

Letting GO

The Quarterly Publication of the National Stuttering Association

October - December 2003

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■ Perceptions of a Parent

BY BILL CLEMENTS

RECOLLECTIONS FROM NASHVILLE

I'D LIKE TO MAKE SOME OBSERVATIONS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A PARENT attending an NSA annual conference for the first time with a teenager who stutters.

I think every family with a child or teenager who stutters should attend this convention every chance they get. The support and positive reinforcement your child will receive from the experience is immeasurable, but the parents, too, will benefit personally more than you can imagine.

Sam and I attended the Family Workshops organized by Nina Reardon, a wonderful person and speech therapist from Illinois. There were joint sessions with the families together, and also separate workshops where we split up into smaller groups—younger children got together as a group; so did the teens, parents of younger children, and parents of teenagers only.

Meeting and talking with other parents is very important, and few of us get the chance to do so except through the NSA. Parents experience emotions ranging from guilt, fear, frustra-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

IN THIS ISSUE...

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER	2
WE'RE BUILDING A BETTER NSA	2
SIGN UP FOR THE NSA DISTRIBUTION LIST	2
WHAT'S HAPPENING	3
NSA ANNUAL AWARD WINNERS	4
2003 CONFERENCE DEDICATED TO JIM MCCLURE	5
GOT CHANGE?	6
WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS	6
NSA 2004 ANNUAL CONFERENCE	6
MEMORIES OF NASHVILLE: PHOTOGRAPHS	7
SPEAKING OUT	8
OUR VOICE	
FAMILY PROGRAMS A SUCCESS	9
IN THE SPIRIT OF MASTERCARD	9
A STUTTERING RAP	9
NSA STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES	10
WELL, IT'S ABOUT TIME	10
INDEPENDENCE DAY	11
ME THE KEY	11
CHAPTER NEWS	12

■ How the NSA "Topped the Charts" in Nashville!

BU VICKI SCHUTTER

NASHVILLE AND THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF STUTTERING

THE 20TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE NSA IN NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE, WAS A VERY DIFFERENT CONFERENCE FOR ME. Yes, yes, I know what you're thinking. "My god, she's been to the last 18 in a row! How could this one be different?" Well, the big difference was that I wasn't able to room with my two beloved "Roommates from Hell," Donna Campbell Sanders and Carol Buckingham.

This year I had another roommate: my husband!

Steve had been to one other NSA Conference, the one in San Diego in 1995, 6 months after we got married. But then, he didn't really go to any of the conferences except the evening activities. This year, though, we had a dual vacation.

The first half we went to Iowa, attended a Schutter family wedding, visited with his mother, and drove around looking at rocks (he's a geologist and rocks are his life!). That was his half of the vacation, and even his mother was impressed with how patient I was.

Then came Nashville and the Wonderful World of Stuttering, so it was his turn to be patient with me!

We got there late Wednesday afternoon, and it's always fun to see how long it will take me to meet up with someone I know. This year it took until we were on the shuttle to go to the Renaissance Nashville Hotel. Grace Gregory from Albany recognized me, and we had a nice chat about how excited we were about the impending convention.

We were very impressed when we got to the hotel. It was very big and nice and comfortable – one of the best convention hotels ever. Steve and I checked in, took our luggage upstairs, and then returned downstairs to look for those wonderful familiar faces that are the best part of the conferences.

Groups were collecting to go to dinner, and we attached ourselves to the Weiner Flock: Bernie and Harriett Weiner from the infamous Royal Oak, Michigan, chapter. Harriett was facilitating the Spouses' Workshop that I wanted Steve to attend, and I was wanting him to get a

chance to meet her and talk to her.

The Weiner Flock, which also included everyone's favorite Toastmaster Russ Hicks, ended up at an Italian restaurant where we ran into several other NSA "flocks." Practically the entire restaurant had been invaded by stutters! After dinner and the walk back to the hotel, several of us went up to the third floor hotel bar to continue the conversation and fun with our fellow NSA convention attendees.

Thursday, Steve wanted to see some of Nashville, so we spent most of the day walking around the city. We went to the capitol, the war museum, another museum with a Civil War exhibit, and the Parthenon. That evening was the opening reception of this year's conference, and it featured fajitas, a cash bar, a hilarious comedy routine by George Laday, and an inspiring speech by Marilee Fini.

No one was prepared, though, for the music of Steve Sharp. Wow! After all the walking I had done that day, I thought I wasn't able to even stand up, but Steve's music had me up and on the dance floor. Let's get that guy to Baltimore!

Friday morning Steve and I got up early and went to breakfast. Then Steve went to the "Living with a Stuttering Spouse or Significant

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



• STEVE AND VICKI SCHUTTER ENJOYING THE CONFERENCE.

The Chairman's Corner

MOVING AHEAD...

IN MY FIRST ARTICLE AS CHAIRPERSON, it is certainly exciting to be able to report on many changes that should make us all enthusiastic about the future of the NSA. For all of us who attended last year's convention in Nashville and were informed of the financial status of the NSA, perhaps this type of article was not anticipated, even by myself.

When the Board of Directors held a special meeting in Chicago in September 2003, difficult and needed decisions were made with the goal of a solid future for the NSA.

Since that time, the office has moved to New York City, the operation is running smoothly and efficiently, and Tammy is doing an outstanding job. For the present, *Letting GO* is being published quarterly and all is on course. Board elec-

tions have been moved to the Fall to allow time to determine the needs and skills necessary for the Board vacancies which will arise and to allow time for NSA members to consider running for election to the Board.

Letting GO will keep us informed of the election timing and the skills needed. Other bylaw changes have taken place and others will surely be considered depending on future developments.

I wish I could report that finances are not a concern to the NSA, but we live in the real world with all other profit and non-profit organizations. By all of us continuing to financially support the NSA, we will hopefully put our more significant financial concerns behind us and devote our full efforts to our continuing mission of providing



hope and support for children and adults who stutter. We are definitely moving in the right direction.

As always, all members of the Board members have open and interested ears to any comments or concerns you may have. We are just a phone call or an e-mail away. On behalf of the entire NSA Board, I want to offer our very best wishes for a happy and healthy New Year.

See you in Baltimore in June!

Ed Weiss
Board Co-Chairperson



■ We're Building a Better NSA

BY ELAINE SAITTA

I HAVE BEEN ON THE NSA BOARD ABOUT SIX MONTHS. During this time, the NSA has made several significant changes and some difficult decisions. Throughout this time, I've discovered that I am working with a group of dedicated people who would do anything to ensure the NSA will be around for many years.

