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Maine-Lines: A Newsletter for People who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Late-Deafened, Summer / Fall 2004

Maine Department of Labor

Maine Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

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

Nancy Melanson
Maine Department of Labor, Nancy.A.Melanson@Maine.gov

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Farm House Burning & Healing Ceremony
By Nancy Melanson

April 24, 2004, the day the farmhouse on Mackworth Island was burned to the ground, started out gray and dismal. The burning of the farmhouse was only part of the much-needed healing process for the survivors of abuse suffered at the hands of Robert E. Kelly and others. The fire seemed to be symbolic of the pain they suffered. As the farmhouse flames roared, the weather cleared, blue sky and sunshine appeared. The sunshine seemed to be comforting. Some survivors, their families, and friends took the opportunity to throw pictures, pieces of wood or drawings into the farmhouse, again symbolizing the pain and suffering as another way to help with the healing process.

The farmhouse had been vacated for many years, it was run down and dangerous; so the burning was very appropriate for many different reasons. The burning also benefited the Falmouth Fire Department; it was a useful training exercise for local firefighters.

After the collapse of the farmhouse and many cheers and hugs, there was a Native American healing ceremony. We all witnessed yet another change in the weather. The wind started with the healing ceremony’s opening remarks from Sara Treat. Standing in a large circle, survivors, families, and friends gathered together and spoke about how they felt about the day. As everyone took turns speaking, the wind continued to pick up speed, papers were flying, bodies swayed back and forth. The smoke from the ruins quickly disappeared. For myself, I have to say that I was in awe; it was not scary; the wind was comforting, powerful, and very healing. It felt as if the evil of the past was being blown off the island and a new life was beginning for the people who suffered.
The annual Blaine House Tea to celebrate Deaf Culture week was held on September 15, 2004. Over 100 people squeezed into the Blaine House. The First Lady of Maine, Karen Baldacci, welcomed everyone to Tea. In her opening remarks she mentioned the importance of a second language for students, and she is in favor of American Sign Language being offered to children as a second language in school. This is the second year Mrs. Baldacci has attended the tea.

Elinor Brown of the Sunrise Program received the “Promoting American Sign Language, Deaf Culture and Deaf People Award.” Elinor has worked for many years with Maine’s deaf people with mental illness and/or mental retardation.

The Keynote speaker was Roxanne Baker a native Mainer, teacher, actress and activist. Her presentation “Our Challenge? Building Bridges to All” stressed the importance of maintaining a Deaf Cultural identity by working with and educating the hearing world. Bridges of understanding will make both cultures stronger.
The “Outstanding Advocate for the Needs of the Deaf Community Award” was given to Kathy Cooper of Mobius Inc. Kathy works with deaf individuals with mental retardation/developmental delays. Working with deaf individuals is relatively new to Kathy. She has met the challenge by learning ASL, Visual Gestural communication and working at Camp Sign-a-Watha for several years.

Two “Special Commendation Awards” were presented this year. The first was given to Dr. Stephen Greene, a psychologist who is fluent in ASL and very knowledgeable about Deaf Culture. His ability to provide therapy to deaf individuals in their native language has helped people in their healing process.

The second “Special Commendation Award” was given to Carrie Pierce. Carrie started a summer camp for deaf children in Kenduskeag, Maine. The camp ‘Sign-N-Kids’ provides camping experiences to deaf children in American Sign Language. Carrie is also a tireless advocate for issues concerning the deaf community.

The final award presented was the “Clifton F. Rodgers Award” for lifetime service to Maine’s Deaf Community. This year’s recipient was Judy Segal. Judy recently retired from Governor Baxter School for the Deaf after over 20 years of service. She was an excellent elementary school teacher and later became the principal of the elementary school. She was praised for setting high standards, the achievements of the students she taught, and working tirelessly to help GBSD elementary program obtain full accreditation.
GBSD hosts Brewster Hall Open House. On Saturday, September 18, 2004 the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf officially opened the doors of its new academic building to Maine's Deaf Community.

The $2.3 million building has been named Brewster Hall after John Brewster, Jr., the nineteenth century Deaf portrait painter who did not receive any formal education until the age of fifty-one when he enrolled in what is now known as the American School for the Deaf.

In addition to tours and a display by the Deaf Dog Education Action Fund, Open House festivities included keynote addresses from the Deaf architect involved in the building's design, John Dickinson, AIA, CSI and GBSD's Superintendent, Larry Taub, Ed.D.

