

## The Chatterbox in My Head

BY KATHERINE PRESTON



Standing in front of the 2009 NSA conference closing ceremony an unlikely couple took the stage. The taller of the two wore loose clothes and would have looked

at home in a rap video whereas his partner appeared markedly more conservative in a button-down shirt.

Mitch Trichton had brought them from the late night “rehearsal grounds” of the hot tub to the stage in front of all 600 of us and we waited, not knowing what to expect from Tim Benton and David Resnick. Suddenly the mic was hit with machine-like beat box sounds, as if someone had switched on a near-by recording, and the chorus began with the help of two of Our Time’s finest. Then suddenly the rapping began; a rhythmic, lyrical stream of words flicking over the beat below.

Tim, who I had first noticed in a workshop on Thursday, who had pushed through an incredibly determined block to get his point across, was now holding the audience in rapture with his words on stuttering. As the rap ended and the crowd stood up to give a standing ovation the power of the NSA seemed as clear as ever. People were not cheering for them because they were not stuttering. They were cheering because they had been given the chance to have a stage, to stand-up and be heard.

### Rarely a Silent Moment

From the workshops to late night group chats at the bar, there was rarely a silent moment at the conference. I have spent much of my life being jealous of “fluent” speakers; the way words flowed subconsciously from their brains through their mouths. Yet I realize that stuttering forces us to value words. Physically and mentally we have to make a conscious decision to run the gauntlet of a sentence.

For those with constant blocks or secondaries speaking is physically tough, and for covert stutterers the mental machinations can be psychologically draining. However, that is not always a negative. We are reassured that words are precious. If we make the decision to talk it is not done lightly, and so the conversations that bubble around the conference are honest, intentional, and meaningful.

### The Difference 9 Months Can Make

As a first timer to the conference I had some idea what I was walking in to but still I found myself overwhelmed. What a difference 9 months can make. In September last year I was living in London, working as a financial journalist and planning how I could change my life. Years ago I had decided never to let my stutter hold me back, but I largely pretended it didn’t exist. I hated it when anyone brought it up in conversation, I used every trick I could think of to hide it, and I was woefully unaware of the concept of self-help.

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## Sharing the Stuttering Experience

BY PAM MERTZ

I became aware of the National Stuttering Association in 2006, after doing some Internet research on stuttering and finding that there was a local chapter in my community. I had kept my stuttering hidden for most of my adult life because I had the belief that it was bad and had received so much social punishment as a child.

When I walked into that first NSA support meeting in March 2006, I had no idea my life was going to change so dramatically. I had never met anyone else who stuttered, and my covertness had me actually believing that I really did not stutter.

I was full of denial and sadness. Hearing other people stutter freely and express emotions about it broke something open in me. At first, I was incredibly scared and overwhelmed, but I went back to meetings in April and May and gradually began to talk about my own stuttering.

The NSA chapter leaders told me about a national conference where people who stuttered from all over got together to share ideas, learn about updates in the stuttering community, and support each other. I wanted to experience that and did what I needed to do to get to that first conference in Long Beach, CA in June 2006, with some help from the NSA.

I knew then that I needed to get involved in the stuttering community

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# ODDS & ENDS

FROM DAVID BLAZINA

## Eagle Scout

The rank of Eagle Scout is the highest rank one can achieve in the Boy Scouts of America and is earned by mastering prescribed skills, applying leadership skills, completing community service projects, and demonstrating the highest moral values and citizenship. Only 5% of scouts who attempt Eagle attain the rank and even fewer who stutter ascend to that lofty perch. The rank of Eagle is an honor respected worldwide.

**Bob Spradley** of the Riverside chapter of the NSA wrote to tell us about **Zachary Mendoza**, who will be receiving this prestigious award.

