“Well, Ma, he’s right you know. I know how you feel but these things happen. Get on with your life.”

“You do not know how I feel! For crying out loud! You have no idea how I feel. What’s the matter with you anyway! I don’t want to talk to you.” She turned to her bedroom, slamming the door behind her.

I didn’t think her finger was so bad, but I sure didn’t make things better.

She was always apprehensive that some physical defect might show up among her children because of the risk she and her husband took by marrying as first cousins, and she was already on edge because my younger brother Richard’s teacher and principal had called her in for a conference. She had tried to find out from Richard what he had done to trigger a parent conference; at eight years of age, what did he do that was so bad?

It was bad; it was the worst it could be. Evidently he had a serious defect. They claimed Richard had a hearing problem; they wanted my parents to recognize that he was a candidate to attend Mary E. Bennett School for the Deaf. They did not expect the angry reaction my mother had to such a suggestion. “What are you talking about? My son is not deaf. He gets distracted, that’s all. He hears when he wants to. You just need to get his attention.”

It required a series of meetings with the principal and teacher before my parents could be persuaded that Richard would not be able to do well at City Terrace Elementary School. He would be better served placed at the school for the deaf. With great

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ALDA NEWS

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Half page (7.5 x 4.5)..........................................$125.00
Quarter page (3.5 x 4.5)......................................$75.00
Eighth page (3.5 x 2.25).....................................$45.00

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During my hard of hearing years (which began in early childhood), I had an uncommon relationship with music. Although I could hear the melody and the beat and was thus able to appreciate the mood of music, I couldn’t recognize virtually anything I’d heard previously. I also couldn’t carry a tune or understand lyrics without speechreading. But I loved rhythm, I danced well, and I wrote poetry (which was my real music). My loss was the reverse of most, with normal hearing in the high pitches, which gave music a beautiful sound quality. When I reached 14, I decided that I wanted to take piano lessons, and an aunt who had played at Carnegie Hall said I had a good touch. Ironically, what caused me to give up the piano after a few years wasn’t my hearing loss but the fact that I was a terrible sight reader (perhaps because of having started instruction at a relatively late age). I was also an Elvis fan, but since I couldn’t understand the lyrics of his songs, my mother wrote them down for me (and that’s how I discovered that even normally hearing people can’t understand everything—she was never able to figure out some parts of “Heartbreak Hotel”). I got my first hearing aids after graduating from college, and music didn’t sound as good as before, perhaps because the frequency range was limited, but it was still enjoyable.

Unfortunately, my hearing loss continued to progress, eventually resulting in deafness. In 1998, I received a cochlear implant, which was a lifesaver in terms of interpersonal communication but less than impressive in its ability to deliver a high quality rendition of music. So at this point, I can’t really say that I appreciate music very much anymore, but I’m thankful to have had the opportunity to do so during my childhood.
At a recent holiday party, my friends and I played the “mitten” game. I’m not sure if that’s the correct name, but it involves a gift-wrapped package, a pair of mittens, a die, and a group of festive players. The die is rolled once by each player until someone rolls a 6. That person becomes the “unwrapper” and attempts to remove the package wrapping using only his or her mitten-covered hands. While this player is engrossed in that task, the other players continue to roll the die. The next person to roll a 6 then takes the package and continues the unwrapping efforts. And so the game progresses. The player who ultimately removes the last piece of tape and paper to reveal the gift is the winner and keeps the present.

Sounds simple enough, right? You figure that after a few minutes, the fumbling mittens will find a loose piece of paper and the unwrapper will tear the paper to shreds in true kid-on-Christmas-morning fashion, right? Wrong.

Consider that said package was wrapped by the hostess’ teenage daughter with meters of industrial-strength packing tape that would put UPS to shame. And further, consider that the gift was in the center of seven successively larger boxes, each box being wrapped more fiercely than one containing it. It was a unique recipe for both hysterical laughter and agonizing frustration.

After 30 minutes of desperate attempts with minimal success (only the outermost box had been opened), it was time to bend the rules and get creative. The obstructive mittens soon morphed into boxing gloves, the package becoming the victim of some vicious right hooks (stopping only when someone cried out that the gift might be breakable). Teeth became a new weapon, and a jagged bottle cap surreptitiously found its way into the mittens, providing much-needed ammunition. Finally, after nearly 90 minutes, the last specks of tape and paper were removed, revealing the elusive prize (a pair of candlesticks). The players’ collective sigh of relief could be heard miles away (assuming that the people living miles away were not deaf).

So where am I going with this? Well, for all its amusement and aggravation, there was a lesson to be learned in this game, one with which we, as late-deafened adults, are all too familiar. We don’t always fully appreciate what we have (in this case, the use of our fingers) until it’s taken away from us. Many of us can remember being able to hear. We know what we’re missing, and we recall being frustrated and unsure about what to do after losing our hearing but eventually fighting back. We seek the support of others in similar situations. We turn to the Internet for information. We use assistive technology. We learn to appreciate what we have. In essence, we do not let hearing loss defeat us.

Inside these pages you will find a variety of stories about supporting others, experiencing music, practicing self-advocacy, attending a first ALDAcon, trying out movie captioning, and more. If you especially enjoy one of the articles, why not contact the author and let him or her know? This newsletter wouldn’t be possible without the fine contributions of our writers.

Starting with the Spring 2013 issue, Terri Singer will be joining the ALDA News staff as an editorial assistant to provide much-needed help in recruiting articles. Many of you already know Terri; she is a dedicated and talented worker, contributing much time and energy to ALDA. Please join me in welcoming her on board.

Finally, as someone who lives near the Jersey shore, I’d like you to keep the victims of Superstorm Sandy in your thoughts. I have never witnessed such extreme physical destruction before. Entire homes have been blown or washed away, mom-and-pop shops have been flooded out of business, and beachside buildings have crumpled like pieces of paper. It will take a long time for many residents to rebuild, but like ALDAns, they will not be defeated.
My Appreciation of Music as a Hard of Hearing Person

By Chelle George

In 2002, I went to Burning Man for the first time. For those who don’t know what Burning Man is, it’s a hippie-ish art festival held in the northern Nevada desert once a year, right before Labor Day. An entire city is created for one week on a dry lake bed and then taken down. It has a creative flair with an anything-goes bent, and attending it let my own creativity soar. As a hard of hearing person with a moderate to profound loss, I found the burners to be patient and accepting people. I’ve attended for seven years and have many fond memories.

One of the attractions is the music, which is what I called techno. DJs take over the night with electronica. Lights flash and walls made of speakers blast away in the darkness as the masses dance on the dusty, cracked lake bed. I fell in love with electronica because it has a strong beat that I can follow, and much of it has no lyrics. That’s my kind of music, and I dance until I drop. I go right up to the speakers to feel the beat, which vibrates through my body, and I love the way the music feels.

I also have a collection of music from 60s, 70s and 80s, back when I still heard normally. From the 90s on, there was a huge gap until I found electronica and started collecting it too. A lot of hearing people I know call it noise or say it isn’t real music because it doesn’t involve a band, but it speaks volumes to me.

Last summer, I met a guy with two cochlear implants. About five minutes into the conversation, Burning Man came up and I said something about my love for electronica music. I’m used to being one of the few in my age group who likes it, and I didn’t expect to run into anyone else, at a hearing loss convention no less, who also liked it. It surprised us both.

This past fall he came through my end of the country (he lives on the east coast), and we spent some time together before he moved on. We toured Northern Arizona, the Grand Canyon, and Oak Creek Canyon, hiked in Sedona, and stayed in Jerome. As we drove around, instead of talking in the car—which is difficult to do for two hard of hearing people to do—we listened to my music and found out we both like the same kind of electronica, down-tempo (which is easy listening) and the full, hard pounding, dancing kind too. It was the pleasantest traveling by car I’ve done in years.

Our enjoyment of music didn’t stop there. That night, Jerome was getting ready for Halloween, a huge week where the town goes all out to celebrate. To start the festivities, a live band played at the only bar in town. We went, not knowing if we could enjoy it, but we wound up having a ball. Although we didn’t understand the lyrics, the drums and bass were just fine and the band was loud. We were the only two people dancing in the bar. Even though he heard more range in the music, thanks to his CIs, it was nice to share that part of my world with someone else who was also hard of hearing.

My hearing loss is progressive, and I know that music and dancing are going to be two of the things I miss most when my hearing takes the last steps to total deafness. I used to say that when that happened, I would go back to Burning Man to stand next to the walls of speakers again and feel the music. If I couldn’t hear it, I wanted to feel it. Thanks to traveling and dancing with my friend, I know music won’t be lost or only available at Burning Man. There are promises for the future.

Chelle lives in Salt Lake City but is originally from Southern California. She raised three children, became a grandma in November 2010, and enjoys skiing and traveling. She is active in the Hearing Loss Association of America and was co-chair for the local Walk4Hearing. She has a hearing loss blog at http://hearinglosspages.wordpress.com and can be contacted at livinglife.fullest@gmail.com. More information about Burning Man is at www.burningman.com.
“Show Us the Captions” Events Put the Focus on Movie Captioning

Last summer, ALDA-Chicago Social Chair Sarah Wegley declared November 2012 to be “Show Us the Captions!” month. On her blog, Speak Up Librarian, she initiated a theater captioning advocacy campaign that, with sponsorship by the Collaborative for Communication Access via Captioning (CCAC), ultimately spread across the United States and as far away as France, England, and Australia.

The Show Us the Captions! advocacy campaign had four main goals: (1) promote captioning to potential moviegoers who are unaware that their local theater has the service available, (2) demonstrate the real need for captioning to theater owners, (3) raise the general public’s awareness of inclusion and accessibility issues, and (4) show appreciation to the cinemas that provide access via captioning.

