

# The RELAY Connection

News, information, updates and more from Maryland Relay.

## Maryland Relay to Host Informative Discussion Group Sessions

Starting in January and continuing through April 2003, Maryland Relay will be hosting a series of discussion group sessions focusing on the delivery and efficiency of our services and features. During the sessions, participants will be encouraged to share their experiences, ideas and suggestions with Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM) and AT&T representatives. Armed with feedback from attendees, Maryland Relay will continue to fine-tune our services to meet the changing needs of our users.

All sessions will be held on the fourth Thursday of each month at the Maryland Relay Center, located at 3700 Koppers Street in Baltimore.

### The discussion group schedule is as follows:

**January 23:**  
Voice Carry-Over (VCO)

**February 27:**  
TTY

**March 27:**  
Internet Protocol (IP) Relay

**April 24:**  
Hearing Carry-Over (HCO) and  
Speech-to-Speech (STS)

Standard phone users who communicate with Relay users are encouraged to attend.

Each session will begin promptly at 6:30 p.m. For security reasons, no one will be let into the Center before 6 p.m. or after 7 p.m.

Interpreters, assistive listening equipment and real-time CART services will be available at all sessions. However, individuals with special needs such as DeafBlind or tactile interpreting should notify the TAM office two weeks before the date of the discussion they plan to attend so that appropriate accommodations can be made. For more information or directions to the Center, contact the TAM office at 1-800-552-7724 (Voice/TTY), or e-mail [moreinfo@mdrelay.org](mailto:moreinfo@mdrelay.org).

## Elke Pieters Joins the Maryland Relay Team



Elke Pieters,  
Maryland Relay  
Public Relations  
Account Manager

Maryland Relay extends a warm welcome to Elke Pieters, who became the AT&T/Maryland Relay public relations account manager this past August. Her new position involves fulfilling public relations duties on behalf of Maryland Relay and making presentations to various groups and organizations across the State.

A New Jersey native with a passion for traveling and meeting new people, Elke earned a bachelor's degree in medical technology from the Rochester Institute of Technology in 1997. She then worked at Johns Hopkins Hospital as a medical technologist and later became an instructor of American Sign Language and deaf culture at Towson University. A former Miss Deaf New Jersey, Elke

is an avid skier and hopes to hit the slopes while traveling in the Midwest this winter.

Elke is excited to be part of the AT&T/Maryland Relay team and looks forward to serving the State's many Relay customers.

### 2003 GABTR Meeting Dates and Locations Announced

Mark your calendar for the following 2003 Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay (GABTR) meetings:

Location	Date
Cambridge	February 22
Hagerstown	June 7
Lexington Park	October 25



# Taking Advantage of New Technology to Serve You Better By Willis Mann

What makes a good relay service? Is it a program that provides reliable service but does not necessarily offer everything that Relay users need? Or does it continue to change with the times by adding new technology to meet the needs of its users? I believe Maryland Relay fits the latter category.

Change has indeed come to Maryland Relay, and this may be upsetting for some people, but change is needed in order to take advantage of emerging relay technology. On June 1, 2002, the State's decision to expand Maryland Relay to include this new technology and improve accessibility was officially put into action. Since then, Maryland Relay has made significant strides in its

quest to offer all Relay users services that are functionally equivalent to the telecommunications features that hearing persons enjoy. To learn more about the "new" Maryland Relay, visit our Web site at [www.mdrelay.org](http://www.mdrelay.org).

We pride ourselves in being responsive to customer concerns, but in order to do this well, we need your input. If you ever have a concern about how your Maryland Relay calls are handled, be sure to jot down the date and time of the call, the operator number and a short description of your concern. Then, e-mail the information to TAM Contract Administrator Pam Stewart at [pam@mdrelay.org](mailto:pam@mdrelay.org). To ensure the



continued growth of Maryland Relay, this kind of direct customer input is vital. (Don't forget to send us your suggestions too!) After all, Maryland Relay really does belong to **you**.

