

The Good work continues...

UPDATE ON HISPANIC INTERPRETATION & COLLABORATION

We had a historic first in Area 29 during our Assembly on Saturday March 19th when five members of the Baltimore Hispanic Intergroup attended and participated with Gil M. and Ramon R. speaking at the mic. It is the first time Hispanic interpretation has been done at an Area 29 Assembly. Assistance in interpretation was provided by District 10 bilingual member Manny R., who was willing to step in and be of assistance.

*Please note, we are looking for additional bilingual members to assist us for future needs, including the State Convention registration desk. If you are bilingual or know of a bilingual member willing to help please contact us!

Four committee members attended an Hispanic member's anniversary celebration at La Ultima Copa ("The Last Cup") and were welcomed with much hospitality, camaraderie, food, and even dancing at the end of the night. Our Spanish-speaking groups know how to celebrate sobriety! Their anniversary meetings last 2 hours and are a true celebration.

We have now received the interpretation equipment loaned to us by Area 13 (DC) for our state convention, and it has been cleaned, catalogued, tested, and is ready for use.

Kathi and Jessica will travel to Philadelphia on May 14th with Marguerita and other hispanic women to attend the XII Pennsylvania Hispanic AA Convention. We will be sure they know about Maryland's upcoming 50th Convention in Frederick, MD on June 24-26 2022!



The vintage nonfunctioning interpretation equipment passed on to us last year by Area 11 (CT) was successfully fixed by local member Kevin W. and is being maintained by the Area 29 Audio Committee. The equipment was used in 2007 at the REDELA in Sao Paulo, Brasil by our friend and Spanish interpreter Amalia C. from Area 11. Amalia is an Appointed Committee Member on the Trustees Literature Committee who spends a good deal of her time interpreting at conventions, committees, and events, both virtually and in person. Her story, "Tomaba Porque Lo Gozaba" ("She Drank Because She Liked It"), is published in the 3rd edition of the Spanish language Big Book. Amalia will be interpreting for us at our Historic 50th Maryland State Convention

Accessibilities March & April 2022

Our *March* meeting was about accessing available resources to work with deaf, blind and deaf/blind alcoholics. A point made was the importance of seeing an audiologist or medical provider for any new hearing or vision loss to rule out treatable reversible causes. Presenter Chris T. created a "live binder" with help from the AA Deaf Intergroup of Central Texas and he walked us through and discussed this at the presentation. Accessible resources given were all referenced and have hyperlinks as well. The live binder is at <https://www.livebinders.com/b/2410708> and it is permissible to use and distribute it freely as a resource. The live binder contains links to many apps and assistive technologies, most of which have YouTube demo videos.

Also in attendance at our March meeting were Tarita Turner from Maryland Accessible Telecommunication (MAT), along with James Whitney OTR/L, OTD, from Maryland Assistive Technology Program (MDTAP), each representing important avenues of free state assistance. In fact *we learned that every state is required to have a telecommunications relay service, pursuant to the federal ADA Guidelines.* Telephone transmission services for residents with hearing or visual disability and anything with telecommunications and disability falls under the purview of the FCC. For qualified clients MAT will conduct an evaluation and deem what telephone system(s) work best for them. Then there is a free determination of what equipment the MAT program can provide. They serve all disabilities and their web link is: <https://doit.maryland.gov/mdrelay/Pages/Equipment.aspx>. These free services are available to any Maryland resident who needs telecommunications assistance.

Now that our Area Assembly and Committee meetings are in hybrid format with a call-in feature, they qualify for relay service as well as Relay Conference Captioning(RCC). RCC services uses the same high quality captioning used for TV and is live streamed via computer. The captioning is superior to autocaptioning

Our next meeting will also use this service, join us and check it out! Please note that all professional transcriptionists, as well as ASL interpreters, follow confidentiality and anonymity guidelines and are HIPAA compliant. Also note that MAT provides telephone relay services in english, spanish, and with spanish-to-english assistance but not as an interpretation service. *We also learned that States are required to both have technology assistance and to make their electronic and information technology (EIT) accessible to people with disabilities.* We had Maryland Assistive Technology Program (MDTAP) representative James Whitney, OTR/L, OT attending our meeting. MDTAP can consult with any state resident with a need and help them find the best available option (equipment) that works for them and will also

loan that item on a trial basis for 30 days to help them in the process of determining a long term solution.

Our second presentation was at our April meeting by our Northeast Regional Trustee, Francis G., who gave us an overview of the history of accessibility committees and shared some of his own personal story. He himself is hard of hearing and has had other health challenges. There were no access or accessibility committees when he got sober in 1989. Then in 2005 for the International Convention, GSO introduced the topic of accessible transportation and a form for requesting it. This paved the way for service animals, scooters etc.