Now that we have relocated our national office to New York, I am very excited about the future of the NSA. Our mission continues to be that of bringing hope, dignity, support, education, and empowerment to children and adults who stutter and their families.

As hard as the Board works, I know there are many of you who work just as hard. Many of you regularly volunteer your time, energy, and money. I truly appreciate the untold ways in which you participate.

As a Board, we have rededicated ourselves to building better communication between the NSA's leadership and its members. To further this, I'm making it my personal responsibility to do everything I can to open up this communication. My goal includes providing chapters more opportunities to feel connected to the national level efforts, and having national people communicating more on a local level.

One way people will communicate more effectively is through the beautiful new NSA website. We poured considerable resources into the site to make it extremely functional. This is

a great source of information for all members—a place where you can find information on stuttering as well as a place where you can find out what the NSA is up to, nationally and locally. (You'll even find back issues of *Letting GO*.) Make a point of checking it out. The address is www.WeStutter.org.

If you haven't offered your time or ideas yet, and want to, please let someone know. And if you want to help on a national or local level, there are many opportunities.

The NSA changed my life, and I will always be committed to helping people who stutter. I look forward to serving you as a board member and hope we can continue to communicate and help the NSA become stronger. Feel free to contact me anytime at elainews@comcast.net about your questions, concerns, or ideas.

Don't ever forget—we are in this together.



■ Sign Up For the NSA Distribution List

BY CATHY OLISH

IN AN EFFORT TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE NSA AND ITS MEMBERSHIP, I am working on creating an e-mail distribution list of NSA members that will be used for the following:

Financial updates, surveys, upcoming workshop/conference details, membership renewal reminders, Change for Change information, monthly and/or quarterly news,

viewing LG on-line (once this becomes available), website updates, organization announcements, and anything else that needs to be communicated to members.

The NSA did not begin collecting membership e-mail addresses until the last two years (approximately 508 e-mail addresses are missing from the database).

Along with obtaining e-mail addresses, the NSA office would also like to confirm your mailing address and phone number as well to ensure the database is accurate and up-to-date.

Here is what you need to do to register

To register, send a note to Cathy Olish at (nsaroyalook@aol.com) with the following information:

1. Your name
2. Your address
3. Your phone number
4. The e-mail address you would like to use for the distribution list

For those e-mail addresses I am unable to collect via this route, I will personally call to obtain them. Of course if you do not want to be included in the distribution list, that is your option. However, we feel this new line of communication will be very effective in keeping our members informed of changes. It will offer opportunities for feedback and input from our members. And it will help keep the membership and the NSA connected.

Please note all contact information is kept strictly confidential with only the NSA office having access to this information.

When communications are sent to members, only the recipients will be able to see their e-mail and not the entire list. If a member wishes to respond to the note, their response will only go to the NSA and not the entire list (so there's

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

What's Happening?

the latest news • hot items • who's doing what • who went where • upcoming events • etc.

COMPILED BY CATHY OLISH

Congratulations to **Joe Donaher** and his wife who welcomed their new addition – **Patrick Joseph Donaher** – into their family mid-September. All are doing just fine, including big sister Erin!

The **Royal Oak Chapter** held their third annual Michiganders Who Stutter Picnic on October 11 (rescheduled from the original date of August 16 – cancelled due to the blackout). This year 24 people attended including **Ed Weiss** from St. Louis, **Mark DeBiasio** from Toronto and **Scott Yeager** from Cleveland. There was plenty of food, games, laughter and friendship to go around. The chapter is already looking forward to next year's picnic.

On October 25, the **Madison chapter** hosted their first workshop entitled, "Successful Communication Workshop" presented by **Dr. Steve Hood**. For the chapter's first workshop, there was an outstanding attendance of 30 people – including PWS, SLPs and student SLPs. Almost everyone participated in the discussions and open mikes. What made the workshop successful wasn't just the \$1,100 (gross) they raised for the NSA or the great information they got from Steve. It was also the support they received from the other regional chapters by attending the workshop and the open discussion of ideas that were shared between people. Even the best-planned workshop might not be successful without good people who are willing to participate.

At the same time and place as the Madison chapter workshop, there was a regional chapter leaders meeting for chapter leaders in the Midwest (Minnesota, Michigan, Illinois and Wisconsin). Midwest Regional Chapter Coordinator, **Judy Johnson**, facilitated this meeting for 11 enthusiastic chapter leaders. Attendees had lots

of great input and there was much excitement about learning new ways to improve our chapters. The next training is scheduled for spring 2004. During this next year, every chapter leader across the U.S. will have the opportunity to be involved in a regional chapter leader session.

Members of the **San Francisco chapter** recently spent the afternoon at the SF Giants baseball game. Partners, siblings and friends watched an exciting game in the hot sun, overlooking the gorgeous bay. Prior to the game, they shared a meal together at a nearby cafe, which provided an extended time to socialize. **Tom Lakritz**, **Andrew Schmeling** and his wife **Julie** were just a few of the many that joined us at the ball park.

In early November, **San Francisco** and **San Jose chapter** members spoke with graduate students at San Francisco State University's Communicative Disorder Program. Professor Minnie Graham, CCC-SLP, Ph.D. welcomed the group with open arms. They spent two hours talking with 30 students about the disorder of stuttering. Each student received a resource packet of stuttering information. After the presentation, one student told SF chapter leader **Nora O'Connor**, "It was an amazing experience to have you come to our class and speak. Thank you so much for taking the time to share your professional knowledge and personal experiences with us."



NORA O'CONNOR

On November 13, this year's convention keynote speaker and author of *Jaguar: One Man's Struggle to Establish the World's First Jaguar Preserve*, **Alan Rabinowitz** was interviewed on NPR's *Fresh Air* radio program. The show originates in Philadelphia at WHYY-91FM. Alan, a PWS, was also the focus of an extraordinary National Geographic special that aired on PBS on November 26th.

During the month of November, ABC-TV affiliate KOMO-TV4 in Seattle, Washington conducted an interview with members of the **Seattle chapter**. This was essentially a follow-up piece on a story KOMO ran last November about the SpeechEasy device in which KOMO followed a person through the process of obtaining their device. They did a year follow-up story on the gentleman, only to discover that it wasn't working nearly as well for he had hoped. He was still struggling with his speech and couldn't get the type of job that he was qualified for (an attorney).

