

# LettingGO

SPRING 2016

**YOU DON'T  
NEED TO HIDE**

FIRST-TIMER LAUREN

**GREAT SUCCESSES**

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**NATIONAL STUTTERING ASSOCIATION**

CHANGING THE LIVES OF PEOPLE WHO STUTTER



## 2015 SUCCESSES

2015 was another successful year for the NSA, as we welcomed new faces at our annual conference, provided assistance to new chapters nationwide, and represented the stuttering community at numerous speech and fundraising events. Recent highlights include:

- **Hosting our 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference in Baltimore, Maryland, welcoming more than 750 people**
- **Hosting Family Fun Days across the country**
- **Welcoming over 20 new chapters**

## 2017: 40TH ANNIVERSARY

As we look forward to spring, we also are making plans for a milestone year in NSA's history – our 40th anniversary as an organization serving people who stutter! The National Stuttering Association was founded in California by Bob Goldman and Michael Sugarman in 1977, as the National Stuttering Project. Through public service announcements, ads in local newspapers, and appearances on local radio and television shows, the organization increased awareness of stuttering. One of the group's most important projects was the establishment of local self-help groups across California.

Today, the National Stuttering Association has more than 125 nationwide, which are an integral component of the services we offer. The organization has grown into one of the recognized voices for the stuttering community, offering resources to not only speech professionals and the general public, but actually connecting people who stutter and spreading our message: *If You Stutter, You're Not Alone!*

## CONNECTING PEOPLE WHO STUTTER

We could not have this success without you! It's easy to support the work the NSA does across the country for children, teens, and adults who stutter – check out the following options!

- *Donate online at [WeStutter.org](http://WeStutter.org)*
- *Become an ongoing benefactor through our [Support Beyond Words](#) program*
- *Ask your employer if they have an employee giving program*

As always, thank you for your continued support of the accomplishments we have achieved together. We could not do what we do without you, and we look forward to seeing you in Atlanta July 6-10, 2016!

## THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

The NSA is a non-profit organization, which means that our very existence depends upon financial support from NSA'ers such as yourselves. Individual donations, big and small, are at the very heart of our organization.

When you make a donation, your dollars help us to manage a network of more than 125 local support groups, host national and regional conferences, Family Fun Days, and continuing education workshops, provide educational resources, and more. In addition, your donations fund our outreach efforts to those who have yet to experience the support that the NSA can provide. We thank each and every one of you who donated this year for allowing us to continue to do this important work!

## ELECTIONS



### DR. GERALD MAGUIRE

The NSA is excited to announce the election of a new Chairman of our Board of Directors, Dr. Gerald Maguire. Dr. Maguire comes to us after more than 20 years with the NSA. Congratulations, Dr. Maguire, we are excited to see what your term has in store for the NSA!

### ANNEMARIE WHITESEL

Also welcome Annemarie Whitesel, mother to a child who stutters and NSA Family Chapter Leader, who is joining us as Family Programs Co-Chair.

*We would also like to thank Kenny Koroll, Lynne Remson, & Samantha Gennuso for their service to the NSA as their terms come to an end.*

## EVENTS 2016

### MARCH 12:

*NSA Carolina Day*

### APRIL 16:

*Boca Raton, FL: Continuing Education Seminar*

### APRIL 23:

*USF/Tampa NSA Chapter's 7th Annual Speech*

### APRIL 23:

*Houston Family Fun Day & CEU*

### JULY 5 - 6 & 6-10

*NSA 2-Day Clinical Symposium & NSA/ISA Joint Conference*

## ENOUGH SILENCE

By Hamon Ashford



I thought for a minute, and then asked, "Dad, how did you grow out of stuttering?" "I just made up my mind that I wasn't going to stutter anymore."

I heard what he said but I didn't understand how that was possible when I had tried all that I knew. "That's why you go to the speech therapist, till you make up your mind to stop," he said. "I have made up my mind! I want to stop but it keeps coming back. I want it to stop now!"

"It don't work the same for everyone," Dad said. "But Dad it worked for you, why won't it work for me?" I started to cry because my desire of this stutter disappearing was critical to the point of me completely going silent till it went away. I made up my mind to stop talking completely till I grew out stuttering altogether. No one could believe that I went silent but I did.

"Let's see how long that lasts," she said. Dad said, "Boy, open your mouth and talk to me." All my family members tried to force me to talk but I stayed quiet at all family events and church till I was forced to speak. Talking was my enemy and silence would force me to grow out of the stutter one way or another.

When I went to speech therapy, I walked into the office with a piece of paper that said, "I have stopped talking till I grow out of my stutter and today I will not talk in this session." Ms. Keon stared at me, and asked, "How did you come to the conclusion to stop talking in order to stop stuttering?" "My dad grew out of his stutter just by saying that he was not going to stutter no more. Also I don't want to be laughed at or made fun of no more." "Well, Dillon," Ms. Keon said. "Living in this world will be a lot harder not speaking. Why would you wish to not talk to your friends? Talking is great when you can laugh and have fun with family and friends." "Yes, I want that without stuttering," I insisted. "You will stop stuttering, but only if you keep using these therapy sessions and keep talking," she said. This therapy session was a Friday afternoon, and that Saturday I abandoned the silent stance. ☺

## OUR CONFERENCE IN BALTIMORE WAS A FANTASTIC EXPERIENCE!

### HERE'S WHAT THE 191 PEOPLE WHO RESPONDED TO OUR SURVEY HAD TO SAY!



- More than 80% of attendees were very satisfied with the conference experience.
- All of the adults who responded to the survey said the conference exceeded or met expectations in changing their attitudes about stuttering, and in socializing and making new friends. Nearly all said that the conference exceeded or met expectations in learning new information about stuttering, helping them feel more self-confident, and getting support.
- 87% of First-Timers said that they felt very welcome at the conference
- Parents said the conference exceeded or met their expectations, and reported that their kids enjoyed the conference, even when they were initially reluctant to attend for the first time.
- Nine out of 10 speech-language pathologists said the conference exceeded or met expectations in most areas, and two-thirds said it was better than most educational opportunities. A few SLPs who attended the 2015 Research Symposium were disappointed that the symposium overlapped the first day of the conference.
- Moving the conference to Baltimore went smoothly for those affected. Of those who had to change hotel reservations or travel plans, 85% said the change went through as promised. 92% said that the NSA did very well in communicating the change and giving clear instructions.
- The Baltimore Marriott Waterfront Hotel received high marks from attendees, though there were a few complaints about the air conditioning.
- More than eight out of every 10 of survey respondents said that they are certain or very likely to attend the 2016 Annual NSA Conference in Atlanta. ☺





**YOU DON'T  
NEED TO HIDE**  
**2015 FIRST-TIMER**

By Lauren C.

