



## **Colorado Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Monthly Bulletin January 2008**

### **VISION**

Colorado Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, in concurrence with the Colorado Department of Human Service vision, seeks to become the nation's leader in empowering Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals, families, and communities to become safe and independent.

### **MISSION**

To promote the interests of our constituents and to work to ensure the quality of communication access for individuals who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing living in the state of Colorado.

### **Cliff's Notes**

Greetings from the office of Commission! We hope you had a wonderful season of holidays and are as invigorated for the New Year as we are.

In truth, the Commission staff comes to the office every single day invigorated. Our sense of responsibility to carry the community's mission invigorates us. We feel like we don't come to work. We come to have fun. We are committed to the community. You are our energy. It is our pleasure serving you. Thank you for your continued support and faith in us.

Continued energy from you is needed for our "re-invigorated" website. It was overhauled over the holidays. User-friendliness, a more interactive nature and updated information were some of the reasons for the overhaul of our website. Some new additions are:

- 1) profiles of staff members,
- 2) News section with community announcements and job openings, and
- 3) contact information for the Commissioners, staff members and committee chairpersons.

Please take a moment to review our website at [www.coloradodeafcommission.com](http://www.coloradodeafcommission.com) and let us know your thoughts.

Enjoy our website!

### **About Susan Elliott, Vice-Chair of the Commission**

Susan is an award-winning educator who in 1977 received her masters in Deaf Education at Gallaudet University and has taught in public school programs at every level in Colorado. In 1981, she received her second masters in Educational Administration and Supervision through the National Leadership Training Program at California State University, Northridge. She was inducted into Hall of Fame for Persons with Disabilities in 2004, and in 2006, she became a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT). She is a strong political advocate for the deaf and hard of hearing and has been active in passing legislation designed to improve communication access, education and quality of life. Susan teaches and directs a center-based high school program for the deaf and hard of hearing in Douglas County. She served on

the Gallaudet University Board of Trustees, and is currently serving on the Families for Hands and Voices Board of Directors.

She was instrumental in establishing the Colorado Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. She chaired the Colorado Association of the Deaf Commission Committee and pushed legislation for creation of the Commission. She was the first chairperson of the Commission, from 2000 to 2007.

Hands up and flashing to her for her exemplary service, hard work, passion and leadership!

### **About Luke Adams, Intern**

The Commission has a “helping hand” in Luke Adams! Luke, a Colorado native and a Criminal Justice major at the Rochester Institute of Technology in New York, started his internship with the Commission this month. He tackles his projects with pride and is fortunate to be able to take his internship near his parents and five sisters in Monument. Please welcome him! He can be reached at [luke.adams@state.co.us](mailto:luke.adams@state.co.us).

### **Commission Retreat**

The Commission retreat, consisting of the Commissioners and staff members, was held in Breckenridge on November 10, 2007, which was facilitated with an outside facilitator to ensure that all participants could fully participate in the planning process.

Participants were given an opportunity to learn the organizational history, its program growth, budget, staffing and the current standing rules. They also heard a review of the “Agenda for the Future,” the Commission’s first planning document and reviewed results of a survey conducted by staff with a number of different constituency groups regarding the Commission and its programs.

Participants then engaged in a brainstorming session with each of the Commissioners identifying ideas that they or their constituent groups would like to be priorities for the Commission’s work over the next three years. Finally, the participants prioritized those ideas and identified five goals that will guide their work through the next three years and become the basis for their three-year strategic plan. The goals are:

- 1) Continue to provide existing legislatively mandated programs and activities such as Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program (TEDP), Legal Auxiliary Services Program and other.
- 2) Broaden and enhance the TEDP.
- 3) Develop and re-implement a mini grant program targeting the top five priorities identified by the Commission.
- 4) Improve the Commission website.
- 5) Prepare for the Sunset Review in 2010 to ensure continuation of the Commission and its program.

Other goals were identified and will be considered while the Commission moves forward with the “new” agenda. Completion of the three-year strategic plan by June 30, 2008 is targeted.

Deep gratitude from the Commission goes to parents of Lisa Allen for their generosity in offering our use of their cozy “Breck” house for the retreat and to Lisa and Billy Allen for hosting the participants during the day.

### **Priorities of the Community and the Commissioners**

While at the retreat, the participants learned of a similarity in survey results related to the priorities between the community and the Commissioners. Participants were pleased to learn that they are in rhythm with the community. Priorities for both of these groups are as follows:

<u>Community</u>	<u>Commissioners</u>
1) Pre-school/K-12 Education	1) Employment
2) Early-intervention Program	2) Early-intervention Program AND Mental Health Services
3) Employment	3) Pre-school/K-12 Education
4) Mental Health Services	4) Adult Education and Literacy
5) Aging and Adult Services	5) Aging and Adult Services
6) Adult Education and Literacy	6) Alcohol and Drug Abuse
7) Deaf and Blind Services AND Emergency Preparedness Program	7) Deaf and Blind Services
8) Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services	8) Social Services
9) Social Services	9) Emergency Preparedness Program

The Commission will incorporate several of the identified priorities into the three-year strategic plan, but sometimes opportunities will arise that it cannot wait. The Commission will work on these issues if resources, support from the community and funding are available. Formation of the Mental Health Task Force is an example. It has the support it needs from the community, Commission, State Legislature, and the Governor's office.