The term "special needs" was the first term used for to describe such needs. It was not until 2011 the first accessibility pamphlet "AA for the Alcoholic with Special Needs" came about, which later became "Treatment and Accessibilities."

Francis himself used a correspondence form for communicating with someone in a correctional facility and then he accessed the Loners and Internatonalist forms to keep in touch and be a part of the fellowship when he couldn't get out for health reasons. Soon came sound amplifiers, ASL interpretation, and large print formats.

Today we have changed the name for services and committees from "special needs" to "accessibilities" and have a much broader range of services and options. These include the A.A. Guidelines for Conferences, Conventions and Roundups which has a section on Accessibilities (MG-04) -A.A. Guidelines Sharing the A.A. Message with the Alcoholic Who is Deaf or Hard-ofHearing (MG-13) -A.A. Guidelines for All Alcoholics (MG-16).

Additional resources include AA Grapevine eBooks and Audiobooks, a home page for ASL on www.aa.org, AA Grapevine YouTube channel, AA Grapevine Instagram and Podcast, and the Accessibilities Checklist(SMF-208). In addition we have an Accessibilities Workbook (M-48i), Access to AA (P-83) pamphlet, *This is AA* in large print (P-56), and *AA for the Older Alcoholic* in large print (P-22).

Other happenings.....

- Kathi and Jessica met with Joy Ashcraft, LMSW Director of Maryland's Commitment to Veterans, Behavioral Health Administration, Maryland Dept. of Health, to learn about current ways active duty, veterans, and the military use and access AA for services. The program is statewide and assists individuals in connecting with behavioral health and wraparound services, provide peer support, and more. We are exploring avenues for future collaboration. *Look for more from us on the Military and Veterans soon!*
- Kathi attended the latest All Accessibilities meeting, the 2nd Monday monthly 7pm-830pm. Zoom ID 690 393 7306, PW AAC2020. All are welcome.
- Kathi presented on Accessibilities for Area 83 Ontario-Service Information Day on 3/26/22, and at SENY District 620-16th Annual Service Workshop on Accessibility in a Virtual World on 4/16/22.
- Kathi and Jessica met with MDTAP and learned more about their equipment and resources. We plan to trial some of their assistive devices for the hard of hearing and to better meet those needs. Please contact us if you or someone you know is hard of hearing and interested in experimenting with some equipment and providing feedback.

Additional Resources

Maryland Department of Aging Durable Medical Equipment Reuse Program (MDoA DME Reuse) has lots of durable medical equipment free to low cost for residents by county such as crutches and walkers or shower chairs. <https://aging.maryland.gov/pages/DME.aspx>

Centers for Independent Living (CIL) at times provides grant funding to residents. **They have a portable ramp program!** A portable ramp can be borrowed on loan to make a meeting or home accessible for someone temporarily in a wheelchair, or to even try the different ramp styles. See also <https://www.rollramp.com> for ramp angle calculations.

And more...

- Find out more about what MDTAP is here: <https://youtu.be/ixFm30tkjAc>
- And learn about MDTAP's lending library here: https://youtu.be/H_PQenDDLko.

Assistive Technology Loan Program (ATLP)
Provides financial loans for individuals for the sole purpose of purchasing assistive technology (AT). <https://mdod.maryland.gov/mdtap/Pages/ATlowloan.aspx>.

Maryland IT Accessibility Initiative

Department of Disabilities Information Technology (IT) on non visual digital accessibility standards and IT services are available and how to make sure your website and services are accessible (such as compatibility with low vision readers and tech devices people are using). There are professionals and resources available for guidance. <https://mdod.maryland.gov/news/Pages/Web-Accessibility.aspx>.

Web App of the month

WEZOOM magnifier app for Android for low vision, and it's free! Video review at <https://youtu.be/AlEbaKZMfjk>.

Upcoming events

May 1, 2022, 4:00 pm EDT

Outreach to Elders, a Homebound Committee, and Survey Results, with Guest Speaker from the Mental Health Association of Maryland. Come help us plan to carry the message right here at home. **If you have not completed the survey, please email accessarea29@gmail.com for the link ASAP -- We need you!**

June 5, 2022, 4:00 pm EDT

AA Deaf Intergroup from Central Texas
Come hear about the history, development, and experience with the deaf community from the only Deaf Intergroup in North America!

July 17, 2022, 4:00 pm EDT

We are working on a military presentation and also plan to assemble a packet of AA information for our military professionals to make available for the armed forces. Please join the Committee and lend us your input!

The **Area 29 Accessibility Committee** meets the 3rd Sunday monthly at 4pm EDT, except in April, May & June 2022, when we meet on the 1st Sunday. ALL our meetings have Spanish interpretation. ASL Interpretation provided by request.

Monthly Area 29 Access Committee
ID 841 2499 3206 PW 326186