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Maine-Lines: A Quarterly Newsletter for People who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Late-Deafened, Winter / Spring 2002

Maine Department of Labor

Maine Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

Maine Division of Deaf, Hard-of-Hearing and Late Deafened

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DIVISION OF DEAFNESS

MAINE-LINES

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAF, HARD OF HEARING OR LATE-DEAFENED

DEAF COMMUNITY FORUM

By Peter Martineau

The second Deaf Community Forum was held at the University of Maine-Augusta on December 1, 2001. Almost 100 former students from the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf gathered. I was thrilled to see so many more than the 40 people at the first forum in October 2000. Some of these people I had not seen in years.

In the morning there were four State of Maine Legislators; Rep. Charles LaVerdiere, Rep. William Schneider, Rep. David Madore and former Rep. Richard Thompson. They explained how the compensation process will work and how the new Baxter Compensation Authority (BCA) program will look. Many people stood up and asked many good questions and told their concerns. Some were discussing hot issues; some misunderstood the program or needed to clarify communication. Later in the morning three of the five Board members from the BCA; John Paterson, Robert (Buddy) Murray and Brenda Schertz met the audience. Things seemed to feel better and anxiety was reduced from talking with these people.

Governor Angus S. King, Jr. was supposed to come to our meeting, but he couldn't make it. He sent a videotape welcome instead, and apologized for not being able to be there in person. He repeated his apology on behalf of the State of Maine for all the terrible actions that took place at Baxter School some years ago. He said he hoped the State was on its way to making a difference and to compensate those who suffered this abuse. He was afraid to thank people who worked on the program that he might forget someone, but he said "there is one person who in many ways symbolized the fight to get this whole process underway and that is Peter Martineau."

He told about meeting with me in Augusta and that I really reminded the State that abuse of a child is really the abuse of a lifetime. He also wished me a Happy Birthday, which was today. He said he hoped today would be a day of healing for the Deaf Community in Maine and to begin to close this unpleasant chapter in our history by opening a new chapter of reconciliation, support and of love between all the citizens of the State. After his videotape, Deaf people "hand shake" up in the air (applauded) for me. It felt good to hear from him.

I especially want to thank Governor King. He was not there many years ago when I was a child. I appreciate his open-mindedness, willingness to listen and the support of the bills so critical to us to clean up the toxicity of our Deaf community. He gave our community pride and courage to become stronger, develop confidence and trust between Maine's Deaf and hearing citizens.

In the afternoon, there was a very special one-woman play by Terrylyne, a Deaf sexual abuse survivor. She is a well-known actress by the National Deaf Community in the USA. The play lasted two hours. Wow, her story really impacted us a lot and some cried at the end of the play. It was awesome and we felt our experiences were similar. Several women came to talk to Terrylyne about things they had never spoken about in their lifetime. There were counselors to support people if they needed it.

After the play I walked to the hall and a man with a table on wheels brought a large three-layer birthday cake for me. On the top it had the "ILY" (I Love You signing hand) and Happy Birthday written on the sides of the cake. Most of the Deaf people signed "Happy Birthday to you" to me.

I want to personally thank Senator Sharon Treat, all the Legislators, Interpreters, Mental Health professionals, Division of Deafness, Maine Center on Deafness, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Dept. of Behavioral and Developmental Services, Baxter School Superintendent, Safer Place counselors and members of Safer Place and their parents who gave us lots of support, worked hard to get the compensation program passed, and who believed that we suffered at our Baxter School. Nobody listened for many years to our struggle. "Now...no more Pain, it will go away!" I can't promise or guarantee the pain will all go away, but you need to put the past aside and move on with your lives.

The current Baxter School is a wonderful place with improved services, changes in policies and procedures to prevent Deaf children from abuse and empower students with their rights.

I am tremendously inspired on this unique day. Good feelings overwhelm me and I feel improved self-esteem and pride. It is an awesome feeling.

