I have been president of the Northern Virginia Association of the Deaf (NVAD) for 16 months, starting in January 2018. I am honored that you all elected me as your president two years in a row. I hope I have performed my duties as president to your satisfaction. I have tried my best to be open, honest, and approachable in my role as president. I want to share some thoughts with you all, the members.

My time so far as president has been a learning, and a very challenging, experience. The purpose of this article is to reply to some comments that have been made. I want you all to know that I understand completely that NVAD belongs to the members. Nevertheless, I believe that, as president, I have some leeway to make a decision now and then. Following are the comments and my replies to them:

- “You should have asked the members about whether they want to have a meeting next month.” — This was said after the March meeting where I announced that the next general meeting would be May 4, 2019. We had a meeting in January, a Super Bowl party in February, and a meeting plus our first Chocolate Festival in March. NVAD deserves a break now and then. Another thing to consider is that other events occurred in March and April that people could attend. There were the Silent Dinners hosted by the ASL Honor Societies at West Springfield High School and Westfield High School and the fundraiser dinner for the Woodson High School Deaf Academic Bowl Team. Both were well attended. NVRC will have Celebrate Communication on April 27.

- “The same speaker can’t be invited again. It’s not fair to other speakers.” — There is nothing in the Bylaws saying that we can’t have the same speaker more than once. I asked a specific person if she wanted to give a second presentation because she was not able to cover everything at her first presentation last year. She was the one who mentioned this comment. This person’s first talk was well attended, and I believe her topic is equally as relevant this year. I am working with her right now to set up a date.

- “You can’t let your friendships influence your decisions as president.” — Some friends have a lot of expertise in meeting procedures and are very knowledgeable about various subjects. They offer perspectives I might otherwise miss, which helps me to make my own decisions.
President’s Column
(continued from page 2)

• “You’re supposed to protect the members.” — As president, yes, it is my responsibility to protect members from being harassed by other members during meetings, according to Robert’s Rules of Order. However, I have not yet witnessed any harassment at NVAD meetings. Whatever grievances two individuals may have with each other, they need to work it out between themselves.

• “You should not send the newsletter to other organizations without asking them to send us their newsletters.” — Networking with other organizations is one way to spread awareness of NVAD. Even though you need to be a paid member of NVAD to receive our newsletter on a continuing basis, there is no reason that we cannot share it with other people in order to increase awareness of NVAD.

Last but not least, I learned through the grapevine about a complaint made about my requesting reports to be submitted to me by email before meetings. Below is what I said in the email announcing the May 4 meeting:

“For those of you who plan to give reports, PLEASE send them to me at mywilliams@verizon.net so I can have them ready to show on the screens. Otherwise, you will not be able to present your report. At the meeting in March, there were some minor disruptions because of last minute additions of reports. I need to make this very clear: I do NOT want to add anything to my laptop at the meeting through thumb drives. I took security training while I was a federal employee, and one of the risks warned against was using thumb drives. They can carry unknown viruses that you may not be aware of. I will truly appreciate your sending me your reports ahead of time. Thank you.”

There are two reasons for making this request:
1. To minimize disruptions during the meeting.
2. To avoid infecting my laptop with unknown viruses from thumb drives.

It is my responsibility as president to make the meetings run smoothly, with no or as few disruptions as possible. Several members have left NVAD because they were frustrated with how long the meetings were and how often they were disrupted. Their absence is noticeable.

If you have any thoughts about this article, share them with me. I can only continue to do what I believe is best for NVAD. Thank you for your time reading this.

Happy Easter
Northern Virginia Association of the Deaf

Saturday, May 4, 2019

9:30AM to 12:00PM

NVAD General Meeting

Northern Virginia Resource Center
3951 Pender Drive, Suite 130
Fairfax, VA  22030

Two ASL students from West Springfield High School have volunteered to provide child care during the meeting. If you need child care, please email Melanie Williams at her email given below. Thank you.

For more information, contact NVAD President Melanie Williams
mywilliams@verizon.net
Northern Virginia Association of the Deaf

FAMILY EVENT

Saturday, May 18, 2019
2:00PM to 4:00PM

Northern Virginia Resource Center
3951 Pender Drive, Suite 130
Fairfax, VA  22030

Bring your little hero to NVRC dressed in his or her favorite superhero costume!

