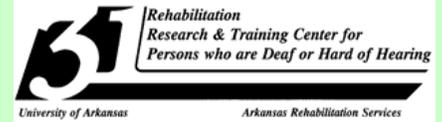




Selected Proceedings of ALDAcon 2004 “Green Mountain Odyssey”



Is Anyone There? **A workshop for starting an ALDA chapter** **Kathy Schlueter**

Kathy Schlueter: Hi. This is a chapter group interest. Start-up group interest. Basically, we are going to discuss some of the programs and optional papers that I can pass out to you. We will go through the pages so you can understand bit about what they are. There are several standard startup kits that I send out to people who contact me. The first thing is an introductory letter from me. That brochure gives the history of deafness and the purpose of ALDA, and the ALDA programs and the activities that are provided. It tells what the ALDA chapter is, where and how to find late-deafened adults, a list of resources, locating deaf individuals and increasing your membership.

I also include a group petition and a chapter petition, depending on which form you want to become. We recommend starting as a group because you need have only five people in your group and you're not required to have a board. When you get more established want to have a board, with a president and officers, we suggest that you send in a chapter petition. This requires yearly renewal. I usually process them and send them out.

In the packet there are a few other brochures to get you started. I also provide a complementary ALDA News.

Now, since we are such a small group, I'm going to ask you if you're in an area where would you be interested in starting a group because I need a chapter group interest list. If you tell me you are new and you give me permission to share your name or your e-mail contact, then I can share that with ALDA. If I don't have your permission, then I don't share. So that's why I get authorization from you to give out that type of information.

Maybe the person who is contacting me is willing to give her information. This I pass to a regional director, who adds it to their list and we start building. I pass on the information that the regional director should introduce themselves to the new contact person, and follow-up behind me.

Audience Member: There are helpful things in here for us on our committees like finding new people. But my ideas are about publicity. Community news, for in the newspapers. She says go to the different agencies. I don't like that. Because most people with a hearing loss are not going to go to these agencies. They are alone.

Kathy Schlueter: So, let's do some introductions and find out what your concerns are.

Audience Member: I live in Miami, Florida. And we are having a hurricane and I'm worried.

Audience Member: I'm Sandy from California. I'm from the ALDA East Bay chapter and I live in San Jose. I discovered ALDA two years ago, and I love it. I would like to find out how to start a group in San Jose. I met a woman here, Ann MacClellan, who was the president of Silicon Valley chapter that busted, when she stepped down. No one wanted to step in and keep it going. She is going to put me in touch with people. I want to stay with the folks. I would like to get something together. I'm primarily attending your class because I'm also on the publicity committee. I have a lot of ideas that I don't like and I'm also on the fundraising committee. So finding people and getting what they are interested in is very important to me.

Now, I see right here, quickly, you are talking about going through agencies to find people. And I find that objectionable, because the kind of people I want are people who don't go to agencies. They are busy with their lives; they are busy working. They are lonely, they don't know there is anything out there to meet friends like themselves. But they don't want to give up what they have. You see? And I think we do that through advertising, through publicity, through -- community notices and posters and all over the place that people go, the YMCA, community centers, whatever is out there.

Audience Member: I'm Michael. I'm with the ALDA East Bay. Three of us here, Sandy, Roselle and myself are all in that organization.

We have a fairly good relationship with our regional director, Nancy Hammons. I help edit the newsletter and publish it, put it out in e-mail and paper copies and she gives us new leads to people. Our memberships run between 70-80 members. It peaks in the summer, about election time, and then it dwindles down. It bounces back at Christmas time when we have our Thanksgiving and Christmas party. We pick up 30 percent of our membership between January and May.

Starting a new chapter is the reason I'm here, to rejuvenate my interest and to try to pick up some new ideas.

Audience Member: We have no chapter or anything in Miami. The nearest thing is in Fort Lauderdale, and that is not really a chapter. I only lost my hearing three years ago. But I don't know any deaf people except when I come here. And I would like to at least start something.

Kathy Schlueter: Before you came into the room, we talked a bit about where you want to start. It seems like you would like to start out as a group, meet people. Socialize and have fun and not have a basic structure where your chapter bylaws require a board. That is wonderful, because the first way we started in ALDA, was just by a group of people meeting. It's a wonderful way to start for your area. And whatever works is going to be what is best for you.

I live in a rural area. I'm from a town of 500 people. So I started ALDA-Freeport five years ago. But because of my environment in the rural area, I find farmers are happy to receive the newsletter but not go to meetings. They're too busy. So a lot of times I don't see the faces. I do a little advocacy and public relations. I don't have a live group in attendance at my chapter, but we still advocate and we still go out and do presentations. We still say ALDA is here.

I also serve on the board of directors for the Center for Sight and Hearing and we have just developed and changed buildings. So now, as a board member and an ALDA chapter member, I'm kind of flipping hats. Because the Center has a hearing clinic, holds hearing tests and offers hearing aids, I have become the backup for Center clients to give them support. One minute I'm on the board of directors. Then I turn into the ALDA chapter, and then I turn into a Lion, because I'm part of the district 1-D that has built that building.

So, I channel myself to stay in the environment. And that's what happens when you are just beginning, starting a chapter. You have to introduce yourself to the public. You have to be willing to meet that agency and say I'm here. This is what I can offer your people. And go on from there.

And sometimes everything is not going to work each time. And so that is my role as chapter coordinator. You guys have to use some of my experience and know that you're going to get frustrated; you're going to get burned out. And my place is to be your sounding board.

