

**ALDAcon2017  
Leadership Program  
Roy Miller and Chris Littlewood  
October 13, 2017**

**SHARAINA RAWLINSON ROBERTS:**

Thank you very much for coming this morning.

This workshop is for anyone who is interested in setting up, promoting, or continuing a chapter of ALDA.

During the first part, Roy Miller will present some of the details regarding the website. I will tell you right now that we already know that there are problems. And it has been a challenge, to say the least, but we are working on it, and Roy can tell you what is going on and show you some of the changes. We welcome feedback about it, ideas, additions, subtractions, whatever. Feedback is great. That is the first half of this workshop. In the second half, we will have Chris Littlewood who will talk about ALDA Suncoast and how it was set up, how it has stayed in motion, and how it has been sustained as a group and thrived.

We are hoping that you can use the information from part of the workshop to help your existing chapter and to help you set up a new chapter. You can ask questions; we encourage your participation.

**ROY MILLER:**

Well, I think we have enough technical challenges this morning to keep us all awake. As Sharaine said, we appreciate any feedback that you might have to offer, especially about the website, and so I passed out some index cards. For those cards, I would deeply appreciate it if you see anything on our website that you do not like, write me a note. If you see anything that you think ought to be changed, write me a note. And if you see anything that you think needs to be added because it would help the website, write me a note! We will collect the cards at the end of the session. And we will consider all of your thoughts very seriously.

When I was asked to do this presentation, it was suggested that I ought to do three basic things.

One is to give you a vision of what I think the website is about; two is to actually show you different pages of our website that you might want to go to at some time. And, three, is to talk about what changes and additions are likely to be made in the very near future.

First, let's talk about my vision of the website.

In general, the ideal website is simply our window to the world. Anyone, whether in China, Australia, France -- you name it -- anyone in the world, can learn about our organization by going to our website. So that is what it is, a window to the world. As such, its basic function is to provide information, but information about what?

First it provides Information about the organization, its history and its rules. It also provides information about the members of the organization, the people who are involved. The website also has information about the activities of the organization, what it does and when it does it.

And, additionally, the website helps in the administration of the organization. There are things that we cannot do manually that we can do if we utilize the computer and the web.

I am going to make one very strong point: Our website is not a social media device. It is not a menu. It is not a place where you go to chat with each other. It is not a place where you share ideas or share concerns. To do that we have a Facebook page. In fact, I think we have two Facebook pages. But if you are interested in using social media, then go to Facebook; do not go to the website because there is no opportunity to use it for social media purposes.

(Referring to the screen). This is the home page of our website. And I will only point out a couple of things. Up here, on the extreme upper right, you have a "Donations" button that if you are so inclined and so generous that you want to give ALDA some money, you can click on that button and it will open a page where you can indicate how much you want to donate.

You will notice here on the right side of the homepage there are two buttons that allow people with special disability concerns to do a couple of things. These two buttons allow you to change the text size; so you see there is a large T for large text or it is a small T for small text. There is also a button to change the display to a high contrast. This is for people with vision problems.

On the lower part of the homepage you will see another button. It says "Renew Your Membership or Join ALDA." If you click on that button it is going to open a page where you can choose your desired membership option.

If you return to the homepage and scroll down past the "Renew Your Membership or Join ALDA" button you will come to a group of buttons that when clicked on will open various sections of the website, and give you information about "Events" in ALDAland, the ALDA Board of Directors, and various "Resources" on the website.

As you scroll on down the homepage, you find two buttons concerning the annual ALDAcon. Clicking on one will open the registration form and clicking on the other will open a page giving a lot of information about ALDAcon. The information about

ALDAcon will change as plans for the convention are updated, but you can check here for information about where the convention will be held, the dates of the convention, hotel costs, program schedule, and so forth.

If you scroll down further you will find our “Events” section listing events on our calendar.

Two comments: First, presently we are publicizing only events concerning our national ALDA organization, so you will at least see here that there are a couple of online board meetings coming up in the next two months. If you want to know about one of those meetings, you can simply click anywhere in that picture and it will open a message that tells you a little bit more about that particular event.

In the future, you are likely to see events of our local chapters added to the “Events Calendar” on our website.

I want to point out something very important. At the bottom of every page of the website you will find a variety of “Quick Links.” If you click on one of the “Quick Links” you will be immediately taken to that item on the website. So, if you are looking for something and you cannot find it through the menu system, check the “Quick Links” and see if there is a link for that item.

Let’s now go ahead and take a look at the page about our Board. This is the page where if you are interested in who is currently on the Board you can learn a little bit about them. This page contains information about the officers and the Regional Directors.

I want to add one thing because there has been some question about this in the past: What if you want to contact a Regional Director by sending that person an e-mail. How do you do that? We do not have any e-mail addresses provided on the Board page, and we definitely do not want to. Why? It is because if we have an actual e-mail address on the website, all kinds of spam can turn up in the inbox of that person. Instead, we have a contact form where all you have to do is open that form, and then you can send a message that will go to one of our people who will forward it to the correct person. You can open that contact form by clicking on the “Contact” tab of the main menu.

