



# THE MARYLAND RELAY *Connection*

WINTER 2015/2016



## Wishing you a wonderful Holiday Season!

Left to right: (bottom row) Naytasha, Mary & Karen; (middle row) Brenda & Asia; (top row) Sabrina



Voice/TTY: 800-552-7724 or 410-767-6960  
Fax: 410-767-4276  
Video Phone: 443-453-5970  
[mdrelay.org](http://mdrelay.org)



You may notice that in our contact information, we include a Video Phone (VP) number. Video Phone enables individuals who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or who have difficulty speaking, to communicate with us over the phone using sign language. Video Phone users may speak with us using a live video feed by dialing 443-453-5970 (Video Phone).

## Happy Retirement, Pam!

Earlier this year, we said a bittersweet goodbye to Pam Stewart, who retired after 22 years as contract manager and interpreter for Maryland Relay.

Pam's career with Maryland Relay began in 1993— after she completed a sign language interpreter program at a local community college. One of her instructors in the program happened to be Brenda Kelly-Frey, the current director of Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM). It was Brenda who suggested that Pam interview for the open position with Maryland Relay, and they have worked together ever since.



*Pam Stewart, retired May 1.*

"Brenda has been my teacher, my mentor, my friend, and by the time I retired, my boss!" said Pam. "This is one of the best groups of people I have ever worked with, and I do miss them."

Over her career, Pam saw Maryland Relay expand from just traditional text telephone (TTY) Relay to include new technologies and services like Captioned Telephone. And even in her retirement, Pam is still passionate about raising awareness for Maryland Relay.

"Between Maryland Relay and the Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) program, we have one of the best agencies in the state for the citizens of Maryland who have any trouble using a phone for any reason," said Pam. "I always said 'if you can't use the phone, you can't stay at home,' and this program offers free service and free equipment that can keep people in their homes. Even with all of the outreach we do, there are still people who don't know about Maryland Relay, and everyone should know about our programs."

In her retirement, Pam is looking forward to working with her local library and hospital to continue to tell as many people about Maryland Relay as she can.

"I am one of the very few and lucky people who can say that I loved every single day of my job, from the first day to the last day," she said.

The entire Maryland Relay staff thanks Pam for her hard work and dedication, and wishes her a very happy retirement!



*Brenda Kelly-Frey, TAM director, and Asia Johnson, Maryland TRS outreach coordinator, stand in front of the "Road to Freedom" ADA Bus*

## **Maryland Relay Celebrates ADA 25**

On July 26, our nation celebrated the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), an event that laid the groundwork for establishing Maryland Relay. This landmark civil rights legislation prohibits discrimination against people with any type of disability and assures them the right to "equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency."

In Baltimore, Maryland Relay commemorated this milestone at a special community fair and reception hosted by the Maryland Department of Disabilities. The "Road to Freedom" ADA Bus was on display in front of the Warehouse at Camden Yards to raise awareness of the history of the ADA and disability history milestones. Our representatives even had the opportunity to meet the wife of activist Justin Dart who is often regarded as the "Father of the ADA" and see his famous hat he wore at the official signing of the ADA with President Bush 25 years ago. We were so honored to participate in this event!



*Kelby Brick, director of the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Lieutenant Governor Boyd Rutherford, Secretary Carol Beatty of the Department of Disabilities, and Brenda Kelly-Frey, TAM director, at the ADA 25th Anniversary reception*

## The ADA Signing: A Day to Remember

Friend and photographer Steve Brenner attended the ADA signing ceremony at the White House on July 26, 1990, and he was generous enough to share a few of his photos with us. We hope you enjoy this exclusive look back at this historic day.



Photographs courtesy  
of Steve Brenner

The crowd gathered on the  
White House South Lawn



One of the pins  
handed out at  
the ADA signing  
ceremony

A ticket to the ADA signing ceremony on the South  
Lawn of the White House on July 26, 1990



President Bush signs the ADA



President Bush addresses the crowd before  
officially signing the ADA

## Making the Workplace Accessible

Linda is the epitome of a person you would find in any high end cosmetic counter in major department stores across the country. She is well polished, friendly, and knows her product as well as her customers. Linda possesses a bubbly personality and makes stopping by her counter personal and fun, except for a period of time earlier this year. Part of Linda's job is to call customers when a special promotion is running. A disease is causing her to lose her hearing and, as it progresses, she is no longer able to hear clearly on the phone. The hearing loss has impacted her ability to perform her duties to the point where she was concerned about losing her job.

