



Mid-Atlantic Aphasia Conference Newsletter

www.midatlanticaphasiaconference.org

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October 2026

From The Editor's Desk:



Have you ever heard the saying, "**Time flies**"?

It means that time seems to pass very quickly. One minute we are enjoying today, and the next minute, another day, week, or year has passed.

Time is precious. Once a moment is gone, we cannot get it back. That is why it is important to use our time wisely.

Being productive means using our time to do things that matter. We can **finish a task**, **learn something new**, **help someone**, or **spend time with people we love**. Even small steps can make a big difference.

We do not have to be busy every minute. **Rest is important, too.** The goal is to find a good balance between work, rest, and fun.

We can start by making a simple plan each day. Choose one or two important things to do. Try not to put them off. Avoid distractions when possible. Celebrate each task we finish.

Remember, every day is a gift. We cannot slow down time, but we can choose how we use it.

Do not wait for the perfect time to begin. **Start today.** Make your time count, enjoy the present, and fill your days with **purpose**, **kindness**, and **joy**.

Denise Mendez

You may not be fluent, but you must be flexible!

Even with all your greatest intentions, you may be short in your expectations. This happens to me too, more that I want to, but I am continually grateful that I still have the chance to success. We worked for months for our 5th Annual MAAC Get Together and Walk for Aphasia and it was rained out – twice. So, we had to be flexible. We decided to go virtual and combine it with pictures and videos.

Our first intention was to have a one mile walk at the Bristol Township Amphitheater, then have a speaker with playing games afterwards. Now the event is on zoom **on Monday, October 26th at 7:00PM ET.** We are **encouraging people to take a one mile walk near your park.** Take a picture or a short video with the mini-flag (see on page 4) and send me an email with your picture or video. See your picture and we everyone's inspiring efforts. **Michael Jankowski, NAA Ambassador will be our speaker.**

All registered participants will be a ticket and may win a prize. We are looking forward to seeing you soon and be flexible.

- Mark Harder – MAAC President

FROM THE MAAC COMMUNITY:

My name is Barbara Pashak and I care for my husband John Pashak. A few years ago, John's health changed due to his exposure to Agent Orange ~1970, while he was in the Air Force specifically in Vietnam.

In a blink of time, John went from working on our roof to being taken by ambulance to the hospital. Without any warning signs, John had a stroke and had no idea of what was happening to his brain and body. His life was on a fast track with 8 days in the hospital to 8 weeks inpatient at Moss Rehab.

John's life changed forever. For a close-knit family, the lives of our children also changed and so did mine. Our focus was on John, nothing else mattered. It certainly wasn't easy for John. An active husband and father who enjoyed staying busy by designing, building, repairing, repurposing, cooking, creating celebrations, playing with our grandson, etc. to his current state from stroke paralysis & Aphasia of spending his time in a wheelchair or being bedbound.

I started to search for community resources and heard about MAAC. My network began to quickly open. Eventually, we reached out to the VA and after numerous evaluations and releasing of his medical records, John learned his health was service connected.

Feel free to contact me regarding your experiences and questions with finding resources, being a caregiver, navigating the VA, working & caregiving, taking care of the "inherited" chores, etc.

Please contact me : pashak@aol.com

Subject line please type: MAAC comments

Thank you!

Barbara

Acquired Dyslexia or Alexia

Sandy Stein, CCC-SLP

Stroke often produces reading difficulties. This “acquired dyslexia” or “alexia” may occur with or without other language challenges and even when writing ability is intact.

The inability to read interferes with work and recreation for many survivors, making it difficult to follow written instructions, pay bills or use the computer. The ease and pleasure of reading is often replaced by effort and frustration. However, many improve their reading through spontaneous recovery, direct practice or compensatory strategies.

Strokes cause many different types of reading difficulties; it can be different for everyone. Type and severity of difficulties is influenced by location and size of the stroke in the brain in addition to prior reading abilities.

Silent reading can be easier than reading aloud following stroke. This is because word retrieval is a challenge for nearly all stroke patients, and this difficulty in recalling words for speech can affect reading aloud just as it affects conversation. Likewise, some individuals have a hard time recognizing written words or abstract ones, which may be harder to read than regularly spelled or concrete words. There may be a difference in a survivor’s ability to read single words versus sentences or paragraphs.

