

LettingGO

SPRING 2019

FRED MURRAY
REMEMBERING OUR FRIEND

**IT WILL GET
BETTER!**
XAVIER'S STUTTERING STORY

**SMBC MOCK
INTERVIEW**
RECAPPING THE EVENT

ACTING IN THE FEAR
EXPOSURE THERAPY

FINDING A COMMUNITY
AN ANNUAL CONFERENCE STORY

Upcoming Events

2019 Annual Conference

Poem By Makenzie Cochran

Activity Maze By Daniele Rossi

NATIONAL STUTTERING ASSOCIATION
CHANGING THE LIVES OF PEOPLE WHO STUTTER



ANNUAL CONFERENCE: JULY 3-7

Come and be a part of a powerful life-changing experience for adults, children, families, and friends who share stuttering as a common bond!

50+ workshops designed to help all who stutter in their journey of self-acceptance, self-confidence and fulfilling life's goals.

A three-day youth program with interactive workshops and activities specifically designed for school-age children, parents and the entire family.

Opportunities for speech professionals to earn CEUs and network with leading fluency experts.

RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM: JULY 2-3

Stuttering: Perspectives on Disability, Diversity, & Culture

This is a great opportunity to learn and explore a variety of perspectives through research presentations and small group discussion. Earn up to 1.3 ASHA CEUs.

Vivian Sisskin, M.S., CCC-SLP, BCS-F
Research Symposium Chair

Christopher Constantino, PhD. CCC-SLP
Research Symposium Co-Chair



CONGRATS!

Congratulations to long-time NSA'ers Mike and Lucy Reed Ward! Mike proposed to Lucy on stage at our 34th Annual Conference in Dallas, Texas, and the pair celebrated their beautiful wedding this past fall. We wish them a lifetime of health and happiness!

EVENTS

MARCH 16, 2019:

Boston, MA - 1-Day Conference & CEU Event

APRIL 6, 2019:

Kent, OH - 1-Day Conference

MAY 4, 2019:

Chicago, IL - Don't Tell Me to 'Slow Down' 5K & Kids Dash

MAY 18, 2019:

Greenville, SC - 1-Day Conference

JULY 2-3, 2019:

Fort Lauderdale, FL - NSA Research Symposium: Perspectives On Disability, Diversity, & Culture

JULY 3-7, 2019:

Fort Lauderdale, FL - 36th Annual NSA Conference

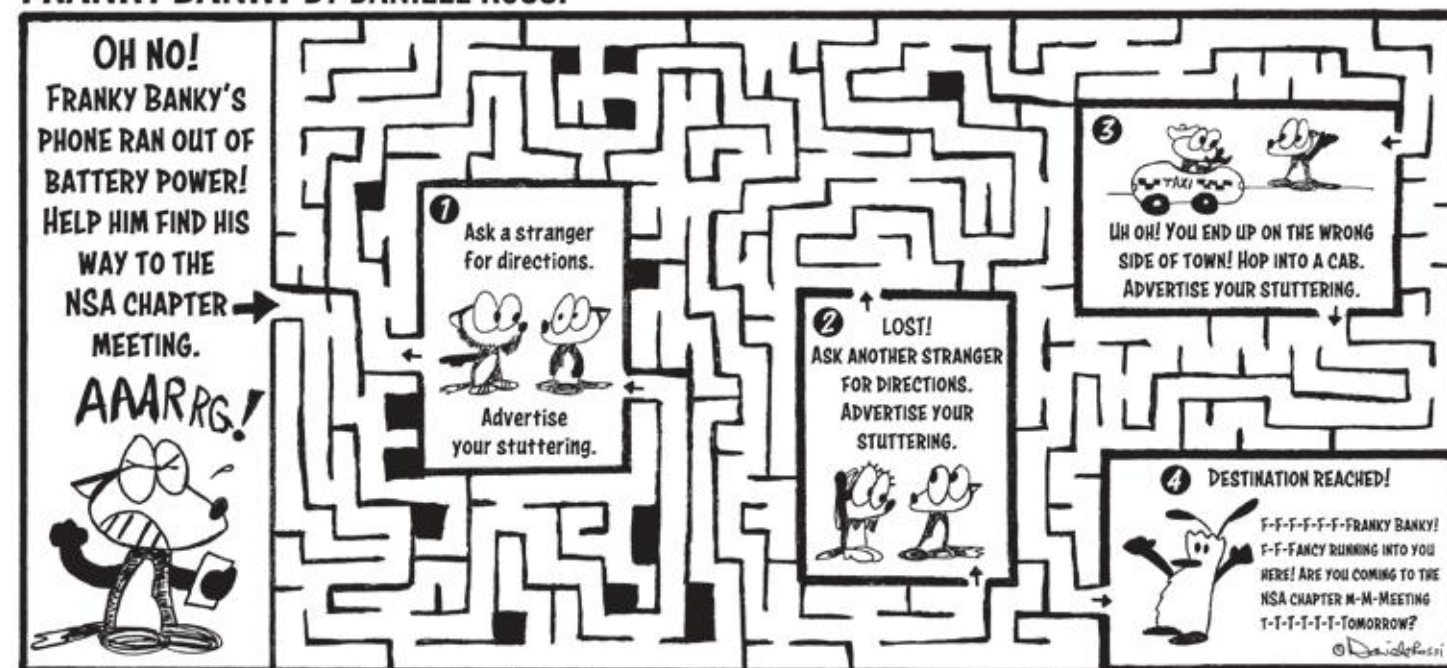
For complete details visit westutter.org

GEARING UP FOR A GREAT YEAR!

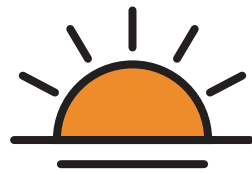
Our Board of Directors met for their Winter Board Meeting on January 19th in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. A great deal of work was accomplished during the meeting, the Board was able to tour our 2019 Annual Conference Hotel, the Marriott Harbor Beach Resort & Spa, and the group is looking forward to another year of serving you, the stuttering community!



FRANKY BANKY BY DANIELE ROSSI



Solution at stutteringiscool.com/maze



REMEMBERING FRED

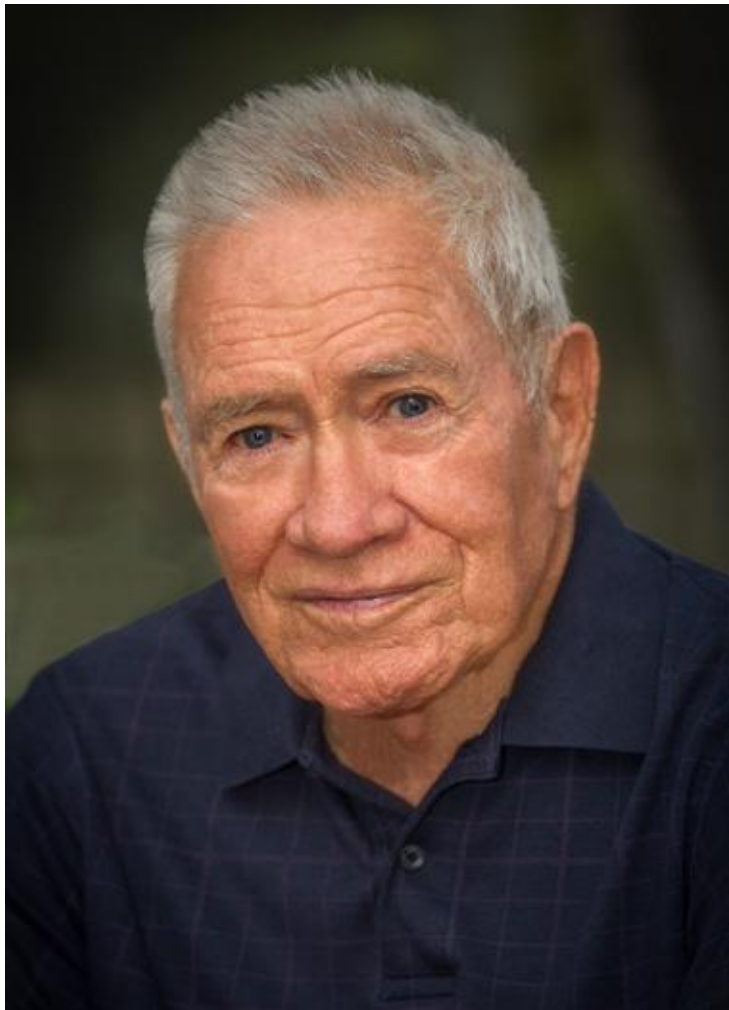
DR. FREDERICK P. MURRAY OCTOBER 8, 1925 - JANUARY 24, 2019