## The RELAY Connection

*The Relay Connection* is a quarterly publication of the Department of Budget and Management, Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM) program. The following people contributed to this publication:

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  - Patty Ferran . . . . . Account Manager/ AT&T
  - Elke Pieters . . . . . Account Manager/ AT&T
  - Nancy Seidman . . . . . Public Relations Dir.
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- Brenda Kelly-Frey . . . . . Director
  - Willis Mann . . . . . Program Manager
  - Pam Stewart . . . . . Contract Manager
  - Nancy Seidman . . . . . Public Relations Dir.
  - Patty Bird . . . . . Customer Service
  - Mike Hollywood . . . . . Customer Service

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## MAT Program Continues to Reach Individuals Across the State

Under the authority of Maryland Relay, the Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) program distributes assistive telephone devices to persons certified as having hearing, vision, mobility, speech or cognitive disabilities. Since its inception, the MAT program has distributed over 2,600 pieces of **FREE** equipment to over 1,600 individuals.

At regional centers located throughout the State, the MAT program continues to conduct **FREE** assessments for applicants and coordinate equipment training sessions for program participants, families and caretakers.

For more information, please contact TAM Director Brenda Kelly-Frey at 1-800-552-7724 (Voice/TTY), or e-mail [Brenda@mdrelay.org](mailto:Brenda@mdrelay.org).

## VRS Trial Update

Maryland Relay recently concluded a highly successful, four-week trial of AT&T's new Video Relay Service (VRS) technology. For VRS updates and information about a possible trial extension, visit [www.mdrelay.org](http://www.mdrelay.org).

## FCC Staff Members Tour New Maryland Relay Center

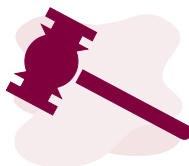
On October 28, 2002, Maryland Relay was honored by a visit from a group of Federal Communications Commission (FCC) staff members, including Thomas Chandler, Esq., chief of the Disability Rights Office in the FCC's Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau and Pam Gregory, special advisor to the Chief.

After listening to TAM and AT&T personnel explain the different components of Maryland Relay, the FCC staff members took a tour of the new Maryland Relay Center and observed firsthand how various types of Relay calls are handled.

Information gathered from this visit will help FCC personnel gain a better understanding of the inside workings of a state relay program, including the latest relay technology currently being implemented.

## GABTR Resumes Multivendorsing Discussion at Third Annual Meeting

The Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay (GABTR) held its third annual meeting in Columbia on November 9, 2002. Much of the meeting centered around the ongoing multivendorsing discussion, and attendees decided in favor of activating an Ad Hoc Multivendorsing Committee comprised of Isaac Agboola, Annette Reichman, Susan Boswell, Brenda Battat and GABTR Chair Mitch Travers.



## Board of Public Works Approves CapTel Trial Continuation

Since it began in March 2002, Maryland Relay's Captioned Telephone (CapTel) trial has grown to include approximately 200 participants, nearly all of whom have responded enthusiastically to the new service.

A technology designed for individuals who are hard of hearing, CapTel allows users to read a captioned version of their conversations on the text screen of their phones and listen to the voice of the person they are calling at the same time.

On December 4, 2002, TAM staff members and CapTel trial supporters attended a Maryland Board of Public Works (BPW) hearing to request the necessary funding to continue the trial through June 2003. In written testimony, Rachel Dubin, a CapTel trial participant who is deaf, explained how much the trial has meant to her and those with whom she regularly communicates. Naomi Frankfort, a senior citizen who is deaf, testified to the tremendous benefits that CapTel technology offers to late-deafened adults like herself. It was Naomi's story of her grandson telling her, "Grandma, your ears aren't broken anymore!" that swayed the BPW and led to a unanimous approval to extend the trial.

Continuation of the trial will allow the TAM staff to gain a more comprehensive picture of the pros and cons of instituting the CapTel service on a permanent basis. However, since the trial has now reached its maximum number of 200 participants, Maryland Relay will not be accepting additional applicants. Stay tuned for more CapTel updates in future issues of *The Relay Connection*.

