

**SUPPORT SERVICES FOR A NEW NON-PROFIT**  
**TESS CROWDER**

TESS CROWDER: I'm going to begin with a video-tape. It is captioned, just so you know. The video tells you a little bit more about my organization. [Shows videotape] So that gives you a pretty good idea of the services we provide. This is our mission: to provide CART services and counseling and rehabilitation counseling and mental health. It's accessible counseling services. We have two licensed mental health counselors who specialize in working with people with hearing loss. They both are fluent in sign. One is late deafened who was hard of hearing for many years before she became deaf. She knows exactly what the experience is like since she's experienced it herself. The other licensed counselor is a hearing person. She is also a certified interpreter and fluent in ASL. For the clients who don't sign, we provide realtime captioning with our laptop or a laptop and a monitor for the counselor who has hearing loss. We type everything that is being said, which makes communication so much easier.

Without the CART, they would write notes back and forth and that takes forever. You can't freely express your emotions and easily communicate if you have to write down everything you need to say.

It now has an audiologist who is also a famous researcher and two certified CART providers, two licensed mental health

counselors, representatives from the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) and ALDA, two business consultants, a community activist, and a certified public accountant. It's a really nice, well-rounded board.

We provide CART services for other non profit organizations, such as ALDA and HLAA, both for their local meetings as well as for national conferences. Last year I was providing services but this year I'm presenting instead. We provide CART services for our state-wide [Florida] and local associations and other non profit organizations that can't afford to pay for CART services but need them.

We've also offered speech-reading classes in the past and counseling services. We provide them either at the counselor's private office or at a deaf service center and also at the Blossom School for the Deaf [Clearwater, Florida]. We do presentations about our nonprofit organization with the intention of raising awareness about CART services and the needs for people with hearing loss. We also conduct a two day crash course in Sign language and sensitivity issues. I do monthly Sign language classes for certain populations. After the Sun City Center Association meeting, we started monthly sign classes there. Not that they're going to be fluent in Sign but it eases communication on an every day basis. They learn the simple signs like /please/ and /thank you, /yes/and /no/, /right/ and /wrong/. Each month they learn just a little bit more, which they practice during the following month. As a group of

people learning, they can practice with each other.

We also had a wonderfully successful VA workshop for the Veteran's Administration. James A. Haley is the largest veteran's hospital in the country and that's where we started because it's in Tampa. We're in Tampa. We put on a one day workshop educating the vets about the different programs and services in the area.

We brought in members of HLAA and local support groups. We talked about the FTRI, the free telephones. The VA workshop also had a presentation on the psychological aspects of hearing loss. We did a presentation on assistive listening devices. The chief of Audiologist at the hospital talked about the services available right at the VA hospital. A lot of vets just don't know about services available for them.

We brought in Flo who has a store in Sarasota, Florida filled with assistive listening devices. She invites people into her store, educates them about her hearing loss and counsels them on what devices they might need or what fits them best. Many times people have to order an assistive listening device by mail and then try it out. Sometimes it can be returned, sometimes it can't. Whatever you get from Flo's store, you may try out for a couple of weeks. If it doesn't work for you, you bring it back and she let's you try something else.

Finally, I introduced representatives from the different associations and we just had a question and answer panel. It was a lot of fun. We laughed the whole time. Right now we're writing

grant proposals so we can provide these one day workshops in all of the VA hospitals in the state of Florida. The workshops will also be a model for the other hospitals in the country.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Are you just in Florida?

TESS CROWDER: Right. However, we could do a workshop anywhere if we had the money. We're always looking for funds. Our first pilot project at James A. Haley VA hospital was success, so we're hoping to build on that.

Last year, we had our first expo, the Communication Access and Technology Expo. We invited for profits and non profits throughout the area and throughout the state to come to our expo. We asked for profits for a \$250 donation, just to help cover the expenses for the refreshments and the CART providers and the interpreters. Aside from that, it was free admission, free refreshments, free workshops and free door prizes. It was a free mini convention and we have people coming to attend from all over the state of Florida.