For more information, contact NVAD President Melanie Williams
mywilliams@verizon.net
President’s Report at NVAD’s Membership Meeting on March 02, 2019

1. To reduce confusion, there will not be any interruption during reports. Steve Williams is the parliamentarian.

2. Meeting must end at 12 noon sharp today due to the Chocolate Festival we are holding afterwards. You will be alerted when there are 30 minutes left.

3. In order to allow time for business portion of meeting, please keep all reports short.

4. The eNVADer for February 2019 has been sent out.

5. Motion re: the $2,000 donation to VAD Mini-Conference Committee was not correctly recorded in the minutes of June 2018 meeting. Also, the adoption of the June 2018 meeting minutes was not recorded in the minutes of the November 2018 meeting. Since November minutes are already approved, they need to be amended to reflect adoption of June 2018 minutes. These will be handled during unfinished business. [President’s note: All of these issues were taken care of during unfinished business. The motion was correctly passed and the June minutes were adopted and recorded at this meeting (March 2019).]

6. NVAD’s 75th Anniversary is next year. Need to establish a committee and ask for volunteers today.

7. Gary and Donna Viall, Peggy Daniels, Jeanne Lavelle, and Steve Williams have agreed to work on updating both NVAD’s brochure and NVAD’s history.

8. NVRC’s Celebrate Communication is April 27 at Springfield Town Center. Need approval during new business to pay $75 for exhibit space. [This was approved during the meeting, and a check has been given to NVRC for NVAD’s exhibit space. Still need volunteers to man the booth and to make a new display board.]

9. Need to write up code of conduct for meetings and activities and guidelines for events. [No action. Most likely, the board will take care of this.]

10. Received email from Anderson Wells, administrative coordinator for Arts on the Horizon. They provide performances and education programs for young children. [No action was taken. We need to decide how we want to show our support.]
Pictures from NVAD’s Membership Meeting on March 02, 2019

Jamie Berke gave her Vice-President report

Robert Goodwin gave his Treasurer’s report

Paul Daniels, Treasurer for 2018, explained some items in the Treasurer’s Report

Gary Viall gave his report on Legislation

Gary Viall gave his report on Stocks

Donna Kay Graff-Viall gave her VAD Rep’s Report
Pictures from NVAD’s Membership Meeting on March 02, 2019
(continued from page 6)

Jill Moebus gave her audit report on VAD Mini Conference

Jeanne Lavelle explained Motion 3
Pictures from Chocolate Festival on March 02, 2019

Large Cookie Sheet from Jeremy Smith
Pictures from Chocolate Festival on March 02, 2019
(continued from page 8)
In Memory of
Brianna Kathryn Beatty

We were saddened to hear of the sudden passing of Brianna Beatty, the daughter of former NVAD members Mary and Tim Beatty. Our hearts go out to them at this difficult time. Tom and Laurie Dowling, Jeanne Lavelle, and Melanie and Steve Williams were among the NVAD members who attended her memorial on March 30, 2019. Allison and Ray Kovachik and JulieAnn and Jim Chavez were also there. Following is Brianna’s obituary:

Brianna Kathryn Beatty, age 25, of Woodbridge, the daughter of Timothy and Mary Ann Beatty, departed this life on March 15, 2019. She is also survived by her devoted fiancé of 3 years, Joshua Wilson Embrey; dear sisters, Melissa Terese Kalisvaart (Michael) and Patricia Woodward (Anthony); a large extended family of nieces and nephews, uncles, aunts, and cousins; and her cherished dogs, Gunner and Chloe. She was preceded in death by her maternal grandparents, Lawrence and Elaine McGauley of Manhattan Beach, CA, and paternal grandparents, Donald and Barbara Beatty of Virginia Beach, VA.

Brianna was born and raised in Sacramento, California, where she attended El Camino and Galt High Schools. Brianna moved to Virginia where she met her fiancé, Josh Embrey. The two were inseparable. Brianna lost her only child, Ryder Patrick Holden, in 2014 to SIDS. This loss affected her greatly until the time of her passing. Brianna loved spending time with her family, fiancé, and pets. She will be missed dearly by all who knew her.

A memorial service was held at the Electric Palm Restaurant on Saturday, March 30. A second memorial service took place in Galt, CA, on Saturday, April 13. Brianna was interred in Cherokee Memorial Park in Lodi, CA, with her beloved son, Ryder.

Instead of flowers, the family requests donations to the SIDS Foundation in the name of Ryder Patrick Holden so that greater efforts can be made to understand and prevent SIDS in infants.

