

## Conference Memories

*It has become a LETTING GO tradition to include a "Conference Memories" article in the issue that appears right after the annual conference. Some of the information below came from Yahoo's NSA conference listserv, and some reports were sent directly to NSA Executive Director Tammy Flores. We kept full names when they were included. Also, some writers described their experiences in a Top 10 format, a first for the yearly Conference Memories article. Special thanks to Philip Garber, Jr. and Cathy Olish for taking all of these great photos.*

### NSA Conference Top 10

1. Meeting up again with my buddies from conventions past and picking up just where we left off.
  2. Seeing how many First Timers there were. I have a feeling they are hooked. :-)
  3. Meeting new people.
  4. Attending one of the kids' workshops and hearing about what they had put on their T-shirts. Good job!
  5. Seeing a proud dad sing "Hero" to his little girl at karaoke night.
  6. When the teens tore up those words that used to bring them down, at the closing ceremony...powerful stuff, guys!
  7. That beautiful resort with a wonderful, educated staff that handled stuttering with grace and patience
  8. The fact that the little coffee shop didn't change their procedure and asked me my name for my coffee order! It was a stuttering convention, but that made it a 'real world' situation, too.
  9. Being able to pick up free information at the registration desk, to take home so the educating can continue.
  10. Seeing the spouses, parents, siblings and other loved ones who don't stutter, coming to support the ones you love.
  11. Do I only get 10?
- ☞ Stacy Fitzenrider

### Exhibiting Talents

The 2009 NSA Conference was a life changing experience for me. As such, I am forever grateful to the NSA's Alvin Liben Scholarship Fund and the donor who created it. It was my first time at an NSA conference, and I've never felt so welcomed by a community. For the first time in my life I felt that I could openly stutter. The sheer mass of the conference did something to me where I stopped thinking of myself as strange/different/wrong and felt more at peace with less anxiety.

I also got to exhibit my talents as a beat-boxer and songwriter at the closing ceremony, performing a song I co-wrote at the conference called, "Be Proud." This song was about being proud to be a person who stutters. It talked about the struggles and difficulties and how the conference helped shift our perceptions and inner feelings about stuttering. I think the song was appreciated by the crowd at large, and I was so happy to be able to contribute to the conference experience in that way.

Without assistance from the Alvin Liben Fund I would not have been able to attend the conference. Once again I want to thank the NSA and the donor who help make it possible for me to have this experience. ☞ *David Resnick*

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## 2009 Award Winners

BY MADISON GARCIA

Howard Thurman once said, "Don't worry about what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive and do that. Because what the world needs are people who have come alive."

I don't think I've ever come across a group of people more "alive" than those who have dedicated their time and life's work through the NSA to enriching the lives of people who stutter. They are a choice group of movers and shakers, dreamers, and visionaries, and the fabric of what makes us who we are as an organization.

The 2009 NSA Awards were presented in Scottsdale, Arizona, at our annual Conference and Research Symposium to honor those who have risen above and beyond, who have worked tirelessly and often quietly, ever-striving to craft a better world for those who stutter.

We offer them our most heartfelt gratitude for their contributions, as well as the fires of inspiration they have so generously ignited within our hearts.

### Conference Dedication

#### Vice President of the United States Joe Biden.

Vice President Biden is a person who stutters and a former keynote speaker at our 2004 conference. His graciousness toward the NSA and openness in sharing about his stuttering are most evident in the personal letter he sent our NSA family, thanking us for the honor of dedication, and further encouraging our members to be courageous and fearless, never feeling limited by our stuttering.

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# Survey: Stuttering Support Makes a Difference

Want to do something about your stuttering that really works? Participate in a NSA local chapter or national conference. That's one of the key findings of a recent NSA survey of 1,235 people, including adults and teens who stutter, parents of children who stutter, and speech-language pathologists.

The survey compared adults who had attended a local chapter or national conference in the last three years with those who had not and found some significant differences. Active NSA participants are less likely to avoid speaking situations and less likely to say their stuttering interferes with work or school. They are more likely to talk about stuttering with family members, friends, and co-workers.

There's also a positive correlation between NSA participation and successful speech therapy. Active NSA participants are significantly more likely to have had speech

therapy as an adult and more likely to consider their therapy experience successful.

## Life Impact of Stuttering

Stuttering interferes with work, school and family life, according to the survey. Children and adults who stutter often avoid speaking situations, feel embarrassed when people find out they stutter, and do not discuss their stuttering with family, friends, and co-workers. In fact, 84% of adults and teens who stutter do not talk about their stutter at all with family members and close friends. Eight out of 10 children who stutter have been bullied or teased because of their stuttering.

## Speech Therapy

The survey found that most people who stutter benefit from speech therapy. 87% of the adults and teens surveyed have had

speech therapy more than once, and 35% have had therapy five or more times.

In general, therapies that change attitudes toward speaking and stuttering were considered more successful than therapies that focus on speech mechanics. However, the majority of people surveyed reported that their therapy was at least somewhat successful regardless of the therapy approach.

The expertise of the speech therapist also is a significant factor. People who had speech therapy from a speech-language pathologist who is a Board Recognized Specialist in Fluency Disorders had a more successful therapy experience than those who did not.

Have you improved your fluency in speech therapy only to start stuttering again later? You're not alone: 84% of the adults and teens surveyed have had a similar relapse.

## Alternative Treatments and Assistive Devices

Alternative treatments for stuttering, such as psychological counseling, prescription medication, and assistive devices were generally less successful than speech therapy in helping people manage their stuttering. About one-third of adults and teens in the survey had tried treatment other than speech therapy for their stuttering.

The 73 people in the survey who had used assistive devices, such as the SpeechEasy, Fluency Master, or Edinburgh Masker, reported mixed results. 11% found the device very successful and 37% said it was somewhat successful in managing their stuttering, but 52% said their assistive device was not at all helpful. Those who had speech therapy at the same time were more likely to find an assistive device somewhat successful. There was little difference in success rates among the three most popular devices.

## Issues for Parents

Although most experts agree that early therapy helps preschool children overcome stuttering, 30% of parents were advised by a pediatrician or speech therapist to defer speech therapy until the child was older. 14% of parents say their children have been denied speech therapy in school. ■

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*The full report of the survey is available on the NSA Web site at [westutter.org](http://westutter.org).*

## CHAIRMANINSIGHT

BY ERNIE CANADEO



### The Sun Shines On

The sun shone brightly on more than 600 NSA members and friends in Arizona and continues to shine on us as the NSA brings together

more families, speech-language pathologists (SLPs), and adults who stutter than any other self-help organization in the world for people who stutter. This year's conference was particularly encouraging as we exceeded our attendance and revenue goals in a very challenging economy thanks to our generous sponsors and members.

As we look forward, the NSA is committed to serving the stuttering community in many ways. The NSA Research Symposium, which opened the conference, was a tremendous success, featuring five of the world's foremost experts educating the audience about the various stuttering research studies currently being undertaken throughout the world. We will make the symposium an important part of every conference, and my hope is that the NSA will be at the forefront of finding a cure for stuttering.

