

THE MARYLAND RELAY *Connection*

SPRING 2015



Stacey Hill, former Maryland Relay Operator, holds a framed photograph of herself relaying the first Maryland Relay call on December 1, 1991.

December 1, 1991: The First Maryland Relay Call

The Maryland Relay administrative offices had a pleasant surprise recently when Stacey Hill, the Operator who relayed the very first Maryland Relay call, came by for a visit.

Now a procurement officer for the Maryland Department of General Services, Stacey happens to work in the same building as Maryland Relay's administrative staff.

"I just happened to share an elevator ride one day with a computer technician who mentioned he was on his way to Maryland Relay, and when I realized we were in the same building, I decided to stop in and see what was going on," Stacey says. "When I told them I was the Operator who took the first Maryland Relay call, I was amazed to see they still have pictures of me answering that call displayed on the wall!"

"It was exciting to get the first call. I was surrounded by a lot of people who were excited about the opening of the Relay center, and we were all excited about the opportunity to provide this service for Maryland's Deaf and hard-of-hearing communities."

Stacey answered that first call at the brand new Maryland Relay center on December 1, 1991. "It was exciting to get the first call," she says. "I was surrounded by a lot of people who were excited about the opening of the Relay center, and we were all excited about the opportunity to provide this service for Maryland's Deaf and hard-of-hearing communities."

Stacey has fond memories of her time as a Maryland Relay Operator. "I worked as an Operator for about four years, and I learned so much about the Deaf and hard-of-hearing communities," she says. "It was a great experience."



Voice/TTY: 800-552-7724 or 410-767-6960
Fax: 410-767-4276
Video Phone: 443-453-5970
www.mdrelay.org

“Captioned Telephone is My Mother’s Lifeline”

Joe Hall had not spoken to his mother on the phone in decades. Hard of hearing due to nerve damage, Madeline Hall stopped using the phone in the early 1980s. When Joe would call from Maryland to check in with his parents who lived in Arizona, he had to rely on his father to pass along their conversations to his mother. But when Joe’s father passed away in 2011, he knew something would need to change.

“We had tried in the past to convince my mother to let us get her a phone that she could use. But she was very skeptical about technology, and as long as my father was around, she insisted she didn’t need it,” he says. “But when my father passed, I realized that if my mother was going to remain independent, she would have to have a phone she could use. Without it, we would have no way to know if she was okay, or if she had a health problem, and it would have been impossible to let her live alone.”

“The key to dealing with an elderly parent who is resistant to change is persistence, persistence, persistence,” says Joe. “Even on the way to our appointment, my mother suggested we reschedule for another day. But I insisted that we go.”

During her evaluation, the staff recommended a Captioned Telephone for Madeline, and showed her how it would allow her to read word-for-word captions of her conversations on a brightly-lit screen. They even let her make a test call—her first telephone call in nearly 30 years—to her younger son.

“My brother is 12 years younger than me, and he had never spoken to our mother over the phone in his life,” says Joe. “He’s a police chief and a big, tough guy, but when he heard our mom’s voice on the other end of the line, he had tears streaming down his face.”

Once Madeline had her Captioned Telephone set up in her home, she realized how much she had been missing all these years.

“I think my mother was scared of technology because she did not think she could learn it, but the Captioned Telephone has been so easy for her to use,” says Joe. “It has a big display that is easy to read, and it works just like any other telephone. We put a chair for her by the phone so she can sit and read the captions while she talks. Now, we talk to her on the phone two to four times a week. And she tells me she wishes she had listened to me years ago! She realizes now that she could have had so many more conversations, and she would not have felt as isolated.”

Not only has Captioned Telephone given Madeline back her independence, but it has also given her family peace of mind.

“I think my mother was scared of technology because she did not think she could learn it, but the Captioned Telephone has been so easy for her to use.”

“Now, we can talk to her whenever we want, and we know Mom is okay. We know that if she has an emergency, she can communicate with 9-1-1 personnel. And most importantly for her, she can talk to her grandchildren,” says Joe. “Having the Captioned Telephone has eliminated worry and fear and created happiness and joy in my mother’s life.”

And what advice does Joe have for others with older parents? “Be persistent, and don’t take away their dignity,” he says. “Get the support of other family members, and talk to them with love and respect and show them what you can do to help. Once my mother was able to see what Captioned Telephone could do for her, all of her reservations disappeared. She calls her Captioned Telephone her lifeline.”