E-mail: info@nvrc.org
URL: www.nvrc.org

Melanie Williams
President, NVAD
mywilliams@verizon.net

Pat Beech
Editor, NVAD
pgbeech@aol.com
Loneliness and Isolation
Among Senior Citizens

Deaf Senior Citizens Are Not Exempt and What Can We Do To Support our Deaf Seniors
By Danielle Thompson-Ochoa, Ph.D., NCC, NCSC

My elderly parents subscribe to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) magazine. While I am not a senior citizen and would like to think I have many (yes, many) more years before I am identified as one, I often enjoy reading the monthly issues of AARP magazine. The articles often focus on topics that are very relevant to me such as saving money, best foods for optimal health and yes, top retirement travel destinations - I can dream, can’t I? Recently, I’ve noticed that greater attention is being given to what some may describe as an epidemic among senior citizens – loneliness.

According to the US Census Bureau, approximately 11 million Americans, over the age of 65, live alone. As people get older, the likelihood of living alone increases. More and more adults are either choosing not to have children or because of difficulty conceiving, do not have children. This results in fewer family members being available to provide care and companionship to seniors.

While living alone does not mean it will inevitably lead to social isolation, it is certainly a predisposing factor. Social contacts tend to decrease as we age for a variety of reasons, including retirement, the death of friends and family, or lack of mobility. Regardless of the causes of senior isolation, researchers are discovering harmful consequences of social isolation, such as, early dementia, heart attacks, diabetes, and early death.

Research and statistics have tended to focus on hearing senior citizens but Deaf senior citizens are no exception. I recently started paying more attention to the obituaries of Deaf senior citizens. As I read about deceased Deaf Seniors, I could not help but wonder if loneliness was a factor in their deaths. Take for example an obituary I read about Mike. It stated that he was, “a beloved swimming instructor with a career spanning seven decades in Toronto, Canada.” It went on to state that he died in a nursing home and his survivors included a son who lived in New Zealand, a daughter in Australia and a sister in Texas along with grand children and great grand children. Mike was living in a nursing home in Canada and his children lived in other countries very far away from him. There was no mention of a significant other. As I sat thinking about Mike, I wondered if he had a significant other or a companion, whether he had anyone he could talk to, laugh with and share special moments in these later years of his life. Whatever the circumstance, Mike died alone, away from his close family. I decided to do some research and it was from this that I wrote this article.

In this article, I look at eleven facts about loneliness in senior citizens and what we as members and friends of the Deaf community (i.e. Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deafblind, etc.) can do to assist in reducing loneliness and isolation among our Deaf Seniors. I have also included a short resource list. This resource list is not comprehensive. There are many more resources available and I recommend you also do your own research, especially if you know any Deaf Seniors.
1. Senior isolation increases the risk of mortality.

**Fact:** According to a study in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, both social isolation and loneliness are associated with a higher risk of mortality among adults aged 52 and older. One possible reason is people who live alone or do not have many social contacts may not seek assistance when they have a medical condition, therefore, allowing the condition to worsen. For example, having a mild stroke and not seeking medical attention can result in death.

**What we can do:** Deaf organizations and social clubs should ensure Deaf seniors are included to reduce isolation. Hosting monthly events will allow us to communicate with our Deaf seniors and we can provide support if we suspect they are unwell or dealing with a medical condition. Years ago when I lived in Boston I attended the Deaf mass at a local Catholic Church. One Sunday, I noticed Mary’s face looked pale and the right side of her mouth appeared lower than usual. While chatting with Mary, she stated she had a terrible headache and her arm and face were hurting. She said she took Tylenol to feel better. I immediately sensed an underlying medical condition, told the Priest and we agreed to call 911 for Mary. Several weeks later, we learned Mary had a mild stroke and was in need of immediate care.

2. Perceived loneliness contributes to cognitive decline and risk of dementia.

**Fact:** Neuroscientists around the country have been alarmed at the number of senior citizens developing dementia before the age of 70. Dr. John Cacioppo, a neuroscientist and psychologist at the University of Chicago, is one of the known researchers studying social isolation. He has concluded in his research on dementia that feelings of loneliness are linked to poor cognitive functioning and faster cognitive decline.

**What we can do:** In addition to the information stated in the point above, Deaf leaders should include “brain challenging” games when we are hosting events with Deaf seniors. Games such as, “Scrabble”, “Sudoku”, “Bingo”, or any memory game that requires thinking and processing information are some ways of cognitively engaging Deaf seniors.

