



Stuttering in a Foreign Language

KEVIN O'NEILL



In my day-to-day, English-speaking life, it's fair to say that stuttering is a non-issue except for rare blocks when I'm particularly tired or stressed, or speaking in an important situation like giving a talk, or being questioned by an immigration officer.

When it comes to foreign languages, though, there's major regression. Before a recent trip to Croatia with my wife I decided I tried to tackle this fear directly. I learned some basic Croatian from language CDs and a phrase book to prepare, and on the trip I was able to successfully execute many short conversations – such as buying bus tickets or asking for directions. But I stuttered quite badly at times, with avoidance behaviors and struggle even for simple phrases like “hello” or “how are you?”

What was going on here? Had stuttering “returned”? Was there some complex neurological interaction with foreign language processing?

I think the mechanism was much simpler than that. Let's think about some of the factors that might lead to stuttering when speaking a foreign language:

- **Lack of confidence.** I could speak a few basic phrases, but otherwise had big doubts about pronunciation and word choice.
- **New sounds.** When speaking in English I have a lot of practice forming sounds fluently, but when speaking a language I have to produce and connect sounds I'm

not accustomed to (like a rolling “r”).

- **Defensiveness.** As a foreigner, I sometimes felt like I didn't deserve to speak, and didn't want to bother people with my bad Croatian (or to revert to English).
- **Perfectionism.** I didn't want to risk making major blunders in a new language, thereby embarrassing myself.

Taken together these factors led to performance anxiety and avoidance. Sometimes when hailing a cab or walking into a restaurant, my wife and I would stall, not making eye contact and hoping the person on the other side of the conversation would engage us first. We didn't want to plunge into English, but were nervous about speaking bad Croatian. For my wife, the avoidance didn't result in stuttering – she just wouldn't speak at all. But for me, given my history and physiology, avoidance is like oxygen for any spark of difficult speech.

In my experience, stuttering happens when there's tension (or indecision) between wanting to say something and holding back. When you're nervous about speaking but still want to eat dinner or get to the airport on time, you're riding that edge. This was true even more so for casual speech, like asking the taxi driver how his day was going. On one hand this was pointless and unnecessary speech with plenty of chance to screw up. On the other hand I wanted to practice my Croatian and to be seen as friendly and charming (i.e., not as an “ugly American”). The tension was perfectly balanced, and of course my stuttering was worst in those situations.

continued on page 7

Genetics Research Making Progress

DR. DENNIS DRAYNA



Researchers at the National Institutes of Health have recently made intriguing discoveries that further our understanding of how genetic factors can cause some cases of

stuttering. In a paper published in the Journal of Biological Chemistry, a collaborative group led by Dennis Drayna, Ph.D. at the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) and Stuart Kornfeld, M.D. at Washington University in St. Louis, showed how mutations in the GNPTAB and NAGPA genes exert their effects within cells. Mutations in these genes had previously been shown to be associated with stuttering, both in large families with multiple cases of stuttering as well as in unrelated individuals with a family history of stuttering. These genes encode enzymes that play a role in cell metabolism, helping the cell to recycle components from old cells that can be used to make new ones. These mutations appear to reduce the activity of the enzymes by about half, and also result in the enzymes being misrouted in the cell so that they fail to end up in their proper place.

“Our previous studies in families showed that mutations in these genes occur in people who stutter, and not in normally fluent individuals” said Dr. Drayna, “Now we understand exactly what the consequences of these mutations are for the cells of the body. We're fortunate to have Dr. Kornfeld,

continued on page 3

WHAT'S INSIDE

Come Celebrate Our 35th Anniversary	2
Happy New Year	2
Chapter Spotlight	3
Stutter Social	4
Chapter News	6

Odds & Ends	8
Support the NSA in the Workplace.	8



Be sure to check out 'WeStutter' on Facebook and Twitter today!

www.WeStutter.org



Come Celebrate Our 35th Anniversary!

The National Stuttering Association's Annual Conference is in sunny St. Petersburg, Florida this year, on July 4-8, 2012. Join us for 'Freedom of Speech at the Beach!'

