



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 6, 2015

The 14th Annual Coffee Hour Turned Out a Successful Event.

(Providence, R.I.) – The 14th Annual Coffee Hour hosted by the Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (RICDHH) at the State House in Providence, RI was held successfully. The theme of this event was, “**Access to Language for Deaf and Hard of Hearing**”.

1. **Governor Gina M. Raimondo** gave a brief speech with a strong emphasis on innovation and opportunity in employment. She quoted, “*Individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing are an important part of our community, and they deserve the same chance to make it as everyone else.*” and “*Employment for those who are deaf and hard of hearing is a value-added for all who participate, for the creation of jobs in Rhode Island, and for the State’s continued economic recovery*”.
2. **Governor Raimondo and the Board of the Commissioners recognized 3 outgoing Commissioners for their contributions:**
 1. **Travis R. Zellner** of Uxbridge, MA - 8 Terms
 2. **James Simon** of Providence, RI - 3 Terms
 3. **Julia Gold** of Seekonk, MA - 2 Terms
3. **RICDHH 2015 Recognition Award: Denise Corson, Program Coordinator of Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan (ATEL)**, for her commitment to promoting the state’s Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan program through demonstration and education for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community in the State of Rhode Island. Denise Corson accepted this award.
4. **RICDHH Certification of Merit award: David Abell, Hearing Assistive Technology (HAT) Project**, for his continued effort to lead and advocate Hearing Assistive Technology projects.
5. **Anthony Luna**, 10th grade, Providence Career Technical Academy, **Makayla Teles**, 11th grade, RI School for the Deaf, and **Barbara Slue**, 12th grade, RI School for the Deaf share their thoughts on “**Why is ‘Access to Language’ important to you?**”. All presentations had a common theme, that access to language helps them to communicate, to solve problems independently, and to advance themselves in social and educational opportunities. Early language acquisition is the key.
6. **Marie Coppola, Ph.D and Deanna L. Gagne, MA, CI/CT, University of Connecticut, Departments of Psychological Sciences and Linguistics, both are hearing children of Deaf parents, presented a brief overview of their topic, “Early language: Creating an optimal foundation for deaf children’s development”.** *They found some important pieces during early language acquisitions. 1. Early experience with high-quality, accessible language, 2. 30-million word gap by age 3 is about access to rich varied language (Providence Talks), and 3. Bilingualism is not a contest, all languages can play well together.”*

7. **Stu Nunnery**, a musician, composer, recording and performing artist, actor, and activist, spoke about his personal journey to re-discovery his first love, music, after 30 years. He thanks the latest technology, digital hearing aids and he had to work hard to re-learn the sounds to recognize the musical tunes. He created this song, "I'm Walkin' Right Down the Middle of Main Street USA", for Walt Disney Productions in 1978 and Disney still uses it for their parade.
8. **Gift Card Drawings:** Lastly, the gift cards were given away to three lucky winners. They were required to participate in filling out three committee questionnaires to be eligible for drawings. Three committees are Community Resources, Mental Health, and Technology Access.
9. **Sponsors:** The events would not be made possible without these sponsors: Thank you!

1. **RI Hamilton Relay** - Refreshments/presenters.
2. **Sprint Relay** - the printing of postcards about this event.
3. **Allied Court Reporters, Inc.** - CART Services
4. **Purple Communications** - Awards
5. **Hearing Loss Association of America - RI Chapter** - \$100 Gift Card
6. **Perspectives Corporation** - \$100 Gift Card
7. **SorensonVRS** - \$100 Gift Card
8. **Partners Interpreting** - Surprise Gifts

The Board of Commissioners are looking forward to having another year of success next year in 2016!

About:

The Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (RI CDHH) is an advocating, coordinating, and service providing entity committed to promoting an environment in which the deaf and hard of hearing in Rhode Island are afforded equal opportunity in all aspects of their lives. The RI CDHH develops policy; initiates and lobbies for favorable legislation; fosters cooperation and awareness among state agencies and community organizations; and educates and advises consumers, state agencies, and employers about Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) rights to equal access.

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