Our teen and youth programs will continue to grow, as was evidenced by almost 100 youth and teens who participated in our conference activities. A special thank you goes out to the parents of these remarkable children for taking them to our conference and for being a part of the NSA. We truly appreciate all you do for your children. You can look forward to more youth days throughout the country in the coming years.

Our NSA chapters continue to thrive, as more and more chapters are created every month; we are now represented in almost all 50 states. Thank you to all the chapter leaders and regional coordinators for all you do and for spreading the word about the NSA.

Please be sure to bookmark the NSA's new Web site, [westutter.org](http://westutter.org), and visit it often as it is updated almost daily with useful information.

Keep the spirit going.  
Ernie

# CHAPTERNEWS

FROM BONNIE WEISS

## **Austin, Texas**

Behnaz Abolmaali, chapter leader of the newly revised Austin chapter, writes that they had their first meeting on June 15. She reports that this was the culmination of a lot of planning and reaching out during the last several weeks, and she could not have asked for a better meeting! Eight people attended. They had a lively discussion for an hour and a half on topics ranging from different therapy approaches, childhood bullying, the challenge of using the phone, word and situation avoidances, pharmaceutical drugs to treat stuttering, and the NSA's annual conference. Four of the people at the meeting are stutterers; one individual attended on behalf of his father, who stutters. There were also a mother and aunt of a 10-year-old child who stutters. Behnaz feels having the perspective of non-stutterers at the meeting was very important. Robert Ruiz, who was the leader of the previous Austin chapter, attended and shared his insights and experiences about what worked and what didn't work when he was the leader.

## **Central New Jersey**

Chapter Leader Hannah Laday writes that six people including one newcomer ventured out in heavy rain for the June 5th Central New Jersey chapter meeting. One of the members, George, was the night's facilitator. They spent the whole meeting on "Keeping a Sense of Humor in Stuttering." Almost everyone had some humorous story to share about their own experiences with stuttering, but they spent a lot of time discussing the difference between being able to chuckle at themselves and being teased by others. In general, everyone agreed that we are baffled by the fact that people still make fun of people who stutter or have uncomfortable responses to stuttering. They did, however, feel that the NSA is helping to educate the public so that this type of reaction to stuttering will continue to decrease. A new member, Tejas, is from India and he shared that teasing about stuttering is much worse in India and he has found much more acceptance in the U.S.

## **Central Wisconsin**

Dan Koblitz reports that the Central Wisconsin chapter met with three people in attendance (Jim, Lorraine, and Dan). After reading the opening words, Dan spoke a little more about the annual conference and its benefits. At Jim's suggestion, the group watched the Joe Biden keynote speech from 2004. They had a nice discussion afterward in which they discussed not letting their stuttering hold them back, so their speech does not define them. Jim ended the meeting by reading the closing words.

## **Cleveland, Ohio**

The August 10 meeting of the Cleveland chapter was a rousing success, writes Glenn Schafer. Four adults and a teenager attended, along with the teen's mom. The meeting was part exercise and part social. The group met at a Target store and practiced talking to sales people in a real life situation. Each person was given 10 questions to ask sales people (for example "Where are the DVDs?"). After the exercise they met at TGIFs for dinner where they discussed the exercise and then just enjoyed each other's company as friends. An excellent time was had by all. Glenn will send a "you should have come" e-mail to other members as a way to boost attendance.

## **Fort Worth, Texas**

The Fort Worth chapter had three people at their June 9 meeting. Chapter Leader Jason Girard thought that there was low attendance because a local university had some big events going on. Jason brought paper strips, each labeled with a different "stressor" or mood that may affect stuttering. Some of the stressors the group discussed were telephones, authority figures, family, stranger, interview, when feeling under the weather, when angry or sad. Each person took the strips of paper and put them in order according what stressors had the most detrimental effect on their stuttering. They then discussed why. Not surprisingly, the telephone and being put on the spot (time crunch)

ranked high. In summary, the group had some very different discussions on the reasons behind each individual's rankings.

## **Grand Rapids, Michigan**

Kristin Thornton writes that a recent chapter meeting was held in Kalamazoo in a university's Holistic Medical Department. Ten people attended, including two new people. For the meeting, one of the graduate students, Deborah Glaz, gave a wonderful overview of holistic health, relaxation techniques, and stress reduction. The information dealt with mind/body/spirit. They also had a group discussion on how time pressure can effect stuttering (such as answering the phone). They also got to use the yoga studio to try breathing exercises. The next meeting will be in Grand Rapids where they hope to have informal discussions.

## **Houston, Texas**

A young man named Jaime attended the Houston meeting for the first time. He had sent an e-mail to Vicki and said he was beginning college in the fall and he was afraid his stuttering would interfere with his performance in his classes. Alexis, Bo, Charlie, and Vicki had supportive advice for Jaime. Bo talked about how important it is to keep your thoughts positive and not allow negative self-talk to bring you down.

## **Manhattan, New York**

The Manhattan chapter had a meeting on June 10. Michael Cohn was the facilitator. There were eight people at the meeting, including two new members. The activity centered on a discussion of questions such as (1) If your life was a movie, how would you cast yourself and the people around you? (2) What movie or TV show do you wish your life was like? And (3) If you could sound like a particular actor or actress, who would it be? The group also talked about actors, actresses, comedians, politicians, and TV personalities who stutter.

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# Learning to Stutter

BY NINA GHISELLI, PSYD.

In the seventh grade, I had a stuttering experience that would change my life. The following is a recollection of this experience and the lessons it taught me.

Throughout school, I dealt with learning disabilities and stuttering. Because of these two aspects of myself, I had varied experiences – positive, negative, and indifferent. In the sixth grade my learning disability drove me to run for student body government. Any relief from academics was welcomed. I thought it would be a great way to get out of the classroom because I would have to attend to my student government activities.

Being in Catholic school, I ran for the office of religious affairs. I delivered a fluent campaign speech after careful construction of my words to avoid sounds on which I stutter. I won the election and thought the only time I would talk was for morning prayer. As most people who stutter know, prayers said in choral style do not present much of a problem, so I felt confident in running for the office.

In the seventh grade, I was informed that we had an inauguration for the elected students. It was simple enough. Each of the students would say “I [insert name here]” and then in choral style, swear in. Since I stutter on my first and last name, this was going to be problematic.

Before the inauguration there was a rehearsal. The run through included each student saying his or her name and then

being sworn in while lighting a candle. During the rehearsal, the difficulty saying my name was apparent. The other students laughed or became impatient. My teacher, in her beehive hair-do, cat-eyed glasses, and polyester suit shushed the other students. I was thankful to have an ally.

I had another ally in an eighth grade boy who I now think had attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. He was enthusiastic about coaching me through my name. He asked, “Can you say Ninja? If you can say Ninja, you can say Nina!” Although the advice was not practical, it was still nice to have a well intentioned peer. I went home, and my parents called my speech therapist Elaine, and we focused on saying my name fluently. The entire week before the inauguration, I struggled with fluency.

## Inauguration Day

When inauguration day came, I could feel the anxiety building. The entire school, first through eighth grade, came to the event. Parents, the parish priests, and even the local newspaper reporters were in attendance. After some opening remarks, it was the students’ time to swear in. When it was my turn, I stuttered, “I, N-N-N-Nina G-G-Ghiselli.” Thoughts ran through my adolescent mind like, “How can I face my peers?” “The Alameda Time Star’s front story will read ‘Girl stutters and embarrasses herself.’”