## The Operator's Corner

What would Maryland Relay do without its friendly, dedicated Relay Operators? Listed below are a few suggestions from the Relay Operators to help make all of your Relay calls proceed smoothly:

- When calling a business or toll-free number that features an automated answering system, it is helpful to let the Relay Operator know upfront which prompts or extensions you would like him or her to enter.
- If you would prefer that the Relay Operator NOT announce to the person you are calling that he or she is receiving a Maryland Relay call, let the Relay Operator know before the call is placed.
- If you are a VCO user and have not entered the phone number of the person you wish to call as part of Maryland Relay's new upfront technology, be sure to wait until you read "GA" on your telephone screen before voicing the phone number of the person you are calling.
- Speak at a moderate pace so that the Relay Operator can type your conversation accurately.
- Be sure to sign up for the Maryland Relay Choice Profile! Information you provide as part of the Profile, including any features or long distance carriers you prefer, helps our Relay Operators process your calls more efficiently.

## GABTR Representatives

You can contact representatives of the Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay (GABTR) at the numbers and e-mail addresses below. They are on this Board to serve the needs of their community and welcome your input.

**Mitchell D. Travers, Chair**  
301-441-2715 (TTY)  
mitch.travers@mdrelay.org  
*Deaf Representative*

**Isaac O. Agboola**  
202-651-5040 (TTY)  
isaac.agboola@mdrelay.org  
*Deaf Representative*

**Brenda Battat**  
301-657-2248 (V)  
301-657-2249 (TTY)  
brenda.battat@mdrelay.org  
*Senior Citizen Representative*

**Susan Boswell**  
301-317-8912 (V/TTY)  
susan.boswell@mdrelay.org  
*Hard of Hearing Representative*

**Patricia Bowman**  
410-333-6304 (TTY)  
patricia.bowman@mdrelay.org  
*Government Representative*

**Marie Campbell**  
301-604-1568 (TTY)  
marie.campbell@mdrelay.org  
*Deaf Representative*

**Rebecca Ladew**  
410-467-0967 (TTY)  
rebecca.ladew@mdrelay.org  
*Speech Disabled Representative*

**Joy Larson**  
301-588-6545 (TTY)  
joy.larson@mdrelay.org  
*DeafBlind Representative*

**Gary Manifold**  
410-569-4340 (V-via Relay)  
lgmlgm@radicus.net  
*Mobility Disabled Representative*

**Susan Miller**  
410-767-8036 (V)  
susan.miller@mdrelay.org  
*Government Representative*

**Annette Reichman**  
202-205-8352 (V)  
202-205-9152 (TTY)  
annette.reichman@mdrelay.org  
*Deaf Representative*

**James A. Stevenson**  
301-759-2047 (V)  
james.stevenson@mdrelay.org  
*Government Representative*

## TAM and AT&T Staff Stage First Maryland Relay Conference Call

Recently, several TAM and AT&T staff members got together to stage the very first Maryland Relay conference call. After AT&T scheduled a Relay Operator and real-time captioner, TAM administrative assistant Mike Hollywood initiated the call, which was an overwhelming success. Other participants included Patty Ferran from Maryland Relay, Clay Bowen from Virginia Relay and a representative from AT&T's corporate offices in New York. TAM staff members Willis Mann and Pam Stewart were present to witness the historic call take place.

This latest Maryland Relay feature offers tremendous advantages for Relay users in the workplace. Compared to regular Relay calls, a Maryland Relay conference call permits TTY users to interrupt the conversation at any time, similar to the way in which standard conference calls function. And, thanks to high-speed captioning, the lag time during a Maryland Relay conference call is virtually nonexistent.

Keep in mind that conference calls placed through Maryland Relay require a minimum of four participants, as well as a two-day advance notice in order to reserve the real-time captioner. Participants also are required to confirm their plans with Maryland Relay the day the call is to take place. For more information, contact Maryland Relay Customer Service at 1-800-552-7724 (Voice/TTY), or e-mail [moreinfo@mdrelay.org](mailto:moreinfo@mdrelay.org).

## Carroll County Schools Embrace Kids Keeping In Touch

Ever since we asked teachers and parents to write to us about their experiences with *Kids Keeping In Touch*—a hearing loss awareness program created by Maryland Relay—we've received a steady stream of heartfelt letters thanking us for designing the program. Many of these letters have come from the Carroll County area, where numerous teachers have put the program into action.

Linda Coons, director of health services for Carroll County Public Schools, recently requested 30 kits! Thanks to Linda, health teachers at elementary and middle schools throughout the county will each receive a kit. After Rita Holland, a health teacher at Linton Springs Elementary in Carroll County, used the kit in her classroom, she found that her students were excited to learn more about their classmates with hearing loss. The television station WBFF broadcast a fantastic human-interest story about Rita's experience.