"Zach is one of the coolest teens I've met, and he has a family to match. His dad is a Fire Department Captain in Corona, CA, who also stutters. We've had the pleasure of watching Zach grow over the course of the last five years as he has demonstrated that stuttering is not a handicap but rather an added challenge. His Eagle Court was September 26. Zach is a senior in high school, on the swim team, and looking into colleges to attend.

"His Eagle Project was quite an undertaking: demolition and reconstruction of 100 feet of wood fencing at Hidden Valley Nature Center in Corona/Norco, CA. The Hidden Valley Nature Center is a public facility used for camping, equestrian events, and scout programs and also has nature trails for hiking, biking, and horse riding. There is an on-site museum that provides educational programs for both schools and the public. Zach raised funds to pay for all the materials, equipment rentals, and purchases as well as lunch for all of the participants by sending personal donation letters to friends, family, and private businesses in Corona."

Zach was the only Eagle recipient at this ceremony.

## Deserving of Recognition

The National Stuttering Association wishes member **Samantha Gennuso** from Edison, NJ the best of luck as she begins classes at Boston University to receive her Masters in Communications.



## Nina Ghiselli

The NSA also extends congratulations to member Dr. Nina Ghiselli of the East Bay chapter as she was named by Exceptional Parent Magazine as one of their "Models of Excellence in the Education Profession" for 2009.

Mike Garcia wrote to us about Nina: "I'm very proud to say that we here in the East Bay chapter are not the only ones who know what a valuable asset Dr. Nina Ghiselli is to the stuttering community. Only a limited number of these awards are presented each year, which speaks to the remarkable nature of the recipients. I don't know how Nina finds enough time in the day to do all that she does for the NSA and disability services.

I can tell you the recent surge in activity here in the NSA's East Bay chapter would not be the same if not for Nina. She is a great role model, and I'm very happy for her and want to thank her for all that she does. Thanks, Nina!"



## Joyce Stone

It is with a heavy heart that the NSA announces the passing of Joyce Stone.

Joyce died October 2, 2009, after suffering an aneurism while in Baltimore for her brother's wedding. In good health and having recently retired, she was looking forward to using her Ph.D. as well as the alternative therapies of magic and comedy to counsel abused women. Joyce was a member of Toastmasters and within the past year had given her mother's eulogy and addressed the audience at her retirement party. She was very proud of both speeches.

Joyce had been involved with the Orange County chapter of the NSA and National Stuttering Project, and for the past year, along with **Monica Henry**, **Claire Byrne**, and **Deanne Zeno Simmons**, was involved in an excellent group therapy program with fluency expert **Dorothy McJenkin**, speech-language pathologist, formerly of Santa Ana College.

Joyce is survived by her wonderful husband, **Al Cohen**, two children, four stepchildren, several grandchildren, and many, many friends.



## She Makes a Difference

**Lori Melnitsky** was recently honored at a special dinner celebrating Long Island women who make a difference.

The "Fortune 52," hosted by the associate publisher of the Long Island Press, **Beverly Fortune**, recognized Lori for her contributions to the community citing her achievements in starting in her own practice, All Island Speech, and co-leading the Long Island adult and TWST chapters of the NSA.

## A Day With the Nationals

On Saturday, September 26, the Long Island, NY and Rockville, MD chapters of the NSA joined forces to host "A Day With the Nationals." Despite a raw and rainy day, NSA'ers enjoyed a day at Nationals Park to watch the Washington Nationals host the Atlanta Braves and then walked around The Mall taking in the sights of the Washington Monument and the Capitol. The day was capped off with dinner in Dupont Circle. Among those in attendance were Long Island chapter Co-Leader **Steven Kaufman**, South Jersey Chapter Leader **Jerry Higgins**, Rockville, MD Chapter Leader **Jerome Mortman**, **Gary Auker** from Harrisburg, PA, **Eric Salguiero** and his wife, **Jennifer**, **Daniel Lippe** from Owings Mills, MD, **Jason Bell**, and **Rob Duffield** and his daughter, **Katie**, from Enola, PA.

