

# Inside Georgia Relay

A PUBLICATION FOR GEORGIA RELAY USERS, SUPPORTERS AND FRIENDS.

Summer/Fall 2006

## Call Handling Remains Topnotch Following Switch to Hamilton Relay

This past spring, Hamilton Relay became Georgia Relay's new service provider. Known nationwide for its superior commitment to customer service, especially its willingness to work one-on-one with relay users to resolve issues, Hamilton Relay has done an excellent job handling Relay calls to date. Any technical glitches or service concerns have been

addressed promptly and professionally.

At the Georgia Relay Call Center in Albany, additional Communication Assistants (CAs) are being recruited and trained through Albany Technical College and the Quick Start program, a state initiative that provides high-quality, customized training to new or expanding businesses and services in Georgia. CAs also partici-

pate in deaf culture training, which includes American Sign Language lessons.

Hamilton Relay can address Relay users' needs over the phone, via e-mail or through home visits, depending on the issue and the user's unique needs. If you have a question, concern or suggestion, call 1-866-694-5824 (voice/TTY) or e-mail [garelay@hamiltonrelay.com](mailto:garelay@hamiltonrelay.com).

## Georgia Relay Welcomes New Relay Administrator, Thanks Ken Ellison for 15 Years of Service

Georgia Relay is pleased to welcome Mike Russell as our new Relay administrator. A longtime Georgia Public Service Commission (PSC) employee, Mike worked his way up from staff auditor to utilities analyst in the PSC's telecommunications division. He accepts his new role with much enthusiasm.



**Mike Russell**

"Georgia Relay provides a valuable service for the deaf, hard-of-hearing and speech-disabled citizens of our state," Mike

says. "I want to keep that service running smoothly, ensuring that users enjoy a positive calling experience and have access to the best possible features and programs." Outside of work, Mike enjoys sports and volunteering. He is also active in his church.

Mike replaces Ken Ellison, who retired in June. As Georgia Relay administrator—a position he held for 15 years—Ken was instrumental in launching the Georgia Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program

(GATEDP), which provides a variety of specialized telecommunications equipment to qualified applicants who have difficulty using a standard phone. He also helped bring the Audible Universal Information Access Service (AUIAS) to the state of Georgia. (A free service, AUIAS allows blind and print-disabled citizens to listen to newspaper and magazine text over the phone.)

Georgia Relay thanks Ken for his many years of service and valuable contributions to telecommunications access in our state.



### About the PSC & Georgia Relay

The Georgia Public Service Commission (PSC) is responsible for the establishment, implementation, administration and promotion of Georgia Relay. Available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, Georgia Relay allows people with hearing or speech loss to communicate with any standard phone user. To make a Georgia Relay call, dial 7-1-1.

# Advisory Council Meeting Features Relay Reports, Marketing News and More

On June 22, 2006, the Georgia Telecommunications Relay Service Advisory Council gathered for its quarterly meeting. In addition to Advisory Council members, attendees included representatives from both Hamilton Relay (Georgia Relay's service provider) and Devaney & Associates (Georgia Relay's marketing, advertising and public relations agency).

Highlights of the meeting included:

- A report from Hamilton Relay that 98 percent of incoming Georgia Relay calls are answered by a Communications Assistant within ten seconds. Hamilton Relay currently handles an average of 43,287 Georgia Relay calls each month. The majority of these calls are initiated by a TTY.
- The Hamilton Relay outreach team conducted seven Georgia Relay presentations this past spring (148 attendees total) and participated in 11 exhibits and

conferences (825 attendees total). Plans are in the works to sponsor four Georgia Relay town hall meetings this fall.

- On the marketing and advertising front, an updated Georgia Relay brochure and trade show display have been produced to reflect the switch to Hamilton Relay. To request a copy of the new brochure, call Georgia Relay Customer Service at 1-866-694-5824 (voice/TTY). Visits to Georgia Relay's Web site, [www.GeorgiaRelay.org](http://www.GeorgiaRelay.org), reached an all-time high in June, with 20,700 hits recorded that month, compared to 12,000 hits tracked in June 2005.
- On June 1, 2006, Georgia began offering the Audible Universal Information Access Service (AUIAS) to its citizens. This free service allows Georgia residents who are blind or print disabled to listen to newspaper and magazine text over the phone. To access the service, users must apply for a Personal Identification Number from the

National Federation of the Blind, Georgia's AUIAS service provider. For more information about AUIAS, call 1-866-316-3242 or e-mail [newsline@nfbga.org](mailto:newsline@nfbga.org).

