

The Gallaudet University Aural Rehabilitation Elderhostels

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Elderhostel is an intensive one week educational program offered by colleges and universities around the world for people 60 years of age and older. The objectives of the Gallaudet Elderhostels are to provide information about hearing loss to hearing-impaired seniors and significant others, improve adjustment and coping strategies, foster consumerism and self-help, and start each participant on an individualized aural rehabilitation program to be continued in the home community. Basic and advanced programs are offered. The three courses presented in this paper are: Hearing Loss and Hearing Aids, Speechreading and Communication Strategies, and Psychosocial Aspects of Hearing Impairment. All include experiential labs. Instruction in communication strategies is based on the concepts of communication as a shared responsibility between sender and receiver and use of appropriate strategies before, during, or after communication breakdown. Speechreading instruction is primarily synthetic, although some viseme training is included. Optional hearing evaluation and counseling are provided to the participants.

Elderhostel is an international program administered through a central coordinating office in Boston, MA. The program was founded in 1975 to provide short-term educational experiences to people 60 years of age and older. The concept was modeled after the youth hostels and folk schools of Europe.

The typical Elderhostel is a residential, campus-based liberal arts and sciences program, not related to problems of aging. Participants live in university housing and attend lectures, concerts, plays, exhibits, and other cultural and recreational activities offered by the university and surrounding community. Each Elderhostel institution is encouraged to offer a program reflecting its unique character. For example, a college located near the ocean might offer programs in marine biology and scuba diving while a school in an historical district might have a program with an historical focus.

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The first Elderhostel programs were held at five New Hampshire colleges, with 200 people participating. At present, programs are offered in all 50 states, Canada, and many other countries. All programs are listed in an Elderhostel catalogue which is mailed to members by the central office around the first of each year. Prospective participants select programs from the catalogue and register through the central office. Many people participate in Elderhostels on an annual basis, sometimes attending several programs during a given year. Costs are minimal, regulated by the Elderhostel central office. As of June, 1988, the full cost per person was \$225.

GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY ELDERHOSTELS

Gallaudet University offered its first Elderhostel program in 1981 to deal with the needs of elderly persons with hearing impairment. The goal of the program was to provide information about the effects of hearing loss on the lives of hearing-impaired people, their families, and their friends, and to teach skills for coping with these problems. Sessions on sign language and deaf folklore were added for general educational purposes to sensitize the participants to deaf culture.

The first *aural rehabilitation Elderhostel* program, "Hearing Loss in Later Years," was filled within four weeks of the catalogue mailing, with a long waiting list. To accommodate continuing demand, the Gallaudet University Elderhostel is offered three times each summer. An *Advanced Elderhostel*, "Further Exploration of Hearing Loss in Later Years," was developed in 1986 for previous participants who had followed through on what they had learned about amplification, assistive devices, and coping strategies, but felt the need for more intensive instruction. The program was based on the results of a questionnaire sent to registrants who prioritized a list of proposed topics. During the Advanced Elderhostel, the group shared problem experiences and tried new approaches to speechreading, strategy use, and problem solving. They spent time exploring the latest innovations in assistive devices and hearing aids, and attended interactive sessions on hearing conservation and better use of the telephone. An oto-neurologist discussed medical aspects of hearing loss and a member of the House Ear Institute Investigatory Team spoke about cochlear implants. Adapted tracking exercises and a consumer group panel were also included. The Advanced Elderhostel will be offered every two to three years and will be limited to former participants.

Accessible Elderhostels represent a concept that developed from the aural rehabilitation Elderhostel programs. The objective is to place assistive listening systems in Elderhostel programs designed for people with normal hearing to make them accessible to hearing-impaired participants. Following initial success at Elderhostel programs at the Peabody Institute of Music in Baltimore, every Maryland Elderhostel used FM equipment which was loaned by manufacturers and monitored by Gallaudet University personnel. The

Elderhostel central office then recommended that all programs purchase FM equipment. Further description of the Gallaudet Elderhostel programs can be found in Kaplan (1983).