Already planning to attend our Annual Conference, July 4-8, 2012, in St. Petersburg, Florida? There are numerous things to look forward to such as inspiring interactive workshops, motivational speakers, and countless opportunities to network with fellow stutterers and speech-language pathologists. Not to mention our live charity auction and closing banquet where you get to show your moves on the dance floor after our catered dinner. Here are just a few items that will help with your planning (complete registration information will be sent out at the beginning of February):

Hotel Information

Early Bird rates are back! Book your room before March 31, 2012 to secure our discounted rate of \$129 per night. (From April 1st rates will be \$149 per night). Visit WeStutter.org to make your reservation at the NSA conference rate now.

The showplace of the waterfront, the Vinoy® Renaissance St. Petersburg, Florida Resort & Golf Club features newly renovated guest rooms, and is the only luxury hotel on the West Coast of Florida with the combination of a private marina, 18-hole golf course, and 12-court tennis complex. Boasting an ideal location on Tampa Bay and just minutes from the excitement of St. Pete Beach, guests of the Vinoy Resort in St. Petersburg, Florida will never lack for fun things to do. A fine example of 1920's Mediterranean Revival architecture, the Vinoy has earned a National Register of Historic Places designation. Showcasing elegant surroundings, flawless service, innovative restaurants and exquisite meeting space, this resort makes every guest feel special. Retreat to spacious rooms that combine the elegance of the past with the amenities of the present, creating a truly unique feel at this legendary hotel.

Master Class Series

This year we're switching things up! Instead of hosting a separate Research Symposium on Tuesday and Wednesday before the conference, we're offering our 'Master Class Series'

of workshops designed for professionals to earn up to 12 hours of ASHA-approved continuing education units (1.2 CEUs). CEU sessions begin on Wednesday morning, July 4, at 9AM.

This year, special attention has been given to providing speech-language pathologists a wide variety of session formats and experiences in which they can earn ASHA-approved CEUs both during the conference and at pre-conference activities. We suggest that SLPs arrive on Tuesday for the Pre-Conference Reception, attend Master Classes on Wednesday and Thursday, and then stay for the rest of the conference, with more CEU and social/networking opportunities through Saturday.

Four 3-hour Master Classes, offered by expert clinicians and researchers in stuttering, will provide speech-language pathologists with an in-depth understanding of important topics/areas related to intervention for stuttering. There will be ample opportunity to discuss controversies, explore cases, gather therapy ideas, and interact with known experts in the field of stuttering treatment. Non-professionals with a background in the basics of stuttering treatment are also welcome to register. Each Master Class offers .3 ASHA CEU's (in addition to our regular conference offerings).

Want to Present A Workshop?

Workshop proposals are now being accepted for this year's conference in St. Petersburg, Florida. You can request a Workshop Submission form from the national office at (800) 937-8888 or email us at: Info@WeStutter.org. The form is also available on the conference section of our website, WeStutter.org.

The deadline to receive proposals is May 15, 2012, and the primary contact individual will be notified by May 15, 2012. Schedules are subject to change.

Scholarships Available

Need help getting to the conference this year? Thanks to the generosity of corporate sponsors and many of our members, we are

pleased to announce that scholarships are available to provide financial assistance for people who stutter who would like to attend our annual conference. Our goal is that families/adults who cannot afford to join us will now be able to attend. If you would like more information regarding scholarships please let us know by emailing Tammy at TFlores@WeStutter.org. Speech therapists are also asked to help identify families who would benefit from this assistance.

The NSA is grateful to the generosity of the many individuals and organizations which allows us to offer this financial help. If you or your company would like to make a donation, please email Tammy at TFlores@WeStutter.org for more information. 

Happy New Year

TAMMY FLORES, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The start of a new year symbolizes different things to each of us. For many it is a time to reflect on what we have accomplished in the past year, while for others it is a time to think about what we will do differently in the year to come. For me it is a time to think about each of you and how grateful I am for the privilege of knowing you.

The NSA is constantly changing and growing, and we try to acknowledge each of you who have helped us throughout the year. We hope that you know that without your support, the NSA would not be able to change the lives of so many. We are growing and developing every day thanks to the ideas and the energy that each one of you brings. All of us working together: professionals, parents advocating for their children, and adults wanting to make a difference for the next generation; we can all reflect on the previous year knowing that we have made a difference in the life of someone who stutters.

Best wishes from me to you for a happy, safe, and healthy New Year! 