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires employers to provide accommodations when a staff member needs to do things in a different way. Maryland Relay provides free evaluations for people who need accommodations using a telephone. Some people are unable to speak clearly; others may not be able to reach the phone in time, or to physically pick up the receiver. There are many reasons someone might use Maryland Relay. An evaluation ensures that an employer can be confident in purchasing the right equipment to meet an employee's individual needs.

"To support a nimble workforce in Maryland, it is vital to create an environment that is accessible to people of

all abilities," said Secretary Garcia, of the Department of Information Technology. "Maryland Relay, as a division of the Department of Information Technology, provides a valuable service to ensure that Maryland residents have the assistive telecommunications equipment they need to be successful."

For Linda this has meant the use of a Captioned Telephone. With this accessible telephone Linda is able to continue to perform at peak level. The Captioned Telephone allows her to both hear and speak just as she always has, while also supporting her hearing loss. Linda can now read everything the other person is saying so that she understands each word. With this tool Linda is able to make and receive phone calls.

Linda practiced on her new equipment so she could regain her level of success. Explanations and instructions for the use of the Captioned Telephone and other devices can be found on the Maryland Relay website at [mdrelay.org](http://mdrelay.org). Also on the site are calling instructions that Relay users may print and give out to family and friends.

**For additional information visit [mdrelay.org](http://mdrelay.org) or call 800-552-7724 or 410-767-6960 (Voice/TTY) or 443-453-5970 (Video Phone).**



## Melissa O'Neill Receives Better Hearing & Speech Month Recognition Award

This year's recipient of the Better Hearing and Speech Month Recognition Award for the state of Maryland is Melissa O'Neill. She is an enthusiastic leader and volunteer, and is dedicated to improving the lives of individuals who are hard of hearing.



*Kellie Broussard, Maryland Captioned Telephone outreach coordinator and Melissa O'Neill*

Melissa currently serves as the president of the Greater Baltimore Chapter of the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA). In addition to providing support and information to people with hearing loss, she is actively involved in organizing social activities for the chapter, including the summer picnic and holiday party.

Melissa is committed to bettering her community and for the past several years has helped raise money for the Salvation Army of Columbia, MD. She has also held internship positions at University of Maryland, Paul's Place, and the National Student Partnership in Baltimore, all of which were aimed at improving the lives of individuals in the community. Through these positions, she was able to assist in a number of ways, including finding housing and employment for clients, helping with an afterschool program and leading a reading club for young girls.

We commend Melissa for her leadership and advocacy on behalf of individuals who are hard of hearing!

## Anna Averett Wins Hamilton Relay High School Scholarship

Anna Averett, a graduate of Westminster High School, is Maryland's recipient of the 2015 Hamilton Relay High School Scholarship. As this year's winner, Anna received \$500 to use towards her college education.

The Hamilton Relay Scholarship opportunity is available to high school seniors who are Deaf, hard of hearing, Deaf-Blind or have difficulty speaking. A recipient is selected within each of the states where Hamilton is the contracted service provider and is one of several ways the company gives back to the communities they serve.

"Hamilton takes pride in recognizing outstanding leadership and promoting education," said Asia Johnson, Maryland TRS outreach coordinator. "We are excited to have the opportunity to contribute to

furthering Anna's education and wish her success in reaching her personal and professional goals."

Anna was awarded the \$500 Hamilton Relay Scholarship after completing an application and writing an essay under the topic of communication technology. Anna is now pursuing a degree in fashion merchandising at the University of South Carolina.



*Asia Johnson, Maryland TRS outreach coordinator and Anna Averett*

# Don't Hang Up! Introducing Maryland Relay Partner

By Mary Clark

Judith is having a hard time getting in touch with her doctor. Her recent throat surgery makes it difficult to speak. She relies on a special telephone device, a TTY, to make calls using Maryland Relay. During these calls, a live Maryland Relay Operator voices Judith's typed words to the person on the other end of the line. When that person speaks, Judith listens directly to what is said.

Some people think they are getting calls from telemarketers or scammers, so they hang up immediately. This is what is happening to Judith.

**After dialing 7-1-1 to connect to Maryland Relay, Judith types in the number for her doctor's office. The Operator places the call.**

**Secretary:** "Good morning, this is Dr. Wilson's office. How can I help you?"

**Operator:** "Hello. A person is calling you through Maryland Relay. This is Relay Operator #1234. Have you received a Relay call before?"

**The secretary quickly hangs up.**

**Operator:** "Relay user, the person hung up. Would you like to make another call?"

**Judith types in her doctor's office phone number again.**

**Secretary:** "Hi, thanks for calling Dr. Wilson's office. How can I help you?"

**Operator:** "Hello. A person is calling you through Maryland Relay. This is Relay Operator #1234. Have you received a Relay call before?"