We had workshops throughout the day. Our first workshop was about programs and services for people with hearing loss. We did communication strategies. We had a performance by the Blossom School for the Deaf. We had a presentation on the latest research on hearing aids and cochlear implants. My friend Flo came to do her presentation on the latest assistive listening devices. Our last workshop, called "Ask an Audiologist," was an audiology panel.

This expo was in 2010. We tried to keep each workshop down to 30 minutes but there was so much interest in the panel of

audiologists, we decided to extend that to an hour for this year.

On to our work in advocacy. One of our projects is to encourage all of the professional sports venues to provide realtime captioning. We started with the Tampa Bay Rays team. First, I got letters of support from all the different organizations throughout the state of Florida. Then, I met with the Rays. Next, I put together a proposal with Alternative Communication Services (ACS) to provide realtime captioning so the Rays would have an idea of the cost. We had another meeting to get the proposals from ACS and from the Jumbotron company. The Rays said they didn't have the money, that they are poor. I don't think the courts are going to agree with that. I also brought in testimonials where the Red Skins prevailed. They caption their games. I printed up an article from the NAD website that said how wonderful captioning professional sports is and how excited everybody was.

We were hoping the contact with the Rays would have been more positive and we could just encourage them to do the right thing. So far, that has not worked. Still, we have a few more plans to encourage them before threatening them with a lawsuit. I'm going to work with the National Association of the Deaf and together we're going to try to push them along.

I was talking with John Waldo about planning a grass roots town hall meeting and inviting all the different professional sports venues and all the hearing loss associations to attend. There would be talk about the ADA law and people expressing what they would

really like to see. Hopefully the sports venues will feel enough pressure that they will go ahead and comply.

Years ago when I was with the Deaf Service Center, they had a similar town hall event to which the different news stations were invited. News Channel 8 heard from all of the different people about the hurricane reporting. People with hearing loss see pictures on the TV with the high winds and the rain coming down and things are collapsing and they're asking, "Where is this happening? Is this here? Do I need to leave? Or should I stay? What's happening?" They had no idea.

That "town hall" event was very successful because Channel 8 became the first news channel to start live captioning for their news. Gradually it caught on and the other local news stations started providing captioning services.

We also started raising awareness about different hearing issues by volunteering to sign the national anthem at the Rays games. They put the signer not right next to the speaker but about six feet away. They have the signer filmed and up on the Jumbotron. That's brought a lot of awareness to the community.

Funny story: One of the times I signed the national anthem, I also signed God Bless America during the 7th inning stretch. I thought there wasn't a camera on me, just one on the singer.

When I finished signing, I got a text from my friend that said, "You were on national television!" It was a nationally televised game. I had no idea.

My non-profit organization, Communication Access, Inc, started up in 2008. It was the beginning of the downturn of the economy. Who would have known? We were incorporated in 2007 and had our first board meeting in September of 2007. We received our 501c3 in 2008 in February, and we had our first fundraiser in May of 2008. Really bad timing to start a nonprofit but we've survived and even raised some money. We also wanted to provide financial support for some other nonprofits that needed it. We donated for Walk4Hearing, for Advocure, Inc., which supports NF2 patients and fundraises for NF2 research. That's people with Neurofibromatosis. We also provide CART services for the Children's Tumors Foundation, also about NF1 and NF2.

have NF2.

Now, a little about fundraising. I started going to the University of South Florida because they have a non profit management certificate program. One of the things that they mentioned in one of the classes was, if you don't ask, then you're not going to get anything. I just recently made up donation cards. If you do ask, you have a 50/50 chance of somebody making a donation. The person donating writes in name, address, credit card information on one side and you have information about your organization on the other side. No bigger than a postcard. Just put it out there. You never know.

Somebody might just want to make a donation or have a lot of money and not want to say anything to anybody. Then that person

Might decide you have a really good organization and make a donation on the card. We also had holiday gift cards printed up that say a donation has been made in your honor.

I learned about GoodSearch.org. It's a search engine and if you have a non profit, you can register your non profit with GoodSearch. Then, you let all of your friends know you have done that. Any time they do a search using Goodsearch.org, a little money goes to your non-profit. It donates something like a penny a search. If you have a whole organization or many different organizations doing this for you, all those pennies add up.