CHAPTER SPOTLIGHT

JULIE LAMMEL, NASHVILLE CHAPTER LEADER



Nine members of the Nashville NSA were in Fort Worth in July of 2011. We not only enjoyed learning new insights on stuttering but also making new friends. The highlight of the conference for us was, of course, winning the 2011 Chapter of the Year award. 15-year old Philip, the youngest Nashville member at the conference, accepted the award on behalf of our chapter.

We won the award based on our phenomenal growth in membership, due in large part to our chapter's promotion of the Academy Award-winning movie, *The King's Speech*. Members were given permission to have an informational table on opening weekend at the theatre. A great number of people asked questions and took NSA brochures. Teachers, medical doctors, parents, and grandparents were all interested in our booth. We even found a new member in the theatre! We were also pleased that theatre employees wore our

"If You Stutter You Are Not Alone" buttons.

A few of our members were invited to speak to the audience before the movie began. SLP's gave updated info on stuttering therapy and a few of our stuttering members gave tips on how to respond when meeting a person who stutters. Accomplished athlete and honor roll student Philip received a standing ovation when he looked into the crowd and said "I am the face of a person who stutters".

Not wanting to lose our upward momentum, the Nashville NSA continues to work to educate the public on stuttering. Member Michael Johnson spoke on a local radio show to celebrate International Stuttering Awareness Day. Michael got the prime 7:30 am drive time. He spoke about how stuttering has affected his life and what the Nashville NSA means to him. Michael told our Chapter that he had flashbacks to *The King's Speech* and King George VI looking into the microphones when he saw all of the lights and the equipment in the studio.

Our members speak 3 times a year to the speech pathology classes at local universities; once at Middle Tennessee State University undergrads, once to Tennessee State University graduate students; and once to the undergraduates. Members feel that the speaking engagements are very empowering and also jokingly say about the speeches that they are "What I wish I had told my speech pathologist!"

Nashville NSA members take turns facilitating each meeting. Each facilitator

introduces new members and guests, asks members to share any announcements, and then guides us in that meeting's program. We believe that this helps each of us take ownership in the group, as well as share the workload.

Members are now working to build enthusiasm for the 2012 Annual Conference in St. Petersburg, Florida. We hope to top our attendance of nine members in 2011.



GENETICS RESEARCH MAKING PROGRESS *continued*

a distinguished medical geneticist and a world leader in the study of these enzymes, working with us."

Another recent study suggests that we may be able to identify an additional gene that can cause stuttering. In a report published in the journal *Human Genetics*, a gene that causes stuttering in at least one family from Pakistan has been localized to chromosome 3. Chromosomes are small structures inside cells that contain our genes. Researchers in Dr. Drayna's group at the

NIDCD found genetic markers in one area on chromosome 3 are inherited along with stuttering in this family. This indicates that a causative gene resides somewhere nearby on this chromosome. Since none of the previously identified stuttering genes reside on this chromosome, finding this gene will tell us something new about the causes of stuttering. The researchers are currently hard at work on this task, and look forward to being able to announce its discovery soon.

"Finding the causes of stuttering is a very difficult task," Dr. Drayna says, "but genetic studies seem to offer hope for understanding a significant fraction of the cases. Many NSA members are participants in our studies, and their participation has been a great benefit to our research. Our long term goal is to translate our discoveries into better methods for the treatment of stuttering, and we're looking forward to being able to give back to the stuttering community." 



Earlier last month our Editor, Mandy Finstad, connected with Daniele (Dani) Rossi and David Resnick, creators of Stutter Social, the hippest and hottest online hangout spot for PWS. Here's what they had to say about it:

MF: Describe to us what Stutter Social is.

DAVID: Stutter Social is an organization that connects people who stutter through group video chats. We use Google+ Hangouts because they're free and it's easy to set up an account. We host 3-4 Hangouts per week right now. They last around 1 1/2 hours and people can come and go as they please. Discussion often revolves around stuttering-related issues, but sometimes we just chat about our day or a good movie. The best part of it is empathetically resonating with other people who stutter. It's a feeling that NSA members know about because we get that in our chapter meetings and at the conference. Now we're working on creating that experience for people all over the world and making it very convenient and accessible.

DANI: It's a state of mind. Stutter Social is a website dedicated to showing available video group chats on Google+ for people who stutter.

MF: How/where did you two meet; what initially gave you the idea to collaborate on such a project?

