



# LETTING GO

NATIONAL STUTTERING ASSOCIATION

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## A Woman With a Voice

BY ANITA S. BLOM

*Although the National Stuttering Association is a U.S.-based organization, we have friends and members all over the world. Such as Anita Blom, born in the Netherlands and now living in Sweden. She'll be one of our keynote speakers at our annual conference this year; don't miss it! (Parsippany, New Jersey, June 25-29; our first New York City area conference!)*

*Here Anita introduces herself and the topic of the presentation she'll deliver. As you can see, she's quite accomplished, and her presentation will be an inspiration to everyone, not only those of us who stutter.*

I started to stutter when I was 9 years old, which changed me from being a talkative and outgoing child into a teenager who stopped talking because of years of bullying and lack of understanding from those close to me. Poetry and music kept me alive and were my voice; I played the saxophone in five bands during the same period of time.

When I was just about to give up the struggle for understanding and acceptance, I became surrounded by people who saw the person behind the stutterer, and at the age of 27, I finally found out there were other people who stutter. I decided to devote my life to giving stuttering a face, with children and young people who stutter as my main crusade.

From being afraid to speak, I have become a speaker in all parts of the world,



to people of all ages. From being terrified of school and being told not to seek employment, I now have two jobs, including teaching! From being told not to learn any languages because I "wouldn't get anywhere anyway," I now speak many different languages and teach Swedish and English. And my speaking engagements all started with the NSA, at the NSA conference in 2002!

My presentation is about a walk through stages of life: From being an outgoing little child to being a silent teenager with no hope for tomorrow and finally becoming a woman with a voice, stronger than ever.

It's about the power of being together: From being all alone in a world that lacks understanding, to doors carefully being opened to peek through, then joining a world full of people. From being all alone in that therapy room, to getting support from all over the world, now being able to give support to others.

Stuttering is so much more than a speech problem. Therapy is so much more than speech training. Research is so much more than finding a cure. To solve this puzzle we need to bring everyone involved together, people who stutter, therapists, and researchers. Through the Internet, in self-help groups, and at conferences like the NSA's and find and share friendship, respect, information, and experiences with each other.

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## NYC Must-Sees!

There are so many great things to see and do in New York City. We'll be seeing you at the annual conference, and you can see the sights of New York City, too. Why not stay a few extra days?

- **Times Square** – Day or night, it's a spectacular display of all things America
- **Central Park** – By foot, Rollerblades, or horse-drawn carriage
- **American Girl Place** – Cafe, doll hair salon, theatre, photo studio... all things girl, for your daughter and her doll!
- **Chowhound** – Restaurant known for "best view" of Manhattan skyline
- **Empire State Building** – best view of NYC
- **Statue of Liberty**– Ellis Island
- **Pizza, bagels, and delis** – If you like food, this is your city. Ask a New Yorker for the "best" and they'll point you in the right direction.
- **FAO Schwarz** – A toy extravaganza!
- **Broadway** – THE place to see a show
- **Garment District** – Approximately one square mile, located between Fifth and Ninth Avenues from 34th to 42nd Streets

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# You Make a Difference

BY TAMMY FLORES

NSA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I recently attended the youth day in Goose Creek, South Carolina, and I can't begin to tell you what a great experience it was. I have been with the NSA since I was 23 years old, and during that time I have never been to a youth day for the entire event.

The youth days we do typically go hand in hand with the Continuing Education Unit (CEU) seminar the day before. I usually help coordinate the event and then take a step back, so I guess I always thought my job was done after the CEU concluded.

Well, my curiosity got the best of me at Goose Creek. I don't remember being so moved by anything as I was that afternoon. The courage displayed by these kids as they got up in the middle of a room full of people that they didn't know and talked about the pictures they drew. The smiles on their faces when they saw their parents watching their every word were priceless, as were the giggles they shared with the other kids.

Then there were the parents and grandparents. You could see their eyes well up when they were asked at the end of the day, "What did this day mean to you?" By the time each of them made it to the front of the room I was fighting back the tears myself! If you ever get a chance to host or participate in a youth day, you really should; it is an unforgettable experience.