KOMO also interviewed **Joe Mirly** at his home for a few hours. They discussed many aspects of stuttering and the type of "mainstream" help available to people who stutter, such as therapy and support. They talked at length about the NSA and the good it does for adults and children throughout the U.S. After the interview, the news crew attended the Seattle chapter meeting where they interviewed several other group members (**David Ream**, **David Van Reeth**, **Joe Mirly**, **Elaine Saitta**, **Misha Henshaw** and **Camilo Mandujano**). Nobody refused to be on camera, and everybody spoke about the reality of stuttering and answered questions honestly and candidly. The piece ran twice the next day.

ROSS R. MILLHISER DIES AT 83

Ross Millhiser, who was a seven-year member of the NSA and one of our most generous supporters, died early Saturday morning, December 6, at Medical College of Virginia Hospitals, Richmond, Virginia.

Mr. Millhiser led a long and interesting life that included active combat during World War II, for which he was inducted into the U.S. Infantry Hall of Fame at Fort Benning, Georgia.

After the service, Mr. Millhiser went to work for Philip Morris where he had a long and eminent career, eventually rising to President and then Vice Chairman of Philip Morris companies.

Outside of Philip Morris, Mr. Millhiser lent

his time and expertise to a number of charitable organizations.

We are pleased to have known such a gracious and accomplished gentleman, and we send our deepest condolences to his family and friends.

ANTOINETTE GATHMAN PASSES AWAY AT AGE 77

Bob Gathman has shared the sad news that his wife Antoinette (age 77) died suddenly on Saturday, October 18 from heart complications.

Antoinette, with her husband Bob, were the heart and soul of Speak Easy, a self-help group centered in Northern New Jersey but with mem-

bers throughout the Northeast. Since 1977, Bob and Antoinette have given much to the stuttering community through their tireless love and support of those who stutter.

Many members of Speak Easy have also been members of the NSA, and many found the self-help movement first through Speak Easy.

Antoinette was warm, vivacious, intelligent, energetic, and totally empathetic to people who stutter. We will miss her.

Mrs. Gathman's loss will be heartfelt by many who knew the kind and gentle person she was. Those of you who want to send letters of love and support to Bob, the Speak Easy address is 233 Concord Drive, Paramus, NJ 07652-4543.

NSA ANNUAL AWARD WINNERS

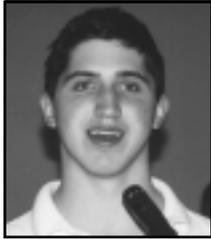
BY JOSEPH DIAZ

I REMEMBER LONG AGO SITTING IN THE BACK ROW OF OUR SUPPORT GROUP MEETING. I wanted to speak out, but just couldn't. I didn't know why I felt that way, but I remember that the fears were terrifying.

All I can say is, I—and we—have come a long way! This year in Nashville we topped our own personal charts in the musical capital of the country. This year's award winners have all been star performers who deserve every accolade they receive.

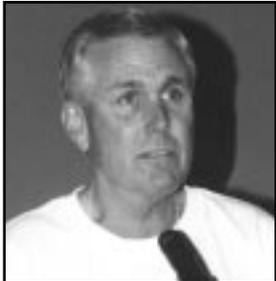
And now...the 2003 award winners:

Youth Recognition of the Year:
STEPHANIE NICOLAI AND DAN KRAMER



This year's award was presented by 2002 winner Jay James Doyle. Stephanie, who comes from Ontario, California, accepted her award on her 13th birthday. Dan, a Pittsburgh resident, is a 17-year-old chapter leader and a nine year NSA member.

Parent of the Year:
TIM BRYANT



Tim has served three years on the Board of Directors and has been an active NSA supporter. His his son, C.J., has been a long time member.

Speech-Language Pathologist of the Year:
LARRY MOLT, PH.D.



Larry has been a friend and supporter of the NSA for many years. Interestingly, Larry hadn't planned on attending the awards luncheon, but fellow SLP Steve Hood talked him into it. And was Larry surprised when he was called up to receive the award.

Chapter of the Year:
SACRAMENTO CHAPTER

This group is always very active and frequently puts on special programs. SLPs, parents, friends, and the media are always invited to their annual open house, and the celebration is traditionally well-attended. Chapter leaders are Kari Kelso and Lorraine Reigel.

Chapter Leader of the Year:
GAIL WILSON LEW



Gail has been the leader of the L.A./ Pasadena chapter for 13 years. Her inspiring stories and articles have run in *Letting GO* over the past several issues. She originated the concept of Youth Day, which has evolved into a three-day program at the annual conference.

Regional Coordinator of the Year, 2003:
JUDY JOHNSON



Judy is a long-time member and a leader in the Minneapolis/St. Paul chapter. She has been a Regional Coordinator for several years in the Central Region where she contacts and assists other chapter leaders in a five state area.

Outgoing Board of Director plaques went to Jim McClure, Tim Bryant, and to chairman Lee Reeves.

We thank you for your time and dedication to this association.

The Member of the Year

This award was presented to a person from Dallas who's been a Regional Coordinator and is a brand new board member. This calls for a little explaining. As the chair of the annual award luncheon I have traditionally put on this program. Now, I was led to believe that Russ Hicks was to win this award, and I even had a plaque made for him! Last year's recipient Bonnie Weiss presented this award, so I didn't think twice when she came up front to make the presentation. That's when everything went crazy.

Bonnie said, "Before I present this year's

Member of the Year, I just want to say a few things about Joseph."

Joseph? Joseph who?

Bonnie went on and on and on, and then to my total amazement, she turned to me and said,

"And this year's Member of the Year is JOSEPH DIAZ."



BONNIE AND JOSEPH

I was devastated! Shocked, I could not believe it. I could hardly keep myself together. What a surprise! I am so lucky and honored to receive this huge honor from the NSA! (Boy, can these guys keep a secret!)

Hall of Fame 2003 recipient:
LEE REEVES



Lee has done a yeoman's job as chairman of the board, and will continue on as co-chairman. Through the years, Lee has put in untold hours and has assumed many, many roles. A mainstay of the Dallas chapter, we really couldn't have made it as an organization without him. Lee promises to remain an active participant in the growth and evolution of the NSA.