On January 24, 2019, the community of people who stutter lost one of its dearest members.

Dr. Frederick P. Murray was perhaps best known as author of 'A Stutterer's Story', a pioneering book written from the perspective of a person who stutters. Personally, many people knew Fred for his festive shirts, his passionate spirit, and his encouraging words. Fred was a speech-language pathologist, scholar (Professor Emeritus, University of New Hampshire), mentor, and trusted friend to many. He was well-traveled and highly proficient in three languages.

Fred knew many of the founders of the profession of speech-language pathology, and many generations of clinicians and researchers thereafter. He was open-minded and learned. Beginning as a young adult and continuing well into his 90's, Fred studied theories of stuttering and participated in a variety of speech therapeutic approaches that emerged from those theories (Fred traced this remarkable journey in a 2011 keynote address, archived on Judith Kuster's Stuttering Home Page: <https://www.mnsu.edu/comdis/kuster/history/murray.html>).

Fred also had his own ideas about stuttering and "recovery" from stuttering. One of his core beliefs was that it is important for people who stutter to develop a willingness to experience stuttering,



rather than suppress it. Suppressing stuttering, he felt, is like disallowing a volcano to vent steam: Soon there would be a massive eruption of stuttering, like Mount Vesuvius. At the same time, Fred believed that it is possible to stutter a thousand times a day, with minimal force, tension and struggle, such that listeners might barely notice the stuttering at all. As Fred would explain, this ability takes years of self-study, practice and patience in order to understand how to stutter in a new way.

Finally, Fred believed that it is important for people who stutter to work on developing themselves, completely, as people. For this reason, Fred was a generous supporter of many organizations that advocate for people who stutter, including the NSA, the SFA, and FRIENDS. Well into his 90's, Fred was a constant presence at local NSA meetings (in Tampa and Orlando) and at NSA national

conferences, where he continued mentoring other people who stutter. He also frequently guest-lectured in university classes, educating new generations of speech-language pathologists, and even attended ASHA conferences. Fred was excited about new research discoveries, new developments in therapy, and the people behind that work. Most importantly, he was excited about the future for new generations of people who stutter. Fred will be missed, but never forgotten, by his many friends and admirers around the world. ☺

My name is Xavier and this is my personal stuttering story. I am 13 years old and currently in the 8th grade. I starting stuttering at the age of 2 years old and I was too young to really know that my speech was different but thankfully, my mom and dad understood.

My parents had my speech tested when I was around 3 years old because the stuttering seemed to come and go. After testing, I was confirmed with moderate stuttering, and so at age 3, I started speech therapy. To me it was all fun and games...literally! I would meet with my speech therapist, we would play games like 'I Spy', 'Hungry Hippo', and 'Flash Card', and I also learned about 'Turtle Talk'. I did not realize at the time that these fun games would become my speech tools. We talked about how a turtle moves very slowly instead of the fast moving bunny rabbit. Therefore, the phrase 'Turtle Talk' became my mental reminder for slow, smooth, and easy speech.