ALDA threw its support behind the campaign by including an ad in the ALDAcon program book and discussing the plan at the annual board meeting. Participation from ALDA members outside Chicago included President-Elect Mary Lou Mistretta organizing a group of eight in Boca Raton, Florida and President Brenda Estes coordinating a group of 12 in Virginia Beach. ALDA-Chicago held its event on November 17 at six theater locations, with a total attendance of 38.

Rebecca Herr of the newly formed ALDA group in Boulder, Colorado was scheduled to host an event on November 30.

Sarah is pleased to report that the United States had events from coast to coast, with representation in Vermont, Massachusetts, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Florida, Michigan, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Texas, Colorado, Utah, and California. The campaign was open to any individual or organization that wanted to participate. Organizations participating in addition to ALDA included the Hearing Loss Association of America’s Kansas City and Greater St. Louis chapters; the Hearing Loss Association of Pennsylvania; Deaf Counseling, Advocacy & Referral Agency (DCARA) in California; Utah-CAN; and Media Access Australia.

Captioning at these theater events was provided through either open captions or closed captioning devices. To make access like this possible, ALDA members and attorney John Waldo filed and won lawsuits in three states. November, with its emphasis on thankfulness and togetherness, was the perfect month to enjoy a social activity with family and friends and say thank you to those theaters that have made inclusion a reality.

An Update on Tom Davinroy

By Robin Titterington

With the help of a good friend I shall call “Nancy Drew,” I was able to get information on former ALDA president Tom Davinroy from his son, Dr. Thomas C. Davinroy, who reports that Tom just celebrated his 80th birthday and is doing quite well in a nearby assisted living home.

For those of you who never had the honor of meeting Tom, you missed a good experience. Few of us could measure up to the level of ALDA advocacy that Tom demonstrated. Driving his huge uh, RV (?) across the country, Tom was not shy about telling folks about his deafness or his love of ALDA. I’m sorry I don’t know the name of his vehicle, but after seeing it during his Atlanta stop, I can tell you it was nearly half the size of my house!

The first time I met Tom was after I became president-elect. Someone was going to pick us up at the Chicago airport for a Board meeting, and I was told that “he will be wearing khakis.” I thought it was odd that the other person knew what Tom would be wearing, but then I discovered he was keenly proud of his service in the Marines and wore his “casuals” every day.

Tom’s son told me that his dad was delighted to hear from a fellow ALDA man and that we can send cards to him at the address below:

Thomas B. Davinroy
518 W. Sycamore Circle
Louisville, CO 80027

Let’s send a lot of cards to someone who supported ALDA in so many ways!
My First Experience with Closed Captioning Glasses

By Tom Hagney

When my grandson asked to see the new movie, “Hotel Transylvania,” I decided that I was game if I could use some sort of closed captioning device. I looked for theaters near his home in north-west Albuquerque, New Mexico, particularly a Cinemark theater, since I have had good luck with their cup holder viewer system. However, the only theaters close by were Regal-owned, so I looked them up on their “Fandango” app on my Android phone. The listings for the theater at the Cottonwood Mall stated that closed captioning was available for all showings on all screens.

Being the skeptic that I am and having been disappointed in the past, I dropped by the theater the night before going to the show, I asked to talk to the manager, and connected with him immediately (nice gentleman). I introduced myself and explained my needs, and he said they used the Sony captioning glasses. I had never heard about them or used anything like this in the past, so he got a pair and demonstrated how they are programmed for movies on the different screens and how the glasses are positioned on the head (fitting over the user’s glasses if any are worn).

The next day, I obtained the closed captioning glasses. Captioning was not available for the previews (disappointingly). When the show started and the music began, a bright green set of music notes appeared in the bottom of the glasses, so I knew they were working. I had to play with the positioning of the lines of text in relation to my own bifocal glasses. (People who do not wear glasses should have an easier time finding a suitable position for viewing the text.) It also took a while for me to learn what position my head needed to be in.

During the show, I noticed that up to three lines of text appeared along the bottom of the captioning glasses. No matter how I moved my head, the captioning moved right along. I never missed a word even when turning towards my wife or grandson. I could close one eye and still see the captions with the other one. The captions did not get out of focus when viewed with both eyes at the same time.

Several lines of dialogue during the movie were not captioned. This was not a fault of the theater or the glasses. Apparently the film makers or the captioning service omitted those lines, either on purpose or accidentally, perhaps because of the speed of delivery of the dialogue during those segments of the film.

The only down side to the captioning glasses versus the cup holder viewing system was my wife can no longer view the captions if she misses something.

All in all, my experience with the captioning glasses was pleasant, and I definitely would use them again. I want to thank our advocates in ALDA for getting the movie theatres to make captioning available for people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Tom is 65 years old and was first diagnosed with a significant hearing loss at age 35, when he starting wearing behind-the-ear (BTE hearing) aids in both ears. His loss progressed over the years, and he received a cochlear implant in April 2011. He still uses a BTE hearing aid in his other ear. He retired as a forensic chemist with the Denver Police Department in 1997. Tom and his wife sold their home in 1999, purchased a motorhome, and have been living “on the road” for over 13 years, visiting all but two states and all but three Canadian provinces. He has been a member of ALDA for three years and attended ALDAcon in 2010, 2011, and 2012. His email address is tmhagney97@gmail.com.
Finding ALDA’s Heart and Soul at My First ALDAcon

By Carol Halla

Well, the dust has settled from ALDAcon 2012, but the memories are lingering in my heart! What a great time—and what an extraordinary collection of individuals. The Columbia, South Carolina location could not have been any more convenient for us. Since my husband, Bruce, and I live a mere 100 miles away in the Charleston area, how could we not go? And, even sweeter, I was there on behalf of Advanced Bionics to help out at their booth. That gave me the opportunity to meet with even more folks.

My very first impression upon check-in was one of being welcomed into the fold... I was even assigned a convention buddy to smooth the way and introduce me to some of the many people involved with putting the convention together. Cynthia Amerman and the whole Newcomers Committee were well organized and staffed with so many smiling faces. It seemed effortless, but we all know the hard work that goes into making that impression. As always, putting a face to a name on an email message is special.

As a first-timer, I had heard that ALDAcon is smaller, more intimate, and perhaps friendlier than some of the larger conventions. Beyond that bit of information, I really wasn’t sure what to expect, but halfway through the first day, I was getting a feel for just how special this ‘con is.

There was a wide variety of information and products for the convention goers, something for everyone, I think. I especially liked it that the convention floor closed for each meal, each special guest speaker, and even the events in Columbia. That was a great way to give everyone a chance to participate, mingle, and get to know the other attendees. The workshops were well presented, informative, and a lot of fun. New products, websites, and social media groups were all discussed. The Hand Bells were a big favorite with a lot of people, including me! As a person with a profound hearing loss who now uses a CI, playing any instrument and following the notes on sheet music was never possible. But with the assistance of the presenters and other attendees, I was able to join in the fun— I dinged, Idonged, and I had a ball! Kudos to Wendy Cheng, who led me along note by note! Another workshop offering insights and tips was “He Said, She / Said” presented by Tina Childress. This seemed custom designed for my normally hearing husband and me and gave us a new appreciation and understanding for each other.

There were many workshops and presentations that I did not participate in. I heard great reports from other attendees and I was sorry to have missed out. Hopefully, I’ll be able to see some of them or new ones at future conventions.

As an unexpected bonus for me, I met a number of Chicagoans. I didn’t realize that ALDA had its roots in the Chicago area, and, I grew up in the 'burbs there. During one of the get-acquainted gatherings for newcomers, I had a chance to speak to Joan Weisberg, who used to work at the Baha’i House of Worship in Wilmette. That’s not even two miles from my old neighborhood, and when I was a kid, it was a favorite place to ride my bike and enjoy the gardens close to the Lake Michigan shore. It’s always a pleasure to talk to someone familiar with the area, and unexpected pleasures are even sweeter.

Of course, one very important aspect of the convention is meeting with other deafened adults. Sharing stories, hearing histories, and bonding with each other are what we all love the best. I was amazed, humbled, and inspired by many of the folks I met. A major premise of ALDA is “Whatever works,” and how true that is! No matter what our background, method of communication, or number of repeats needed is, we all love getting together. I felt myself opened up to this amazing group of people, and I treasure the new friends I made. Our paths have been varied as we lost our hearing, but if ALDA was our common destination, it’s an amazing silver lining!

Sign language dominates as the preferred method of communication. Since I grew up in the hearing world, I have never learned it. But I picked up a few signs, got tips on how to get started, and found everyone to be patient and encouraging. Hopefully, by next year I’ll be more proficient. Editor’s note: ALDA’s communication philosophy is “Whatever works, works!” No particular method is officially endorsed, and members use a variety of approaches, including speechreading, sign language, and pen and paper.

Ahhh ... karaoke night... Who knew that a room full of deaf people could rock like that? I never realized that balloons vibrated to the beat of the music, and the whole room was energized. If only for one night, it was empowering to feel the magic and to let your inner rocker shine! An ALDA tradition and sponsored by
I. King Jordan Award Winner—Linda Drattell

John Waldo, last year’s I. King Jordan Award winner, gave the following introductory presentation about Linda Drattell, this year’s winner:

This year’s I. King Jordan winner is employed at an agency devoted to serving the needs of people with hearing loss, first as a counselor and then as an outreach coordinator. She worked on accessibility on her area’s subway system to make the system friendly for people with hearing loss, which is important for visitors from out of town like me. I first met the winner sometime later, when lawyers in California invited me to assist them on a movie captioning case. Our winner became the public face of that lawsuit, for all of us and for ALDA.

The television interview our winner did, when suit was filed against Cinemark, generated wonderfully favorable press coverage. I’m convinced that that coverage and the human face that the winner put on our case was a major factor in persuading Cinemark to provide captioning capability in California theaters and eventually nationwide. Our winner has been an advocate for and leader of ALDA and recently served as president. This year’s I. King Jordan Award winner is your friend, my client, and our champion from San Leandro, California, Linda Drattell.