I don't remember everything about all of the individual workshops, but I definitely remember how I felt while I was attending them! My most important memory was the first workshop that I had ever visited. It was the "Teen Orientation", and was my first glimpse into the Teen Advisory Council (TAC). After everyone sat down and started passing the beach ball around, I felt as though I had found my long-lost family. They were so kind and sweet to me and it felt good to be a part of something bigger than myself!

I also liked how every workshop was fun and practical in its own way. I enjoyed talking about our situations and circumstances at school and at home, and I also appreciated how the TAC opened up about how they applied their personal experiences with the NSA. It really helped us understand their points of view!

As the days passed and the memories grew fonder, I was spending less time with my family and more time with my new friends. We were making memories, getting lost, laughing, and getting ready for the next day of fun! We never missed a meeting, and every exercise only brought us closer so we were able to relate to more and more as the week pressed on. I am so thankful for that opportunity, because through it I learned that it never hurts to travel outside of your comfort zone; in the end there is someone else just like you just waiting to find their new companion!

The NSA has the best ways to bring people together and to have new experiences to share on the next, and the next, and the next trip! I wouldn't change a thing. There will always be "the next best workshop". In addition, you can't replace the staff and the members who make the NSA what it really is! To me the NSA is my second home, and I wish that new people who might be hesitant to join in would just take the leap and try something risky. Who knows, it could be the best thing they've ever experienced, something that could change their lives forever.

Most of the time my speech therapists taught me to 'fight back' or told me just to 'breathe', as though my stutter was brought out by my emotions, and that was humiliating! I dreaded speech therapy because I kept struggling to find the 'perfect' SLP. Then I found someone who completely changed my life in the most miraculous way, Karyn Goldman. It was as if an angel came down from heaven and plucked me right out of my misery! While I was her student we tried different techniques. Sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't. That's the thing though, we are still great friends and we Skype all the time but she doesn't try to change the way I talk. We can relate to each other because she stutters too!

So thank you, NSA. For teaching me that you don't need to hide behind your stuttering but to stand beside it with confidence and pride!! I will never forget the First Timer speech I gave, knowing that I made a difference. Now it's my turn to help First Timers to become the best stuttering superstars they can be. I can't wait for Atlanta, because I still have so much left to learn! ☺

# THRIVING WHILE STUTTERING

By Hanan Hurwitz

An amazing thing recently happened to me: I was promoted at work to the position of Director of Quality and Functional Safety. The amazing thing is that just five years ago I was so incredibly fearful and ashamed of my stuttering, spending all my energy trying to hide from it. Now I am communicating very well while stuttering and being entirely unapologetic about it, without seeking or needing approval from the audience on any aspect of my speech.

**I AM WHERE I AM BECAUSE OF THE NSA, AND ALL THE WONDERFUL PEOPLE I HAVE MET, LEARNED FROM, AND BEFRIENDED ALONG THE WAY.**

It is important for me to be able to tell the NSA, again, how supremely beneficial the organization has been to me, and even more important to tell my story to others in order to encourage them to achieve their own success, as others encouraged me.

During the years 2006-2009, I held the position of Quality Manager. While I did a very good job, both I and my job performance suffered greatly because of the way I felt about my stuttering. I was very much attached to the negative thoughts and feelings about myself and my stuttering, and always fearful of speaking and always trying to hide my stuttering. Many times I managed to be covert, but the volcano of frustration and self-loathing was building up all the time. I used email instead of the telephone in an attempt to get things done, and I avoided conflicts whenever possible. While I made significant improvements to our Quality System, much was left undone by my impaired ability to communicate, and I left the job feeling totally burned out. Looking back, I made my life difficult by a few things: allowing my stutter to stop me, and feeling that I had to solve all problems perfectly and immediately. Of course, none of these things are necessary or realistic. My thought that I had to be perfect derived quite a lot from my desire to make people approve of me despite my stutter.

Along my journey with I have learned a number of lessons, but here a few key ones:

- *I am not alone*
- *I am not to blame for my stutter (nobody is!)*
- *There is no universal law that says I am not allowed to stutter*
- *The Iceberg Analogy of stuttering allows me to see the true picture of stuttering*
- *I was living the "false role disorder" of believing I needed to be fluent*
- *I do not need to attach negative judgments to my stutter, and do not need the approval of anyone else regarding the nature of my speech*

Before my promotion, I made a presentation to management describing my approach to Quality Management and Organizational Excellence. It was a presentation they did not need from me in order to approve me for the job, but that I needed to give so that I could be sure that we were coordinated on our expectations. Among the topics discussed was what has changed from the period 2006-2009 to today that would make the chances for long-term success much better than in the past. I discussed what has changed in the company, and what has changed in myself. I spoke about my stuttering openly, with some humor and without any negative feeling. I explained, unapologetically, about how stuttering held me back in the past, and how today I live and even thrive while with still stuttering. This important thing to me is not the job, but rather the ability to stand up in front of 'scary' people and explain how my stuttering did affect and still affects me. This is huge, and is so much more important than a job title.

I hope I will succeed in my new position at work. I am pretty sure I will. Stuttering is still somewhat of a struggle, but the skills I have learned from the NSA and the community of PWS around the world put me in an excellent position to succeed. And even more important, I now use what I have learned to help other PWS and their families. ☺



# IN MEMORY OF FREEMAN GOSDEN

By Annie Bradberry

I write this with a heavy heart and warm memories of my mentor, Freeman Gosden.

