



MONTHLY BULLETIN

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 6

JUNE 2008

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

DEAFBLIND AWARENESS WEEK

In 1984, President Reagan declared the last week of June as "Helen Keller Deafblind Awareness Week" This action was taken as a result of a joint Senate and House resolution. In his proclamation, President Reagan explained why having a Deafblind Awareness Week is so important:

"Inadequate education, training and rehabilitation for those who are deaf and blind may prevent these Americans from becoming independent and self-sufficient, thereby greatly limiting their life potential and imposing a high economic and social cost on the Nation.

We must prevent such problems among our deafblind citizens by fostering their independence, creating employment opportunities, and encouraging their contributions to our society."

In closing, Reagan recognized the anniversary of the birth of Helen Keller, "America's most renowned and respected deafblind person." He called on Americans to allow her accomplishments serve as a beacon of courage and hope for our Nation, symbolizing what deafblind people can achieve.

Many organizations throughout the United States continue to recognize Deafblind Awareness Week by hosting various programs and events. One such organization is the Helen Keller National Center. For more information about Deafblind Awareness Week, visit <http://www.hknc.org/Nancy%20holding%20place%20old%20files/DBA/DeafBlindAwarenessWeek.htm>.

For more resources about deafblindness, visit <http://www.odhh.maryland.gov/resources.asp> and click on "Deaf-Blind."

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Hello again! It has been a true pleasure getting to meet many of you over the past few months. I have been honored by the warm and welcoming attitudes from so many of you in the community – both constituents and professionals alike. I am truly impressed with the commitment and perseverance each of you brings to the work you do.

It is this same diversity and openness that has allowed Maryland to once again provide such an incredible opportunity to our deafblind community. The deafblind camp, held from June 15th through June 20th at West River Camping Center, is a perfect example of how committed and creative our community is. On behalf of the Governor, I would like to thank each volunteer for the hard work you have done in planning, coordinating, and financing this event to make it so wonderful.

I am humbled by the hard work, dedication, creativity and determination that each of you bring to assisting Maryland in attaining its goal that all Maryland citizens who are deaf, hard of hearing or deafblind should have equal and full access to resources, services and opportunities for participation in all aspects of community life.

I look forward to meeting more of you in the days to come. I strongly encourage you to participate in our Town Hall meeting on June 24th at the West County Area Library in Odenton from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm. It is your voice, your commitment and your dreams that make Maryland the terrific State it is today. Thank you.

Lisa



ODHH

PROGRAMS

- *Awareness Training and Technical Assistance*
- *Constituent Services*
- *Community Outreach and Education*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

THE DEAFBLIND COMMUNITY TODAY 2

RECOGNIZING HELEN KELLER 2

DEAFBLIND SERVICES IN MARYLAND 3

STATEWIDE PANDEMIC FLU EXERCISE 3

ADA ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION 4

ANNOUNCEMENTS 4

THE DEAFBLIND COMMUNITY TODAY

Deafblind? What does this mean?

Most people imagine someone who is totally deaf and totally blind. However, the word “deafblind” describes a person who has both a vision loss and a hearing loss. Some people have little or no vision or hearing. Most deafblind people, however, have some useable hearing and vision. Below is a brief description of different people who have combined vision and hearing loss.

Rita is profoundly deaf and has Usher Syndrome, a genetic condition that combines retinitis pigmentosa and deafness. She needs people to sign to her in a small space near their mouths so she can see their signs better with her restricted vision.

Margaret is hard of hearing, and depends on speech and speechreading. She is gradually losing her hearing and vision as she gets older. She is now considering a cochlear implant to improve her hearing. She bought a CCTV to enlarge printed materials because she has difficulty reading regular print.

James is totally deaf-blind, uses braille for reading and relies on tactile signs for communication. He feels the signers’ hands in his own hands, and signs to others in the normal way, except for those who also use tactile signs.

Madeleine grew up as a blind person and started to lose her

hearing as an adult. She depends on speech and her residual hearing. She sometimes uses a personal assistive listening device so she can hear other people more easily.

Alex was born with auditory and optic nerve damage. He is hard of hearing and has low vision. He needs people to sign close up so he can see their signs more easily.

Gregory’s vision and hearing began to decline when he was an adult because of unknown causes. He still has enough vision to be able to speechread people and read regular print, but he is considering training in braille, sign language and independent living skills because he has been told he may lose more vision and hearing later.