**“HEARING LOSS IN LATER YEARS”:
AN AURAL REHABILITATION ELDERHOSTEL**

Although other aural rehabilitation programs for the elderly may share some elements with the Gallaudet Elderhostel program, several factors make the Gallaudet program unique. The Elderhostel program is intense, including approximately 40 hours of class, interactive labs, and other activities offered during a six-day period. Participants are on-site 24 hours each day, allowing for further interaction with staff and faculty during meals and evenings.

The basic goal of the Elderhostel program is to start the participants on a meaningful, individualized aural rehabilitation program. The program attempts to provide support, disseminate information, offer individual direction, stimulate consumerism, and begin a program of sensory aid use. Participants are expected to continue their efforts in their home communities using the resources given to them during the program. According to reports of Elderhostel alumni, information and motivation acquired during the Gallaudet program have stimulated formation, development, and/or restructuring of programs in their localities.

The Gallaudet Elderhostel program draws participants from a national pool of senior citizens. It also attracts professional visitors and hearing-impaired people from consumer groups who function as participants, observers, or staff. As a result, the program is able to disseminate information throughout the United States and Canada.

A unique aspect of the Gallaudet program is its intra- and interdisciplinary approach. Diagnostic and rehabilitative audiologists interact during presentations and labs. Similarly, audiologists, speech-language pathologists, social workers, and educators of the deaf share expertise. Particularly beneficial is the team effort of the social worker, speech pathologist, and audiologist for sessions on coping and communication strategies.

A final distinguishing feature of the program is the fact that the Gallaudet location allows the Elderhostelers to study, observe, and interact with deaf culture. This opportunity enhances their global understanding of hearing loss and sometimes allows them to better accept their own communication problems.

Objectives

There are five objectives for the introductory aural rehabilitation Elderhostel:

1. Increase general understanding of hearing loss and its effects on the lives of hearing-impaired seniors, their families and friends.

2. Provide information about coping strategies, hearing aids, assistive devices, and services available to hearing-impaired people.
3. Encourage participants to join and become active in those consumer organizations for persons with hearing-impairment that best fit their needs. Lists of such organizations as well as professional services organizations are distributed.
4. Start each participant on a rehabilitation program which can be continued in the home community.
5. Introduce the Elderhostelers to deaf culture.

Activities

The program is comprised of courses described in Table 1. These are taught largely through interactive lecture-discussion sessions offered in the mornings, supplemented with small group activities and experiential labs. The labs are designed to provide hands-on experience with technology; the small group sessions are used for audiometric interpretation activities, speechreading exercises, and role-playing to illustrate coping strategies. The courses are the following:

Hearing loss and hearing aids. Among the topics listed in Table 1, stressed areas include: difference between sensitivity and understanding, effects of different types of hearing loss on communication, benefits and limitations of amplification, and consumer issues. Experiential labs deal with hearing aid orientation, assistive devices, and audiometric interpretation. Hearing evaluations, including electroacoustic check of hearing aids, are offered without extra charge.

Speechreading and communication strategies. Included are discussions of the importance of integrating speechreading and residual hearing, the use of the redundancies in language, and the importance of integrating communication strategies with speechreading. Assertiveness training is an important part of this course. Role-playing is used during the large group lectures and the labs to facilitate learning of communication strategies.

Psychosocial aspects of hearing impairment. Through discussion, problem solving exercises, and unstructured rap sessions, psychosocial problems are identified and coping strategies suggested. The impact of hearing loss on families and friends is explored. Both large and small group activities are used to identify ways to cope more successfully. A social worker is available on an appointment basis to meet with individual participants or couples.