Linda’s comments are below:

It is such an honor to receive this prestigious award. I want to thank the ALDA Board and you all for choosing to give it to me.

Dr. Jordan, a special thanks to you for presenting me with this award. Through the years, you have made a point of getting to know me and listening to my ideas for helping others who are late-deafened. Your listening helped me feel empowered, and I strive to listen to others.

When I first lost my hearing, I felt extremely isolated and depressed. Then I went to my first ALDA meeting at the deaf community center in San Leandro, outside San Francisco. It’s very hard to get to that first meeting. Forcing yourself to get in the car. Driving the distance to a place you normally don’t go to. Introducing yourself to people you’ve never met before. What are we going to talk about?

I opened the door and walked into the room. Some of you were there. Chatting, laughing, commiserating, and comfortable with each other, signing what Bill Graham would call crappy sign language. It was the first time I learned how to sign “what’s up?” I fell in love with that sign. With it, you’re suddenly included in the conversation. I started to cry, and Cristina Cordoba said to me, “Why are you crying? We’re your family.”

Christine Seymour had found me and led me to ALDA. She introduced me to Carrie Levin and several others. Edna Shipley-Conner was also there. She looked straight at me and said, “You’re coming with us to lunch and you’re sitting next to me.”

Where did all this friendship come from? From nothing outside the door to everything inside the door. I’m so grateful that I found ALDA, that I found all of you. Losing my hearing required both my family and me to make quite an adjustment. We all had to figure out together what would enable us to overcome this communication hurdle that no one expected.

I want to thank my husband, Eric, who had stood by me all these years and tried to learn sign language. He helps make our conversations work, and while we miss the way we used to joke, we have found new ways to make each other laugh. I remember his dad coming to visit us once, and Eric telling me something about our daughter. I responded, thinking he had said something about the weather. His dad said, “How do you two talk to each other?” And we laughed, and I said, “It’s an adventure.”

I want to thank my son Michael, who is here with me today with his wife, Angel. He has always been the type of kid who appreciates his parents’ help. It just happened that he got to know several kids who were deaf when he was going to high school, and he learned sign language from them. The first thing he said to me when it was clear I was becoming deaf was, “Mom, you always helped me in life. Now I can help you. No worries.”

I want to thank my daughter Alex, who became interested in the deaf and hard of hear-

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ALDAcon 2012
Charleston, SC

Karen Krull, Eileen Hollywood (Able ALDAn Award winner), and Brenda Estes

ALDA President Brenda Estes

ALDAcon 2012 Program Chair Marylyn Howe

ALDA co-founder Bill Graham

Lori Messing and Ken Arcia

Marty Mattox-Baker (Fearless Leader Award)

Linda Drattell, Lois Maroney, Cheryl Heppner, Roy Miller, Bill Graham, John Waldo, Marylyn Howe; Ken Arcia, Robin Titterington, Kathy Schlueter

Photos by Ken Arcia unless otherwise noted
Ken Arcia, Brenda Estes, Marylyn Howe, Lois Maroney, Bill Graham, Roy Miller, Christine Seymour, Linda Drattell, Cynthia Amerman, Karen Keefe; Cheryl Heppner, Robin Titterington, Kathy Schlueter

Lori Messing receiving the Dr. Robert Davila ALDA Angel award (Brenda Estes is on left)

Mark Dessert and Baron at ALDAcon 2007

The President’s Special Recognition Award was given by Brenda Estes to Mark Dessert (who was not present to receive it) for his guidance and assistance to Board members over the years.

ALDAcon 2012 Co-Chairs Dave Litman and Rachael Morris

Roy Miller and Carol Slney discuss combined 2013 ALDA and TDI convention in Albuquerque

Karaoke fun
Newly Established Service Aims to Match Captioning Users and Providers

A new service called CaptionMatch is available to make it easier for people to request any kind of captioning (broadcast—including Internet—and realtime, such as CART, STTR, Palantype, or Velotype). CaptionMatch is an international matching service, not a captioning company. When registered captioning providers see a request made by a registered captioning user (who is anonymous until the match), the providers can send questions or proposals via CaptionMatch.com online. Registration is free and providers are charged a small fee when a match is arranged. Registration and captioning requests can be made at http://CaptionMatch.com, where more information is provided.

The service was created by Lauren Storck, a long-time ALDA member and supporter. She says, “It’s another way for us to educate people about the needs for captioning and to support the development of the captioning professions as well.”

Life in ALDA-land: Shy No More!

By Lucy Miller, Ph.D.

I’m not sure if I started life as a shy child, but I certainly became shy when I realized how different I was from other people. I talked “funny,” I didn’t understand what people said to me, nor did I know what most people seemed to know. Picked on and bullied, without the tools to deal with it, I found my best defense was to be invisible and blend into the background.

I carried my shyness like an invisible cloak into adulthood. By not drawing attention to myself, I didn’t have to deal as much with my differentness. Yes, it was often lonely, but I was in my comfort zone.

When I decided to try a hearing dog, I had no idea how profoundly this would change my life. I figured that a hearing dog, by alerting me to sounds, would make me feel safer and more connected. What I hadn’t foreseen was that my shield of invisibility would be dismantled.

Having Muffin has turned my life upside down and inside out. We are a team. As such, we interact with people everywhere we go. Shyness was no longer an option for me. First, labradoodles attract a lot of attention. Second, there are very few service dogs where we live, so we are often the first to blaze the trail. Third, Muffin’s vest says she’s a hearing dog. Most people figure out that if Muffin’s the hearing one, I must be the not-hearing member of the duo. Her vest also says “Please don’t pet me; I’m working.” Nearly everyone wants to be the exception; some ask if they can pet her, while others don’t bother to ask and just aim at Muffin.

The best part, besides feeling much safer, is that I am no longer overlooked. I can relax while waiting for my name to be called; they know who I am and come right over to where Muffin and I are sitting or standing. No more missed flights because the gate was changed at the last minute. No more missed doctor’s appointments because I couldn’t see what the nurse was saying behind the chart that obscured her face. And I now meet so many nice people! When the small talk is centered on dogs, that becomes an easy subject for me to follow. I don’t have to indicate that I’m deaf, because my hearing dog makes that obvious. All I have to do is explain that if people speak slowly and clearly, it’s easier for me to read their lips.

Although I didn’t anticipate the breadth of the changes that would take place when I traded my invisibility cloak for a very visible hearing dog, I discovered a whole new, more sociable me!

Dr. Lucy Miller, a marriage and family therapist and educator in Hawaii, has given a number of presentations and workshops for ALDAcon. She can be contacted at drlucy@hawaii.rr.com.
Confession of a Recovering Ignoramus (continued)...
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reluctance, my parents finally agreed to go along with the school’s insistence.

Years later as an adult, Richard said that attending a deaf school was not good for him. The teaching staff focused primarily on the deaf kids, who were much further behind than Richard, who was hard of hearing. Many of the other kids could not speak, and since it was an oral deaf school, the staff was determined to teach the deaf kids to read lips and talk. Richard’s speech did not sound perfectly normal, but he did talk, so his teachers saw him as way ahead of his classmates.

Richard found paying attention to his teachers extremely boring, for they said the same things repeatedly. He spent his years at the deaf school daydreaming that he was not there, and he believes that if he had been provided with glasses and hearing aids as a child, he could have learned speechreading proficiently and thus been able to function in the school his three brothers attended.

It was a difficult enough for my mother to accept her sons’ defective eyesight; they needed glasses. The thought of hearing aids would be asking too much of her.

I did not get glasses until I was 16, when they were required for my driver’s license. Paul, two years younger than me, followed suit. I tried to convince my parents to get glasses for Richard and Philip, but my mother opposed that.

“Bobby, they are too young for glasses. Maybe someday, but not now.”

My mother wouldn’t budge and refused to talk anymore about it. It was only through subterfuge that I found a way to get glasses for Richard and Philip. I walked both of them to the optometrist’s office. He wanted me to have my mother or father come in, so I told him they could not take off work, and that I had been instructed to bring my brothers in to see him. I suppose since he was just starting his practice he was anxious to have patients, so he agreed to do the eye exams.

When he asked my youngest brother if he could see the big E on the screen Philip said, “What big E?” Dr. Davis put some gadget in front of Phil’s face and asked again. Now Phil did see the big E. Before we left, Dr. Davis wrote a letter to my parents with the results of the exam and how imperative it was for my brothers to wear glasses. Somehow, he was able to persuade my parents.

Why did I have the nerve to bring my younger brothers to Dr. Davis’ office? Well I knew my mother could not stay mad at me for very long. After all I was her favorite son, and I always got my way if I kept after her.

However my parents were annoyed by my habit of interrupting them and others. I can still hear my mother saying, “Bobby, it’s rude to not wait your turn; you’ve got to let others finish what they are saying.”

I did not know why I had this need to control what was being said. But around the time Richard started attending the deaf school, I began to suspect that my own hearing ability was deteriorating. For one thing my friends would tease me by mimicking the way they thought I heard things.

I would hear ringing in my ear, and I was upset about no longer being able to hear the birds in the morning, the crickets at night, or my wristwatch tick.

Still I did not tell my mother. She would die. I finally made up a story that I had an earache; I needed to go to an ear doctor. I refused the old remedy my father used with earaches, pouring hot oil in the ear. This time I insisted on seeing a doctor.

My mother made an appointment with an ENT at the clinic downtown. I assured Ma that she didn’t need to take me: I could take the streetcar myself. I remember the doctor’s exact words: “Well, son, you have a progressive hearing loss, which is probably hereditary. Right now you can get by reasonably well, but in time you are going to have a very difficult time understanding what is being said. I suppose I’d better call your parents.”

I insisted on telling my mother myself. On the way home I cried. I knew I had to keep it a secret. One son who couldn’t hear was bad enough.