Treatment often helps survivors with dyslexia. Many speech-language pathologists are trained to diagnose acquired dyslexia and can recommend treatment or home-practice strategies appropriate for each person’s unique pattern of dyslexia. However, the process of reading recovery is complex and largely depends on the location and severity of the stroke.

The following suggestions may help survivors with reading difficulties:

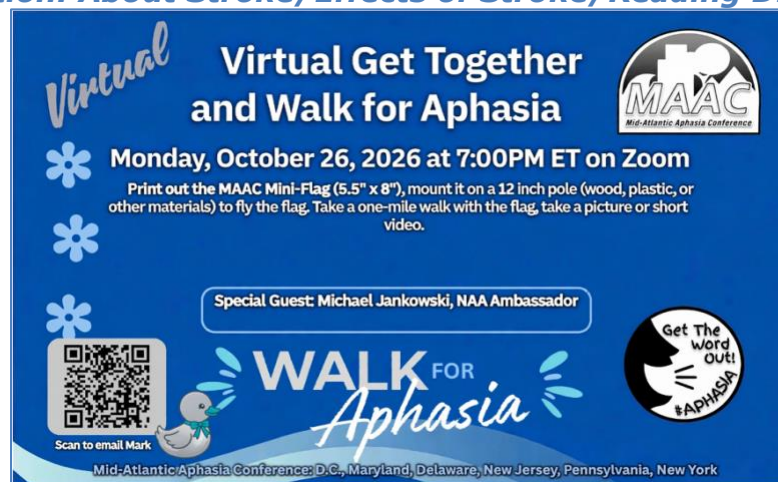
1. Sounding out letters: Say the letter name, then produce the sound the letter makes. For example, the name for “S” is “es”, but the sound it makes is “ssssssss”. Begin with a small number of letters, then expand as your skill improves.
2. Naming Letters: Some survivors are able to pronounce words that are spelled aloud to them. For example, they are able to say

the whole word “boat” if someone first spells it aloud – B-O-A-T. These individuals may learn to spell words aloud to themselves by naming each letter.

3. Recognizing and/or understanding whole words: For people who have difficulty reading whole words that cannot be sounded out, pairing a written word with the corresponding picture may help them recognize the word and understand its meaning. Several ways survivors can learn to pair written words with their meanings:
 - Read magazine or newspaper headlines and look at the associated pictures.
 - Surf the Internet for Web pages where words and pictures are paired.
 - Watch television with written words on the bottom of the screen.
 - Listen to an audiotope while looking at the corresponding written words.
4. Focusing visual attention: Some people with acquired reading difficulties have difficulty reading sentences or paragraphs because they can’t focus their visual attention on one word at a time. Visual distraction can be reduced by cutting a “window” in a piece of paper and then moving the window along a line of text so that it can be read one word at a time.

These strategies and exercises can help survivors with dyslexia improve their reading ability. Remember, what really makes the difference is: PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!

Reference: American Stroke Association. A division of the American Heart Association: About Stroke/Effects of Stroke/Reading Difficulties



THE MAAC COMMUNITY CHAMPION AWARD!

For over four years, MAAC has been a dedicated nonprofit organization, committed to supporting and empowering the aphasia community. The organization's commitment is evident in the actions of its members. Each person plays an important role in advancing MAAC's mission and making a difference within the community.

This quarter, we recognize the future of Speech Language Therapists by honoring 2 students from the University of Delaware.

Kennedy Barnes - emerged as a leader in the University of Delaware aphasia groups during her first year of graduate school, developing creative activities for group sessions and the Aphasia Retreat

And

Amelia Alacqua – who demonstrates strong leadership skills at the University of Delaware aphasia groups, creating unique activities related to use of AI in aphasia, and pursuing opportunities to share knowledge in the aphasia community!

Kennedy and Amelia- We Celebrate You!

Thank you for all you do for the aphasia community!

***Paul Allen: A Presentation –
Awareness and Connecting with Co-Workers***

"I'm just thrilled to be with you all tonight, especially since I could not be with you last year.



I want to thank Stephanie, Heidi, Tom and the entire Intellus planning team for making it possible for me to say a few things to you all.

Some of you know, and others may wonder what happened to me. A little over a year ago I had a stroke. On a Monday I went to work, on Tuesday I had a stroke and life pivoted. I wanted to briefly update those here who didn't know, and share a bit of my patient journey.