## Youth Day at Syracuse University

The Gebbie Clinic at Syracuse University held a continuing education seminar on Friday, November 6 with **Dr. Scott Yaruss** presenting. Then Saturday, November 7, Syracuse University hosted a NSA Youth Day.

Morning events included breakout sessions targeting specific age groups facilitated by several speech-language pathologists. The afternoon included

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## Getting Ready for 2010

FROM TAMMY FLORES, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AND ERNIE CANADEO, CHAIRMAN

Well, here it is again. Another great year coming to end, and now with high hopes for 2010. Together we successfully helped people who stutter, introducing new programs and material, through another year. Congratulations on achieving such a significant accomplishment!

Around this time of year many non-profit organizations send out an appeal for donations. While we certainly welcome and need financial support (and will send that letter another day :-), in this end-of-year message we want to share our appreciation and gratitude for the many ways you have offered your time, support, and collaboration in 2009.

### To Our Financial Contributors

We gratefully acknowledge the individuals and organizations who provided financial support to the National Stuttering Association (NSA) in 2009. Your donations are invaluable. In these challenging times your financial contributions, large and small, are helping us take the next steps that enable the work we do. We simply couldn't do it without you. Thank you so much!

### To the Incredible NSA Chapter Leaders, Presenters, and Volunteers

- To the chapter leaders all over the U.S. who have given so generously of their time, hearts, wisdom, and love to help guide the NSA forward this year.
- To the regional leaders who share the gift of the NSA within their geographic areas (and sometimes far beyond) and help care for the ever-expanding community.
- To the speech-language pathologists who support the partnerships and goals of NSA education and research, who champion our professional focus, who guide our learning program development, and are

helping the NSA to thrive, whatever the future brings for all of us.

- To each and every NSA member who gives so much to nurture the NSA in building life-affirming futures – we can't thank you enough!
- To each of you who subscribes to this newsletter and stays connected with us, thank you, too. We appreciate your feedback, your questions, your presence, and your support.
- To our sister organizations and all those who foster conversations that matter, thank you for being there and aligning with us and other kindred networks to strengthen our common voice.

In addition to the wonderful NSA community and our other friends and colleagues, this year we also give thanks for the opportunities that await us in 2010. We particularly welcome the promise of new families, adults, and speech-language pathologists who continue to share our motto: "If you stutter, you are not alone."

Happy holidays to you and your families.

Warm Wishes,  
Tammy Flores, Executive Director  
Ernie Canadeo, Chairman

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### ODDS & ENDS *continued*

round table discussions as well as an open mic session. This event featured NSA members/facilitators **Sujini Ramachandar**, MS CCC-SLP, **Pamela Mertz**, BSW, and **Joe Klein**, Ph.D., CCC-SLP. Also facilitating were Syracuse chapter Co-Leaders **Evan Sherman** and **Vince Markowsky**, various professors and clinical staff from the Department of Communication Science and Disorders at Syracuse University, and speech-language pathology students.

## Speaking Free(ly): Therapy Scholarships for Teens

The National Stuttering Association is pleased to announce the Rose Flaum Scholarship Fund. This wonderful scholarship fund was created by Sander Flaum, a long time NSA member, in memory of his mother. The Rose Flaum Scholarship Fund has been established to provide speech therapy for qualified NSA members.

Up to three scholarships will be awarded annually beginning in 2010. Therapy will be provided by a speech-language pathologist who is credentialed as a fluency specialist (BRS-FD) by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Specialty Board for Fluency Disorders.

To be eligible, applicants must be an NSA member and be between the ages of 15 and 21 years. Applications will be reviewed by a committee and based upon the following criteria/needs:

- brief description of how the applicant feels the scholarship would be of benefit
- exhaustion of insurance coverage for stuttering therapy
- financial need
- preparedness for therapy

If you are interested and would like to receive information about the Rose Flaum Scholarship Fund or how to apply, please e-mail Tammy Flores, NSA executive director, at [info@westutter.org](mailto:info@westutter.org).

