

Dave Heineman  
Governor

Mr. Steven Manning  
Chairperson

John C. Wyvill  
Executive Director

# The Communicator

Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing



A newsletter surveying health, government and issues affecting Nebraskans.

## Mr. John C. Wyvill Hired as NCDHH Executive Director

-Ben Sparks, Interpreter/Program Assistant

The NCDHH Board of Commissioners hired Mr. John C. Wyvill after interviewing many promising candidates. Mr. Wyvill began work at NCDHH on October 21, 2013, immediately taking to heart the vision and mission set forth by the Board. In the three months, Mr. Wyvill has attended meetings, advocated for consumers, began legislative work regarding sign language interpreters and managed NCDHH staff. Mr. Wyvill has received several messages from concerned Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nebraskans regarding access to public service providers, which he resolved personally and with staff assistance.

Mr. Wyvill shared the Commission's vision and mission with the Nebraska Association of the Deaf, Hearing Loss Association of America, Omaha Chapter, and the Omaha Association of the Deaf. He has formed ties with agencies and looks forward to creating more with increasing collaboration with Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired.



Mr. Wyvill brings a wealth of legal and administrative experience to NCDHH. His relevant work experience includes serving as assistant legal counsel to Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, Director of the Arkansas Department of Workforce Education, Director of the Arkansas Vocational Rehabilitation Agency. He has also served as President of the Council of State Administrators in Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). President George Bush appointed Mr. Wyvill to the United States Access Board, serving as Vice Chair of the Board.

Mr. Wyvill teaches law and ethics courses at Bryan College of Health and Sciences and worked for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Mr. Wyvill can be reached by email at [john.wyvill@nebraska.gov](mailto:john.wyvill@nebraska.gov) or by phone at (402) 471-3065



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## Local Leader, Frank Turk, Recognized by The National Association of the Deaf

I ran into Dr. Frank R. Turk at the 2009 Nebraska Association of the Deaf Conference in Lincoln. He encouraged me to run for the presidency and I was hesitant for two reasons: I had a little experience with Board's duties and I was too young. Frank didn't care. Today, I have been serving NeAD for a third term and I am grateful I took his advice. I am one of the countless leaders Frank has been building in his lifetime.

Frank has had a tremendous career as an educator, administrator, coach and advocate for Deaf and Hard of Hearing youth. He is well known as the "Father of Deaf Youth of America" because he founded two successful camps: Youth Leadership Camp (YLC) and the National Leadership and Literacy Camp (NLLC). To build a stronger community, he emphasizes the importance of intergenerational leadership. He strongly believes in having leaders of all ages engaged in the community by working collaboratively to obtain greater resources.

Recently the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) hosted its leadership training conference in Omaha. The NAD made a special recognition at the opening ceremony for Mr. Turk by establishing a scholarship fund named after him: Frank R. Turk Scholarship. This fund will provide financial aid for high school students who are interested in attending to YLC. Your donation can make a difference in the Deaf community by developing our future leaders. To make a donation, contact Allie Rice at [allie.rice@nad.org](mailto:allie.rice@nad.org).

-Jonathan Scherling, President of the Nebraska Association of the Deaf



## Interpreter Review Board Chairperson Recognized For His Work

Mr. Gary Theiler was recognized by NCDHH staff and Executive Director for his tireless work as Chairperson of the Nebraska Interpreter Review Board. As Chairperson, he oversaw the process of making proposed changes to the Rules and Regulations Relating to Sign Language Interpreters. This document outlines the legal responsibilities and expectations of licensed interpreters and transliterators.

# Omaha Fire Department Developing Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detector Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing



The Omaha Fire Department (OFD), working with Mayor Jean Stothert's office met with NCDHH staff members, Beth Ellsworth, Peggy Williams and Ben Sparks to establish a program to distribute accessible smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

“The Omaha Fire Department recognizes that there are community members that we are not able to reach with our current smoke/carbon monoxide detector program. Those individuals in the community that are deaf or hard of hearing may be unable to be alerted by a traditional device. This places them at greater risk of death or injury from a fire.”