Another idea for a fundraiser could be a charity cookbook. I came up with this idea because I have a group of friends who live in the area and every once in a while one of the girls has a champagne brunch with hors d'oeuvres. I thought we could put together a cookbook of our hors d'oeuvres with ads for some of the popular restaurants like Outback, Red Lobster and some others. Inside would be a coupon for a free appetizer or something from one of the cooperating restaurants.

I've talked about the University of South Florida.

Their football team is called the Bulls. We had an idea about running with the Bulls. I figured if I worked together with the University of South Florida, the student body president and the fraternities, they could take on the responsibility of the liabilities. They do similar functions, so I'm sure they're already aware of liability insurance. We'll get the cheerleaders to cheer

everybody on also.

Once we did a 50/50 raffle to wind \$10,000. raffle. It was a raffle to win \$10,000. We were going to sell 200 tickets, at \$100 a ticket. Convincing a group of ten from one organization to buy one ticket would be great. The odds of winning most lotteries are one in a number in the billions. Our raffle odds were one in 200. But, the economy was so bad we only sold 60 tickets. That brought in over \$3,000 for us. The winner was the Deaf Service Center that desperately needed this money, which was over \$3,000. So it was a win/win situation for everyone. You need to be careful with raffles, however. Check with the laws in your state. Also, it's Paypal's policy not to take raffle money.

We have our annual fundraiser, with a cocktail reception, a gourmet dinner, live and silent auctions, a band and dancing. We also have a comedy competition among a doctor, a lawyer, a priest, a rabbi and a politician. That was a joke right there. Each comic brings in all their friends so they can get the votes. We have sorority girls all dressed up in their gowns urging people to vote. "Vote for the lawyer, we'll give you a get out of jail free card. It's \$10 for a vote. Vote often, vote early. Vote for everyone." The local Supervisor of the Elections couldn't show up but we videotaped her saying to vote often, vote early, and vote for everyone. She had a good sense of humor. If anyone took her little clip out of context, she could be in trouble.

A friend of mind, Steve Yerrid, just published a book, *The*

*Making of the Championship Heart*. It's beautifully illustrated and makes a nice gift. He generously offered to give us a portion of the proceeds if you put in a special promotional code when you buy the book.

Your non-profit organization has to have a website. Make sure you list all the information on ways to make a donation. There are always outright gifts, cash and credit cards. Also mention memorial gifts and the charitable annuities and trusts. I don't know a whole lot about that, but we work with an attorney.

I have two businesses, a for-profit providing CART services which supports my non-profit, Communication Access. For years I applied for grants to fund more CART services, but I was not a 501c3. Communication Access is a non-profit.

Does anybody have any questions about the non-profit? Would anybody like a donation card? You can use it this as a model for your own organization.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: How has the turnout been on your Adjusting to Hearing Loss workshops? Good participation?

TESS CROWDER: When we were doing the single ones in the different towns without the exhibitors, it was really difficult to get the publicity out. Now that we're doing one for the year and inviting all the different exhibitors, they help advertise. Our first year had about 150 but we're expecting about 200 this year.

I'm also working with the Audiology and Speech Pathology departments at the University of South Florida. I also provide CART

services with my for profit, which supports my non profit. I provide CART services for the audiology and speech pathology classes for some students with hearing loss. They let me do a very brief presentation about my non profit. I asked for volunteers to help with the expo and over 45 people volunteered.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: You talked about this search engine. I didn't understand. Can you explain that some more?

TESS CROWDER: I think it is Goodsearch.com. You can sign up for that and it will ask which organization would you like to donate to. They have a list or you can put in a name and they will find it. If you put in "Communication Access, Inc," it will show up there and each time you do a search, it will make a donation to us.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Do you use Good Search as your search engine instead of Google?

TESS CROWDER: Yes. It's powered by Yahoo. Go there and it will tell you how to set up your home page for doing searches. So thank you all for coming. Thank you. If you want more information come and see me. Thank you, Brook and thank you for our interpreters.

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**Tess Crowder** is a certified CART provider and founder of Communication Access, Inc. She also is president of RealTime Communication Services, Inc., and has volunteered CART services for ALDA and HLAA conventions for many years. She also has conducted sign language and sensitivity seminars throughout the country.