Marie O'Brien, the Collections Coordinator of the Dyer Library/Saco Museum which owns 16 Brewster paintings, and museum docent Elizabeth Wells brought and displayed two original Brewster portraits. The women also provided a slide show on Brewster's work. The day was capped by a high-energy workshop led by Rathskellar, the Deaf performing troupe that was in town as part of Maine's overall celebration of Deaf Culture Week.

New Technology here in Maine!

Video Relay Services - (VRS)
This system uses a high speed internet connection and web cams (little eyeball look-alike cameras on top of a computer monitor) or D-Link Videophone (small camera in a box around 7 in. wide x 6 in. long and 1 1/2 in. deep) with a television to access IP relay systems.

It works like traditional text relay in that the deaf and hearing persons are in different locations and the call assistant (CA) (in the case of VRS it is a certified interpreter) is at a third location. Instead of typing, the deaf caller signs in ASL to the web cam or D-link videophone, the CA, who "sees" the ASL user on their screen, voices to the hearing caller who uses a standard telephone and signs back to the deaf ASL user what the hearing caller says. Many in the Deaf community already have this system set-up in their homes.

The cost would involve buying a Web cam or D-Link videophone and high-speed internet monthly service. There is no cost to the users for the CA (same as traditional relay). Contact Maine Center on Deafness to find out about free D-Link Videophones.

Video Remote Interpreting - (VRI)
This system also uses a high-speed internet connection web cams or D-link Videophones. Deaf and hearing people are in the same location and the interpreter is in a remote location. It is used the same way a live in-person interpreter is used except that the interpreter is present on the TV screen or computer monitor. The TV and D-Link Videophone can be set on a rolling cart and moved wherever needed. All you need is an outlet to plug in the TV and a place to plug in the internet line. No computer is needed.

Another VRI system is used with ISDN phone lines (three are needed) and different equipment (although it looks very much like the D-Link Videophone).

NexTalk
This is a computer based TTY system. Instead of making and receiving calls through a traditional TTY, calls are made and received using a desktop PC. Calls can be made from a TTY to a PC...PC to PC...and PC to TTY. Messages are typed back and forth; not unlike 'instant messaging' or traditional TTY calls. At this time "freeware" can be installed on your computer from the NexTalk web site: www.nextalk.net.

The State of Maine will be purchasing a server that will enable selected state employees to receive and make calls through NexTalk to TTY users. Callers using TTY's will notice no difference except that now their calls will be answered and there is always the option to reach an operator for help.

The Department of Labor (DOL) will be the pilot program for NexTalk. Some DOL employees will have it added to their computers in December or January. Other departments will be added after DOL’s implementation.
Deaf Rights Group (DRG)  
10th Anniversary

DRG is a state-wide coalition of Deaf rights activists including Deaf, hard-of-hearing and hearing people, educators, lawyers, advocates, interpreters, state employees, and legislators. DRG is committed to securing equal access for the Deaf and hard-of-hearing. DRG meetings are open to the public. Mary Edgerton from the Maine Center on Deafness has led the group for 10 years. Please contact the Maine Center on Deafness at 1-800-639-3884 (V/TTY) for more information.

**DRG Achievements**

1994

- Proposed legislation to require the State to hire four full-time interpreters for the legislature and the Executive Branch. The legislation failed but lead to improved access at the Maine Legislature.
- Convinced the Maine Human Rights Commission to provide interpreters for deaf individuals who wanted to observe Commission meetings.

1995

- Successfully passed legislation to increase access to the legislature and government services for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing. The law required greater compliance with the ADA.
- Participated in the initial planning for an American Sign Language/Interpreting BA Program at the University of Southern Maine to increase the number of qualified interpreters working in Maine.
- Worked with the legislature to provide an assistive listening loop system for hard-of-hearing individuals.

1996

- Participated in the Legislative Study Committee that resulted in the passage of L.D. 505, which initiated the process to make Governor Baxter School for the Deaf more autonomous.
- Started the effort to require State agencies and the legislature to list TTY numbers on stationery, business cards and all other written materials they produce.
- Produced the fact sheet *Equal Access for the Deaf in a Medical Setting* to help ensure that individuals are provided with interpreters for medical appointments.
- Began working with the Department of Public Safety to make 911 accessible for TTY callers. The effort has included developing a “silent call” policy.
- Presented information on deafness as part of the Judicial Education Program for the Courts.
- Provided training covering the civil rights of inmates to all staff at the Kennebec County Jail.