Captain Melanie J. Bates, working closely with Fire Chief Bernard Kanger, has taken the lead, developing this program because of a single phone call. Roman and Lina Kogan are both Deaf. Recently, the Kogans and their two children, ages 1 and 3, woke up feeling sick. Roman discovered he had left the family's SUV running in the garage, leaking dangerous levels of carbon monoxide into their home. This incident could have been deadly.

The Kogans called the Mayor's Hotline, asking about resources to equip their home with detectors. The hotline staff worked with the Omaha Fire Department and NCDHH to develop a plan to obtain and install this life-saving equipment.

**Program is entering a “Needs Assessment” phase and needs your information. If you are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, living in Omaha, and need specialized equipment, let OFD know by going online to [www.omaha-fire.org](http://www.omaha-fire.org) and filling out the short Needs Survey.**



## National Association of the Deaf Leadership Training Conference: Defy Expectations; Achieve Feats!



What a success! With over 150 people in attendance, people left the NAD National Leadership Training Conference (NLTC) with tools and tips to bring back home.

The Conference had fostered the enhanced development of leadership within state associations, entities, and corporations. NAD's mission was to provide guidance and support to the deaf and hard of hearing community to take on society's challenges and succeed in a more equal and accessible world.



Richard McCowin  
NAD Region II  
Representative

To achieve our desired feats, we must defy the expectations that have been imposed on us by a society that does not always have the best understanding of deaf and hard of hearing people. We must learn to lead not only ourselves, but also lead society before they can view us with respect and equal standing.

Corporations and agencies can expect their employees to have a better understanding of efficiency, effectiveness, and execution of duties as well as honing networking skills. State association and other nonprofit officers became familiar and comfortable with board governance, website and social media tools, financial management, reporting mandates, legislative and political advocacy, and membership recruitment. All participants benefited from essential diversity training crucial to every entity.

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### Board Members in the News

**Dr. Jan Moore, Professor in the College of Education at the University of Nebraska, Kearney campus,** was noted for her work and presented research information at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association national convention held in Chicago.

The title of her presentation “If God Can Hear Your Most Inner Thoughts, Why Are Praise Bands So Loud?” covers the topic of noise levels in churches.

According to the ASHA Press Release, “In the first known study of noise levels in church settings in the United States, researchers measured noise in three Protestant churches in Nebraska. Contemporary “praise band” church services, which are increasingly popular, feature more music and longer durations of continuous music than traditional services. Noise levels recorded on multiple Sundays consistently exceeded 90 decibels and topped 100 decibels at times—putting clergy, band members, and parishioners (including children and babies) at risk.”



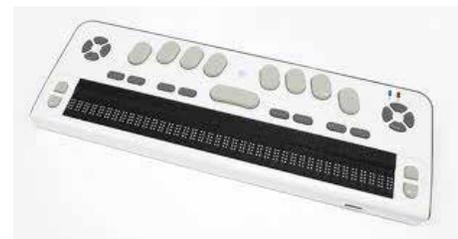
# iCanConnect

The National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program

Communication is essential for staying healthy, holding a job, managing a household and participating in the community. Modern technology has vastly expanded the way most people communicate through voice, data and video services. But for people who have combined vision and hearing challenges, special equipment may be necessary to make a phone call, send an email or access the Internet. The National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP), also promoted as “iCanConnect”, was mandated by the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 and established by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). NCDHH was selected to operate the equipment distribution program for low-income Nebraskan residents who have combined hearing and vision challenges.

The program provides outreach, assessments, telecommunications technology and training free of charge to those who meet the federal eligibility guidelines. Examples of telecommunications technologies include products that are available to the general public and may be accessible to individuals who have combined hearing and vision challenges or products that are adaptable through the use of specialized equipment; such as screen enlargement software, screen readers or braille displays. For additional information on types of equipment offered, please visit [www.icanconnect.org/equipment](http://www.icanconnect.org/equipment).