- The Georgia Public Service Commission is considering issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) to secure a CapTel™ service provider.

The Advisory Council provides feedback to Georgia Relay's service provider on customer care, outreach and training issues. Members include representatives from the PSC, the business community and the state's deaf, hard-of-hearing and speech-disabled populations.

The next Advisory Council meeting will take place Thursday, September 21, 2006, at 1:30 p.m., at the headquarters of the Georgia Council for the Hearing Impaired, located at 4151 Memorial Drive in Decatur. All Advisory Council meetings are open to the public. 🍌

## VRS and Internet Relay Updates from Hamilton Relay

Video Relay Service (VRS) makes it possible for sign language users to communicate in their native language via video conferencing. This feature requires either a computer with high-speed Internet access and a Web camera or a videophone with a high-speed Internet connection and a television.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) recently changed its VRS guidelines to enable users to select the VRS service provider of their choice, regardless of the type videophone they use. To access Hamilton Relay VRS through your videophone, follow these instructions:

1. Select "Dial" on your videophone
2. Click the "Speed Dials" button

3. Click the "Add" button

4. In the "Name" section, type:

#1Hamilton VRS

In the "Dial Method" box, select "IP address"

Enter the following IP address:

HamiltonVRS.tv

5. To place a VRS call via Hamilton Relay, select #1Hamilton VRS on your speed dials list (do NOT click "Dial VRS" in the main screen)

### Introducing VideoMail for VRS Users...

VideoMail allows people who regularly contact you via Hamilton Relay VRS to leave you message if you are unable to answer their call. Messages are then sent to your e-mail or pager address. To learn more or to sign up for a VideoMail

account, visit [www.hamiltonrelay.com](http://www.hamiltonrelay.com).

### Get Inspired with InspireChat™!

A 24-hour Internet Relay service, Hamilton Relay's InspireChat allows people who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech disabled to use their computer or other web device to connect to Hamilton Relay (via the Internet) and call any standard telephone user. During the call, the Communications Assistant voices everything the InspireChat user types and types the words spoken by the standard phone user, relaying the conversation back and forth. InspireChat users also benefit from convenient print and save options, personal profile and preference options and simple, one-click access. To learn more, visit [www.hamiltonrelay.com](http://www.hamiltonrelay.com). 🍌

## Make Plans to Attend Georgia Relay's Town Hall Meetings

Georgia Relay's outreach staff has planned town hall meetings in several cities across the state. Meetings will be open to the public, and attendees will have the opportunity to comment on their Relay calling experiences and share any Relay-related questions or concerns. Current and potential Relay users are encouraged to attend, along with family members, friends and other individuals who wish to learn more about telecommunication through Georgia Relay. The meetings will also feature a preview of the latest equipment available through the Georgia Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program (GATEDP).

Mark your calendar for the following town hall meetings:

### Saturday, August 26, 2006

6 p.m.

Georgia Council for the Hearing Impaired, Inc. (GACHI)  
3902 Northside Drive, Suite 4C  
Macon

### Wednesday, August 30, 2006

6 p.m.

GACHI Columbus Community Center  
4800 Armour Road, Building C, Suite E  
Columbus

### Wednesday, September 27, 2006\*

6 p.m.

Chatham County Public Library  
2002 Bull Street  
Savannah

### Wednesday, October 25, 2006

6 p.m.

GACHI Decatur Community Center  
4151 Memorial Drive, Suite 103-B  
Decatur

For more information, contact Georgia Relay Customer Service at 1-888-694-5824 (voice/TTY) or [garelay@hamiltonrelay.com](mailto:garelay@hamiltonrelay.com).

\* Meeting location is tentative. Please call to confirm before attending. ☺

## Georgia Relay Welcomes Well-Traveled Outreach Coordinator

Sam Costner enjoys traveling. So much so, that he's made it part of his job. Over the course of his career, he has worked with deaf and hard-of-hearing communities in numerous states, including North Carolina, South Dakota, Ohio and Iowa. His latest assignment brings him to the state of Georgia, as our new outreach coordinator.



Sam Costner

"Throughout my career, I've enjoyed meeting different people and educating them about relay," Sam says. "Communicating through relay has improved my quality of life so much...I want to show others how relay can do the same for them."