DAVID: Daniele and I had our first meaningful conversation at the 2011 NSA Conference in Ft. Worth. We connected at Nina G's comedy show and talked about digital media and web design. It was clear that we were both tech-heads who loved the NSA and wanted to do our part in supporting people who stutter. After the conference, Dani interviewed me for his podcast. I remember talking about how super strong the camaraderie was at the conference this year and how I really didn't want that to end just because I was back home in LA. I know I wasn't alone in having that desire—Dani certainly voiced his agreement and others did too. I think that was the birth of Stutter Social—the acknowledgement that we didn't want the conference to end! Of course, we also have our local chapters, but sometimes people can't make the chapter

meetings and sometimes we're left wanting more than the once a month meetings.

I can't remember the exact order of events, but I know I got an invitation from Cathy Olish to participate in a group video chat that used some other service. I couldn't make that meeting, and then shortly after I got an invite from either Daniele or possibly Mitch Trichon to participate in a group video chat on Skype. I made the Skype meeting, but it was fraught with technical difficulties. I suggested to the group that we move the chat over to a Google+ Hangout because the technology was set up to facilitate just this sort of thing. Dani hosted one or two Hangouts and that's when I got the idea to create an organization around it. Stutter Social would take what we were already starting to do and make it more organized and accessible to a wider audience.

DANI: In a dark, dark alley after midnight. David was chasing counter-agents and I just happened to be passing by. Then.... I saw her across a crowded room. I knew I just had to have her. Oh wait, wrong story.

After we got back home from the NSA conference in Fort Worth this summer there was a lot of talk among our mutual friends about the possibility of starting up a video chat group to keep in touch. We tried to avoid using paid software so we experimented with Skype but like David said, we found Google+ Hangouts (the name of their video chat service) the best option.

MF: So how does it work? How do participants go about joining in?

DAVID: The first step is creating a Google+ account, which is Google's social network. You don't have to display any personal information, but you do need to have an account. Once you have an account, you can join a Hangout anytime. The link to join the Hangout isn't available until the Hangout starts (this is something we're working on changing), but once the Hangout starts, we

post the link. Simply click the link and you'll automatically join the Hangout. (You also need the Google voice and video plug-in, which if you don't have, Google will prompt you to install before putting you in the Hangout.) Getting started with Stutter Social takes around five minutes.

DANI: You can be notified of Hangouts in several ways:

- On the Stutter Social website at <http://stuttersocial.com>. We have a calendar of events and post links to Hangouts in progress.
- On the Stutter Social Facebook group
- Via the Stutter Social Twitter account at twitter.com/stuttersocial
- Notifications also show up in your stream on Google+ (a "stream" is similar to the news feed feature on Facebook).
- Email notifications. You can sign up for them on <http://stuttersocial.com>.

MF: Tell us a little bit about your motivation for/goal in creating such a group?

DAVID: Our goal is to proliferate the message of 'If you stutter, you're not alone.' This message comes directly from the NSA and through Stutter Social, we can continue to help people who stutter feel connected. The Hangouts are fun and emotionally rewarding, which is what keeps me motivated on a daily basis. I've seen how they improve my life and the lives of so many others. We get 5-10 people in every Hangout from all over the world and they keep coming back, along with new people each week, so I know we're doing something right!

In addition to our goals of reaching people who stutter, we're also doing our part in raising public awareness about stuttering. At the 2011 NSA Conference, the keynote speaker David Seidler said that "the story of stuttering is the story of bravery". Fellow PWS Aman Kumar then asked Mr. Seidler "what can we do now to move this message forward?" Mr. Seidler responded that it's up

to each one of us to spread the word about stuttering. I was inspired by those words (I remember taking notes in my iPhone as he spoke) and I'm sure Mr. Seidler's message was a part of my motivation for creating Stutter Social.

DANI: We wanted to create a place where fellow stutterers could meet and keep in touch, practice their speech tools if they like it and feel connected with a stuttering community. Some places around the world do not have speech therapy or an organization like the NSA. So an online supportive community is the next best thing.

Our ultimate goal is to create a 24-hour chat group with Hangouts from all over the world.

MF: You've recently gotten some press for Stutter Social; did you ever think that it would grow to this size, this quickly?