# Money Matters

BY BILL SMITH

We reported to you a year ago on “Money Matters” and are pleased to announce that your NSA continues to move forward on a sound financial basis.

Our total revenue was up slightly this year, and includes your new and renewal membership fees, “Change for the Better” monthly contributions, donations from the twice yearly fund raising drives, revenue from our annual conference and workshops, sales of merchandise and books, and a few other items. It also includes donations which are restricted to a specific purpose. These funds were donated by a very generous board member, his family, and his friends, so that members and their families who could otherwise not afford to attend our Scottsdale conference this year could participate in this life changing experience.

Only 5% of our expense dollars are associated with fund raising, another 8% is categorized as administrative, while the

balance of 87% is allocated to Program Services, directly benefiting people who stutter and their families – including the Scottsdale conference and workshops, our outstanding publications LETTING GO and Family Voices, our new brochure for pediatricians and family physicians on childhood stuttering, our recently updated Web site, and of course, the expense of the personnel who bring these services and benefits to our members, their families, and others in the stuttering community.

We sincerely appreciate what you have done over the years to support the National Stuttering Association and trust that you will continue to support generously our very special NSA family. There are so many ways to do so – we particularly encourage signing up for the Change for the Better program, where each month an amount you select is donated to NSA through your credit card. I do this, and I can vouch for it being a painless and

efficient way to support your favorite charity. This method of support is particularly beneficial to the NSA staff – as many of our expenses are monthly it helps to have an offsetting reliable monthly income flow.

We also have the ability to receive donations of stock – transferring stock which has appreciated in value over the years is very likely your most tax efficient method of supporting the NSA – we urge you to consider this form of support. And, while nobody likes to think about it, we would be honored if you could consider the NSA in your estate planning process. We welcome inquires at the NSA office in New York regarding the various ways to support NSA, as well as any requests for additional financial information. ■

Bill Smith is an NSA board member and treasurer and has been an NSA member since 2000. He lives in Riverwoods, Illinois.

## Cleveland, Ohio, Here We Come!

**NSA Conference 2010: Cleveland, Ohio**  
**Mark your calendar for July 7–11, 2010!**



Rock and Roll Hall of Fame

There's a well known saying throughout the Midwest, “Cleveland Rocks!” Well, next year, when the National Stuttering Association holds its annual conference there, it will surely rock like never before.

This year, more than 600 people attend our conference in Arizona, and the 2010 conference has every indication of being our largest ever. Whether this is your 1st, 7th, or 14th conference, it is guaranteed

to be educational and enlightening. Want to find out more?

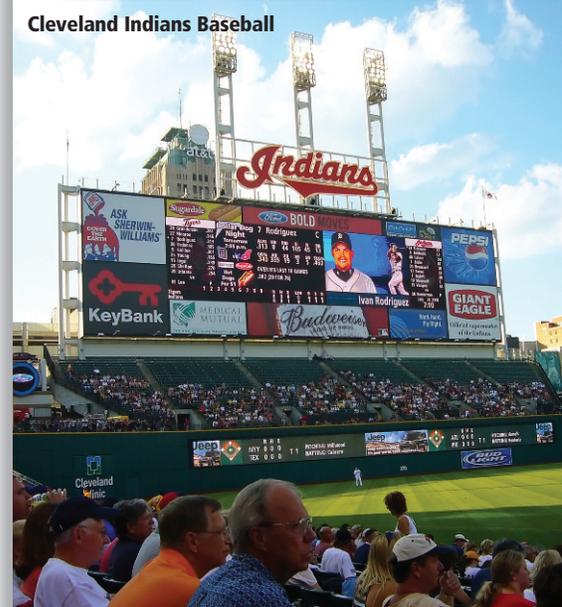
The annual NSA Conference is the premier meeting of people who stutter and those who support them, including children, teens, parents, and professionals. Attendees say they wish they had known about this conference years ago! Everybody gains insight from professionals and most importantly, from each other.