Before coming to Georgia, Sam worked for Hamilton Relay in Iowa as an outreach program manager. His love of travel, com-

bined with his years of experience in Relay operations and marketing, will prove beneficial in his new position as he journeys around the state to educate potential Relay users about the many advantages of using Georgia Relay to keep in touch.

Sam will also organize Georgia Relay workshops, town hall meetings and seminars, as well as work closely with Georgia Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program staff.

Due to the many offsite workshops and meetings he attends, Sam is best reached by e-mail at [sam.costner@hamiltonrelay.com](mailto:sam.costner@hamiltonrelay.com). Be sure to contact Sam if you wish to schedule a Georgia Relay presentation for your organization, group or business. ☺

## Exciting Updates to Georgia Relay Partner

With nearly 100 businesses already signed up, Georgia Relay Partner is growing quickly! (Georgia Relay Partner is a beneficial, free program that teaches businesses how to make and receive Relay calls.) To ensure the program continues to be a user-friendly resource for Relay users and participating businesses, we have made a few small adjustments.



Most notably, Relay Partners no longer need a password to access the program's training and educational materials at [www.GeorgiaRelay.org](http://www.GeorgiaRelay.org). Instead, partners simply click on the Georgia Relay Partner

button on the home page. Clicking "Already a Georgia Relay Partner?" on the left menu will then take them straight to the training materials, including the employee and employer guides, Georgia Relay calling tips poster and instructional video.

In addition, outreach staff members are now available to make a free presentation at a Relay Partner's place of business. The presentation explains the Relay calling process, ensuring business owners and their employees feel confident taking and placing Relay calls. To schedule a presentation, e-mail Georgia Relay's Outreach Coordinator Sam Costner at [sam.costner@hamiltonrelay.com](mailto:sam.costner@hamiltonrelay.com). To learn more about Georgia Relay Partner or to join, visit [www.GeorgiaRelay.org](http://www.GeorgiaRelay.org). ☺

# Atlanta Hosts DeafNation Expo

On Saturday, May 13, 2006, DeafNation, Inc., brought its popular DeafNation Expo to Atlanta's International Convention Center. Both Georgia Relay and Hamilton Relay hosted booths at the event, which attracted approximately 3,700 attendees.



DeafNation Expo is the country's foremost touring trade show for the deaf community. Held at various locations throughout the nation, Expos feature displays by government agencies, local entertainment and vendor booths with products and services for the deaf. Attendees can also participate in presentations, workshops and seminars hosted by financial advisors, education experts and other professionals.

Georgia Relay's booth was hosted by Sam Costner, outreach coordinator, and Tom Borgaila, account manager. "The most enjoyable part of being at DeafNation was enlightening attendees about Relay," explains Tom, who even drew a schematic diagram for one attendee to help him access a certain type of assistive technology on every floor of his home.

Sam and Tom also educated attendees on Georgia Relay calling options (e.g. Hearing Carry-Over, Voice Carry-Over and Speech-To-Speech), Georgia Relay Partner (a free program that teaches participating businesses how to place and receive Relay calls) and the transition to our new service provider, Hamilton Relay.

DeafNation will sponsor five additional Expos this year in Seattle, Denver, Chicago, California and New York. To learn more, visit [www.deafnation.com](http://www.deafnation.com).

## New Telecommunications Equipment Available through GATEDP

New and upgraded assistive devices are now available through the Georgia Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program (GATEDP), which provides free, specialized equipment to financially and medically qualified applicants who have difficulty using a standard phone.

New equipment selections include:

- Upgraded visual telephone alert systems
- New amplified telephone ring signalers
- Upgraded cordless amplified telephones

For more information about GATEDP or to apply, call 1-888-297-9461 (voice/TTY) or visit [www.gachi.org](http://www.gachi.org).

Check out our updated Web site – [www.GeorgiaRelay.org](http://www.GeorgiaRelay.org)

### Telecommunications Relay Service Advisory Council:

Susan Arrington  
Tom Borgaila  
Henry Carter  
Tom Gale  
Mark Gasaway  
Cindy Peters  
Mike Russell  
John Silk  
Robin Titterington  
Lewis Turner  
Bob Vaughan  
Ron Vickery

### Georgia Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Advisory Committee:

Susan Arrington  
Tom Borgaila  
Carrie Bruce  
Henry Carter  
Tom Gale  
Harold McPheeters  
Wilda Owens  
Leigh Anne Shepard  
John Silk  
Ralph Stamp  
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