*"She found that her students were excited to learn more about their classmates with hearing loss."*

Keep in mind that while the information contained in the kit is geared toward students in grades three through five, *Kids Keeping In Touch* is easily adaptable to other grade levels or situations outside of the classroom. If you would like a free copy of *Kids Keeping In Touch* for your classroom or for your child's classroom, please contact Nancy Seidman at 1-800-552-7724 (Voice/TTY), or e-mail [nancy@mdrelay.org](mailto:nancy@mdrelay.org). Also, if you have already exposed your students to *Kids Keeping In Touch*, please let Nancy know about your experience. Your school may be featured in a future newspaper or television story.

## We Need Your Help to Spread the Word About Maryland Relay!

The Maryland Relay administrative offices receive presentation requests from groups and organizations daily. Though we try to accommodate every request, at times scheduling conflicts arise among our public relations team members.

Last year, we recruited two active Maryland Relay users to explain to various groups across the State the purpose of Maryland Relay and their experiences using the service. These individuals have been welcome additions to our outreach efforts and continue to do a fantastic job explaining the many benefits of using Maryland Relay to keep in touch.

We currently are looking for additional representatives, especially individuals willing to make presentations in Southern and Western Maryland and the Eastern Shore. If you are a Maryland Relay user with any amount of public speaking experience and would be willing to make occasional Maryland Relay presentations, contact Nancy Seidman at 1-800-552-7724 (Voice/TTY), or e-mail [nancy@mdrelay.org](mailto:nancy@mdrelay.org).

### CLIP-N-SAVE

## MARYLAND RELAY CONTACT NUMBERS

**7-1-1 in Maryland**  
**1-800-201-7165** Voice/TTY  
**1-800-735-2258**  
Anywhere TTY/HCO  
**1-888-VCO-WORD**  
(1-888-826-9673) VCO

**1-877-258-9854** 2-line VCO  
**1-877-735-5151** ASCII  
**1-800-785-5630**  
Speech-to-Speech  
**1-900-344-3323**  
pay-per-call, English

**1-900-344-4889**  
pay-per-call, Spanish  
**1-800-877-1264** Spanish  
**1-800-552-7724**  
Customer Service

[www.mdrelay.org](http://www.mdrelay.org) [moreinfo@mdrelay.org](mailto:moreinfo@mdrelay.org)

## Bring a World of Customers to Your Phone

The Maryland Relay Partner program, the first of its kind in the nation, was created to reduce and eventually eliminate hang ups experienced by Relay users when calling Maryland businesses. By educating businesses and their employees about the proper use of Maryland Relay, the Relay Partner program benefits Relay users and participating businesses by helping each group feel confident about conducting business through Maryland Relay.

The overwhelming success of the program has made it impossible to list every Relay Partner in our newsletter. However, we have created a Relay Partner directory and will continue to keep a complete list of Relay Partners on our Web site at [www.mdrelay.org](http://www.mdrelay.org). For a free copy of this directory, contact Maryland Relay Customer Service. Listed at right are the newest Relay partners. We will continue to print any new partners in our newsletter as they join the program. Featured below are brief guidelines for Relay Partner program participants:

### Relay Users:

The next time you make a business call, make it to a Relay Partner. When you call a Relay Partner, you can be sure that the business has received proper education and training about making and receiving Maryland Relay calls.

### Business Professionals:

An estimated 500,000 people in Maryland are deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind or speech disabled. Maryland Relay allows this important consumer group to communicate with any standard phone user—including your business.

### It's easy (and free!) to become a Relay Partner.

All Relay Partners receive Maryland Relay educational materials and training sessions to learn how to make and receive Relay calls. In addition, Maryland Relay actively promotes the names of Partners to the deaf, hard-of-hearing, DeafBlind, speech-disabled and senior citizen populations.

To learn more about becoming a Relay Partner or to schedule a free, onsite training session, call Maryland Relay Customer Service at 1-800-552-7724 (Voice/TTY), or e-mail [moreinfo@mdrelay.org](mailto:moreinfo@mdrelay.org).