After the ceremony, I was not sure what to expect, other than students making fun of me. Immediately after, Sara, a girl in my class, came up to me and said “good job.” I thanked her and doubted that others would be as supportive. Soon after, I spoke to the eighth grade boy who attempted to modify my speech. While I was talking to him, a second grade boy, who had been at the practice and saw the older students laugh and make fun of me said, “Hey, N-N-N-Nina” to mock me. The eighth grade boy knelt down to the second grader so that he could look him in the eye. He went on to say, “If I ever hear you say anything like that again about Nina, I am going to tell everyone that you wet your bed and suck your thumb.” I thought that this was the nicest thing anyone had ever done and had never felt that kind of alliance with anyone outside my immediate family. I was not teased for my stuttering for some time after that.

## I Could Stutter, It Would Be Okay

Before I understood my identity as a person who stuttered, I cited this as my most embarrassing moment – the day I stuttered in front of 200-300 people. When I stated this as my most embarrassing moment, I did not have the internal feeling that matched my apparent shame. Instead, I reflected what I thought should be embarrassing. In fact, it was a defining day in my stuttering life. That day I learned that I could stutter and that it would be okay.

Today, I am a clinical psychologist, and I teach graduate students of education and psychology in disability issues. I have embraced my stuttering, as well as my learning disability. The above experience offers many lessons to me as both a person who stutters and as an educator and psychologist working with children and adults who stutter and have disabilities.

First and foremost, my parents allowed me, and even encouraged me, to participate in these activities. In spite of wanting to protect me, they were able to provide a place where my struggles and feelings were validated and active problem solving could be explored. They called on the resources available, including my speech therapist, and practiced saying my name over and over again.

Second, I found that stuttering did not result in catastrophic experiences. I could stutter, even in front of my immediate community, and live to tell the story. Stuttering in front of my entire school in the seventh grade makes stuttering in front of my current class of 12 graduate students a neutral experience.

Finally, Sara and the eighth grade boy demonstrated that allies come in many forms and express themselves in different ways (albeit borderline inappropriate at times). Being allowed to take challenges helps to reveal the positive side of stuttering, as well as finding allies, self-efficacy, and self-esteem. For me, experiences like these taught me how to stutter. ■

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*Nina Ghiselli is a clinical psychologist in private practice and the director of Disability Services for Alliant International University. She teaches classes at Alliant International University, UC Berkeley Extension, and Argosy University. You can read more about Dr. Ghiselli at [drninag.com](http://drninag.com).*

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## Our Young People Speak Out

FROM TOM GURRISTER

### Why a Positive Attitude Is Important to a Stutterer

Let me start off by saying I've been a stutterer for as long as I can remember. It has always weighed down my shoulders like I'm wearing a backpack full of rocks. It has stopped me from trying out in plays, doing extra-credit oral reports, running for 7th grade officer, and, in general, speaking aloud to any kind of audience.

When I came to Wasatch Speech and Language Center, I was able to learn some new techniques to control my stuttering, ones that actually worked. Not to say being with Tom and Maria had cured me, but it had helped me to speak more fluently. Sadly, although "prolongation," "pull outs," and "easy bumps" had helped my stuttering, they didn't really help my confidence. I could use the tools and speak okay, but it didn't mean I wanted to talk to an audience.

So Maria gave me a challenge. She told me to volunteer to read at school, offer to pray at church, and raise my hand if I knew the answer to a teacher's question. This challenge terrified me, and at first it was like torture. Gradually, I realized that each time I did it, it became easier and easier. Soon it was no big deal when I spoke or read in class, and now I even find it fun. When I got this speaking assignment, I was thrilled that I could tell all of you my change; like a caterpillar turning into a butterfly, stuttering no longer bothers me. It just shows what a little patience can do.

I still stutter sometimes, but it's no big deal. Stuttering is what makes me an individual, and I'm not ashamed that I'm a little different from everyone else.

We should keep practicing our techniques to stay fluent, but most of the stuttering is

in your heart. When you release the embarrassment, the sadness, and the stress of stuttering out of you, it will become little more than the nose on your face, the shape of your eyes, the color of your hair.

Yes, I stutter, but I don't care. It's what makes me, me. ☞ *Megan Hills, Age 14*

### A Good Sense of Humor Helps With Your Stuttering

I think it's good for everyone to have a good sense of humor. I like Jeff Dunham and Dane Cook. I like to quote some of their lines to my friends and family. It's easy for me to talk to people without bumping when I quote others, and it makes me happy when I tell stories to people that make them laugh.

It's also good to have a sense of humor when other kids say things that hurt your

feelings. You just have to remember that they don't understand and haven't learned how to treat anyone with respect.

Remember, bullies have more personal issues than other kids. Ignore them and remember always how great you are.

☞ *London Painter, Age 12*

### What Do You Want Listeners to Know About Being a Stutterer?

1% of the world's population stutters as adults and 1 in every 20 children have a stuttering problem. Me and my fellow stutterers will need time to get out what they say, and if you insult one of us, are you going to insult all 6.7 million of us? We need time to get our words out, and if you ignore us, who's to be certain you didn't miss something important? Do not make assumptions about people who stutter, you might be quite a bit wrong.

I am saying this because I do not want people to assume I have a mental issue, or that I forgot my name, just because I got stuck on the first C. Give us time, let us speak! ☞ *Clay Smith, Age 13*

### What It Feels Like to Be a Stutterer

I'm in a maze, trying to find my way out. It seems like, there's no way out of this never-ending maze. Every stutter, block, and struggle makes me more confused. The only way out is to use my techniques, prolongation, pull-outs, easy/fake stuttering, and responding to my moments of stuttering. Finally, I've found my way out of the maze. ☞ *Devan Walkenhorst, Age 14*

## Thanks to Conference Volunteers!

An extra special thank you to Erica & Aaron Perez, Anthony Romano, Jim & Lee Lowman, Brandie Flores, Lynn Black, Michael Blank, Cathy Bacon, all the Arizona State University volunteers and the entire NSA Central Arizona chapter for volunteering your time in helping with raffle items, auction items, registration, the NSA store, and most importantly getting the word out about the conference.

Also, special thanks to Debbie Nicolai, Sarah D'Agostino and Marybeth Allen for putting together a great program for the families – it was a tremendous success once again.

Last, but not least, thanks to Philip Garber Jr. Philip, age 14, has stuttered since he was four years old and is a freelance photographer from Mansfield, New Jersey. Thanks so much, Philip, for snapping all those photos for us; we really appreciate it.

The NSA depends on its members and chapters to help out every year with items for the silent and live auctions. Thank you to all of you who sent, brought, or helped secure an item. As always a big thank you to everyone who bid on all of the great items and helped make the auctions a success.