DAVID: I had a feeling all along that we were doing something with the potential to become popular, but I had NO IDEA it would explode like it did. It was a happy accident, actually, that led to the exposure. A group of Google+ aficionados were using a third party tool called Hangout Canopy (written by a friend to Stutter Social, Brian Aldridge) to go "Hangout Hopping" and they found their way into my Hangout (we now take measures to prevent this, but I'm really glad we didn't on that day!) All of a sudden eight more people were there, chatting away like they knew each other. I asked everyone to introduce themselves and as they're going around I noticed that none of them stuttered. I politely asked, "Um, just to make sure, you all know this is a Stutter Social Hangout, right?" They had no idea what I was talking about. So I explained, and their reactions were shocking. These were the technorati of Google+ (people who have between 5,000 and 500,000 followers) and they said that Stutter Social was the coolest thing they've ever heard of on Google+. They all started sharing about it, writing articles, podcasts, and blog posts. Of note was Peter McDermott's article, which ended up being re-shared by some of the top people at Google and got us

picked up by Sarah Hill's KOMU News program. Basically, within a matter of minutes, Stutter Social had gone viral.

We had 36 people join the Hangout that day, and maybe only four or five of us were PWS. One of the coolest things about that Hangout, besides the awesome exposure for Stutter Social, was that I opened the floor to the non-stutterers to ask questions to us stuttering folk. Most people don't know much about stuttering, so that Hangout functioned as a sort of expert panel taking questions from the audience. We helped open peoples' eyes to what stuttering is really like from a very personal perspective.

The additional exposure we got on Sarah Hill's KOMU News program was just phenomenal. She was very gracious to have us on and we've already seen spikes in participation since the program aired.

DANI: Never in a million years. My idea for co-founding Stutter Social was to meet and help fellow stutterers around the world. I never imagined it would be picked up by the press!

MF: So what's next for Stutter Social?

DAVID: We're going to keep on "hanging out!" We hope that more and more people join the Hangouts and that stuttering continues to be less and less of a taboo topic in society. We've launched our website this week that will make it even easier to join a Hangout and participate in the social discussions. We're also developing plans to coordinate with stuttering organizations worldwide that will hopefully increase the already present international participation.

Something that is still a bit in the ether, but that we're starting to talk about now, is having Stutter Social "channels". Each host would have their own channel that would borrow from traditional media in terms of content structuring, and which may extend beyond Hangouts to also include podcasts, Twitter, and blogs. Forgive me for being vague, but I don't want to say too much about it until we have a better idea ourselves—but stay tuned!

Another thing that's really exciting to me is being able to take what Stutter Social is doing with stuttering to a broader base of causes. I hope we can facilitate other self-help groups using social networking and group video chat technology to engage their membership. I know the Google+ team is working on ways to make Hangouts more conducive to self-help groups and Stutter Social is informing their process.

DANI: We are also currently working on a communications plan and assessing features for the website that we think will be practical for users.

MF: Where can we learn more (good place to list your podcast info; video interview links, website, etc)

DAVID: Our website (<http://stuttersocial.com>) is the best source of information and the best way to get connected to all of our social networking outlets. The website has a Hangout calendar, a link to join a Hangout, links to our Facebook and Google+ pages, and information about our hosts. At the time of this writing there are four hosts: David Resnick, Daniele Rossi, and two new hosts we're excited to have onboard – Mitch Trichon and Evan Sherman.

For those who are intimidated about how to get set up technologically with the Hangouts, I am offering to personally call any of you to talk you through getting set up step-by-step. I have already done this with two people and they are both enjoying Hangouts now. Just send me a message at stuttersocial@gmail.com and we'll make it happen.

DANI: The Stutter Social website is at <http://stuttersocial.com>. I dedicated an episode of my podcast, Stuttering is Cool, to Stutter Social where I chat with David and play some clips of a real Stutter social chat. (Note: Stutter Social chats are not recorded. I asked permission for this episode.) 



CHAPTER NEWS

DAVID BLAZINA

Rockville, Maryland

The most recent Rockville meeting consisted of a few new people as well as one long-time NSA member who is trying to start back up with the group and NSA functions. Included in the group was also **Jerome Mortman**, **Tracey Wallace**, and **Eric Salgueiro**. The group talked about their experiences with stuttering throughout their lives and the high and low points of their speech. A new person described his experiences in his native country of India and the hardships his stuttering brought as a young man, such as difficulty getting the type of job he wanted even though his skill level far exceeded the qualifications of the position for which he had applied.