Conference Dedication:
JIM MCCLURE



We dedicated this Nashville conference to Jim McClure, a Chicagoan and outgoing board member. Jim has been our self-appointed public relations director for years. He was also co-founder of the Chicagoland chapter and was chair of this year's Nominations Committee. Jim's plaque read, "In recognition of his con

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NSA ANNUAL AWARD WINNERS *continued*

stant devotion to the stuttering community, his passion and enthusiasm for furthering the cause of stuttering support, and his lifelong commitment to improving the lives of people who stutter." (Hear, hear!)

And a few thank-you's. Kudos to **Sarah and Kelly Butcher, Ryan Saitta, Mandi Bradberry, and Umberto Bellini** for volunteering their time at the NSA store! You were an enormous help and we appreciate you.

And thank you **Tammy, Erica, Annie and Julie Lammel** for everything you did to make our 20th conference a success.

See you in Baltimore in 2004 Baltimore for our Star Spangled Celebration!

2003 NSA Conference Dedicated to Jim McClure

EACH YEAR THE NSA'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE IS DEDICATED TO AN OUTSTANDING INDIVIDUAL who has made a major contribution to the NSA and to the stuttering community. This year the honoree is NSA Board member Jim McClure.

Jim is a public relations specialist who works behind the scenes, generating stories and media coverage for the NSA. At every conference, Jim is in contact with local newspapers and TV and radio stations, making sure that local reporters are on the scene. What's more, when you see an article about us in a national paper, chances are it's Jim's doing.

Being our media guru, however, is only part of why Jim has earned our enduring appreciation. Jim is also the co-founder of the National Stuttering Association's Chicagoland chapter, which has been meeting in the Chicago suburbs since 1984. He also served on the NSA's board of directors from 1997 to 2003.

Jim began his career as a newspaper reporter and was a corporate public relations manager for 22 years. Since 1990 he has headed his own communications consulting and writing business. He also spent 27 years in the Navy and Naval Reserve, where he commanded two reserve units and retired as a captain.

Jim is an accredited member of the Public Relations Society of America, and was 1995 president of that organization's award-winning Suburban Chicago chapter. He is a graduate of Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism.

Jim is also a "graduate" of the adult stuttering treatment program at Northwestern University. He and his wife, Kathy, have two grown children.

Jim's dedication to the stuttering self-help movement sets an outstanding example of what single individuals can do to raise public awareness of stuttering.

We are pleased to honor Jim for his outstanding contributions.

HOW THE NSA "TOPPED THE CHARTS" *continued*

Other" workshop, and I went to Marty Jezer's workshop on introductions. Not surprisingly, Steve was in the minority in his workshop. Since approximately 80% of stutterers are men, the majority of spouses of stutterers are going to be women. Steve said he didn't say anything in the workshop, but he found it very interesting to listen.

After the first workshop came Friday's General Session, and I'm sure everyone was fascinated and moved by the speech of Alan Rabinowitz, Director of Science for the Exploration Wild Life Conservation Society. After his speech, Alan held a question and answer session in which he spoke of his struggles with stuttering and the challenges he faced as a researcher in the Belize rain forest. We all left feeling we had gotten to know a real friend.

The Awards Luncheon is always very special to me, as I see honored many people I've known and loved for years. This year it was especially memorable, because last year's Member of the Year Bonnie Weiss, Russ Hicks, and heaven knows who else turned the tables on emcee Joseph Diaz and revealed, to his great surprise, that he was this year's Member of the Year.

Perhaps we should be suspicious that they were all so good at fooling, tricking, and lying to Joseph, but everyone agreed it was for a good cause. Joseph's amazement, joy, and gratitude when the truth was revealed moved everyone, and I can promise you there wasn't a lumpless throat in the room.

There were several choices for things to do that night – a tour of the city, a visit to the Grand Ol' Opry, and a dinner riverboat cruise. Steve and I were signed up for the cruise, which was a riverboat on the Cumberland with a nice dinner and a big musical stage show. Drifting past downtown Nashville, we got a glimpse of another show at the fairgrounds for the big Corvette convention, which was in town the same weekend.

Saturday morning we again got up early and went to breakfast, and then I went to Dan Kremer's workshop on "Stuttering in Film, Television, and Media." After that I attended Jeff Shames' "Bringing It to the Surface: What Do We Say When We Talk about Stuttering," in which he showed an all-too-brief segment from his film *Stutter Step* and we discussed if and how we talked about stuttering with our parents and others.

Steve met me for lunch, and we found ourselves sharing a table with Russ and Desmond Mahoney, an NSA member and convention attendee I have known since my first convention. After lunch was Saturday's general session, which started out with the Conference Dedication and the Hall of Fame induction.

I was delighted to see that the conference was dedicated to outgoing NSA Board member Jim McClure, who has done such an outstanding job as the NSA's public relations guru. As for the Hall of Fame inductee...well, there was

only one person it could be this year: outgoing NSA Board Chair Lee Reeves. What these two men have given to the NSA over the last few years cannot possibly be measured or repaid.

The rest of the General Session included a speech and performance by Frankie Jones (a hot young music producer in Lincoln, Nebraska) and a speech by Sander Flaum (chairman of Euro RSCG Life and Chair and Founder of the Fordham Leadership Forum).

You're probably thinking that it sounds like this General Session had some widely differing speakers, and you're right. But yet, these two men had more in common than you might think, including a passion for their work and a determination to be the best they can be without letting their speech get in the way.

We saw more of Frankie Jones in the closing ceremony. He, Mike Retzinger, and some NSA kids and teenagers performed a special song, and the courage of the NSA youth moved everyone.

Then came the rush upstairs to get ready for the banquet, and the return to the ballroom for the end of the 2003 conference. Steve and I found ourselves at a wonderful table with Donna, Carol, Desmond, Russ, Bill Smith, Steve Gilbert, and others. We had our dinner, then the auction, and then the dancing.

The next morning we were up for breakfast again, returned to the room to finish packing, and then went downstairs to check out. I wanted to go through the restaurant before I left to see who was there to say goodbye to, but the airport shuttle arrived just as we finished checking out. I sadly got on it, as I said my silent goodbye to Nashville and my eighteenth consecutive NSA conference.

Next year in Baltimore!

... VICKI SCHUTTER HAS BEEN ATTENDING NSA CONFERENCES SINCE THE BEGINNING OF TIME.

A Special Thanks...

to NSA members Bill Nimelman and John Wood. Bill from Dallas Texas created the 2003 conference logo and John from Macon, Georgia created the T-shirts and donated them to the NSA for *free!* Thank you both!

NSA DISTRIBUTION LIST *continued*

no need to worry about receiving any extra e-mail).