As soon as I returned home I went right to Richard to give him a big hug. “From now on, you just turn that television up as loud as you want. I’m not going to give you any more crap about it, Rich.” He gave me his sweet smile. I loved him more than ever.

With my new driver’s license, I was hired to stock food on the shelves at the City Terrace Food Center and to deliver groceries. I was thrilled to drive around delivering groceries, and sometimes a customer gave me a tip.

Sadly, my ignorance of how to interact with customers showed up. I tried to joke with them, but the jokes did not go over. It was my way of avoiding questions that I might have trouble understanding. I hated the embarrassment of looking like a dummy.

I couldn’t be sure I heard the doorbell ring, do I knocked on the door, and there were times when I was told sharply I needn’t pound on the door, they weren’t deaf. Sometimes a voice would call out, but I was unsure what was said. Was I being told to wait a minute or to come in with their groceries? One time

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One of Us
By Karen Krull, Curator

This issue’s interview is with one of the liveliest people I ever met. I had asked her to tell me a little bit about herself, and she did such a superb job, that I’ll share it with you in whole, instead of summarizing as usual. Rachael is one of us for sure, and one of the best of us. Read on, and enjoy!

Hey gang! I am Rachael Morris. You can call me “Ray” if you want. I am 30 years old and lost my hearing in 2007 as a result of neurofibromatosis type 2 (NF2).

NF2 is characterized by the growth of benign tumors throughout the nervous system. The most common are vestibular schwannomas, also called acoustic neuromas, which develop along the auditory nerve. Tumors on nerves in other areas of the brain or spinal cord are also common. I have had tumors treated throughout my entire body, resulting in various impairments, some temporary and others permanent. Enough about that, so anyway…

As a 25-year old young woman I was lonely, scared, confused, and very lost in a new deaf world. I was introduced to ALDA a year later, and my attitude completely changed. I was hooked and in love. After attending four ALDAcons, I am still blown away with the acceptance and kindness I have received! To me, there are two “holidays” I look forward to every year—Christmas and ALDAcon!

I am a founding member of ALDA Carolina-Flight and served on the ALDAcon 2010 Program Committee, ALDA Outreach Committee, ALDA Volunteers, and most recently I was ALDAcon 2012 planning co-chair. I have also served as ALDA’s Region 3 Director since 2010. I am a supportive and friendly “people” person, and I have tremendous passion and admiration for my deafened peers.

I love making others laugh with my silly and random commentary. Nothing makes me happier than seeing another person smile and succeed because of my influence. I have never been a shy gal. I grew up dancing, singing, performing in musical theater, and cheerleading. Although I can no longer hear a tune, I still have a tendency to randomly break out and dance or sing a song. My “implanted” iPod is constantly in full swing! I’m a nut, what can I say, but a smart one with a lot of love in my heart!

Name: Rachael Lauren Morris
Where were you born? Current residence? High Point, North Carolina for both

Marital status? Single
What is your present job? I work for smiles, high fives, and hugs as a teacher assistant four days a week with special needs children, ages 5-8.

What is the worst job you ever had? Although I enjoyed being a job coach for a nonprofit agency geared towards assisting handicapped citizens to find and maintain employment, I found the tasks that went with helping a client “maintain” a job to be somewhat unpleasant. For example, I gag every time I think about washing dishes at K&W Cafeteria. That kitchen, that food, the sanitation… SCARY!

Movies you want to see again? Shag, ELF, Love Actually, Pretty in Pink, Say Anything, Forrest Gump, The Other Sister, The Family Stone, It’s Complicated, Patch Adams, Beaches, A Chorus Line, Grease, Annie… The list goes on and on, I’ll stop now.

Books you tell others to read? My Point is… and I Do Have One by Ellen DeGeneres, Bossy Pants by Tina Fey, The Art of Racing in the Rain by Garth Stein, Blue Like Jazz by Donald Miller, My Stroke of Insight by Jill Bolte Taylor, A Survival Guide for New Deafies by Amy Sargent, and The Curly Girl Handbook by Lorraine Massey and Michele Bender…. That about sums it up!

I stay home to watch: Most reality shows on TLC, Modern Family, Parenthood, Grey’s Anatomy, Dancing with the Stars, American Idol, and Deal or No Deal reruns on The Game Show Network (GSN) channel.

Favorite pig-out food: Anything cheesy and Mexican

Hobbies: Creative writing, being “crafty,” reading, crossword puzzles, and going to Target

If I had more free time, I’d: Probably take my cleaning chores more seriously and respond to emails quicker! I admit that laziness is a factor here also…

The hardest thing about becoming deafened is: Adjusting, accepting, and being patient around hearing friends and family.

I began accepting my deafness: When I was introduced to ALDA in 2009 and attended my first con that fall. I have grown a tremendous amount since then! I accept that I am now deaf, but am I confident being deaf? Not yet. It’ll happen.

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when I thought I was asked to come in I opened the front door and saw a lady putting on her blouse. She was angry and I was red-faced. I tried to make her laugh by saying, “I’m sorry, but I’m really too young for that!” She didn’t think I was funny.

I had a difficult time telling people to repeat what they said. I could manage to say “What?” twice in a row, but that was my limit. After two attempts to understand, I faked it. Of course, getting caught at bluffing was far worse, but I couldn’t help myself.

One time when I understood that the man was calling to me to bring in his groceries, I came in, but he didn’t bother to get up to show me where to place them. He just sat on his armchair and pointed to the kitchen. It was only after I returned to the living room that I noticed that the leg he was resting on a footrest with his pants leg rolled up above his knee had horrible green and yellow streaks. I couldn’t help staring.

“Son, you’re looking at gangrene. And I just might lose that damn leg.”

“Oh; that’s bad.”

“And it hurts like crazy.”

I couldn’t think of what to say, so I turned around and left.

A couple of weeks later when I returned, he was sitting in the same place, but his leg was missing and he had a bulky bandage around his knee.

“Well, at least it no longer hurts.” I greeted him.

“Are you nuts? It hurts worse than before.”

Again I was unable to come up with what to say.

On another delivery, a woman opened her door and stepped aside for me to bring in her groceries. I noticed she had two black eyes and a large bandage covering her nose.

“Put my groceries on the table over there. In case you are wondering, I had a nose job because my nose was too big.”

“Well, I hope you like it when the bandages come off,” was all I could think of saying.

The following time, she no longer had black eyes, and the bandage was off. It didn’t take me a second to figure out what to say. “Oh, how nice your nose looks. It is a beautiful nose. I really like it.”

She beamed, took money from her purse, and handed me the biggest tip I had ever received. I left her place exhilarated.

On my next trip to her house, I commented, “Gee, I can’t get over your nose. It is really very lovely. You sure did the right thing. It couldn’t be any more beautiful.”

I was puzzled when I left. She didn’t say anything and just gave me a look. The tip was back to normal. I figured I did not lay it on enough.

So on the next delivery I said, “That nose of yours is one in a million. I love the way it looks now. It is the best. Really fantastic.”

“Enough already! Enough,” she blasted me. “One time is good. A second time is all right. But now it is too much. Get out of here. Go. Go now.”

I drove over to talk to Uncle Monty. He knew better than anyone how to butter up his customers. He sold insurance for Prudential and was named top Prudential salesman in the country a few years before. He said when I turned 18 he would help me get a job at Prudential; he had connections.

I told him about the lady with the nose job. He shook his head and laughed.

“You sure blew that, Bobby.”

“What went wrong? I gave her big compliments; that’s what I see you do. What did I do wrong?”

“There are three rules you must never forget. Listen carefully: SINCERITY, SINCERITY, SINCERITY. Always be sincere with your compliments. I look around for something that I sincerely feel is special, something I would be proud to own. If I see a picture on the wall that I like, or a nice piece of furniture that I would love to own; that’s what I compliment. And if I see nothing that I think is special, I don’t say anything. You must always look around to see what is worth a compliment or don’t give one. If you take the time to observe, most times you should be able to find something that impresses you. But if you don’t, it’s better to say nothing.”

What Uncle Monty said made sense. I began practicing his advice to observe so I could be sincere. The results were good. But there was something missing. Uncle Monty’s formula would not have worked with my mother when she was distraught with a crooked finger and acted as if it was the worst thing in the world. And it certainly would not work with the man who had his leg amputated. It might work when selling something, but compliments were not useful when someone was hurting. And telling someone that I knew how they felt bombed on me more than once with good reason, for no one could ever know what someone else felt. There had to be something that would be helpful to say.

Just as the ENT had predicted, my hearing continued to become worse over time. And with each new level of hearing loss, I was devastated anew. I would pray, “All right, I can manage with this amount of loss,
but no more, please.” I couldn’t possibly adjust to any more loss of my ability to hear. And yet as I progressed from moderate to severe to profound loss, I had to accept it. What else was there to do? My fear became that one day hearing aids would no longer help. Then what? A cochlear implant?

As much as I did not know about offering emotional support, I did realize first hand that telling someone. “Time heals everything” or “God would not lay a burden on you that you could not handle” was not helpful.

My brother Paul and his wife, who had given birth to a disabled baby, were told by a counselor, “I know how you feel,” and then that bit about not being given a burden they could not handle. My brother’s wife angrily shouted, “No, you do not know how I feel. Did you give birth to a child who is mentally challenged?” When the counselor shook her head no, she was told, “Then how the hell could you know how I feel?”

When someone tried to comfort me by saying, “Time heals everything.” I would answer, “All time does for me is have my hearing get worse.” No, what I really wanted was someone to just listen to my tale of woe, to let me get it out of my system.

I no longer remember how I heard about ALDA, but Bill Graham invited me to attend an ALDAcon around 1990. What did I have to lose?

I didn’t lose; I gained. What a remarkable revelation it was. It’s difficult to describe the total exhilaration I felt every moment of every day at ALDAcon. Gone was having to endure wishing I could understand what was being said. A guy named Steve Wilhelm had created ALDA Crude, a marvelous invention that captioned what was said. (Now, of course, we have professional captioning.) I was in heaven every day. And like so many others, I teared up when it was over and time to return home. I made some truly wonderful friends, some of whom are still an important part of my life, friends who share the challenge of hearing loss.