The Rockville, Maryland chapter also held their holiday party at McGinty's Public House in downtown Silver Spring on Saturday, Dec. 17. The gathering attracted about 15+ people and it was also a farewell for Eric Salgueiro, (who is currently serving as co-chapter leader along with Jerome Mortman), since he is relocating to Huntsville, Ala., with his family. Among the members who attended were NSA Northern Virginia chapter leader **Matt Zenkovich**, **Carol Buckingham**, **Beth Bienvenu**, **Gary Auker from Harrisburg, Pa.**, **Boris Senatorov**, and former Long Island chapter leader **Steven Kaufman**.

Central NJ

The Central NJ Chapter had a small but valuable meeting on Friday, Nov. 4th. Four PWS and 1 SLP student attended. One member gave a spontaneous, passionate, and animated reading of the Welcoming Words; it was a real joy to witness! The group discussed the following questions: "What is more important for you, communicating or fluency? Does it vary per circumstance? At work vs. casual talk in social environments? Family vs. friends?" The consensus was that that fluency was the gold standard when they were younger, and they experienced a great deal of pain and discouragement because of that belief. The group members all agree that now it is unrealistic for them to strive for absolute fluency and they are happier with a more easeful stutter that allows them to communicate comfortably.

The group participated in an activity in which they each wrote a letter to their teenage selves that consisted of what they wanted that person to know about living with stuttering and then read them aloud. This activity was approached with sincerity and some very raw emotions were shared. One person chose not to write the letter because they did not want to re-visit their feelings. The SLP student had a friend in high school who stuttered and whom she liked a lot. She wrote a knowledgeable and sincere letter to that person.

Five group members are traveling together to Manhattan next weekend to see the One Act Plays at Our Time Theatre, and are greatly looking forward to that!

Madison, WI

This past fall, four members of the NSA Madison Chapter: **Matt Hagen**, **Philip Temme**, **Joe Koenig**, and Chapter Leader **Bob Lee** spoke to SLP students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Bob led the group in a panel format presentation about stuttering, strategies people who stutter use, and the National Stuttering Association. After the presentation the students were able to ask the panel questions, to help them with their clients who do stutter.

Illinois State University

Jean Sawyer reported that their meeting began in a familiar way. One of the organizers (Gay) and she talked about stuttering, wondering who else would come. About 30 minutes later, a person who stuttered came by to ask if this was the NSA meeting. After reading the opening words, each of them talked about the reasons they were there and when it came time for the new person to share she said she had read about the supportive network of the NSA and wanted to see what it was all about. This young woman is a student and is having some struggles with her speech in her student teaching program. Gay and Jean are also speech pathologists and gave her some information about speech therapy and their university clinic, in case she wanted to pursue that route. All in all it was a great meeting. Jean adds that they will keep trying to get the word out, letting past attendees know that they've missed them and they're still there for support.



Nashville, TN



The Nashville NSA Chapter has something that no other NSA Chapter has...their very own football team! Yes, the Nashville NSA members are the proud supporters of the Clarksville, TN Eagles. The Eagles are a Pee-Wee team of 9-11 year olds, coached by one of the chapter members, **Jermaine Louis**.

Jermaine is a PWS and a veteran who suffered serious injuries in the Iraq War. Returning to his base at Fort Campbell, KY and the 101st Airborne, Jermaine vowed to make a difference in himself and in his community. With the support of his speech pathologist, **Cynthia Zmroczek**, Jermaine joined the Nashville NSA Chapter. He attends every meeting and drives one hour each way to participate. With the financial support of the Nashville NSA members, Jermaine began coaching the Eagles. The fathers of the young men who comprise the team are either in the service or currently deployed, and Jermaine hopes to give each one the gift of teamwork and a strong work ethic.

Before each game the team says their Mission Statement developed by Jermaine. "I can achieve anything I put my mind to. I'll do the best in whatever I do. I'm destined for greatness. Team Eagles, Team Eagles, Team Eagles!" Jermaine hopes that his team will use this Mission Statement to assure success in all areas of life.

The Nashville NSA will receive a plaque from the Clarksville Athletic League for their support of the Clarksville Eagles.