When I was younger and around other people, I did not really care if my words sometimes got stuck. When I went into 4th and 5th grade, I sometimes felt like I was treated like a baby because teachers and classmates would tell me to 'slow down'. I don't think I was ever really teased to my face about my stuttering, but I am sure there were some kids that laughed at me. The worst was feeling like I was being treated like a baby because I stuttered, and that was bad enough. I sometimes heard my classmates saying don't make fun of him because he stutters. Sometimes it made me a little sad, but I never stopped raising my hand to answer questions in class, and I liked to read so I would always raise my hand to read when the teacher asked for volunteers. I was confident that I could do it no matter what.

I think people that tease or make fun of people for stuttering should live with stuttering for just one day so they can understand. There's nothing funny about it. I think teasing does go away after a while. At first people don't know you, but as they get to know you and understand, it gets better because stuttering fades into the background of the relationship and no one really focuses on it anymore.

As I moved beyond the 6th grade, most of my friends and classmates knew that I stuttered. It's not a big deal, and sometimes if I can't get a word out they will finish the word for me if they know what I'm trying to say. When I was younger I felt bad, but now when someone finishes a word for me it makes me feel good that they have enough compassion and understand me. Now my parents don't have to tell my teachers that I stutter. There are only a few teachers that actually realize that I stutter and if I feel the need to tell a teacher now I speak for myself because it's a part of my life that I have accepted and it's no big deal. As I continue to grow, my stuttering seems to get better as I still remember and use my speech tools when I have rough times. This is why I now want to get more involved with volunteering and helping other who stutter.

To anyone that may stutter like me, I say stand tall and remember that we are all unique in our own way. Stuttering is just part of who we are but doesn't define us. Even though it may seem like it may never get better, if we keep working at it, it will. As we keep working through the tough times and do not let our speech challenges defeat us, we can help each other and make the world a better place. ☺

IT WILL GET BETTER!

A PERSONAL STUTTERING STORY

By Xavier R.



SMBC OFFERS MOCK INTERVIEWS FOR PEOPLE WHO STUTTER

On the evening of January 31, The National Stuttering Association (NSA) partnered with Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation (SMBC) to host a three-hour mock interview event for people who stutter (PWS) in the firm's New York City office. These individuals, who traveled from around the US to take part in this special event, ranged from college students to professionals represented a wide range of industries.

SMBC welcomed more than 30 of its senior leaders consisting of Directors, Executive Directors, and Managing Directors from across its businesses and departments to volunteer as mock interviewers for these PWS and to provide them with valuable feedback on their interviewing skills as well as tips to help them to gain more confidence.

Kunal Mahajan, a Vice President at SMBC, who is a life-long PWS and an active participant in the NSA, hosted the evening event and championed it on behalf of the firm along with his colleagues and team members. Prior to the arrival of the Mock Interview event guests, Kunal and Tammy Flores, Executive Director of the National Stuttering Association, prepared the firm's senior managers by educating them on stuttering and the challenges PWS face.

Isaac Deutsch, SMBC Deputy Head of the Americas and Senior Deputy President of SMBC Nikko Securities America, Inc., kicked

off the event where he welcomed everyone, instantly connecting with the firm's senior managers and the interviewees. Highlights from his remarks include:


"Today, we brought together our senior leaders who hold client-facing roles within our firm and who are strong communicators. They are interested in learning about stuttering and join us this evening to help each one of you further develop your interviewing and communication skills. Our firm will continue to invest in and attract people of disabilities to SMBC and its affiliates as well as educate our employees on the challenges that people with disabilities face. We are proud to be a part of the National Stuttering Association's 2019 initiative of bringing stuttering awareness to the workplace and are excited about the relationship we are building with the NSA and with all of you."