### **Legal Auxiliary Services Program**

The Legal Auxiliary Services Program continues to move forward with many exciting projects.

A legal interpreter workshop, by Carla Mathers entitled "Advanced Ethics for Court Interpreters", is being held on February 9 and 10, 2008. The workshop flyer is available on the Commission website (Announcements of the News section).

A legal workshop at the spring Colorado Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf conference in Grand Junction is being co-sponsored by the Commission and DOVE: Advocacy services for Deaf women and children. The workshop will be provided by Lewana Clark and is entitled "In My Shoes/In Her Shoes".

The Advisory Council continues to meet regularly and is looking forward to a very productive 2008!

### **Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program**

The State Board of the Colorado Department of Human Services has reviewed the revised Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Rule and will consider it for approval on Friday, February 1, 2008.

Main changes in the Rule are as follows:

- 1) Income qualification for the Program: A state median household income will be utilized for qualification of income status. The current Program is available only for low-income applicants.

- 2) Telecommunications equipment eligibility: The applicant may re-apply for new equipment if the applicant has received equipment from the Program within the preceding four (4) years. The current Rule has seven (7) years.
- 3) Vendor voucher reimbursement: This part was eliminated from the Rule because the voucher system is no longer needed for clients.

The intent of the Rule revisions is to make the Program available to a larger deaf and hard of hearing community and to make the application process more efficient.

You are welcome to come to the February 1 meeting! It will be held at 10 a.m. at 1575 Sherman St., Room 4A/B, Denver 80203. The new Rule will become effective on April 1, 2008 should the State Board approve it.

### **Mental Health Task Force**

Ric Durity and Ami Garry, Co-Chairs of the Commission Mental Health Task Force, outlined a strategic planning project for the Task Force at the Commission meeting on January 10, 2008. The intent of this proposal is to plan a process for developing a strategic plan for Colorado and an approach for engaging policy makers, community leaders and key stakeholders committed to implementing the plan.

The planning project includes six phases with a number of discrete steps. These are:

- 1) Community planning process: A diverse task force of 10-12 persons will convene and perform concrete research and planning assignments between meetings.
- 2) Feedback sessions with the community: Up to four focus group, e.g. deaf and hard of hearing community, mainstream and specialized mental health service providers, parents of deaf and hard of hearing children, and administrators and educators of deaf and hard of hearing education will be conducted for collection of information and feedback.
- 3) Initial plan development: Draft of the strategic plan for deaf and hard of hearing mental health services will be made. This will include implementation responsibilities and timeline.
- 4) Community forum: A one-day forum to introduce and build support for strategic plan will be hosted.
- 5) Forum follow-up: Outcome of the forum input and activities will be incorporated into a final strategic plan and written report.
- 6) Specific legislative and/or policy issues for action: Issues that require legislative or policy decisions for follow-up by the Commission will be submitted.

The Commission will ensure inclusion of diverse perspectives and viewpoints that are representative of Colorado's geographic diversity, cultural diversity, diversity in deafness status, diversity in the provider community as well as deaf and hard of hearing youth and adults, parents of deaf and hard of hearing children, and children of deaf and hard of hearing parents.

Please **note** that the project will begin as soon as funding for this project is available. The Commission is currently working to obtain funding for the project.

### **Legislative News**

The Commissioners have reviewed and favored the following issues:

- 1) SB 08-057 bill: It concerns insurance coverage of hearing aids for minors, under the age of 16 years. This bill, if passed, will mandate insurance to include hearing aids in their health plan. It was introduced in the House and hearings will be held in the near future. The PDF version of the bill can be retrieved from the State Legislature website at [www.leg.state.co.us](http://www.leg.state.co.us). Go to the current regular session of the Senate for the bill.
- 2) The Colorado Quality Standards for Interpreters Committee's second proposal to the Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA) for a state interpreter licensing board: This Colorado Association of the Deaf Committee has requested DORA to reconsider their position on the 2006 CQSI application. It was not recommended at the first review.

For more information about these issues, contact Chair Joe Benedetto at [joe.benedetto@dora.state.co.us](mailto:joe.benedetto@dora.state.co.us)

*The 2008 Colorado General Assembly has been convening since January 9, 2008, and will end on May 7, 2008.*

### **Notice of Commission Meeting**

Mark your calendar for the next Commission meeting! It will be held at 3 p.m. on Thursday, March 6, 2008, in Colorado Springs. A tentative meeting agenda will be posted on the website.