As you know, we have an annual conference every year. For the last several years, we have been blessed to have been able to offer scholarships to those who need financial assistance in order to attend. I received the following e-mail from Angela Phelps, a speech-language pathologist (SLP), recommending one of her clients (C. Cosby, known as CC) for a scholarship:

*"I am an SLP working in a school district in Summerville, South Carolina. One of my 4th grade students is a person who stutters. Unfortunately, he is the only person at our school who stutters, and often feels like he's alone as he has no one else in the same situation to which he can relate. He is a wonderful, generous kid with a big heart, and always tries his hardest at everything he does."*



*"Recently, I signed him up for a Saturday workshop that your organization held for families and children in Goose Creek, SC. He came back to school with such joy, and he has said over and over that it was the best day of his life. He was equally excited when he learned about the National Conference. He received a packet from NSA yesterday that contained information about the convention. In it, there was mention of possible scholarships available to families that need financial help. We are hoping that some scholarships are still available despite it being so close to the Conference dates."*

*"I am e-mailing to say how much he has gained emotionally from attending the workshop, and I feel that going to the National Conference would truly give him a big boost in his confidence and self-acceptance, with which he struggles. He has learned a lot about stuttering this year, and is on the path of self-acceptance, but it is still a daily struggle and I worry about him sliding back as he heads into adolescence. He would benefit so much from being around other children who face the same struggles. He has a family who is incredibly supportive of him and want to help him in anyway they can. Please help them to do so. Thank you for your time and consideration!"*

And this is from CC's mother, Cati:

*Dear Tammy,  
"I've found myself staring off into space... I can't believe it. It goes so much deeper than you can imagine. You know so little about me, yet are providing a life changing experience for my baby...I will be able to take my son to the NSA Conference 2008 in NJ...and NYC! I am floored. He's never been to an airport let alone on an airplane! Staying at the Sheraton, a castle! A Mets/Yankees game with his grandfather! Most importantly he has the opportunity to be with other kids with the*



**Tammy Flores, NSA executive director, and CC both had a blast at the Goose Creek Youth Day and are excited about the conference this month.**

*same obstacles and learn how to deal with them! That is such a gift!*

*"My boy, oh, how he struggles, but wow, how he smiles! He has found an organization that supports him, helps him, and obviously loves him enough to do this for him and his family. For that Tammy, I thank you and the NSA with all of my heart."*

*"We are all looking forward to seeing you this summer and becoming a part of the NSA family! I doubt we will sleep until June 25th!"*

It's this type of letter that shows what the NSA is all about. This is what your donations help us to do, and without you we would not be able to continue helping people.

Thank you, thank you for being a chapter leader, thank you for being an advocate for your child that stutters, thank you for being the SLP that cares, thank you for being a part of the NSA. Together **we can** and **we do** make a difference in the lives of people who stutter. ■

# CHAPTER NEWS

FROM BONNIE WEISS

## **Brooklyn, New York**

The Brooklyn chapter held its first meeting on March 11. They had 22 people in attendance, including 8 people who stutter, 2 parents of a child who stutters, 1 spouse of someone who stutters, 4 faculty members, 6 graduate students and Tammy Flores, NSA executive director. The group had a meet & greet session at the beginning of the meeting where refreshments were served. After about 30 minutes the chapter leader opened the meeting with the Opening Words. Tammy spoke briefly to the group. Eric Jackson, a co-leader of the group, talked about the new chapter and had everyone introduce themselves and discuss their experiences related to stuttering. A parent of a child who stutters asked the group what they think helps them not to stutter. Eric said he felt that there is “no quick fix” and other people chimed in to discuss their beliefs and experiences. Some of those present also talked about the importance of talking about their stuttering and how a support group meeting does help them feel safe and comfortable.

## **Buffalo, New York**

John Cheney says that the chapter continues to meet on the first and third Wednesday of each month. On the April 2 meeting, attending were three people who stutter as well as three undergrad students who are in the Communicative Disorders Department of the University at Buffalo. The main topic of the evening was covert stuttering. Those members who are covert tried to explain to the students what covert stuttering is all about. At the meeting on April 16, Owen Wilkinson, a person who stutters, joined the group for the first time. Owen is a student at Niagara University and has just started therapy with Chris Heximer, who is on the faculty at Buffalo State. Four members who were present talked about their history of stuttering and therapy, etc. Owen plans to become a regular member of the group. The Buffalo chapter also tries to have a social event once a month, either meeting at a restaurant or at one of the members' home.