**If you are an individual who has combined vision and hearing challenges, or know someone who is, you may wish to explore our website at [www.ncdhh.ne.gov/deafblind/ndbedp.html](http://www.ncdhh.ne.gov/deafblind/ndbedp.html) or contact Kim Davis to inquire further about the program, qualification criteria and obtain an application. Kim can be contacted by telephone at (402) 261-2657 VP/V or (800) 545-6244 V/TTY or by email at [Kim.Davis@nebraska.gov](mailto:Kim.Davis@nebraska.gov).**



Official White House Photo by Pete Souza



## NCDHH Hires Two Field Representatives

Heather Pucket

Field Representative II



Greetings from North Platte, home to Union Pacific Railroad's Bailey Yard, the world's largest railroad classification yard, and the home of Buffalo Bill Cody's Scout Rest Ranch and Wild West Show!

**My name is Heather Pucket and I was hired as the North Platte Field Representative in September.** I am truly excited to begin my travels in Western and Central Nebraska to meet you. Right now, I would love to take this opportunity to tell you a little bit about myself. I was born and raised in North Platte. After graduating from high school, I attended Mid-Plains Community College in North Platte and later graduated from the University of Nebraska-Kearney with a Bachelor's degree in Social Work and a minor in psychology. After graduating, I returned to North Platte to work at Boys and Girls Home of Nebraska as the Supervisor of the Staff-Secured Shelter, Treatment Group Home and Community-Based

Services. Later that year, I married my wonderful husband and we now have two middle-school aged children that keep us extremely busy with their activities. We love to spend time together attending church activities, camping, cooking and our weekly family tradition consisting of movie night every Saturday with pepperoni pizza and root beer floats. On a personal note; I love to garden, scrapbook and work on the genealogy of our families.

For the past sixteen years, I have had the opportunity to work closely with children, families and a vast variety of community resources all across Nebraska. This includes nearly ten years of experience with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services as a Child Protective Service Worker and Child Support Enforcement Worker. Both of these positions have provided me with extensive knowledge of the social service system and the legal system, which broadened my vision of what social work means. In addition, I have worked with organizations (in a volunteer role and paid positions) such as the Frontier County Attorney's Office, Richard Young Psychiatric Hospital, Rape/Domestic Abuse, Head Start and Hospice.

All of these experiences, personal and employment-based, have truly formed me into the person I am today. I have a strong passion to help others, an open ear, the gift of gab and I openly invite a new challenge. So when I was given the opportunity to work closely with the deaf and hard of hearing communities in Nebraska, I said, absolutely!!

I am so very excited to expand my knowledge of hearing loss and the deaf culture. I am already learning day by day, but I truly hope all of you will be a part of my education. Tell me stories about you and your hearing loss... Tell me what tools you need to feel successful... Tell me how I can best advocate for you... Correct me if I sign something incorrectly (because I most assuredly will).

With your help and my years of social work experience, it is my hope that I will be beneficial to you and your loved ones for many years to come. I truly look forward to providing assistance and anxiously anticipate meeting each and every one of you. Please feel free to call me at (308) 535-6600 or by email at [Heather.Pucket@nebraska.gov](mailto:Heather.Pucket@nebraska.gov) if I can be of assistance. See you soon!

## Board Meeting Schedule

NCDHH invites you to attend our Board meetings. These meetings are open to the public. This is an opportunity to provide feedback, input and participate in NCDHH decision making. We look forward to seeing you! Agendas can be found online at [www.ncdhh.nebraska.gov/boards.html](http://www.ncdhh.nebraska.gov/boards.html).