Again, thank you more than my words can say...I mean it.

BAXTER COMPENSATION AUTHORITY (BCA) BOARD MEMBERS

These are the five BCA Board Members who are working to design the BCA Program.

The BCA meetings are held on the second and fourth Monday of each month through June. They are at the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, 2 Anthony Avenue, Augusta, 2nd Floor, Room #2. Interpreters and CART is available for these meetings. They are from 1 to 4 in the afternoon, and the public is welcome.



Lois Galgay Reckitt is the Executive Director of Family Crisis Services – the comprehensive domestic violence services programs in two Maine counties, including the City of Portland. Lois has directed this agency for 16 years. In addition, she served as the Executive Vice President of the National

Organization of Women (NOW) in Washington, DC for 5 years, and was a founder of the Maine Women's Lobby.

She served on NOW's National Board for 16 years. During that time she chaired the National Committee on Pornography and served on the Committee to End Violence Against Women. In March of 1998, Lois was inducted into the Women's Hall of Fame for her work on behalf of Maine women – she is joined there by other famous people like former Senator Margaret Chase Smith and Senator Olympia Snowe.



Steve Rich was born and raised in Westbrook, Maine. He graduated from Westbrook High School in 1979, and graduated from the University of Southern Maine with a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration in 1983.

Following graduation from USM, he was employed by the Connecticut State Police (1984-1986); U.S.F.& G. Insurance Company (1986-1992) in the Claims Department. He worked in various roles from Claims Adjuster to Assistant Claim Manager. He is now Assistant Vice-President of claims at Acadia Insurance Company, where he oversees claims for the entire state of Maine.



Brenda Schertz was born Deaf into a Deaf family in Brooklyn, New York. Brenda is now teaching American Sign Language at the University of Southern Maine and has also taught at Northeastern University. She is on the Board of Directors at the Learning Center for Deaf Children, in Framingham, MA. She has

served on the Boston Public Library's Access Center Advisory Committee, Huntington Theatre's Deaf Task Force Committee, Board of Directors of Massachusetts State Association of the Deaf and as a consultant and tour guide at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Ms. Schertz now lives in Portland, Maine, with her husband, a computer instructor.



Robert (Buddy) Murray is a native of Bangor and a graduate of Boston College and the University of Maine School of Law. He currently is a partner in the firm of Rodman & Winchell in Bangor, where he works in the areas of employment law and administrative law. He formerly served as a member of the Maine House of Representatives from 1982-1986. He also served

two terms as a member of the Maine Senate from 1996 to 2000. During his time in the Senate, he was the Senate Chairman of the Criminal Justice committee. He continues to serve on many Boards for different non-profit organizations in the community. He is married to Maggie Cox Murray and has two children, Erin and Dillon.



John Paterson is a shareholder in the firm of Bernstein, Shur, Sawyer & Nelson in Portland. His work includes civil litigation and administrative practice. While he has a broad-ranging trial practice, he has a particular interest in business litigation, antitrust, media and First Amendment law, securities litigation and health law. Before

joining Bernstein Shur, he was in the Maine Attorney Generals' office from 1969-1981. In that office he served both as Chief of the Environmental Protection Division and later as Deputy AG in charge of civil litigation. He has served in a number of civic activities including as a member of the Freeport School Committee, the Freeport Town Council, President of the Board of the Chocolate Church Arts Center, the Board of the Tedford Shelter, and currently the Board of PCA Great Performances. He is also chair of the Professional Ethics Commission of the Board of Overseers of the Bar.

Purpose of Baxter Compensation Authority:

To help victims/survivors of abuse at the Maine School for the Deaf or the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf heal by:

- ❖ Providing financial compensation to former students who were abused.

- ❖ Admitting the State did not protect students.

- ❖ Apologizing to students and their families.

Compensation Program

Who is eligible?

