



Hard of Hearing Task Force Meeting Minutes: Virtual Meeting via Zoom February 18, 2022

I. Call to Order, Introductions, Housekeeping - (HOH Specialist, Christy Abrams)

The Hard of Hearing Program Specialist called the meeting to order at 9:05 am

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

Absent Members: None

ACDHH Staff Present: Carmen Green Smith, Deputy Director / Jeremy McCown, Technical Operations Analyst / Michele Michaels, HOH Program Manager / Christy Abrams, HOH Specialist / Betty McEntire, Director of Public Policy and Community Relations / Beca Bailey, Community Engagement Liaison / Nikki Soukup, Incoming Director of Public Policy and Community Relations

Others Present: Kimberly August, Past Task Force Member, Sarah (ASU), Captioner Linda and ASL Interpreters Dustin and Beth

II. Honoring Task Force Member Kimberly August (Christy and Michele)

- Kimberly August served on the HOH Task Force from 2009 to 2021. In honor of her 12 years of service to the TF, Kimberly was presented with an acrylic diamond shaped award inscribed "Kimberly August 2009-2021 The Arizona Commission for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing extends its gratitude for your dedicated service to the citizens of Arizona as a Distinguished Member of the Hard of Hearing Task Force".

III. Review & Approval of Minutes 11.19.2021 (All present at 11/19 meeting)

- Liz noted a needed correction of two names. Correction is SUE VARDON is with a V instead of a B (Barden should be Varden). Correct spelling next name is KARIN LUSK-RYDIN
- Cynthia moved to approve with those two corrections and Roz seconded the motion. Motion passed.

IV. Hard of Hearing Specialist Report (Christy)

- Calls continue to increase for the Hearing Healthcare Assistance Project (HHAP); working with ASU Speech and Hearing Clinic to help low income people to obtain hearing healthcare. Please refer anyone to Christy who may be looking for resources. So far, we have referred 25 people for the project and have had 19 new calls/emails just this month!
- Enjoyed working with Carmen and Michele to develop TV spot on COX Your Health program
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- We still have some clear masks left, the link is on our website, but when that supply runs out, that's it.
- The Division of Services for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing in Utah meets virtually every Friday morning. An amazing group of people who come together to discuss various topics relating to being Hard of Hearing, everyone is welcome.

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

- Contact Christy for hearing aids, referral to cochlear implant companies, learning to advocate for captioning or loop installations, etc.
- The ACDHH/ASU Hearing Healthcare Assistance Project (HHAP) provides hearing aids and aural rehabilitation free of charge to clients who qualify. Aural Rehabilitation in concert with professionally programmed hearing aids will enable better utilization of hearing aids. It's a very important component. This is a novel project that has not been done anywhere else in the country with a state agency partnering with a university with students practicing to become doctors of audiology
- We assist hard of hearing people with an ongoing dialogue; HLAA Chapters, ALOHA, American Tinnitus Association, employment advocacy at work, how to get an assistive listening device at the movie theater, etc. Whatever they need to know!
- Trainings; Pima County Department of Public Health, Southwest Maricopa County Public Health, Arizona Statewide Independent Living Council, HLAA West Valley, Arizona Statewide Toastmasters Group (Christy is the Sergeant at Arm of Audible Talkers Toastmasters).
- Provided contact information for AzTEDP ACDHH's free phone program, regardless of income for the Hard of Hearing, the Deaf and the DeafBlind: Speech devices, amplified phones, alerting devices, wireless doorbells, alarm clocks and bed shakers. Call our main number 602-542-3323. Sherita at our front desk is our information and referral person and she will get you to the right person.
- May is Better Hearing and Speech Month, a National Celebration! We will be talking about OTC Hearing Aids / Personal Sound Amplifying Products.
- ACDHH has partnered with COX Digital Media to have digital ads pop up on smart devices around the state! AZ is a big state with 7.2 million people and 1.1 million are hard of hearing, and we want to get our information out all over the state!

VI. HLAA Chapter Leadership Announcements (Melanie O'Rourke and Ron Tallman)

- **HLAA West Valley:** The Chapter continues to meet via Zoom. Christy Abrams and Cynthia Amerman started off the year for the January and February meetings. In March, Sara Benton, a Commissioner on the Board of ACDHH and also an ASL interpreter in the Flagstaff area. With the focus on OTC HA, Dr. Kristin Samuelson, Clinical Assistant Professor and Audiology Clinic Director of ASU Speech and Hearing Clinic will present on; "Why should I see an Audiologist when I can buy hearing aids at the grocery store?" Fred continues with their book club as well as Fred's wife and Chapter Secretary, Pat Williams



has started a writer's workshop. Working on developing something exciting for May and Better Hearing and Speech month.