Ironically, strokes are consistent only in that they are variable — if everyone in this room had a stroke, each person's ramifications would be different.

The crazy thing is that you may never know I've had a stroke unless you listened to me searching for the right words or having difficulty saying them. My stroke left me with what is called an aphasia - cognitively the words are here, but delivering them - the formation of the words, is a challenge. Since my event I have been working very hard each day through speech and occupational therapy, to regain as much as I can. And while recovery from aphasias is a 'long haul' as my neurologist has said, my prognosis is positive.

For those who know me, you can appreciate how frustrating it is, having been a communicator and educator throughout my career. I know which words I want to use, but my brain and my mouth don't always like to dance together! But every day, I thank God for what I still have, and what, by His Grace, I have moving forward.

Having spent the last several decades of my career focused on the pharmaceutical sector, you could say I am a living example of the industry and its impact. Through other patients I've met on this journey, I've witnessed firsthand patients who have struggled with instructions given by their HCP. This is one of the biggest challenges of our industry - compliance and persistence, comprehension and engagement with the HCP.

A key to what we focus on is ensuring the HCP does a good job at explaining what the medicine is, how it works, answering the patient's questions as completely as possible, while making sure the patient recounts the instructions. In the end this is what it's all about- the right diagnosis for the condition, for the specific patient, for the patient's optimal outcome.

So to conclude - and some of you know I could talk with you all day - the message I want to share is:

1. I don't know where you are with your faith journey, but my faith in God, along with the love and support of my family, has carried me through. Remember that while we may love our work, it is our family and friends who love us back.
2. Remember to tell your loved ones how much they mean to you; life can change in an instant.
3. Thank God for each day you have - don't take your life or granted.
4. Savor each day and take each opportunity to touch the lives around you.

I'd be happy to share more about my story and journey. Again, thank you for the opportunity to share."



ALEXA READS?

Tie: *I hear you all the time, asking Alexia reading out loud to you.
"Alexia - Read this article." "Alexia – Read this research paper."
"Alexia – Read this poem."*

Me: Tie, I think you are talking about Alexa – not alexia.

Tie: *Aren't they the something?*

Me: No Tie. Alexa is a device that allowing users to play music, control smart home tech, and gets information using voice commands. Earlier in my stroke, I couldn't write or read. Reading is still a challenge. If it is a long article, I may ask Alexa to read it out loud to me.

Tie: *Then, what is alexia?*

Me: Alexia is a sudden loss or impairment of reading ability in a previously literate person due to brain injury, stroke, tumor, or neurological illness. So, it's **alexia without agraphia** (or pure alexia).

Tie: *What is agraphia?*

Me: Agraphia is a disorder that causes a complete or partial loss of the ability to write. I have a little of it too.

Tie: *Alexa – play the Alphabet song. That's how you started at scratch again.*



Everyday Brain: Getting to Know My New Brain

August 2, 2026 / **Laura Malis** - MAAC Guest Blogger

Living with Brain Fatigue after Stroke

For most of my life, I didn't think about my brain. I just used it.

Then I had a stroke.

I was pretty sure my brain was damaged.

But for four years I thought recovery meant my job was getting my old brain back.

Today's Brain

For the first time in my life, I think about my brain—the one I have now.

What changed wasn't me.

It was my brain.

It took me a long time to understand that.

I was still curious.

I still wanted to learn, and read, and write.

I was still interested in the world.

But the way my brain worked had changed.

When I get fatigued, I feel pressure on the right side of my brain. If I keep pushing, I can even start to feel nauseous.

I've learned these are signs that it's time to stop and come back later.

That's when I know my Brain has reached its limit.

What Helps me.

I walk.

I cook.

I travel.

I write.

I laugh with Keith.

I keep asking questions.

I still dream about what's next.

In many ways, I'm still the same person I've always been.

Instead of fighting My Brain, I (try to) listen to it

Every day I'm learning what helps, what hurts, when to push forward, and when to rest.

I'm working on learning how to live well with the brain I have.

And for me, that's what Everyday Brain is all about.

When my brain is tense, I stop and walk. (Or at least that's the smart thing to do.)

I've learned to spread difficult tasks throughout the week instead of trying to do everything in one day.

I use AI as my teacher when long instructions become overwhelming.