Former students at the Maine School for the Deaf or The Governor Baxter School for the Deaf who were abused by state employees or as result of State action or inaction before January 1, 2001 (includes staff-to-student and student-to-student abuse). This includes physical and sexual abuse.

A Safer Place

Poem by Stephen A. Gagnon

**When your disabilities becomes a cause,
your taken away from the warmest nest.**

Sent away on an Island whom everyone is the same.

**Seeing your peers crying in pain,
no rod should have been placed.**

**During the years goes by,
memories of scars that seared your mind.**

**Thinking of a safer place for everyone whom is the
same,
no more pain.**

Love once again can be a reality,

**Embracing with hugs and tears,
mourning those whom has gone by time.**

Once again your warmest nest is back to A Safer Place.

**PINE TREE SOCIETY TO MAKE HEALTHCARE MORE
ACCESSIBLE TO THE DEAF COMMUNITY**

By Erin Rice

Pine Tree Society is starting on an innovative project that will make healthcare in Maine more accessible for the deaf and hard-of-hearing community, thanks to a recently received federal grant from the Technology Opportunities Program, National Communications and Information Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.

The Video Relay Interpreting (VRI) project is a unique, collaborative, comprehensive, state-of-the-art video conferencing system, which will make sign language interpreting services available to all hospitals in Maine.

Current barriers for Maine people who are deaf and hard-of-hearing in seeking quality healthcare are significant. Although the Americans with Disabilities Act requires hospitals to be accessible to persons with disabilities, the lack of interpreters, especially in rural parts of the state makes access difficult during both prescheduled and emergency situations.

It is quite common for Pine Tree Society interpreters to travel two or three hours each way to respond to hospitals needing interpreting services. The weather in Maine can make travel to hospitals difficult and sometimes impossible. In fact, during a six-month period last year, more than 200 requests for interpreters went unmet.

Another barrier for the deaf and hard-of-hearing population is the need for ongoing training for hospital staff with regard to the Deaf culture, the appropriate use of interpreting services and how to effectively communicate with patients who use American Sign Language.

Pine Tree's VRI project has the potential to solve these problems. By utilizing the state-of-the-art Interactive Video Conferencing (ITV) technology operating at 30 frames per second via high speed telephone lines, Pine Tree will allow the pool of interpreters clustered around Maine's largest cities to reach all hospitals in the state. Through this project, interpreting services will be available to deaf and hard-of-hearing persons for emergencies and prescheduled appointments, 24 hours a day.

Protocols and procedures will be developed so that all hospitals can effectively provide these essential services to the people who need them.

The VRI steering committee will include representatives from various organizations including Pine Tree Society, Maine Telemedicine Services, Maine Center in Deafness, Maine Association of the Deaf, Maine Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services, Maine Division of Deafness, Maine Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Maine Hospital Association, Governor's Operations Director, Maine Medical Center, Eastern Maine Healthcare and Maine Health Alliance.

For more information on the VRI project, please contact Lois Morin, VRI Coordinator or Doug Newton, Deaf Services Director at 885-0536 (TTY/V) or by e-mail to deafservices@pinetreesociety.org.

Additional information is also available on the Pine Tree Society's web site, <http://www.pinetreesociety.org/>.

This information was made possible in part by a grant from the Technology Opportunities Program, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.

711...ANYONE..? By Hannah Merker

"Definitely masochistic tendencies," my daughter said, laughing, when I told her I was researching reasons for my low telephone bills. A fax from my telephone service provider, one of 23 small units in Maine (in areas outside of Verizon service), stated: In reference to you not getting billed for your 711 calls.. They [technologists] are.. looking into this problem. [We] are advised that all the telephone companies in Maine are having this problem but we are the only one that actually has a customer using 711.."