## **Madison, Wisconsin**

The month of April brought some exciting happenings to the Madison chapter. They held their monthly meeting on April 8 at Meriter Hospital. They had 5 people in attendance, one of whom was Derek Johnson from Louisiana, an assistant professor of Biology at the University of Louisiana Lafayette. It was great having someone from another chapter come and visit. On April 29 the chapter had their 5th Tuesday get together. They met at Boston Pizza and Sports Bar. Bob Lee, Ann Mickleson, Phillip Temme, Joe Koenig, and Gloria Klumb attended. On April 21 one of the members did something that not too many people even try. Bob Lee ran the Boston Marathon in just under 4 hours. (26.2 miles). Bob made sure that people knew that he was from Wisconsin. He wore his red Wisconsin Hat, and a red Wisconsin shirt that said, “Wisconsin Badgers.” He says the best part was going past the Wellesley college girls. They would scream and hold up signs that said “Kiss Me” Bob likes to cooperate with people, so when he saw one of those signs he did stop and get a kiss! He said it was only once but was it?

## **Orono, Maine**

The NSA chapter that meets at the University of Maine had a meeting with three people who stutter as well as one wife and a toddler! After reading the Welcoming Words, they had a nice round of introductions and welcomed Karen Kerr, who is a speech-language pathology student. It was her first meeting, and she later said that she had learned a lot. While eating Girl Scout cookies (Thin Mints!), members continued a discussion of what to do for National Stuttering Awareness Week. Marybeth Allen distributed some public relations materials and everyone challenged themselves to contact a new media outlet in their own local area. They also read an article downloaded from an International Stuttering Awareness Day archive about advertising your stuttering. After reading

about others' experiences, they shared times when they had done similar advertising; what they were comfortable with and how they saw it affecting their stuttering.

## **Seattle (Eastside), Washington**

The April 17 meeting of the Eastside support group began with introductions. The group was asked for their thoughts for May, which is Better Hearing and Speech Month. The event would bring together those who stutter with medical professionals and students in hope of learning from each other. The group was very excited about this and planned to create activities that will promote communication between the chapter and professionals. The first activity of the night was called “Commonalities and Uniqueness.” They formed two groups and were given a piece of paper so they could compile a list of commonalities, and then search for those things that are unique for each person in the groups. The two groups had a great time discovering the similarities and differences and reported their findings at the end of the meeting.

## **Tucson, Arizona**

The NSA Tucson chapter had their monthly meeting on politics' Super Tuesday with five people present. They also had a visitor from Phoenix, Arizona. They had several important issues to discuss, including losing Jennifer Barthel as the co-facilitator of the group and moving their meeting location. The new location is at the Tucson Woods Memorial Library. The group was also saddened by the loss of one of their members, Dick Curlee. He was a long time member of the Tucson Chapter. The chapter members then talked about what has helped them to communicate more effectively, and the focus was on the benefits of various therapy programs and being a Toastmaster. Everyone present talked about short term speaking goals for themselves. Judith Eckardt was the facilitator for this meeting.



# I Am a Person Who Stutters: Thoughts on My Journey to Acceptance

BY LEANA S. WEN, WRITTEN MARCH 2007

I am a person who stutters. Saying this seemingly innocuous sentence out loud took me 23 years. Throughout my childhood and adolescence, the idea of being discovered as a person who stutters (PWS) frightened me more than anything in the world. I was raised in Communist China in a family that suffered many acts of political persecution, and I also had severe asthma and endured life-threatening respiratory problems – one might think there are more frightening things, such as these external threats to life or even the internal demons of insecurity that tend to plague childhood. But no, it was fear of being “found out” as a PWS that dominated my thoughts during the day and my dreams during the night.

I don't remember when my journey as a PWS began. Like many other PWS, I have early memories of being afraid to be called on in class because I feared I might stutter. I developed ways to sound “normal,” from replacing words that might induce stuttering to not speaking at all when I thought I sounded “bad.” Growing up in China, there was a huge stigma against people who were abnormal. I wanted to be the perfect child, the one who brought joy and not displeasure to my family. “Don't speak like an idiot!” My mother would always say whenever she saw I had trouble getting words to come out. (What an irony it was, that years later after starting therapy, I recognized that my father and uncle also stuttered.) Fluency was my dream, and stuttering was my shame.