# ODDS&ENDS

FROM DAVID BLAZINA

## NSA Members Speak to Grad Students

**Bob Rochefort** and members of the Boston and Boston North chapters participated in the annual Massachusetts General Hospital Institute of Health Professions grad student fluency class. Bob received the following e-mail from professor **Anthony Bashir** thanking them for their participation:

*Dear Bob,  
I so very much appreciated your candor and depth of participation in last evening's class at IHP. The students were deeply touched by each of you and they so respected your honesty and openness, as did I. You have my thanks and admiration for your work and your continued demonstration of resilience in your life. My best wishes with the hope of seeing you again next year. The students took all the materials that you had brought from the NSA, thanks so much for that generosity. Your coming each year and doing such a fine job of sharing and teaching means a great deal to both Diane Parris and myself.*

## Buffalo Workshop

Join the NSA Buffalo chapter as they present Stuttering: The Road to Empowerment on Saturday, October 3, 2009, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. at 280 Park Hall on the Amherst (north) campus.

This is an informative, entertaining, and interactive workshop that deals with stuttering up close and personally. The workshop directly confronts issues about stuttering that stand in the way of successful living, personal growth, and happiness. Participants learn ways to become empowered to take control of their speech and their lives!

The presenter, **Dr. Lee Reeves**, is a veterinarian and the founder of the Dallas chapter of the NSA. For more than 30 years he has been actively involved with support groups for persons who stutter and is a past chairman of the NSA Board of Directors. Lee has been a frequent

speaker on the subject of stuttering at meetings for speech-language pathologists, local support groups, and various church and service organizations.

His workshops are not only fun and entertaining but also educational, provocative, and challenging. Lee's style and approach make these workshops a must for both seasoned NSAers and first timers alike.

You can register online: [WeStutter.org](http://WeStutter.org), by fax: 212-944-8244, or by mail: National Stuttering Association, 119 W. 40th Street, 14th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

For more information please contact Bonnie Weiss at [blweiss1@verizon.net](mailto:blweiss1@verizon.net), Adrian McAdory at [casanova7164@yahoo.com](mailto:casanova7164@yahoo.com), or the national office at [info@westutter.org](mailto:info@westutter.org) or 800-We-Stutter (800-937-8888).

## Continuing Education and Youth Days

The NSA Buffalo chapter will host a continuing education seminar (CEU) presentation by **Nina Reeves** on October 3 from 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. in Buffalo, NY.

There will be a CEU with a presentation by **Dr. Scott Yaruss** on November 6 from 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. and a Youth Day on November 7 in Syracuse, NY.

## Research Symposium DVD Now Available

You can order a DVD of the research symposium held at the 2009 NSA conference at [WeStutter.org](http://WeStutter.org).

The DVD was videotaped and edited by **Tom Kuster**, professor of communication at Bethany Lutheran College. The DVD is divided into chapters by each speaker's presentation and is ideal for NSA meetings, teachers, and those who simply want to learn more about stuttering.

Five speakers comprise the panel, and the symposium is moderated by **Dr. John Tetnowski**. The DVD features 12-minute presentations by:

**Larry Molt, Ph.D.**, CCC-SLP/A, BRFS, associate professor in Communication Sciences and Disorders at Auburn

## Golf Tournament Benefits the NSA

On August 3, 2009, Nina Reeves and NSA Executive Director Tammy Flores represented the NSA at the



Special Kids Network 10th Annual Golf & Women's Tennis Tournament.

Next year's event will be held Monday, August 9, 2010, at Twin Orchard Country Club in Long Grove, Illinois. For information, visit [specialkidsnetwork.org](http://specialkidsnetwork.org).

We thank the Special Kids Network for allowing us to be part of this wonderful event, and we look forward to seeing you next year.

University in Alabama and director of the university's Neuroprocesses Research Laboratory. Dr. Molt's topic was assistive devices used to enhance fluency.

**Dennis Drayna, Ph.D.**, senior investigator and section chief at the National Institute of Deafness and Other Communication Disorders. Dr. Drayna's topic focused on the genetic aspects of stuttering.

**Vivian Sisskin, MS**, CCC/SLP, BRS-FD, a clinical instructor in the Department of Hearing and Speech Sciences at the University of Maryland. Ms. Sisskin focused on stuttering and concomitant disorders.

**Gerald Maguire, MD**, associate professor of Clinical Psychiatry and the Kirkup Endowed Chair in Stuttering Treatment in the Department of Psychiatry and senior associate dean for Educational Affairs at the University of California, Irvine (UCI) School of Medicine. Dr. Maguire's topic was an update on potential pharmacological treatments.

**Walt Manning, Ph.D.**, CCC/SLP, BRFS, professor and associate dean in the School of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology at the University of Memphis. Dr. Manning provided insight into behavioral therapy for stuttering.

**A huge thank you to Tom Kuster for videotaping the different sessions at the NSA conference. We truly appreciate all you do, Tom.**

### Hall of Fame

**Judith Kuster**, CCC-SLP. Judith is a speech-language pathologist (SLP), a professor at Minnesota State University, and an American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) fellow with a special license in stuttering treatment. She is also the founder of the Stuttering Homepage, an unprecedented Internet resource for professionals in the stuttering field and support for those who stutter.

### Outgoing Board Member of the Year

**Alex Rosenbaum**. Alex joined the Board of Directors at age 18 with the NSA Teen Advisory Council. He is now a senior advisor to the council and continues his legacy of inspiration and encouragement to fellow people who stutter (PWS) through outreach work in his community and his active presence within the NSA.

### SLP of the Year

**Walt Manning**, CCC-SLP. Walt is an SLP, professor, and the associate dean at the School of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology at the University of Memphis. He has served in several positions in the Tennessee Association of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists and is a fellow of ASHA. His vast knowledge of the field and the compassion with which he carries out his work have become something of legend.

### Member of the Year

**Vicki Schutter**. Vicki has been an influential member of our NSA family for years, proof that fires cannot always be extinguished so easily. Her nickname is “The Texas Tornado,” referring to her endless energy, boundless passion, and willful spirit. Vicki is a former member of the trailblazing Houston chapter, former co-editor of LETTING GO, former board member and editor of Houston Lets Go, the newsletter of the Houston chapter.



### Volunteers of the Year

**Pam Mertz** and **Gregg Benedikt**. Pam’s name has become synonymous with “fearless activist” on behalf of the stuttering community.

From her work with Toastmasters to her NSA chapter work and volunteerism to her highly popular personal blog on stuttering, Pam continues to shape the world and shift the tide of awareness-raising. Her skilled writing and candid nature have plucked the heartstrings of many a fellow PWS and paved way for personal growth for many who struggle with their speech.

Gregg has been involved in the NSA for over 20 years, and his dedication and creative abilities never cease to amaze us. His was the brilliant mind behind the “Hello, My Name Is” poster that is now being used as a nation print advertising campaign that will reach millions of people. In addition, he has also created posters for National Stuttering Awareness Week and International Stuttering Awareness Day. Does he stop there? Oh, no. (In fact, I don't think his mind ever stops.) Several years ago, he developed/wrote/produced a program to raise money for the NSA by accepting advertising/sponsorship in the conference program. Still in its infancy, he hopes this year it will really take off.

Gregg is a creative director, communications consultant and an adjunct professor. But ask him and he'll tell you that his two most favorite titles are husband and father.

