



THE MARYLAND RELAY *Connection*

SUMMER 2014



MAT Program Offers Assistive Telephones to Fit Your Needs

Communicating by telephone is an important part of living an independent life. That's why the Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) program provides the opportunity for individuals to apply for free assistive telephone equipment.

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 (Social Security, SSI, SSDI, lives on retirement, etc.) 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 the above criteria, you may qualify for free equipment through the MAT program. Once your application is approved, you will receive a letter in the mail containing instructions for scheduling a free evaluation. 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.

Five MAT Evaluation Centers are located throughout the state. Evaluations are free and are designed to identify the type of equipment that fits your individual needs. During the evaluation, you will have the opportunity to practice dialing, answering, and talking on several different phones or devices until you and the evaluator find the one that works for you.

The MAT program offers a wide variety of equipment, including:

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

Once the equipment that works for you has been identified, the evaluator will place an order, and it will be delivered to you within one to two weeks. Each device comes with personalized instructions for setup and use, and you may always contact your local MAT Evaluation Center for additional training.

To learn more, or to apply for the MAT program, visit mdrelay.org or call Maryland Relay at 1-800-552-7724 (Voice/TTY) or 443-453-5970 (VP).



Voice/TTY: 800-552-7724
Fax: 410-767-4276 / VP: 443-453-5970
www.mdrelay.org

Jehanne McCullough Wins Hamilton Relay High School Scholarship

Maryland Relay is proud to announce that Jehanne McCullough, a student of Maryland School for the Deaf, was selected as Maryland's recipient of the 2014 Hamilton Relay High School Scholarship. As this year's winner, Jehanne 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 creating opportunities for higher education and promoting outstanding leadership across the country," said Tracie Reaver, Maryland Captioned Telephone Outreach Coordinator. "We are excited to have the opportunity to contribute to furthering Jehanne's education and wish her success in reaching her personal and professional goals."

Jehanne was awarded the \$500 Hamilton Relay Scholarship after completing an application and writing an essay on the topic of communication technology. Jehanne plans to attend college this fall to study Government.



Scholarship winner Jehanne McCullough (center), pictured with Tearra Donovan (left) and Tracie Reaver (right)



OPERATOR'S CORNER

Tips for Using STS and Visually Assisted STS

Maryland Relay offers both Speech-to-Speech (STS) and Visually Assisted STS service designed specifically for people whose speech may be difficult to understand over the telephone. Below are a few tips for STS and Visually Assisted STS users to follow to assist our Operators in providing the best service possible when placing calls:

1. Give the Operator (OPR) as much information as possible about your call prior to the OPR dialing. For example, if you know you are calling an automated system that requires you to select from a number of options, let the OPR know which options you want before the call is placed. If you reach an answering machine, the OPR will get your full message and then call back to leave that message.
2. Once the call is connected, everyone on the call will be able to hear each other.
3. The OPR will revoice three- to four-word segments unless you request otherwise.
4. The OPR will clarify anything that is not clear before revoicing.
5. It is helpful if you pause while the OPR revoices.
6. You should not be concerned with the length of time a call may take. There is no time limit.
7. You or the person you are calling may request that the OPR remain in the background. If you need the OPR to begin revoicing at any time during the call, you must request the OPR to do so. This is especially helpful when calling family, friends or others who are familiar with your speech.
8. Say "GA" or "Go Ahead" when you are finished speaking and are ready for a response.
9. You may make as many consecutive calls as you want.
10. You are in charge of your call. You may request a male or female OPR — and as long as one is available, your request will be honored.

If you have other questions about STS or Visually Assisted STS, please call Maryland Customer Service at 866-269-9006 (English) or 866-744-7471 (Spanish).

Marcia Swanson Wins Better Hearing and Speech Month Award

Each May, during Better Hearing and Speech Month, Hamilton Relay recognizes one individual in Maryland who is hard of hearing, late deafened or has difficulty speaking and who has been a positive influence in his or her community. This year's recipient of the Better Hearing and Speech Month Recognition Award is Marcia Swanson of Silver Spring.