Don't miss this opportunity to learn and grow with others who share your experiences. The latest therapeutic information will be discussed, and everything happens in a safe and friendly environment. Both children and adults love these conferences!

Registration materials and tour information will be mailed in late January, but you can book your hotel room now at the Renaissance Cleveland Hotel. Room rates are \$139. Check out the NSA Web site for all the info at [westutter.org](http://westutter.org). ■



West Side Market



Cleveland Indians Baseball

# Miami Hurricanes' Antonio Dixon Graduates With Class

BY SUSAN MILLER DEGNAN

*The following article appeared in the May 17, 2009 edition of the Miami Herald. You can see the article online as it was originally published at [miamiherald.com/sports/colleges/um/v-print/story/1053306.html](http://miamiherald.com/sports/colleges/um/v-print/story/1053306.html).*

University of Miami academic advisor Kelly Pierce still sometimes weeps when she reads the recommendations sent to the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics on behalf of Hurricanes football player Antonio Dixon.

They're tears of joy.

"I may be almost as happy as he is – if not more," Pierce said.

Dixon, the 6-2, 325-pound defensive tackle whose story of homelessness, severe stuttering, learning disabilities and a father in prison has been well documented, earned his degree in liberal arts Friday. The 23-year-old also recently signed a free agent contract with the Washington Redskins.

But what Dixon has boasted about the most lately, according to roommate and former UN teammate Spencer Adkins, is being one of six college athletes nationwide to receive the Wilma Rudolph Student Athlete Achievement Award – intended to honor college athletes who have overcome great personal, academic and/or emotional odds to achieve academic success.

"He has been bragging about that award for weeks," said Adkins, a linebacker who also graduated Friday and was taken in the sixth round of the NFL Draft by the Atlanta Falcons. "He's a big-hearted, funny, loving teddy bear. School was sometimes a struggle for him, but he always kept working hard. I have no doubt he'll make it in football, too."

## Drive And Determination

"This is a way for us to say we recognize and appreciate what you've done," said award co-chair Katie Ammons, Virginia Tech's associate director for student-athlete academic support. "What touched us about Antonio was his drive and determination. He didn't quit when he easily could have. He didn't give in to people making fun of him or accept society's perception of the homeless. He didn't believe that was his lot in life.

"Antonio just kept pushing, and this is our chance to say he touched us, and in essence, our entire organization."

Dixon's stuttering, though sometimes still severe, has lessened as he gets more confident. He said he was thrilled to graduate Friday, and was returning to Washington on Sunday.

"Graduating was a big achievement,"

Dixon said. "I've been here for four years and everybody said I did good. I knew this moment would come. I always wanted to be the first one from my immediate family to get a college degree."

Part of what Dixon wrote to the committee: "If I didn't have the support here and have people here to tell them my problems, I don't think I would have made it. I'm going to graduate this May on time with a degree that is going to help me when my football career is over. When I get that diploma I'll be happy. I'm ready to graduate because I put in a lot of hours. I overcame a lot. I'm ready to conquer anything that life throws at me."

## Mother Is Brought To Tears

Dixon's mother, Corenthia, was ecstatic the day her son graduated. Accompanying him were his two brothers, his sister and his cousin.

"It brought tears to my eyes to look at him walk up there and get his diploma," said Corenthia. "He looked like one of those big judges on TV. He looked so handsome, and he was smiling all night."

Dixon's younger brother, Jarvis, dropped out of South Miami High when he was 17. Now he's working toward his GED and wants to go to college. "It's just a blessing," Jarvis said. "Everybody thought Tony was going to be nothing because he had that stuttering problem. I'm glad he's my brother.