### Adult Chapter Leader of the Year

**Nancy Barcal**, CCC-SLP. Nancy is an SLP and both the adult and youth chapter leader for the Roseville and Sacramento, California chapters. Under her direction, the chapters have presented to multiple early childhood education college classes and have spoken to over 40 teachers and SLPs in the region. She has been at the forefront of disseminating information on stuttering to libraries, community centers, area therapy groups, pediatric offices and school SLPs.

### Adult Chapter of the Year

**Tampa, Florida**, led by Brad Madsen and Delroy McPherson. This chapter meets bi-monthly and consists of both PWS and a Speech and Language Pathology students. Efforts to promote the chapter have produced a consistently ever-expanding group of members and a visible presence within their surrounding community. Last winter, along with the University of South

Florida, the chapter sponsored the largest continuing education unit program in the history of the NSA, generating almost \$10,000 in revenue for our organization. Shortly thereafter, the first NSA Youth Day in the Tampa Bay area was held, establishing our friends in Tampa as true trailblazers in community outreach.

### Kids/TWST Chapter of the Year

**Naperville, Illinois**, led by Beverly Vosicky. This chapter meets quarterly on Friday evenings at a local high school and has established itself as a bubbling and energetic presence. The child and adolescent members of this chapter are full-fledged activists, extending a warm invitation to their chapter to all who are interested and creating a dialogue with and providing education on stuttering to their same-age peers.

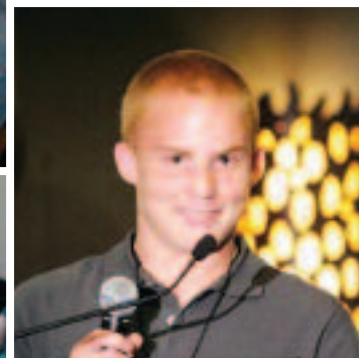
### Parent of the Year

**Lois Hare**. Lois is the proud mother of Sean Hare and an active NSA parent and a philanthropist who has led a number of roundtable conferences for parents of youth who stutter. Her unwavering support of her son and his involvement within our organization establish Lois as a cornerstone of parental support. Her gracious heart and unbreakable spirit have made her a lifeline for a number of NSA parents.

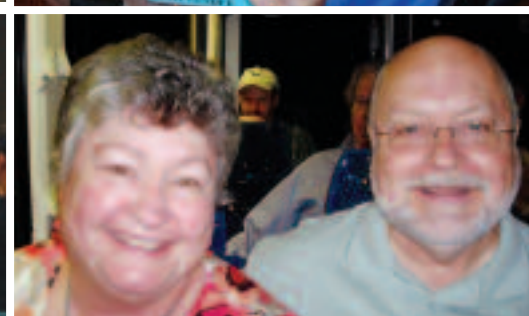
### Youth of the Year

**Robbie Picken**. Robbie is a PWS, an active NSA volunteer, and a young man with a maturity far beyond his years. His dedication to providing support and encouragement to fellow NSA youth began the second he stepped foot into the organization. The freedom with which he shares his journey with stuttering is as an inspiration to youth and adults alike. ■

*Madison Garcia is a former chapter leader and a continued active member of the NSA. She is a clinical psychology student in Los Angeles, California, with plans to pursue her doctorate in the field, with an emphasis on providing clinical counseling/intervention services to PWS. She is also an active member of the ISA and the American representative on the core team which has established a non-profit for PWS in Pakistan.*



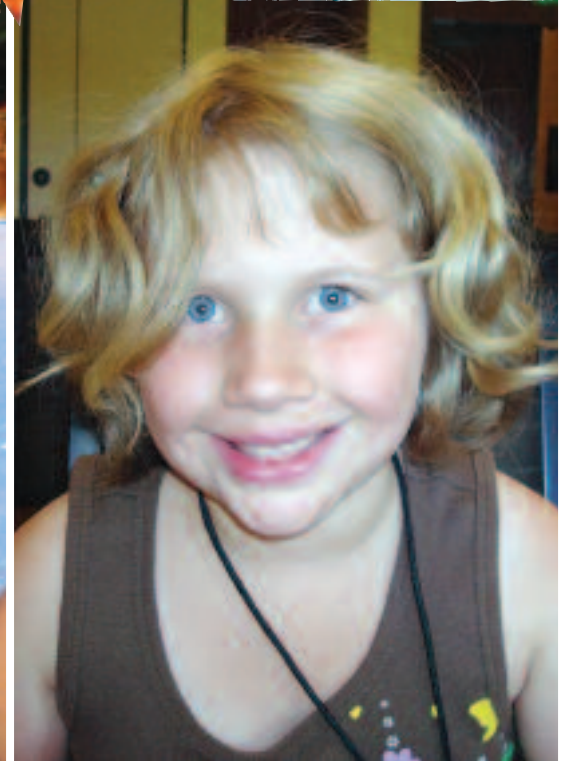
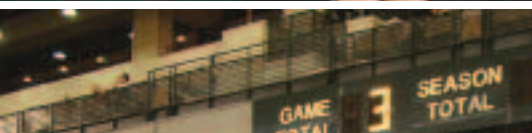
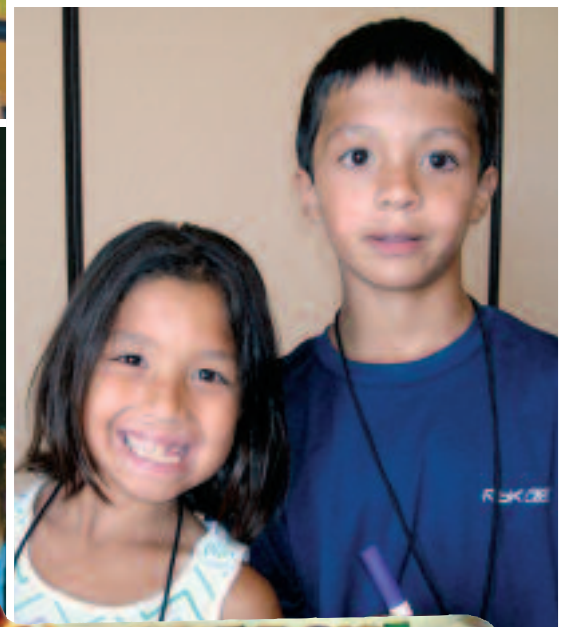
We hope you were one of our  
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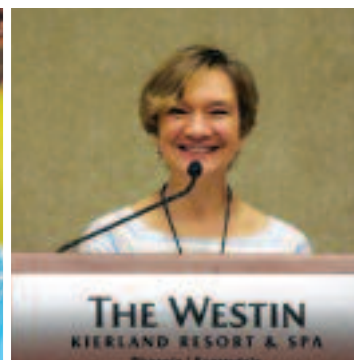
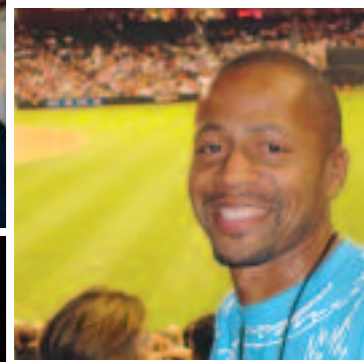




of the folks we caught on  
Annual Conference. If not,  
Cleveland, Ohio, next year!







