



Hard of Hearing Task Force Meeting
Draft Minutes
Virtual Meeting via Zoom November 18, 2022

I. Call to Order, Introductions, Housekeeping - (HOH Specialist, Christy Abrams)
The Hard of Hearing Program Specialist called the meeting to order at 9:04am

Voting Members Present: Commissioner Fred Williams, Commissioner Melanie O'Rourke, Barry Forst, Cynthia Amerman, Liz Booth, Ron Tallman, Harvey Smith, Roz Seibold

Voting Members Absent: N/A

ACDHH Staff Present: Sherri Collins, Executive Director / Nikki Soukup, Director of Public Policy and Community Relations/ Michele Michaels, Hearing Healthcare Program Manager / Christy Abrams, Hard of Hearing Specialist / Ricky Gonsowski, Technical Operations Analyst

Others Present: CART Captioner and 2 ASL Interpreters

Introducing New ACDHH Team members: Sue Kay Kneifel, Director of Business Operations, and Cameo Hunsaker, Interpreter Professional Development Specialist

II. Review & Approval of Minutes 08/19/2022 (TF Members present at 08/19/22 meeting)

- Fred moved to approve the minutes from August 19, 2022 as is and Barry seconded the motion.

III. Public Policy & Community Relations Report

- Community relations work in progress for Toys to Avoid Campaign.
- Excited to announce that the Language Acquisition Task Force has completed their 20-page report; available In English and Spanish as well as an ASL summary version that has a voiceover and captions. This is available on the ACDHH Website under the Task Force Tab. Key findings and recommendations include; need to develop a more cooperative standardized system for collecting data in order to make decisions on language acquisition and language development for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind children. Important to provide resources for families early on and provide a whole continuum of language choices to determine what's best for each individual child.
- The ACDHH Board approved a resolution to recognize that DeafBlind /CVHL community members can serve in the roles as Deaf representative and CVHL can



serve in the role of HOH representative. There is a DeafBlind representative currently on the board.

- Working on making communication accessible through different broadcasts; AZ US Senate debate, certified Deaf interpreters who are visible on the broadcast as well as captions. Placement of interpreters and captioning is a work in progress!
- We have a new Governor and we will begin the new legislative session and we're excited to see what happens there!

IV. Hard of Hearing Specialist Report (Christy Abrams)

- A big congratulations and thank you to Ron Tallman and Barry Forst for organizing another Fabulous Walk4Hearing for Arizona! It was a chilly morning and a gorgeous day. Ron and Barry put a tremendous amount of time, heart and spirit in which makes the Walk so great!
- In the past quarter, more than 548 emails and calls have come in to Christy from people across the state that are hard of hearing. They contact us for various reasons; maybe they can't afford hearing aids, they want to learn about accommodations, need emotional support, help to navigate employment issues, assistive technology, communication strategies for family members or themselves. You name, if we don't have the answer, we will certainly search for it.
- The Hearing Healthcare Assistance Project (HHAP); we continue to refer low income adults to ASU Speech and Hearing Clinic. We have referred 45 people to ASU as well as other resources such as; Vocational Rehabilitation, the Veterans Administration, Medicare Advantage Plans and National resources. Please don't hesitate to refer anyone to us even if you're unsure about income. We have many resources and will find out what options are available for each individual.
- Outreach and education continue with our trainings; Communication Access Resources for Empowerment for medical professionals, Let's Get to Work for employers, Public Safety training for first responders and Police Officers.
- Toys to Avoid; any toy over 85 decibels runs the risk of harming a child's hearing. Every year, we go on a hunt for the loudest toys and create social media to create awareness in hopes to keep kids hearing safely!
- Looking forward to creating some new swag; a new button or magnet with input from the Task Force!