Let’s look at the “About ALDA” page which you can open by clicking on the “About ALDA” tab of the main menu. At the top of this page, you will see several buttons. You can click on any of those buttons and immediately be taken to that particular section of the “About ALDA” page; you do not have to scroll down to look for it.

For example, someone in the audience wanted to know about the ALDA chapters. By clicking on the “Chapters” button you are immediately taken to that section. There is also information on this page about the “ALDA groups”, about the electoral “regions” of ALDA, and about ALDA’s “mission.” The whole page is information about ALDA as an organization.

You will also see up here on the main menu of most pages a tab for “ALDAcon.” If you click on that tab it will open a page that will provide a variety of buttons that when clicked on will provide information about that year’s ALDAcon, such as the program guide, instructions for the hotel, how to get to the hotel from the airport, and so forth.

Another topic is “volunteers” and you can open the “ALDA Volunteer Form” by clicking on that entry after clicking on the “Support ALDA” tab of the main menu. ALDA needs volunteers to do anything and everything. So, if you are ever interested in giving some time to the organization, you can open the “ALDA Volunteer Form,” provide some information about yourself, such as your name, address, and e-mail address, and specify which of a variety of activities you are interested in or skilled at doing.

One of the things that was missing on the new website is pictures (except for the Board of Directors.) People keep saying that we need visual stuff, so we are adding pictures. And you can open our first photo gallery by clicking on the “About ALDA” tab of the main menu, and then clicking on the “Award Recipients Photo Album” entry of that drop-down menu. We will add more photo galleries, but here you can go and see the recipients of the ALDA awards for the last five years.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:**

I know there is a button to click where you can join or renew; but can you show me that again, and does it have the levels of membership on that screen?

**ROY MILLER;**

On the homepage you can click on the “Renew Your Membership or Join ALDA” button and it will open a page showing the different levels of membership, such as regular membership, veteran membership, and senior membership.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:**

Aren't there other levels like silver or bronze members?

**ROY MILLER;**

Just keep scrolling down the page. What you are referring to are the “lifetime” membership levels, and they include gold, silver, and bronze levels. If you want to join or renew your membership, just click on the type of membership that you desire, and it will open a page where you can enter the information about yourself and give your credit card information. Then submit your information and you’re all done. Does that answer your question?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:**

Yes!

**ROY MILLER:**

Let’s go to the “Resources” section of the website by clicking on the “Resources” tab of the main menu. If you are interested in learning more about what rights you have as a

deafened person when it comes to something such as renting a house, for example, this page has information on all of the Federal disability laws. All of the disability laws are talked about here whether it is regarding traveling on an airline, renting an apartment, buying a house, whatever.

I am going to end by talking a little bit about the things we are going to be adding. I have already said that we are going to add more pictures. We will probably be adding a few small video clips. Also, we will be adding slideshows. Current problems prevent us from doing that, but we will solve that issue as we go. We are going to amplify the "Resources" section. For example, we are going to add a complete list of all the organizations that provide services to deaf and hard of hearing people as well as a list of all the government agencies and programs that provide services for you.

I hope that you now know a little bit more about the website, and that you take the time to visit it and go through it. As I mentioned, if you see something you do not like, then send me a note. If there is something you want added, let us know about it.

## **PART 2 -CHAPTERS**

### **CHRIS LITTLEWOOD:**

Sharaine asked me to talk about chapters and sustainability of chapters. I did not set up the ALDA Suncoast chapter but I can talk a little bit about what's important for a chapter and what you need to do.

The first thing: do not take yourself too seriously; do not wear a tie. Roy was saying, that he decided a long time ago that there was no more need for a necktie and a jacket, so do not take yourself too seriously with the chapters. You want people to come back as well as come to visit you; you want them to have fun.

When I first started with ALDA, I was one of these gung-ho guys. I wanted to get all the information. I wanted to make a thank you letter. I was making an 18-page newsletter. And so, I was bringing my computer, to a meeting, in order to show people how to connect to the Internet relay chat. I wanted to do everything to encourage people to connect and overcome their disability.

And after a while, I began to understand that there are two things that were needed most and they were the same things that goes back to how Bill Graham started ALDA in Chicago when he had it at his house... pizza and beer. We all get together and socialize, and support each other that way, and we grow from there. If a newcomer, comes to the meeting, and sees an 18-page newsletter, and reads that, and looks at the information, and sits and sees some self-advocacy presentation, and learns something, they might come back but if they have pizza and beer, that "meeting after the meeting" is always the best part. When we socialize; that is when we hang out. That is when we are friends. That is what Bill had at his first meeting -- pizza and beer-- and just do not take yourself too seriously.

When Bill Graham talks about wanting to do everything right, and being one of the gung-ho guys, that was me too. I was setting up the presentations, and the newsletter. (ALDA news is a quarterly newsletter nationally.) We try to do a monthly newsletter with ALDA Suncoast. Sometimes the newsletters are long, sometimes short. Sometimes our months get crazy and there is no newsletter at all. We do the best we can. We will put that information together.