### Full Commission Board:

**March 14**, 8:30am-2:00pm, Lincoln Medical Education Partnership Building  
4600 Valley Road, Classroom 4A  
Lincoln

### Nebraska Sign Language Interpreter Review Board:

**February 7**, 1:00pm-3:00pm, Lincoln Medical Education Partnership Building  
4600 Valley Road, Classroom 4A  
Lincoln

### Mental Health Advisory Committee:

**February 11**, 2013, 2:00pm-4:00pm, Omaha State Office Building  
1313 Farnam  
Classroom E  
Omaha

## Brenda Chappell Field Representative II

First of all, I want to thank you for giving me a warm welcome at NCDHH and offering me encouragement and support. I am looking forward to working at NCDHH as a Field Representative II in Omaha. Let me introduce myself.

**My name is Brenda Chappell.** I am an alumna of Nebraska School for the Deaf and a Gallaudet University graduate with a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and Master's in Deaf Education. Upon graduation, I became a teacher for Bravos Valley Regional Day School for the Deaf Program in Bryan, Texas, working there for 5 years. Then I returned to Nebraska and worked as an ASL Instructor at Southeast Community College in Lincoln and later became a Residential Counselor at Iowa School for the Deaf for 7 years.



I am very involved in the Deaf community. I was a secretary for Nebraska Association for the Deaf (NeAD) and currently serve as a second-term secretary for Nebraska School for the Deaf Alumni Association (NSDAA). I am on a few committees for Heartland Deaf Abuse Advocacy Service (HDAAS). I also volunteer for Nebraska Deaf Heritage Museum and Cultural Center (NDHMCC).

There is one certain thing I like about myself – I like to smile for no reason. I am called “Sunshine” by some people for I bring sunshine into their lives. I always close my message with “Make a good day!” because I believe that we can make something good happen instead of waiting for it to happen. I am eager to offer and continue my service to Deaf and Hard of Hearing community and beyond.

## NCDHH Provides Opportunity For Growth To Sign Language Interpreter Intern



-Allison Hay,  
Student at Iowa Western  
Community College

The last 8 weeks of my semester at IWCC is spent in practicum. I remember Mrs. Cool and Mr. Welsch pulling me out of class to tell me Ben Sparks from NCDHH was looking for a mentee and it was going to be me. I was the first name that popped into their heads when they read Ben's email. Keep in mind, I had heard of NCDHH and I knew it was a referral agency so I was not sure of my responsibilities. Would I be doing community interpreting, office-work? What were my expectations?

My first day there I was nervous. No one could give me a definitive answer as to what I would be doing for 8 hours a day. I can tell you though that the highlight of my week was the 8 hours I spent at NCDHH working with Ben. My other practicum site was a school setting, very monotonous. I looked forward to Tuesday; not knowing what my day would bring me, and taking each hour in stride.



Not only did I have opportunity to get my hands in the air and do some interpreting, but also I received first hand knowledge of the interpreting career and what goes on behind the scenes. I knew after each interpreting assignment Ben would ask me, "Any questions or concerns about what you just did?" He always opened up the opportunity for discussion and gave me a chance to talk about my work, the specific situation, what could have been done to better the interpreting, and what I did well for that situation.

I never could have foreseen the wonderful opportunity I was given from Ben and the NCDHH staff. I left every day with encouraging words and areas for improvement. I was able to sit in on a mental health quarterly meeting, participate in a discussion of QAST and the future of Nebraska testing with the Director of NCDHH, interpret for members of the Deaf community, and work alongside an amazing mentor.

### NCDHH Board Approves New Logo

At the September 13, 2013, Board meeting, Commissioners voted to approve the use of a new logo. The logos were designed by the University of Nebraska, Kearney, as part of a multimedia senior level project. Dr. Nanette Hogg's multimedia class made a presentation to NCDHH Board and staff members outlining work they completed as part of their class. Prior to approval of the logo, design changes were recommended by the Board.





