Dear Friends,

We hope that you and your family have a joyous holiday season!

To paraphrase Charles Dickens, “It is the best of times and the ‘most challenging’ of times.”

The unmet need of deaf and hard of hearing persons in Northern Virginia continues to be great. Extrapolating national statistics, in the three counties that NVRC serves - Arlington, Fairfax and Loudoun - there are over 35,000 deaf people and 260,000 people that have some hearing loss.

NVRC is the only community-based non-profit organization that serves the deaf and hard of hearing communities in Northern Virginia. We have launched new initiatives this year such as reaching out to younger generations of deaf and hard of hearing communities for their input and expanding our use of social media, as well as targeting our ASL interpreting services to new areas where they are needed by our deaf constituents. In addition, we are searching for funding to expand our outreach program to hard of hearing persons whose first language is not English, and to provide skill building training to deaf job seekers to help them be more employable and keep their jobs when hired.

But the harsh reality is our revenues have not been consistent in covering our costs, and we have lost money for each of the last three years. We no longer have ample cash reserves to cover operating losses. Outside of our control, the City of Alexandria stopped funding deaf and hard of hearing outreach during 2015. During 2016, in Interpreting Services, we lost Fairfax and Arlington counties as they went to single source contracts, and we lost ITT as a customer as it went bankrupt. These lost Interpreting Services revenues were over $197,000. This year, we have cut costs, are working to rebuild the Interpreting Services program, and are applying for additional program grants. In addition, we need to increase our Contributions from individual donors and widen our donor base. However, these efforts will take time to yield results.

We are at a critical crossroads and need your help now to keep our operations going.

We are deeply grateful for the contributions that you have made to NVRC in the past. We respectfully request that, at this critical time for NVRC and for the benefit of the deaf and hard of hearing communities, you please reach into the deep well of your generosity and give the largest contribution you can. NVRC Board members and Staff have also made donations to NVRC. Whatever your “stretch” donation would be to NVRC, it would be greatly appreciated.

For 28 years, NVRC has empowered deaf and hard of hearing individuals and their families through education, advocacy and community involvement. We have made dramatic positive changes in people’s lives. We are excitedly laying the groundwork for the future, striving to increase our services and initiatives in the first quarter of the 21st century, and continuing to improve the lives of deaf and hard of hearing persons. We sincerely ask for your generous help now.

Sincerely,

Robert Loftur-Thun
Interim Executive Director

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2016 NVRC Annual Report and Proposed Initiatives

December 3, 2016 NVRC Annual Meeting

Please join us on Saturday morning December 3rd from 9:30 a.m. to noon for our Annual Meeting at NVRC. We'll be serving a delicious pancake breakfast before the meeting which officially begins at 11 a.m., and NVRC members will have the opportunity to vote for at least three new Board members recommended by the NVRC Board. There are two ways to RSVP: go to www.nvrc.org and click on the “RSVP” link on the homepage banner, or send an RSVP with the number of people in your group to info@nvrc.org. We hope to see you there!

Transitions

NVRC’s Board has undergone several changes this year. Donna Grossman passed away very unexpectedly several months ago. Our thoughts and prayers go out to Donna’s family. Fred Williams and his wife Pat have just moved to Arizona, and Tony Battisti will be leaving the area in January. We thank Fred, his wife Pat, and Tony for their many years of service and support to NVRC. We’ve also said some goodbyes to our Staff. Joan Cassidy, Loudoun County Outreach Specialist, retired in July after 18 years of service. Marla Dougherty, Arlington County Outreach Specialist, left NVRC in July, and SB Morgaine, our Interpreting Services Program Manager, is moving to the Pacific Northwest this month. Our heartfelt thanks go to Joan, Marla and SB for their service, talents and dedication to NVRC’s mission. And we are delighted to welcome Andaleeb Elayan, NVRC’s new Finance and Administration Manager. Andaleeb is a May graduate of Gallaudet University with a degree in Accounting and is doing a great job! Her first language is ASL, and we are looking forward to having you meet her at our Annual Meeting. We also welcome Leah Atwa, who will be our new half-time Interpreting Services Manager on a contractor basis.

Financial Challenges

While we are very excited about our new initiatives to better serve the deaf and hard of hearing communities and chart NVRC’s course for the future, it is also the most challenging of times financially. NVRC has lost over $60,000 per year for the last three years, FY2014, FY2015, and FY2016. Our Contributions, Interpreting Services, and Special Event revenue have not been at a level to sufficiently cover our organizational costs. Outside of our control, the City of Alexandria stopped funding deaf and hard of hearing outreach during FY2015. During FY 2016, our current year, in Interpreting Services, we lost Fairfax and Arlington counties as they went to single source contracts, and we lost ITT as a customer as it went bankrupt. These lost Interpreting Services revenues were over $197,000.