This perceived stigma persisted after I immigrated to the U.S. My personality is such that I have always sought the spotlight, and I realized early on that I wanted to devote my life to public service by changing the world on the macro level – that is to say, through policy and politics. But running for elected office and a public figure seemed incompatible with being a PWS. Since I did not want to change my career goals, I figured I had to hide the stuttering. I would make speeches that were completely scripted so that I could memorize the lines and pretend that I was acting. I pulled out of debates when I thought that my speech was getting less fluent. I planned entire conversations that were devoid of words that triggered stuttering.

Instead of the stuttering going away, my activities in hiding the stuttering only intensified my shame. Medical school, something very intensive in interpersonal communication, was a constant challenge in finding ways to hide dysfluency. It seemed a cruel irony that I had trouble with the word “doctor,” and I came up with countless ways to introduce myself and to address my attending physicians that would avoid usage of their commonplace title. Occasionally, because of the jargon of medical lingo, I could not get around saying words that gave me trouble. I remember my struggle on my neurology rotation because, as I was consulting around the hospital, I could not say the name of the service I was representing.

Though my struggles were constant, and my fear of being “found out” was an underlying part of every interaction, I kept pursuing my many ambitions. I led clubs, organized events, and spoke at rallies and conferences. In 2005, I faced my greatest challenge when I was elected the national president of the American Medical Student Association (AMSA). At that time, I had not spoken to one person about my stuttering and had not even admitted this to myself. (Nobody had remarked on my stuttering either, a testament to the extreme covertness under which I was operating.) Upon being elected, I realized that my responsibilities were that much greater. I would be responsible for representing our entire 65,000-person membership and be the voice of physicians-in-training in the U.S. I would be speaking on behalf of AMSA at conferences, at medical schools all across the country, to media, and to Congress. How could a person with such responsibilities be a PWS? How could I let all these people know that I stuttered? I would have to work that much harder at hiding.

Of course, the nature of stuttering is such that the harder one tries to hide, the worse it becomes. During my first month as AMSA president, things came to a head. It was my first time to lead a board of trustees meeting, and I wanted very much to set the tone for the rest of the year – and to not stutter. My hiding worked for the first day, but on the second, I began struggling and tried to hide it. The hiding made the stuttering even more struggled,

and at the end of the day, I could not get more than two words out in a sentence. I was mortified. There were still three days of the meeting left, and I could not lead the meeting. I could not speak. I could not communicate. I was a failure. I wanted to die.

Somehow I got through the rest of the meeting, though I was an emotional wreck at the end. The intensity of emotions I experienced prompted me to accept that stuttering was a major problem in my life, and interfered with my career, my relationships, and my emotional well being. I was finally prompted to action, and I decided to seek therapy for the first time in my life. Initially, I saw briefly some therapists who either had trouble believing I stuttered (I had gotten quite good at being covert), or tried to convince me that my issue was not stuttering but confidence or childhood trauma. One of them referred me to Vivian Sisskin at the University of Maryland, and it was with Vivian that my path to recovery truly began.

I am a bit embarrassed to admit that when I first met Vivian, I thought her methods would not work with me either. I could not embrace the idea that to accept stuttering meant to show it to the world and that acceptance was the key to getting better. For me, the preferable way was to get over my stuttering through “working on it” in some way, some exercises, perhaps, in a similar way that I recovered from asthma. Going to a group with other PWS, or worse, telling my friends and colleagues, seemed an insurmountable barrier. Yet gradually, Vivian convinced me that my problem was primarily psychological, which influenced also the emotional and physical aspects that constitute stuttering, and that showing my stuttering to other people was a necessary and unavoidable part of therapy. Stuttering is different from asthma or other diseases in that it is the shame that keeps the disease propagating, and shame that adds to trauma and prevents healing.

I remember vividly my first group meeting. What an experience it was to admit to a group of people for the first time I stuttered, and then to hear their stories, many of them with similar elements, all of them inspiring. I joined the NSA, and was further inspired by the stories in LETTING GO and other publications. The PWS I met or read about were all in various stages of their own journey and had

taken it upon themselves to see it as a journey of not just recovering from stuttering, but also of finding themselves. As Vivian reminded me, stuttering is a part of one's identity, just as, for me, being a woman, or being Chinese, or being a doctor, was. And the identify of PWS should not prevent one from opportunities in life in the same way that being a Chinese female physician should not.