## The Nebraska Arts Council Provides Grants to Help Pay for Interpreting Services

Signers for the Arts grants provide non-matching grants of up to \$250 to Nebraska organizations to hire licensed ASL sign language interpreters for arts events. The grant helps underwrite the cost of licensed interpreters for arts events such as live music, dance or theatre performances, cultural events and exhibits at museums or other venues.

# Signers for the Arts Grants

Priority will be given to organizations and communities that might face challenges regarding access to arts or cultural programs due to geography, economic conditions, ethnic background or disability.

For more information on how your cultural venue can apply, please refer to [www.nebraskaartscouncil.org](http://www.nebraskaartscouncil.org) or call Deborah Bunting or Nicole Van Zante at (800) 341-4067 or in Omaha, call (402) 595-2122.

**Nebraska Commission for the Deaf (NCDHH) is making a concerted effort to clean up the agency's database of registrant contact information. Please take a moment now to provide us with an update of your contact information.**

**To receive the newsletters by e-mail**, please send an email to [ncdhh@nebraska.gov](mailto:ncdhh@nebraska.gov), asking to be added to the e-mail newsletter mailing list.

**To receive the newsletter by US Postal Service**, please contact us by phone or email. Ask to be added to the USPS newsletter mailing list. Include your name, company name, and mailing address. You may also use the Registry Form found on page 15.

- Call NCDHH 800-545-6244 or by video phone (VP) call (402) 325-1068 and ask to be kept on our mailing list
- Send an email to [ncdhh@nebraska.gov](mailto:ncdhh@nebraska.gov) – Be sure to include your full name, mailing address.

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**The E-Communicator**  
Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

## NCDHH Mental Health Specialist Update

By Peggy Williams



As many of you know I served as the NCDHH Interim Director following Dr. Pete Seiler's retirement from July 1, 2013 – October 18, 2013. I would like to thank Dr. Seiler and the NCDHH Board for having the confidence in me to carry out the duties of an Interim Director for the Commission. As a long term employee of the Commission, it was great being involved again with all the programs and services that NCDHH provides.

Below is a list of the tasks I accomplished during the interim, however, this list is not inclusive:

- Assisted in developing ideals for use of the agencies 2013 carryover funds.
- Prepared for the September 13, 2013 Full Board Meeting
- Conducted an all day workshop for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing on Sept. 28 on Consumer Fraud, Advocating for Yourself and Improving Your Financial Awareness in Omaha.
- Met with Disability Rights Nebraska to discuss LB 39.
- Met and made recommendations to the VR committee regarding the VR Focus Group results conducted by NCDHH.
- Made recommendation to the NCDHH Full Board at the Sept. 13th Board meeting to consider changing the Temporary Part Time Administrative Assistant position in Omaha to Permanent Part Time. Board approved.
- Monitored staff, programs and NCDHH services on a daily basis.
- Coordinating the establishment of a distance learning sign language class with Mid Plains Community College in North Platte. I am still in the process of working on this.
- Assisted NCDHH staff member responsible for the Deaf-Blind equipment program with organizing and implementing the program.
- Made changes to the NCDHH Board Handbook
- Certified payroll every two weeks/Approved time sheets/approved leave requests from staff
- Met with Southeast Community College in Lincoln and made recommendations on implementing an effective way in having Deaf/Hard of Hearing students request interpreters for classes.
- Prepared information packets for the new Executive Director

John Wyvill began as the NCDHH Executive Director on Monday, October 21, 2013 and as he stated to me several times before he began, "I am going to hit the ground running" and he has done just that. John's creativity and his sincere passion for people who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing is obvious. With John's leadership and enthusiasm services for people who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing will continue to grow and improve.

Even though I continued to do as much as possible with my duties as the Mental Health Specialist, some things were put on hold. I have now returned to my position and am working diligently on new projects and programs for 2014. These projects/programs include conducting a Regional Mental Health Workshop for Interpreters, creating a DVD to be sent to Nebraska Mental Health and Substance Abuse providers on "Treating People who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing" and producing a one-hour educational program on hearing loss that will be aired in May. This program will be divided in to 2 categories; Early Identification, Technology and Noise Induced Hearing Loss.