**Secretary:** "What is this?"

**Operator:** "The person on the line is using Maryland Relay service to communicate with you. The caller is typing his/her conversation which will be read to you. When you hear the words 'go ahead,' it is your turn to speak. Please speak directly to the caller. One moment for your call to begin."

**Judith types her side of the conversation.**

**Operator:** "And your party has typed, 'Hello, this is Judith Cole. I need to make an appointment to see Dr. Wilson for a follow-up. Go ahead.'"

**Secretary:** "I'm sorry, I'm not sure what you want me to do."

**Judith is hung up on a second time.**

Every day Relay users make and receive calls through Maryland Relay. In order to lessen the amount of hang-ups, Maryland Relay has created a program called **Maryland Relay Partner**. This program provides free training to businesses on how to place and receive Relay calls, giving them the opportunity to:

- connect with thousands of Relay users
- increase sales
- grow customer loyalty among Relay users
- encourage positive word-of-mouth from satisfied Relay users

In this case, if Dr. Wilson's office signed up for the **Maryland Relay Partner** program and received the free training and educational materials, Judith's calling experience would not end in hang-ups. Instead, the secretary would already be aware that a person who cannot use a standard telephone is using Maryland Relay to communicate, and she would know it is her turn to speak when she hears, "go ahead."

If you are a Maryland Relay user and have experienced multiple hang-ups with businesses or organizations, please contact Customer Service at 800-552-7724 or 410-767-6960 (Voice/TTY) or 443-453-5970 (Video Phone). Maryland Relay staff will reach out and offer free training on making and receiving Relay calls. If your workplace involves phone calls, please sign up for free training to learn how to connect with Relay users. To enroll, business owners may visit [mdrelay.org](http://mdrelay.org) to complete an online inquiry form.

## MAT Program: Free Equipment and Personalized Service

At Maryland Relay, we pride ourselves on providing personalized service to everyone who applies for free equipment through the Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) program. Here is a letter we recently received from one of our clients about their experience with Sabrina Fields, lead practitioner for the MAT program:

***My husband and I recently received a telephone from the MAT equipment program. We are so pleased with the phone and wanted to be sure you knew how ably Sabrina Fields assisted us during the assessment in your offices for the phones and then how kind she was to come to our house to help install them. During our assessment, we mentioned we were hesitant to carry out the installation ourselves. Sabrina suggested we call upon her to help so that we could easily access and make good use of the system.***

***Sure enough, we received the phones, called the MAT office, and Sabrina appeared at our house and installed two telephones for us. I want to thank Sabrina and you for running such a fine office. Sabrina more than exceeded our expectations in showing us how to use the equipment. The telephones make all the difference in the world. Now when people call, we hear them clearly; they don't seem to mumble anymore.***

***Sincerely yours,  
AL & SL  
Baltimore, MD***

The MAT program is a state-provided service of Maryland Relay, a division of the Department of Information Technology.



## Maryland Relay Partners with Meals on Wheels

Maryland Relay recently partnered with Meals on Wheels of Central Maryland to raise awareness for the Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) program among the 1,500 seniors and other homebound adults who receive meals from Meals on Wheels each day. As part of the partnership, Meals on Wheels distributed information about the MAT program to its clients with their meal deliveries. In addition, Maryland Relay provided training for Meals on Wheels' regional client liaisons, so that they can better inform their drivers, volunteers, and clients about Maryland Relay. Maryland Relay will also have Meals on Wheels information available at its administrative office.

This collaboration was a natural fit for both organizations, as many individuals who receive meal assistance from Meals on Wheels may also benefit from the free assistive telephone equipment available through the MAT program. Maryland Relay is already receiving more inquiries about the MAT program as a result of this partnership.

**To learn more about MAT, visit [mdrelay.org](http://mdrelay.org). To learn more about Meals on Wheels of Central Maryland, visit [mealsonwheelsmd.org](http://mealsonwheelsmd.org).**



## Telecommunications Access of Maryland

Maryland Dept. of Information Technology

301 West Preston Street, Suite 1008A

Baltimore, Maryland 21201



## Making 2016 Plans? Schedule a Free Presentation!

**Maryland Relay offers free presentations for schools, groups, and organizations, upon request.** Presentations are led by Maryland Relay outreach coordinators who are experienced at tailoring presentations to each unique audience. To schedule a presentation call 800-552-7724 or 410-767-6960 (Voice/TTY) or 443-453-5970 (Video Phone) and ask to speak to an outreach coordinator.