The interviews were followed by a panel focused on the "Benefits of Coming Out With Your Stutter in the Workplace," which Kunal moderated with his three managers (Greg Wiske, Chrystian Marin, Emma Glennon). Attendees learned from the panelists about how meaningful it was to them when Kunal opened up to them about his stutter and how Kunal's openness allowed them to better understand how to support him. Other panel topics included what the interview process was like, navigating presentations, and the benefits having a PWS join the team.

Qishen Li, a Masters student at Baruch College, shared this heartfelt comment:

"As a life-long stutterer, it was a life-changing experience for me. Now I feel much more confident in myself and what I have to offer in a workplace. It was inspiring to learn that PWS can overcome this obstacle with our speech and can achieve career success regardless of it."

The evening ended with timely and important remarks, encouraging all attendees to take to heart one thing: It is okay for you to be a person who stutters! In addition, PWS must take on the responsibility of educating their institutions and managers about this disability. If we can have the courage to own our stutter and tell them about the support we need, they will come to our side and work with us so that we can manage this disability together in the workplace while being the most effective employees each of us are very capable of being. 

This was truly a one-of-a-kind event for the stuttering community and we are grateful to SMBC for hosting this initiative for us.

THIS IS STUTTERING: AN ORIGINAL POEM

By Makenzie Cochran

Although my words may not always come out, my heart feels so full it could almost shout.

Inside this heart tumble thousands of words, some of which may never be heard.

They resolve to break free from the tension and strain, fighting as long as strength remains.

Each day I rejoice when some break away, and treasure up the rest for another day.

Though I sometimes yearn to speak and be free, I praise my great God for how He teaches me.

This unique voice of mine is not a curse or mistake, even if it falters and shakes.

It has taught me to listen and let others be heard...to love them in deed, not only in word.

This battle to speak may always persist, but without the fight, oh, what blessings would be missed?

And how amazing to think...

All these unsaid words still reserved in my heart, my God knows in full, not merely in part.



ACTING IN THE FEAR

The first time I heard the term “exposure therapy,” a friend was suggesting that I be thrown into a pit of snakes. Or maybe she suggested that I visit a zoo and look at a snake, but to me, those are the same.

Wikipedia describes exposure therapy as exposing the target patient (me!) to the anxiety source (snakes!) or its context without the intention to cause any danger. Essentially, you are exposed progressively to stronger fears. Maybe I’d start with a small fear: looking at pictures of snakes. Then maybe I’d visit the zoo and look at a snake. Then, well, I guess the next step is holding a harmless snake. Shivers down my spine on that one, but you get it. You act in the fear.

Recently a graduate student in an SLP program called me to conduct a phone interview she needed to do for class. She asked me questions on topics such as what my stutter felt like and how it affected me in school. I talked about the NSA and my local chapter in San Diego, and how much just knowing other people who stutter (PWS) has changed my life. When I mentioned my fear of the conferences and of group meetings, she called it exposure therapy. And she was dead-on.

I first heard about the NSA in 2013. I was 22 years old, and a friend at Biola University, my rival college, sent me the link for This Is Stuttering. Morgan, the guy creating the documentary, was a 22- or 23-year old person who stutters and was premiering the film within a week of my message to him. My hands were sweaty on the way there, and I had one friend drive with me, and another friend meet me there. I was afraid to sit in a room full of people and watch someone stutter onscreen. After I watched Morgan – someone my



By Jaymie Horak

age, at a similar university, in the same place in life, with a very similar stutter, and the exact same secondaries – speaking about his fears, how it affected his faith in God, and how frustrated he felt with himself on the phone, I realized that I was not alone. The obsession with fluency, the hatred of stuttering, the shame of speaking....these things were not just me.

After this, I kept tabs on him. I learned of his connection with the 2013 NSA Conference in Arizona. This was the first time I saw the NSA’s website, and while I was tempted to make the drive to the conference, I was too afraid.

Cue 2014: NSA Annual Conference in Washington DC. That sounded so cool! I applied for a scholarship, but I ignored the follow-up calls and emails, and I didn’t go.