## “Boss of the Month” Program Established

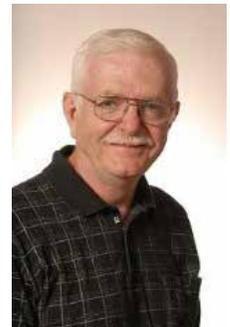
By Ben Sparks

Executive Director, John C. Wyvill, established the recognition program “Boss of the Month” in an effort to highlight NCDHH stakeholders who make a difference in the lives and communities around them. Each month, Mr. Wyvill and NCDHH staff will select a recipient from a list of nominations made by Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities. The recipients will be chosen based on their character and the impact they make in working to achieve equality and opportunity in social, educational, vocational and legal aspects impacting the daily lives of Nebraskans, a mission of NCDHH.

**If you would like to nominate someone in your community, please contact Ben Sparks, Interpreter/Program Assistant, by email [ben.sparks@nebraska.gov](mailto:ben.sparks@nebraska.gov) or by phone at (800) 545-6244.**

### November, 2013 Mr. Albert Sparks

Mr. Albert Sparks is there whenever you need him. Whether it is volunteering to spend time with a Deaf person who is lonely, teaching someone to use a video phone or doing international Deaf Missionary work. Mr. Sparks never says “No” and embodies the spirit and dedication we should all strive for every day. Congratulations to Mr. Sparks.



### December, 2013 Ms. Tami Richardson-Nelson

Ms. Richardson-Nelson is a very active leader in the Deaf community. She has worked to help organize the first domestic violence/sexual assault committee for the deaf and is always available to help out when something is needed to be done. Currently Tami has established a committee to study the educational needs of deaf children in Nebraska and advocating to ensure Deaf people have access in the medical setting.



## NCDHH Field Representative, Ms. Kim Davis, Attends NAD Leadership Training Conference



The National Association of the Deaf recently hosted the Leadership Training Conference (NADLTC) from October 3 – 5, 2013 in Omaha. The conference provided attendants a diversity of workshops that revolved around the conference's theme on defying expectations and achieving feats within the social, educational, vocational and legal aspects; all of which impacts our daily lives. Such conference or workshop opportunities like this are great ways to gain or enhance one's personal and professional knowledge, skills and empowerment necessities. Moreover, events like this are hard to come by these days in comparison to the common continued educational functions that are afforded to the general society we live in, especially ones that solely focuses on deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing population. Such as with the NADLTC, it's diversity of workshops touches the language revisions of state and federal statutes and regulations, outcomes of lawsuits filed in state and federal courts, noteworthy professional researches or studies, success stories of effective leadership trends at the local, state and national levels, and networking avenues with the ever-so-evolving social media.

Some of the workshops of particular interest that I had attended were topics related the Deaf Education that covered the general relevant federal statutes and regulations; the consideration for a ASL-English Bimodal Bilingual Approach for early childhood education for families who have deaf or hard of hearing children ([www.bilingualece.org](http://www.bilingualece.org)); the new national legislative and educational campaign that seeks to end the common language deprivation that deaf children experience before entering kindergarten (websites pending: [www.asl4kids.org](http://www.asl4kids.org) and [www.standforASL.org](http://www.standforASL.org)); and a doctoral research on the national, state and local policy and organizational development of educational practices and academic achievement for deaf and hard of hearing children. Other workshops attended discussed the diverse community we live in and how to work effectively with various groups of individuals who are not only deaf, deaf-blind or hard of hearing but of a diverse background in education, ethnics, nationality or family values; and enhancing communication tactics and techniques through the use of the ever so growing social media (recommended book "101 Social Media Tactics for Nonprofits: A Field Guide" by authors Melanie Mathros and Chat Norman through Wiley Publishing, 2012).