Two of these friends, a married couple, invited me to fly out for a visit recently. For most of the week I was visiting everything was truly lovely. However, two days prior to my departure, the wife developed a frightening medical condition and was rushed to the hospital. After spending hours in the ER, she and her hubby returned to tell me that the prognosis looked promising and there was a good chance of full recovery in a few months. But at the time of my departure, it was obvious that my friends were worried about if and when she would recover fully.

The day after I returned home, I sat down at my computer to write an email offering emotional support. I wanted to help alleviate her worry and anxiety. However, I had difficulty in composing my message, because I did not consider her medical condition as worrisome as she did. To me, her hearing loss was a bigger concern than this new development. But I was about to learn, or perhaps re-learn, a very important lesson about providing emotional support.

She did not respond to my message, and I wondered why, since for she has always been very good at replying to email. So I wrote to her again thinking that perhaps she did not receive my message.

A few days later she wrote back, “Bob, I love you dearly. But platitudes don’t do it!”

When I read that I felt terrible. Here were my dearest friends, and I blundered in offering comfort. I wrote back asking her what should I have said. She replied, “I’m sorry if I came across abrupt and ungrateful for your concern. I’m not certain what the best way is, but I can tell you what one should not do. One should not advise the person to be grateful for other things. That assumes that they are not, and that’s a wrong approach. One should not tell them that they need to be more positive. That’s not helpful and negates the person’s feelings of sadness/loss or whatever. These are very valid feelings and need to be expressed. What seems to feel best in my case is just plain ole sympathy. Sorrow that this happened, hope that it will soon go away, prayers that are being said...that type of thing. It is also comforting to hear that someone else had the same problem and is now fine.”

She ended her message with the following: “I was telling my cousin that this is the worst thing that ever happened to me, and she said, ‘Yeah, but what about your hearing loss?’ I said, ‘What about it?’ (Hahaha! I’m so used to it, I don’t even think about it!)”

I was grateful for my dear friend for writing the above message. It added greatly to my gathering a knowledge base of what should and shouldn’t be said when offering emotional support. I’ll be sure to review what I have discovered helpful prior to showing up at the Albuquerque ALDAcon in October 2013.

Bob is a retired university professor of philosophy and has been married to Ling for 33 years. They live in California and have nine grandchildren, ten hens, and a rooster that strut around their front yard grabbing people’s attention. They keep the neighbors’ good will despite the loud crowing at the crack of dawn by giving them organic eggs. Bob enjoys reading and writing, and each morning he and Ling play the clarinet together. She frequently insists he plays too loud, and he says he wonders why. Bob can be contacted at saywhatbob@gmail.com.
The worst thing about deafness is: The loneliness and isolation

The best thing about deafness is: Knowing y’all

How did you learn about ALDA? An NF2 friend of mine here in North Carolina encouraged me to go to the ALDA North Carolina chapter interest meeting. A dude who claimed to be from Rome was leading the meeting. Dave Litman’s wit, sarcasm, and passion for ALDA had me sold! I have learned so much from him and am forever grateful for what he introduced me to and for our friendship. (P.S. Dave is from Rome, New York, NOT Rome, Italy. He will try to fool you, too!)

In what ways has ALDA enhanced your life? Wow, there are so many! ALDA has accepted me and is patient with me. I have this entire family that understands what I go through every day. I am an ALDA mentor and leader. ALDA has encouraged me and taught me valuable life lessons and responsibility. ALDA has inspired me to do more and achieve more. I am not scared or insecure with ALDA. I have grown tremendously in being up front about my impairments and asking for help when needed. I get wrapped up in a bundle of emotion reading captions and ALDA publications. ALDAcon karaoke has enabled me to appreciate music, lyrics, and performing again. There is so much more I could say. I would not be my “resilient self” if I had never found ALDA. Thank you all!

When I am depressed, I: Sleep

My most irrational fear is: Heights and bridges—I have missed a few once-in-a-lifetime activities because of my anxiety here. I will always regret not getting off the train at the top of Pikes Peak in Colorado Springs and not going to the top of the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

If I could hear again, the first thing I would do is: Listen to my nieces talk and giggle

The thing I like best about myself: My attitude

Nobody knows: I have a serious obsession with Kermit the Frog. It’s not easy being green! I also still sleep with the blanket that my brothers brought me the day I was born.

What I can’t stand is: A negative attitude.

Favorite memory: 1999-2002, everything from my senior year of high school to my first years in college is a very vivid, bittersweet, and precious memory to me! Also Christmas mornings at Nana and Deda’s

Favorite saying: “Only the strong survive.”

The bottom line is: Sometimes ya just gotta dance in the rain!
Angel Sound Training Software
By Steven R. Otto

As someone who has spent 41 years working with individuals with hearing aids, cochlear implants, and auditory brainstem implants, I can attest to the fact that regular practice and experience with these devices are the key in achieving more rapid gains and higher levels of performance and benefit.

Angel Sound Training software is a free program designed for cochlear implant and auditory brainstem implant users and other people with hearing loss to help them practice and develop their listening skills at their own pace and convenience. The program is based on the popular Sound and WAY Beyond Program but with additional advanced functions and modules. Both programs were created by auditory researcher Dr. Qian-Jie Fu at the House Research Institute, Los Angeles. Dr. Fu is known throughout the world for his extensive and innovative research in this area.

Angel Sound is now available for download at http://www.tigerspeech.com/angelsound/angelsound_download.html. It can also be obtained on a CD by emailing angelvoice@tigerspeech.com. The software is available through the Emily Shannon Fu Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to honoring Emily Shannon Fu, an angel and beloved daughter of Xiaosong Wang and Dr. Fu, who is the founder of TigerSpeech Technology.

Since it is not possible for all individuals to attend professional auditory training sessions, Angel Sound software can make such training available to everyone. The scientifically-based software provides training activities that progress from easy to more difficult, and it also provides built-in assessment tools to allow the user to track progress over time. My recommendation, and the recommendation of TigerSpeech Technology, is for daily use of the software, since regular practice, even for relatively brief sessions, can result in very large improvements over time. With Angel Sound, it is possible to obtain this valuable practice with a maximum of convenience.

Steve Otto is a research audiologist in the Department of Communications and Auditory Neuroscience at the House Research Institute in Los Angeles. He can be contacted at otto@hei.org.
ing world and has choreographed for deaf entertainer CJ Jones and performed in a show he produced in Las Vegas. She has also choreographed for the deaf band, Beethoven's Nightmare. The sharing of the hard of hearing, late-deafened, and deaf worlds with my family has become a fascinating thing I didn’t foresee when I lost my hearing.

I also want to thank my extended family, which has been most lovingly supportive. I have a nephew who is taking sign language classes in high school, my parents attended an ALDA-San Jose meeting with me, and my daughter-in-law is doing her thesis on deaf rights.

I gradually started to lose my hearing in my 30s, the cause of which is unknown. One Sunday morning, when I was in my early 40s, I woke up having lost 30 decibels overnight. Still no clue as to why. I graduated from in-the-ear to behind-the ear-hearing aids. Now my hearing is pretty much gone. A couple of weeks ago, I vacuumed our home, moving from the kitchen to the dining room. When I looked back, I saw that the electrical cord was unplugged, and I had no idea for how long.

I found the late-deafened and Deaf communities to be wonderfully supportive. Both enabled me to become whole again. I wanted to give back, to do what I could for the next person, to help strengthen the organizations that helped strengthen me.

Along the way, I have been involved in advocacy for deaf and hard of hearing people. A couple of years ago, at the Ninth Circuit appellate court hearing in San Francisco, I was part of a group of deaf and hard of hearing individuals who stood witness to the court requiring a movie theater chain to provide devices to make their movies accessible in Arizona. And who grabbed my arm that day but John Waldo, who said, “Hey, let’s do something in California.” Over the last four years, I have also focused my advocacy efforts on the Bay Area Rapid Transit, or BART, subway system that goes around three quarters of the San Francisco Bay area. It’s used heavily by commuters and tourists, and I worked with the BART police in developing a sensitivity training manual. I also advocated for accommodations such as electronic signage, dynamic maps, and loop systems in the new BART car design that will be part of the new cars scheduled for completion in 2017.

My greatest satisfaction is being available to provide needed support and friendship, just as others here have provided them for me. I cannot say enough about what this award means to me. Thank you for this tremendous recognition. Thank you for the warmth that I know comes with it. You all have my deepest respect and gratitude.
Chapter Happenings

By Ann Smith, Curator

Francine Stieglitz reports on ALDA-Boston’s activities. The chapter participated as an alliance member in the Walk4Hearing and held its holiday party on December 8 at member Ann Tanona’s house in Natick. The first event scheduled for 2013 was the Annual Brunch on Sunday, January 6 at the Westford Regency Inn and Conference Center, with Dr. David Citron speaking about Project Deaf India.

Jim Stansell sent ALDA-Peach’s news. In September, Dr. A. Barry Critchfield, Ph.D. of the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities was scheduled to present to the chapter. He is the director of deaf services and planned to speak about them, but he had to cancel at the last minute. Attendees spent the meeting time discussing services that they thought Dr. Critchfield’s department should be offering, so they will be ready for a good discussion when his presentation is rescheduled. In October, Ellen Rolader from Georgia Relay and Hamilton Relay spoke about their offerings. In November, Jim Stansell and Robin Titterington were elected to positions on the board. Jim will continue serving as secretary and Robin will be member-at-large. Three board members will continue serving in their current positions: Yael Shaner, president; Kristin Stansell, vice president, and Xantha Burghardt, treasurer. Roxanne Gasaway retired from the board. Several members also spoke about their ALDAcon experiences at the November meeting.

