

Website: RD1 report - Quarter 3 by Laura Sinclair

Another summer in the can, the trash can that is. I hope you all eked out some productive projects and a bit of get-away from the stay-cations. It certainly was hot and dry enough in the northern areas of RD1! Too hot, in fact. Yet the Fall colors don't disappoint against the blue sky. It's the simple things in life that make one feel "normal" these COVID-19 days. Working from home, taking care of the kids more than usual, more togetherness must have some silver-lining, though. Perhaps we will be better prepared for the coming holidays, especially with having smaller gatherings due to safety precautions. More people will get experience roasting the good ol' bird! We certainly have banana bread down pat! I know you'll get your pantries bolstered to hunker down as the snow begins to fly.

We have a new Board freshly elected at ALDA Boston Chapter. Congratulations & best wishes for emerging from COVID-19 with high hopes for physically gathering someday, some way! They throw marvelous parties at the holidays. Having dual membership helps me do my part to help eat the treats! Alas, I will have to find a different way to maintain my COVID-weight in the coming months. I understand some plans are already underway for virtual speakers. I hope to "see" my fellow ALDAn's from Boston soon and see articles submitted by their Media Strategist so you can learn more about what is happening in this active chapter!

Some fun was had by ALDA Seacoast NH Group members and friends. What starts as a two-hour affair ends up being five, but who's counting!? We mask-up (clear mouth masks generously made and donated by NH ASL interpreters have been handed out to those who don't have one) and do "whatever works" to communicate with the disadvantage of distancing and hindered lipreading.

At our first in-person activity since February we braved an August lakeside picnic hosted by a member. In September, I hosted a Fire tower hike. We had some new masked faces and a few up from Massachusetts, too. We had an equally beautiful day for a beach walk in October post-tourist season, such as it was, making parking plentiful.

Under my RD hat I fielded ALDA Contacts from PA, NJ, NH, VA, MD & CT and jumped in on some ALDA Official Discussion Group forums on Facebook. Our Facebook ALDACon page photos of Niagara Falls are a beacon of hope for us in 2021! 2020's Con will be limited to "seeing" each other during the virtual Annual Membership Business meeting so it is hopeful all will learn how to use a webcam and carry that experience through the long winter months. We'll soon be reunited, if just for a few hours!

I aim to virtually connect with the rest of our RD1 membership who are not connected to a local chapter or group. Some fellow ALDAn's in NH and MA have actually closed the "distance" with virtual socials hosted by others, a Webinar here, Zoom or Google Meet there and from further away, too. The process will soon be sorted so stay tuned for announcements! It is an opportunity to connect in accessible ways never before possible. A "Group" is an easy start to becoming a "Chapter" in the future. All it takes is members who wish to stay connected & watch it grow! Details to start a Group are on the <https://ALDA.org> website.

Despite running into issues with the shortage of key devices we D/HOH use because of many schooling and working from home now, we can always rely on Harris Communications as a source mainstream folks don't know about. They had to postpone publication of a 2020 catalogue due to hiccups in the process this year but look forward to a 2021 issue chock full of the latest technology to make our lives safer and more connected. New items and pricing are readily available on-line, however, and friendly service is just a phone call away. Just my opinion, but many of us have had decades of experience trying to find just the right device for a need and they've always been there...at ALDA conventions, too, where you can sometimes handle an item and ask questions about it. There are also state agencies that have devices to show or lend upon request.

The reason I know about the catalogue delay is I heard about a grant from Tufts Health Plan Foundation in MA to help the "under-represented" in NH and border states suffering uniquely during COVID-19. I'd say we D/HOH qualify in droves! My drive to promote clear mouth masks is still in a developing phase, but I've got a few other ideas for a cache of goodies I hope to source and disperse. State offices, of which we are lucky to have some ALDA members, are helping me with suggestions and resources connecting where there is a need or tool.

The Visual Communication flyer [NH coronavirus-visual-tool healthcare.pdf](#) is one tool that is being mass-produced. Massachusetts fine-tuned the ALDA Facebook version posted earlier this spring. Wisconsin initially developed this pre-COVID so we thank that state organization for sharing! I learned that by October it had been shared 78,000 times from MCDHH Facebook page! Along the way, Steward HealthCare translated it into multiple languages and large print. MCDHH has open-sourced blank templates for other states to follow suit with the only request being that they be informed of its use. These flyers, edited for NH use, are in production as a laminated copy (for sterilization purposes) as I type this! At least twelve other states have produced their own. Ambulance services will be targeted for distribution, as well as Senior Centers, right on down to individuals who can pack in an emergency “go” bag.

I’ve put feelers out to different sectors like education, medical, public facilities and retail so we might raise awareness of the need for us to lipread. In getting masks and communication tools out in small supplies, I hope to have a trickle-down effect where someone sees, tells another about it, who tells yet another until we see these available everywhere like the solid masks. I walked around my local farmer’s market wearing a homemade clear mouth mask and as folks commented on them, I would hand out free wrapped ones with a dab of anti-fog treatment. Great sense of community-building! Who doesn’t love something free that will help someone else!

I was happy to see that the masks the ALDA Board trialed this summer are now available in a chain store in both adult and child sizes! And Staples has a good display of masks and accessories for wearing with hearing devices. As manufacturers of FDA medical-grade approved clear mouth masks have staggering shipping backlogs, we need to put our minds to task to approach the problem with “whatever works” ALDA ingenuity. Share what you learn on our Social Media outlets!

Clearly (no pun intended) these masks are not a “solution” as their downfall is decibel degradation and condensation in humid settings, but “helpful” in combination with other communication devices. I have supplies to make a version somewhere between the face shield with drape that was shared by MOOG Center for Deaf Education this summer and the “Badger” style developed at Univ. of Wisconsin Engineering (with others) that allows a mic to be placed inside the mask. This is especially helpful for teachers of the deaf (TOD) but also anywhere an FM system is used. Think museums & tour guides as places wrestle with staying open safely! These are not medical-grade but do allow cleaning for single users.

I am searching for that illusive Voice-To-Text (VTT) device that can work without WIFI for those who don’t have a cell phone with ASR(automatic speech recognition) capability. If you know of one, give me a shout at RD1@ALDA.org. Amazon Fire or Google tablet, perhaps?

I met with a director of a non-profit developing a concept of “villages” which brings folks aging-in-place together to share volunteer resources. I love their motto...”Listening deeply, developing options, helping you move forward”. Being one of the “sandwich generation”, I can appreciate their goal for piece-of-mind, knowing I am not the person my parent can contact to arrange some task to be done. It isn’t a new concept. In fact, their literature states 200 “villages” across the USA with 150 in development, of which this local contact is a founder. It is a nominal fee, membership-based organization...no surprise as we all know there are expenses associated with any organization... website management, marketing materials, events, technology, and incidentals. Much like ALDA!

So, as we enter the last quarter of 2020, I wish you strong villages, healthy families and deep listening! Even though we are not having our convention this year, please support ALDA national with your membership renewal as work continues behind the scene! And don’t forget your local ALDA membership renewals. If you don’t have one, or your local Chapter or Group is struggling to maintain momentum, please contact your RD! We will help you build it. Visit our website often for more news and updates. ALDASTRONG!