V. Hard of Hearing Program Manager Report (Michele Michaels)

- ACDHH is developing Age of Access, a special project being developed and geared towards those who are aging, a website specifically for seniors. As we age we find that we need access to effective communication when we go to hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, and continuing care retirement communities, among other places. As Caregivers, we need to hear if someone is getting out of bed at night. In particular, our Deaf seniors may not have access to the same information as others do; medical power of attorney, behavioral health power of attorney, financial power of attorney, creating a will, do not resuscitate order (DNR). Navigating Medicare is another important thing to be able to learn how to do with access.
- Saturday, March 25th we are going to have our first ever Senior Expo for the Deaf, the Hard of Hearing and the DeafBlind.
- For low income people under the age of 21, they can receive hearing healthcare through our state Medicaid program, AHCCCS. At the age of 21 then we look at Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) to assist. We can also provide resources for people who may not have US citizenship.
- Our team has been busy with delivering presentations and trainings such as Let's Get to Work for ThredUP, and AZRS & AZTEDP & HOH for the Phoenix VA Social Workers. Michele led our training for the Civil Rights staff with the Arizona Attorney General's Office in our boardroom in person. Also, Ballet Arizona has a small Dorrance Theater which now has an induction loop installed by OTOjOY and Michele led that training in person at their facility. We want to make sure that people can go out to public venues and have accommodations; the theaters, movies, performance spaces and really engage, be interactive, enjoy and socialize!
- New Orleans is hosting the American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA) conference this week. There are 10,000 people attending ASHA and Dr. Rao and Dr. Helms Tillery from ASU presented a virtual poster session about the HHAP. Dr. Rao and Dr. Helms Tillery are the Audiologist and Speech Language Pathologist professors, respectively, at the ASU Speech and Hearing Clinic who work directly with ACDHH on the HHAP. The ASHA poster session was actually designated as a meritorious poster submission. There were 1,394 total poster submissions for this conference, and of those, 59 out of almost 1,400 were selected as meritorious poster submissions. ASHA is recognizing the value in what we're doing! We are the first state in the country to develop a Hearing Healthcare Assistance Project for low income adults with a state university where students are being trained, and where we have the aural rehabilitation component.



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VI. Over-the-Counter Hearing Aids (All)

- Cynthia shared that she participated in an interview on over the counter hearing aids with KGUN channel 9 in Tucson. The one positive may be that more people would be willing to start their hearing loss journey earlier and then discover more, greater things as they go along.
- Michele shared her experience in the 2000's when she used to have hard of hearing people without hearing aids try the Pocketalker. Some would be emotional as people would realize maybe there is something that can help.
- Ron was watching a football game on TV and all of sudden a Walmart commercial comes on about OTC Hearing Aids and it occurred to him that this is really happening.
- Roz turned on QVC this morning and they had BOSE hearing aids on for \$1,000! She shared as a retired hearing aid dispenser that she is nervous about them, good possibly for people who can not afford hearing aids, but worry they will not be programed correctly and wind up in a drawer.
- Michele mentioned that people can go to their hearing care professional and share 'I'm on a tight budget' and at least that way a professional will make sure there's no ear wax, no perforation to the eardrum, no scar tissue, no middle ear infection. We want to encourage people to be smart consumers, investigate and if they do buy something over the counter make sure that they can return it because a return policy is not required by federal law.
- Melanie mentioned an article from ASHA written with the idea in mind of how can Audiologist help people through this process, getting over the counter aids. But with some of the OTC hearing aid prices, you might as well just go to an Audiologist and get the benefits of hearing test and the evaluation and the expertise of the audiologist. Another important point, the importance of having a telecoil!

VII. HLAA Chapter Leadership Announcements (Melanie O'Rourke / Ron Tallman)

HLAA West Valley:

- Commissioner O'Rourke stated that in October they have started back with in person meetings. They also have hybrid meetings. Their November meeting, Gael Hannan, celebrated Author and Hard of Hearing Advocate, presented on Zoom from British Columbia and it was a wonderful presentation!
- Shannon Tyree and Melanie went to an expo in Sun City West "Meals and Motors", hoping to find transportation for members to HLAA meetings. They also got information on the Sun City West Radio Station KSCW and last week Melanie was interviewed for their community chat and talked about the HLAA, national and



local support group that is there and shared information about how to reach out and attend meetings.

- Their December meeting will be their 40th Anniversary for the West Valley Chapter and they are hoping to have at least 40 individuals attend in person!
- Commissioner Williams is also Vice President of HLAA West Valley and continues with the Book Club! The next book will be Hearing Loss of Dummies.

HLAA Sun Lakes:

- Ron reported that they had their first in person meeting back in October, they had a Skits Day and had a lot of laughs. In November, Liz Booth was the guest speaker and delivered a great presentation on hearing loss and relationships. They have been using onsite CART and will try to move to offsite CART for the meeting.
- Looking forward to some very good guest speakers; Dr. Ingrid McBride in January will discuss technology updates for both hearing aids and cochlear implants. In February Dr. Susan Schmidt will talk about Tinnitus. In March, Dr. Tabitha Buck on how some drugs can affect hearing loss. In April Dr. Adam Cassis will discuss transition from hearing aids to cochlear implants.