We would like to get this distribution list in place fairly soon. Thus, a quick response to this request would be greatly appreciated.

If you do not have e-mail, please contact the NSA office to confirm your contact information (800-364-1677 or 212-944-4050).

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Got Change?



The NSA Needs Your Support!

LIFE CAN BE DIFFICULT FOR ANYONE WHO STUTTERS

HERE'S A WAY TO MAKE IT EASIER

Just save up your pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters. You'll barely miss the change you set aside, but we'll convert it into very-much-appreciated change for people struggling with stuttering.

CLINK A FEW COINS IN THE JAR—DAILY!

We've come up with a novel new way to raise needed funds—"Change for Change." It's a way you can make a difference for just pennies a day.

Set aside a portion of the small change you put on the night stand before you go to bed. Create a special donation jar for the NSA. We'll even send you the label.

Every penny, every nickel you save will go toward our many workshops, special activities, research, local newspapers, hot lines and local chapters.

Your coins may be small change to you, but it means big changes for people who stutter. Information on how to participate in this program will be arriving soon.

PUT YOUR SPARE CHANGE TO WORK

Withdrawal Symptoms

BY PAUL BITTORF

I ALWAYS LEAVE A CONVENTION FEELING SOME WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS. There were so many friends and it was such a deeply personal, very emotional event. I cried so many times - even when I was trying not to (my kids were probably thinking I lost it). I felt so good about other people's successes. I was so proud of many people I consider my closest friends and family. Who wouldn't feel some withdrawal??

But the NSA has helped me in another way as well. It is funny, but each year my withdrawal symptoms get a bit less. I ask myself why this is and there is only one answer. I enjoy the rest of my life so much now thanks to the NSA, that life is just as good outside of the NSA bubble. REALLY! I am not kidding. This new enjoyment and way of thinking is all because of the NSA. The empowerment in my life that I have gained from the conventions and the local chapters changed my life. It is powerful stuff. I can name specific individuals and situations all involving the NSA chapters and conventions that have radically and forever changed my life. So much has changed that I could never go back now - only forward.

I actually enjoy my job talking to business executives and not caring whether I stutter. And I love, now that I feel worthy and accepted, to help other people (fluent and otherwise) in many other volunteer organizations that I belong to. Plus I am soooo involved with the NSA that I am never far from my family and friends.

Please continue to enjoy and support this special family that we, together, have formed as part of the NSA, but also please realize that you are just as great as the next person and that stuttering is just another part of who you are outside of this family. Life is meant for living with all its joys and pain but not with the added fear and humiliation that we bring to ourselves as people who stutter.

If you want to lessen your withdrawal, take what you do for others who stutter seriously. Revive and put new life into your chapters, add more programs and activities locally. Give to the NSA to guarantee we'll be around and that all this will never go away. And by all means work very hard to find others who stutter in your area and let them have the opportunity to experience the NSA and everything that we are feeling.

There are literally thousands of people just like you who stutter who are at this very mo-

CHANGE-FOR-CHANGE DONORS

We would like to thank the following members who signed up as monthly donors in our Change-for-Change campaign but were not previously acknowledged.

Joe & Anne Petrini, Gary Auker, Jo Louise Klein, Doug Scott, Emanuel Singer, and Agnes McGerty.

Your generosity is deeply appreciated.

ment alone. There are people who stutter who will *never* have the opportunity to feel uplifted as you have been and who will *never* have any chance to experience a withdrawal like the ones we are going through now unless we find them!!! We need to find these people. This is your mission and calling as a leader in the NSA.

I would bet that if you are successful at doing this that you will not feel so bad when the convention is over. You will see new opportunities to live the life that you want as a person who brings dignity and hope to others, without your own fear, shame or embarrassment.

I want all of you to be OK with your life both within and outside of the NSA and this will be great.

Are you with me?

... PAUL BITTORF IS GLOBAL SERVICES PROGRAM MANAGER COMPTIA IN LOMBARD, ILLINOIS. HE IS WAS THE FOUNDER AND FIRST LEADER OF THE MADISON NSA CHAPTER.

THE NSA 2004 ANNUAL CONFERENCE



THIS YEAR OUR 21ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE WILL BE HELD IN BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

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We Topped the Charts

MEMORIES OF NASHVILLE



speaking out

comments and letters

MORE THAN HE EXPECTED

I just got back from the NSA convention. I know some people who are on Stutt-L are not in the NSA, but I just wanted to post this to let people know what a worthwhile event this is.

I have never been to the NSA convention before. I have been apart of stuttering support groups off and on for about eight years. This was an awesome event. To be surrounded by people who have experienced what I have experienced daily for 30 some years was a terrific feeling.

The information I got through workshops and just talking with people from all different ages and walks of life was priceless. My favorite workshops were titled "Successful Communication: Realistic Outcomes for Adults Who Stutter" and "Covert Stuttering." The other workshops I went to were excellent too, but these two were just ones that hit home for me. The stand up comedy of George Laday was great. It was hard to believe it was his first time doing stand-up comedy. Unfortunately, I couldn't make the entire last day of the convention, I had to come home to the real world.

Nashville, Tennessee was a great place to visit, a lot better than I expected. The convention had a lot to offer, even more than I expected. I am glad my expectations were blown out of the water, and I will definitely be going to more conventions in the future.

Jason Pearson

FROM A FIRST TIMER

I really would need a thesaurus to find every adjective to help me try to explain the whole range of thoughts and feelings that I have about the Conference. Amazing, wonderful, tremendous, are just mere words that we use so often that they lose some of their impact. But I will use them to describe the educational and enlightening aspects of the conference.

The first two days, and part of Saturday, I could not maintain a dry eye. The whirlwind of emotions was too great for me. In my old age I am getting rather emotional, easily choked up, anyway. And then experiencing this conference just took me over the edge, not once, not twice, but over and overly.

I never felt anything like this in my almost 63 years, and I will never feel it again. Because I will never have another "first time" again.

Coming up to the registration table and having you [Annie] give me a big hug, I felt like I knew you already and we were old friends, and that helped make me feel welcome. And meeting Tammy, who I did talk to on the phone, if very briefly, and then the Kremer's from Pittsburgh, and on and on...I felt I belonged, as much or more than ever before, with these people.

It may have been my first time, but I was no stranger to them, nor they to me. [We have shared] feeling the pain, embarrassment, hurt, awkwardness, nervousness, anxiety, defeat things that I have felt it for roughly 55 years. [I was so overwhelmed] by my getting rid of the fear, being able to stutter my fool head off and knowing that everyone was free and was accepted for who they were, intrinsically, not shunned. All that brought such joy and happiness to me.

