

LettingGO

SPRING 2018

SHADOW

UNCOVERING THE TRUTH

REFLECTIONS

LOOKING AHEAD WITH EVAN SHERMAN

CHAINS THAT BIND

A POEM BY ETHAN S.

FLUENCY TRAIN

LOVING & ACCEPTING YOUR RIDE

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

BRETT CUNNINGHAM

Military Support Group

2018 Annual Conference &
Masterclass Series

Member Engagement - Ward/Reed

NATIONAL STUTTERING ASSOCIATION

CHANGING THE LIVES OF PEOPLE WHO STUTTER



CALLING ALL ACTIVE & RETIRED MILITARY NSA'ERS!

Military personnel face unique challenges as people who stutter. Personnel often don't seek advice or support because in the military, differences are generally perceived as weaknesses. For these reasons, we have created a closed, moderated group on Facebook for our active and retired military personnel who stutter, as well as military support chapters. Visit WeStutter.org for more information and to get involved!



CONGRATS!

Sending heartfelt congratulations to Michael Ward and Lucy Reed on their engagement! Mike popped the question during our 34th Annual Conference in Dallas, and we could not be more pleased for them. Best wishes to the happy couple from your family at the NSA!

EVENTS

MARCH 16, 2018:

'When I Stutter' New York Film Premier

APRIL 7, 2018:

9th Annual USF/Tampa Speech Party

MAY 5, 2018:

Chicago Don't Tell Me to 'Slow Down' 5K

MAY 12, 2018:

Orlando Don't Tell Me to 'Slow Down' 5K

MAY 14-18, 2018:

National Stuttering Awareness Week

For complete details visit westutter.org



2018 ANNUAL CONFERENCE CHICAGO

Our 35th Annual Conference is fast-approaching, and with a program designed for children who stutter, their parents, 'tweens, teens, and adults who stutter, as well as speech professionals, this is a unique educational experience for all who attend.

MASTERCLASS JULY 3-4

Our Masterclass Series brings together top researchers and clinicians to present and discuss current issues in theory and treatment of stuttering, while offering ASHA Continuing Education credits.

Get back to the basics of stuttering and fluency treatment with our Masterclass Series, Stuttering 201: Back to Basics. Topics include up-to-date best practices in treatment approaches, counseling for kids, teens, and adults, and an opportunity to ask the REAL experts, a community panel of SLPs who stutter.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE JULY 4-8

This years conference includes:

- A three-day youth program with workshops specifically designed for school-age children and their parents, and activities for the entire family.
- Keynote speakers and dozens of workshops to help people who stutter learn from experts and see how people are coping successfully with stuttering.
- Opportunities for speech professionals to earn additional 1.1 Continuing Education credits, as well as to network with leading fluency specialists.

HAVE AN IDEA FOR A WORKSHOP? WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Persons who stutter make up a diverse group, with no two people stuttering in exactly the same way. Because one size does not fit all when it comes to stuttering, we strive to include a variety of perspectives and ideas when planning our Annual Conference program. During our conferences we offer ample opportunity to learn about stuttering from experts and peers, explore your attitudes toward speaking, be entertained, and try out new techniques in dozens of workshops, and we are currently on the lookout for fresh, unique workshops.

If you have an idea for a General or Continuing Education Workshop, complete and submit a Workshop Proposal Form at WeStutter.org no later than March 15, 2018.

By Evan Sherman, Vice Chair

REFLECTIONS

I'm sure that I am not the only one who feels extremely excited for what is to come in 2018. Tammy, her team, and the Board of Directors are hard at work preparing for this year's Annual Conference in Chicago, Illinois and it is sure to be an amazing experience for all. Fresh off our winter board meeting at the conference site in Chicago, I can assure you all that our hotel has top-notch amenities including a welcoming hotel bar with plenty of places to chat, as well as extensive meeting space that is perfect for us. Between the large meeting rooms, the conversation-friendly lobby, hotel restaurant, and our prime location in the heart of downtown Chicago, close to various restaurants and nightlife hot spots, this hotel can't be beat!