You might say, "Kathy, it's not working for me. What can I try differently? I failed at this." You have not failed at anything. It's just not a perfect time for them. Also, it has to be within them to come out and say, "I have a loss. I need help. I want to talk with another and share my story."

So this is what you work on. And basically, a lot of times I go out and share my story about how I first became involved with ALDA.

So it takes time. It's not always going to work. But you just try one more thing. And we put together some of these notes and the past history. Try a membership drive. We just recently tried something, which was bad timing for some and good timing for others. So we tried it, but now we expanded that membership drive because it didn't work well for everybody.

So we went back to the board. I spoke with Nancy Hammond and I said it's not working for my leader, it's not enough time. We got an extension. So I go back to the drawing board and I say we will try again and you can work a bit harder.

So that's really it for the history.

Audience Member: You have a lot that I want. One thing is starting a new group, finding a few people to start -- a lot of the ideas. I read fast. I glanced through it. That's all very good. I don't know if there is anything in here yet, but I think being able to raise funds is important, too. And how do you support yourselves or get closed captioning, those kinds of things, for even a few people?

Kathy Schlueter: I guess I'm getting to the point where I'm not shy to ask for funding. But for ALDA Freeport, in the very beginning and still now, a lot of the materials, a lot that I give is coming out of my pocket. But then every once in a while I make a presentation and get a donation from the Lions, the local Dakota Lions Club, which I served as the first lady president in the Dakota Lions Club.

We have to close soon. Is there something that I'm not answering for you that you need from me today?

Audience Member: No. But I would like to make a suggestion to get more chapters started. I think that there are certain areas you should be aware of that should definitely have a chapter but maybe needs the National to get started, to find somebody. Like New York, Washington, D.C. I mean, how can they not have a chapter? You see what I mean? If you find somebody isn't coming to you to start a chapter, maybe there is a way you can find somebody there to get them started on starting a chapter.

Kathy Schlueter: Okay. But you can see right now that we offered a chapter workshop and we are very small. And even -- I'm offering to take the time to do a workshop, but you can see that, from our attendance, and -- and to ask -- okay. I think -- let's give feedback. Ask a board member or a chapter, myself, to do dual roles, automatically start one because I'm in that state, its way too much pressure. They can't do that. Because we are volunteers, there are so many things that need to be done, because we have to cover the whole area.

Audience Member: Maybe I could change that suggestion a bit. Maybe there is a way -- it's all about communications and publicity. I think we all have to find a way to enlarge this. Because I think ALDA has a lot to offer and more so than a lot of other groups that are existing. I really do.

Kathy Schlueter: Well it's hard, because everybody says, "I'm interested. I'm interested." But you've got to be willing to do the work behind it. I have sent out six chapter group kits this year. And I made contact with them. I haven't heard from them again. And I have to follow and chase them to do that, if they want to start a group.

But I can only go so far, and you're going to have to take the other end. I'm willing to talk; I'm willing to put the packets together. The Region Directors are willing to send it out and contact with you. But once you say you're interested, and then go totally silent is kind of telling us how interested you want to be.

Audience Member: You are involved with the Lions. I wonder what you think of a suggestion of finding new people by having our different members go around to the different organizations and make presentations to find people who are hearing-impaired.

Kathy Schlueter: I go to different organizations. Lions International support. They have hearing-impaired programs themselves. They have a free loaner system for hearing aids. So, it's a person to contact.

Audience Member: I think I could get enough people together to get started in a group. But my big concern is how am I going to get CART so we can communicate? Is there an agency that provides that? I was told in Boston that they have a state agency that is providing that CART free.

Kathy Schlueter: Let's not focus on CART. When I started my group, I used the LCD panel and used word processing, with just the keyboard and it went up. We all took turns typing. Also, I think some people have used the large print of TTYs. Parts of my meetings were all conducted with whatever I was going to talk about printed on an agenda and there were handouts. So, if you didn't understand me, you could follow me on paper. I didn't have CART right away.

Audience Member: But what if I can get a big enough group together the first time and I'll need CART, what then? Who is going to pay for that?

Kathy Schlueter: You've got to find a sponsor. You have to find somebody who is willing to donate. Ask your local Lions Club or the local Kiwanis people.

Audience Member: Do most of the ALDA groups have a sponsor?

Kathy Schlueter: No. I don't have a sponsor. But I go out and get the donations. And I don't do CART all the time for free. So, am I answering any of your questions or concerns?

Audience Member: I hardly know where to start. I feel like I need to get a core group together that will work with me. Right now, it kind of almost frightens me. I don't want to be one of the people that is silent that you never hear from again.

Kathy Schlueter: That doesn't bother me at all. If I don't hear from you, you're going to hear back from me to see if you're still interested, if you're having trouble. Don't feel shy or embarrassed, or anything. Because I'm more than willing to keep working with you and it's not a problem.

So I have a white piece of paper in there, if you want to give me your contacts. I hope I gave you some information and then if you have your contacts... Do the evaluation and you can turn them in and say this workshop was valuable, worth having. And do you think you want to have another type of workshop like this for next year. Thank you.

Kathy Schlueter, ALDA Past President 2000, lives in Dakota, IL. Kathy is a past recipient of the ALDA “Bob Hawley” Fearless Leader Award, ALDA’s President Award and has served on the ALDA Board of Directors for the past nine years. She is currently serving as the ALDA Chapter Coordinator, President of ALDA Freeport chapter, ALDA News Advertising Director, ALDA finance committee and board member for the Center for Sight and Hearing, Rockford, IL. She has also served as the President for the Dakota Lions Chapter 2002-2003.

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