



# The DILA Sign Post



Summer 2008

## From the Executive Director's Desk

By Jennifer Whitcomb, Executive Director

On April 23, 2008, DILA's Board of Directors established an endowment fund with the Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore (CFES). This fund will not only support charitable organizations in our area, but also create a steady stream of income to nourish our own programs and services. On July 11, 2008, the DILA team will kick off our first-ever "Sign to Succeed" Board and Employee Giving Campaign with a goal of 100 percent participation. Both the endowment fund and giving campaign will enable us to offer even more diverse programs and services for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. While our highly committed board and staff have demonstrated their long-term commitment to our success, we still depend on community support. Our efforts for fiscal year 2009 will focus on reaching out to our community, and

I hope you will consider supporting our services for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals.

In other news, DILA extends tremendous thanks to United States Senator Benjamin L. Cardin and his staff for helping Deaf Independent Residences (DIR) secure federal funding that had been tied up for several months. After a quick phone call to Senator Cardin's office, the money was promptly released and sent to DIR.

We also want to thank the Maryland Home and Community Care Foundation for funding our series of ADA trainings for healthcare providers and community members with hearing loss. We believe knowledge is power. The better we understand our rights and responsibilities under the ADA, the stronger our



society becomes. Please visit our newly designed Web site at [www.dila.org](http://www.dila.org) for information about upcoming ADA workshops.

Remember, our specially trained staff members are always available to provide information or referral resources on just about any issue dealing with deafness and hearing loss.



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## Staff:

Jennifer Whitcomb, Executive Director  
Ramona Bradley, Residential Health Director  
Ken Stottlemire, Community Programs Director  
Marlena Turner, DIR & Human Resource Manager  
Kim Collier, Community Support Specialist  
Sarah Perry, Employment Manager  
Laura Jones, Administrative Assistant  
Lisa Trolan, Office Coordinator  
Mary Parks-Russell, Financial Assistant  
Pat Nock, Residential Health Specialist  
Sue Beaver, Interpreter Coordinator/  
Interpreter  
Celeste Emerson, Independent Living Advisor  
Renee Gordon, Independent Living Advisor  
Kim Guinta, Independent Living Advisor  
Todd Morrison, Independent Living Advisor  
Belinda Price, Independent Living Advisor  
Chuck Thomas, Independent Living Advisor  
Joan Taylor, Independent Living Advisor  
Eddy Morrison, Communication Specialist  
Will Chambers, Driver  
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## Interns:

Danielle Hall  
Anna Proper

**Deaf Independent Living Association**, established in 1982, is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. A volunteer Board of Directors governs the agency of approximately 25 staff members, fluent in American Sign Language. Office is located in Salisbury, Maryland serving the Eastern Shore's nine counties. DILA continues to serve as a transitional program between home, employment and education for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

# Notes From a Newcomer...

By Chuck Thomas, Independent Living Advisor



Pictured above: Chuck Thomas

For this issue of *The DILA Sign Post*, I was asked to write an article detailing my experiences as a new DILA employee. Now I could write a general assessment of DILA's rehabilitation program and services, but while important, these are not the things that have impacted me most since I began working here in January 2008.

I have worked in the human services field for many years, both in the community and at a residential facility, and what amazes me most about DILA is not necessarily its services (though they are, in my opinion, exceptional), but its people.

Until now, my exposure to deaf culture was limited to classroom settings. While interpreter preparation programs are ideal for learning ASL, they don't expose you to the real deaf world. While I was comfortable and competent in the classroom, in the real world, my ASL grammar is jumbled, and I have difficulty deciphering slang.

I often feel like Tonto in *The Lone Ranger*! Luckily, language barriers can easily be broken with time.

To me, socialization and consistent interaction are integral parts of improving language skills. They create experiences that turn classroom knowledge into reality. Here's an example: one day I walked into Lizette Ramos' office to ask a question. She was busy writing something at her desk and did not see me come in. So, I waited for her to look up. When she did, she jumped because I had scared her. She politely explained that the next time I need to get a deaf person's attention, I should flick the lights. I knew that. In fact, it was covered in one of my deaf culture and history classes. But I had forgotten it because reading about something is much different than actually doing it. As a hearing person, these cultural differences can slip my mind, so I do appreciate the patience and gentle reminders.