2017 was a transitional year for the National Stuttering Association Board of Directors with several elections. We reduced the number of board members dramatically in an attempt to streamline our processes. As a result, there will be more committee positions available in the future, so keep an eye out for opportunities to get involved. We would like to thank **David Resnick, Katie Gore, Roisin McManus, and Dr. Laura Plexico** for their contributions our board and to the National Stuttering Association. We wish them the best in their future ventures. **Sarah Onofri** recently stepped down in her role as co-chair of family programs, but continues to make a difference on the executive committee in her role as Secretary.

Adult Programs underwent a much needed restructuring this past year. **Tom Scharstein**, who now assumes the role of Adult Programs Coordinator, has completely revamped the chapter reporting system, making it easier than ever for chapter leaders submit their quarterly reports. With this new system, reporting is at an all time high, even reaching 100% reporting in the fourth quarter of 2017. Family Programs has grown dramatically as well with new and exciting outreach events. Under the lead of

“It is because of our **generous donors** that we can continue to reach far and wide to improve the lives of **people who stutter.**”

Annemarie Whitesel, with new growth comes more workload. Therefore we have added two new Regional Chapter Coordinators for Family Programs, **Tiffany Kittilstved** and **Steven Moates**, and a new Teen Advisory Council Chair, **Caden Short**. Our new mentoring program, which pair kids and teens who stutter with an adult role model is now entering its second year. What better way to make a positive impact on our younger generation than pairing them with an adult NSA all-star? We are excited for all of the new ventures in our support/self-help network, and we expect continued growth throughout the year.

We continue to reach far and wide with our Facebook groups for teens and parents, our regional workshops, CEU events, and 5K walks/fun runs. This past November we held our 5th Annual NSA Boston 1-Day Conference & CEU Workshop, and in September, our first CEU event in Daytona Beach with **Dr. John Tetnowski**. We look forward to more exciting events planned for 2018.

This year the NSA Research Committee has been hard at work reviewing submitted research proposals involving NSA members. For those who don't know, our research committee is responsible for keeping our organization at the forefront of all the cutting edge research on stuttering. **Dr. Laura Plexico**, who has co-chaired the research committee with **Dr. Kathleen Scaler-Scott** for many years is stepping down from her role to allow for new leadership. The Board of Directors thanks her for her years of dedication to the NSA. We look forward to seeing her name in the literature for years to come. We'd also like to welcome **Dr. Daniel Hudock**, from the University of Idaho, to the committee and are excited for his anticipated contributions.

Our special projects chair, **Pam Mertz**, as always, is extremely busy implementing her new ideas. One of the coolest events we held in 2017 was the Goldman Sachs interview day, where people who stutter participated in mock interviews to practice

their interview skills. In coordination with adult programs and Pam's drive and determination, we also have started our first NSA Adult Chapter on a military base, and even held our first military workshop at the 2017 NSA conference in Dallas.

If you haven't noticed, our website has most definitely received a face-lift. With the help of our web developer **Paul Williams**, and our digital consultant **Sam Sherman**, we have optimized not only the look of our site, but also its usability. With our new user-friendly website, it is easier than ever to connect with people from around the world looking for more information about stuttering and the NSA.

For those who can't always make it to our national conference in the summer, you always have the option of attending one of our regional conferences. Locations this year have not been announced just yet, so keep your eyes open because we might just be coming to a city near you!

2018 is turning out to be a very exciting year for the National Stuttering Association. As a non-profit organization, we rely heavily on our generous donors. We'd like to thank all of these donors for going above and beyond to support our work. Our mission is to bring hope and empowerment to children and adults who stutter, their families, and professionals, through support, education, advocacy and research. It is because of our generous donors that we can continue to reach far and wide to improve the lives of people who stutter. For anyone who would like to help us financially to continue our mission, please contact our national office, or fill out the form on our website.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, our fearless leader, **Tammy Flores**, and our Projects Director **Mandy Finstad**, I'd like to wish you all a wonderful and exciting 2018. Stutter proudly! Stutter beautifully! You are not alone, together we are strong! 🗣️



By Joey Stoyas

From a young age I remember having difficulty speaking. I was held back in Kindergarten because of my speech. My most vivid memory of stuttering was in 1st grade. My teacher had me read a sentence while she moved her finger across the words at what seemed a fast pace. In my mind, I knew what the sentence was, but could not get the words out. From this moment on I was in speech therapy at school.

