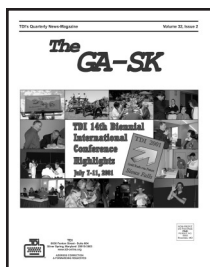




Executive Director's Message

Claude L. Stout

“The quality and quantity of captioning in the future will depend on how much we participate with letters, fax, emails, phone calls, or face-to-face meetings.”



On the Cover

The TDI's 14th Biennial International Conference and Expo was an educational and entertaining event. The photos are shown with captions on pages 6 through 8. All conference photo credits go to Debbie Kuglitsch of CSD unless otherwise noted.

Captioning - For a Total Television Viewing Experience!

Here is a multiple-choice question for our GA-SK readers: Which scenarios below have you experienced in the past year?

- A. You were disappointed that a certain TV program was broadcast without captions.
- B. You noticed there were errors in the captions, or inconsistent feed of captions.
- C. You experienced a sudden cut off of captions near the end of an intriguing, exciting TV program.
- D. You had to wait for return of captions because the TV station used crawls or graphics to announce school closings or weather warnings.
- E. You read in the TV Guide about a TV program with captions, but when it was broadcast, it didn't come with any.
- F. All of the above
- G. None of the above

If your answer is A, B, C, D, E or F, have you brought these captioning deficiencies to your local TV broadcaster's attention? If you receive cable or satellite service, did you also inform your service provider? If so, did you hear back from any of them?

If not, TDI encourages you to advocate for yourself and your neighbors in your community. It doesn't take much time and effort to file an informal complaint on a captioning issue. You can easily do it from home and there are various ways to file it such as by fax, email, or a traditional letter through the Post Office. You could call on the TTY or through the relay service but we recommend you also follow up with a printed letter. Having something on paper gives you some documentation on the complaint in case you need to follow up with more discussion. A TTY or voice transcript of the phone conversation with the local television broadcaster or provider usually cannot be used as evidence in court.

When you file an informal complaint, the FCC asks that you cover three factors:

1. The name of the video programming distributor against whom the complaint is alleged (e.g.: the company that provides you cable or satellite service and the local TV station on which the program aired);
2. The date and time of the alleged violation;

Continued on page 15

TDI Board of Directors	
Northeast Region	Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont Tom Driscoll — TomDriscoll@tdi-online.org
Southeast Region	Alabama, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia Joseph Duarte — JoeDuarte@tdi-online.org
Midwest Region	Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, Tennessee, Wisconsin Ellen Roth — EllenRoth@tdi-online.org
Central Region	Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Wyoming Lori Breslow — LoriBreslow@tdi-online.org
West Region	Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington Larry Littleton, Vice President — LarryLittleton@tdi-online.org
Members-at-Large	Dr. Roy E. Miller, President (MO) — RoyMiller@tdi-online.org Carol Slinye (MO) — CarolSlinye@tdi-online.org

Executive Director's Message - Continued from page 2

3. Details about the problem so that the distributor (cable company or the local TV station) may correct or otherwise respond to the complaint.

Be sure to include your address on the letter itself, then wait a few weeks for a response.

Just to give you an idea how it works when such a situation occurs: Suppose I have a TV at home with cable service from Comcast Cable, doing business in Montgomery County. One Sunday night, I turn on my TV to watch "The Practice", a courtroom drama shown on ABC. To my dismay, there were no captions on this program one Sunday night.

I then go to my computer, log on to AOL and look up on the web for WJLA, the local ABC affiliate for Washington, DC at: www.wjla.com. Then I looked for "Contact Us" and clicked on the link to see an email message board, and wrote them a short email message. I also checked Comcast's website at www.comcast.com and sent the same message to Comcast. Here goes my message:

Hi WJLA-7 and Comcast,

I subscribe to cable services with Comcast, and Comcast carries WJLA-7 on Channel 27. I enjoy watching The Practice every Sunday and it is regularly captioned. However, last Sunday night I was ready to watch the season premiere at 10:00p.m., and was disappointed to find no captions at all. I would like for you to check and find out why they were not provided for last Sunday night's episode.

I also would appreciate hearing from both of you, and I am sending copies of this message to two other contacts: The Federal Communications Commission access@fcc.gov, and a nonprofit advocacy organization of which I am a member, Telecommunications for the Deaf, Inc. (TDI) info@tdi-online.org

Thanks,

John Doe

12345 Main Lane, Villetown, MD 54321

For example, here is what I found from WJLA's website its contact information in case I want to send a letter or a fax, or make a phone call:

By Mail: WJLA-TV, 3007 Tilden St. NW, Wash., DC 20008

By Phone: Voice: (202) 364-7777

By Fax: (202) 364-1943

Comcast's contact information:

By Mail: Comcast Cable of Montgomery County
20 W. Gude Dr., Rockville, MD 20850

By Phone: Voice: (301) 424-4400

As you can see, it doesn't take long to write a short note, and send it out. It is important that you address a captioning problem

with both the television station, and your cable or satellite service provider at the same time. Do it as soon as possible after the problem happens.

Sometimes captions are missing due to several factors, not necessarily confined to the technical operations of the local TV broadcaster. Engineers at your local station have a monitor, which captures the signal as it is transmitted. The problem may be traced to the transmission of captions from the cable company or satellite service provider. The industry's awareness and commitment to addressing a captioning problem will be as good as to how often we speak up and let them know, etc.

Also, please remember to bring up your complaint diplomatically with the TV station and cable company authorities. Very often, they are anxious to serve their customers, and do not intentionally cause problems for us.

Not only should we send the TV stations and cable companies some constructive feedback when we see a problem. Also, if we have been happy and impressed with the captions on a favorite TV programs, we should take the courtesy to thank the TV stations and their providers for producing good captioning.

Some TV stations get funding from corporations and foundations to provide captioning, and we need to take the time to send a word of thanks to these corporations and foundations. Those letters will help secure even more funding for future programs. For example, Verizon sponsors the real-time closed captioning services for WJLA's local news, weather, and sports broadcasts.

Here are resources you can check to advocate for better TV closed captioning services:

www.fcc.gov/cib/consumerfacts/closedcaption.html

www.captions.org/

Complaints or messages of gratitude are important to those in the television broadcast and cable industries, as well as producers of those TV programs. Because of the feedback they get from us, they have the incentive to reallocate their resources into captioning of their programming. They will have additional documentation to qualify for additional funding, or to justify acquisition of new technical equipment to provide quality captioning to our TV sets. Often, advertisers and sponsors of those programs will depend on such feedback from viewers. Although they are not required by law to caption their commercials, those letters provide evidence of viewers in the marketplace who do rely on captions. The quality and quantity of captioning in future will depend on how much we participate with letters, fax, emails, phone calls, or face-to-face meetings.

Never underestimate the power of an individual consumer such as yourself. Collectively, we go to the polls to elect certain individuals for political office, primarily because we know they understand our particular needs as individuals with hearing loss, and vote our way on a variety of issues. We exercise our buying power with the income we make and buy certain products and services that meet our needs. Let us remember that we can only seek for quality and abundance of captioning on TV programs with letters, fax, emails, phone calls, including constructive criticism or "pats on the back". **SK**