

Don't Hang Up When Operator Announces "Relay" Calls

Marty Folsom
AAUW NC Tar Heel News Editor

I recently called a member of AAUW NC. She hung up three times. If you don't know me, you are unaware I am hard of hearing. And, if you have not heard of the Relay system, when a calling assistant tries to explain and says the words, "AT&T Relay," you may think it is a telemarketer. MCI and Sprint also offer Relay service.



Marty Folsom

After our member hung up three times (she became angry because she did not understand), I called another member and asked her to get my message through. As we talked, we decided this in a "education thing," so I am offering this information in *Tar Heel News* as a service to help people communicate.

d/Deaf/hh

Definitions from the booklet distributed by the Western N.C. Conference United Methodist Deaf Ministry (used with permission) tell us:

deaf (d)

The partial or total inability of a person to hear sound unaided—focuses purely on the medical aspects of deafness and ranges from mild to profound. Using the lower case "d" refers to deaf people in general or the condition of deafness.

Deaf (Deaf)

People who use American Sign Language (ASL) as their primary language and generally prefer to view deafness not as a handicap, but as a shared experience underlying their sense of community. They consider themselves as a part of the sociolinguistic group known as the Deaf.

Hard of Hearing (hh)

People who have substantial but not complete hearing loss. They rely mostly on assistive technologies, lip-reading, or other strategies to interact with others effectively. They comprise over 90% of all people with hearing loss.

The information in the booklet is available at <http://www.wnccumc.org/hhs/deafministry.htm> and the booklet itself can be downloaded in .pdf format. It is filled with many definitions and a large array of resources from many sectors. I encourage everyone who reads this article to access this information to enable you to communicate better with those who are not blessed with good hearing. Good information can help alleviate isolation, fear, and anxiety.

Relay—Linking d/Deaf/hh and those with speech disabilities to others

A TDD/TTY is a Text Telephone. The handset of a regular telephone is placed on this device, which has a small screen and a keyboard. The caller can communicate directly with another person who has a TDD/TTY.

Relay North Carolina operates 24/7 (other states have it, too). A caller can dial 711 to relay a conversation between a person with a speech or hearing disability using a TDD/TTY and a hearing person using a regular telephone. The person using the TDD/TTY types his/her message. It is relayed to the other party by a Relay Operator (RO). The RO then relays the hearing/speaking person's exact words by typing them back to the TDD/TTY user. All calls are handled with strictest confidentiality.

Some Interstate highway rest areas and other public places have TDD/TTYs.

Phone companies have taken Relay a step further by utilizing the Internet. A d/Deaf/hh caller can go to the relay web page for AT&T, MCI, or Sprint, enter a phone number and instructions to the Calling Assistant (CA), and communicate with any person who has a telephone or TTY/TTD. The calls are free.

How to Connect

In addition to going to the following sites to make text calls, be sure to visit the home pages for more information.

AT&T: English and Español

<http://www.relaycall.com/national/relay.html>

MCI: English

<http://www.ip-relay.com>

Sprint: English, Español, and Français

<http://www.sprintrelayonline.com/>

At this time, it is not possible to make voice Relay calls to the Internet.

Relay Etiquette

- Give the CA a chance to explain the service.
- If the CA does not announce the name of the caller, ask who is calling, just as you would with a regular caller who does not announce his/her name.

Want to Know More?

If you have questions about d/Deaf/hh, feel free to ask. Any other AAUW NC members who can educate our members about barriers for other situations and help us to transcend them is encouraged to do so. Send articles or questions to marty@penstrokes.com or fax them to 704.872.3400. Mail hard copies to Marty Folsom, 1525 sMelviney, Statesville NC 28677.

Triad Cluster Sponsors Judges' Forum

THE TRIAD CLUSTER welcomes all to the Judges Forum on March 31, at 7:30 p.m., at the Hawthorne Inn and Conference Center in Winston-Salem. Eden, Greensboro, and High Point Branches will be joining the host branch, Winston-Salem, for an interesting and most informative evening.

Forum members are Wanda Bryant, NC Court of Appeals judge; Rhoda Billings, currently serving on the NC Bar Association Committee studying the various alternatives possible in the election/selection of judges; and Bob Hall, co-director of Democracy NC.

AAUW members and friends are invited to come to the dining room at the Hawthorne Inn where tables will be reserved for those who wish to have dinner prior to the forum. Conversation and gathering for the forum audience will begin about 7 pm. Our coordinators for this important event are Julia Archer, J.D., and Beth Messersmith, co-director of Democracy NC.

Ellen Morris, Winston-Salem Branch

The American Association of University Women promotes equity for all women and girls, lifelong education, and positive societal change.