After about two years of therapy, I still did not know exactly what was going on; the speech therapist did not tell me that I had a stutter. I stopped therapy, but whatever was going on continued to linger in the back of my mind. Like a shadow.

WHATEVER WAS GOING ON CONTINUED TO LINGER IN THE BACK OF MY MIND. LIKE A SHADOW.

As I grew older I experienced more situations where I was forced to speak, including those where I was unable to speak due to a combination of blocking and extreme nervousness. Throughout these years I was unable to stand up for myself. I was bullied on my soccer team. I developed incredibly low self-confidence. The shadow was starting to take over, and I no longer felt safe in my own mind.

This shadow was telling me not to walk on the cracks in floors or to turn the light switch on and off a certain number of times. Under all of the stress, I had developed OCD. I began experiencing night terrors. This shadow overpowered me for a long, long time. One day my sister told me that I did not have to listen to the voices. So simple! My OCD and night terrors faded away with time.

High school ended up being a mixed experience for me. I had a love for soccer because whenever I was on the field I felt alive. I would scream and was heard across the entire pitch. I had a voice when I played. My stutter just seemed to vanish. I went on to the local community college wanting to do something with my life, to find my purpose.

After a year in community college, I applied to a state university and was accepted to a major in criminal justice! All I wanted to do was help other people so that they did not have to feel the weight of their own shadows. Moving away from home and everything familiar was extremely difficult, but I persevered. To pay for college I joined ROTC, which became another escape for me and provided me with a good group of friends. Things were good, but I felt like I was trying too hard to fit in and did not even know who I was. My shadow starting butting in again, and I was tired of being trapped in my mind with my shadow. I was given a therapist's number, and it was the hardest phone calls I have ever had to make. Just trying to say my name seemed to take several minutes, but the woman on the other end of the phone waited patiently.

My therapist was the most patient person I have ever met. I emptied myself completely, telling him that I felt hopeless. He told me there was a speech clinic on campus that I might want to check out, and I felt a shift in the wind. I visited the clinic and took a

fluency test, where my fluency rate was a 9 out of 10. In my mind I was thinking how my habit for avoiding certain words and coming off as fluent had always been my top priority. The graduate student and speech-language pathologist looked at me with a lot of interest after the test, as they had noticed that I was avoiding certain words. I had let myself be vulnerable because I did not know what else to do. After that moment we had a long talk and they told me that I have a stutter. I did not believe it at first.

I had been living in denial about my speech, thinking that it would just 'get better over time', or that maybe I was just stressed on a particular day. I thought a stutter was repetitions, and my speech had blocks. That's stuttering? I had so much to learn! I was told to come back again and that they would explain more, but I was in shock to have finally come to the realization that I stutter. My shadow had finally stepped into the light.

I woke up the next day and knew for the first time in my life that my shadow is my stutter. The thing I hate most in my life. I wanted to figure out more about it. To uncover the truth behind it. Over the next year I went to speech therapy and learned about avoidance, speech techniques, and triggers. My habit for avoiding was so deep that I had a difficult time trying new things. Right off the bat, the graduate student told me that I would only get as much out of therapy as I put in. I had to continue to be vulnerable and face my shadow head on. I found a light of hope in myself because I knew I was not alone.