Twin Cities, MN

Linda R. Hinderscheit reported that the Twin Cities Chapter of the NSA met last with 18 people in attendance, including 10 PWS, a significant other who does not stutter, and two parents of a person who stutters. **Joel Korte**, now an official co-leader of our chapter, led the meeting. The chapter is very fortunate to now have *four* co-leaders. The group started out the meeting with the usual introductions and an ice breaker topic in honor of the Thanksgiving holiday: "What are you grateful for?" Joel then opened up the floor to anyone who had experienced any recent events related to stuttering that they would like to talk about with

the group. Afterwards the group discussed the topic of the evening, “What do you think you’d be like if you didn’t stutter?” and “How has stuttering shaped who you’ve become?” It was a great discussion with contributions by many in attendance. They even had to cut the discussion short because they only have the room until 8:30!

Northampton, MA

The Northampton NSA Chapter, led by **Carla Bernier**, met on Wednesday, November 9. Seven people attended the meeting, including two persons who stutter, one Smith College Student, and three Communication Disorders graduate students. The Welcoming Words were read, once again, in unison.

The graduate students had contacted Carla ahead of time requesting permission to attend and interview the PWS. They were working on a project for their fluency class that educates the public by drawing awareness to fluency disorders. Their intention was to compile comments, feelings, advice and

experiences of persons who stutter, and then make a visual representation of the responses. There were, however, only two PWS at the meeting (it was the week that much of the NE was without power after the Nor’easter!).

Next, they watched the video by Phil and Uri Schneider “*Going with the Flow: A Guide to Transcending Stuttering*.” There were several nice discussions, mainly about how there are no one ‘size fits all recipes.’

The closing words were read in unison by several of the participants.

Houston, TX

Vicki Schutter reported 9 attendees at the last Houston meeting – **Vernon, Crystal, Jeremy, Donaldson, Vicki, Elliott, Mario, Charlie, and C.A.** – and 3 of the group were first-timers! One of the first-timers, Elliott, read the Opening Words. Then the group did introductions, at which most of the group talked about their reasons for coming to the meeting. The topics discussed included the tragic story of **James Campbell**, the 17-year

old boy who stuttered who had killed himself, and the depression and despair many of us had felt when we were that age. The group collectively wished that they had been able to reach out to him to tell him to hang in there, that it DOES get better. We talked about how important organizations like the NSA are in helping younger people who stutter find mentors who have been through what they are going through now.

The group also discussed how attitudes can change at different stages in their lives. They talked about the difference between *fluency* and *communication*, how one person’s approach differs from another, and how each person has to find the approach that is best for them.

Cleveland, OH

Glenn Shafer reported that six people attended the last meeting of the Cleveland Chapter, which is an awesome turnout for this group! The group planned their upcoming annual holiday party.

STUTTERING IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE *continued*

If avoidance is one of the biggest problems for people who stutter (and it certainly is for me), what causes avoidance? Clearly my lack of confidence played a role. But did I avoid and stutter because I lacked confidence? Or did I lack confidence because I knew I might stutter? Well, both. The interplay between confidence, avoidance, and stuttering is intricate and complex. I’m certain that if I didn’t stutter I would have spoken Croatian more often and more effectively. I would have been more confident, and my confidence would have increased as I practiced speaking.

Like my wife, however, I’m an introvert with a tendency to be timid in new situations. And let’s be honest about my language abilities: my handful of basic phrases didn’t make me a native speaker, and my ability to understand spoken Croatian was nonexistent except for 15-20 words and basic numbers. Stuttering aside, I lacked confidence in my speaking ability, and so did my wife. This is perfectly natural when you’re a complete beginner.

There are no easy answers with stuttering. Confidence can’t be conjured out of thin air. A few years ago, for example, I stuttered more severely at work than I do now. But as my career has progressed and I’ve become more confident in my professional role, I stutter much less. On the other hand, I suspect that one reason for my success at work is increased fluency and decreased stuttering-related avoidance.

What’s a stuturer to do, given this chicken-and-egg riddle? Surely the answer is to make efforts on all fronts. Reduce avoidance behaviors even if it’s scary and you’re not confident. Do what it takes to build confidence in your domain (e.g., by practicing a foreign language). Work on the mechanics of stuttering: easy breathing, relaxed jaw and chest, and vocalizations that cause you trouble. With greater mastery comes natural confidence.

Just as stuttering can cause a “downward spiral” of more severe blocks, decreased confidence, and more avoidance, the same dynamics can lead to synergistic effects in the

opposite direction. You speak a little better, for example, and this might give the confidence to avoid speaking less often. Feeling more confident, you might relax a little more and speak even better. There are many entry points on the path to mastery, and they’re mutually reinforcing.