I met Freeman in the early days of my time as Executive Director for the NSA. He called and introduced himself to me as a fellow stutterer, talked about how he wanted to make a donation and offered his expertise. With just one phone call I knew Freeman would become a valuable mentor and friend to the organization, and to me.

During my 10 years as director a friendship formed. I could pick up the phone and express my concerns and fears, and ask questions that I knew he could help me to answer. Early on he told me to trust my instincts. That was only one of many invaluable pieces of advice that he would bestow to me. I remember my visits with him. I would sit and he would tell me just to talk, to get out what was on my mind, and I would do just that. He would sit, quietly listening, while I rambled on and on. Then he would repeat it back to me, but this time in order and we would work through each item of discussion. I always left our time together feeling confident and empowered.

I am still working as an Executive Director in the nonprofit field and thanks in large part to Freeman, who not only taught me a great deal of the 'nitty-gritty' business information essential for anyone, but also, even more importantly, served as a truly inspiring mentor and role model to me.

We did not see much of each other after my time as director for the NSA ended. We spoke only a few times and he continued to provide support and guidance. I could sense that he was happy that I had stayed in the nonprofit field. I don't know if I was ever able to say I owed so much of that decision to him. I regret not staying in contact these last few years. Even when I was not in contact his influence guided me through many of my life's experiences. I am reminded more and more these days that life is short.

We will never know the sum total of his selfless acts and anonymous acts of kindness, and like few others, he made each of us feel as though our relationship with him was the only one that mattered. So spend more time with your family and friends. Tell someone you love him/her. Surround yourself with those that help you shine. Visit your mentors and let them know the impact they've had on your life. Don't wait for free time; it will never come. ☺



## Official Obituary:

*GOSDEN JR., Freeman Fisher of Santa Barbara, CA, passed away October 26, at Casa Dorinda, his home for the last 14 years. He was predeceased in August 2015 by his wife of 60 years, Dorothy (Paxton) Gosden.*

*Freeman was born in Chicago in 1928 to Leta Marie (Schreiber) and Freeman Fisher Gosden and attended the Latin School for Boys. While employed in the oil business in Odessa and Midland, Texas, Freeman contracted polio. He returned to Los Angeles to recover and continued his career. He worked in the advertising business at Young & Rubicam, BBDO, and Rexall Drug and Chemical Co. After serving as president of Market Compilation and Research Bureau, Freeman became a partner in Smith-Hemmings-Gosden, a pioneer advertising agency in direct marketing, which later merged into Foote, Cone & Belding. He retired as chairman of FCB Direct Marketing Worldwide.*

*During his career Freeman created the original frequent flyer program and founded Me Books, selling over one million personalized children's books in its first two years. He taught direct marketing educational sessions at over 120 colleges and corporations, resulting in his being named Direct Marketing Educational Association's Man of the Year. He served as a consultant to Williams-Sonoma, Shell Oil, Lionel Trains and the National Stuttering Association. He was president of The Beach Club, Santa Monica, CA, and a member of the board of the Santa Barbara Symphony.*

*He is survived by his daughters Lee Curtis Gosden and Jill Gosden Pollock (Gordon Lee), his grandchildren Katherine and Henry Pollock, his sister Virginia Jackson, his stepmother Jane Gosden, his half-brother Craig Gosden, and his half-sister Linda Gosden Robinson.*

# GREAT SUCCESSES

By Lindsay Mitchell

In 1935, many years before the widespread introduction of speech therapy, I began to stutter. In my grammar and high school years I remained silent for the most part, except for having discovered a singing voice, which I was able to enjoy and share. I went on to pharmacy school, where I had little need to talk, but just to gain knowledge of the profession. In 1981 I attended an "Airflow Technique" seminar by Dr. Martin Schwartz with little success.

Today, at 83, I still am a person who stutters who has experienced many different situations. My greatest difficulty is in conversation around a table where others are talking very fast. However, public speaking, where I have no competition, goes relatively well. Participating in Toastmasters was a very helpful experience. Using a microphone is a great experience, and some experts say that hearing one's voice amplified allows one to hear from another source. In the 1990s I discovered that memorizing poetry and sharing it publicly to be very satisfying.

In 1990 I learned that my grandson was having speech blocks at the age of five. Having had speech therapy, and with the successes of Temple University School of Speech, today he is a successful engineer. His story and mine, in addition to two of my favorite poets, Maya Angelou and James Earl Jones, show that one can experience stuttering and yet have great success. ☺





## 2016 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

This year, our conference joins up with the International Stuttering Association World Congress and head to one of the greatest cities in the Southeast - Atlanta, Georgia.

Our hotel is the spectacular Hyatt Regency Atlanta, located right in the heart of downtown. This property boasts all of the amenities that you have come to expect from an NSA conference – a pool, gym, and even the only revolving rooftop restaurant in the city. Given the premier downtown location, we are fortunate to have once again secured an amazing group rate of just \$159 (+taxes/fees)/night. Easily accessible by mass-transit, the hotel is just a half hour direct MARTA ride from Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport. And since Atlanta is within a 2-hour flight for 80% of the U.S. population, this location is prime for getting into and out of with ease.

Making this year extra special the NSA is host to the International Stuttering Association's World Congress. Founded in 1995, the International Stuttering Association (ISA) is a not-for-profit, international umbrella association made up primarily of national self-help associations for people who stutter. Their mission is to improve the conditions of all those whose lives are affected by stuttering in all countries. Their vision speaks truth for all of us; A World That Understands Stuttering.

What's truly amazing about our Annual Conferences is that you are in one place with hundreds of people who share the common bond of stuttering; everyone at the conference is there either because they stutter, they love someone who stutters, or they are interested in learning more about stuttering. When you're at the NSA conference, people who stutter are in the majority!