In principle and practice, AAUW values and seeks a diverse membership. There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, or class.

Wilmington Educational Foundation Honorees

Wilmington Branch has honored three members with a \$3,000 contribution to the Educational Foundation. These women, Sue Wood, Ellyn Bache, and Evelyn Sivier, have given countless hours of service and support to AAUW.

Sue Wood was honored with a \$1,000 contribution to the Eleanor Roosevelt Teacher Fellowship. She joined the Wilmington Branch in 2002 and has been co-vice president of membership for the past two years. In this position, she has focused her energy on writing and publishing the yearbook and streamlining branch membership records.

Ellyn Bache was honored with a \$1,000 contribution to the International Fellowship. She joined the Wilmington Branch in 1995 and has been involved in planning the major fundraiser for the Educational Foundation for nine years. Ellyn devotes much of the year doing public relations work to make the *Tea with Carolina Authors* a successful fundraiser.

Evelyn Sivier was honored with a \$1,000 contribution to the American Fellowship. She became an AAUW member in 1977 when she helped establish the Marco Island Branch in Florida. Evelyn served as education chair for ten years and handled fundraising and candidate selection for scholarships. Through her efforts, the San Marco branch became the recipient of a \$100,000 legacy and was able to establish a perpetual scholarship. Evelyn joined the Wilmington branch in 2000 and has served two terms as treasurer.

*Dianne G. Perry, EF Chair
Wilmington Branch*

Dietitians Win Big Advocacy Battle

Barbara Ann Hughes,
PhD, MPH, RD, LDN, FADA

Dietitians achieve the promise of reimbursement from Blue Cross/Blue Shield of North Carolina. The announcement on October 13, 2004, by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina that it will offer its members coverage for obesity may be shocking. Their decision underscores the importance of dietetics professionals in addressing one of the country's most serious public health problems and can serve as a nationwide model for treatment of obesity. Their proposed package of coverage available to more than a million North Carolina residents includes nutrition counseling and other services provided by registered and licensed dietitians along with reimbursement for doctors' visits and two prescription weight-loss drugs.

How did it happen? I decided to take on the insurance industry. My efforts included seeking out RDs around the country who were receiving reimbursement. By calling local and national companies and asking to become a provider of MNT, I succeeded in contracting with a handful of companies, but never BCBSNC. I kept trying, but never with success.

Last year, this vision was shared with 12 other Research Triangle Park private practice dietitians. After an area meeting, the group recommended the first carefully-worded goal: "Encourage BCBSNC to credential RD/LDNs in private practice as 'in network' MNT providers with independent provider numbers and privileges outside of physicians' offices."

Our efforts included composing a letter to BCBSNC requesting a meeting and networking with BCBSNC's Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Robert Harris, a member of my church in Raleigh, and others. We stressed that credentialing RD/LDNs for this provision was "the right thing to do."

After several revisions and assistance from Pam Michael, ADA director of quality, outcomes and coverage, a letter was mailed to Dr. Harris. *News & Observer* Business writer Jean Fisher contacted our group for an interview, resulting in the publication on July 17 of "Dietitians seek insurance change." The article contained the quote: "We believe medical nutrition therapy is an important preventive service. Right now, all insurers have a problem reimbursing us for anything preventive."

This was just the beginning of media exposure to our quest and communications and meetings with BCBSNC that resulted in the company agreeing to cover preventive treatment.

Suggestions for a successful campaign:

- Organize for support to reach the goal
- It's all about relationships, connecting with stakeholders, experts, issues, ideas, resources, vision, and particularly with insurance executives
- Keep your eye on the goal with persistence and courage
- Timing is critical
- Success is developed daily, but not in a day
- Create momentum by providing vision and tools
- Work to create a "One Voice Phenomenon."

Success will not occur by rallying around one person, one agency, or one organization. Success will only occur when it doesn't matter who gets credit, when we're all speaking the same language, and when we all share the same vision.

\$3 Tax Form Check-Off: Say "Yes"

The coalition members of NC Voters for Clean Elections have been working hard to promote the \$3 Check-Off on the NC Tax Form, the major source of funding for the Public Campaign Fund. In early February, the coalition kicked off a statewide awareness campaign (called the "Say Yes" Tour) where activists will visit over 55 cities across North Carolina to promote the Check-Off. Thanks to AAUW NC for publicizing our efforts in your state newsletter. Last year many branches helped spread the word by distributing information, forwarding e-mails and putting the announcement in their newsletters. If your branch would like to know more about the Public Campaign Fund, participate in the campaign, or would like a speaker at one of your meetings or events (during February or March), please contact Shane Reese at streese@ncvce.org or 919.933.8583.