ALDA-Northwest Indiana’s report comes from Kim Mettache and Marcia Kopp. Kim, ALDA-NWI’s president, was the booth & sponsorship coordinator for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Festival at Crown Point, Indiana, hosted by Northwest Indiana Deaf & Hard of Hearing Community (NWI Deaf) in September. ALDA-NWI had their last meeting of the year on Saturday, November 10 with CaptionCall and Engage presenting. (Engage offers a mobile app that provides deaf news, events, and emergency information in a 30-second ASL video.) The CaptionCall demo was provided by regional manager Ann Anderson-Brooks, a member of ALDA-Chicago. ALDA-NWI also participated in the “Show me the Captions!” movie event on November 17, with three members attending Lincoln.

Marcia Kopp reported for ALDA-Chicago and ALDA Midwest. Kudos to Martha Mattox, leader of ALDA-Midwest, and her group for donating to ALDA its full 40% of monies raised at the Dayton Walk4Hearing held this past May.

ALDA-Chicago hosted several summer activities, starting with a miniature golf/luncheon in June. Cleo Simmons’ annual pool party was in July, and August featured a day outing at Renaissance Faire, a medieval-type recreation across the Wisconsin border. In September, the chapter participated in the annual ALDA dual picnic with ALDA-NWI. ALDA-Chicago also had an exhibit at Deaf Awareness Day in downtown Chicago. October was a busy month, with three activities before ALDAcon 2012. ALDA-Chicago sponsored a new members’ luncheon attended by six new members. A social event was planned in conjunction with a Pullman Historic Tour, which is given only one weekend a year. An ALDA-Chicago team also participated in HLAA’s Walk4Hearing in Chicago for the second year, just three days before ALDAcon. In November, 40 people took part in the “Show Us the Captions” promotion in Chicagoland at seven locations. For the last social of the year, ALDA-Chicago held a holiday party at a condo clubhouse in Palatine, Illinois. The annual holiday party at the late Mary Clark’s lovely home in Oak Park will be sorely missed, and ALDA-Chicago will always treasure the memories of those special events.

Send your chapter’s happenings to Ann Smith at fabsmith@att.net. Deadline for the next issue is February 21.
Singing a New Melody

By Maryruth Dilling

Music…it has been my lifeblood for over four decades. Until the last few years, it was as essential as the air I breathe.

I grew up listening to music on a daily basis. I would sing with family members and friends from the time I was about four years old. As a new mother, I would dance and sing with my baby. Years later, my then four-year-old daughter could sing for six hours straight on a car ride without repeating a single song.

Growing up, I was in choir. In fact, I spent a year in the Texas Girls’ Choir. I joined various church choirs everywhere I went. I used to sing duos with my father, who had a lovely tenor singing voice. I cut my teeth on old gospel hymns. I had dozens of songs memorized by the time I was in grade school.

As I entered college to earn my degree in deaf education, I joined the school’s sign language choir. This opened up a new way to sing, and I started signing songs at church on a weekly basis. People loved the beauty of the language and would ask me to sign the songs and special music each week. I fell in love with this new way of expressing the beauty of the words I was voicing.

When I was in my 20s, my hearing slowly started fading. At first, in regard to music, it wasn’t a big deal; I just turned up the volume and was still able to ‘get’ most of the words. Over the years I had accumulated a nice collection of music CDs. Everyone knew I loved to listen to music, so it was a popular gift from family and friends. I had a huge stereo with a five-CD changer. I turned it on in the morning and it stayed on all day.

As I hit my 40s, my hearing began worsening on a faster basis. I began to notice that certain artists were harder to understand, and the music itself started to sound like static. I began to prune my music collection. I kept turning up the volume till I blew three sets of speakers. The number of artists I could understand continued to slowly shrink, reaching the point where I stopped playing those CDs and got rid of my player. My partner, who loves music as much as I do, stopped asking me to listen to PBS concerts with him, as I could no longer distinguish sound well enough. I ended up frustrated and upset, depressed over my worsening hearing.

Today, I tend to stay away from music. Thanks to a new FM system at church, I do get to enjoy some of the words, but I rarely join in with singing because I can no longer hear myself well enough to tell if I am within key range. I must admit that when we sing one of my favorites, I belt it out with the best of them. I just pretend everyone is tone deaf. I still get requests to sign for special music, but I can only do old songs or sign a capella, as I cannot distinguish the words from the music. The last time I had the audience sing an old song while I signed, I had many wonderful responses.

So where does music fit in my life today? When I am alone in the car, I sing all my old favorite gospel hymns. No one but Wynnie, my hearing dog, hears me, and she doesn’t tell. I can’t tell if I am on key or not, but it doesn’t matter. My soul is still receiving the nourishment it needs from music. Confucius said that music produces a kind of pleasure which human nature cannot do without. Now, I sign a new melody without sound, but filled with happiness. My dog and I love it.

Maryruth is a transplanted Texan living in the Pacific Northwest. While working on her master’s degree, she keeps busy with home schooling her son, writing, speaking to groups on mental health issues, communication, and goal setting. She is the president of Kindling Dreams, LLC and can be contacted at maryruthdilling@gmail.com.
GA to SK

By Ann Smith, Curator

Doreen Dougherty and Tony Yuppa of ALDA-Garden State were married on November 3, 2012. In spite of an uninvited guest named Hurricane Sandy, the wedding went off without a hitch. After a Costa Rican honeymoon, the new Mr. and Mrs. settled down to happily-ever-after.

Congratulations to Elena Kras of St. Paul, Minnesota for winning a first place gold medal in an international poetry contest sponsored by the World Poetry Movement. Elena says that hopefully, her award will speak on behalf of all our deaf and hard of hearing members who are trying to step beyond their limits.

Roxanne Gasaway of ALDA-Peach (Georgia) writes, “A month or so ago my computer went out. My sister, who works with computers, ordered me a new one. She lives in New Jersey, however, so a computer tech came and set up the computer, and a phone tech replaced an ailing modem. A new monitor was ordered later, and since my sister had business in Atlanta, she set it up and we got to visit, which was especially nice. She and her family got through both storms okay.”

Send your personal news to Ann Smith at fabsmith@att.net. Deadline for the next issue is February 21.

SKSK

Everything in the universe has a rhythm, everything dances.

—Maya Angelou
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It has been an honor serving as ALDA president this year. Your 2012 Board of Directors accomplished many objectives. Including, but not limited to, the following:

- Renewed our memberships with the International Federation of Hard of Hearing People (IFHOH) and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network (DHHCAN). As a DHHCAN member, ALDA provided feedback and signed onto over 60 petitions on a variety of topics such as NG911, VRS, petitions exempting businesses from providing captions, and IP captioning.
- Welcomed ALDA-Boulder, a new ALDA group in Colorado.
- Redesigned the website to be more user-friendly, and created chat rooms for the Board of Directors, members, and veterans (with the capacity to create additional chat rooms in the future). We will have the capability to upload videos, archive important documents, send out renewal notices and welcome letters, provide more advertising space, display a photo gallery, and more.
- Signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with TDI to co-host a joint conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico from October 16-20, 2013. I would like to take this opportunity to assure you that the rumor about ALDA and TDI merging is NOT true. We have been, and will remain, two separate organizations.
- Created the “Deafened Vets” online discussion group in response to an inquiry from a late-deafened vet.
- Began utilizing social media as a marketing tool. We now have a link to our Facebook and Twitter accounts on our website home page.
- Disseminated over 1600 ALDA brochures to chapter/group leaders and to community agencies across the country.
- Implemented a new tradition at the I. King Jordan banquet, in which the previous year’s recipient of the I. King Jordan Distinguished Achievement Award introduces the current recipient.
- Networked to expand the number of state agencies partnering with ALDA in providing pro bono meeting space and/or sponsoring CART/interpreters for ALDA’s chapters and groups.
- Created the Newcomer’s Mentoring Program to ensure better connections with our newcomers before and after their first ALDAcon.

So often, when Board members’ terms expire, they take all their knowledge and resources with them instead of passing the information on to their replacements. It’s vital that we have updated guidelines and policy procedures in the Board Manual to ensure continuity. While serving as ALDA secretary in 2010, I began saving the Board and committee chair reports in the manual, and Karen Krull, the current secretary, has continued with this. She has also done an amazing job of streamlining the manual to ensure that pertinent information is right at one’s fingertips. In 2010, I had also asked the Board of Directors to write up guidelines for their positions for future Board members, and I had these guidelines updated in December 2012. ALDAcon guidelines are being compiled for the manual, and a copy of the guidelines will be forwarded to the planning chair of future ALDAcons. The regional directors (RDs) have developed guidelines, and I created a brief description of all ALDA committees.

I look forward to another year on the Board of Directors, during which I will oversee the redesigned website and perform any other duties assigned by our incoming president; and to working on behalf of our membership in advocating for better-quality telecommunication access, expanded Internet and venue captioning, and e911 accessibility.

If I can be of service to you, please contact me at past-president@alda.org.

The chapter/group leader workshop at ALDAcon was FANTASTIC! It was a great opportunity for the leaders to meet face-to-face to exchange ideas and network with each other. We learned that the chapter and group petition can be confusing, so we plan to revise it in the next few months.

In 2012, I served on the 2012 ALDAcon program committee; was the Board’s liaison to NTID/RIT; was chapter coordinator; assisted with developing the regional director guidelines; and began learning the ropes for stepping up as president.

A few months ago, I asked then-President Brenda Estes to begin seeking bids for ALDAcon 2014; our goal is to make an announcement about the date and location in the next couple of months.