All of the staff at DILA, both hearing and deaf, have really made me feel welcome. They have encouraged me to shadow them and ask questions, and I thank all of them for their help.

Since I began working at DILA, I have been meeting with the Communication Specialist, Eddy Morrison, on a weekly basis. I have found these meetings to be invaluable. Eddy has helped me with many different aspects of communication, from ways to increase my receptive skills (especially with finger-spelling) and clarifying ASL slang.

*(continued on page 3)*

# ASL Update

By Eddy Morrison, Communication Specialist



For businesses interested in a basic ASL class for their employees, DILA now offers a specially designed satellite course. By the end of the course, students should be able to carry on a basic conversation with deaf co-workers. Our instructors can also modify lesson plans to include vocabulary, phrases and communication scenarios specific to your company. The course focuses on receptive skills (comprehension), expressive practice (use of the language) and deaf culture.

Due to increased demand, DILA will offer an expanded selection of community ASL courses this fall, including ASL I, II and ASL for Children. All courses include plenty of student/teacher interaction and focus on language, grammar, comprehension and deaf culture. Please note that class size is limited and enrollment is on a first-come, first-served basis.

To register for a DILA ASL course or for more information, call 410-742-5052 (voice/TTY) or e-mail [dila@dila.org](mailto:dila@dila.org). And don't forget about DILA's Deaf Resource Library and Sign Lab, filled with books and DVDs to help you sharpen your ASL skills. The library and lab are open to the general public Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

## Notes From a Newcomer... (cont'd)

Most importantly, we discuss each consumer's language skills and/or barriers and how best to communicate with him or her.

DILA has exposed me to many new and different things in a relatively short period of time. This summer, I will attend a workshop to learn more about working as a Support Service Provider for deaf-blind adults. After the workshop, I will head to a deaf-blind camp with one of our consumers. Both will be new experiences—and I can't wait!

## Take Yourself Out to the Ballgame with DILA!

By Laura Jones, Administrative Assistant

DILA will host our annual Deaf Community Night with the Delmarva Shorebirds on Thursday, August 14, 2008, at 7:05 p.m. Watch the Shorebirds take on the Charleston River Dogs while mingling with your DILA pals. To order your tickets, please see the enclosed flyer or call 410-742-5052 (voice/TTY).

## City of Salisbury Approves Community Development Block Grant for DILA

By Jennifer Whitcomb, Executive Director

The City of Salisbury has approved a \$27,600 Community Development Block Grant to benefit DILA's Employment Program. This generous grant will give many deaf and hard-of-hearing job seekers access to more employment resources and training opportunities in their own community.

DILA thanks the City of Salisbury for its commitment to this worthy cause. To learn more about DILA's Employment Program, contact Ken Stottlemire at 410-742-5052 (voice/TTY).

## Consumer Spotlight: Paul Carmack

By Joan Taylor, Independent Living Advisor



I have had the great pleasure of working with Paul Carmack for the past three years, both as a job coach and

independent living advisor. An active volunteer at Peninsula Regional Medical Center in Salisbury, Paul lends his time and skills to the hospital's Environmental Department, Central Processing Unit, and Food and Nutrition Department.

Punctual, dependable and productive, Paul exudes qualities employers seek in their staff. For example, when Paul works in the Central Processing Unit, he helps prepare patient care bags, which contain personal necessities for post-surgical patients. Paul takes great pride and joy in this particular task and routinely assembles an astonishing 80 to 100 bags during his shift.

In honor of his phenomenal dedication to his work, Paul was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation on March 14, 2008, from Barb Sturgis, director of Volunteer Services at Peninsula Regional Medical Center. I am so very proud of the professional relationship Paul and I have developed, and it's been a pleasure watching him grow into one of the most motivated, determined individuals in the working community. I look forward to continuing to help Paul achieve his goals.

## DILA Establishes First-Ever Endowment Fund with Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore

By Max Verbits, Board President



DILA celebrates our new endowment fund with CFES. Pictured above (left to right) are CFES President Spicer Bell, DILA Executive Director Jennifer Whitcomb, DILA Board member Melanie Donophon, and DILA Board President Max Verbits.

At the April 16, 2008, quarterly meeting of the DILA Board of Directors, members unanimously voted to establish the agency's first-ever endowment fund with the Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore (CFES).