As my last speech session neared, the SLP asked me if I wanted to give a speech in front of one of her classes about what it is like to live with a stutter. I said yes immediately! This was my chance to open up more to people. On the day of the presentation, I did not feel as ready as I thought I would be, but as I began to speak I found that I was enjoying myself. I was smiling and sharing things I had never told many people. The audience asked me a lot of questions at the end, including a gentlemen in the back of room who raised his hand, tears in his eyes, and stated that he also had a stutter, and that I was so brave I was for standing up there. For the first time I truly felt like I had helped someone that day. That I had given my light of hope to someone else.

Shortly after that day, I decided to enlist in the National Guard to help pay for my education, but also to put me in a situation where I was forced to face my shadow. On my first day of basic training I was introducing myself to someone when I started to have a repetition stutter on my name and began twitching a little bit. My buddy thought I was having a heat stroke and tackled me! After I explained that I have a stutter, we laughed it off. Being authentic and wearing my heart on my sleeve paid off.

Returning from training I was ready to get to know myself better and be even more authentic. I wanted to make an impact and share my knowledge. I decided to change my major to speech pathology so that I could help people understand that it is okay to stutter! By learning more about your stutter, you will learn more about yourself. My stutter is just one puzzle piece of who I am.

My next step in life is to continue my education with speech pathology and work closely with the NSA, starting by attending my first conference this summer in Chicago! 🇺🇸

CHAINS THAT BIND

By Ethan S.

The repetition of my thought
Abrupt
Monotonous
The infinite forms it possesses
How it once brought me to my knees
The transformation
The glow it produces
How I've changed in its light
My secret blessing
A butterfly out of its cocoon
Endless potential
A new beginning
Chained no more
Like the amber sun just before my dawn