3. Feelings of loneliness can negatively affect both physical and mental health.

**Fact:** Seniors who feel lonely and isolated are more likely to report having poor mental and physical health. Connecting seniors with social resources, such as senior centers and meal delivery programs, are other ways to combat subjective feelings of isolation.

**What we can do:** Connect our Deaf seniors with local resources, such as meal delivery programs, senior centers with events targeted towards seniors (and inclusive of Deaf Seniors). Encourage our Deaf seniors to interact and socialize with other Deaf seniors in the DC metro area.
4. Social isolation makes seniors more vulnerable to elder abuse.

**Fact:** Elder Abuse is a serious crime. Unfortunately, many seniors have been victims of elder abuse. Social isolation can make them more susceptible to this abuse.

**What we can do:** Members of the Deaf community should maintain contact with our Deaf Seniors and check in with them regularly. Any suspicions of abuse should be reported to the Elder Abuse Hotline. The contact information from the website of the Department of Social Services of Virginia is

- In Virginia: (800) 552-7096
- Out-of-state: (804) 786-8536
- Hearing-impaired: (800) 828-1120
- 13 Adult Protective Services Hotlines: (888) 832-3858

5. Loneliness causes high blood pressure.

**Fact:** Studies have shown that older adults who are lonely show an increase in systolic blood pressure. Preventing or addressing loneliness in seniors can prevent some associated health risks.

**What we can do:** Set up a regular exercise class or a “buddy walk” program for our Deaf seniors to improve their health and fitness. A simple 30 minute walk, three to four times a week can help to reduce blood pressure and other health risks. Walking with a “buddy” can help to combat loneliness.

6. Physical and geographic isolation often leads to social isolation.

**Fact:** The National Council on Aging states, “one in six seniors living alone in the United States faces physical, cultural, and/or geographical barriers that isolate them from their peers and communities. This on this site” isolation can prevent them from receiving benefits and services that can improve their economic security and their ability to live healthy, independent lives.”

**What we can do:** The Metro provides discounted tickets for Deaf individuals. If you are applying for reduced fare cards as a Deaf person, you have to prove you are Deaf by submitting a recent audiogram. A valid state ID card or driver’s license will be accepted proof of your senior status. The Washington Metro website is: https://www.wmata.com/fares/reduced.cfm.
Loneliness and Isolation Among Senior Citizens
(continued from page 13)

7. Transportation challenges can lead to social isolation.

Fact: Closely related to the point above, the AARP states that “life expectancy exceeds safe driving expectancy after age 70 by about six years for men and 10 years for women.” However, the National Coalition On Aging conducted a survey in 2017 that showed 41% of seniors do not feel the transportation support in their community is adequate.

What we can do:
Check in with Deaf seniors and find out if they have reliable transportation to attend Deaf events or other events in their communities. Having access to adequate public transportation or other senior transportation services is imperative to our seniors’ accessing programs and resources. This will also allow them to feel connected to others in our community and provide them with a sense of independence.

8. Loss of a significant other is a major risk factor for loneliness and isolation.

Fact: Losing a significant other is an event which becomes more common as people age. It has also been shown by numerous studies that the death of a partner increases a senior’s vulnerability to emotional and social isolation. Besides the loneliness brought on by bereavement, the loss of a partner may also mean the loss of social interactions that were facilitated by being part of a couple.

What we can do:
Here are some things that can be done to assist with the loss of a significant other:
a) Refer our Deaf seniors for counseling when they have lost a significant other. Being able to express their grief in a safe place is essential.
b) Support groups: If one is not in place at a Deaf community center in the DC metro area, seek a support group in the community that will provide ASL interpreters for our Deaf seniors. Be ready to advocate for our Deaf seniors when they are denied ASL interpreters.
c) Encourage Deaf seniors to meet and socialize with others. There is nothing wrong with Deaf seniors dating other seniors!

9. Socially isolated seniors are more pessimistic about the future.

Fact: According to the National Council on Aging, socially isolated seniors are more likely to predict their quality of life will get worse over the next 5-10 years.

What we can do:
Support local community based programs and services for senior citizens. My husband and I donate financially to senior programs in Alexandria. We also volunteer at any senior event when our schedules permit.
10. LGBT seniors are much more likely to be socially isolated.