This is my second term as the President, and one of the things that I have learned is that in advocacy, no matter what you are doing, you have to pace yourself. Also, you have to enjoy what you are doing. Avoid talking about the structure of the meeting. One time I started talking about Robert's Rules of Order at one of our meetings and I think I put everybody to sleep in about five or ten minutes. So that is important stuff. You have got to work together as a team and be professional and be politically correct. And you have to make sure that everybody's opinion and voice is heard; yes, that is all important, but the other thing that is very important is to allow your passion for the group to show through.

One of the things that I always want to do, is make newcomers feel welcome. Sometimes I do not think I do a good enough job with that because I spend so much time on the presentation, and the meeting and the structure itself that I do not even get to talk to the new members enough and then they do not come back. That is a mistake on my part that I want to try to correct.

We just celebrated our 20th year as a chapter. We had a big party. That sign that you saw at the welcome reception, among all the old ALDAcon signs, was made by Judith. She created a lot of artwork for our celebration and we brought it here this year. ALDA Suncoast is in Clearwater, Florida, but we have members like Judith who lives in Canada half the year.

We are lucky enough to have a CART provider and we can put our meetings on the Internet so if you do not live close enough to a chapter I often tell people, just text me, before the meeting, and we will put the CART online and then you can participate in the meeting that way. So that is encouraging and I wish I had more time to publicize that because I think more people would get involved with us.

There are two other very important things that you need other than pizza and beer. You need a Tess Crowder. Tess Crowder has been our CART provider for free for 20 years. She is amazing. She is a board member. She's one of our best friends. She will always lend a hand, it doesn't have to be for captioning -- and she will always go out for pizza and beer (she will have a glass of wine instead of beer) but she will always do that. Just guard your French fries because she will steal your French fries too. A Tess Crowder is very, very hard to come by. Tess is an awesome person and you are not likely to find that; we are so lucky. I do know there are other ways to go about finding captioning. I will talk about that in a second. If I have time.

The other thing you need is, somebody like Debbe Hagner, because Debbe Hagner, will

do anything. She works on our newsletter, she helps me get presenters, plus she does so much for this conference. She will bend over backwards to help you.

On the other hand, sometimes when you ask for volunteers some people will not get involved. That is okay. Sometimes, it is important for people to just show up. That's it. We have members who just show up. If you get somebody like Debbe Hagner and somebody that just shows up and then have a bunch of people in between, as well as a bunch of people like Bill Reese and I, who like pizza and beer, then you have got a chapter.

The other thing I would suggest is to communicate a lot with Matt, our ALDA Treasurer. He will tell you what you need to do as far as setting up for getting information for the chapter dues and things like that. What we started to do a few years ago is collect dues (and I am very proud of this as being one of the things that is going to be the legacy of me being the president of our chapter); that includes both your national and your chapter dues.

You pay dues to your chapter of \$40 a year; that sounds very expensive. \$15 goes to the chapter and the other \$25 goes to ALDA's national organization to pay the dues. We really like that. It is very important for the chapters to be connected to ALDA national. Because if nothing else, the name "ALDA", that Kathy and Bill Graham started, is the official name of the national organization. We are working under that organization, ALDA national, as a chapter and we are using the national name. We are connecting with ALDA through the website and through conferences

Questions?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:**

What are some of the more successful ways that chapters have found new members or members, period.

**CHRIS LITTLEWOOD:**

Connecting with the organizations in your area is one way. For example, our library has a deaf and hard of hearing section. They send information and stuff our way. Another example is that we hold our monthly meetings, in a church. And that church has deaf and hard of hearing members who attend our meeting. And that is very important.

We have two coffee nights at Starbucks which is a big thing. We have a north county coffee night and a south county coffee night for the deaf and hard of hearing community. Sometimes, it is only ALDA people and sometimes people who are not members attend. We often ask the non-members "why aren't you coming to our meeting?" And hopefully, we get new people to be involved.

Sometimes we find members just through friends; we are a small family...a small chapter.

Lois Maroney, the co-chair of this conference, was the founding president of ALDA Suncoast. Then Cindy Reese, who passed away a few years became president. Cindy was our ALDA angel because she was so good at setting up social stuff. She was always really good at saying, "Oh, let's go meet here" and setting up stuff like that. She was an amazing president and she helped us all. After Cindy passed away, her husband Bill took the reins. I became the president a couple of years ago.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:**

ALDA used to have really good resources on how to start chapter. One is called Chapter Notes and there are six or seven articles. They cover absolutely everything that you are asking about. They were written down. They used to be on the website. I have copies of them that I downloaded years ago, but one whole article talks about where to find members and how to make connections in your community. That information needs to be available to all of us because we could use that.

**CHRIS LITTLEWOOD:**

That is probably a good idea to write that on a card and send it to Roy and we will check it on the website; that is awesome.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:**

Chapter bylaws are on the website?

**SHARAINA RAWLINSON ROBERTS:**

Roy is saying that, yes, chapter bylaws are on the website.

I want to thank you all, for coming.