Our conferences are a safe and supportive place where you can be completely open about your stuttering. We welcome not only people who stutter of all ages, but speech-language pathologists, research specialists and other leading experts in the field, and the loved ones of people who stutter. We've been working hard to put together a program schedule that all of those demographics - kids, 'tweens, teens, families, 20-somethings, adults, and SLPs - are sure to enjoy.

For more information on workshops, scholarships, hotel reservations, registration, what to expect as a first-timer, general tips, and much more check out the Annual Conference section of our website – WeStutter.org. Also be sure to 'join' our 33rd Annual NSA Conference event on Facebook for the latest news and happenings regarding the conference. We will see you in Atlanta!

## 2016 CLINICAL SYMPOSIUM:

### *Person-Centered Approaches to Treatment*

Effective counseling skills are essential for positive outcomes in the treatment for stuttering. This year's NSA pre-conference program will offer (pending approval) approximately 1.3 ASHA CEU's and will include topics related to narrative therapy, motivational interviewing and exposure therapy, July 5-6.

The format will include breakout discussion groups led by leading researchers and clinicians in the field of stuttering. Abstracts, biographical sketches, and registration materials will be posted on the NSA. 



Cameron Francek  
Adult Chapters Coordinator

## CHAPTER HAPPENINGS

Miranda Smith represented our chapter at the Ohio state speech pathologists conference in Columbus. We also had 8 of our members participate in Fluency Friday, a mini conference in Cincinnati for kids and teens that stutter.

*Chris Mancini - Cincinnati*

Scavenger Hunt in downtown Orlando to raise money to help members attend the national conference.

*Kevin Chambers - Orlando*

We have continued with our quarterly "Chat and Chew" meetings. Instead of having the usual monthly meetings, we meet at Bickford's four times a year for a dinner meeting. So far this has been a positive change to our meeting structure. We are having more attendees overall and are able to have more meaningful discussions.

*Sarah Onofri - Boston North*

Five members of the chapter including the two chapter co-leaders are rehearsing a theatre play. We will be on stage for 5 performances in Philadelphia during the Fringe Festival in September and one performance in NYC in October. The play has been written for us and is promoted by Actors International, a group that works to give everyone a voice and an opportunity to experience theatre.

*Carmen Shapiro - Philadelphia*

## TOP CHAPTER GOALS & OBJECTIVES FOR 2016

### **Increase chapter meeting attendance**

- Both new membership and those who used to be active

### **Advance outreach efforts**

- Have a workshop to present a panel of PWS to SLP's and Graduate Students
- Chapter advertising
- Create an NSA Chapter Page and Facebook page

### **Add a social aspect to local NSA Chapter**

- Hold meeting at a restaurant or coffee shop
- Organize dinners, get-togethers and chapter outings
- Hold events with other NSA chapters in the area

*Thank you to all of our chapter leaders for your hard work in 2015! We look forward to working with you all and seeing you in Atlanta in 2016!*



# WHO IS GEORGE DAQUILA?

By Sarah D'Agostino

When you try to envision a stuttering software programmer you might imagine a quiet guy hunched over his computer in an office corner writing code. Meet George Daquila, 32-year-old software developer for Goldman Sachs in New York City, a programmer and a person who stutters - but nobody puts George in the corner. A large part of George's job is working with others. His day-to-day interactions include talking with businesses, traders, and portfolio managers determining their requirements and writing code to get what they need out of the technology. George works on a team and together they do a lot of collaborating.

When George interviewed for his position at Goldman Sachs, he opened up about his stuttering at every level of the hiring process. "Bringing it up relaxes me and relaxes the listener," George recalls. "During the process, I told every one of them that I stutter, which led to some more in-depth conversations with managers. I explained how it used to hold me back but through a lot of hard work, I came out stronger. That was a true and positive story that I could tell my new manager and it impressed him."

George wasn't always this open about stuttering. His earliest recollections of stuttering therapy were not pleasant. The focus was fluency, fluency, fluency, and this did not work for him. "I remember speech therapy in 6th grade, where I met the speech therapist in the teacher's copy room. There was something absolutely shameful and it got worse each time a teacher came in. The therapist was an absolutely wonderful person, but this didn't work for me at all."

George also has vivid recollections from his childhood, including a time in middle school where his stuttering was really eating at him from the inside out. He was heading to the library to do research during his homeroom period. The lights were dimmed because the class was watching the morning kids news, and he needed to ask for the library pass. George says, "I remember staring at that pass for a long, long time before I finally psyched myself up to go ask. It was really painful."

Growing up, the S-to-C sound transition was always tough for him, including words such as ski, scale, skip, and, his best friend's name, Scott. "Calling Scott's house was a tough one. It would usually result in me going 'S-S-S-Scott' many times. I remember one time, after practicing Scott's name over and over, I finally just grabbed the phone in the kitchen and dialed the number. I stared at our green Formica countertop as I said 'May I please speak to

Scott?' No sweat. No massive tension. I just said it. I remember this moment so well. It was so simple and I was so happy," George recalls.

When George was having a particularly difficult time in 8th grade, his mom discovered and researched a 12-week intensive program on the West Coast. Through that research she learned of a well-respected stuttering specialist who worked closer to their home in Pittsburgh, PA. It was not long before George met with SLP and stuttering specialist J. Scott Yaruss. Dr. Yaruss helped George learn to accept his stuttering. During one of their first sessions, Dr. Yaruss asked George what he called his stutter, and not surprisingly, George didn't have an answer; he hadn't really talked about it at all. Dr. Yaruss said, "We are going to call it stuttering," and George remembers this as being so simple, yet so clear and freeing.

In high school George remembers good times with stuttering. At this point he had grown comfortable with speaking and never hesitated to raise his hand in class. When George finished high school he also stopped seeing Dr. Yaruss, and that's where George says it all came off the rails again. During graduate school, his stuttering worsened, and depression set in. At one point during graduate school at Virginia Tech, George was really struggling with his stuttering. He decided to videotape himself during different speaking situations. While trying to say 'bye' on the phone he had a very long pause (5 - 20 seconds). George recalls, "I remember the look on my face on the video. I was about to cry but just swallowed and pushed it down. After watching that tape, I knew I needed to do something and it was hurting me so much more than I was letting on."

