

Make your connection...

Vermont Relay

VERMONT TELECOMMUNICATIONS RELAY SERVICE

Summer 2018



Vermont Relay Is for Everyone

By Jorika Stockwell

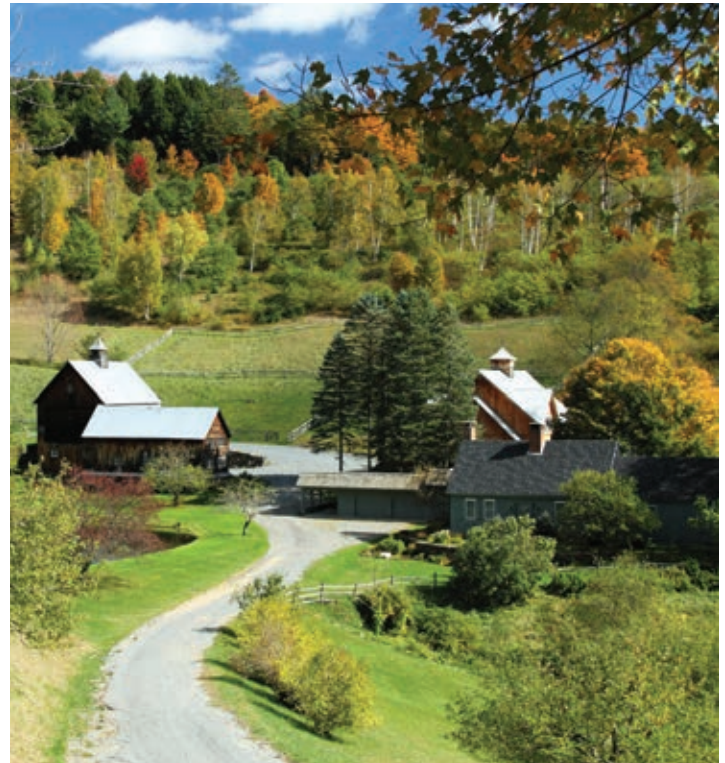
Vermont Relay provides telecommunications relay services and products for a variety of people, who share the same feedback time after time: Vermont Relay and captioned telephones have allowed individuals to regain independence beyond their wildest imagination.

People who are losing their hearing oftentimes don't want to face it, or even admit it. Many fear getting hearing aids, resist wearing the hearing aids, or using assistive devices such as amplified or captioned phones. This is a common challenge, especially with the many misconceptions and stigmas surrounding hearing loss. Add the fact that many don't know where to turn for guidance, and it becomes a major life challenge.

A large number of the people who have contacted Vermont Relay over the years are *not* people with hearing loss; rather, they are the children, grandchildren, family members, or friends of a loved one who has hearing loss.

A woman approached the Vermont Relay exhibition booth last year, drawn to the captioned phone on display. She shared that her mother lived in the same old farmhouse for the past 60 years. Her father had, unfortunately, died the previous spring, so her mother was on her own. When the father was still alive, their three children made sure that one of them called each day to check in.

Now that their father was gone, they were unable to make calls since their mother could not hear the phone ring most of the time, let alone have a conversation on the phone. When one of the children did call, there would be no answer, so the nearest



sibling would drive an hour round-trip to check in. It was getting to be difficult and costly, and usually unnecessary. With this inconvenience, the three children discussed having their mother move in with one of them or to a senior-living apartment, although they knew she wanted to stay in her beloved home.

We gave the daughter information on the captioned phone and how to get one at no cost. When their mother's application to the Vermont Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program was approved, she received a free captioned phone and a flashing light that let her know the

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www.vermontrelay.com

Vermont Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program

The Vermont Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program (VTEDP) provides Vermonters with disabilities a phone or computer to connect with others. Since the cost of adaptive equipment can be high, this program helps level the financial playing field for Vermonters with disabilities. A good quality amplified landline phone costs between \$80 and \$200, much more than standard phones in many retail stores.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 led to the establishment of telecommunication equipment distribution (TED) program programs in 48 states (Delaware and New York do not have this program). Eleven states met in 1997 to set up a national organization, the Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Association (TEDPA). There are no federal guidelines for TED programs, so each state may have different guidelines, procedures, equipment, and application process. At the annual TEDPA conference and throughout the year, states share ideas, and work together on state and federal regulatory issues. The TEDPA website, at www.tedpa.org,

is a great resource for anyone looking for information either for themselves or relatives in other states.

Vermont's legislature established VTEDP in 2002, with funds from the universal service charge that appears on Vermonters' phone bills. From 2004 until 2014, the Vermont Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VCDHH) in Brattleboro was selected to manage and administer the program. When VCDHH closed in 2014, the Vermont Center for Independent Living took on the program and currently manages VTEDP.

Vermont's program is unique in its small size, and in that it broadly defines the list of disabilities that qualify people for the program, and allows a wide variety of equipment to be distributed.

If you know Vermonters with disabilities who have difficulty using the phone, please have them visit www.vtedp.org or contact VTEDP at (800) 639-1522 Voice/TTY.

