



MONTHLY BULLETIN

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 5

MAY 2009

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

GOVERNOR OPENS SWINE FLU COMMAND CENTER

Governor Martin O'Malley has announced the opening of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's (DHMH) Swine Flu Operation Center in Baltimore. The DHMH Office of Preparedness and Response has begun monitoring and assisting health care partners across Maryland to prepare and respond should the swine flu present a health emergency for state residents.

"We want the citizens of Maryland to know that their government is doing everything we can at this time to prepare for any contingency with regard to swine flu," said the Governor, "I want to thank our health and emergency professionals for their quick and thorough efforts as we take these precautions to protect the citizens of Maryland."

There are no known cases or probable cases of this novel strain of swine flu in Maryland to date. All Maryland hospitals, health centers, clinics, doctors and other health care providers are now on alert with specific instructions to identify and manage accordingly, anyone who calls or visits their facilities while experiencing flu-like symptoms.

Maryland has extended the existing influenza surveillance period beyond its original end date of May 20, 2009, until further notice. Any health care provider with a suspected case of flu is requested to contact their local health department and submit samples to the State Public Health Laboratory for testing on all cases of flu-like illness that fit the appropriate characteristics.

"Just as we've planned and practiced for years, we are taking the necessary precautions to be ready if and when swine flu comes to Maryland," said John M. Colmers, DHMH secretary. "We want to emphasize that the greatest tool for combating this serious health threat is the common sense approach anyone can take, such as washing your hands frequently and covering your mouth when you cough."

As with any other seasonal flu, Marylanders should be advised to exercise precautionary measures to avoid becoming ill or spreading an illness to others.

For more information on swine flu. visit: www.dhmh.state.md.us/ or www.maryland.gov/.

ODHH

PROGRAMS

- *Awareness Training and Technical Assistance*
- *Constituent Services*
- *Community Outreach and Education*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

ODHH UPDATES	2
HANK PASSI, NEW STAFF SPECIALIST FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING SERVICES AT DORS	2
NOAA WEATHER RADIO FOR PEOPLE WITH HEARING LOSS	3
MEET MARIAN BLAND (CONT.)	4
ODHH ON THE MOVE	4

MEET THE ODHH ADVISORY COUNCIL: MARIAN BLAND

As you may know, of the council's 16 members, eight are public members from the community and eight serve as representatives of various State agencies. Marian Bland comes to the Advisory Council as the designee of the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH).



of the Office of Special Needs Populations, under the Mental Hygiene Administration (MHA), and is responsible for the oversight and administration of programs and services for consumers of mental health services with special needs. This includes: individuals with psychiatric disabilities who are homeless, are in jail and could be

DHMH is responsible for public health services in Maryland. Marian is the Director

(cont. on page 4)

ODHH UPDATES

Spring has officially sprung and ODHH is bounding forward. The month started with an ODHH Town Hall Meeting, where constituents had an opportunity to give feedback regarding the performance of the Office and also assist ODHH in identifying areas where gaps in policy and services exist. Some topics discussed were visual smoke and evacuation alarms, access to interpreters, and better coordinated information sharing about issues impacting the community. April 13th marked the end of the 2009 Legislative Session, where ODHH achieved an important victory: maintaining an independent, funded, and staffed office. However, SB 97, which would have enhanced accessibility to candidate information for individuals with hearing loss, never made it out of committee. With this in mind, ODHH is working to allocate staff and resources to focus more time on important policy initiatives and issues that affect our constituents.

The session also led to an exciting new responsibility for ODHH. The Office will be serving on the Interagency Council on Aging. The Council membership was redefined by HB 1480 and ODHH asked to be included in its membership. The first meeting was held this month.

The Office continued to be an outspoken advocate for the communities we serve by submitting public comment to the Interagency Committee on Disability Research to assist in developing a federal disability and rehabilitation 2010 research agenda. ODHH provided suggestions regarding interagency research coordination, health IT and electronic health records, health disparities, health promotion in the workforce, employment and health, and other critical research issues.