## Best Memories

- Stephanie Nicolai. Newest Teen Advisory member, she rocked the Board meeting!
- Both Keynote Speakers. The best pair in NSA history.
- Thursday's Chapter Leader meeting.
- The Westin Hotel!
- Two guys that were in wheelchairs. Don't remember their names. I applaud both of them.
- Jay Jones-Doyle, his late Saturday workshop with 80! in attendance. Without saying a word his exuberance said it all....
- Barry Liben, his late afternoon speech to the parents of teens. His moment of truth. He just told his story with the NSA. From why to why not.
- All the award winners!
- My #1 has to go to Tammy Flores! Can you believe years ago she applied for this job not knowing anything about stuttering? She has turned this association skyward. You remember just a few years ago she had to make announcements in front of us at a conference. We heard her knees shake from the back of the room. Did any of you see that this year? Not at all. Simply, she finds the hotel, makes the deal, tells us when/where/cost, ask for workshop presenters, the magic happens. How easy for us to attend. Thank you, Tammy, for being yourself.

Now let's finish the year strong. Mid-summer, ease into fall. Let's just tell people we stutter. It can be that simple. ☞ *Joseph Diaz*

## I Am Not Alone

This past July I was able to attend something that is very dear to me, the NSA conference in Scottsdale. The conference gives me the support and the knowledge that I am not alone. I am not the only person who stutters. When you are around 600 people who stutter and we are all in one hotel it is just awesome. No one tells you to slow down or ask why do you talk like that. Everyone supports each other. We make new friends and are able to bring home new confidence in speaking

Thank you for supporting and making this possible. ☞ *Gloria Klumb*

## Warm Welcomes

I'm very thankful for being able to attend my first NSA Conference this year! As a first timer, I received warm welcomes by everyone.

I have met some of the most amazing people I've ever met before at this conference, and I still talk to them almost every day now! I began a new life after I left the conference. I'm taking steps now to be more open about my stuttering and thus being less covert. I have the attitude now that I'm capable of doing whatever I want to do despite stuttering. I can't wait for the conference next year! Thank you so much, NSA! ☞ *Adrian McAdory*

## Withdrawal Symptoms

I am having some really major withdrawals. It seems like it goes by so fast. The highlight for me was meeting first timers and working with the kids. The kids are truly awesome. I was saddened by some who were noticeably detached and scared but I truly hope they come back next year. It brought me back to when I was a kid. At the same time, it was nice to see them having fun with one another not letting their speech get in the way of things. That is the best age where we can make a difference in someone's future. I know if I heard about this organization when I was their age, things may be a little different for me. They are more inspiring than anything!

For those of you who I have blackmail pics of, you better start writing those checks ;-) If you went anywhere near the hot tub, this means you! LOL ☞ *Cathy Olish*

## Powerful Experience

It was a special time for me to attend my first NSA conference, to meet and network with hundreds other people from around the country who stutter, and to gain new insights about myself and the current period in my life.

It is difficult to put in words the sense of community and friendship each of us

**"I began a new life after I left the conference. I have the attitude now that I'm capable of doing whatever I want to do despite stuttering."**

felt at this year's conference. To me, it is telling of how powerful the experience of stuttering.

☞ *Behmaz Abolmaali*

## Enlightenment

It was our first experience at the NSA conference. The conference was such an enlightening experience for my daughter Joanna and also for me. We met so many people with the same feelings that Joanna experiences; it showed her that she is not alone. She really opened up while meeting everyone. I don't believe she has ever spoken to another person that stuttered prior to the conference.

Joanna attended 2 open mike sessions. At the 2nd session Joanna actually got up and spoke in front of everyone, I was so proud of her...That is one of the things she has feared the most in her everyday life.

The information she acquired at some of the workshops let her see that she shouldn't be so afraid of the real world because she stutters.

After the conference we were walking to the plane and she started to cry knowing she was leaving all these friends she met and felt so comfortable with at the conference and going back to the world that scared her so much throughout her life.

I do believe that attending the workshops and meeting so many wonderful people really showed Joanna that she was not alone and encouraged her to try to face her fears in the real world. Joanna is planning to join a chapter in Rhode Island with Jamie Rocchio while she is away at college this year.

Thank you so much for everything you do, Hope to see you next year. ☞ *Janice and Joanna Kunicki*

## An Irreplaceable Highlight

Ever since my first conference in Long Beach, these annual events have become an irreplaceable highlight of my year, providing much-needed support and encouragement from a group of friends whom I have come to regard as family. Words could never adequately express my gratitude for the opportunity to foster

relationships which have enriched my life and to spend a few days in a place that is unlike any other in this world, for those of us who stutter. So, thank you from the bottom of my heart. ⇨ *Madison N. Garcia*

## Joy and Tears Top 10

10. Getting very little sleep and really not caring at all.
9. Hearing covert stutterers tell their story and shed some fears and remembering where I was only 3 years ago and of course crying.
8. Being interviewed by a doctoral student about my journey with covert stuttering, complete with free stuttering and heart-felt emotions.
7. Getting dressed up and enjoying the Saturday banquet, including pit stops in various different places.
6. Having dinner with new and old friends Friday night in "town" and trying bang bang chicken and shrimp for the first time.
5. Having Gary, a speech-language pathologist (SLP) from Oregon, seek me out to meet me and let me know he has included a piece from an article I wrote on his graduate class final exam. Wow!
4. Meeting people for the first time who I have communicated with on Facebook. I felt like I already knew them.
3. Spending time with new friends at the pool until wee hours of the morning, one new friend in particular, who touched my heart.
2. Doing a workshop about dealing with fears and getting thumbs-up from very influential SLPs who were in the audience. That was so affirming.
1. Being recognized with award for 2009 Volunteer of the Year and being overcome with joy and tears at the same time. I was shocked and honored.

⇨ *Pam Mertz*

## Everyone Was So Open

I just wanted to thank everyone at the NSA conference this year for being so nice to my wife (Lynnetta) and me as this was our first NSA conference ever. I also need to give a great big thank you to Jim McClure and Tammy Flores for getting us to go the conference (I'm on Social Security disability so money is extremely tight).

We attended quite a few of the workshops together, and we were both surprised at how "open" everyone was to talking with complete strangers. Lynnetta talks to people every day in her job (employment specialist for a federal halfway house) so she is used to it, I, on the other hand, am not used to it. Since my first major heart attack in 2005 and becoming unemployed, I've talked to fewer people every day. We estimated that I talked with more people in 4 days at the conference than I've talked to in a year at home.

I've already been told that we need to start saving money so we can attend the Cleveland conference next year without imposing on the NSA for assistance. Hopefully we can manage it, but if not, attending this one was a life changing experience, and I have all of you to thank for that.

A public thank you again to Jim and Tammy for their help in attending the conference, and a public thank you to all of you for helping make our first conference a memorable one.

⇨ *Bobby Childers*

## Blog Entry About a First Conference

"I like your ssssparkly toes!" The young blonde girl said as she zoomed past me at the conference.

"Thank you!" I yelled to the back of her as she continued on.

Later I had a chance to meet and bond with Olivia, who told me that she is 9 years old, stutters, and was there with her dad.

"Do you stutter?" she asked.

"No, my son does." I replied.