I look forward to working with the 2013 Board, committee chairpersons, and our amazing members. If you have any questions or concerns, contact me at president@alda.org.
As past president, I visited Albuquerque from November 16-18, 2012 to represent ALDA at TDI’s community meeting with people from the New Mexico Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons (NMCDHH), the University of New Mexico (UNM) ASL Program, New Mexico School for the Deaf, HLAA, and other local organizations and government entities that serve the Deaf community and people with hearing loss in the state. I am happy to report that the Hotel Albuquerque is quite charming and in an area with many wonderful restaurant choices and the lovely atmosphere of Old Town just around the corner. The ALDA-TDI convention in Albuquerque that will be held in October is the first time two such national organizations have joined hands and hearts to offer an enhanced convention experience.

Newcomer Committee Report—Buddies were assigned to this year’s newcomers who, excluding exhibit hall workers, numbered 20. The newcomer breakfast sponsored by Hamilton Relay was a lovely sit-down affair. We have had enthusiastic reports from many 2012 newcomers about their first ALDAcon experience.

Newcomer Mentoring—As Newcomer Committee Chair, I have been commissioned by the Board to draw up a list of mentors who will continue conversations with newcomers from time to time throughout the year after their first ALDAcon. The list is an ongoing project, and we are making progress in finding mentors. If you would like to “adopt” a newcomer, please write to me at cynthiaamerman@gmail.com.

Nominations Committee Report—we had a committee of eight that was geographically, gender and etiologically diverse, as required. Tools for selection (election bylaws, policies, and procedures and the database) were distributed and nomination forms were revised. The ballot mailing included a questionnaire asking whether each member would like to receive next year’s ballot electronically. The League of Women Voters of Greater Tucson was selected to count the ballots and advise us of the new president-elect, secretary, and RDs from regions 3 and 4.

Outreach Committee Report—video footage was taken at the convention for posting on the ALDA website.

For the past three years it has been my pleasure to serve you as president-elect, president, and past president. It has been an amazing experience full of learning and growing, from which I have benefitted tremendously. As I leave the Board, I send best wishes to you all for successful advocacy and for educating others so that we can all benefit from an increasingly accessible world.

ALDAcon 2012 was a success both functionally and financially. The final figures are not in yet, but it looks like a profit of over $10,000. Since this was a chapter-sponsored ’con (by ALDA-Flight from North Carolina), 25 percent of the profit will go to the chapter.

As of November 30, 2012, the amount in ALDA’s bank accounts totaled $49,327. The balance sheets for the accounts are:

- ALDA operating expenses: $13,237
- ALDAcon (2011) account: $11,599
- Scholarship funds: $24,491

The federal IRS 990 form for 2011 has been submitted, as well as the IRS subordinate report and the State of Illinois registered agent report. All outstanding bills have been paid, and we are on or near budget with our expenses.

And, as a reminder, ALDA, Inc. is a nonprofit corporation, so donations are tax-deductible. Also, some employers have matching donations plans. If you have any questions regarding donations, please contact me at treasurer@alda.org.

Since the last report in May, I’ve continued to record the minutes from all the online meetings, keep track of motions, and tally votes. It has also been my responsibility to update the Board Manual and to incorporate a list of contents to make it easier to find a particular item.

Membership Report—Since my last report, I sent out exit poll letters to former members, asking if there was anything we could do to encourage them to rejoin. Some answered that they were unaware their membership expired, and they renewed. Others stated they would only rejoin if they planned to attend an ALDAcon. A few said that they had limited funds and preferred a different organization. There were a couple of complaints about the difficulty of renewing on the website. I also sent renewal reminders to everyone whose membership had just expired and to those whose renewal date was approaching. I’m happy to report that the majority followed up with renewals. I also implemented a membership drive from November 1 to December 31, 2012, with a $10 discount for members who joined or renewed for two years.

In case you didn’t notice, your renewal date may have changed. Our database manager, Gloria Popp, reconfigured all renewal dates to a quarterly basis instead of a monthly
one. How can you tell? Check out the address label on your newsletter. The expiration date is listed above your name and address, so please renew if you’re due.

Website Content Chair Report—have given input to the new website programmer, to assure that the website will be attractive and easy to navigate. All the links will function and your member login will once again be activated. You’ll find it easy to renew online, advertise, check out ALDAcon news, find out about chapters or groups near you, and more.

ALDAcon 2014 Bids—We had hoped to announce the date/location of ALDAcon 2014 during ALDAcon 2012. Unfortunately, we had to stop soliciting bids when it appeared that registrations for 2012 would be lower than for 2011. All bids previously solicited were declined, we revised our RFP, and we have been actively seeking bids from several venues in different parts of the country. The decision will hopefully be made by April 2013, and we will announce the location when plans are finalized.

Region 1 Report
By Paul Wummer, RD1

Over the spring and summer, I received various requests from the northeast states and across the Atlantic. In several correspondences, I mentioned LDA chat in response to late-deafened adults wanting to correspond with other people with hearing loss. As usual, there were a couple of requests for information concerning financial assistance for hearing aids.

I also fielded a request from a man in the music industry who is working on a new show based on Beethoven’s string quartets. Instead of only talking about the music and Beethoven, he wanted to interview people who may know from personal experience what Beethoven might have gone through in becoming deaf. With the help of the Board, a few ALDAns were contacted to be interviewed.

A closed captioning provider from the Orange County, New York area wanted to become involved with ALDA (on a local basis) as a volunteer, and another person was looking for volunteering opportunities with ALDA in the Northern Virginia area.

A request came in from the Boston area for two ASL interpreters for a July business conference in Boston. However, ALDA does not provide interpreters. A lady from New York was looking for assistance to get a captioned phone for her brother, and someone in New Jersey asked about TTYs.

I was also contacted by several people who were confused about when their ALDA membership expired and/or were having problems using the website to join or renew their ALDA membership.

Region 2 Report
By Marsha Kopp, RD2

During the summer and fall, I received the following:

- Request for detailed information about ALDA for the University of Iowa’s Iowa COMPASS disability resources database, a free information and referral service for people with disabilities, their families, and service providers.
- Inquiries about ALDA chapters in Minnesota and Wisconsin. I suggested starting a chapter, and one inquirer asked for a chapter starter kit for Minnesota.
- Inquiry from an ALDA member wants to meet other ALDA members in the area that she moved to.
- Request from a mother for information on providing assistance for her daughter in Indiana.
- Inquiries for financial assistance for hearing aids in Chicago, Wisconsin, and Michigan. For each request, I sent a list of hearing aids resources in the local area as well as national information.
- Continuing concerns about membership renewals online. “Show Us the Captions” Cinema Advocacy in November and December

This project to highlight and promote movie captioning was initiated by Sarah Wegley, an ALDA-Chicago member, along with ALDA-Chicago. At the time of this report, 20 locations across the country participated or showed interest, including Chicago, St. Louis, Florida, Colorado, Philadelphia, Virginia Beach, Boston, San Francisco, and Kansas City, Kansas.

Region 3 Report
By Rachael Morris, RD3

Things here have been movin’ and groovin’. Lots of individuals contacted me with all sorts of inquiries. I was very pleased with several emails related to ALDAcon. As I looked over the contacts I had as a regional director, I noticed that some of these individuals were registered as newcomers for the ‘con. I had ended every email by promoting ALDAcon with lots of excitement and snippets of what to expect, mentioned that I was the co-planning chair, and gave information about how to register. I don’t mean to toot my own horn, but
folks really bit into it. Well okay, “TOOT TOOT.” A chunk of inquiries came to my RD email from folks wanting 'con information. They were mostly from the Carolinas, Tennessee, and Florida.

I received a couple of inquiries regarding a group or chapter in Arkansas. There isn’t any, and I had never had an RD contact in Arkansas, so I did a bit of research in our database and found five individuals from Arkansas. I emailed these folks to see if anyone knew of an ALDA group or would be interested in starting something, and I had a GREAT response from four of them. I started an exchange with these four and the two people who had initially contacted me. I began with who I was, where I lived, my ALDA story, etc. They all did the same, and this resulted in a couple of expired members renewing and new friends made.

A lady in Georgia called our office on behalf of her father in South Carolina. She was having a difficult time getting membership information and forms from our website. I thanked her for letting us know, apologized for the inconvenience, and assured her that a total transformation of the website was underway. After she provided her address and her father’s, I mailed them both the Spring 2012 ALDA News, a copy of the 2011 ALDA Reader, ALDA brochures, and ‘con registration forms. They were most appreciative! I need to look at ‘con registration and our updated database to see if we have a new ALDA member with this particular friend’s name.

Funding for hearing aids is a question I often get. I provided contacts for a lady in Texas and encouraged her to look into a “deaf friendly” counselor at a vocational rehabilitation agency, the Foundation for Sight and Sound, and the Starkey Hearing Foundation.

Two individuals contacted me to ask whether there were people with hearing loss in the Atlanta area. One lady was especially interested in meeting individuals with cochlear implants, as she was considering one. I contacted the ALDA-Peach president, and we were all conversing through email in no time! One of these ladies has been attending Peach meetings and socials.

I had a call from a new HLAA chapter leader in Lakeland, Florida who was seeking donations for CART services and to help “loop” their area. I sent a very friendly response explaining that ALDA is an organization much like HLAA, and we have our needs for this kind of funding as well. I suggested that he seek assistance and/or advice from the national HLAA organization.

A few people in my region were referred to me after calling the ALDA office. They had limited Internet access and asked for information to be mailed to them. I typed up friendly letters and sent packages with newsletters and bro-

**Region 4 Report**

*By Kathy Evans, RD4*

The new guidelines for regional directors were completed in June 2012. I was happy to be the writer of this document, as Mary Lou Mistretta and I worked to pull together information, incorporate feedback from the other RDs, and finally get the approval of ALDA President Brenda Estes. I’m using the outline of the RD guidelines as the structure for this report.

1. **Responding to new contacts**

   I received nine inquiries from new contacts in the four-month period I’m reporting on. Half were looking for chapters or other deafened people near them. One wanted resources to learn speechreading, another needed information on captioned phones, one woman was looking for a speech-to-text device for easy use by her father’s friends, and another wanted to find out how to get her local newspaper to list the captioned movies in her area as the San Francisco paper does (she didn’t want to get the information electronically – this is a reminder that we need to reach out to people who don’t have Internet access). One person wanted to know where her mother could have her dog trained to become a service animal and be of more help to her.