For more information about Captioned Telephone or the Maryland Assistive Telecommunications (MAT) program please call 800-552-7724 , 410-767-6960 (Voice/TTY), 443-453-5970 (Video Phone) or visit mdrelay.org.

Meet Maryland Relay's New Outreach Team

Maryland Relay and Hamilton Relay are pleased to welcome two new outreach coordinators to our team, Asia Johnson and Kellie Broussard. Both Asia and Kellie will travel throughout the state to educate people within residential, commercial, instructional and public sectors about Maryland Relay's services and the MAT program. Asia and Kellie will be representing Maryland Relay at many community events throughout the state. If you see a Maryland Relay booth at your local event, please be sure to stop by and say hello!

Asia Johnson

As TRS Outreach Coordinator, Asia specializes in educating people about Maryland Relay's Traditional Relay Services (TRS). Prior to joining Maryland Relay, she worked with students who have autism and hearing loss as an early intervention specialist at Trellis Services, Inc. in Hunt Valley, Maryland. She is a graduate of Towson University with a bachelor's degree in Deaf Studies.

Kellie Broussard

As Captioned Telephone Outreach Coordinator, Kellie specializes in educating people about Maryland Relay's Captioned Telephone services. She most recently worked as program coordinator for the East River Family Strengthening Collaborative in Washington, D.C., where she worked to connect families with community-based services. Kellie is an experienced outreach coordinator, having worked for the Advisory Neighborhood Commission, D.C. Public Schools, Young American Works Public Charter School, D.C. Department of Health, and the U.S. House of Representatives.

Both Asia and Kellie are available to give free presentations and training sessions to groups and organizations upon request.

For more information or to schedule training or a presentation on Maryland Relay, Captioned Telephone, the MAT program, and the Maryland Relay Partner program, please contact Maryland Relay Customer Service at 800-552-7724 or 410-767-6960 (Voice/TTY), 443-453-5970 (Video Phone) or moreinfo@mdrelay.org.



Top: Asia Johnson, Maryland Relay TRS Outreach Coordinator; Bottom: Kellie Broussard, Maryland Relay Captioned Telephone Outreach Coordinator



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Andrew Cohen Receives Hamilton Relay 2014 Maryland Deaf Community Leader Award

Each year during Deaf Awareness Week, Hamilton Relay recognizes a community leader who is Deaf or Deaf-Blind and has been a strong influence within their community and/or the State of Maryland. The 2014 recipient of Maryland's Deaf Community Leader Award is Andrew Cohen. Andrew is a true asset to the Deaf-Blind community as demonstrated by his dedication and contributions to organizations and associations throughout the state.

Committed to encouraging individuals who are Deaf-Blind to value and maintain their independence, Andrew is active in connecting members of the community to as many resources as possible. Specifically, he was instrumental in establishing a relationship between the DeafBlind Camp of Maryland and the Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind. Andrew has served on the board of the DeafBlind Camp of Maryland since 2011. As a member of the board, he keeps the needs of individuals first as he develops activities for the camp. Andrew uses his technological expertise to develop and maintain the camp's website. He has also coordinated logistics for the camp's annual Tech Expo and is working to establish an online version of the camp application to increase accessibility for all users.

In addition to his work with the DeafBlind Camp of Maryland, Andrew has contributed to the community by supporting the American Association of the Deaf-Blind. He sits on the board for the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council as well as the Deaf-Blind sub-committee for the Maryland Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. He was also the president of the Metro Washington Association of the Deaf-Blind from 2011 to 2013. Andrew has served as an excellent role model for young individuals who are Deaf or Deaf-Blind. He meets every challenge with enthusiasm and is truly committed to serving the community.

Congratulations, Andrew!

"Committed to encouraging individuals who are Deaf-Blind to value and maintain their independence, Andrew is active in connecting members of the community to as many resources as possible."



Andrew Cohen, 2014 Maryland Deaf Community Leader Award recipient, with Asia Johnson, Maryland Relay TRS Outreach Coordinator.

Introducing the CapTel 2400i



The newest addition to the family of CapTel® technology is now available to Maryland residents who have difficulty hearing over the phone: the CapTel 2400i. The CapTel 2400i includes new elements along with a variety of enhancements to popular features, providing just another option for enjoying phone conversations with clarity and confidence!

The Captioned Telephone service is the same, offering quality captions through the use of voice recognition technology. With its new touch-screen technology, the 2400i allows users to enjoy a large colorful display with the capability to navigate the menu and dial a number by touching images on the screen.