Fact: According to Services and Advocacy for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) seniors, LGBT seniors are twice as likely to live alone, they are more likely to be single, and they are less likely to have children. They are also more likely to be estranged and disengaged from their families. Stigma and discrimination among LGBT seniors is a major cause for them to be isolated and withdrawn.

What we can do:
1) Advocate for our Deaf LGBT. Many LGBT aging programs are targeted towards hearing LGBT seniors.
2) Engage our Deaf LGBT seniors the same way we engage our Deaf seniors into events and programs targeted for Deaf seniors.
3) Assist our Deaf LGBT seniors with navigating resources. The National Resource on LGBT Aging has numerous resources on their website, however, it can be complex to navigate the website. The website is: https://www.lgbtagingcenter.org/resources/resources.cfm?st=VA.

11. Loneliness in seniors is a major risk factor for depression.

Fact: Numerous studies over the past decade have shown that feeling lonely is associated with more symptoms of depression in middle aged and older adults.

What we can do: Support our Deaf seniors and encourage them to seek treatment. Locate counselors fluent in ASL to refer to our Deaf seniors. It is important to recognize the feelings of loneliness, isolation, and depression so we can better assist our Deaf seniors.

Deaf Senior Conference 2019

The Deaf Senior Conference will be held in Seattle, Washington September 4–9, 2019. If you have the means to attend, I encourage you and all non-senior Deaf friends to participate. Supporting Deaf Seniors will not only enrich their lives but you may find that it is very rewarding for you. And well, if it’s one thing we do know, we’ll all get there someday.
Loneliness and Isolation Among Senior Citizens
(continued from page 15)

Resource List
(Note: this list is not comprehensive. Please inform NVAD of resources not on this list)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Organization/</th>
<th>Purpose:</th>
<th>Website:</th>
<th>Deaf Founded?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deaf Seniors America</td>
<td>A non profit organization that advocates for Deaf seniors by providing a variety of information, and resources for Deaf seniors</td>
<td><a href="https://deafseniors.us/">https://deafseniors.us/</a></td>
<td>Yes, founded by and for the Deaf.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Deaf Therapy (NDT)</td>
<td>Accessible web based therapy with licensed counselors who are fluent in ASL</td>
<td><a href="https://nationaldeaftherapy.com/">https://nationaldeaftherapy.com/</a></td>
<td>Yes founded by two Deaf women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf Counseling Center</td>
<td>Accessible web based therapy with licensed counselors who are fluent in ASL</td>
<td><a href="http://www.deafcounseling.com/">http://www.deafcounseling.com/</a></td>
<td>Yes founded by two Deaf women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Deaf Association</td>
<td>Updates a list of Deaf Senior resources on their website.</td>
<td><a href="https://www.nad.org/members/sections/senior-citizen-section/">https://www.nad.org/members/sections/senior-citizen-section/</a></td>
<td>Yes, founded by and for the Deaf.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Loneliness and Isolation Among Senior Citizens

*(continued from page 16)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NBDA (National Black Deaf Advocates) Senior Program</td>
<td>The NBDA Black Deaf Senior Citizen Program is for those seniors who are 55 years old and up, however, it is open to anyone who supports this program.</td>
<td><a href="https://www.nbda.org/news/nbda-black-deaf-senior-citizen-program-dr-elizabeth-moore">https://www.nbda.org/news/nbda-black-deaf-senior-citizen-program-dr-elizabeth-moore</a></td>
<td>Yes, founded by and for the Deaf.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBT Center - DC</td>
<td>Supports LGBT individuals to be safe, connect with others and seek support.</td>
<td><a href="http://thedccenter.org/deaf/">http://thedccenter.org/deaf/</a></td>
<td>(has a resource website link for Deaf LGBT).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfax County Senior Centers Locations</td>
<td>Statewide agency that provides information and resources to the community.</td>
<td><a href="https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/neighborhood-community-services/senior-centers">https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/neighborhood-community-services/senior-centers</a></td>
<td>No, hearing, state-sponsored Agency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council de Manos</td>
<td>A deaf non profit organization specifically for individuals who identify as Latinx. Their vision states “Our vision is for the people we serve to achieve self-fulfillment”.</td>
<td><a href="https://www.councilde">https://www.councilde</a> manos.org/</td>
<td>Yes, by and for the Deaf.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Currently they do not have a specific senior citizen section, however, they actively recruit and involve Deaf Latinx seniors.