

THE MARYLAND RELAY *Connection*

FALL 2017



Happy Anniversary to the Tablet Program!

Last September, Governor Hogan announced that tablets were now available through the Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) program. In this past year, more than 400 tablets have been distributed to qualified applicants. That means more than 400 people have gained accessible communication through video chat services and communication-enhancing apps.

We're proud to say that the program has been a success, but don't take our word for it. Here's what people have said since receiving their tablet:

"I love my tablet. It has opened many communication doors for me. I am more independent now! It has become part of me!! I am VERY grateful."

– Anonymous

"Having this device and technology has opened my world again.

Thank you." – D.S., Chesapeake Beach, Md.

If you, or someone you know, would like to apply to be evaluated for the MAT program or would like more information, please visit mdrelay.org or contact Maryland Relay at 800-552-7724 (Voice/TTY), 410-767-6960 (Voice/TTY), or 443-453-5970 (Video Phone).



Voice/TTY: 800-552-7724 or 410-767-6960

Fax: 410-767-4276

Video Phone: 443-453-5970

mdrelay.org



You may notice that in our contact information, we include a Video Phone (VP) number. Persons using American Sign Language can contact us via Video Phone at 443-453-5970.



Carrie Nichol森 Wins Hamilton Relay 2017 Better Hearing and Speech Month Recognition Award

Congratulations to Carrie Nichol森 of Columbia for being selected as the Hamilton Relay 2017 Better Hearing and Speech Month Recognition Award recipient for the state of Maryland! Carrie has dedicated herself to improving the lives of individuals with hearing loss by being a resource and providing encouragement.



Carrie is very involved in the community, serving as the president of the Greater Baltimore Chapter of the Hearing Loss Association of America. She has revamped their web presence, launching and maintaining a Facebook page and creating regular newsletters to help the community stay updated.

Carrie also holds a leadership role with the Maryland Chapter of the Alexander Graham Bell Association of the Deaf and is a mentor for the Bionic Ear Association, making sure those who already have or are considering cochlear implants have all the information they need. Additionally, she volunteers with Fidos For Freedom by staffing exhibits and educating visitors on the availability and benefits of service and therapy dogs for people with hearing loss.

Her peers describe her as an inspiration with an "open attitude and willing spirit." Carrie's long list of accomplishments leave no doubt that she is deserving of this recognition.



Cassandra Blake Receives Hamilton Relay \$500 College Scholarship

Cassandra Blake, a graduate of Queen Anne's County High School from Sudlersville, Maryland, was awarded a \$500 college scholarship by Hamilton Relay!

Cassandra is attending Chesapeake College this fall to study Early Childhood Education. She was awarded the \$500 Hamilton Relay Scholarship after completing the application process, which included writing an essay on the topic of communication technology.

We wish her the best of luck in her future at Chesapeake College!



Meet Our New Outreach Team!

We are excited to introduce the two newest members of the Maryland Relay team, Bobby Harris and Jenny Curran! As Outreach Coordinators, Bobby and Jenny will travel throughout the state to educate people about Maryland Relay's services and the MAT program.

Bobby Harris

TRS Outreach Coordinator

Bobby is far from a stranger to Maryland Relay, as he used to work as the Translator/Interpreter Supervisor at the Maryland Relay Center in Frostburg. He was responsible for overseeing the translator/interpreters and ensuring the Maryland Relay Operators had the tools and resources they needed to provide the best service possible.

In his new role, he will be representing Maryland Relay at community events throughout the state and sharing information about Maryland Relay's Traditional Relay Services.

"I am looking forward to exploring Maryland and meeting new people," says Bobby. "If you see me at an event in your community, please do not hesitate to come and say 'Hello!'"

Bobby is a graduate of the Maryland School for the Deaf and the Rochester Institute of Technology College of Liberal Arts.

Jenny Curran

Captioned Telephone Outreach Coordinator

Jenny has dedicated her career to connecting people with resources and services they need to live inde-



Bobby Harris



Jenny Curran

pendently, so we are excited to have her on board to raise awareness for Captioned Telephone and the MAT program.

