
3. Your phone and the phones around you will work in the background, without draining your battery or data, to exchange these privacy-preserving anonymous tokens via Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) technology. This is a passive process that begins once you opt-in and functions without the app open.
4. On a daily basis, your phone downloads a list of all the anonymous tokens associated with positive COVID-19 cases and checks them against the list of anonymous tokens it has encountered in the last 14 days.
5. If there is a match, the app will notify you with further instructions from your public health authority on how to keep you and the people around you safe.

**To learn more about frequently asked questions visit: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/covidwise/frequently-asked-questions/>**



# See what they say, safely!

As always, we encourage the use of masks to keep yourself and the community safe. Masks are a vital part in the fight against COVID-19 and can be a useful tool against the upcoming flu season, too. Clear masks are especially vital in the deaf and hard of hearing communities. Not only do they allow visibility for lip reading but they promote positive interaction, lowers situational anxiety, supports social, emotional and language development for children and helps reduce the sense of isolation and loneliness in individuals.

So, remember to do your part and wear a mask.

## Here are four sites we recommend for people looking to order one today:

### ClearMask

[www.theclearmask.com](http://www.theclearmask.com)

The ClearMask™ is the first fully transparent, FDA-cleared, class II surgical clear mask with full-face visibility. This mask also meets ASTM level 3 standards for fluid resistance and flammability. The mask has been created to be breathable and comfortable for the wearer. An anti-fog, transparent plastic barrier blocks aerosols, fluids, and sprays. They can be ordered with an EZ-Adjuster strap or classic tie-on. Starting prices for a box is \$67.00.

### Safe'N'Clear

[www.safenclear.com](http://www.safenclear.com)

The Safe'N'Clear Communicator mask is FDA registered and approved. It is also ASTM certified to meet F2100 Level 1 protection. This level of certification classifies this as a surgical grade mask typically used in medical operation rooms. A large fog-resistant clear panel acts as a proficient barrier and helps filter 95% of bacteria and particles that the wearer may encounter.

### *Having trouble keeping your mask clear? Here are three tips to keep your mask from fogging up:*

1. Use liquid dish soap on the inside of the plastic window. Simply add a dot of the dish soap to the center of the vinyl, rub it around with your finger to coat the material, and wipe the excess off with a paper towel. This technique may last up to an hour.
2. You may also use toothpaste in the same manner. Squeeze a small drop on the inside of the clear window. Rub it in and wipe it off with a paper towel.
3. If you tape a folded tissue under your mask at the bridge of your nose, it may absorb escaping moisture.

### FaceView Mask

[www.faceviewmask.com](http://www.faceviewmask.com)

FaceView Mask™ is a medical mask that features a clear center. This allows a new level of visibility and sound while wearing the mask. Requests for a free quote can be made through the website.

### Clear Accessible Mask P&M Handmade Mask. Tampa, FL

The Clear Accessible Mask is a home business based in Florida. Patti Sanchez is a deaf local who creates masks for interpreters, DHH and Deaf or Hard of Hearing individuals. Her work has made news in the Tampa Bay Times and across social media. Patti is dedicated to fulfilling orders from other states as well as her own local community. Current pricing ranges from \$7 for one mask to \$30 for five masks. There is no official site for P&M Handmade Mask but orders can be requested by email: [Pattichez@gmail.com](mailto:Pattichez@gmail.com)





# Celebrating a Valued Member of the Community

Every day, individuals in the Hearing Loss Community strive to raise awareness, improve conditions and educate the public on issues affecting people who have hearing loss. These dedicated individuals are advocates, inspirations and role models to others, committing themselves to a variety of organizations and services.

In association with Better Hearing and Speech Month in May, Hamilton Relay, Virginia Relay's contracted service provider, recognizes the accomplishments of outstanding leaders. These individuals are nominated by their peers and selected for their accomplishments and service to others. We congratulate and are pleased to recognize **Thomas McBride** as this year's Better Hearing and Speech Month Recognition Award in Virginia!