"You know how people look up to Kobe Bryant and Shaq? Tony is my hero. Seeing him do it, I know I can, too." ■

## Poem: What Can I Say...

BY JESSICA GIUFFRE

Last year I took a creative writing class because I love to write. We did a unit on performance poetry. When writing performance poetry, you're supposed to be very truthful and vulnerable, so I thought what is more truthful than writing about my stuttering. I shared it with my class and everyone loved it, including me. My speech pathologist hung it up in her room.

### What I Can Say...

I find it more a gift than a curse  
I'm different, I'm special, I'm unique  
I open my mouth, and the words don't come out  
The walls are caving in  
I take a deep breath  
Search for the strength  
I long to be normal  
And am proud to be different  
I've had it since I've been born  
It's apart of me, in my blood  
I tackle my fear  
Speak my mind  
I'm important  
I matter  
I speak and speak  
And stutter and stutter  
It feels good  
I feel free  
It's not about what I can't say  
But what I can say  
...And that's everything!

An intensive therapy I had been to when I was 17, and later in my 20s, started my re-education. At school and university I had never met another stutterer and, as a result, I had created an image in my mind of stutterers as strange, pathetic creatures. The therapy course challenged my own misconceptions and inspired me. I remember looking around and seeing myself in the truck drivers, in the businesswomen and in the school children around me. I was struck by how wrong I had been, and I realized I wanted to write something to challenge the perceptions and myths that lurked around stuttering.

Leaving my job as a financial journalist in London, I moved to America to write a book on the one subject I had spent most of my life hiding from. I wanted to hear the experiences of others, I wanted to hear why people thought it happened, and I wanted to explore my own feelings towards the chatterbox in my head. It could have been a disaster. I had no idea how I would find all the stutterers I knew existed across America. Luckily I quickly found the NSA and a door was opened to a network of stutterers, speech-language pathologists (SLPs) and researchers across the country.

Having spent 9 months interviewing over 100 people (mostly stutterers but also some parents, spouses, researchers and SLPs), listening to Stuttertalk, going to local NSA meetings whenever possible, and going out with an amazing man that also stutters, I imagined that the conference would be nothing new. However, to be thrust into a world where stuttering is both normal and valued was incredibly cathartic. Growing up I never knew another stutterer, so all my role models were fluent people. I emulated them. Unsurprisingly I never quite succeeded, and every time I stuttered it felt like a personal failure, being unable to think myself into fluency. In the alternate universe of the conference I was surrounded by stuttering role models.

### Conference Empowerment

Sitting at the opening ceremony I watched the Our Time kids stand up as examples to many of the younger audience members. As eight of the kids stood on stage to read

a poem about dealing with stuttering at every stage of life, the difficulties and obstacles that almost every person in the room had faced were brought plainly to the floor. I felt myself tense as past and present worries were exposed, but these children were empowered standing on stage. Rather than asking for pity they appeared strong and honestly brave.

It is easy to shed a tear at the conference, more often than not from laughter. The jokes that drifted around the Westin walls could have been met with stony silence if made by a fluent speaker but here people gave themselves permission to see the funny side. Talking to Jamie Rocchio about how physically draining it is to speak she delivered the line “I’ve got really developed jaw muscles, I work out!” In the same vein, recording the podcast for Stuttertalk and talking about the nightmare of the fast food drive-thru, Jason Faust had the crowd in hysterics with the image of him explaining that he stuttered into the microphone and getting the unexpected reply, “And would you like to value-size that stutter today for 39 cents?”

Often people become role models without realizing it but at the workshops advice was handed out explicitly. Everything from learning how to meet women to learning the power of self-advertising. These workshops were lead by confident, charismatic speakers and promoted the idea that stutterers should never have to apologize for their speech. In the workshop called

“Fearless Stuttering” a fluent audience member said that she often looked away when someone started stuttering and that seemed to help. Another audience member turned around to explain that, although looking away might possibly help in the short term, in the long term it would be a shallow victory for the stutterer. They would feel they had made the listener uncomfortable and their stutter had made them so hideous that the other person had been forced to look away.