"How old is he?" Olivia continued.

"21." I said.

Twenty-one and this was Phillip's first conference, unlike Olivia, who at 9 has attended for several years, which left me wishing that I knew such an organization existed when he was younger.

Being introduced to the National Stuttering Association at an early age will hopefully buffer Olivia from the devastating anxiety, shame, fear, solitude and depression that so many stutterers have within them.

Did you know that there are over 2 million adult stutterers in the U.S. alone?

I sure didn't.

So with only 600 people, encompassing the stutterers and their families/support people, attending this year's conference... that says that we must get the "word out."

⇨ *Susan Moody*

## The Kliq

This year's conference was my first year back since 2006. I arrived knowing that not many of the stutterers my age that I started this NSA journey nine years ago would be in attendance. The "Kliq" as we called it, had depleted over the years. I was worried that I might not have that special connection with stutterers outside my age group. I was wrong.

A close friend and I conducted a workshop on Fearless Stuttering, and we had great turnout of all ages. Afterwards, and up until the end of the conference, I remember younger and older stutterers talking to me about what a special connection we made with them in our workshop. Come to find out the "Kliq" was much bigger than I ever expected.

Being a person who stutters is something very special, and being able to share it with others like you is something words cannot explain. Just when I thought the NSA conference couldn't get any more meaningful it does! Can't wait for next year! ⇨ *Kenny Koroll*

## Vicki Schutter Top 10

10. Doug Scott being at the conference again after 8 years. It was just like old times!
9. Talking with old and new friends at dinner Wed. night.
8. Getting a massage at the spa...aaaaaaaaaaaaah!
7. The opening night reception – always fun!
6. Both keynote speakers.
5. Being given the Member of the Year Award – especially with Doug on one side of me and Paula on the other, with a flattering speech (who are they talking about?) written by my friend and mentor, Lee Reeves.
4. Calling my mother and telling her about the award.
3. Having dinner with some old and new friends Friday night at the Capital Grille.
2. The banquet and dancing!
1. Having Cleveland to look forward to next year!

⇨ *Vicki Schutter*

*continued on page 14*

## Red Bull for the Soul

Each year, I come back from the NSA conferences rejuvenated, recharged, and ready for anything, and this year was no exception! If stuttering is “normal” anywhere, it’s at the NSA conference. If you want to meet new people who seem like old friends, it’s at an NSA conference. If you stutter and want to feel better about speaking, go to an NSA conference – it’s like Red Bull for the soul! Thanks so much to Tammy and the rest of the NSA team. Can’t wait to hang in Cleveland! ☞ *Eric Jackson*

**“If you stutter and want to feel better about speaking, go to an NSA conference – it’s like Red Bull for the soul!”**

rolling (or the Banquet on Saturday Night if you will) we had to step back into the “real-world” again, but instead of feeling defeated, I felt empowered to do things that perhaps I would have kept putting off; for instance, after I got home I joined Toastmasters. I definitely wasn’t the same person I was when I first arrived in Arizona.

I’m already counting down the days until Cleveland!  
☞ *Megan*

## Gregg’s Top 10

10. The Opening Ceremony (after 13 conferences, it still thrills me beyond imagination)
9. Watching Vicki as she realized she won Member of the year
8. 34 people in the hot tub at 1 a.m.
7. Meeting Jerome from Detroit, MI
6. Steve Kaufman at karaoke – like watching Clark Kent stepping into a phone booth, tuxedo and all (we need to talk about the white socks, Steve)
5. The two guest speakers – like a one-two punch to your soul
4. The great lunch specials
3. I’ll never complain about the heat in NYC ever again (I believe one day hit 118)
2. Tammy seems to make every conference better
1. Seeing old friends and making new ones See you all in Cleveland.  
☞ *Gregg Benedikt*

## Counting the Days ‘Til Cleveland

I think the words that best describe the NSA Conference would have to be “Indescribable,” or perhaps the phrase “Life-Changing” are the best; either way this experience was truly remarkable. I still can’t shut up about it to my family and friends.

Just the fact that I had the chance to be a part of the “majority” for a change alone was almost like an episode from the Twilight Zone: Once the credits started

## Learning From Each Other

10. The pulsating feeling of your heart beating as your plane crosses Sun Devil Stadium and realizing you’re finally touching down at Sky Harbor International, and officially welcoming your arrival to the NSA conference.
9. The moment you walk through the lobby and hear a teammate call your name, and the smile breaks out enthusiastically as you run up to give them a big embrace.
8. The meeting of so many first-timers who are now so happy to have found the tremendously brilliant radiance of this organization, and within an hour, have so many texts and e-mails to respond to.
7. The continuous rush of teammates who are checking in and laughing... you just want to watch and take it all in, and still you don’t believe that they’re really here!
6. All the impromptu social gatherings at lunch and dinner which lead to more spontaneous activities and some hilarious moments (such as having a digital camera accidentally dropped into a glass of beer, the person whose camera it was will remain nameless...you just had to have been there LOL.
5. The kickoff with the debut of the Thursday morning workshops where we all learn from each other. I firmly believe one of the best attributes of this conference is that no matter what, we can always learn from one another, regardless of how old we are or where we are going. I learn just as much from the veterans as I do from the youngsters

- and teens, and first-timers.
4. The karaoke: It all started one Thursday night in Parsippany and has snowballed into an annual event. Who can forget a young girl singing Linkin Park’s “Numb,” three children with “You Give Love A Bad Name,” Bill Parry evoking the smooth baritones of Francis Albert Sinatra, and then there’s some teammate with a Yankees jacket over a tuxedo...
3. The late nights spent at the pool, just laughing, crying, talking about life and stuttering, followed by our hopes and dreams. We triumph together, and we rebound together.
2. The night out at the D-Backs game and the awards ceremony, and the keynote speakers. Yes, I know I’m squeezing in all three here...but in a cool way, it’s karma that the night the NSA shows up, the D-Backs win 9–0, the pitcher throws a complete game shutout, and teammates Gregg Benedict, Vicki Schutter, Pam Mertz, Alex Rosenbaum, and Kenny Butler are all recognized. I am honored to spend time with each of them.
1. And finally, the banquet-the dancing, both fast and slow, the camaraderie, the joys of just having a good time and most importantly, knowing we have a place where we belong. The closing ceremony said it best: we are beautiful. And to know that, it’s the sexiest thing in the world.  
☞ *Steven Kaufman*

## Blessed to Stutter

For the first time in my life I feel blessed to be a person who stutters. I believe that God has given me this obstacle to overcome in order to feel the true love that I felt at the NSA Conference in Arizona. Never before in my previous seven conferences have I personally felt such a powerful bond among people who stutter. A bond we can carry with us wherever our travels take us and guide us through any challenges that we encounter.

Once again it was another outstanding performance by Tammy Flores and the conference coordinators. The conference was truly awesome! I am also very pleased with the current condition of the NSA and the direction it is taking. As a former chairperson of the Wisconsin State Council for

# Research Refines Therapy Effectiveness, Seeks New Answers

the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, I understand and appreciate the efforts of Tammy, the NSA Board Members, and all of the other contributors. I look forward to seeing you all in Cleveland! ☞ *Dan Koblitz*

## Life Changing Event

I have a 10-year-old boy who stutters. This was a life-changing event for us. I cannot tell you how wonderful this past weekend was for our family. I am emotionally exhausted but also feeling elated for my son.