- **HLAA Sun Lakes:** Chapter will continue to meet virtually for the remaining of March, April and May and will discuss again in October. Big applause for Roz Siebold the new Vice President of their Chapter! In January, Dr. Shawn Stevens, Otolaryngologist of Barrow Neurological Institute presented on cochlear implants and in March, Heidi L. Lervik, Assistive Technology Specialist from the Arizona Technology Access Program (AzTAP). Next month, Vicki Thompson from ACDHH will present on AzTEDP and Sherri Collins, Executive Director of ACDHH in April and Michele Michaels, Hearing Healthcare Program Manager from ACDHH in May! Thank you for all of the significant support after the January newsletter went out. It's very labor intensive to put this together and the feedback is appreciated.

VII. **ALOHA Leadership Announcements** (Cynthia Amerman)

ALOHA has new officers in January; Karl stepped down as President, he's been a wonderful leader! Cynthia is the President so far and Judy Thomas became the Secretary, Stan Kruggel is staying on as Treasurer. They are regrouping and thinking ahead to the Better Hearing and Speech Month. Recommended a book: Preventing Decline: Advances in the Medical Treatment of Hearing loss and Tinnitus by Dr. Keith Darrow, PH.D. They will be starting this book on Wednesday in their book club which is on the second and fourth Wednesdays. Invited Christy to come and speak with ALOHA at some point, as they are lining up speakers and will continue to meet virtually until they feel it's safe for people to come.

- Michele mentioned the HLAA Working Adults Chapter is another great resource here in Arizona for working adults that are hard of hearing or even for folks that are hard of hearing and looking for employment and not sure how to navigate hearing loss on the job. Peggy Staples is the contact and she can be reached at: azworkingadults@gmail.com
- **ALDA Convention will be in San Diego, CA October 19th -23rd**
- **HLAA 2022 National Convention will be in Tampa, Florida June 23rd-25th**

VIII. **Public Policy & Community Relations Report** (Betty McEntire)

- Betty will be moving to Washington DC but will be staying on with ACDHH through the end of the legislative session. Introduced her replacement Nikki Soukup.
- Shared Cup O Capitol live video sessions are every other Friday; Betty and Beca have a coffee chat where they talk about all the stuff that's going on down at the legislature, public education, elections, not many bills directly mention the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing and the DeafBlind, however everything that goes on down at the Capitol impacts our community because it impacts citizens.
- There is a Senate Bill that allows only certain categories of individuals to be eligible to request an early ballot. Deaf and Hard of Hearing are not included in how they are defining that. The four categories are; blindness, physical disability, age of 65 and over, residing 15+ miles away from precinct. This is important as this would eliminate early voting and go back to how we used to



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vote in Arizona 30+ years ago which is voting on election day only. Our community's preferred choice is early voting because it's challenging to go to the polls; there's lots of noise, communication is challenging and understanding directions can be hard without accommodations.

- We support the bill sponsored by Representative Longdon allowing the state to have an actual ADA Coordinator to facilitate ADA access among state and government agencies. We learned from the pandemic that agencies specifically don't know what their responsibilities are as it relates to ADA accommodations.
 - Requested the Commission be a nonvoting member of the advisory council for the purposes of drafting the state plan on responding to Alzheimer's and dementia in the state of Arizona. There is a correlation between having a varying hearing level and Alzheimer's and dementia.
 - Senate Bill 1034 is Senator Rogers' bill; VA tax exemption that includes the spouses. There is another House Bill from Representative Carter out of LD15; the other VA property exemption for individuals with disabilities and service disabilities.
- **Welcome New ACDHH Team Member Nikki Soukup, Incoming Director** (Betty McEntire)
 - Nikki said she is excited to be part of ACDHH. She's moving to AZ from Austin, Texas and most recently worked for the State of Texas in their office of the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing Services Unit.