For months I have been billed only for the basic costs of two telephone lines. My invoices have been painless to look at. Alas! this is about to change. My small company has resolved its transition-to-711-dialing-difficulties. I was enchanted with those deliciously low numbers, yet I knew I could not possibly be the only Maine user of 711, the new number to access the relay, replacing more than 160 ten-digit 800 numbers nationwide. And if I was, something was radically wrong with 21st century telecommunication systems' outreach.

On September 22, 2000, Governor Angus King placed Maine's first 711 call, introducing improved communications access for Maine's deaf, hearing-impaired, and speech-disabled community, thus complying early with an FCC mandate that all states provide 711 service by October 1, 2001.

711 is a giant step in services continually updated since the advent of the relay, not terribly long ago. There is still a long way to go. How many times have you called a

company, a physician, a small shop, only to have someone hang up before the CA can even explain what relay is? How many times have you found communication utterly unavailable as the CA tries to give you the menu - press this, press that - usually recorded to fast to get it all, and finally, when 'Leave your message' comes on, the line disconnects, requiring another dialing? Can you recall the last time you reached a human being?

It oft seems that modern technologies have distanced people, rather than drawing us closer. Then I remind myself of the many caring CAs whose numbers I recognize, who cried with me the night my husband died and I had so many calls to make, real people, not faceless automatons. Recently a CA said, "I handled your first call the night you moved into the cottage and your guide dog lapped water out of the toilet bowl that was filled with antifreeze... I know she survived.. I know you have moved.. bless you.."

For someone unfamiliar with relay, a CAs message indicates she will report to me all the person's words, and anything else she hears. Wonderful background sounds come to me in parentheses: (baby crying); (dog barking); (person sneezing, chewing.); (talking to someone); (parrot saying 'hang up that phone!'); and once, talking to a sister (toilet flushing).

This is not of minor importance, creating, as it does, a reality of conversing that someone with hearing hardly thinks about, something lost in the frustrating delays trying to reach banks, schools, or public institutions.

Implementing 711 dialing, access to Spanish-speaking CAs, are, an FCC news release states, examples of "the importance telecommunication plays in a person's ability to participate in this information age." But only if relay users **and** hearing people know about the relay system.

Information stuffed into telephone bills is probably ineffective, tossed aside as one dares to look at the cost of using a telephone. Data about relay is usually buried in directories.

A different kind of shouting is needed.

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SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION OFFERS NEW SERVICE FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

The Social Security Administration (SSA) announced today that individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing may apply for Social Security benefits immediately when they call the Social Security Administration's national toll-free TTY/TDD number, 1-800-325-0778.

"The Social Security Administration wants all Americans to have access to the services we provide," said Social Security Commissioner Jo Anne Barnhart. "The agency will continue to develop and implement innovative technology that improves the services we deliver to the public."

People who are deaf and hard of hearing may immediately file for Retirement, Survivors, Medicare, and Lump Sum Death Benefits without an appointment. Callers may now dial 1-800-325-0778, Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and file a claim for benefits using a TTY/TDD machine, which enables the person to communicate directly with a representative without the need for a local relay system. To file an immediate claim, individuals should have certain documents in-hand when calling, such as their birth certificate, most recent W-2, military service DD214 and bank account information.

The paperwork completed by TTY/TDD during the initial contact application will be mailed to the applicant for review and a signature. The applicant may return the printed claim by mail or in-person to his or her local Social Security office. Along with the signed form, SSA also needs certain documents, such as a person's birth certificate and proof of citizenship or residency to establish eligibility for Social Security benefits. An applicant can either mail or take these items to Social Security.

For more information about Social Security and its programs, visit SSA's website *Social Security Online* ~ www.ssa.gov ~ or call 1-800-772-1213. People who are deaf or hard-of-hearing may call our toll-free TTY number, 1-800-325-0778.

DID YOU KNOW?

- ❖ **CORRECTION:** In our last issue of Maine-Lines we said there were interpreted AA Meetings at St. Hyacinth's Church in Westbrook. This information is wrong and we are very sorry for any problems we caused.