The following week, DILA presented CFES with a \$20,000 check to establish the fund, which will grow in value over time and generate repeat income for DILA. The fund will also support much-needed service expansions for the deaf and hard of hearing. To make a contribution to this fund, call 410-742-5052 (voice/TTY).

## Wicomico County Awards DILA Enrichment Grant

By Jennifer Whitcomb, Executive Director

The Wicomico County Executive's Office has awarded DILA an enrichment grant to support our Educational Advocacy Program.

We are grateful for the county's support; by working together, we can make our community a stronger, more vibrant place for individuals with hearing loss. For more information about DILA's Advocacy Program, contact Kim Collier at 410-742-5052 (voice/TTY).

# The Best \$20 (or less!) You'll Ever Spend

By Marlena Turner, DIR & Human Resource Manager

Do you rent a home? If so, have you taken steps to protect your valuables and other belongings in case of fire, water damage or theft?

Many renters mistakenly assume that their furniture, electronics, jewelry and other valuables are covered under their landlord's insurance policy. However, most landlords' policies only cover damage to the actual building itself—not to your personal belongings. And if the damage is caused by a tenant, he or she can be held liable for repair costs.

Renters insurance can cover the cost of replacing your belongings and assist you with additional living expenses if your rental home or apartment is damaged beyond repair. Many policies also cover the renter if he or she is found liable for property damage or a visitor's injury.

Depending on your address, deductible and amount for which you are insured, most renter's insurance policies cost between \$10 and \$20 per month—a small price to pay when you tally up the cost of replacing your CDs, electronics, television, jewelry, furniture, computer and other valuables. In fact, the average two-bedroom residence contains over \$20,000 of personal possessions!

**Even if you never make a policy claim, just knowing you're covered is worth the extra expense.**

## DILA Job Lab Now Open

By Ken Stottlemire, Community Programs Director



After many months of planning and hard work, DILA is pleased to announce the opening of our first-ever Job Lab! A user-friendly resource center for deaf and hard-of-hearing community members

seeking employment, the Job Lab features a computer with Internet access; a list of area job openings (updated weekly); books and videos on employment, interviewing and resume building; and information on the Americans with Disabilities Act, including reasonable accommodations for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals in the workplace.

The Job Lab is open to the general public Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Many thanks to Quota International of Cambridge, Maryland, for donating the lab's computer.

## What is the Interpreter Network Committee?

By Sue Beaver, Interpreter Coordinator

The Interpreter Network Committee is an invaluable networking tool for interpreters working in Maryland's Eastern Shore area. The committee meets monthly and covers a range of topics, from interpreter ethics to freelancing opportunities. Recently, the group even held an informative, well-attended study session for the upcoming National Interpreter Certification exam.

A sub-committee has also formed to develop a screening process for interpreters interested in freelancing for DILA. Sub-committee members are working hard to design a process that will ensure the highest quality interpreting services for the Eastern Shore's deaf and hard-of-hearing community.

The Interpreter Network Committee is open to all interpreters (certified and non-certified), and new members are welcome anytime. To learn more, call 410-742-5052 (voice/TTY) or e-mail [dila@dila.org](mailto:dila@dila.org).

**Check our website's calendar of events for the next meeting date.**

## Coming Soon: James and the Giant Peach, featuring Sign Stage on Tour!

By Marlena Turner, DIR & Human Resource Manager

Come see Sign Stage on Tour's amazing performance of Roald Dahl's beloved classic, *James and the Giant Peach*. Orphaned at age seven, James Henry Trotter is sent to live with his two evil aunts. One day while working in the garden, a mysterious man gives James a magical peach that changes his life forever!

Specializing in sign language theatre, Sign Stage on Tour features deaf and hearing actors performing together on stage. All dialogue is presented in spoken English and ASL simultaneously to ensure all audience members can follow along.

**Performance dates, times and location to be determined. Check our website's calendar of events for further updates.**

## DILA Thanks Our Recent Donors

The high quality of our programs and services is a testament to our generous donors. Their support enables DILA to serve growing numbers of deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals.