I have no idea who the keynote speakers were in the past, but I can not imagine a better one, a more inspirational one than Dr. Alan Rabinowitz. His morning presentation has to rank among the highest, if not the highest, stirring speeches I have ever heard. Right now, I can think of no one more worthy to be my hero and role model than Dr. Rabinowitz. And believe me, after that conference, I got a whole lot of heroes.

Many other heroes include Dr. Lee Reeves, Annie Bradberry, Dr. J. Scott Yarus, Russ Hicks, Dr. Larry Molt, Dr. Walt Manning, Dr. Stephen Hood, Dan Kremer, Paul Young, Kathy Filer, John Harrison, and Phil Schneider. In a greater sense, I could make the argument that everyone there is my hero.

One thing I came away with, was a deep feeling of urgency to do something with my life and that includes working for the advancement of NSA. I will be contacting you soon about my becoming a member of NSA and giving my belated pledge for "change for a change."

Down through the years, I have been to religious, spiritual retreats, camp meetings, revivals, etc. and have come away with a feeling of closeness, not only to God, but to the people I attended with. But I can honestly say, I have never felt more kinship, more camaraderie than I felt in this organization.

Unless some catastrophe prevents it, you will see me in Baltimore.

Bill Frew

POWER OF A SIMPLE E-MAIL

It's funny how a simple e-mail has changed my life. I sent out a random e-mail to the National Stuttering Association last year, looking for financial assistance to support my graduate education to become an SLP. I didn't even know what the NSA was! And then, one day, I get an e-mail back from you, inviting me to stop by the NSA booth at ASHA.

NSA in Nashville was an amazing experience. I spent the first couple of days feeling numb. I wasn't sure of how to react or respond to the overwhelming outpouring of love and support among the NSA members. This was truly the first time in my life that I've ever been in such a safe environment and, to be perfectly honest, it was

a little scary.

It wasn't until Saturday, the last day of the convention, when I began to truly feel and experience/process the atmosphere I was in. And sitting here, two weeks later, I still get chills when I think about it.

I also want to thank you on behalf of Julie. For over two years, she has felt helpless when it comes to my stuttering. She sees me struggle and sees the bad moods I get in as a result of my speech...and there was little she could do about it. Now because of the NSA and workshops for spouses of PWS, she has more of an understanding and solutions on how to help and support me during those times.

It's hard to believe that a simple e-mail could have such an amazing impact on my life. But it has.

Rob Bloom

A SUPPORTER FROM BOLIVIA

(Sent to Annie Bradberry) It was great to meet you! I am so glad I called you two months ago when I really didn't know if the NSA convention would meet my needs because back then I was so focused on getting more training to work with my son here in Bolivia. I remember you said that what I really needed was support and that I would also meet some wonderful speech therapists who would be willing to help.

You were absolutely right!!! Those four days in Nashville were one of the greatest experiences in all my life. They surpassed all my expectations. I finally understood what makes stuttering become a real problem, and I realized that most of the things I was doing were right, and best of all it was great to hear this from all the SLPs I talked to.

I met so many wonderful people that made me feel right away part of the great family the NSA really is. I learned from all of the adult people who stutter that what they needed most were parents that talked openly about stuttering and to know that their stuttering was OK. I couldn't stop my tears at the workshops with kids and teenagers when I saw all the courage that takes to talk about your feelings in front of strange people, regardless if you are a fluent speaker or not.

I saw in all of those wonderful kids my little son Santiago, and my fears vanished about his not being able to follow his dreams because of his stuttering. I came home lighter, as if I had taken a big load off my shoulders. Everybody at home says I look happier. And I am. I feel renewed.

The SLP I met, Dr. Phil Schneider, gave me hints on how to keep on working with my son but in a less structured manner. He even offered to work with me at the distance. I will be calling him periodically for his supervision.

For all of these wonderful things the NSA convention brought into my life I thank you so much. I will soon get started with my support group. I will write to you telling how my first meeting went. Take Care.

Sandra Gil

OUR VOICE

NSA young people and parents speak out



Family Programs a Success

BY NINA REARDON

EACH YEAR A LITTLE BETTER

ONCE AGAIN, YOUTH, TEENS, PARENTS AND SIBLINGS CAME TOGETHER to share experiences, learn more about stuttering and engage in a process of self-acceptance in the safe and supportive environment of the National Stuttering Association.

As always, volunteers made the difference for the families. SLPs, NSA teens, and adult members of the NSA facilitated workshops that were unparalleled in quality. Flexibility was a key ingredient of the weekend, as working with youth and adolescents lends itself to the unexpected!

Thursday afternoon we all came together for an orientation and to meet first timers and see old friends. This year's Teen Liaisons (Brad Sara, C.J. Bryant and Alec Rosenbaum) opened the programming with a welcome message from their own experiences in the NSA. Thursday afternoon's programming allowed everyone to "ease into" the conference spirit. Then, the children enjoyed the pool party and teens enjoyed an ice breaker and social in the evening.

On Friday, we were in full swing and, before we knew it, it seemed like it was evening and time for the Family Teaming Event. This annual event was held for families that didn't opt to attend tours.

Back in our midst was the phenomenal team of Kristin and Tom Chmela who, after some quick room changes, brought the families together in team-building activities that once again were the judged the favorites in our straw poll.

Saturday buzzed by as the families filled their day with workshops that culminated in a "back together" workshop where parents, kids and some teens got to share questions about stuttering with each other. Wow, what powerful insight our teens and kids shared with their parents!

Then, it was rush-rush to the closing ceremonies where, of course, our kids and teens were spotlighted through the talents of Freddy Jones and "the group" (Mike Retzinger, Tom Wright and John McDermott). Closing ceremonies built a feeling of group support and empowerment.

At the banquet and auction, the children helped with the raffle tickets and some of our teens stepped up to help with the auction as runners. Our families danced into the night and vowed to return next year to share the awesome experiences that Baltimore will bring!

... SLP NINA REARDON IS THE "OUR VOICE" COORDINATOR FOR LETTING GO.

PERCEPTIONS OF A PARENT continued

tion and despair all the way to joy and a tremendous pride in our children who cope with stuttering with great courage and strength. Being able to share those emotions and understanding you are not alone can be an enormous help.