After contacting Dr. Yaruss and restarting therapy again, they were able to approach ideas of both fluency and acceptance. George says, "You can't communicate or become more fluent if you don't accept your stutter. This was a very, very tough lesson to learn. My approach now is to target what makes me comfortable, because ultimately that is what it is all about. If I am comfortable with a technique, it will relax me and I will stutter less. I think the most helpful technique for me is pausing often and longer than I need to. Pseudostuttering is also a HUGE help for me, that again leads to acceptance."


Being married to his high school sweetheart means that George's wife Amanda has been alongside him for most of his stuttering

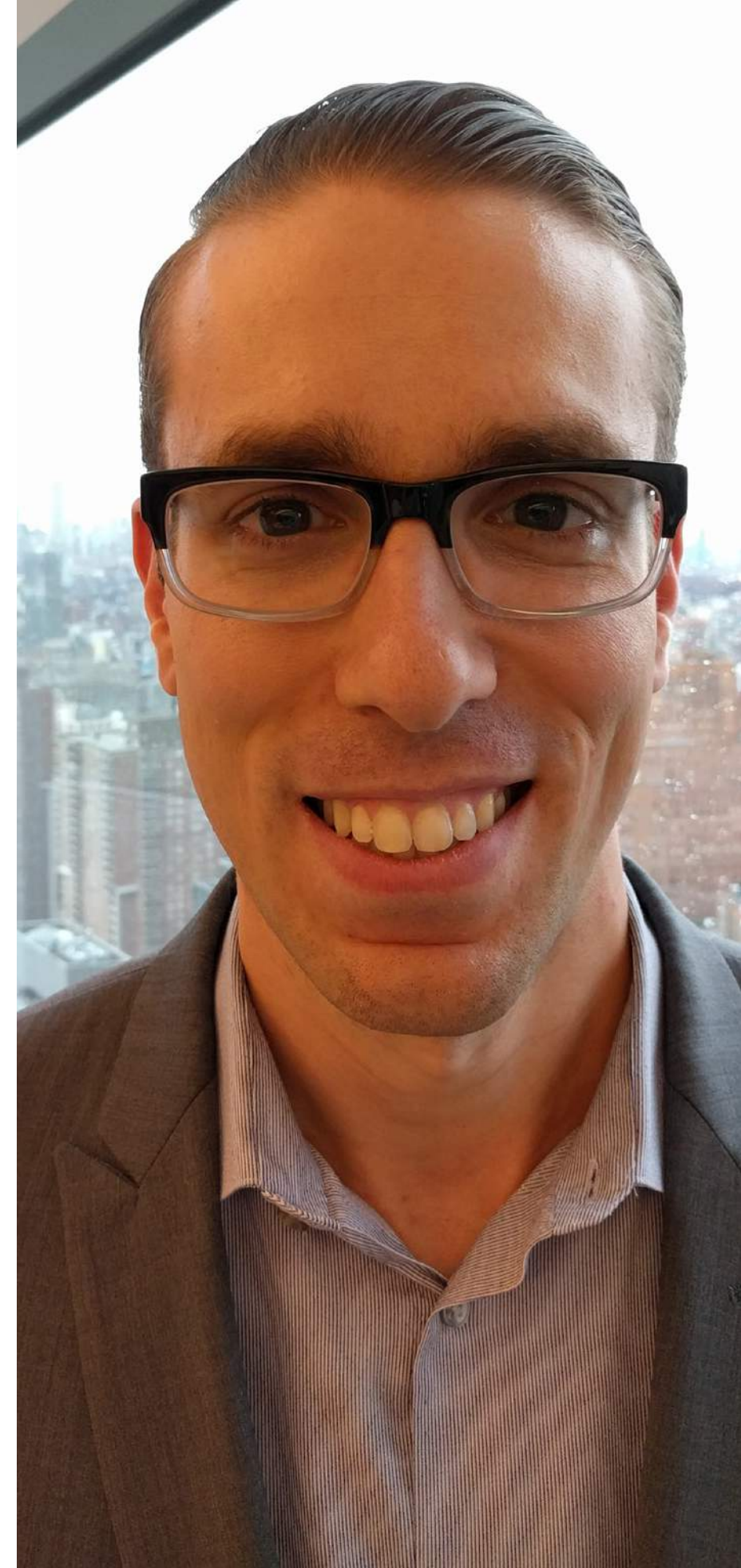
journey. She has seen him through the awkward years and has also seen his growth and his triumphs. George says that he is as transparent as possible about his stuttering with Amanda, and will go to her to vent or to ask for advice, especially when he has a weighted speaking situation such as an interview or presentation. She is supportive and caring but not overbearing.

George and Amanda have great adventures both separately and together: hiking, biking, races, and drinking beer, which might lead one to ask, "How can I be social as a person who stutters?" George says that earlier in his life, his approach to social gatherings was different. He would never get into deep conversations with any one person. He would bounce from one group to another, keeping it light and casual in an effort to cover up stuttering. When he hit a roadblock with his speech, he would just move on to the next person. Now that he is more accepting of his stuttering, the social landscape has changed for George. He says, "I have better and more real conversations. Sometimes I will bring up the topic of stuttering and it is always a positive experience. People will ask questions, which gives me a deeper connection with that person. It exposes me and shows that I can be open, which always has a positive effect on the conversation or relationship."