Y'all did such an amazing job with this convention! My head is spinning with everything I experienced. I just kind of sat back and took everything in.

I am also hoping to see if a kids group might be starting here in Phoenix.

Again, what an awesome 3 days it was for us. Ya'll should be so proud – everyone I met was so kind and generous. In particular a sweet girl named Erica came running after us into the parking lot with wristbands just so we could get into the pool on Thursday night. I am forever grateful to the NSA for allowing my son to feel that he is not alone.

Thank you again for everything.  
☞ *D'nell Rynd*

## CHAPTER NEWS *continued*

### Safeharbor, Rhode Island

Chapter Leader Jamie Rocchio wrote that at the first meeting since the conference those present shared their conference experiences as well as agreed this is a new beginning for the Rhode Island chapter. They discussed possibly moving the meeting place to a more central location and possible changes in the time of the month they meet. All agreed that their goal is to increase membership and attendance. The group also discussed possibly starting a TWST group since they have had several teens visit the group in the past. Jamie thinks that the Rhode Island chapter is ready to get down to some serious business!

Research on stuttering is showing promise in the areas of genetics, pharmaceuticals, and assistive devices. At the same time, leading speech-language pathologists are evolving more strategies for client-centered fluency therapy, according to presenters at a research symposium July 9 at the National Stuttering Association's national conference in Scottsdale, AZ.

Presenters included Larry Molt, Ph.D, CCC-SLP/A, Auburn University; Dennis Drayna, Ph.D, National Institutes of Health; Vivian Sisskin, MS, CCC-SLP, BRS-FD, University of Maryland; Gerald A. Maguire, MD, University of California, Irvine School of Medicine; and Walt Manning, Ph.D, CCC-SLP, BRS-FD, University of Memphis. Moderator for the session was John Tetnowski, Ph.D, CCC-SLP, BRS-FD, University of Louisiana.

Here are some highlights:

**Assistive devices:** Dr. Molt reported that in a long-term study of the SpeechEasy assistive device, 77% of users achieved reduced disfluency, but fluency gains diminished over three years for a significant number. Regardless of fluency, however, many subjects perceived themselves as better communicators. New, low-cost software for cell phones, PDAs, and MP3 players allows users to experience delayed auditory feedback; however, outcomes studies on their effectiveness are yet to be published.

**Genetics:** About half of stuttering is genetic in origin, according to Dr. Drayna. "If it's genetic, we can identify the gene," he said, "and that can get us to the cells and molecules that the pharmaceutical industry works with." Studies of large families where stuttering is prevalent indicate that approximately 60% of stuttering cases can be attributed to a person's genetic makeup. At the same time, genes do not entirely control stuttering in anyone. Therapy can largely eliminate stuttering for some people, but their genes do not change.

**Stuttering and co-existing disorders:** Not all disfluency in early childhood is stuttering, according to Vivian Sisskin. Some kinds of disfluency may be a result of other disorders such as language

disorders, cluttering, developmental apraxia of speech and autism spectrum disorders. She noted that while it's impossible to predict which children who stutter will recover on their own, recovery is influenced by family history, gender and age when stuttering begins. If a child is still stuttering two years after onset, spontaneous recovery is less likely.

**Pharmaceuticals:** Trials of a prescription medication for stuttering show promise, Dr. Maguire said, but further research is needed before such drugs become available to the public. At this time, the drug Pagaclone has shown promise for the treatment of stuttering. Open-label trials will be starting in the near future. Dr. Maguire emphasized that Pagaclone is not approved for children. Some drugs, such as Zoloft, and other drugs that work with serotonin and dopamine (neurotransmitters) can exacerbate stuttering. He suggested children who stutter and have significant anxiety problems should see a child psychologist as well as a speech-language pathologist.

**Factors in therapy effectiveness:** The relationship between client and clinician is just as important and may be even more important to therapy success than the specific therapy method used, according to Dr. Manning. His goals for change are to increase fluency, improve communication and develop greater autonomy. He suggests that people who stutter, with the help of their clinicians, move toward rather than away from the problem, assume responsibility for taking action, restructure the cognitive view of the self and the problem, and recruit the support of others. ■

.....  
*A video recording of the symposium is available from the Stuttering Home Page, [mnsu.edu/comdis/kuster/nsadvd/nsavideos.html](http://mnsu.edu/comdis/kuster/nsadvd/nsavideos.html).*

# Successful Bilingual Open House

BY MIKE GARCIA

The Bilingual Open House passed by too quickly. With the help of everyone involved, we had a great venue, comfortable accommodations, festive decorations, great food and refreshments (thanks, Rosario!), an extensive brochure table, and above all else great guests. Before I knew it, it was 3 o'clock and it was time to pack up.

The purpose of the Open House was to do some personal outreach, face to face, to show people how personal and enriching involvement in the NSA can be. We wanted to share information about stuttering to help dispel some of the myths and to empower through education, and to share personal experiences with people who may not have had the opportunity to share with fellow people who stutter (PWS). Another equally important purpose was to do this in Spanish, as needed, to accommodate and include populations that might not otherwise be included.

Over the 3-hour event, we had 19 in attendance! Some were PWS (Tony from the San Jose Chapter came up – thanks, Tony), some were people with disabilities, and some were parents/friends/loved ones. A very brave and sweet 14-year-old girl and her grandmother and father attended and this was the first time she had ever met someone who stuttered! Imagine attending an NSA Open House as your first experience with PWS! From

the reactions of the 3 of them, I think they walked away with a greater sense of insight and inspiration.

The discussions were a collaborative effort among all present. We used a clip from the video *Transcending Stuttering* to show the most common difficulties among PWS. NSA members shared topics that were most dear to them, like self-esteem, how we're perceived by fluent speakers, surpassing the stutter in terms of life/career goals, and therapy/insurance. We also talked about benefits of joining the NSA and upcoming events like the International Stuttering Awareness Day (ISAD) on October 22 and the Teen Open House in San Francisco (TWST kick-off Josh?) on October 17. Parents/friends/loved ones asked questions, and it was great to educate those who were interested.

Toward the end of the event, while wrapping up, I couldn't help but think about how much I've changed in the past 3 years. Before, I was as covert as one can get. I let the shame weigh down on me, and it showed through my speech and confidence (lack of). I didn't want to talk to anyone about stuttering, as if they didn't already know I did! But through some self-initiated change, three great therapists at the Cal State East Bay Clinic, and my NSA family, I feel I've turned 180 degrees. Though I still stutter, I can breathe now, and it feels great. ■

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## Support the NSA at Your Workplace!

You, your family members, and friends can contribute to the NSA at your workplace. The NSA participates annually in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). Federal employees can designate #10853 on their CFC form to support the NSA. However, you don't have to be a federal employee to contribute. Each year many employees make donations to the NSA through matching gifts, stocks and other ways. For more information call us at 800-We-Stutter (800-937-8888). You can also e-mail us at [tflores@WeStutter.org](mailto:tflores@WeStutter.org).



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*Changing the lives of people who stutter*

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