

Monthly Communicator

NJ Department of Human Services | Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

JUNE 2015 | www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddhh/home/index.html

Chris Christie, Governor

Kim Guadagno, Lt. Governor

Elizabeth Connolly, Acting Commissioner

David Alexander, Director

Director's Corner

News and Notes

■ **Traci Burton**, *DDHH Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist* has resigned from her position effective May 18, 2015 and will be accepting a position with the Division of Disability Services. Traci has been with the division for 12 years. I want to thank Traci for her work on behalf of people who are hard of hearing and wish her the best with her new position. The division plans to begin a search to fill the position as soon as possible.

■ The *Monthly Communicator* has changed over the last few months. The new format focuses on sharing with the public more information about the division's programs and services in a quick-read format that is environmentally friendly. The *Monthly Communicator* will continue to have a **Calendar of Upcoming Events** hosted by state and professional associations. You may submit a short paragraph and provide a link to your upcoming professional events and workshops. Please email to: monthlycommunicator@dhs.state.nj.us before the tenth of the month for next month's issue.

■ **Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Day** is scheduled for June 6. This is one of the largest awareness events in New Jersey. We hope you plan on attending with your families. For information or to purchase ticket for this event go to www.deafnjad.org or contact GATickets@aol.com. Please stop by the exhibit to meet the DDHH staff. We are also pleased that Sprint/NJRelay continues to be partners with DDHH is sponsoring this year's event.

■ Congratulations to **Sprint** on being awarded the NJ Relay Contract. Sprint was awarded a new three-year, multi-million dollar Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS) contract to provide assistive communications services to the Deaf and hard of hearing within the state. DDHH and Sprint/NJ Relay have a history of working together and DDHH looks forward to continuing this partnership on behalf of improving telecommunication services for people who are Deaf and hard of hearing.

- David Alexander, Ph.D., Director

DDHH Partners with MVC to Ensure Accessible Tests

By **Catie Purrazzella**, Service Coordinator

In April, the Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing received several complaints from Deaf and hard of hearing individuals regarding communication access issues at their local New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission offices. The complaints were in regards to *American Sign Language (ASL)* interpreter requests for the knowledge test that were being denied.

In New Jersey to obtain a basic driver license, the requirement is to pass three different tests: vision, knowledge, and road test. The knowledge test is offered on the computer in either English, Arabic, Chinese, French, Spanish, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian or Japanese. This is a barrier for many Deaf and hard of hearing applicants because English is not their first language and ASL is not a written language, but a visible language.

In the past the MVC has provided qualified ASL interpreters for the Deaf and hard of hearing applicant taking the knowledge test. Starting about a year ago, the MVC gradually shifted to using a different format. It created and implemented a video that displays a sign language interpreter translating each question on the knowledge test into sign language. Another issue that was brought to DDHH's attention was that some applicants were not even aware about this new format and it was not offered to them when they made ASL interpreter requests.

DDHH will continue to work with the MVC and plans to review the new format for its effectiveness.

If you have experienced something similar to this and wish to share your concerns with us, please contact Catie Purrazzella at Catherine.purrazzella@dhs.state.nj.us or (609) 503-4862.

NJ DDHH Attends 31st Annual ASL Festival at Union County College

By Jason Weiland, Field Representative

On April 25th, the New Jersey Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing joined over 45 other exhibitors at the 31st Annual ASL Festival held at Union County College in Cranford. The Fest highlighted ASL performances from interpreter students enrolled in the ASL Interpreter Training Program (ITP) at the college. Hundreds of Deaf, Hard of Hearing, students, interpreters, their families and friends attended to renew old friendships and make new ones. The event was coordinated by students in the school's ASL ITP program, which included exhibitors who shared valuable resources, sold various goods, and offered unique programs.

NJ DDHH representative Jason Weiland manned an exhibit table throughout the day's events offering information about the agency's various programs and services including the monthly communicator, hearing aid loan program, communication access referral service, community outreach, and equipment distribution program. In addition, DDHH was on hand to answer questions and concerns from the community. The Division took the opportunity to network with other agencies to develop a strong resource and referral system for NJ.

During the day, the students, UCC staff, ITP alumni, and the community honored Dr. Eileen Forestal, Coordinator and Professor, ASL & Deaf Studies Program and ASL-English Interpreting Program who established the program over 30 years ago. Dr. Forestal will be retiring this year after a long illustrious career with the program. The school also awarded several awards to honor the achievements of community organizations, students, community members, and alumni interpreters. The evening ended with a fundraising dinner event hosted by New Jersey Association for the Deaf and an evening showing of the Deaf film "Beyond the Embers" in collaboration with the Northwest Jersey Association of the Deaf.

