

Summer Safety Tips

for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing



Summer is right around the corner! Here are some tips for having fun and staying safe this season:

- Talk to your community leaders about installing street signs that warn incoming drivers that children who are Deaf will be playing in the area.
- Most hearing aids and cochlear implants are not waterproof. Talk to your children about properly caring for these devices this season.
- If your child spends a day with a friend, talk to their parents about how to contact an interpreter if one is needed.
- Bicycle helmets, while very important for safety, can interfere with hearing aids. Make sure your child knows to be extra alert to oncoming cars and to stay on sidewalks when possible.
- Talk to your community about providing interpreters at swimming lessons, and make lifeguards aware if your child is Deaf or Hard of Hearing.



Star Grieser Wins Deaf Community Leader Award

Congratulations to Star Grieser for winning the Hamilton Relay 2017 Deaf Community Leader Award! Star has been a great asset to the Deaf community for many years. She not only served as a board chair for the VDDHH Advisory Board, she also spearheaded the development of a community organization for individuals who are Deaf in the Hampton Roads area when the local VAD chapter disbanded.

Star works with Tidewater Community College as part of the Interpreter Training Program and hosts ASLville at the college to bring a communication-accessible experience to the community. Star's personality, accomplishments, and ability to make people want to learn more about Deaf culture and ASL make her a very deserving winner of this award.





VDDHH Unveils NEW 2018 Directory of Services

You may not be aware of all the helpful services in Virginia for those who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or DeafBlind.

Luckily, the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) has compiled the extensive 2018 Directory of Services for People who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind that is available for download on the VDDHH website!

With resources that range from assistive technology and DeafBlind services to hearing loss support and interpreter referral agencies, this directory can help you find the support and answers you or your loved one may need.

Visit www.vddhh.org/outreach.htm for the full 2018 Directory of Services for People who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind.

Welcome Our Newest Virginia Relay Partner!

The Virginia Victim Assistance Network (VVAN) staff recently finished their training to become a Virginia Relay Partner!

Located in Henrico, VVAN strives to be a voice for crime victims and works to diagnose, assess, and advocate for the needs of victims and their families; promote policies and legislation to protect victims' rights; and foster accountability through the criminal justice system.

The VVAN Helpline is now fully trained and ready to answer calls from Virginia Relay users. To learn more about this resource, visit www.vanetwork.org.

Virginia Victim Assistance Network

Helpline: 1-888-887-3418

P.O. Box 71704

Henrico, VA 23255

Virginia Relay
You Are Always Connected



PARTNER

To see a complete list of Virginia Relay Partners and learn how your company can receive FREE Virginia Relay Partner training, visit www.varelay.org.

Upcoming Events

June 3

Deaf Awareness Day at Kings Dominion
Doswell, VA

June 13

12th Annual Art of Aging Expo
Fredericksburg, VA

June 18-20

Opening Doors and Unlocking Potential
Doubletree by Hilton Hotel
Richmond-Midlothian, VA

June 22

Camp Loud and Clear
Front Royal, VA

June 23-24

2018 Virginia Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (VRID) Biennial Conference
Wyndham Virginia Beach Oceanfront
Virginia Beach, VA

SAVE THE DATE

Thursday, October 4, 2018

9:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Virginia Relay Advisory Council Meeting
Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)
8004 Franklin Farms Drive
Henrico, VA

Lisa Harbour Graduates from Partners in Policymaking

Congratulations to Virginia Relay Advisory Council (VRAC) chair Lisa Harbour on graduating from the Partners in Policymaking (PIP) program! Offered by the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD), this program consists of seven two-day sessions and is available for individuals with developmental disabilities and parents of young children with developmental disabilities.

"I think anyone who is eligible, especially VRAC members, should go through this program," says Lisa. "It was nothing like I expected."

PIP participants hone their leadership abilities by attending advocacy training, resource development, and skill building workshops led by state and national experts. Topics covered include the history of the disability rights movement, self-advocacy, independent living, employment, building inclusive communities, natural supports, legislative advocacy, assistive technology, communication, team building, and much more.

This program is competitive and only select applicants will be able to participate in PIP. For those who are accepted, all costs, including travel, lodging, and meals, are covered by VBPD!

Visit www.vaboard.org/policymaking.htm for more information.



Welcome, Eric Alvillar!

A new face has joined the Virginia Relay family! Eric Alvillar has been hired as Telecommunication Relay Service (TRS) outreach coordinator. In this role, Eric will pursue outreach and educational opportunities throughout the Commonwealth to raise awareness of the TRS features available through Virginia Relay that enable people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, or who have difficulty speaking to place and receive telephone calls.

Eric has more than 13 years of professional experience in sales and marketing. He recently moved to Virginia from San Diego, California, where he was the operations and business development manager for a corporate travel agent and meeting/event planner. He also served in the military with the United States Navy.

"Being new to Virginia, I am looking forward to traveling and meeting people from all areas of the Commonwealth as I explore new and exciting opportunities to share information about Virginia Relay," says Eric. "I'm eager to meet both current and potential TRS users, and open more doors to accessible telecommunication."

Eric is available to provide information and training on how to use Virginia Relay TRS features to individuals and groups including agencies, businesses, or schools. **For more information, please visit www.varelay.org or contact Eric at 804-295-2863 (Voice/TTY) or eric.alvillar@hamiltonrelay.com.**



"I am looking forward to traveling and meeting people from all areas of the Commonwealth as I explore new and exciting opportunities to share information about Virginia Relay."

-Eric Alvillar



Providing Accessible Telecommunications Since 1991

1602 Rolling Hills Drive, Suite 203
Henrico, Virginia 23229-5012

Visit us at www.varelay.org

VRAC Update

The Virginia Relay Advisory Council (VRAC) recently held a meeting and we have a lot of exciting news to share! We are happy to welcome **Lisa Harbour** as the new VRAC chair! Lisa is joining us from the Association of Late Deafened Adults (ALDA).

We are also welcoming **Alissa Conover**, who is joining the Council as a representative of the Virginia Association of the Deaf (VAD).

Additionally, we said goodbye to three of our members. **Mani Aguilar**, our representative from the Speech and Hearing Association of Virginia (SHAV), **Valerie Luther**, our Captioned Telephone Service (CTS) user, and **John Slone**, our Video Relay Service (VRS) user, have retired from the Council. We thank them for their service and commitment to improving and expanding Virginia Relay.

Become a VRAC Member

With the retirement of these VRAC members, we currently have openings for three new members to join the Council:

- Internet/Wireless Relay user
- Captioned Telephone Service (CTS) user
- Video Relay Service (VRS) user

For members of VRAC, the duties and responsibilities include:

- Ensuring through research and practical experience that Virginia Relay is meeting the needs of its users
- Collecting feedback from consumers to be shared with VDDHH, and the contractor(s)
- Providing advice on meeting the requirements for functional equivalency required by federal law
- Assisting in the disseminating of information from VDDHH and the Relay contractor(s) to consumers
- Providing access to consumers and other interested parties through meetings held in various regions of the Commonwealth as determined by the Advisory Council

If you use these Relay features and are interested in serving on VRAC, please contact **Eric Raff** at 804-404-9090 or eric.raff@vddhh.virginia.gov.

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)

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 of the DeafBlind (VADB)

Barclay Shepard
Representing Hearing Relay users

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

Non-Voting Members:

Eric Alvillar
Hamilton Relay

Christa Cervantes
Hamilton Relay

Diane Devaney
Devaney & Associates, Inc.

Mary Nunnally
Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services

Eric Raff
VDDHH Director

Gary Talley
VDDHH Community Services Program Manager



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.