- ❖ The 2001 edition of **Resources: A Guide to Services for People Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing** is now available. Call Nancy Melanson at (207) 624-5965 (TTY) or (207) 624-5963 (V) for a **free** copy.
- ❖ The **State of Maine** has a **web home page** that can connect you to all the different State agencies. **The Web Site is:** www.state.me.us/
- ❖ The **Maine Department of Transportation** has a website to **check road conditions**. **The Web Site is :** <http://www.state.me.us/mdot>
- ❖ **Safer Place:** Were you physically abused (slapped, pushed, hair pulled) by teachers or staff at Governor Baxter School for the Deaf or Maine School for the Deaf? Were you sexually abused (touched on your body or forced to have sex) by teachers, staff, or other students?

Contact Safer Place:

(207) 892-6814 (V/TTY)

(207) 892-6602 (FAX) or

E-mail: place4safe@aol.com

- ❖ The **2001 TTY Directory** is available through Maine Center on Deafness. Call (207) 797-7656 V/TTY or (800) 639-3884 V/TTY for your free copy.
- ❖ The next **Division of Deafness Advisory Council Meeting** is **April 11, 2002**. The meeting starts at 6:15 P.M. and ends at 9:00 P.M. It will be held at the Criminal Justice Academy, Rt. 201, 15 Oak Grove Road, in Vassalboro. Please call the Division of Deafness for directions, 624-5963. Open to the public.
- ❖ **Equal Access Program**
As of January 1, 2002, the Division of Deafness began a program which provides a 70% rebate for all cell phone calls made to or from a person using a TTY in Maine including relay calls. Please contact the Division of Deafness, (207) 624-5963 to get an application.
- ❖ A **SHHH (Self Help for Hard of Hearing People)** group has started in Southern Maine. Hilary Liscomb is the Coordinator for the group. They meet every 3rd Tuesday of the month, 7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. at the Dana Center at Maine Medical Center. C.A.R.T. will be provided so all can hear.

- ❖ There are TTY numbers for information about **Bio-terrorism or Terrorism incidents**.

The **New Non Emergency Toll Free Number for the State Police is 1-888-524-7900**. This number is answered in Orono and then routed to the closest State Police Barracks.

The State Police TTY numbers are: Augusta 287-4478, Houlton 532-7576, Orono 866-5805, Gray 657-5740

All numbers are accessible 24 hours/7 days a week. These numbers are to be used for information only, not emergencies.

There is a possibility that when your call is answered the greeting maybe "911, what is your emergency?" or "Is this an emergency?" If this happens, do not be alarmed. Just explain that you need information.

If you have an emergency, you should dial 911 or your local emergency number.

Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) has an informational TTY number you can call. The number is 626-4434, but this number is not accessible 24 hours/7 days a week. If you do not get an answer, please leave a message and they will return your call as soon as possible.

The Department of Labor, Division of Deafness is currently working with Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) to get 24 hour/7 days a week access to this TTY line.

- ❖ **HIV/AIDS INFORMATION**

TTY service for the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention's National STD and AIDS Hotlines (CDC NSTDAH) and the National Immunization Information Hotline (CDC NIIH). The TTY service hotline is the only one in the nation that provides TTY users:

1. Free, private information and education about HIV infection, AIDS, Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and vaccines.

2. Referrals and information about places to go for help (i.e., HIV test sites and local support services). The staff of Health Communication Specialists (HCS) is trained in sexually transmitted diseases (STD), AIDS, vaccine information, communication skills, and Deaf Culture. The staff can answer any questions TTY users may have about HIV/AIDS and other STDs. The TTY Service Hotline is NOT limited to deaf and hard-of-hearing people who are living with HIV, but to all who may have concerns and/or want accurate information about the disease.

The TTY Service Hotline number is 1-800-243-7889 and is in operation from 10:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M. (EST), Monday through Friday.