DILA thanks the following businesses, organizations and individuals for their recent donations:

### Bronze Sponsorship (\$5,000 – \$9,999)

Wicomico County of Maryland  
Community Enrichment  
Grant – for DILA's Educational  
Advocacy Program  
Community Foundation of the  
Eastern Shore, Inc. – for DILA's  
Parents of Deaf and Hard of  
Hearing Children Support Group

### Copper Sponsorship (\$1,000 – \$4,999)

Quota International of Cambridge,  
MD – for a videophone project at  
Dorchester County Public Library  
Mrs. Gloria Brown & Family – for  
DILA's Summer Camp for Deaf and  
Hard of Hearing Children & Youth

### Supporters (\$25 – \$499)

K. Ahmed  
Food Lion, LLC  
Cherianne Fowle  
Fruitland Lions Club  
Mervin Garretson  
Maryland Charities Campaign  
May Nu

### Supporters (\$25 – \$499) (cont'd)

Ocean City Parrot Head Club  
PKS & Company, PA  
Salisbury Wicomico Lions Club  
Roberta Sampson  
Ken Stottlemire  
Lakia Warren

### Memorial Gifts

Mrs. Gloria Brown & Family –  
in memory of Dana B. Davis

### Much-Appreciated In-Kind Gifts

Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Joy Carney  
Clear Channel Outdoor  
Kim Collier  
Comcast Cable  
Lizette Ramos  
Shockley Management  
Sorenson Communications  
Stroehmann's Bakeries, Inc.



# Get Ready for an Adventure!

By Marlena Turner, DIR & Human Resource Manager



This summer, DILA will embark on an adventure—Camp Adventure, that is! An overnight summer camp for deaf and hard-of-hearing children, their siblings and children of deaf parents (ages 5-17), Camp Adventure will take place August 8–10, 2008, at Camp Pecometh in Centreville, Maryland.

Camp activities will include fishing, hiking, canoeing, campfires, swimming, crafts, a luau and more. This is sure to be a great adventure for all! The cost is \$100 per camper, and limited scholarships are available. Camp volunteers are also needed. To learn more or to register, contact Marlena Turner,

Camp Director, at 410-742-5052, ext. 125 or [marlena.turner@dila.org](mailto:marlena.turner@dila.org). Families are also encouraged to check our web site, [www.dila.org](http://www.dila.org), for information and updates.



## Sorenson Videophone Now Available at Dorchester Public Library

Ken Stottlemire, Community  
Programs Director

Good news for Dorchester County residents! Thanks to a recent donation from Quota International of Cambridge, patrons of the Dorchester County Public Library now have access to a Sorenson Video Relay Service (VRS) videophone. The videophone is available to the general public Monday through Saturday.

A free service, VRS enables sign language users to communicate in their native language via video conferencing. During a VRS call, a professionally trained video relay interpreter translates the user's sign language into spoken language or text for the other (hearing) party. When the other person responds, the operator translates his or her words back into sign language for the VRS user.

A videophone is available for public use in DILA's Salisbury office as well.

**Dorchester County Public Library Hours:**  
Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.  
Tuesday, Thursday, 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.  
Saturday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
**Location:** 303 Gay Street, Cambridge, MD

**DILA Hours:** Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

# Upcoming Events

Unless otherwise noted, all events will take place at DILA's office in Salisbury, located at 806 Snow Hill Road. For more information about a particular event, call 410-742-5052 (voice/TTY).

## August 7, 2008

Parents of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children Support Group Meeting  
7 – 8:30 p.m.

## August 8 –10, 2008

DILA's Camp Adventure  
Camp Pecometh, Centreville, MD  
For deaf and hard-of-hearing children and their siblings, ages 5 – 17  
Registration fee: \$100  
(scholarships available)

## August 14, 2008

Deaf Community Night with the Delmarva Shorebirds  
Game time: 7:05 p.m.  
Arthur W. Perdue Stadium,  
Salisbury, MD

## September 4, 2008

Parents of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children Support Group Meeting  
7 – 8:30 p.m.

## October 2, 2008

Parents of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children Support Group Meeting  
7 – 8:30 p.m.

## November 6, 2008

Parents of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children Support Group Meeting  
7 – 8:30 p.m.

## December 6, 2008

Parents of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children Support Group Holiday Party  
1 – 4 p.m.

James and the Giant Peach,  
featuring Sound Stage on Tour  
Dates, time and location TBD

*Visit our Web site: [www.dila.org](http://www.dila.org)*



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