IX. Community Engagement Liaison Report (Beca Bailey)

- Community Engagement activities; monthly community view videos continue, in January, Sherri Collins was able to give some information on what we expect to see going forward. We are always looking to the community for feedback, questions and concerns. Sherri interviewed Germaine Graham, a speech language pathologist, fluent in ASL and a black woman. She is amazing, very knowledgeable, passionate and especially in regards to children who are developing and acquiring language and the importance of having access to language.
- Issues relating to the Deaf community regarding access; Deaf self-advocacy training on healthcare.
- ACDHH Deaf Specialist, Kim Minard and Licensing Coordinator Emmett Hassen have provided a mini-training to empower the Deaf community as well as Children of Deaf Adults "CODAs" who may have to advocate for their parents in healthcare; hospitals, skilled nursing facilities or assisted living. There are always issues with getting in and providing accommodations.
- Sonia Samaniego, our Family Engagement Coordinator in Public Policy and Community Relations, has been hosting various webinars that focus on families who have children who are Deaf, DeafBlind or Hard of Hearing.
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- We will be hosting a National Speaker Series and next month in March the topic will be related to looping! Social Psychologist, Dr. David G. Myers, author of [A Quiet World, Living with Hearing Loss](#) will be speaking about how we can loop Arizona! Michele shared that she follows David on social media and he is a beloved man. Arizona is, by the way, the first state in the Union to have looped not only our visitor galleries and our meeting rooms for both the House and the Senate but also each legislator desk and the legislative floor! As well as Sky Harbor Airport terminal 3 where every gate is looped and as they renovate Terminal 4, those gates will be looped as well.
 - In March, we will be celebrating Black History Month. Next Thursday, Facebook Live at 3:00 pm we'll have a panelists from the National Black Deaf Advocates. Marsellette is the New York City Black Deaf Advocacy chair. She and the panel will be speaking about intersectionality, identity and empowering those who are Black, Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing.
- X. AZ Walk4Hearing 2022 (Ron Tallman)**
- The 2022 walk is scheduled for November 5th. National has set our goal for \$60,000.
 - For the 2021 walk; alliance checks will go out probably early next week, we received \$8,138.00 back from National from the 2021 walk. This goes right back to Arizona. There are a couple of volunteer positions open including raffle coordinator. Barry is staying on and taking over the refreshments table. Dana will be taking over registration along with Karin. The HLAA Convention is in Tampa, Florida at the Marriott. Registration for Early Bird is open now on the website www.hearingloss.org. Early Bird Registration is open until March 4th. You get a discount if you register now. COVID Vaccination cards are required to attend.
- XI. Employment Activity (Harvey Smith, Maricopa County Human Services Department)**
- Very interesting times at the moment; rapid increase in wages for entry level positions. Contacted by a company Thred Up that has opened in the West Valley, and they would like to be much more inclusive; they are looking to pilot a program to entice Deaf and Hard of Hearing to come and work for them and then keep them. Also, the Arizona State Health Services and Administration are both looking for all people. They are having in person career fairs, one is next Wednesday with employers including customer service people. Warehouse and supply people are needed. Also, a company called ConAm which is a property management company looking for facility people and customer service.
 - Currently, the AZ job board has nearly 100,000 openings, yet there are only 12,000 current resumes on the same job board. So, there is a clear disconnect! The good news is, if you are looking for work, just show up, literally, just show up. They had a career fair two weeks ago and 75% of the people who showed up were verbally offered jobs that same day! Also, there is a steep increase in wages. For example, at the Arizona Grand, housekeepers are starting at \$20.00 per hour.
- XII. Announcements / Share Information (All)**
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- Fred thanked Christy and Michele for good service in assisting a member who moved to Indianapolis to connect to resources there. Commented on Keith Darrow's book; "sitting is the new smoking!" Man was not invented to sit, the chair was invented long after man was invented! The book was interesting and we all need to stay active!
- Discussed puppies keep us active, a FitBit gives great reminders for it's time to get up and move! As Michele always says, hearing loss is a healthcare issue and it impacts us in so many different ways and on so many different levels.
- Harvey commented that Dr. Stevens performed his cochlear implant surgery and as far as he can tell, his work is excellent! It's very different to hear through a CI and he's still learning how to use it and how to enjoy it. A great example was when he first turned it on, every dog barking sounded like lumber dropping on a concrete floor, but now he is able to recognize it is actually a dog barking!

XIII. Next Meeting date (Christy)

Next HOH Task Force meeting May 20th (9:00 am)

XIV. Adjournment (Christy)

- The meeting adjourned at 10:45 am