As I progressed in therapy, I began to see stuttering in an even more positive light. All those PWS who were seeking therapy had insight into themselves and had devoted significant time and energy into thinking about communication. Communication, as I learned, involved many aspects, not necessarily fluent speech, but things like empathy and awareness, all of which are tools many people do not take the time to refine, yet we PWS think about constantly and work on every day. Those of us PWS, I am convinced, become even better communicators, more attuned to emotional and physical cues, as a result of our stuttering. Now that's a part of our identity in which we should take great pride!

I can't say that the process of acceptance has been easy. It hasn't been, and the first time telling my best friend and colleagues was extremely stressful (their reactions, that they knew all along, helped make it much easier). The rest of my year leading AMSA went more smoothly after I was ready to advertise my stuttering. One defining moment was when I responded to an article about disabilities in medical school, and told a reporter about my experiences as PWS in medicine and leading AMSA. It was frightening, though exhilarating, to finally be out in the open with my greatest fears. Yet there were many moments when I struggled with speech that I wished more than anything that I could be "normal." Perhaps that wish never goes away completely. Even at my subsequent jobs in Switzerland and Rwanda, where I was open about stuttering and advertised, there was always a little voice saying, "Maybe in the next meeting you will stutter, and they won't want you here any more."

When I interviewed for the Rhodes Scholarship, that little voice was present as well. I was confident about my application and about myself, but I feared that it would all come to an end if people found out I was a PWS. After all, the quintessential Rhodes Scholar, Bill Clinton, did not stutter, and

scholars are selected in part for their ability to speak and communicate. Who would select a PWS to embody the image of such a prestigious scholarship? I remember during my final interviews being stuck on my first word because I was trying hard to hide. Something clicked in those moments, and I decided to not worry about the outcome, which I could not control, but on the process, which I could. The important thing for me was to be true to myself, and so I addressed the issue head-on by talking about my struggles as a PWS. It was extremely cathartic to speak about this in such a high pressure setting, and though I have no idea how it influenced the outcome, it mattered to me that I could accept myself, be proud of all that I am, and show my pride to the world.

It is now almost three years since I first went to seek therapy, and I am far from "over" stuttering. In fact, I will never be "over" it, because being a PWS will remain a part of my identity. I would also be deluding myself if I said that I have fully accepted being a PWS, as there are still moments when I struggle, and recognize the desire to cover it up and just be "normal." I believe these are all natural feelings shared by PWS and are OK to have. It is part of the process, part of the journey, from which I have learned a great deal, about myself, about other people, about communication, and about self-acceptance. Saying those words, that I am a PWS, took me two decades, and is only the beginning. As Sir Winston Churchill, himself a PWS, stated:

"Every day you may make progress. Every step may be fruitful. Yet there will stretch out before you an ever-lengthening, ever-ascending, ever-improving path. You know you will never get to the end of the journey. But this, so far from discouraging, only adds to the joy and glory of the climb."

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*Leana S. Wen, a 2007 Rhodes Scholar, graduated from Washington University School of Medicine in May. She has served as a Global Health Fellow at the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland, and as a National Security Education Program David L. Boren Fellow in Kigali, Rwanda. Leana is also a dancer and writer and is committed to fighting for social justice around the world.*

## NSA Named Special Recipient for Celebrity Golf Tournament

Gary Benjoya, vice president of Special Kids Network in Chicago, Illinois, says that the NSA has been selected as a "Special Recipient" of their 9th Annual Celebrity Golf Tournament. The charity organization raises funds for children with special needs. The event will be held August 18, 2008, in Chicago.

"I am very excited to have the NSA be a part of our charity this year as [its mission] touches me personally," Gary says. "Our family became aware of NSA through Nina Reeves when Corey went to Nina for speech therapy. Nina initially directed us to the NSA Web site to review materials, and then we went to the national conference that was in Chicago a few years ago. It was at the conference where we really gained an understanding as to how stuttering impacts families in different ways. While Corey is a very outgoing 12-year-old boy who does not have an ounce of shyness in his body, and is probably one of the more talkative kids of all his friends and hockey teammates, stuttering still impacts him in his day to day life. The convention really touched us.