Our contracted Outreach Services to Fairfax, Arlington, Loudoun County and Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, represent over $410,000 in revenue, and are the foundation of our revenue base, but they are not enough to cover all of our organizational costs. This year, we have cut costs, are working to build back up the Interpreting Services program, and are applying for additional grants. In addition, we need to increase our Contributions from individual donors and widen our donor base. These programs will take time to grow.

We have worked hard since July 2015 in cleaning up the accounting records for FY2015 and working with our auditors. FY2015 audited financial statements were finished in September of this year, we have completed FY2016 accounting work, and are supplying the auditors with accounting information for FY2016, for the year ending June 30, 2016. As December 2016, the Board will receive timely monthly financial statements for FY2017, which began July 1, 2016.

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Exploring New Opportunities with Younger Generations

We are all enthusiastically looking to the future. The NVRC Board, Staff and I are very excited about the new opportunities that NVRC is pursuing. As part of our strategic planning process, in addition to reaching out to our existing deaf and hard of hearing friends who have also been loyal supporters for years, we are conducting focus groups and surveys to reach out to younger generations. The deaf and hard of hearing communities have been significantly impacted by the communications technology revolution, and we hope to better understand the needs of younger generations and to develop NVRC programs to better serve their needs. We are also redesigning our web site and increasing the use of social media channels such as Twitter, and Facebook, as well as producing video for NVRC’s YouTube channel.

Demographic Changes – Opportunities for Multicultural Outreach Expansion

Northern Virginia has also undergone a dramatic demographic change over the years. Over 320,000 people speak Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, Chinese and Arabic in Fairfax, Arlington and Loudoun counties. NVRC is searching for funding to pilot the NVRC Multicultural H.E.A.R. (Hearing Education, Advocacy, & Resources) program, which will provide Spanish translation of NVRC outreach materials to people who are hard of hearing, as well as provide Spanish interpreters for NVRC outreach visits, technology open houses, and one-on-one follow up consultations.

Deaf Unemployment – Opportunities for Special Educational Programs

Unemployment is a serious economic problem with the deaf community. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate in the U.S. in 2014 was approximately 6.5%. According to the 2015 Annual Disabilities Statistics Compendium, in 2014, the unemployment rate for deaf and hard of hearing people was 49.7%. NVRC is searching for funds to launch the Deaf Jobseeker Support Program that will provide communication, workforce and job seeking skills to deaf individuals in order to empower them to be more employable. The program, if funded, will also teach basic skills in math, financial literacy, workplace procedures, organization, job research, resume writing and job interview techniques. There would also be a Deaf Worker Support Network program where newly employed deaf workers can receive support to keep their jobs, a challenge in an environment where fellow workers hear.

Interpreting Services Initiative – Opportunities for Program Growth

I have been excited to work with SB these past several months on a new marketing plan for our Interpreting Services. We will be reaching out to local small business owners, medical facilities and colleges to let them know that NVRC has interpreting services. NVRC is the only non-profit provider of interpreting services in this area and we want to get the word out about our Interpreting Services! We would also like to reach out to our Deaf membership and ask them to remember us when there are interpreting opportunities in the community. We are a small staff and rely on word of mouth and community support, so please reach out to us if you know of a place we should contact. We are also offering outreach to businesses as well to provide them with information about how to make their business more welcoming to deaf and hard of hearing people in Northern Virginia.

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I have been working with SB and Leah Atwa, an experienced contractor interpreter with NVRC, to continue to move the program forward. SB’s last day of work is today, November 23. Leah has joined NVRC as a half-time Interpreting Services Manager contractor for four months while we market test and assess the Interpreting Services program’s new initiatives. Having a half time contractor will enable us to break even with a lower Interpreting Services revenue target, and we will strive to steadily rebuild the Interpreting Services program. We are also very grateful for the advice and guidance of Jan Nishimura who was a co-founder of SLA interpreting services and is a long time pillar of the interpreting community and the NVRC community.

Hearing Aid Market and Technology Innovations – Opportunities for Advocacy

The President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST), in its October 2015 report, identified age-related hearing loss as a serious national problem. Age-related hearing loss affects many Americans, with older adults particularly at risk. The market for hearing aids is characterized by high cost and low innovation. The PCAST report identified market, technology and regulatory innovations that could potentially dramatically lower the cost of hearing aids and hearing assistive devices. NVRC, as a community-based organization, is exploring ways that we can help facilitate the dialogue among the hard of hearing community, legislators, and hearing healthcare providers.