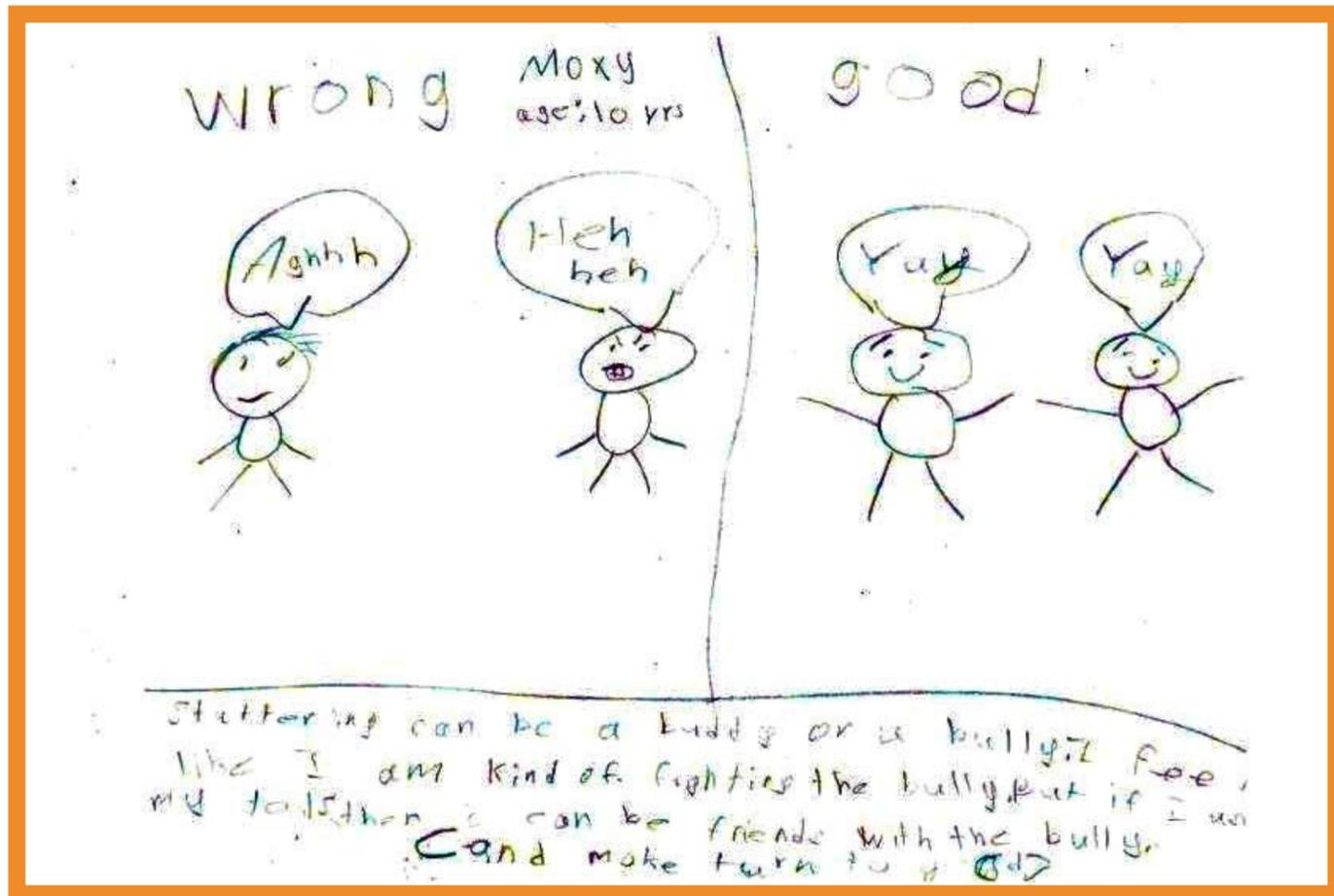
FLUENCY TRAIN

By Cliff Holt, NSA Member of the Year - 1996

Lucky or unlucky, you call it. As people who stutter, we should be considered lucky. We do not stutter all the time, nor do we speak fluently all the time, thus giving us a vivid picture and clear understanding of how it is to be both fluent and disfluent. People with other physical or mental issues cannot claim that! We see both sides of the coin, which gives us an inherent ability to empathize with the stuttering world and to be able to understand what goes on in a world of fluency.

Sometimes we feel as if we will never catch up to the high-speed train of fluency, but does that really matter as long as we feel good about ourselves? Why is fluency our goal? It is not that great. A lot of smooth talkers do not come across in an effective manner. On the other hand, we have had to improvise and learn to utilize other strengths of ours in order to communicate in an effective manner. We can communicate as well - if not better - than most people who speak effortlessly. So stop trying to catch that fluency fast train and go with what you have. Your train is fast enough and your communication abilities are just fine (besides, a faster train is more likely to crash than a controlled train).

By accepting this and considering yourself lucky to be given the gift of the ability to empathize in a true fashion, people will like you much better, you will like yourself better, which is all that matters anyway! ☺



Drawing by Moxy, age 10

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



BRETT CUNNINGHAM

Brett is a 25-year old person who stutters, born in Waxahachie, Texas. He lived there until around the age of 7, until his mother married and they moved a few miles down the road to Ennis, Texas. His family expanded by one step-sister and one step-brother shortly after.

Brett works manufacturing aerosol products at Sherwin Williams, but when he's not there you can find him either out on the lake or up in a tree stand. Brett's hobbies include reading, hanging out with friends and family, and participating in numerous outdoor activities like hunting and fishing. He loves learning about wildlife and the great minds of the past like C.S. Lewis, Isaac Newton, and Gandhi. Brett hopes to one day be a public speaker so he can teach others what he has learned throughout his life.

Brett began stuttering at the age of 5 and only recently found the NSA, in June of 2017. When he was growing up, his mother suggested speech therapy, but he declined because he believed it didn't really have much of an effect on him. After high school however, his speech increased in severity, and he came to the NSA hoping to change his perspective on the way he talked.

Since joining, his outlook on stuttering and other struggles in life has greatly improved. He has learned that avoiding the circumstances that life sometimes throws our way never helps, and embracing those difficult times can lead to wisdom and greater mental strength. The one piece of advice that Brett has for those who are going through a rough patch is: It's okay to be afraid. If there was no fear, then there could be no courage. Accept that you're scared and move forward anyway!



#NSAINCHI18

JULY 4-8



ANNUAL CONFERENCE

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