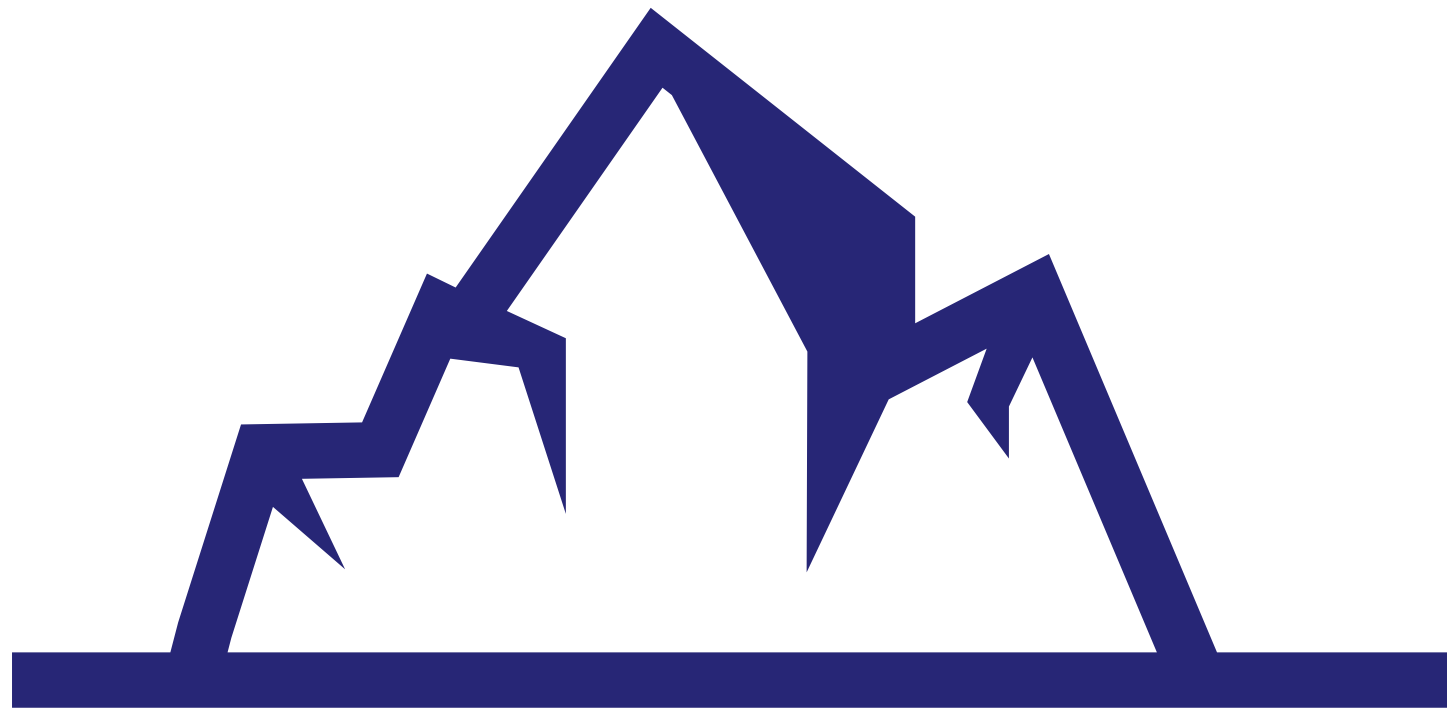
George has been working continuously on being more open and accepting. He decided to move out of academia and go into the finance industry because of the opportunity to work with other people and face technical challenges. "My position with Goldman Sachs has been great, and the company is especially supportive. I had no idea until I was here that charity work and diversity are a large part of the culture. Even better is that they allow me to take time to work with the NSA, and that is very meaningful to me."

All around, George is an amazing example of a person who stutters who has come a long way with hard work. When asked to give a message about stuttering, this is what George had to say:

"Being a person who stutters is tough...really, really tough. We shouldn't downplay how difficult it is. I always tried to hide my stutter and my feelings about stuttering. I wanted to hide it all. The more I talked about stuttering the less of an issue it has become. However, stuttering can be turned into an asset. I have struggled and still continue to struggle with my stuttering. It is something you can't give up on because it is there every time you speak. To overcome stuttering, you need to be ruthless with yourself and face it head on. Being self-aware is invaluable, and a critical skill to becoming a successful communicator. I used to think that I was weak because I stuttered but it has made me so strong!" 







# TREATING STUTTERING

AT USC SPEECH & HEARING RESEARCH CENTER

By Clinical Assistant Professor Charley Adams

“LIKE THE ICEBERG, MOST OF THE PROBLEM OF STUTTERING LIES BELOW THE SURFACE.”



Stuttering, which is characterized by involuntary stoppages in the forward flow of speech, is a low-incidence disorder affecting approximately 1 percent of the population worldwide. Roughly 5 percent of children will go through a period of stuttering that lasts six months or more, most of whom recover by late childhood—leaving 1 percent with a long-term problem. It impacts all races and ethnicities equally; however, there are four males who stutter for every one female.

Despite the low-incidence rate of this speech disorder, the USC Speech and Hearing Research Center, in the Arnold School of Public Health’s Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders (COMD), has treated numerous stuttering patients over their 45-year history. Patients and their family members, teachers, speech-language pathologists and physicians find their way to the Center because of its unique expertise and experience on both common and rare communication challenges. These patients are looking for the most experienced and informed clinicians, and they are looking for innovative research and interventions. They are looking for people like Clinical Assistant Professor Charley Adams.

Adams first developed his connection with stuttering when he was a doctoral candidate in the COMD department at USC. He was approached to take on a caseload of stuttering patients and teach a graduate course on the topic for a faculty member who was retiring. “That was about 15 years ago, and I’m very fortunate to still be doing both,” he says. “I’ve met so many fascinating and interesting people who stutter and who work with stuttering.”

Adams can easily list many well-known individuals from history and popular culture who have stuttered—many of whom have spoken publicly about the condition (see inset). He points out that building awareness is important because people who stutter have been mocked, teased and bullied for decades. “Some listeners have mistakenly jumped to a variety of inaccurate conclusions when they hear someone stuttering, ranging from ‘you’re stupid’ to ‘you must be lying’ to ‘you don’t know what you’re talking about,’” says Adams. “Importantly, attitudes are changing and awareness and understanding of stuttering have improved in recent years, and things have really ramped up ever since the film, *The King’s Speech*, came out in 2010.” There is even an International Stuttering Awareness Day observed each year (October 22, 2015).