Lastly, and most importantly, on one of the NADLTC event schedules worth mentioning here is about a nationally known true-to-heart highly respected leader and cherished now-Nebraskan resident. During a welcoming reception, a scholarship program was established in honor of Frank R. Turk who is also known as the "Father of the Deaf Youth of America." Mr. Turk has communicated his leadership principles to the nation's schools and programs of the deaf and hard of hearing, adult and youth organizations, and deafness-related educational groups for over 50 years. He has served as national director of the JrNAD, 1966-1980, and NAD Board member, 1968-1974. Along with Gary W. Olsen in 1969, he co-founded NAD's Youth Leadership Camp (YLC). The YLC program emphasizes intergenerational relationships especially designed to eliminate the common self-defeating behaviors and transform these behaviors to self-confidence and self-esteem. The ultimate goal is to develop the young people as the future leaders of our Deaf America. Mr. Turk speaks of intergenerational leadership and stresses the importance of and need for purposeful joining of adult and youth groups to create a positive and productive community of deaf and hard of hearing generations. Additional information about the four-week long NAD Youth Leadership Camp (YLC) can be found at [www.nad.org/youthleadershipcamp](http://www.nad.org/youthleadershipcamp). Interested individuals or organizations who wish to donate to the Frank R. Turk Youth Leadership Scholarship may wish to visit NAD's website at [www.nad.org](http://www.nad.org).

## Accepting My Hearing Loss

-Beth Ellsworth, Field Representative II



Coming to accept my hearing loss happened gradually but two situations helped me tremendously!

“You never call me!”, I would exclaim to my friend Liz. She was trying to explain that she called me almost every day but I never answered the phone. To say I was defensive was an understatement. I argued with my friends because I denied my hearing loss and was extremely uncomfortable wearing my hearing aid. I felt no one would like me if they “knew” and so I faked it, pretending that I understood what they said.

My friend Liz finally quit arguing with me and bought a device where the light would go off to let me know the phone was ringing. She hooked it up and the next day she called me. “You finally called me,” I said as I picked up the phone.

“No, I’ve been calling you but you never answered. This time you saw that I called because the light flashed,” she clarified. I reluctantly admitted that she was right and a seed was planted in my mind. I began to accept that just maybe my hearing wasn’t the best.

I had a swimming class and I was always on the wrong end of the pool. Of course I couldn’t wear my hearing aid in the pool but I probably wouldn’t have anyway because I was in denial and didn’t have a hearing loss. Others just mumbled!

To solve the problem the teacher asked someone to volunteer to be my “buddy”. A girl named Teresa volunteered and for the rest of the class I kept up with my classmates and I gained a friend!

One day Teresa and I were walking to another class and she asked if my hearing aid was working for me. I blew up! “How do you know about my hearing aids?” I defensively replied. Shrugging, Teresa told me that her roommate worked at the campus audiology office and saw me there. She went on to say it wasn’t a big deal, she just wondered if my office visit was helpful.

I was afraid that Teresa would stop being my friend because I went to great lengths to hide my hearing loss but that didn’t happen. Another seed was planted for me. While I thought wearing hearing aids was shameful, I slowly began to realize that I was wrong.

I used to apologize for my hearing loss. When I didn’t understand something I would say, “I’m sorry, I have a hearing loss. Would you repeat that?” Now I am comfortable asking for what I need to be included in conversations.

As a Field Representative I enjoy working with people who experience a hearing loss or have no hearing. I also work with the public to promote understanding about what having a hearing loss is like. I’d love to hear your experiences. I look forward to hearing from you!

Beth Ellsworth  
402-682-7269  
Beth.ellsworth@nebraska.gov

## Ms. Peggy Williams, Mental Health Specialist, Celebrates 35 Years with Nebraska

Please join the NCDHH Board and Staff in thanking Ms. Williams for the outstanding work she has done to enhance access to services and increase awareness of Deafness and hearing loss issues for all Nebraskans.