### A Sense of Belonging

The concept of being proud of our stutter, of having the strength to do whatever we want, and being able to laugh at ourselves when it all goes wrong, is central to self-acceptance. I would go crazy if I didn’t laugh at the situations my speech gets me into and I am comfortable with who I am but there are still moments when I catch myself grateful for lucky fluency or exhausted by particularly “stuttery” days. The conference brought me closer to the level of complete acceptance I would love. It offered a community and a sense of belonging that is rare. I saw the beauty that can be found in imperfection and was reminded of the importance of communication above all else. Arriving home from Arizona I realized that stuttering has given me far more than it had ever taken away. ■

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*Katherine Preston writes from Falmouth, Massachusetts. Visit [www.katherinepreston.com](http://www.katherinepreston.com) for more information.*

## Research Study

Dr. Tamara Cranfill, Eastern Kentucky University, is examining the degree to which college students between the ages of 18–25 years who stutter view their ability to perform various jobs. By doing this study, she hopes to learn if there is a difference between how people who stutter view their abilities compared to the people who may be in a position to hire them.

Participants will be asked to respond anonymously to the

Vocational Advice Scale (Gabel, Blood, Tellis, & Althouse, 2004), a 43 item questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale (i.e., strongly agree to strongly disagree). A question example is: “I would advise this person who stutters, if qualified, to be an optician.” Responses will be grouped to prevent individual identification. For more information or to participate, e-mail [Tamara.Cranfill@eku.edu](mailto:Tamara.Cranfill@eku.edu).



## A Weekend of Empowerment

It all started in early 2009, when NSA Webmaster and former Dallas Chapter Leader Russ Hicks approached Long Island Chapter Leader Steven Kaufman with an idea about hosting Russ's "Successful Stuttering: It's Time To Live!" workshop. Although originally aimed for the New York area, he felt that the best chances to make it a success would be to move it to another area and bring in Jerome Mortman, the chapter leader from Rockville, MD and Tracey Wallace, the director of adult programs.

After months of long-distance e-mails and conference calls, the ball started to get rolling when both reached out to Dr. Shelley Brundage, the advisor of the student National Student Speech Language Hearing Association (NSSLHA) chapter at George Washington University. A date was picked, and the weekend was set to kick off with Russ speaking to a graduate class of her students. Then, on May 30, "Successful Stuttering" made its grand debut at the Marvin Center, with 20+ NSA'ers in attendance.

Some of the inspirational highlights included an open mike where all attendees got up to speak, including Monica who refused to give in to her speech as she began to cry, but doggedly said what

she wanted to. Another spoke about how this workshop was a big step toward helping her with her attitude. One woman, who just earned her speech-language pathology degree, spoke about how she was looking forward to working as a speech pathologist. Lastly, another attendee said it was worth the five and a half hour drive just to see Russ speak. And afterward, all enjoyed an evening filled with delicious dinner from Buca di Beppo in Dupont Circle.

It was actually poetic justice that this event was held in Washington, DC, where the nation's capital symbolizes freedom, power, and unlimited potential to make yourself a stronger human being. The NSA and Washington, DC...so perfect together.

### NSA members attending included:

Steven Kaufman, NSA Long Island chapter leader; Russ Hicks, NSA Webmaster and former Dallas chapter leader; Jerome Mortman, Rockville, MD, chapter leader; Tracey Wallace, director of adult programs; Matt Zenkovich, Northern Virginia chapter leader; Sonia, Northern Virginia chapter; Mike Valencia, Bristol, VA; Charles Repine, DC chapter leader; Elo Oji (future DC chapter leader); Alex Kuzmenkoa, Manhattan, NY; Reuben Schuff, Baltimore, MD.

### SHARING THE EXPERIENCE *continued*

because I needed help, but felt I could also help others. As I healed, I could perhaps help others heal. Sharing the stuttering experience, all of it – good and bad – makes a difference.