About Vermont Relay

Vermont Relay is a free service for all Vermonters, connecting individuals who are deaf, deaf-blind, or hard of hearing, or have a speech disability, with users of standard telephones. Vermont Relay makes communication simple, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Using Vermont Relay is easy. Either the hearing or the deaf person dials 711 to reach a specially trained operator known as a communications assistant (CA). The CA acts as an impartial, two-way "relay," reading typed messages to the hearing person and typing responses back to the deaf caller.

To learn more about Vermont Relay, visit www.vermontrelay.com.

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phone was ringing. Although she was a bit resistant to this newfangled phone, she realized quickly that it was easy to use. She positioned the flashing light so she could see it even if she had the TV or radio volume cranked way up.

Their mother discovered that she could now make her own appointments instead of depending on her kids. Considering how fiercely independent she was, she loved not having to ask for help. Best of all, she could have daily conversations with her children and grandchildren, and even reconnect with her sister in Florida for weekly hour-long chats. All this was possible without having to make her move out of her house.

At Vermont Relay, stories about how Vermont Relay has allowed individuals to continue their independent lifestyles are shared again and again. If you know someone who is struggling to adapt to hearing loss, let us know. Vermont Relay offers several low-cost (or even no-cost), easy solutions that will help people reclaim their lives.

Dos and Don'ts for Ear Health

Your ears are complex organs. They work to detect, transmit, and transduce sound to your brain, while also helping you maintain a sense of balance. When damage occurs to any part of the ear, you may experience hearing loss. While not all hearing loss can be prevented, you can take steps to protect your ears — and your hearing! — with these dos and don'ts.

DO:

Do use earplugs. If you will be in a place with loud sounds, like a construction site or music concert, use earplugs or earmuffs to help muffle loud noises.

Do turn down the volume.

Do you enjoy listening to music or watching television? Be sure the volume is at a safe level. Exposure to dangerously loud sounds with or without headphones can put you at risk for noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL).

Do keep your ears dry. Too much moisture can invite bacteria into your ear canal, causing swimmer's ear or other ear infections that can affect your hearing. After you bathe or swim, gently towel-dry your ears. If you can feel water inside your ear, tilt your head to the side and gently tug on the earlobe to let the water out.

Do exercise. You may be surprised to learn that a healthy heart can help you maintain your hearing health. In fact, cardiovascular exercise is shown to increase blood flow to your head, which can keep your ears functioning optimally.

Do get regular hearing screenings. While you can get a hearing test at any age, experts recommend that you schedule a screening with an audiologist every ten years until age 50, then every three years after.



DON'T:

Don't use cotton swabs to clean your ears. Inserting cotton swabs or any other foreign objects into your ears can damage your ear canal or eardrum and can lead to hearing loss. Instead, use a washcloth with soap and water to clean the outer ear. Contrary to popular belief, the ear canal does not need

cleaning. If you have bothersome ear wax build-up, your doctor can safely remove it for you.

Don't smoke. Smokers are 70 percent more likely to suffer from hearing loss than non-smokers. If you smoke, talk to your doctor about patches, pills, and other stop smoking aids that may help you protect your ears by kicking the habit.

Don't spend too much time in noisy environments. If possible, try to limit the amount of time you spend at loud restaurants, bars, concerts, and sporting events. If you find yourself in a noisy

environment, use earplugs to protect your hearing health.

Don't let hearing loss keep you from connecting with loved ones. If you experience hearing loss that is preventing you from enjoying telephone conversations, reconnect with a CapTel captioned telephone that shows captions of everything the caller says.

Following these hearing protection tips can help you properly care for your ears at any age.

To learn how you can stay connected to loved ones with a CapTel captioned telephone for hearing loss, visit CapTel.com.



CapTel[®]
Captioned Telephone

For more information, visit www.captel.com.

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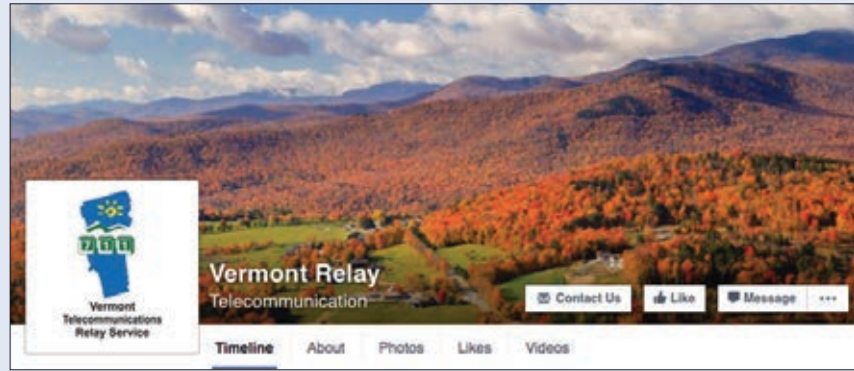
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