Marcia is a true leader and advocate within her community who does not hesitate to take on leadership roles. After a career of more than 30 years with the Federal Government, Marcia now spends much of her time volunteering for a variety of local organizations.

She is a graduate of Western Maryland College, now referred to as McDaniel College, where she was instrumental in establishing a scholarship fund for students. This scholarship is available to students who are Deaf or hard of hearing and also extends to students who choose a field of study related to working with individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

Marcia spends a great amount of time volunteering and serving a variety of roles within community organizations. She is actively involved in the Center Hiking Club and held the role of vice president from 1997 to 1999. Currently, she is the secretary for hike leaders, ensuring members have their "Leader Hike Packs." She is also secretary of the White Oak National Active and Retired Federal Employees (NARFE) Chapter #1888 and previously held positions as president, vice president, legislation and treasurer. Additionally, Marcia serves as the vice-chair of the Maryland State Legislative Committee. This year, Marcia also volunteered to work as an election judge during the Primary Election, and she plans to volunteer again for the General Election in November.

Her volunteer efforts extend to working with local middle and high school students in the B-Sharp program. This program provides a classroom setting for suspended students where they have the opportunity to keep up with their homework, talk about their decisions and discuss better alternatives.

We commend Marcia for her volunteerism and dedication to improving the lives of individuals in her community!

GABTR welcomes new members

We are happy to welcome two new members to Maryland's Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay (GABTR). Members of GABTR represent the needs and concerns of Maryland Relay users and focus on ensuring that effective outreach and quality services are provided to Maryland consumers.

Charm L. Smith represents Maryland Relay users who are Deaf or hard of hearing. She is the president of the Maryland Association of the Deaf, an organization that works to safeguard, maintain, and advance the civic, educational, and social welfare of people in Maryland who are Deaf and hard of hearing. She is looking forward to ensuring that the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community is well represented in all GABTR activities.

Jason Corning represents Maryland Relay users who are Deaf-Blind. He is the president of both the Metro Washington Association of the Deaf-Blind and Baltimore Association of the Deaf-Blind. He is also coordinator of the Deafblind International Youth Network for the U.S. region. As a member of GABTR, Jason is looking forward to providing his perspective and helping to educate the community on the needs of people who are Deaf-Blind. He wants to make a difference and see other people who are Deaf-Blind achieve success.

For more information about GABTR, please contact us at 800-552-7724 (V/TTY) or 443-453-5970 (VP).

Save the Date: Next GABTR meeting September 6

The next meeting of the Maryland Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay (GABTR) will be held September 6 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Maryland Relay administrative office located at 301 West Preston Street, Suite 1008A, Baltimore, Maryland 21201. This meeting is open to the public and all are welcome to attend. Please note that this is a fragrance-free office and a photo ID is required to enter the building.



Telecommunications Access of Maryland

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



Free Presentations Available

If your group or organization would like to learn more about Maryland Relay's programs and services, our Outreach Team offers free presentations and training sessions upon request. For more information or to schedule training or a presentation, please contact Maryland Relay Customer Service at 800-552-7724 V/TTY, 443-453-5970 VP; or moreinfo@mdrelay.org.

Upcoming events are listed on our website at www.mdrelay.org.

Goodbye and Good Luck to Tearra Donovan and Tracie Reaver

Maryland TRS Outreach Coordinator Tearra Donovan and Maryland Captioned Telephone Outreach Coordinator Tracie Reaver will soon be leaving Maryland Relay to pursue new opportunities. Tearra will be moving west to Nevada, and Tracie will be taking on a national role with Hamilton Relay. Over the past few years, Tearra and Tracie have done great work with us and have shared information about Maryland Relay's programs and services with people across the state. We sincerely thank them for all of their contributions, and wish them the best of luck as they move onto their next ventures!



*Pictured left to right:
Tracie Reaver and
Tearra Donovan*