"I am so excited to be out and about, spreading the word about Maryland Relay and how it provides greater access to communication with family, friends and businesses," says Jenny. "I love to meet new people and travel, and this position gives me the opportunity to do both!"

Jenny has a bachelor's degree in Deaf Studies from Towson University, and currently lives in Edgewood.

Both Bobby and Jenny are available to give free presentations and training sessions to groups and organizations upon request.

For more information, please contact Maryland Relay at 800-552-7724 or 410-767-6960 (Voice/TTY), 443-453-5970 (Video Phone) or moreinfo@mdrelay.org.

GABTR Meets December 9, 2017

The next meeting of the Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay (GABTR) will be held Saturday, December 9, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Maryland Relay (301 West Preston Street, Suite 1008A, Baltimore, MD 21201).





Operator Feedback

Here are a few tips from our Operators to keep in mind the next time you place a Maryland Relay call:

Move away from background noise: If you are a voice user and you're in a crowded room or have a television on, the Operator may have trouble hearing your voice over the other sounds. Move to a quiet room to ensure the Operator can hear you clearly.

Offer clarification: Sometimes an Operator will ask you to clarify or repeat what you've said when you're a voice or Voice Carry-Over (VCO) user. Don't be discouraged; they are simply trying to make your call go as smoothly as possible. If they do ask you to repeat what you said, do so clearly and slowly so your conversation can continue.

News from the FCC

In September 2015, a petition was filed to urge the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to modify the equal access requirement which requires TRS providers to offer consumers access to their long distance carrier of choice to the same extent that such access is provided to voice users. Specifically, the petition requested that the rules change so that TRS providers no longer need to assess charges for long distance calls. Many landline or VoIP consumers have telephone plans that give them free long distance or have "bundles" that include long distance minutes.

The FCC granted the waiver. As a result, Maryland Relay users are no longer charged for long distance calls. However, there are situations when payment may still be necessary. These situations include:

- International Calls
- Directory Assistance
- Pay Phones
- Pay-Per-Call Services

You may use other methods to pay for these types of calls, including calling collect and using a calling card. For international and directory assistance, you may use the long distance carrier of your choice.

Deaf Culture Training

Maryland Relay is dedicated to bridging not only communication gaps, but cultural gaps as well. We are committed to educating our employees about the Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of hearing, and late-deafened communities and their cultures, as well as individuals who experience difficulty speaking.

To ensure that we serve all Marylanders with pride and dignity, our service provider, Hamilton Relay, offers culture training to all team members. Operators at the Maryland Relay Center participate in training during their new-hire orientation and have ongoing training throughout the year.

Our training modules include a wide variety of topics and methods including presentations, videos, and activities.

Our Operators truly enjoy the variety of lessons included in our Deaf culture training, and we believe that providing these learning opportunities guarantees that we are providing Maryland Relay users with the best service possible.





New Maryland Relay Partners!

The Maryland Relay Partner program provides free training to businesses across the state to ensure employees know how to make and receive Relay calls. It gives Maryland Relay users and Maryland businesses a way to stay connected, increasing sales and customer bases for the businesses and ensuring Maryland Relay users have equal access to the services and products the businesses offer.

We first introduced Maryland Relay Partner a little over two years ago, and the program continues to grow as more businesses complete their training.

To find the Maryland Relay Partners in your area, check out our new online directory at mdrelay.org! If you are a business owner who would like your company to become a Maryland Relay Partner, just visit mdrelay.org to complete our online inquiry form.



We'd like to thank and congratulate our newest Maryland Relay Partners!

Baltimore Neighborhoods, Inc.