"I am very thankful that Nina introduced my family into the NSA and that in some way I have been able to give back to the NSA financially through the Special Kids Network ([www.specialkidsnetwork.org](http://www.specialkidsnetwork.org)). I am also thankful for the help that Special Kids Network gets from Tammy [Flores, NSA Executive Director] and Nina every summer at our Annual Celebrity Golf and Tennis Outing. Their hard work and tremendous dedication do not go unnoticed."

If you would like to participate in the golf tournament – or if you just want to help out – please contact Tammy Flores at 800-937-8888 or [info@WeStutter.org](mailto:info@WeStutter.org). ■

# ODDS&ENDS

FROM DAVID BLAZINA

## NSA Web Site Under Construction

Partnering with Z2 Systems, the NSA has recently installed NEON, which stands for Nonprofit Enterprise Online Network, to provide more robust online services that will enable you to access and securely update personal information. After creating a login name and password, a user will be able to not only access his or her information, but will be able to also see membership status and donation history, register online for the Parsippany/New York City conference, and much more. NEON is highly integrated with the NSA Web site at [WeStutter.org](http://WeStutter.org).

### What will be affected:

- Login procedures including login IDs and passwords
- Membership and Donation areas
- The NSA Store
- Online conference registration

### What will not be affected:

- The general information areas on the Web site – about 95% of the site
- The Annual Conference section (except online registration)
- The NSA Yahoo! groups such as NSACHAP and NSA-Conference

## Thank You, Volunteers

A big thank you goes out to all of those who helped at various local state conferences.

NSA members from the Baltimore area worked the NSA booth for the Maryland state conference. We also had NSA members working the booths in Saratoga Springs, New York, Atlantic City, New Jersey, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

NSA members from the Pittsburgh area (who helped out in Philly) include **Alan & Mimi Reznik, Caryn Herring, Kristin Pelczarski, Ellen Moreland and Allison Turak.**

New Jersey members: **Carole Shannon, Jim Petrowicz, Larry Lindstrom, Kathy Filer, John Lee and David Coe.**

Baltimore members: **Ina Hamburger, Jerome Mortman, Thomas St. Thomas, Lavern James and Meisha Nieves.**

## New Speech/Language Assessment Tool

Now available is a speech and language assessment designed to measure the broad impact of stuttering on a person's life. Developed for use with adults 18 and older, the OASES™ (Overall Assessment of the Speaker's Experience of Stuttering) is a brief, comprehensive assessment tool that speech and language professionals can use to support the need for treatment, plan effective interventions, and measure progress in stuttering therapy.

The OASES was developed based on the World Health Organization's International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health. As a result, it assesses not only the symptoms of stuttering, but also the impact on a person's ability to perform daily activities and participate fully in life.

Easily administered in fewer than 20 minutes, the OASES helps evaluate speakers' perceptions about their stuttering, their reactions to stuttering and the difficulties they encounter in daily life as a result of stuttering. Developed by **Drs. J. Scott Yaruss and Robert Quesal**, the OASES is designed to examine functional communication difficulties and quality of life for adults who stutter.

For more information about the OASES, visit [speechandlanguage.com](http://speechandlanguage.com) or call 800-627-7271.

## NYSSHLA Convention

Members of the NSA St. Rose Chapter in Albany, New York, staffed a booth at the annual New York State Speech Hearing Language Association (NYSSHLA) Convention in Saratoga, New York, over the weekend of April 10. The conference was held at the Saratoga Hotel, and exhibits were displayed at the adjoining Saratoga Civic Center. NSA members took turns staffing the booth on Friday and Saturday.

Many speech-language pathology (SLP) graduate students stopped by the NSA booth and talked with NSA members, receiving valuable information. Additionally, 4 NSA members took part in a panel presentation entitled "Creating Lasting Change for Adults Who

Stutter," facilitated by St. Rose fluency specialists **Dr. Donna Cooperman** and **Dr. Joseph Klein**. The NSA members on the panel were **Mary Archambault, Grace Gregory, Brandon Quadrini and Pamela Mertz**. Each member spoke about his or her personal journeys with stuttering.