Later on there was a small, regional conference in Anaheim that was held across only two days. A friend offered to drive to the hotel and stay with me, and so I nervously agreed to go. It’s the only reason I went.

The moment I arrived, hearing other people stutter made the hair on the back of my neck stand up. It made my shoulders and neck tense, just the way it did when I stuttered. Hearing other people in the lobby stuttering put me on high alert. I even whispered to the receptionist because I was afraid that someone would hear me and know that I was one of them.

Hearing people stutter made me nervous. I wanted to finish their sentences, avert my gaze, even walk away. I’d later realize that I was projecting my own fears onto them. Eventually I met three

men from the San Diego Adult NSA Chapter, one of whom urged me to come to the meetings after this conference.

Listening to the open mic during the event was a taste of what I had always needed: knowing that although our stutters came in different shapes and sizes, we feel the same shame, the same fears. I was surrounded by all of these incredible people: funny, silly, kind, thoughtful, respectful, encouraging. I was encouraged by many to attend the next Annual NSA Conference, told that I would love to party all night. No one had ever assumed that of me because I was always so “shy” (read: socially anxious due to my stutter.)

I avoided the chapter meetings for some time. I went once, but it made me too nervous. After a few months, once I ran out of excuses, I started to attend regularly. I still didn’t make it to the 2015 conference; even after everything I had already experienced, I was still afraid. As time went on, the group of guys in my chapter became my friends. I kept attending meetings, and in 2016 I finally made it to an Annual Conference.

Now I lead workshops, participate in interviews about my stutter with grad students, and speak about stuttering at universities and schools. At work, I answer phones all day long, I stutter freely and easily, and present presentations with confidence. It was exactly as the grad student had prescribed years before: exposure therapy. My worst fear was stuttering, and dropping myself in a hotel lobby full of 200 people who stutter that weekend in October 2014 was perhaps one of my unknown worst fears.

Yes, it is uncomfortable. But stay in it. Hold onto it. And eventually, the fear will lessen. ☺



FINDING A COMMUNITY

By Christine K.

After returning from the 2018 Annual Conference, we presented our NSA 2018 poster to our principal, explained what the NSA is, who we are, and just how amazing the conference was this summer. The kids proudly told her of their favorite parts (of course, one child said, “throwing balls at the adults”) and what they learned from the conference. Our principal immediately put our poster in the front office for all to see. The next thing we know, we are being questioned by all of the kids:

You guys went to a pool?! (yes), This was a speech field trip?! (sort of), She was on the cover of a magazine?! (she sure was – LG Fall 2018), What is this stuttering conference all about? (Throwing balls at adults, apparently), What was it really all about? (Letting go and being brave. Making friends and loving yourself. Finding a community unlike anything you’ve ever known, finding your people. Stuttering.)

A few of our NSA- EFY Crew members decided they wanted to present the poster to their teachers, and one second grader even decided he wanted to present it to his whole class! He beautifully explained the NSA, the conference, and who we are. I heard his classmates whispering that they wish they could come to the stuttering/pool party/throwing-balls-at-adults conference.

It was wonderful. It is wonderful. The Letting Go cover is displayed throughout our school. We have another NSA poster in my speech room along with the trophy and metals from the Talent Show. We proudly wear our #WESTUTTER shirts regularly.

There are no words to describe just how good the NSA conference was...chills, tears, and laughs from our group, and their people - all 882 of them - smiling and sobbing behind them. 🙏



The world's largest gathering of people who stutter.



36th Annual Conference

JULY 3-7, 2019 • MARRIOTT HARBOR BEACH RESORT & SPA

1460 BROADWAY NEW YORK, NY 10036 | P. 800.WESTUTTER (937.8888)

E. INFO@WESTUTTER.ORG | WWW.WESTUTTER.ORG | [f](#) [t](#) [i](#) 'WESTUTTER'

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: TAMMY FLORES | EDITOR: MANDY FINSTAD | DESIGNER: MICHELLE GEIGER