❖ **Maine-Lines Anyone?**

Give *Maine-Lines* to a friend. Encourage them to sign up for quarterly mailings. All we need are names and addresses. Send to Rehabilitation Services, Division of Deafness, Attn: Nancy Melanson, 150 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333 or E-mail to Nancy.A.Melanson@state.me.us

❖ **Help us find your classmates from Baxter School and the Maine School for the Deaf**

If you know someone who does not receive *Maine-Lines*, that means we don't have their name and address and they may miss very important information related to compensation and other news in the Deaf community. If you know someone who would like to receive this information please call Nancy Melanson at the Division of Deafness, 624-5965 (TTY) or 624-5963 (V).

❖ **CAPTIONING COMPLAINTS**

Having trouble with the closed captioning (CC) on your TV?

In the past, there have been problems with captioning during snowstorms. There were also problems during the September 11 attacks. There

are solutions, but first the television stations need to know about the problems.

Do you want to complain? Here's how: First call the local TV station to tell them what the problem is. Sometimes it is simple and they can fix it right away. None of the TV stations have TTYs so you need to call through relay. Here is a list of the voice phone numbers to call.

Television Stations:

Portland/ Westbrook: ME PBS, 874-6570; WGME, 797-1313; WCSH, 828-6666; WMTW, 775-1800; WPME, 772-3535; WPXT, 774-0051
Lewiston/Auburn: WMTW, 782-1800; WCSH, 784-0599; ME PBS, 783-9101
Bangor: WLBS, 942-4821; WABI, 947-8321; WVII, 945-6457; WBGR, 947-3300; ME PBS, 783-9101
Ellsworth: WABI, 664-0589
Machiasport: Washington County TV, 255-6200
Presque Isle: WAGM Television, 764-4461
Fort Kent: WFLT, 834-6878

If that doesn't work, you can complain in writing to the broadcasting company (if you use an antenna for TV reception) or to the cable company (if you have cable) or to the satellite company (if you use a satellite dish). Sample complaint letters are available on the NAD website <http://www.nad.org/infocenter/infotogo/tech/captioncomplaint.html>, or call Nancy at the Division of Deafness for help.

If that doesn't work, you can complain to the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) at 1-888-835-5322 (TTY) or 1-888-225-5322 (V), both toll free, or in writing to the Federal Communication Commission, 445 12th Street SW, Room 6C-447, Washington, DC 20554.

If you do complain, please inform the Division of Deafness (DOD) or the Maine Center on Deafness (MCD) by sending us a copy of your complaint letter, call or e-mail telling us what you did and if the captioning improved. If it did not improve, DOD and MCD will file a statewide complaint with the FCC.

Thank you for helping with this important problem.

❖ **NEW Web Sites**

MCD

<http://www.mainecenterondeafness.org/>

ADOP - Advocates for Deaf Oral Programs

<http://www.adop.org/>

DeafBlind information

<http://www.helenkeller.org/>

Maine Department of Labor
Division of Deafness
150 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0150

Return Service Requested

Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

Kathleen Brogan, Director

Division of Deafness

The Division of Deafness provides a program of services to Deaf, hard of hearing and late deafened citizens of Maine, which include: information and referral, advocacy, statewide registry, and accessibility promotion.

Jan DeVinney, Director
Division of Deafness
150 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0150
Tel: 624-5964 (TTY only)
E-mail: Jan.A.DeVinney@state.me.us

Mary Goodheart, Staff
Tel: 624-5955 (TTY)
624-5954 (V)
624-5980 (FAX)
1-800-698-4440 TTY/V (within Maine only)
E-mail: Mary.E.Goodheart@state.me.us

Nancy Melanson
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Tel: 624-5965 (TTY)
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Alice Crandall Johnson
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E-mail: Alice.C.Johnson@state.me.us

The Maine Department of Labor provides equal opportunity in employment and programs.

Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request.