Special thanks to Mary and Grace, who did an awesome job coordinating everything!

## Wedding Bells

Long time NSA member **Lynn Bejnar (Black)** tied the knot with **Randy Black**. The NSA family wishes Lynn and Randy all the best.



## Help With Auction Items

The live auction is one of our largest fundraisers as well as a conference mainstay, and at this year's conference in New Jersey on June 25–29, we expect it to be bigger and better than ever. So when you pack, don't forget your credit cards! (Just a little NSA humor.)

Even better, we're pleased to tell you that our silent auction for smaller items will return to the conference. It's another chance to bid on exciting treasures and help the NSA at the same time. Talk about a win-win situation!

Want to help? We thought so. The NSA is now collecting items for both auctions. Items of interest include: sports memorabilia, electronics, art, jewelry and more. If you have any questions about the auction, items or anything else, feel free to call us at 800-WeStutter (800-937-8888).

## South Carolina CEU Day

The NSA held a Continuing Education Unit seminar on April 4 in Goose Creek, South Carolina, where SLPs gathered to hear **Nina Reeves** speak on several topics. A youth day was held that Saturday and was a huge success. A big thank you goes out to **Caroline and Anne Pittard, Charley Adams, David Owens** (principal of Goose Creek Primary School), **Richard Fluharty**, and of course **Nina Reeves** for making this weekend possible.



### New NSA Staff Member

From NSA Executive Director **Tammy Flores**: “I am so excited to introduce you to the newest member of the NSA staff, **Melissa Lopez**. Melissa was hired to work part time and to help out where needed. She’s doing a great job, and be sure to say ‘Hi’ when you call, or introduce yourself at the conference this year.”

### Mid-Atlantic Region Chapter Coordinator

**Lou Madonna** recently relinquished his role of regional chapter coordinator for the NSA’s Mid-Atlantic Region and is pleased to welcome **Charley Adams** as he assumes this position. The NSA thanks Lou for his valuable contributions and also welcomes Charley and wishes him well.

### A Special Thank You

We thank the **Sam & Ethel Garber Foundation** for their generous donation at the request of **Rabbi & Sylvia Goldman**. The donation honors their late grandson, **Aaron Goldman**, whose father is one of the founders of the NSA.

### What Are Your “Care Abouts”?

NSA Webmaster Russ Hicks recently wrote an e-mail inquiring as to why there are chapter leaders, as well as attendees of chapter meetings, who are not dues-paying members of the NSA. From that discussion arose the topic of “Care Abouts,” or the direction we as NSA members would like to see the organization take and the ways we would like to see it effect change. The result was an enthusiastic exchange of ideas, as people verbalized what many of us feel on a conscious or subconscious level—that they can’t imagine their lives without the NSA and want to take an active role in how and what it provides for people who stutter.

### A few examples of “Care Abouts”:

- I care about getting kids and teens comfortable with their stuttering.
- I care about making sure kids and teens know that they can do whatever they want and should never let their stuttering stop them from doing anything that they want.
- I care about helping parents understand that the guilt they carry is not good for them or for their child.

— *Debbie Nicolai, Parent and Family Programs Coordinator*

- I care about getting people to notice all the good the NSA does and has to offer.
- I care about making sure the NSA is a viable organization for years and years to come.
- I care about my job and the people I work for and with.

— *Tammy Flores, NSA Executive Director*

- I care about all of our chapters (adult & teen) and want them to be active in the NSA.
- I care about all of the people who stutter that don’t know about the NSA.
- I care about balancing more involvement with the NSA with my family and work.
- I care about making a difference.

— *Brad Madsen, NSA Board Member*

We would love to hear YOUR “Care Abouts”—we will publish as many as I can—so e-mail Tammy Flores (tflores@WeStutter.org) or write to Tammy via postal mail (Tammy Flores, Executive Director, National Stuttering Association, 119 W. 40th Street, 14th Floor, New York, NY 10018). Send them by carrier pigeon—we don’t care—just let us know!

### A WOMAN WITH A VOICE *continued*

This presentation is about chat groups, youth meetings and children’s camps. It is about children learning from their classmates, teachers learning from their students, and parents learning from other people who stutter. It is about working together to create a situation for everyone to feel good and to get answers to all those questions.