There were families from all over the country with different backgrounds and situations, and I learned important things from every single one of them. I learned from the SLPs who gave workshops, from the other parents who gave workshops or talked in the sessions, from the kids themselves and from the adults I met at the larger group events.

It was not necessarily easy. As more than one parent, including me, said, it was an emotional roller coaster. Nina had a workshop where we practiced stuttering, and then went out onto the street and in the hotel to ask for directions, etc. from a stranger and stuttered while doing so.

Actually experiencing a bit of the apprehension and fear of rejection that many PWS feel every day was a very powerful experience for me. It put me more in touch with my son than perhaps I've ever been. I won't miss that session next year in Baltimore, and I would encourage every parent to do the same.

I could write a book on the three days in Nashville, but two key things stood out for me that are important for parents who are wondering if they should attend.

First, your child or teen will have a chance unlike any other to communicate with their peers, therapists, other experts and very successful adults from a variety of fields who stutter. Watching your child open up and perhaps do things they've been reluctant to ever do before is absolutely priceless.

Seeing the teenagers mentoring the younger kids, taking them under their wing so to speak, was just awesome. Watching my son rap in front of 350 people was something I will never, ever, forget.

Finally, everybody you meet there is so warm, accepting, helpful. It is more like a family reunion than any convention I've ever attended. You may be a first-timer, but you won't be a stranger for more than about a half hour on the first day.



BILL CLEMENTS IS A MEMBER OF THE ROYAL OAK, MICHIGAN NSA CHAPTER

In the Spirit of MasterCard

SUBMITTED BY ELANA YUDMAN

Roundtrip Airfare to Nashville: \$250
Registration Fee for the NSA convention: \$150
Four Night Stay at the Renaissance Nashville Hotel: \$225

Going home, stuttering in front of the mailman, and not caring about it.... Priceless.

... ELENA YUDMAN HAS BEEN AN NSA MEMBER FOR THREE YEARS AND IS A SOPHOMORE AT BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY IN UPSTATE NY.

A Stuttering Rap

BY AMANDA PHILLIPS

Hi! This is Amanda Phillips. I am 21 years old, and I am from Bellingham, MA. The 2003 NSA national convention in Nashville, TN, was my first convention. I worked with Judy Butler and Marybeth Allen with the two kids workshops, and led the kids in the stuttering rap song:

S-t-u-t-t-e-r

Watch out villian cause here we are.

POM po-POM po-POM.

You're bullying us and we are brave.

So go back home to your hideous cave.

POM po-POM po-POM.

Yeah!

I had a lot of fun meeting new people and learning more about stuttering. Overall, it was a beneficial experience and I hope my mother and I can make next year's in Baltimore.

National Stuttering Association Statement of Activities for the Year Ending September 30, 2003

The Board of Directors of the National Stuttering Association desires to keep all members informed of the current financial conditions of the organization. The financial statements were compiled from NSA records for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2003. We are conducting an audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards for the same period.

BALANCE SHEET FISCAL YEAR ENDING 9/30/03

Current Assets:			
Checking	\$	6,240	
Cash in Banks - Savings	\$	33,797	
Inventory At Cost	\$	8,659	
Future Fund		<u>35,733</u>	\$ 84,429
Fixed Assets:			
Equipment At Cost			\$ 24,348
Accumulated Depreciation		<u>(24,348)</u>	\$ -
Other Assets:			
Total Assets:			<u>\$ 84,429</u>

LIABILITIES & FUND BALANCE

Liabilities and Net Assets			
Current Liabilities:			
Accounts Payable		17,600	
Future Fund (Restricted Account)		<u>35,733</u>	\$ 53,333
TOTAL LIABILITIES			<u>53,333</u>
NET ASSETS			<u>31,096</u>
Total Liabilities and Fund Balance			<u>\$ 84,429</u>

INCOME STATEMENT FISCAL YEAR ENDING 9/30/03

Revenue:			
Dues and Membership	\$	25,046	
Book and Poster Sales		18,060	
Workshops and Educational Seminars		78,593	
Donations and Grants		116,568	
Convention		74,169	
Miscellaneous Income		<u>2,528</u>	
	\$		314,964
Expenses:			
Administrative/Management		117,672	
Rent		10,404	
Insurance		3,579	
Telephone		12,697	
Credit Card Expense		6,241	
Office Expense		30,728	
Letting Go		22,988	
Postage		10,296	
Education and Workshops & Printing		20,616	
Books		14,288	
Educational Seminars		78,494	
Fund for Tomorrow		22,302	
Project Expense		4,223	
Professional Conferences		8,493	
Convention Expense		53,702	
Fundraising Expense		<u>5,788</u>	
Total Expenses	\$		422,511
Net Revenue Over Expenses	\$		<u>(107,547)</u>

Well, It's About Time

BY CAROLYNN SPEZZA

STUTTERING WORKED IN MY FAVOR

RECENTLY MY HUSBAND AND I WALKED INTO THE OVERLY CROWDED EMERGENCY ROOM at our local hospital. Looking around at the many people waiting in hard chairs, I knew we had quite a long wait ahead of us.

Two hours earlier I had sustained a mild head injury and broken nose from an over-zealous field hockey player at the elementary school where I work. Because I had not been able to stop crying for more than five minutes in the previous two hours (a side effect of the head injury), I knew my worried husband would not allow me to skip out on the emergency room visit.

As I stood in line to speak with the intake nurse, I noticed I was standing a little behind

my husband. This is what I do when I'm exhausted and want him to do the talking. However, when I heard the nurse warn the woman ahead of me of the long wait, I stepped in front of my husband.

Knowing that my stuttering was even more severe than usual due to the two-hour ordeal, I decided to see if I could use it to my advantage. I walked up to the nurse and stated that I had received a head injury two hours prior and had since been having difficulty controlling my emotions...conveniently leaving out the important fact that my stutter was normal and not due to the injury. Looking very concerned, she took my medical card and asked me to have a seat.

We found two chairs together, but didn't even have time to get comfortable. Within a few moments the doors to the clinic area opened, and a nurse read my name.

Although I felt a little guilty walking past the

many sick patients who had been waiting for God knows how long, I couldn't help but smile at my husband.

I put up with a lot of crap because of my stuttering, so why not take advantage of it for a change?

... CAROLYNN SPEZZA HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF THE NSA SINCE MARCH 2003 AND CURRENTLY RESIDES IN AUBURN, CALIFORNIA.