As you can see, there are many combinations of vision and hearing loss that can lead someone to be labeled as “deafblind.” People who have combined vision and hearing loss are very diverse and come from a wide variety of social, educational and vocational backgrounds.

About the Author: Elizabeth Spiers is Director of Information Services at the American Association of the Deaf-Blind (AADB), a consumer advocacy organization for people with combined hearing and vision loss. For more information about AADB or about deafblind individuals, people can contact her at elizabeth.spiers@aadb.org, or visit AADB’s website at www.aadb.org. People can also contact AADB at AADB, 8630 Fenton Street, Suite 121, Silver Spring, MD

RECOGNIZING HELEN KELLER

Helen Keller was born on June 27, 1880 in Alabama. At the time of her birth, Helen could both see and hear. However, when she was nearly two years old, Helen became very ill. Though doctors cannot be sure of exactly what Helen’s illness was, some speculate that it was either meningitis or scarlet fever. The illness ultimately caused Helen to lose her hearing and her sight.

The story of Helen’s childhood is widely known. She was a difficult child prone to tantrums and bad behavior. Helen’s parents, desperate for guidance in raising Helen, sought the advice of a specialist in Baltimore. The Kellers were ultimately referred to the director of the Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind who recommended Anne Sullivan to teach Helen.

Anne began trying to communicate with Helen by

fingerspelling into her palm. Helen’s first breakthrough with language was when Anne pumped water over her hand while fingerspelling water into her palm. After her breakthrough, Helen progressed very quickly, learning to communicate through tactile signing and also learning to read Braille.



Recently discovered rare photo of Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan.

Helen attended the Cambridge School for Young Ladies and in 1900 began attending Radcliffe College, becoming the first deafblind person to enroll in an institution of higher education. She graduated in 1904.

After graduation, Helen began touring and lecturing with Anne. She wrote a total of twelve books in her lifetime. She also worked to raise funds for various organizations advocating for people who are blind. Helen eventually received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Lyndon Johnson. She died on June 1, 1968.

DEAFBLIND SERVICES IN MARYLAND

The American Association of the Deafblind (AADB), a national deafblind advocacy group, is housed in Silver Spring, Maryland. But Maryland is also home to many state-based organizations related to individuals who are deafblind.

Connections Beyond Sight and Sound is a partnership



between the Maryland State Department of Education and the University of Maryland, College Park. This project supports children in their home, school, and community by providing consultation, training and special programs, technical assistance to children, their families, and care providers. For more information, visit <http://www.cbss.umd.edu/>.



Metropolitan Washington Association of the Deafblind is a social, nonprofit

organization of, for, and by deafblind people. Its purpose is to encourage, recognize, and promote the needs of deafblind people in the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area in the areas of economic security, social equity, access to communication resources, and privileges as citizens. For more information, visit <http://nonprofit.deafvision.net/mwadb/>.



Baltimore Association of the Deafblind is a social organization serving the Baltimore-Metropolitan area. Most of their events are based out of the Christ United Methodist Church of the Deaf, however, they have hosted bowling events, outings to amusement parks, and visits to museums. For more information, visit <http://www.baltimoredeafblind.org/>

STATEWIDE PANDEMIC FLU EXERCISE

From June 17-19, Maryland will host a Statewide Pandemic Influenza (Pan Flu) Exercise. The goal of the exercise is to test the expertise and capability of several components of the healthcare system to adequately identify and respond to unusual work and patient loads during a pan flu outbreak. But we need your help!

First, it is important to understand what the pan flu is. A pandemic is a global disease outbreak among humans. An influenza pandemic happens when a new virus, for which there is little immunity to, begins to cause serious illness and then spreads easily person-to-person worldwide.

A pandemic may come and go in waves that can last for six to eight weeks. An especially severe influenza pandemic could lead to high levels of illness, death, social disruption, and economic loss. Everyday life would be disrupted because so many people in so many places become seriously ill at the same time.

In order to test Maryland's readiness to handle a pan flu outbreak, several counties are in search of volunteers. This is where we need your help! Several entities are seeking volunteers who are deaf and hard of hearing to test their staff's ability to handle communication barriers during a pandemic outbreak. Below are the details for volunteer opportunities in Maryland:

University of Maryland Medical Center

Date: Tuesday, June 17, 2008

Time: 8 AM – 3 PM (lunch will be provided)

Location: Baltimore City – Corner Penn St. and Lombard (Tent structure)

Details: Contact Sharon Kellogg at skellogg@umm.edu, Pre-registration required.