ODHH has continued its aggressive training schedule, providing instruction to the Maryland Emergency Management Agency, MAC, Inc., Calvert County Office on Aging, the Anne Arundel County Office on Aging and Disability, the DHMH ADA Coordinators, and to the Mary Browning Senior Center in Garrett County. As you can see, ODHH is reaching out across our diverse state to reach deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders in all geographic regions.

Look for ODHH coming to a town near you!

Lisa

STAFF SPECIALIST FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING SERVICES: HANK PASSI

As you may know, DORS has a new Staff Specialist for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services. Craig 'Hank' Passi is a state employee at the Maryland State Department of Education with Division of Rehabilitation Services (known as DORS) and is based in its Baltimore Headquarters. Hank has worked in 3 different states in a variety of roles, including working as an ADA Telecommunication Specialist and a High School Guidance Counselor. For the last 12 years, he has worked as a Vocational Rehabilitation counselor, where he also became the State Coordinator for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Delaware.

Hank attended college at NTID and Gallaudet University before receiving his Bachelor's at University of Minnesota, Duluth and received his Master's in Education and Rehabilitation at Western Oregon University. Hank completed his Rehabilitation Administration and Leadership Training at San Diego State University, where he further developed his skills in the rehabilitation administration field.

Hank's main duties as the Staff Specialist for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services are to coordinate, plan and develop statewide activities related to vocational rehabilitation programs, special

programs or projects to enhance employment services to individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing; to undertake specialized efforts that ensure the collaboration of other community partners in areas of special needs in working with deaf and hard of hearing here in Maryland; and to provide technical assistance and consultation to DORS staff regarding policies, procedures, agency practices and job placement issues regarding specific consumers, cases, or issues involving staff who are deaf/hard of hearing.

Hank currently lives in Cecil County (North East), Maryland with his wife, who is also deaf, and his two teenagers. Hank enjoys life with his family often watches the kids playing sports and enjoys outdoor adventure trips. Hank is proud to be a grandfather and enjoys spending time with his parents who have a small peach orchard farm across the road from where he and his family reside.

You can find out more about the DORS Services for People Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing by visiting <http://www.dors.state.md.us/DORS/ProgramServices/Deaf+Services/>.



NOAA WEATHER RADIO FOR PEOPLE WITH HEARING LOSS



What is NOAA Weather Radio?

NOAA Weather Radio receives National Weather Service warnings, watches, forecasts, and other hazard information 24 hours a day.

What is the special-needs NOAA Weather Radio?



The special-needs NOAA Weather Radio was designed to adapt to the needs of the deaf and hard of hearing community. The Radio can warn deaf and hard of hearing persons of hazardous conditions, giving them around-the-clock, up-to-

the-minute weather information. The Radio is a weather alerting system that can be a lifesaver, much as the now commonly-used smoke detector with flashing light, for deaf and hard of hearing persons.

How does the radio meet the weather alerting needs of deaf and hard of hearing persons?

- It provides visual and vibrating alarms and simple text readouts.
- Three warning lights indicate the level of alert (Statement, Watch, or Warning).
- Liquid crystal display readout indicates specific warning such as "Tornado Warning" or "Thunderstorm Warning".
- Programmable state/county selections screen out warnings for other areas.
- Accessible technology, now being developed, will enable deaf and hard of hearing persons to obtain NOAA Weather Radio alert messages in text format.
- The battery-operated NOAA Weather Radio can be portable at home, work, school or play, or while traveling, boating or camping.
- For deafblind persons and persons with co-occurring hearing and vision loss, special-needs NOAA Weather Radio receivers may be equipped with special adaptations which convert the weather messages into large print and/or Braille version without depending on volunteering reading services.

What does the special-needs NOAA Weather Radio do in times of inclement weather?

When an alert is broadcast on the NOAA Weather Radio, it

will send a signal which then activates one of the following accessories:

- Pillow vibrator to wake individuals from sleep.
- Strobe light to alert individuals during waking hours.
- Bed shaker to shake a bed to wake individuals up.

Where can you obtain information on the special-needs NOAA Weather Radio?