VIII. AZ Walk4Hearing 2022:

- The 7th Annual Walk4Hearing was held on November 5th at Riverview Park and it was a very, very nice day! There were over 500 registered walkers for the event and they determined from registration that about 400 people attended the walk! The Walk raised \$44,800.38 and provided over \$500.00 in free ice cream to the walkers. It was a great event!
- Next year, November 4th will be the date, it's been approved by HLAA National and Ron is working with the city of Mesa to see if we can move forward with that date. There are many changes happening with the city this year. Mesa Parks and Recreation has taken over all of the required paperwork, hopefully this will make things run a little smoother.

IX. ALOHA Leadership Announcements: Cynthia Amerman:

- Cynthia reported that they will be rescheduling their yard sale to January and they will have a loop to demonstrate during the yard sale.



- They have been working to grow the organization and have found that The Little Book of Boards by Erik Hanberg to be educational! It talks about small nonprofits and how they run their boards.
- They feel good about being back out in the community after COVID. Cynthia will be speaking with the Lions Club on December 1st and Dr. Nicole Marrone's class at the University of Arizona about Vocational Rehabilitation.
- Their hybrid meetings have worked out very well.

X. Employment Harvey Smith:

- Harvey shared that unemployment is now about 3.7% up by .5% in the last quarter. If you're looking to return to work, if you want a side gig to help pay for the increasing cost that we're all feeling these days there's never been a better time!
- Businesses are reaching out to Harvey to ask how do I tap into persons with disabilities. One, they have figured out how good we are. Secondly, they're realizing that diversity and inclusion should include people with disabilities, equal diversity and inclusion.
- Healthcare and hospitality if you know anyone looking for employment in those areas reach out to Harvey.
- Sign up for their weekly job class; resources for job seekers and people wanting to go back to school!

XI. Captioning Advocacy and Efforts (All)

- Captioning is a huge topic! We have much good work to do to spread the word and educate people. Michele explained that we can have captioning for television, telephones, video conferences, real live events like the Arizona Storytellers Project that we provide CART captioning for. We have captions for YouTube, and Tik Tok, etc.
- The Global Alliance for Speech-to-Text Captioning is a newer organization, it's been around for a couple of years now and they're looking at developing an international standard for captioners to raise the level of captioning quality around the world. There is a new initiative where people who are members of the Global Alliance can actually submit videos of poor captions on television.
- Captioning helps Hard of Hearing and Deaf people, but it also helps children who are learning language, whether it's English or Spanish. Hearing children learn from having captions on the TV, it helps them learn to read. It helps people who are English Language Learners. It helps people who have some cognitive issues, some auditory



processing disorders, such as the politician who was running for office and needed captions because-of-an auditory processing disorder resulting from a stroke. Captions benefit more than the 50 million Americans who are deaf or Hard of Hearing!

- Commissioner O'Rourke received information from HLAA, Lise Hamlin who is their advocacy person on this very topic. We can contact our Representatives and Senator Mark Kelly and the other people to advocate for our need to have captioning!
- Commissioner Williams shared they've had some interesting experiences with captions. A Survey Monkey pointed out that hearing people like captions as well. ASR captions can be challenging for example, during a dinner party the captions do not follow the natural flow of several conversations that may be happening at one time. Captions can be a lifesaver however they can also take mumbled confusing speech and turn it in to dirty words phonetically. "There's work to be done but there's help on the way!"
- Michele pointed out that a human captioner, a nationally trained and certified captioner can add things; "another person talking, background noise, dog barking,". They can discern between "death" and "Deaf," "heart" and "hard." Because we see a lot of "death" people and a lot of "heart" of hearing people on the auto captions, plus the other words that maybe we don't want to see, particularly in a workplace, if we're using auto captions.
- Movie theaters are starting to have movies with Open Captions! That's real progress!

XII. Announcements / Share Information (All)

- Harvey: February 15th, 2023 Chase Field from 11:00 am -7:00 pm: A Job Fair!
- Sherri Collins our Executive Director asked to share that we will be releasing a survey on accessible services related to older adults. So watch for that!
- Our new website Age of Access will be LIVE by March 2023! Prior to it being LIVE we will have a test group of people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind try it out and obtain their feedback.

**XIII. Meeting Adjourned at 11: 01 am
Next Meeting Date February 2023 TBD**