**I needed to get involved in the stuttering community because I needed help, but felt I could also help others. As I healed, I could perhaps help others heal.**

### A Difficult Time

I lost my long time job in 2006, at around the same time that I came to terms with my stuttering. In fact, I lost my job because of stuttering publicly and not having the courage to own, acknowledge, and educate.

I have had several jobs since then and have met many financial

challenges. My partner is acutely ill, and no longer able to work. Therefore, any "extras" have been difficult to manage. This year has been especially difficult, as it has been for many people.

However, I knew I needed to get to NSA 2009 in Arizona. I asked for financial assistance and received a scholarship toward my hotel costs in Scottsdale. This enabled me to attend the conference and fully participate and continue to be immersed in the stuttering community. I cannot contribute financially to the NSA, but I can contribute my time and voice, and have been doing that as much as I can.

I was so thrilled and overwhelmed with the honor of receiving the Volunteer of the Year award at the conference this July. I would not have been able to be there to experience that joyful moment if the NSA had not helped me financially.

Thank you, NSA, for helping me to find my voice and open my heart. Thank you for making it possible for so many people to make room for stuttering in their lives. ■

# CHAPTER NEWS

FROM BONNIE WEISS

## Bowling Green, Ohio

The Bowling Green chapter has been very active. They even have a "webcam member." One of their members recently was accepted into graduate school for speech pathology. At one of their recent meetings, they talked about advocacy of their speech along with "cheating" (avoidance) sometimes when they talk. There were some different thoughts on this, and all were great! Some members seemed to be in agreement with the idea of telling people about stuttering when they get to know them. Others preferred disclosure right away. The group decided that as long as they are comfortable with how they share their stuttering, that's all that counts! Scott Palasik said that the follow up topic of "cheating" on their speech was fun because they went around the room and talked about how each of them use avoidances!

## East Bay, California

The East Bay Chapter met for a fun social in Rockridge with four in attendance. Mike Garcia writes that the evening was especially fun because the group met at a restaurant. Mike had been doing a lot of traveling for his job and thought the meeting with Nina, Josh, and Vanna helped to "recharge my batteries." It was nice to put "business" aside and get to know everyone on a more personal level.

## Kingston, Rhode Island

Chapter Leader Jamie Rocchio reports that the group met on Monday, October 5. They had 16 in attendance: 1 parent, 4 stutterers, and 11 graduate students. It was a great meeting. They discussed topics such as positive and negative speech therapy experiences, listeners' reactions, and that for many the goal is communication, not fluency. Students were encouraged to ask questions and become involved in the discussion. They were also encouraged to attend future meetings.

## Rockville, Maryland

Jerome Mortman writes that at their October 6 chapter meeting, one of the members practiced a speech he was to give at an upcoming Toastmasters meeting. The subject of his speech was a young man, Nick, who was born with no arms and legs and is a dynamic motivational speaker. He saw the man on an Internet video and became inspired. He thought that if Nick could come to terms with his disability, then coming to terms with stuttering ought to be a "cake walk" for persons who stutter. Also, on September 26, the Long Island, New York and Rockville, Maryland sponsored an outing to watch the Washington Nationals play baseball (see this issue's Odds & Ends). The Nats lost, but everyone had a good time. After the game, they had dinner at an Italian restaurant in downtown Washington, DC.

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## Happy Holidays!

On behalf of the board of directors, Ernie Canadeo, Bill Smith, Barry Liben, Lee Reeves, Cathy Olish, Marybeth Allen, Debbie Nicolai, Michael McDuffie, Stephanie Nicolai, Jim McClure, Tracey Wallace, Brad Madsen, Marc Rosenbaum, John Tetnowski and our staff, Tammy Flores, Sarah D'Agostino, and Melissa Lopez, we wish you and your loved ones a Healthy and Happy Holiday season!



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