2530 N. Charles St., Suite 200 | Baltimore, MD 21218
410-243-6007

Carroll County Health Department Transit Unit

290 S. Center St. | Westminster, MD 21157
410-876-4813

Joint Trust Funds

10003 Derekwood Ln. | Lanham, MD 20706
301-731-1050

Maryland Transit Administration

6 Saint Paul St., Suite 303 | Baltimore, MD 21202
410-539-5000

Maryland Transit Administration Police Department

4701 Mt. Hope Dr. | Baltimore, MD 21215
410-454-1600

Prince George's County Memorial Public Library

9601 Capital Ln. | Largo, MD 20774
301-699-3500

St. Mary's County Department of Human Resources

41770 Baldrige St. | Leonardtown, MD 20650
240-895-7500

Congratulations, Brenda Kelly-Frey!

All of us at Maryland Relay would like to share our heartfelt congratulations to Brenda Kelly-Frey on celebrating 15 years as director of Telecommunications Access of Maryland! Brenda has dedicated her life and career to helping bridge the communication gap between the hearing and Deaf communities.

Raised by Deaf parents, Brenda was introduced at a young age to the challenges that the Deaf community faces in accessing telecommunications. Seeing her parents rely on other people to make phone calls gave her a deep understanding of the Deaf community's need for privacy and independence.



"I have been fortunate to learn from and work with Brenda over the last 20 years. She has been a powerful and positive influence in the TRS industry. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work with Brenda throughout my own Relay career."

Dixie Ziegler, vice president of Hamilton Relay





"I have had the pleasure of working with Brenda for the past 20 years. Brenda is passionate about her work and a very hard worker. Congratulations, Brenda, for your many years of service to both Maryland Relay, TEDPA, and NASRA. I look forward to working with you for the next 20 years."

James Forstall, executive director of Florida Telecommunications Relay, Inc., and the current chair of TEDPA

A champion for individuals who are Deaf and hard of hearing, Brenda's proudest accomplishment is helping to establish the MAT program in 1997, which continues to grow and evolve, ensuring that every Maryland resident has access to telecommunications solutions regardless of ability or income.

She is the current chairperson of the National Association for State Relay Administration (NASRA), a past chairperson and charter member of the Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Association (TEDPA), and is also active with the Federal Communications Commission.

Brenda has been a teacher, mentor, and friend to so many over the years. Her continued hard work and dedication is both appreciated and admired by all who have worked with her!



"Brenda is one of the reasons why Maryland is one of the greatest places in the country for Deaf and hard of hearing individuals. She oozes integrity, compassion, and commitment to equality. She is one of the most dedicated advocates for access to telecommunication services for Deaf and hard of hearing individuals. I am honored and blessed to call Brenda not only a top-notch colleague, but also a dear friend."

Kelby Brick, director of the Maryland Governor's Office of the Deaf & Hard of Hearing





Telecommunications Access of Maryland

Maryland Dept. of Information Technology
301 West Preston Street, Suite 1008A
Baltimore, Maryland 21201



Larry Hogan
Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford
Lt. Governor



 facebook.com/MarylandRelay711

 twitter.com/MDRelay711

UPCOMING EVENTS

Look for Maryland Relay's Outreach Coordinators at these upcoming events.

To see a complete list, visit mdrelay.org:

October 4-5

2017 Power of Age Expo
Maryland State Fairgrounds
Timonium

October 11

**APG Disability Awareness
Month Symposium**
Aberdeen Proving Grounds
Aberdeen

October 19

**Kent County Health
and Wellness Expo**
Kent County High School | Worton

October 20

Howard County 50+ Expo
Wilde Lake High School | Columbia

October 20

**Maryland State Education
Association Convention**
Roland E. Powell Convention Center
Ocean City

October 20

**St. Mary's County "The Way to
Wellness" Community Health Fair**
Southern Maryland Higher
Education Center
California

October 21

**Anne Arundel County
DisABILITY Awareness Day**
Westfield Annapolis Mall
Annapolis

November 4

**African American Community
Forum on Memory Loss**
Coppin State University | Baltimore

November 10

**National Federation of the Blind
of Maryland Convention**
Sheraton Baltimore North Hotel
Towson

November 30

**Baltimore County Department
of Aging Advocacy Conference**
Hunt Valley Inn | Cockeysville

December 13

Waxter Wisdom Series
Waxter Senior Center | Baltimore