I use [text-to-speech\(opens in new tab\)](#) whenever I can, because listening and reading together helps me understand words.

I do my writing when my brain is fresh.

I've also learned that taking care of my brain doesn't begin when I'm tired. It begins the night before.

Meditation, [4-7-8 breathing\(opens in new tab\)](#), and a quiet bedtime routine all help me wake up with a brain that's ready to work again.

I'm still learning.

Spoon Theory *has helped me understand that my brain has limits.*

Next month I'm planning to learn about the Pomodoro Technique to see if it helps, too.

These are the things that are helping me today.

Next month I may discover something new.

That's what Everyday Brain has become.

Not a search for my old brain.

I'm getting to know the one I have now.



Alphie and the Disappearing W's

In ***Alphabetia***, Alphie the Alphabet Genie was getting ready for the day.

He had a gift to *****wrap*****, a story to *****write*****, and a toy ship that was a *****wreck*****.

But when he popped out of his lamp and twirled his black curly mustache, something sounded... wrong.

"Look, I will *****rap***** this gift!" said Alphie.
The gift said, "You want me to sing?"

"I will *****rite***** a story!" said Alphie.
The paper said, "You mean you will do it RIGHT?"

"I will fix this little *****reck*****!" said Alphie.
The ship said, "I'm not a RECK, I'm a WRECK!"

Alphie gasped. His big blue eyes went wide.

His W's had wandered off again!

One little pink W was giggling on a cloud: "You never hear me in WRAP!"

A yellow W shouted: "I'm silent in WRITE!"

A red W whispered: "No one says me in WRECK!"

Alphie puffed out his chest — made of A-B-C-D blocks — and said:

"Ah! You are the SECRET W's! You don't make a sound, but without you, words get all mixed up!"

"RAP is music, but WRAP is a present!"

"RITE is a ceremony, but WRITE is what we do with a pen!"

"RECK isn't a word, but WRECK is what happens to a ship!"

He swirled, and his letter-tail made a soft WHOOSH. The W's floated down and clicked back into place:

****W + rap = WRAP****

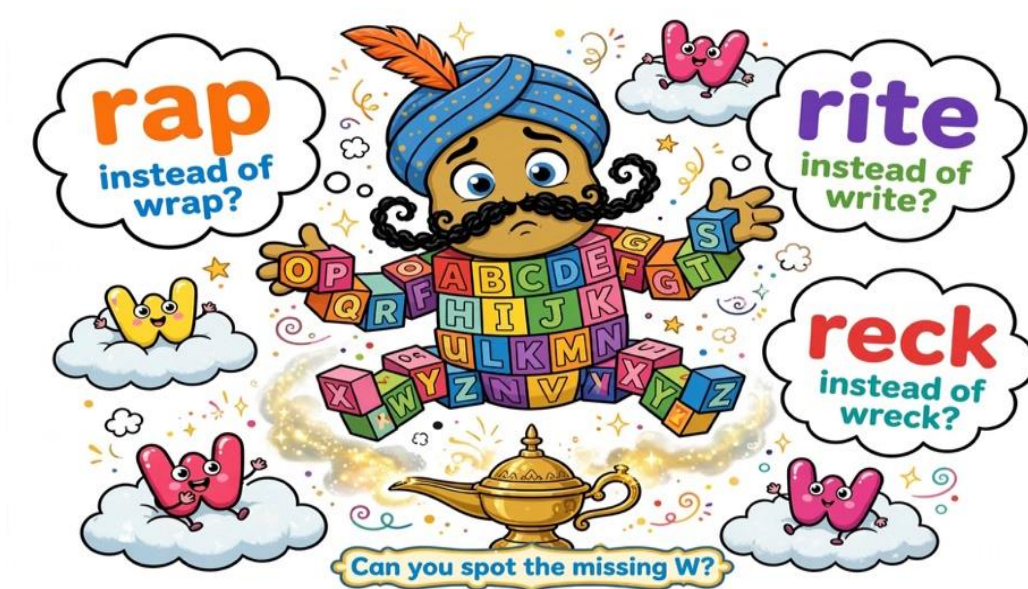
****W + rite = WRITE****

****W + reck = WRECK****

Alphabetia was wonderful and correct again.

Alphie winked, twirled his mustache, and dove back into his lamp.