Part of this awareness includes when stuttering arises, and how long it might last. Stuttering can begin as early as 18 months of age and as late as puberty. Onset is most common while kids are experiencing rapid growth of both language and motor skills, usually between the ages of two and five. Many who start to stutter will grow out of it, some will hang on to it for a year or two or three, and some will continue to stutter into adulthood. However, assuming that stuttering will improve on its own can be a mistake.

“Well-meaning pediatricians often tell parents not to worry that their child has begun to stutter, and that s/he will outgrow it,” says Adams, who has been routinely invited to speak to residents at the USC School of Medicine about stuttering during their pediatric rotation. “Many do, of course, but some don’t; and by the time a parent finally seeks help in spite of that advice, the optimal time

frame with the best outcomes may have passed.”

Stuttering therapy looks very different depending on the age of the patient, according to Adams. “With young patients, our expectation is normal fluency upon completion of treatment,” he says. At this age, therapy focuses on facilitating more fluent speech and guiding young children to learn how to select easier, “unstruggled” talking.

With older kids and adults, milder stuttering with control may be a more realistic outcome goal. “This therapy will focus on control techniques to employ when the patient needs them, and we also target the fear and avoidance that can come with years of stuttering,” says Adams.

When schedules permit, the Center clinicians will often utilize group therapy in addition to individual therapy. For adults, they usually recommend attending a monthly support group as well, which is sponsored by the National Stuttering Association.

Clinicians like Adams, and the graduate students they are training to become future speech-language pathologists and COMD researchers, engage in a range of activities to stay informed of the latest research and treatment for stuttering. “By teaching and giving workshops on stuttering, I stay current so that I can be sure to share best practices in stuttering intervention,” he says.

Working with groups such as the Stuttering Foundation of America and the National Stuttering Association, the Center has hosted or co-sponsored a variety of workshops for people who stutter as well as continuing education opportunities for speech-language pathologists. For example, they have held one-day events for kids who stutter, their parents and their speech-language pathologists.

“We work hard to expose our students to a variety of disorders, including stuttering, but numerous surveys have documented that stuttering remains a disorder that graduating students feel least confident treating,” Adams says. To help bridge the gap, he encourages current and former students to devote some of their continuing education to stuttering and offers his expertise to previous students who now work as speech-language pathologists. “I often get phone calls and emails from former students asking for advice working with patients who stutter,” Adams says. He even helps colleagues who stutter.

He also has some advice for the other 99% of the population—for those of us who don’t stutter. “It’s important that people not respond any differently when someone is stuttering,” he says. Giving advice or trying to finish a sentence isn’t helpful. “Simply pay attention and respond to the message, not how it’s being said,” he adds. “Be a good listener, and maintain eye contact.”

Some people are more comfortable with their stuttering than others, so don’t ask about it unless they bring it up. “And never tell them that you stutter sometimes, too – unless you have the disorder, it’s not the same thing,” he says. “People who stutter don’t need your advice or empathy; they just need your patience.”

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# TAC { OUR EXPERIENCES WITH STUTTERING }

By Ben North, TAC Chair

My name is Ben North and I am the current Teen Advisory Council (TAC) Chairman. I am currently a junior psychology major at The Catholic University of America, and I am a person who stutters (PWS). I've stuttered as long as I can remember, and even though I'm very open and extroverted about it now, I wasn't always that way.

My first memories with stuttering were in elementary school. I remember being asked by what felt like everyone at school, "why do you talk that way?" That question was hard for me to answer, because I didn't understand why I spoke differently, or why I wasn't like everyone else. I didn't know why I had to deal with this extra challenge that made everything else just a little bit more difficult. I was hesitant to talk in class, order for myself at restaurants, or make new friends in school. I remember having a block (which is the type of stuttering that's not a repetition of a sound, but a lack of sound before the word comes out) when my neighbor, who was about 35 at the time, said hi to me, and when I had trouble responding she lectured me saying, "it's polite to respond to people when they say hi to you". Now I realize she probably didn't know what was going on or why it took me a bit longer to respond, however these are the kinds of things that PWS sometimes have to deal with, even at such a young age.

Middle school was probably the most challenging time with my speech, but was also the time that changed a lot of my outlook. It was the age where all your peers fought for the top of the social hierarchy, where kids wanted so hard to fit in that they made fun of each other for basically everything. For a person who stutters, his or her speech is an easy target. I remember getting made fun of and mocked almost every day. It was precisely at this time that I thought to myself, I can either continue like this or I can stand up and change it. In 7th grade I started giving speeches to my team (which was the group of a hundred kids that I had all of my classes with) about stuttering including what it is, what it isn't, and not to bully someone who talks like this. Immediately after the speech, I remember kids coming up to me and asking questions about it. It was then that I realized people generally just don't understand what stuttering is or what it's like to live with it.

My first NSA conference was the summer after 7th grade. While it was eye-opening and inspiring to see so many people my age be so open about their speech, there was something that really prevented me from enjoying the conference - another 14-year old kid who thought that bullying first timers would make him look cool to the older kids. For the first time I wasn't monitoring my speech, but I was enjoying being with people who truly understood me. That feeling of freedom is what the NSA is all about.

Two conferences later, I applied for a position on the TAC. I knew I wanted to help others who stutter who may be going through things that I've gone through or am going through. I was brought on to the TAC for the 2011 conference, and I made it my personal goal to make sure no first timer had the same first conference experience I had. I tried to introduce myself to as many first timers as possible, to make sure they felt included and a part of the NSA family. Over the years that's been my goal because it would be nothing short of a tragedy for people, especially young teens and kids, to leave the NSA without feeling what I felt my second conference and every conference since then.

**Here are some of the stories from my fellow TAC members:**

## SAMANTHA GREEN

I started to stutter when I was 4. I didn't really know what stuttering was and I didn't know that 1% of the population stutters. For the longest time I thought I was alone. My outlook about stuttering wasn't the best. I had friends that stutter that graduated from speech therapy because their stutter stopped. But I never really graduated from speech therapy. My therapist took me out of it because I wasn't improving by the 8th grade. I started to be more confident about my stutter after my first NSA Conference in Fort Worth, Texas. I had no idea that there were people that stuttered, and it was kind of a shock to me! After my second conference I decided that I wanted to be on the TAC because I wanted to show the first timers and the other people that stuttering isn't so bad.