1997

- Won passage of legislation to require landlords to provide visual or other suitable smoke detectors for individuals unable to hear audible alarms.
- Held workshops attended by more than 200 people in Orono and at GBSD to educate Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals about their civil rights.
- Forced the State to install pay TTYs at the State Capitol and in the State Office Building.
- Won passage of the Telephone Equipment Accessibility Study Bill and had a DRG member appointed to the group.
- Worked with Ingraham to make their crisis-calling system more accessible to TTY callers. Ingraham now provides a separate TTY number.
- Provided a second presentation on deafness for the Judicial Education Program for the Courts.
- Won legislation to have all interpreters in Maine registered. The law included the establishment of a Technical Review Committee to study interpreter licensing. Several DRG participants were appointed to the committee.

1998

- Won passage of a resolve bill to study the needs of the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities in Maine. Several DRG participants were appointed to serve on the Committee.
- Worked with the Social Security office in Portland to improve the procedure for obtaining interpreters for meeting with Social Security representatives.
- Convinced the City of Portland to install 24 pay TTYs around the city. DRG members determined locations of the TTYs.
- Forced the Turnpike Authority and the Department of Transportation to install TTYs and signage at rest areas on the Turnpike and I-95.
- Participated in Public Forums across the State that were organized as a result of the resolve to study the needs of the deaf community.
- Forced the legislature to provide interpreters at the legislature one day a week during the session.
- Won passage of legislation that increased the Legal Interpreting Fund from $38,500 to $115,000.
- Worked with GBSD to create a state Employment Classification for sign language interpreters.
- Obtained waivers so that state employees would not be prohibited from interpreting for state functions, meetings and events.
- Started the effort to create an emergency alert/response system for deaf individuals. DRG members were interviewed on Maine Things Considered about how the Ice Storm of 1998 impacted the deaf community.
- Convinced the local Attorney General offices to purchase TTYs.
- Forced the legislature to appoint an ADA Compliance Officer.
• Convinced the State Court Administrator to have all Court personnel trained about deafness.

1999
• Helped with the process to introduce legislation to extend the statute of limitations so that former students of GBSD who were abused could sue the state for compensation.
• Obtained increased funding for MCD and for funding to hire a Director and an assistant to the director for the Division of Deafness.
• Worked with the Department of Justice to have visual ordering systems installed at the drive thru of McDonalds restaurants.
• Won passage of legislation establishing the Telecommunication Equipment Program to distribute specialized telephone equipment to individuals with all disabilities.
• Won legislation that requires that all interpreters in Maine be licensed and to set up a State Advisory Committee which included DRG members.
• Established the Legal Justice Subcommittee of DRG. Participants included an attorney from the Department of Justice, the State Court Administrator and a District Court judge.
• Appointment of a DRG member to serve on a Court ADA Team to study Court accessibility issues.
• Convinced the legislature to have interpreters available two days a week during the session.
• Won passage of a Newborn Hearing Screening law with an advisory group to include increased representation from the deaf community.
• Chaired the DoD Emergency Services Committee to continue with the effort to develop an emergency alert system for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals.
• Won passage of ASL Remedial Education Law. Governor King later eliminated the funding from the State budget.

2001
• Helped coordinate and participated in the training of police departments.

2002
• Convinced Hannaford to install pay TTYs at eight of its 47 stores.
• Several DRG members were appointed to the Newborn Hearing Screening Advisory council.
• Helped to set up ASL education program through existing Adult Education in Portland and Augusta.
• Helped in the reestablishment of the SHHH group in Portland for late deafened individuals.
• Won passage of legislation to require the Bureau of Insurance to perform a cost analysis of mandated coverage for hearing aids.

2003
• Won passage of legislation to extend to three years the amount of time deaf teachers have to pass the PRAXIS certification exam.
• Won passage of legislation to require a state study committee to develop a proposal for the creation of an emergency notification system for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals.
• Won passage of legislation to study the needs of deaf children and adolescents with mental retardation and behavioral disabilities.