## User Feedback Leads to IP Relay Enhancements

Since the summer 2002 debut of Maryland Relay Internet Protocol (IP) technology—a feature that allows individuals make Relay calls over the Internet—we have received many suggestions and comments. The number one request from IP Relay users? A split-screen option.

We took this request (and others!) seriously, and we are now pleased to offer IP Relay users split- and standard-screen formats. Other IP Relay enhancements include:

- black and white background options
- an additional font size (users can now choose from four different font sizes)
- printable transcripts of each call, including the date, time and phone number dialed (these transcripts also can be saved on your computer's hard drive)
- a feature that allows users to send an interrupt message to the Relay Operator
- a help button displaying additional information

Keep in mind that YOUR feedback helped us determine which enhancements were needed. As we continue to fine-tune our IP Relay service, we welcome your comments, questions and suggestions. You can contact us at 1-800-552-7724 (Voice/TTY), or e-mail [moreinfo@mdrelay.org](mailto:moreinfo@mdrelay.org).



## Join Us In Welcoming the Newest Relay Partners Aboard!

RELAY  
PARTNER  
UPDATE

Listed below and arranged by category are the latest Relay partners:

### Contractors and Home Improvement

**Kolb Electric, Inc.**  
Linthicum, MD 21090  
410-789-1000  
[www.kolbelectric.com](http://www.kolbelectric.com)

### Medical Care

**Ravenwood Nursing and Rehab Center**

Baltimore, MD 21201  
410-837-4990  
[www.fhsinc.org](http://www.fhsinc.org)

### State Farm Insurance

**Renita J. Prevot**  
Owings Mills, MD 21117  
410-356-1157



## An Easy Way to Add Maryland Relay Calling Instructions to Your Business Card

Wish your business card contained instructions on how to use Maryland Relay? Well, thanks to the dedicated folks at Maryland Relay and suggestions from our users, your wish has come true!

Maryland Relay has developed a wallet-size business card that features step-by-step instructions for using 7-1-1 and Maryland Relay's new Voice access number, 1-800-201-7165. The card also includes space for Relay users to write their name and phone number. The cards may be used alone or can be pasted to the back of an existing business card. To request a quantity of these cards, call 1-800-552-7724 (Voice/TTY), or e-mail [moreinfo@mdrelay.org](mailto:moreinfo@mdrelay.org).

# News, Updates and More from the Maryland Relay Public Relations Team

It has been a very busy fall season for the Maryland Relay public relations team. The team is thrilled to send out two new representatives—Michael Hollywood (TAM administrative specialist) and Elke Pieters (Maryland Relay/AT&T public relations account manager)—to make Maryland Relay presentations to various groups and organizations throughout the State. To arrange for Mike or Elke to make a presentation to your group or organization, contact Nancy Seidman at 1-800-552-7724 (Voice/TTY), or e-mail [nancy@mdrelay.org](mailto:nancy@mdrelay.org).

In other news, the Maryland Relay Center's Open House, held in late September 2002, was a resounding success. Attracting nearly 300 attendees, the event featured fantastic entertainment, tasty refreshments and the opportunity to speak with the Maryland Relay staff about the transition to AT&T and all the new Maryland Relay features on the way. A heartfelt thanks goes out to all individuals who attended and helped support the Open House. To view pictures from the event, visit [www.mdrelay.org](http://www.mdrelay.org).

Be on the lookout for brand-new Maryland Relay television commercials and print advertising scheduled to debut soon! This year, our goal is to generate increased awareness of 7-1-1 dialing

among all State citizens. Essentially, Maryland Relay wants everyone to recognize 7-1-1 as the phone number to access Relay services, just like 9-1-1 is universally known as the number to dial in case of an emergency. New

magnets and phone stickers promoting 7-1-1 also have been produced and can be ordered for your home or office by contacting the Maryland Relay customer service office at 1-800-552-7724 (Voice/TTY), or e-mailing [moreinfo@mdrelay.org](mailto:moreinfo@mdrelay.org).

## Maryland Relay Hosts Open House



Maryland Relay's Open House, held on September 21, 2002, attracted close to 300 attendees.



TAM Director Brenda Kelly-Frey presents an award to former Director Gil Becker in recognition of his outstanding service to Maryland Relay.

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**IT'S POSSIBLE**