- <http://www.weatherradios.com/>
- <http://www.homesafeinc.com/>
- <http://www.silentcall.com/catalog/index.php?intro=1>
- http://www.harriscomm.com/catalog/default.php?cPath=1140_45_213
- <http://www.weathershack.com/> and <http://www.weathershack.com/education/weathershack-education-center.html>, a comprehensive guide to weather measurement equipment, including operation, applications and set-up

The above links are provided for convenience and information only and do not constitute an endorsement of the products offered. (See Disclaimer: <http://www.nssl.noaa.gov/disclaimer.html>)

In addition to using the radio, deaf and hard of hearing persons should educate themselves on weather safety. Where can they learn weather safety?

Weather safety education is highly recommended for deaf and hard of hearing persons to understand basic weather knowledge. This education is vital in preparing them to respond properly to weather threats. Contact your local National Weather Service office, your state emergency management agency, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or your American Red Cross chapter for weather safety information. It is recommended that you:

- Educate yourself concerning the threat and danger of various weather hazards.
- Familiarize yourself with weather warnings.
- Attend safety talks.
- Follow basic safety rules.
- Develop a family disaster plan for weather emergencies.

Taken from <http://www.nssl.noaa.gov/edu/safety/specialneeds.html>.

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF THE
DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

217 East Redwood Street, Suite 1300
Baltimore, MD 21202

Voice: 410-767-1497
TTY: 410-767-7756
VP: 443-453-5954
Fax: 410-333-1016

Martin O'Malley
Governor

Anthony G. Brown
Lieutenant Governor

Lisa H. Kornberg
Director

Julie Anne Schafer
Editor

WWW.ODHH.MD.GOV

ODHH ON THE MOVE

May 2009

Brown Bag Lunch
Friday, May 1, 12 PM—2 PM
Catonsville Public Library
Catonsville, MD

World of Possibilities Expo
Wednesday and Thursday, May 6 & 7,
9 AM—5 PM
Timonium Fairgrounds
Timonium, MD

ADA Title III Workshop
Thursday, May 14, 11:30 AM—3:30 PM
Queen Anne's County Art Council
Centreville, MD

DORS Disability Expo
Friday, May 15, 11 AM—2 PM
Johns Hopkins—Bayview
Baltimore, MD

DeafNet Deaf Awareness Day
Friday, May 15, 9 AM—2 PM
Valley Mall
Hagerstown, MD

June 2009

ODHH Advisory Council Meeting
Tuesday, June 2, 2 PM—5 PM
MDOT Headquarters
Hanover, MD

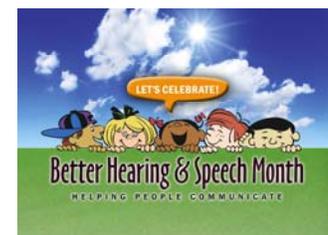
Six Flags Deaf Awareness Day
Saturday, June 20, 10:30 AM—9 PM
Six Flags America
Largo, MD



Since 1927, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) celebrates Better Hearing and Speech Month each May. This annual event provides opportunities to raise awareness about communication disorders and to promote treatment that can improve the quality of life for those who experience problems with speaking, understanding, or hearing.

This month of awareness is also a good time to analyze your own hearing and determine if you are one of the estimated 28 million Americans who have a hearing loss that can be treated.

For more information, visit <http://www.asha.org/bhsm/>.



MEET MARIAN BLAND (CONT.)

(cont. from page 1)

appropriately served in the community; individuals who have history of trauma; individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing; victims of natural or man made disasters; and veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts who have behavioral health needs. The MHA is responsible for oversight of inpatient psychiatric state hospitals in addition to public mental health services. Springfield State Hospital has an inpatient unit with an array of staff who are culturally competent and fluent in ASL for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

On the ODHH Advisory Council, Marian represents DHMH and works in

partnership with the Council to improve or enhance services for citizens who are deaf or hard of hearing who are in need of public mental health services. As Chair of the Mental Health Subcommittee, Marian holds regular meetings to work with key stakeholders in the public mental health system to ensure accessibility and provision of outpatient and inpatient mental health services to Marylanders with hearing loss. The subcommittee also looks at pressing issues in the field, including workforce shortage, co-occurring disorder treatment, and the integration of services from a behavioral health perspective.

Marian is the contact person for mental health services for deaf and hard of hearing Marylanders and can be reached at blandm@dhhm.state.md.us.