Above all, go easy on yourself. Maybe you keep failing in your attempts to reduce avoidance or secondary stuttering behaviors. This is natural and expected. Don’t berate yourself, but don’t give up either. There are other gates to the path.

My experience with speaking a foreign language reminds me that even though I’ve become mostly fluent, I’m not “cured.” (There is no cure; stuttering is complex and intimately connected with our psychology and neurology.) Rather than getting mired in shame when I stutter or feeling false pride just because I’m having a good day, my job is to know and understand the conditions that lead to stuttering and to find my own strategies for success. 🍷



ODDS&ENDS

MANDY FINSTAD

Pam Mertz

NSA member **Pam Mertz** represented stuttering at the Uptown Community Harvest Festival in Troy, New York. It was a community block party event, and the organizers had secured a Pepsi Refresh grant to sponsor it. Pam's table had a mix of information and resources, and garnered a lot of visitors. The NSA pens, bracelets, and buttons were a big hit. Many people commented what a great idea it was to bring this kind of information to a community "fun" event.



Lee Reeves

Former NSA Board Chairman, Lee Reeves, presented the keynote address at the National Council of State Boards for Speech-Language

Pathology and Audiology Annual Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Lee spoke about the important role that public members play while serving on state licensure boards. He stressed the need for each state examining board to remain independent of ASHA when establishing their own standards for licensure of speech-language pathologists and audiologists who wish to practice in their state.



Bob Spradley

Ron Mitchell reported the sad news that **Bob Spradley**, long time member (20 years; 15 national conventions) of the NSA, passed away on November 7, 2011.

His memorial service was November 18th. Letters or cards can be sent to **Sue Spradley** 584 Fairwood Drive, Upland, CA. In lieu of flowers, gifts can be sent to the NSA or the

USO Ontario, CA. Bob was a ex-marine and donated time to the NSA and the USO.

Long-time members will remember Bob as the photographer of the NSA and in later years helping in the children workshops. He was a great man, husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and friend of the NSA.

A tribute to Bob can be viewed at <http://tinyurl.com/BobSpradleyMemorial>

Congrats!

The NSA congratulates **Sarah Watson Bell** and her husband Tim on their soon-to-be second child. Sarah is a native of Longview, Texas, and recently relocated to the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, where she is now part of the Dallas chapter. Sarah has one son, Ethan, and is looking forward to having him serve as a big brother!

The NSA wants to congratulate **Allison Ladavat** on passing her comps! Allison, who hails from Pittsburgh, has attended several conferences and is very excited about her future as an SLP.

The NSA sends their best wishes to **TJ Polak** and **Tanya Mourato** on their engagement. TJ has attended conferences in both Arizona and our last one in Fort Worth, Texas.

The NSA would like to congratulate **Madison Nicole Garcia** on her engagement! Her fiancé, James Pike, proposed to her on Dec. 24, at a resort in California. Madison is a former winner of the Member of the Year award (2008 in Parsippany, N.J.) as well as a former chapter leader. She is currently studying psychology (with an emphasis on research) at California State University-Northridge. Madison has long been outspoken in her support for people who stutter. We wish her a lifetime of happiness!

Omissions

The NSA apologizes to **Stephen Hood**, who should have been listed as one of our \$400-\$499 donors on the Donors List in the November-December issue of LETTING GO. Thank you, Stephen!

We regretfully neglected to mention that **Jason Faust** was the winner of our annual 2011 "Good Guy" Award. NSA Board Member **Kenny Koroll** had this to say about Jason: "Jason is always there, willing to help out in any way possible. Jason woke up early every morning of the conference to help set up the displays and tables for registration, the silent auction, and the NSA store. He is always very welcoming to all of the First Timers, making everyone feel accepted and at home. Jason was also one of the NSA All Stars in Fort Worth. Again, please help congratulate an NSA favorite, and my brother-from-another-mother, Jason Faust!"

Support the NSA in the Workplace

Did you know that you, your family members, and your friends can contribute to the NSA in your workplace? The NSA participates annually in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC), which means that federal employees can designate #10853 on their CFC form to support the NSA. However, you don't have to be a federal employee to contribute! Each year many employees make donations to the NSA through matching gifts, stocks, and other ways. For more information call us at 888-937-8888 (888 WeStutter) or email us at Info@WeStutter.org.