"Remember," he whispered, "just because you don't hear a W, doesn't mean it's not working!"



Matt Weingertner - MAAC Representative

Every Voice Matters: Tools for Everyday Communication

Yesterday, Mark and I had the privilege of hosting the Long Island MAAC Mini-Conference, "Every Voice Matters: Tools for Everyday Communication." It was an incredible and meaningful day filled with connections, learning, and conversations.

We were excited to have 30+ people attend, and the energy in the room made the event truly special. A huge thank-you to everyone who came out, participated, shared their experiences, and helped make the day such a success.

I also want to give a special thank-you to our amazing speakers—Mindy Olinsky Schnell, Ian MacManus, Michael Lahey, and Jean Marie—for sharing your knowledge, experience, and expertise. Your presentations gave everyone valuable information, practical strategies, and a better understanding of how we can support people living with aphasia.

And of course, thank you to Mark Harder for co-hosting and helping bring this event together. It was a pleasure working alongside you!

Most importantly, this event reminded me why every voice matters. Whether communication comes through speaking, writing, gestures, technology, or other tools, everyone deserves the opportunity to be heard, understood, and included.

Let's keep the conversation going, keep raising awareness, and "Get the Word Out! Aphasia!"





MONDAY, OCTOBER 12TH AT 7:00PM ET
MAAC SUPPORT GROUP W/ SPECIAL GUEST

LAURA MALIS



Laura Malis had a stroke in 2022 and was diagnosed with aphasia. Language, reading, and writing — all of them suddenly became difficult. She was lucky and found a speech therapist. She also worked 30 hours a week for three years improving her language, reading and her brain. Laura now reads using Text-to-Speech. She reads books by hearing and following the words at the same time. She worked on strength and is now working on balance as well. She's also writing again. Laura created [Aphasia at Home](#), website with resources for living with aphasia. She also writes [a blog](#) about life, aphasia, and recovery. Laura has participated in 16 aphasia research projects and is especially interested in research involving aphasia and reading and/or AI. She and fellow NAA Ambassador Paula Gallagher helped create an aphasia peer-support group in Connecticut. Laura is a National Aphasia Association Ambassador.

ARCH Aphasia Fair

WHERE RESOURCES CONNECT



Thankfulness!

A FUN PROJECT



November 17
10 :00 am - 12:00 pm



Community Center at
Giant Supermarket
315 N. York Road
Willow Grove, PA 19090



Please RSVP to
morethanaphasia@gmail.com

Together, we create more than words.



**MAAC
VIRTUALLY
ABROAD**

**with
Yvonne Kent Pateras**

November 19, 2026

12:00PM New York

11:00AM Chicago

10:00AM Denver

7:00PM Athens

9:00AM Los Angeles



MAAC QUARTERLY SCHEDULE/CALENDAR

OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, and DECEMBER 2026

<i>Date</i>	<i>Session</i>	<i>Topic/Guest</i>
<i>Saturday, October 3 10 AM- 2 PM</i>	Long Island MAAC Mini-Conference East Meadow Public Library	
<i>2nd Monday October 12 7 PM</i>	<i>MAAC Support Group For people with aphasia and care givers/care partners On Zoom</i>	<i>Special Guest: Laura Malis</i>
<i>4th Monday, October 26 7 PM</i>	<i>Virtual 5th Annual MAAC Get Together and Walk for Aphasia On Zoom With special guest Mike Jankowski, NAA Ambassador</i>	
<i>2nd Monday, November 9 7 PM</i>	<i>MAAC Support Group For people with aphasia and care givers/care partners On Zoom</i>	<i>Special Guest: Paula Gallagher</i>
<i>Thursday, November 19 7 PM</i>	<i>MAAC Virtually Abroad! Special Guest: Yvonne Kent Pateras On Zoom 12 noon ET (NY time) 7 PM (Athens time)</i>	
<i>4th Monday, November 23 7 PM</i>	<i>MAAC Conversation Group For people with aphasia and care givers/care partners On Zoom</i>	
<i>2nd Monday, December 14 7 PM</i>	Holiday Party & MAAC Support Group For people with aphasia and care givers/care partners Bristol Township Park & Rec Building In Person and On Zoom	
<i>4th Monday, December 28 7 PM</i>	<i>MAAC Conversational Group For people with aphasia and care givers/care partners On Zoom</i>	