2. **ALDA members**

   This is the area in which I have had a hard time doing what I think should be done. I have heard from four members asking about other members in their areas or where they’re moving, and wanting to know the dates for the TDI-ALDA Conference in 2013. One was a victim of a scam and wanted the ALDA News to include information about scams to help members protect themselves. I asked her to write about her experience and submit it.

   I have had email exchanges with some of our chapter and group leaders and tried to give them support. When news was going out on Facebook, I knew some people who
do not use social media, and I sent the information to them directly – that was appreciated. But for the most part, this is the area that needs more attention. With the TDI-ALDA conference being held in our region next year, good contact with the members will undoubtedly build our numbers as they make plans to join us in Albuquerque.

One interesting request from one of our members was to help him develop a way to provide information about dealing with deafness to veterans. ALDA’s president approved the starting of a Yahoo group for deafened vets, with me as its Board liaison, and it now has a handful of members. I turned over the leader/moderator’s responsibility to one of them. Work is needed to build the group and to keep ideas coming so we don’t lose it.

3. Professionals and agencies

I have received requests for brochures from deaf and hard of hearing agencies, and a hospital social worker was looking for support for a deafened patient as she transitions home. One of the more interesting requests came to ALDA, Inc. from a cellist in New York (okay, not my region, but I still got to reply to him) who was doing a radio program on Beethoven and wanted some deafened musicians to help his audience better understand what it would have meant to Beethoven to lose his hearing. I gave him some good resources and would like to get a transcript of that program!

4. Building a regional database

My databases are growing: people who have inquired about ALDA, resources in the different states, and general resources for the kinds of questions people need help with when they lose their hearing. I think they’ll be helpful to the next RD4.

5. Connecting individuals to work toward establishing future ALDA groups and chapters

I am seeing interest and numbers in Oregon around Portland and in Arizona around Phoenix. These groups could start coming together in 2013. I have quite a few names of people around Los Angeles, but so far, none have expressed an interest in leading a group there.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my term as regional director 4. It has been a wonderful opportunity to learn more about how ALDA functions and to make some good friends on the Board and through the many contacts I’ve received.

ALDAcon Advisory Committee Report
By Kathy Evans, Chairperson

The ALDAcon Advisory Committee –AcAC – is made up of ALDA members with experience in different aspects of planning ALDA’s annual convention. Our responsibilities are twofold: (1) to advise and mentor the current ALDAcon planning committee and (2) to provide information for the ALDAcon guidelines (preserved in the Board Manual) that will give more continuity to the volunteer efforts to organize and run ALDAcon each year.

There has been some talk about the AcAC being asked to search out and receive bids for future ALDAcons and to be instrumental in the selection process. Board members are doing this now, which works well if it is not too time consuming.

The months leading up to October’s ALDAcon are busy times for advising the ALDAcon planning committee. I had a very comfortable working relationship with this year’s planning and program chairs. They asked me questions, and I volunteered to take on some assignments to free their time to focus on other things. I have a lot of past forms, program books, hotel information, etc. that were available to them to save time. Karen Krull, as advisor for registration, stepped in for our registration chair when her family needed her undivided attention. This is a wonderful use of our committee that I hadn’t considered before. Many thanks to Karen for making a big difference this way.

Two of our AcAC members were on the 2012 planning committee. We need to make sure that detailed information will available to the planning committee when there are no AcAC members on it.

I have the CD of the ALDAcon guidelines that were prepared by Carolyn Piper in 2006. There is much excellent information, but it is difficult to search quickly for answers to questions. I will add more forms to be copied and compile statistics for future planners. During the planning process, many points have come up that need to be added to the guidelines, so that is being done, too.

With TDI shouldering the bulk of the planning for our joint conference with them in 2013, the AcAC can focus more on the guidelines.
**ALDA Membership Report**
*By Gloria Popp, ALDA Database Manager*

There are 31 people who have been ALDA members for over 20 years, 30 for over 15 years, 35 for over 10 years, 33 for over 5 years, and 130 for up to 5 years.

ALDA membership expiration dates were changed on July 1, 2012 to quarter-end dates by extending expiration dates to the end of the nearest quarter. This was done to correspond to the quarterly publication of the ALDA News and will assure that members receive four newsletters during their yearly membership.

**ALDAcon Proceedings**
*By Margreta von Pein*

After a five-year apprenticeship under mentor-editor Carolyn Piper, I have been promoted to the position of ALDAcon Proceedings chairperson. Well, full disclosure, I did in venerable ALDA fashion volunteer for the promotion. After asking for volunteers in the Fall 2012 ALDA News, I signed on a willing and capable group of six proofreaders/editors eager to tackle the transcripts from ALDAcon 2012. I hope we will produce a professional level of work that will make Carolyn and ALDA proud.

**Scholarship Committee**
*By Carolyn Piper, Chair*

The scholarship committee (besides myself, it includes Karen Krull and Cynthia Amerman) successfully continued its efforts in 2012 to provide financial assistance to members in need of monetary help in order to attend ALDAcon in 2012. Eight members, seven of whom were newcomers, were able to attend the ’con in Columbia, South Carolina with the help of this program.

The ALDA scholarship program is an ongoing effort that consists of three funds. The oldest is the ALDA, Inc. fund. The second is the Edna Shipley-Conner Newcomer Fund, which was set up in 2003 and is specifically designated to assist only first-time ALDAcon attendees. The third fund was set up this past year and is a memorial fund utilizing donations in honor of members who have passed on. Recent donations have been made in memory of Mary Clark and Geoff Brown, both of whom were long-time members and supporters of ALDA.

Applications for the upcoming ’con in 2013 will be available by March. Look for the announcement of availability in the ALDA News, LDA Chat, chapter or group newsletters, and on the ALDA website under the link for the upcoming ’con. For more information regarding the scholarship program, including how to make donations to a scholarship fund, please contact me in one of the following ways:

wicwas@wcvt.com
802 434-2452 (CapTel)
82 Piper Place
Huntington, VT 05462
The mission of the Association of Late-Deafened Adults (ALDA) is to support the empowerment of late-deafened people.

Late-deafened adults are people who have lost their hearing in any degree after having acquired spoken language. ALDA members may or may not use hearing aids, may or may not use assistive listening devices, may or may not use cochlear implants, and may or may not use sign language. What ALDA members DO is “whatever works.” This is the philosophy that keeps the doors to ALDA wide open to anyone who is interested.

ALDA is committed to providing a support network and a sense of belonging to late-deafened people, sharing our unique experiences, challenges, and coping strategies; helping one another find practical solutions and psychological relief; and working together with other organizations and service providers for our common good.

ALDA provides networking through local chapters and groups as well as our annual convention (ALDAcon). We offer social activities, advocacy, peer support, up-to-date information on new technology, and guidance for late-deafened adults, their families, and their friends on ways to deal effectively with the difficulties arising from losing our hearing. ALDA is inclusive, never exclusive. Members find themselves part of a family, with emotional and social support, and, above all, acceptance.

Membership in ALDA provides support for outreach: newsletters, brochures, mass mailings, public presentations, and participation in local and national events to spread the word about ALDA to the more than 31 million Americans, and other late-deafened people worldwide, who would benefit from our organization. ALDA also assists chapter leaders and regional directors to expand ALDA through more chapters and groups and increased membership.

You can join ALDA via the form in this issue, or go to www.alda.org or contact ALDA, Inc. at 8038 MacIntosh Lane, Suite 2, Rockford, IL 61107, 815-332-1515 V/TTY. Membership entitles you to receive the quarterly ALDA News, which spotlights personal experiences of late-deafened people, and to attend ALDAcon at the lower member rate.

If you are interested in learning about ALDA in your area or seeing ALDA become active there, please contact your regional director (contact information is at “Contact Us” on the ALDA website).
JOIN THE FAMILY.....JOIN ALDA!

Your membership in the Association of Late-Deafened Adults connections you with ALDAns throughout the world. Don’t miss our informative quarterly newsletter, ALDA News. Check our chapter directory at www.alda.org to find a chapter near you. Our fully accessible annual convention is a must for newcomers and old-timers alike.

To join or renew using credit cards on our secure site, go to www.alda.org. To mail your membership, please complete this form and send with check payable to:

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Address ________________________________

City ________________________________

State: ______ Postal Code: ______ Country: ______

Home Phone: __________ TTY [ ] Voice [ ] Cap Tel [ ] VP [ ]

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Fax ________________________________

E-mail ________________________________

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ALDA Chapter (Name/None): ________________________________

Gender: Male [ ] Female [ ]

Hearing Loss:
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ALDA’s Mission Statement:
To Support the Empowerment of Deafened People.

Education  Advocacy  Role Models  Support

ALDA provides networking opportunities through local chapters and groups as well as at the annual ALDA conference (ALDAcon).
Make a Difference! Become a Lifetime Member!

Why a Lifetime Member?
A. ALDA and the work it does to support the empowerment of deafened people means a lot to me; I want to support ALDA financially
B. I don’t have to worry about forgetting to renew my dues
C. I plan to live to be at least 130 years old; think what a bargain Lifetime Membership will be!

Ann Smith, Lifetime Member

Lifetime Memberships may be tax deductible and can be paid in three annual installments by check or credit card.

Lifetime Membership Tier
• **Bronze** $500 - $1,499: receive a personal letter from the President, bronze plaque
• **Silver** $1,500 - $2,999: receive a personal letter from the President, silver plaque and priority seating at future ALDAcons
• **Gold** $3,000+: receive a personal letter from the President, gold plaque, priority seating at future ALDAcons and complimentary registration to a future ALDAcon.

Contact ALDA treasurer: treasurer@alda.org or visit www.alda.org