2004
• Won passage of legislation that creates an emergency notification system that includes the distribution of pagers to all individuals in Maine with a hearing loss.
• Won passage in the Maine Senate of a bill requiring insurance companies to pay for hearing aids. The bill was defeated in the House.
• Won legislation that changed the funding mechanism for providing interpreters in the courts and for private attorneys and increased the qualifications needed by interpreters to work in legal situations.
• Helped with the successful effort to obtain an additional $6 million of funding for former GBSD students abused at GBSD.
• Forced several of Maine’s television stations to change the position of closed-captioning so that emergency messages are always visible.
• Working with All Maine Votes, a coalition of disability groups, to ensure that voting is accessible to people with a hearing loss.
Legislative Updates:

Public Law 553
Emergency Alert Notification System for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Individuals

Emergency Alert Notification Equipment:
The Maine Communication Access Program (MECAP), formerly the telecommunications equipment program, (TEP) will be distributing one-way pagers, two-way pagers, and text message capable cell phones to the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities, either on a loan or cost-share basis.

The equipment for each consumer is determined by where it will be used and types of emergency information the individual wishes to receive, as well as comparative cost and monthly service charges.

Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and several other agencies have been working diligently on the project. MEMA is currently coordinating other agencies: NOAA, Department of Public Safety, Department of Transportation, Maine Turnpike Authority, and the Bureau of Health to deliver emergency messages to the individuals who receive the equipment.

The Program has started; contact the TEP at Maine Center on Deafness for more information.

Public Law 685
To Clarify the Law Regarding Interpreting Services for People Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

"An Act To Clarify the Law Regarding Interpreting Services for People Who Are Deaf or Hard-of-hearing" took effect on July 30, 2004. The new law clarifies the responsibility for providing and paying for communication services (interpreters or CART) for a deaf or hard-of-hearing person whenever a court or a public agency conducts a proceeding involving the "personal or property interests" of the deaf or hard-of-hearing person.

The law specifies that "any authority, board, bureau, commission, department or officer of state government or of any county, municipality, school district or any other political or administrative subdivision" that conducts a proceeding involving a deaf or hard-of-hearing person is responsible to provide and pay for communications services (interpreters or CART) during the proceedings.

Some funding will remain with the Division of Deafness to be used by private attorneys/advocates when they represent deaf clients to cover interpreting costs if needed. Without funding to cover the cost of interpreters for lawyers/advocates, there is concern that deaf people will have a hard time finding lawyers/advocates willing to represent them.

The Division of Deafness (DoD) will maintain a list of qualified legal interpreters and make the list available to anyone who needs it. See the Division of Deafness’ web site www.maine.gov/rehab/dod for the current list. Interpreters need to be nationally certified and have special legal training. The law requires the phase-in of stricter qualifications. Money from the fund can only be used for interpreters on this list.

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS)/DoD does not pay for interpreters/CART for court appointed attorneys (the Courts’ responsibility) or for actual agency or court proceedings.

Bills to look for at the next Legislative Session:

“An Act to Require all Health Insurers to Cover the Costs of Hearing Aids”
Senator Beth Edmonds will be resubmitting legislation that would require private health insurance companies to include hearing aid coverage. The initial bill to be submitted will include all age groups.

“Service Animal”
The Department of Labor will be submitting this bill to change legislation regarding the responsibility of the Division of Deafness (DoD) to certify hearing dogs. Current law states that the DoD will certify the hearing dogs for deaf and hard-of-hearing people. The current legislation contradicts the American with Disabilities Act, and the DoD has no way to determine if the dog has been properly trained.

“911 TTY Test Calling”
Because of several complaints that “silent” TTY calls to 911 have not been answered, this bill would require periodic random testing and reporting to ensure that the calls are answered properly. This will include Captel, Voice Carry Over (VCO), and Hearing Carry Over (HCO) technology as well as regular TTYs.
“Lifeline Rates for Emergency Alert Pagers”
Under the emergency alert notification system, pagers will be provided (depending on income for free or on a sliding scale) to all deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals in the state that request them. The concern is that some individuals will not be able to pay the monthly fee to utilize their pagers. This bill would create a low cost monthly fee similar to the lifeline rates that are available for landline phones for low-income people.

“Health Insurance to Cover Interpreters”
The purpose of this bill is to require private health insurance companies to cover the cost of sign language interpreters for doctors’ and other medical provider appointments. As with the hearing aid bill, the Bureau of Insurance would be required to perform a cost study to determine how much health insurance premiums would need to be increased to cover the costs of the interpreters. The study will also produce valuable information so that we would know how much it is costing medical practitioners to provide interpreters.

“BCA Funding”
An additional eight million of funding is needed to complete compensating former students from Governor Baxter School for the Deaf and Maine School for the Deaf who were abused.

“Interpreting Licensing”
Stacey Surprenant and Betsy Reifman, through Maine RID, are coordinating the effort to make changes in the State’s Interpreter Licensing Law.