If you would like NJ DDHH to host an exhibit table at your event, please contact Field Representative, Jason Weiland (609) 498-7006 or Jason.weiland@dhs.state.nj.us

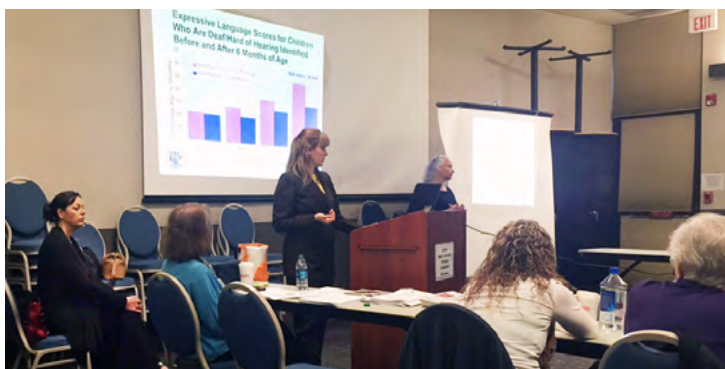
GPPH Wellness Fair

By Traci Burton, Field Representative

On Thursday April 9, 2015 Greystone Park Psychiatric Hospital (GPPH) hosted their annual Wellness Fair for patients and staff. Many GPPH programs were represented in the exhibit hall such as the Occupational Therapy Department, Spiritual Health, Weight Control and Nutrition, and the GPPH Gardening and Landscaping Department. There was also a Zumba demonstration for those inclined to join in.

Two outside agencies were invited to host exhibit tables. Capitol Care distributed information about their day programs and I represented DDHH at our information table. Visitors learned about the NJ [*Hearing Aid Project*](#), and the [*Equipment Distribution Program*](#). In addition, the CapTel and amplified telephones, smoke detector with flash, and a Pocket Talker Pro were on the table for demonstration.

For those patients and staff who were unable to make it to the fair, GPTV (closed-circuit programming for GPPH only) asked an individual from each table to talk for a minute about the program/agency they were representing. I reiterated what I had on the DDHH table, as well as mentioned a couple of other programs DDHH provides. After all, hearing loss reaches beyond those residing and working on the deaf unit at GPPH.



DDHH Advisory Council Meeting

The NJ Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing held its quarterly advisory council meeting in the East Brunswick Public Library on April 24. Kathryn Aveni from the NJ Department of Health, Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program (EHDI)

presented an update on the newborn hearing screening program. Susan Marcario, Executive Director for Family Link gave a presentation about early intervention services.

Kathy related that the EHDI program started in NJ with the passage of a law in 2002 mandating that all newborns' hearing be screened before they are discharged from the hospital or by 30 days of age. If the child is found to be at risk for hearing loss, he/she must be kept on a registry. Insurance companies must cover the cost of the screening, and hospitals must provide referrals for follow-up services. The program is entirely funded through federal grants.

There are two ways to screen newborn hearing. One uses an ear probe to detect the ears' hair cell responses, Otoacoustic Emissions Testing (OAE); this is the quicker and cheaper method. The other method is Auditory Brainstem Response (ABR), which uses electrodes to measure the infant's brain stem response to the auditory stimulus. Hospitals are given the discretion to decide which test to use, though babies in neonatal intensive care units must be tested using ABR. The accuracy of the screening varies and is highly dependent on the skill of the screener and if the infant is quiet and calm during the screening test. Of the two methods, ABR provides fewer false positives.

An integral part of the referral process is for early intervention. Susan Marcario explained the state's program for early intervention. Susan explained that NJ has four regional centers for service provision. Early intervention is a statewide system of supports and services for families and their special needs children. Services are brought to the family's home and provided at no charge. There is a toll-free number to make a referral to the program, and referrals can be made by anyone 888-653-4463. The phone menu will direct callers to the correct regional center for their area. Additionally, there is a Web site: <http://thefamilymatterswebsite.org>

The next meeting is scheduled for Friday July 31 at the East Brunswick Public Library. The public is invited to attend. Communication access is provided with sign language interpreters, assistive listening devices, and realtime captioning.

Other Organizations Serving People With Hearing Loss

News Links from HLAA-NJ

Submitted by Joel Strasser. APR, Fellow PRSA, Trustee, Public Information Officer, Hearing Loss Association of New Jersey (HLAA-NJ)

Joel.Strasser@hearingloss-nj.org

■ News, Views and Dates from HLAA-NJ for June 2015:

<http://hearingloss-nj.org/pdf/HLA--MCcolumnJune2015-051015.pdf>

■ HLAA-NJ Chapter News:

<http://hearingloss-nj.org/htm/chapters/chapters.htm>

A **Deaf Community Forum** will be held on June 12 regarding accommodations at the Philadelphia Airport. For more information contact: Kathie Gray-Plotkin: *psadkg@gmail.com* or Beth Lockard: *lockard.beth@gmail.com*.

A legislative **Training Workshop** will be held on Saturday, June 13, 2015 from 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Details can be found at: *<http://www.deafnjad.org/#!/legislative-training-workshop/c5xn>*

Calendar of Events

Saturday June 6

31st NJ Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Day

Six Flags Great Adventure
Jackson, NJ

Ticket info: *GATickets@aol.com*

DDHH Regular Office Hours: Monday – Friday: 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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