Check out these great features:

- Large, colorful display with easy touch-screen technology
- Easy-to-follow menu system

- Built-in answering machine stores up to 100 unique messages
- Adjustable font sizes and colors
- Amplification and adjustable tone control
- Bright flashing when phone rings
- Phone book allows you to easily store and dial more than 95 names and phone numbers
- Save up to 10 favorite numbers and 4 speed-dial numbers
- Menu options and prompts available in English or Spanish

In addition, the 2400i captions will default ON automatically due to recent changes with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). This simplifies the process for users who require captions on every call.

To learn more about Captioned Telephone or the CapTel 2400i, please call 800-552-7724, 410-767-6960 (Voice/TTY), or 443-453-5970 (Video Phone), or visit mdrelay.org.

CapTel is a registered trademark of Ultratec, Inc.



NEWS & NOTES

Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM) Director Brenda Kelly-Frey has been elected as Chairperson of the Board by the National Association for State Relay Administration (NASRA). Elections took place during NASRA's annual conference this past September in Portland, Maine. NASRA is comprised of individuals who are directly involved in the administration or oversight of Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS) for their respective states. NASRA members are typically state administrators or public service/public utilities commission employees. As director of TAM, Brenda has overseen Maryland Relay and the Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) equipment distribution program since 2002.

Sabrina Fields, Assistive Technology Lead Administrator at TAM, has been elected Vice-Chairperson of the Board by the Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Association (TEDPA). Elections were held during TEDPA's annual conference this past September in Portland, Maine. TEDPA is the national association for representatives of state distribution programs of specialized telecommunications equipment for people who have difficulty using a standard phone. Sabrina oversees the MAT program and works to connect approved applicants with the free assistive telephone equipment that best meets their needs.

Pictured top to bottom: Brenda Kelly-Frey and Sabrina Fields



MAT Program Now Offers Two Additional Captioned Telephone Options at No Cost

Maryland Relay is pleased to announce that CapTel® 840i and CapTel 2400i phones are now available at no cost to qualified Maryland residents through the Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) program.

Like all Captioned Telephones, the CapTel 840i and CapTel 2400i automatically provide word-for-word captions of all conversations on a brightly-lit display screen. The captions provide an increased understanding of what is said for people who have difficulty hearing over the phone. To use the CapTel 840i or CapTel 2400i, you need telephone service (digital, DSL, VoIP or analog) and high-speed Internet access (WiFi or Ethernet cable).

In addition to Captioned Telephones, the MAT program offers a wide variety of assistive telephone equipment, including:

- Amplified phones
- Ring signalers
- Phones with large and/or high contrast buttons
- Phones that talk when dialed
- Picture phones
- Phones that amplify speech
- Text telephones (TTYs)
- Braille TTYs for people who are Deaf-Blind
- Hearing Carry-Over (HCO) phones
- Voice Carry-Over (VCO) phones
- Hands-free phones

The MAT program is available to any Maryland resident who:

- is 5 years of age or older;
- receives one or more state or federal financial benefits, or has limited income; and
- is unable to effectively use the telephone due to hearing or speaking difficulties, or due to low vision, limited mobility or cognitive factors.



If you meet this criteria, you qualify to apply for free equipment through the MAT program.

Once your application is approved, you will receive a letter in the mail containing instructions for scheduling an evaluation at your nearest MAT Evaluation Center. Evaluations are free and are designed to identify the type of equipment that fits your individual needs. If you do not qualify for free equipment and wish to purchase equipment privately, you may still receive a free evaluation through the MAT program.

To learn more, or to apply for the MAT program, please visit mdrelay.org or call Maryland Relay at 800-552-7724, 410-767-6960 (Voice/TTY), or 443-453-5970 (Video Phone).



Telecommunications Access of Maryland

Maryland Dept. of Information Technology

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Baltimore, Maryland 21201



Welcomes

Maryland's 62nd Governor,

Larry Hogan, Jr.

and Lt. Governor

Boyd Rutherford.



Save The Date: Next GABTR Meeting
May 2, 2015 | 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

The next meeting of the Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay will be held Saturday, May 2 at the Maryland Relay TAM office located at 301 West Preston Street, Suite 1008A Baltimore, Maryland 21201. This meeting is open to the public. Anyone is welcome to attend to learn more about our programs and services and offer feedback, suggestions and concerns. For the latest information, please contact the Maryland Relay office at 800-552-7724, 410-767-6960 (Voice/TTY), or 443-453-5970 (Video Phone), or visit our website at mdrelay.org.

Please note that this is a fragrance-free office and a photo ID is required to enter the building.