It is also about raising our voices, people who stutter together with therapists and researchers; children and teenagers together with adults of all ages. It is about reaching out to those close to us as well as our governments. It is about working together to get more help, funding, and understanding. It is about creating a world for children to enjoy going to school. For teenagers to make that presentation. For adults to go for that dream job. To help each other deal with stuttering, stand up for who you are and pass this on to others. It’s about making our own place in society instead of waiting for others to make it happen.

Self-help is not just about people who stutter gathering once a month. Self-help is all of us together, making a change in our situation as well as in society. And it all starts where people meet. Here, at this conference.

I am a well known face in all local and national media, radio and TV, and an annual contributor to the online International Stuttering Awareness Day conference. I am also often engaged as an inspirational coach and is highly involved in issues regarding bullying, disability, and discrimination on local, national and international political levels.

I have a saying that encourages people of all ages to take pride in who they are: “S-s-sure I s-s-stutter. What are you good at?” ■

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*Anita Blom is the youngest of seven children. Today she is chairwoman of her local self-help chapter, chairwoman of the Swedish Stuttering Association, vice chairwoman of the European League of Stuttering Associations, and a member of the Advisory Board of the International Stuttering Association, where she is involved in several committees, including the next World Congress in China.*

# Your Letting GO Team

Last month we published brief bios of two of our LETTING GO staff members, Editor Sonya Kunkle and Assistant Editor for the Odds & Ends column David Blazina. Here we introduce our other team members, Art Director Janet Lenzer and Assistant Editor for the Chapter News column Bonnie Weiss.

## Janet Lenzer

I was born in Iowa, and I went to college there, as well. My life was “all things Iowa” till I moved to the East Coast at age 29. For several years I bounced back and forth between jobs and residences in Baltimore, Maryland, and the Washington, DC, area. But now my roots are deeply seeded here in Baltimore with a husband, a home, two darling daughters – ages five and three – and a very cute Basenji (dog). After 17 years as a graphic designer and art director I went back to school. When I graduate with an Master of Fine Arts degree in Integrated Design – my studies include print, Web, video, animation, and a good bit of writing – I intend to take my career down a new path, teaching design at a college or university. I met Sonya Kunkle (LETTING GO editor) when I worked with her about 10 years ago, and she later recommended me for the position of art director for LETTING GO. I thoroughly enjoy my part in the



newsletter. We’ve got a good team – a well-oiled machine. Aside from my family, school, and design work I enjoy reading, entertaining, travel, football (Go, Ravens!), lap swimming and Pilates.

## Bonnie Weiss

I was born and raised in Western New York in the Village of Hamburg which is about 15 miles south of Buffalo. I moved to Buffalo after I started working in the city. My first job was with Liberty Mutual Insurance Company. Because I stuttered, the personnel director would not promote to a job where I had to make calls on the phone, or help customers who came into the office. A friend of mine encouraged me to apply for a job at the University at Buffalo (UB), saying that she didn’t think my stuttering would be a big thing there. And it hasn’t been. I worked at UB for 40 years before retiring in 2004. For almost 30 of those years I worked in the Classics Department and was the only staff person there. At my interview, I told them stuttering wouldn’t get in the way of my doing my job. It was then that I started speech therapy, just a short walk from my office!

My first NSA conference was in 1994, and I haven’t missed one since. I got really involved in the NSA and was on the Board of Directors for two terms. We started a chapter in Buffalo in 1994 and hosted the convention in Buffalo

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LETTING GO is a forum for views and information about stuttering. The opinions expressed are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily the opinion of the National Stuttering Association. The NSA accepts no responsibility for the accuracy of any opinion or information provided by any contributor, nor do we endorse or reject any therapeutic strategies, programs, or devices mentioned in these pages.

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in 1997. The NSA has helped me grow as a person who stutters, and so many of the members have encouraged me in my “walk.” I am the leader of the Buffalo chapter of the NSA, and we are hoping to start a TWST (Teens Who Stutter) group for teens soon. I enjoy doing Chapter News for LETTING GO and also love being the associate editor of *Stutter Buddies*, the NSA’s children’s publication. In my spare time, I do ceramics, read, and pet my two large cats, Katy and Molly!



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*Changing the lives of people who stutter*

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