If you would like to be informed about Legislative public hearings, work sessions, etc. regarding deaf and hard-of-hearing issues, call or E-mail the Maine Center on Deafness and have your name added to the “Legislative Alert List."

E-mail: medge@maine.rr.com
1-800-639-3884 (V/TTY Toll-free in ME)
797-7656 (V/TTY)
797-9791 (FAX)

Baxter Compensation Authority Update

- 300 former students have contacted the Baxter Compensation Authority (BCA).
- 151 people have gone before the BCA panel.
- 147 have been found eligible for compensation.
- $8,005,000 has been awarded to claimants.
- The deadline to file a claim is March 2006.
- Out of state outreach is taking place.

Did you know?

- **Maine Center on Deafness now has a Scribe Program.** This program can help deaf and hard-of-hearing people understand any hard-to-understand papers or forms. The program will be taking place every Monday from 10:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M., or by appointment at the Maine Center on Deafness. Contact Jonathan Connick, 1-800-639-3884 (V/TTY).

- **Alpha One now has a Walk-In Clinic for American Sign Language (ASL) Users.** This clinic will have signing staff present to assist ASL users with letters, forms and general issues. It is beginning on December 2, 2004, Thursday, 1:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. and continuing on every Thursday, 1:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. thereafter; also available other days and times by appointment. This is at the South Portland Alpha One office on 127 Main Street. Please contact Lisa Rouelle or John Dunleavy at 767-2189 (V/TTY).

- **NEW: Self Help for the Hard of Hearing (SHHH).** Support Groups are now meeting every month in the southern and central Maine area. SHHH is a volunteer, international association of hard-of-hearing people, their relatives, and friends. It is a nonprofit, educational organization devoted to the welfare and interest of those who cannot hear well. Contact Jody Went at 439-3197 (V) in southern Maine and Marianne Winnett at 685-3885 (V) in central Maine for further information.

- **Identification Cards Available for Deaf and Hard of Hearing.** The Division of Deafness has ID cards to offer to anyone who is deaf or hard of hearing. The laminated cards are produced at the Division of Deafness, and they are free of charge. Applications and examples of the cards are available by calling the Division at the numbers listed on the last page of this newsletter or visit DoD’s website www.maine.gov/rehab/dod.
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 next Division of Deafness Advisory Council meeting is January 13, 2005. The meeting starts at 6:15 P.M. and ends at 9:00 P.M. It will be held at the Augusta CareerCenter, 2 Anthony Avenue, 2nd Floor, Conference Room 2. Please call the Division of Deafness at the numbers listed on the last page of this newsletter for directions or information. This meeting is open to the public.

Maine-Lines, Anyone?
Give Maine-Lines to a friend. Encourage them to sign up for mailings. All we need are names and addresses sent to the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Division of Deafness, Attn: Nancy Melanson, 150 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333 or e-mail to Nancy.A.Melanson@maine.gov.

New website
http://www.countrycandids.net

I offer outdoor photography services for anyone! If you are just interested in seeing the website please feel free to browse. There is a live one-on-one chat support help-line, online payment for photography deposits through pay pal at no additional fee, an Events listing, Photography Specials for diversity members such as: Deaf & Hard-of-Hearing community, State of Maine Employees, New Customers, Seniors, etc.
Thanks!
Tammy (Estes) Beaulieu

On a Lighter Note:

When I was young, I was put in a school for retarded kids for two years before they realized I actually had a hearing loss. And they call ME slow!
Kathy Buckley, Comedian

Voice automatically turns off on all movies and TV programs when there are no captions.

A DeafDigest reader sent in a wish list suggestion:

DeafDigest Gold - August 22, 2004
Bureau of Rehabilitation Services
Jill Duson, 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 includes: information and referral, advocacy, and accessibility promotion.

Jan DeVinney, Director
150 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0150
Tel: 624-5964 (TTY only)
E-mail: Jan.A.DeVinney@maine.gov

Alice Crandall Johnson
Rehabilitation Consultant
624-5966 (TTY/V)
E-mail: Alice.C.Johnson@maine.gov

Nancy Melanson, Assistant to the Director
Tel: 624-5965 (TTY), 624-5963 (V)
1-888-755-0023 (TTY) (within Maine only)
1-800-698-4440 (V) (within Maine only)
624-5980 (FAX)
E-mail: Nancy.A.Melanson@maine.gov

Web site: www.maine.gov/rehab/dod

The Maine Department of Labor provides equal opportunity in employment and programs.
Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.