## KATIE DUFFIELD

As a child, as soon as I began speaking, I developed a prominent stutter. Finding help was difficult, but I was blessed with parents who made me a priority. It took quite a while, a few years even, to find proper assistance and support. In that purgatorial interlude, I saw a Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP) named Mrs. Leonard at my school just about every week. I was very shy and had trouble expressing myself, mostly due to my stutter, so I talked very little. Mrs. Leonard saw this as an opportunity to get me into writing. In second grade, she had me write an article for a newsletter called "Stutter Buddies" a project of the National Stuttering Association. The Association published my article in its newsletter and sent my family a copy, along with brochures and information about stuttering and the organization's goals. For once, the information wasn't about casting blame, or saying there was something wrong with

me, or even how to "cure" my stutter; it was simply educational, and included testimonies from other people who stutter, explaining that none of us were alone in this struggle. This was something my parents had not seen before anywhere else.

My mother did some research and found out that the organization had an annual conference and that year's was in Atlanta. Just a few months later, we packed up and flew out, each of us terrified and excited in a million different ways. When we arrived, my parents found solace in dozens of other parents telling stories with the exact experiences and concerns they had, and dozens more validating their feelings and reassuring them that everything our entire family was going through was, in fact, normal. I was welcomed with open arms by knowledgeable and experienced teens and so many other kids who stuttered. It was such a liberating experience to not have to worry about my speech. I had the power to say whatever I wanted for the first time in my life. No matter how long it took, people listened; they looked me in the eye and made sure I knew that what I had to say was important. The people of the NSA have caused me to be grow into so many of the positive things I am today, including someone who has a yearning to hear the voices of the people to whom our society has grown deaf.

I have gone to every conference since that first one in Atlanta nine years ago. Over the course of that time, I went through an important transition. Several years ago, I was asked to give a keynote speech as a part of the "All-Star Panel" at the National Stuttering Association. This opportunity allowed me to talk to more than 600 people about overcoming the struggle stuttering presented me. Years later, I again found myself being asked to speak, this time on a much smaller scale: a group of middle schoolers in my area who stutter. Both of these experiences led me on a path from someone who was helped to someone who could now help others.

Additionally, within the National Stuttering Association, there is a council of teens who creates and runs workshops, reaches out to first-time conference attendees, socializes with the families, helps out

in kids workshops, facilitates activities, and creates a safe and compassionate environment during the conference. The TAC also works year-round on fundraisers and outreach projects and maintains a huge presence online to reach people in that manner. It was this group of teens who did so much to make me feel comfortable and understood when I felt so lost and self-conscious. I am now a member of the TAC and have the privilege of doing the same thing for the next generation. I love being a part of this organization; I get to help kids and other teens who need me and I really hope I make a difference or at least help them along the bumpy road of self-acceptance and loving their voice.

## DANNY WOOD

My name is Danny. I have stuttered since I was three years old. Although stuttering is one of the hardest things I have had to deal with in my life, I wouldn't change it for the world. Stuttering has made me the person I am today. Because of stuttering, I get to connect with some of the greatest people in the world every year at the National Stuttering Association Conference. I have also had many opportunities in my life that I wouldn't have been able to have without my stutter. One of these opportunities is to be a part of the Teen Advisory Council of the National Stuttering Association. Holding this position is extremely important to me. Before I found the NSA, I was very negative about my stutter and wished it would just go away. When I attended my first conference, TAC members were there to help teach me that stuttering was a good thing. I looked up to them for that. My goal is to make sure every child who stutters understands how great it really is, and I hope I am able to achieve that.

## ISABEL SZILAGYI

I was only three when I was branded with a mark that made me different, something that made me stand out from the crowd every time I opened my mouth. It was at that age when I developed my stutter, and over time it began to be clear that I would carry it with me for my entire life.

The definition of stuttering is a communication disorder involving disruptions or "disfluencies" in a person's

speech. Part of me hates that definition, because stuttering is so much more than that to me. For most of my life, stuttering decided what I would order at Starbucks, whether or not I was going to hang out with my friends that day, if I was going to pick up the phone, or talk to that one boy I like.

Slowly, my stutter became who I was. During introductions, all I wanted was to say something other than "I'm Isabel Szilagyi, and I stutter". I wanted to say "I'm Isabel Szilagyi, and I play the violin", or "I'm Isabel Szilagyi, and I love to ski". I felt like I was drowning in my stutter, and drowning in the humiliation, anxiety, frustration, and isolation that came along with it.

Everything changed for me when I went to my first National Stuttering Association conference at the age of twelve. I felt as if I had slipped into another world, a world that was finally made for me. I had been drowning in my stutter for so long that I had forgotten what air tasted like. At the NSA, I finally found patience, kindness, and acceptance. Most importantly, I found people who understood everything that I dealt with when it came to my stutter. I wasn't alone in this after all. Those that made the biggest impression on me were the members of the Teen Advisory Council. As a self-conscious little 12-year old, they were the best role models imaginable. Here were teens that didn't let their stutter define them, who even thought of it as a gift that made them stronger. I was determined to become just like them.

Five years later, I'm now a member of the TAC. It's hard to remember back to when I felt like my stutter was a curse. I can't imagine who I would be without it. Of course there are bad days, there will always be bad days. But because of my stutter, I've become stronger, braver, and kinder. My stutter means the world to me because it gave me my NSA family. I'm proud to stand out from the crowd now, and I want so badly to make a difference for the better in the lives of people who stutter. I want to show everyone how the NSA can change lives. I know for sure that it changed mine.





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E. INFO@WESTTUTTER.ORG | WWW.WESTTUTTER.ORG |   'WESTTUTTER'  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: TAMMY FLORES | EDITOR: MANDY FINSTAD | DESIGNER: MICHELLE GEIGER