CONTINUING EDUCATION SEMINARS IN 2004 ARE BEING HELD IN THE FOLLOWING STATES:

Baltimore, MD February 6
Manhattan, NY March 12
Boston, MA March 26
Washington, DC May 7

Check the NSA website for more information.
www.WeStutter.org



Independence Day

BY LEE HEARD

DRIVING A CAB TOOK ME TO AN ENTIRELY NEW PLACE.

WHILE MY FRIENDS IN THE U.S. WERE CELEBRATING THEIR INDEPENDENCE DAY, I was celebrating an independence day of a different kind. For years during my service in the Canadian army, I had always had to talk on the radio and had nothing but problems with my speech and with the other soldiers on the radio teasing me because of it.

July 4th 2003, is when I decided to take a part time job driving a taxi on Friday and Saturday nights in order to earn some extra cash and to avoid spending it at the bars. When I had applied for the job I was able to control my speech rather well and was hired on the spot. This fateful night was my first shift and the night when I would find out if I was actually able to do the job. I showed up at the cab stand, and I was explained the rules, the most important being that when talking on the radio, you must first say your name before speaking so that the dispatcher knows whose speaking.

As I hopped into my cab I was filled with apprehension because I have always had problems saying my first name. Sure enough that whole evening, whenever I called in to the dispatcher it always came out L-L-L-Lee. While this was okay while I was in the cab alone because I had the foresight to inform both the other drivers and the dispatcher of my speech impediment, I knew it would be a whole different ball game

when I had customers, especially drunk customers in the cab listening to me try to talk on the radio.

The whole night driving people to the bars, no one seemed to notice my broken radio communications, and I thought that it might be the same after the bars as well, I was wrong. My first fare home from the bar was a bunch of guys and as soon as I started talking on the radio, they started to laugh when I tried to say my name.

After using an extra large helping of self-control I managed to ignore them and soldier on. After a few more incidents like that occurred, I found that it became easier and easier to say my name on the radio, and it also became easier at work as well. Now after three weeks on the job, I talk on the radio like I was a trucker, with no problems at all!

That's why I consider my first day as a cab driver my independence day, because it freed my from the 11 years of fear that I had faced about my stuttering and talking on the radio.

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And reinforced my philosophy that in order to conquer your weaknesses associated with your speech, you must push yourself out of your comfort zone and tackle your problems head on.

The whole experience reminds me of a quote by Emerson who said "That which we persist in doing becomes easier—not that the nature of the task has changed, but our ability to do has increased."

... LEE HEARD, 28, SERVES IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES IN ARMY INTELLIGENCE. HE SITS ON THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE FOR THE CANADIAN FORCES ADVISORY GROUP FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

Me the Key

BY ROGER W. HANCOCK

*When just friends we were,
 talking was easier then.
 Now that I'm sweet on you,
 the stuttering keeps me quiet.*

*Your presence sweet,
 enjoyed so just as friends.
 Conversing about your dreams,
 so relaxing was your voice,*

*Now my heart it pounds within,
 my chest I think might burst.
 Just to hear your voice again,
 brings no comfort to that thirst.*

*They say no gain without the pain,
 but when will love release?
 It feels so great to love you so,
 but the pain I cannot bear.*

*Maybe it be me the key,
 that the secret be with me.
 Courage must be to tell you, so,
 you'll know, I'm in love with you.*

... BY DAY ROGER IS A TELEPHONE INSTALLER-REPAIRMAN. HE SAYS THAT "JUST OVER TWO AND HALF YEARS AGO, BELIEVING I COULD NOT WRITE, I WROTE MY FIRST LETTER TO THE EDITOR. SINCE THEN I HAVE HAD 74 LETTERS PUBLISHED IN ONE NEWSPAPER OR ANOTHER. I BEGAN TO SERIOUSLY WRITE POETRY IN MARCH, 2001."



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Chapter News

from Bonnie Weiss

FORT WORTH, TX

The new Ft. Worth group seems to be going strong. Jeff Goodman writes that the group has met four times, and that word is spreading about the chapter. They have been getting good support from the Dallas and Plano chapters, and have already been contacted by students who are studying in the field of speech pathology. Jeff has been working hard trying to get press coverage for the chapter. A photographer from the Fort Worth Star-Telegram attended a meeting early in the summer and took photos.

MANKATO, MN

Dick Thambert writes that they have been very active lately. They had a "Shop Picnic" for any NSA member in Minnesota and even had a member come from Wisconsin. There were 25 people who attended, and they played volley ball, horse shoes, and had lots of karaoke!!! The Mankato chapter meets once a month.

MOBILE, AL

Joe Klein facilitated a recent meeting in Mobile. There were seven people in attendance, and they had a great discussion. Three of the issues discussed were: 1) What aspects of stuttering do you dislike the most; 2) Why is it so hard to work on speech to maintain progress, and 3) What is the best way to overcome negative thoughts that perpetuate fear and avoidance? A great discussion ensued with many members joining in.

PHILADELPHIA, PA

The Philadelphia chapter met on November 6th. It was a great meeting, according to Lou Madonna. Lucy Reed of the South Jersey chapter was in attendance and gave follow-up feedback. Both the Philadelphia and South Jersey chapters are planning holiday parties in December. Members of the Philly chapter participated in a study during the summer done by speech language pathologists from LaSalle University. The study was on cognitive behavioral therapy and stuttering modification in adults who stutter.

RALEIGH, NC

Abhi Banarjee writes that the "Triangle" chapter met in October with eight people in attendance. In addition to the four members who stutter, three SLPs attended, as did a reporter from the *Herald Sun*. (There was a great article on the about the chapter in the *Herald Sun* just recently!) After checking in, the group held a Table Topics discussion with a novel twist—each person asked someone else a question on any topic. It was a great format, and the Raleigh chapter suggests that other chapters give it a try.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

The San Francisco chapter had a vibrant, enlightening and fun meeting recently, writes chapter leader Nora O'Connor. There were 12 people in attendance including one new person. Nora led the group in an exercise about people's feelings and thoughts regarding their speech and how this applied to their lives. They discussed speaking experiences and the words that would describe their feelings, and most members came up with the word "passion."

SAN JOSE, CA

Mel Hoffman writes that the San Jose chapter had a pre-meeting barbeque and potluck dinner for 17, including four guests. Special thanks went to Jim Stimmell for being chef for the BBQ. Then they had an excellent meeting, facilitated by 20-year-old Jeff Olevson (his first time as facilitator).



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