Ms. Williams began her employment on April 24, 1978 with Services for the Visually Impaired, currently the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired as the agency receptionist. In 1979, Ms. Williams was promoted as the Deaf-Blind Coordinator/Orientation Counselor and continued in that position until June, 1981.

In an effort to pursue her interests in working with the Deaf community and becoming a professional sign language interpreter, she applied for a Field Representative position for NCDHH and was hired by Mr. Jaime Galloway, the Commission's first Director on July 1, 1981.

Since July 1, 1981, Ms. Williams has seen many changes in services, programs and technology for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing that have been exciting to see. Ensuring that access to services and programs and advocating for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people will continue to be an area that Ms. Williams wants to see continually grow and strengthened in the State of Nebraska.

In 1984 while discussing mental health issues within the Deaf community with Dr. George Propp, he indicated to Ms. Williams that if you are deaf, living in Nebraska and have a mental health issue you need to move out of the State of Nebraska which was very disturbing to her. Ms. Williams went on to work on establishing the first substance abuse treatment program in Lincoln in 1985 and wrote Legislation on creating mental health services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nebraskans. In 1995, Governor Ben Nelson signed in to law LB 25 ensuring full access to comprehensive mental health, alcoholism, and drug abuse services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people. Ms. Williams took over the Mental Health Specialist position for NCDHH in 1999 and continues to ensure that equal access to services in the behavioral health settings as well as providing advocacy services and training.

She will continue to advocate for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people even after retirement! She doesn't just see what she does as her job, but as her passion. The Commission has been her home for many years, and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing have been a very important part of her life and embraces this population as her extended family.



# Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing



4600 Valley Rd Ste 420  
Lincoln NE 68510  
Toll Free – 800-545-6244  
Video Phone – 402-261-2670  
E-Mail – ncdhh@nebraska.gov



## Registry of Persons with Hearing Loss

Section 71.4728(5) of the Revised Statutes of Nebraska requires the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) to conduct and maintain a voluntary census of Nebraska citizens who have a hearing loss. **All information provided to the Commission on this form will be held strictly confidential.** Please return this completed form to the address given above. If you have any questions about this form, please contact our office between 8:00 am – 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday (*closed on state holidays*).

**Please Print Clearly**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Year of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Video Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Texting Y / N

### Do you consider yourself?

- Hard of Hearing       Late Deafened       Deaf       Hearing       Deaf/Low Vision
- Hard of Hearing / Low Vision       Speech Impaired       Other (Specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Yes                      No

Do you have a Cochlear Implant?      

Do you use a Hearing Aid?      

Would you like to receive the NCDHH newsletter and announcements  Yes  No

### Would you like more information on:

- NE Specialized Telephone Equipment Program (NSTEP)       Equipment Loan Program
- Sertoma Hearing Aid Bank Program       Media Loan Program
- Lions Hearing Aid Bank Program       Mental Health Services
- Interpreter Referral Program       Presentations or Training
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### How did you hear about our program?

- Friend       Health Clinic       Internet       Referred by another State Agency
- TV/Radio       Newspaper       Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Registering with NCDHH helps the Commission make better planning decisions and improve services.

**Thank You!**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Staff Member: \_\_\_\_\_



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## Change Service Requested

Is this address correct? If not,  
please let NCDHH know.  
Thank you for your help.

### Submit an Article Idea!

**NCDHH welcomes ideas and articles for consideration and insertion into future issues of the newsletter.**

Please submit articles to:

**NCDHH Newsletter Ideas  
4600 Valley Road, Suite 420  
Lincoln, NE 68510-4844**

or e-mail them to:  
[ncdhh@nebraska.gov](mailto:ncdhh@nebraska.gov)

Articles submitted are not necessarily the views of NCDHH. The NCDHH newsletter is published four times annually.

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