Union Hospital of Cecil County

Date: Wednesday, June 18, 2008

Time: 9 PM – 5 PM

Location: Union Hospital of Cecil County, 106 Bow Street, Elkton, MD 21921

Details: Union Hospital is recruiting volunteers to provide a realistic scenario for Cecil County's first responders. Volunteers will be mock victims and go through treatment, sheltering and off-site hospital care.

Howard County, Hammond Village

Date: Wednesday, June 18, 2008

Time: 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

Location: Hammond Middle School, 8110 Aladdin Drive, Laurel, MD 20723

Details: Preprinted screening forms will be given to all Hammond Village households in advance of the exercise date; Head of household representative will come to the middle school at the appointed time. Forms will be screened for type and number of antiviral medication courses; participants will leave with fake medication. (Household information will be entered into a CDC Program.)

Please consider participating in this important and worthwhile event. If you have any questions, please contact Julie Anne Schafer, jschafer@gov.state.md.us or JoAnne Knapp, jknapp@mdod.state.md.us.

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF THE
DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

217 East Redwood Street, Suite 1300
Baltimore, MD 21202

Voice: 410-767-6290

TTY: 410-767-7756

Fax: 410-333-1016

E-mail: odhh@gov.state.md.us

Martin O'Malley

Governor

Anthony G. Brown

Lieutenant Governor

Lisa H. Kornberg

Director

Julie Anne Schafer

Editor

WWW.ODHH.MD.GOV

ODHH ON THE MOVE

June 2008

*National Counselors of the Deaf Association
Conference*

June 18-21

Gallaudet University
Washington, DC

Six Flags Deaf Awareness Day

Saturday, June 21, 9 AM—4:30 PM

Six Flags America

Bowie, MD

*Maryland Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard
of Hearing Meeting*

Tuesday, June 24, 2 PM—5 PM

MD Department of Transportation—BWI
Hanover, MD

ODHH Town Hall Meeting

Tuesday, June 24, 6 PM—7:30 PM

West County Area Library
Odenton, MD



July 2008

Howard County Commission on Disabilities
Monday, July 21, 6:30 PM—8:30 PM
Columbia, MD

ADA 18th Anniversary Celebration
Saturday, July 26, 4 PM—7 PM
The Music Center at Strathmore
Bethesda, MD

***ODHH will be closed on July 4, 2008 in observance of
Independence Day***



The mission of the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults (HKNC) is to enable each person who is deafblind to live and work in his or her community of choice. HKNC was authorized by an Act of Congress in 1967

HKNC operates a residential and training facility at its headquarters in Sands Point, NY. Support services for youth and adults who are deafblind, their families and the professionals who serve them across the country are provided through its system of field services.

The Regional Representatives of HKNC are located in ten offices across the country. They are responsible for assessing the needs of individuals, communities and states within their regions; developing strategies of collaboration, coordination, and cooperation to help meet those needs; advocating for those who are deafblind in local, state, national, and international forums. For more information, visit <http://www.hknc.org>.

JOIN IN THE CELEBRATION!



On Saturday, July 26, 2008, Maryland will celebrate the 18th Anniversary of the Signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act

(ADA), a major milestone in ensuring that more than 54 million Americans received the same basic freedoms – independence, access, freedom of choice and inclusion – as all Americans.

This year's anniversary, which will feature a special salute to disabled veterans in recognition of their contributions and support for the ADA, will focus on how far society has come in promoting the rights and empowerment of people with disabilities in their efforts to lead productive, meaningful and

independent lives.

Held at The Music Center at Strathmore, 5301 Tuckerman Lane in North Bethesda from 4 – 7 p.m., the 2008 celebration will feature a reception with light refreshments, keynote remarks and music in the Strathmore concert hall. The Mid-Atlantic ADA Information Center and the Maryland Technology Assistance Program, part of the Maryland Department of Disabilities, also will have special displays and demonstrations during the event.

Interpreter, CART and assistive listening devices will be provided on request. For more information, to RSVP or for other accommodations, call 410-767-3660 or 1-800-637-4113.