For over 24 years, Thomas was a Marine Helicopter Instructor. Throughout his retirement years, he was actively involved in his community, promoting resources for living well with hearing loss and was a great advocate for a hearing loss prevention program for young adults. He actively promoted the Payne Foundation, which provides financial assistance to individuals with hearing loss who need to obtain hearing aids. In addition, Thomas was involved with the Farmville Lions Club, VFW Post 709 and was on the Advisory Committee at Longwood University's Speech, Hearing and Learning Services. He also facilitated the Speech Hearing and Learning Services (SHLS) Hearing Loss Support Group in Farmville.

Sadly, Thomas passed away before we were able to present him with

this award. We thank Thomas for his service to our country and to the hearing loss community.



Thomas McBride (left) at a hearing loss support group meeting in 2019.

## Voting Resources

**Absentee ballots and early voting are the prime directives of Virginia to ensure voting rights are protected while keeping the community safe. Here are a few resources to help you vote safely and efficiently:**

### Virginia.gov Citizen Portal

Update your information. Registered voters have access to a citizen portal where voter registration information can be updated, or absentee voter ballots applied for. Information on polling locations, election districts, absentee ballot status and voting history are all easily accessible as well.

### Virginia Department of Elections Facebook

Follow the Virginia Department of Elections Facebook page. The page is continuously updated with reminders and helpful resources for citizens. Informational videos about absentee ballots, early voting or deadline dates are posted daily on Facebook as helpful reminders.

### Pocket Guide for Voters – Virginia Department of Elections

Have questions about this year's voting process? This pocketbook guide is mobile friendly and easy to understand. Now you can have a copy of deadlines, voting process outline and simple reminders within easy reach. The guide is a simple and free tool that can help make the elections less of a hassle.

### Vote411.org Virginia

VOTE411 is committed to ensuring voters have the information they need to successfully participate in every election. This site is very helpful in answering frequent questions about provisions for voters with disabilities, overseas and military voters, early voting and more. Not only does the site list contact information for the Virginia Department of State but volunteers are always on hand working to assist new voters or provide election information.

### Virginia Dept. of State

Department of State  
Washington Building  
1100 Bank St., First Floor  
Richmond, VA 23219

Phone: 800-552-9745

Fax: 804-371-0194

Email: [info@elections.virginia.gov](mailto:info@elections.virginia.gov)

URL: [elections.virginia.gov](http://elections.virginia.gov)

### DEADLINES

#### October 13:

Last day to register to vote or update your address for this election.

*If you move, your polling place may change. Be sure to update your voter registration address every time you move.*

#### October 23 by 5 pm:

Last day to request that an absentee ballot be mailed to you.

#### October 31:

Last day to vote an absentee ballot in person at your local voter registration office.

#### November 3:

Election Day - Polls open 6 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Find out more at [vote.virginia.gov](http://vote.virginia.gov) or (800) 552-9745 or TTY 711.



Providing Accessible Telecommunications Since 1991

Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
1602 Rolling Hills Drive, Suite 203  
Henrico, Virginia 23229-5012

Visit us at [www.varelay.org](http://www.varelay.org)

## Upcoming Events

**Nov. 10, 2020**

**Virginia Nurses Association**  
2020 Virtual Legislative Summit

**Nov. 20-22, 2020**

2020 Virtual Fall Abilities Expo

**Nov. 4, 2020**

**VDDHH Advisory Board**

**Meeting** via Zoom  
10 a.m. -12 p.m.

More information will be posted  
on the VDDHH Facebook page.



### Find Us on Facebook!

Virginia Relay and VDDHH both have Facebook pages! Just type "Virginia Relay" or "VDDHH" in Facebook's search field and click the "Like" button at the top of the page to get regular updates on Virginia 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 of the Deaf (VAD)

**Karen Darner**

Representing Speech-Language-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

**Doral Jackson**

Representing Hearing Relay Users

**Jenny McKenzie**

Representing Virginia Association of 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