The three Elderhostel courses are interdependent; the content of one course is essential to success in the others. The Gallaudet Elderhostel programs are very much team efforts. Planning and administration of all non-professional aspects of the programs such as room and board are the responsibility of a person from Gallaudet University's National Academy. Coordination of professional activities is performed by a member of the Audiology Department who liaises with the National Academy coordinator. Table 1 indicates those

Table 1
 Content of the Gallaudet University Elderhostel Program,
 "Hearing Loss in Later Years"

Activity	Content	Provider
Course: Hearing Loss and Hearing Aids	Normal Ear Sensitivity vs Understanding Pathologies Types of Hearing Loss Audiometric Interpretation Tinnitus and Vertigo Amplification Assistive Devices Evaluation Procedures Consumer Information Hearing Aid Orientation	Audiologist
Experiential Labs:	Hearing Aid Orientation Assistive Devices Audiometric Interpretation	Audiologist, project assistants
Course: Speechreading and Communication Strategies	Benefits and Limitations of Speechreading Assertiveness Training Communication Strategies	Audiologist or Speech/ Language Pathologist
Experiential Labs:	Speechreading Communication Strategies Role-Playing	Audiologist or Speech/ language Pathologist, project assistants
Course: Psychosocial aspects of hearing impairment	Psychosocial problems and solutions	Social Worker
Small Group Discussion	Psychosocial problems and solutions	Social Worker and Audiologist
Individual Consultation	Psychosocial problems	Social Worker
Individual Tests	Hearing Evaluation Hearing Aid Check	Audiologist, project assistants
Group Lecture/ Demonstrations	Sign Language Cued Speech Deaf Folklore	Sign Language Teacher Cued Speech Teacher Sociologist

professionals who provide for the courses, labs, and small group sessions.

In addition to professional staff, three project assistants are hired for each program. They live in the dorms with the Elderhostelers; assist with preparation of materials, registration, and small group activities; and take notes on a large flip chart during each presentation. They set up, dismantle, and monitor all equipment; fit FM units to participants; and perform electroacoustic evaluation of hearing aids. The project assistants are on call at all times during

the week of Elderhostel to assist with any emergencies or special needs. Professionals who are interested in learning how to conduct an aural rehabilitation Elderhostel are invited to serve as project assistants whereby they can gain first-hand experience.

The three courses with their labs and small group activities are supplemented by deaf culture activities such as sign language demonstrations and sessions on deaf folklore. Also scheduled is a demonstration of Cued Speech (Cornett, 1972).

The majority of the activities occur in a room with easy access to living quarters and dining hall. In addition to a permanent room loop, a public address system and an FM system are made available for each program. A mixer into which all systems feed allows presenters to use a single microphone without feedback. To facilitate communication among participants, the presenter repeats all questions and comments; sometimes a second microphone is passed to the person in the audience wishing to comment. Information written on a flip chart is later posted on the walls for future reference. FM units on different channels are available for simultaneous small group sessions and outdoor excursions. When presentations are given by deaf speakers, voice-to-sign and sign-to-voice interpreters are available.

Each Elderhosteler receives a book of materials to take home. These materials include the following information: (a) ways for significant others to communicate with hearing-impaired people, (b) hearing aids and hearing aid orientation, (c) roles of different hearing health professionals, (d) functioning of the normal ear and pathologies, (e) certified audiological facilities in each participant's geographical area, (f) speechreading and communication strategies, (g) assistive devices, (h) professional and consumer organizations providing information about hearing loss, and (i) psychosocial aspects of hearing impairment and coping strategies.

Target Audience

The Elderhostelers have been hearing-impaired people from 60 to 95 years of age and their spouses or friends who often have mild hearing losses themselves. Hearing problems have been primarily sensorineural in nature, caused or aggravated by presbycusis. The major complaint has been difficulty understanding speech, especially under difficult listening conditions such as group situations, distance listening, or noise. Friends and family have expressed the need to cope better with the communication frustrations of living with a hearing-impaired person.

Patterns of hearing aid use have varied widely from full-time to no use. Often hearing aids are found to be inappropriate or functioning inadequately. Sophistication about amplification has ranged from the man who appeared with an experimental noise-cancelling prototype, to the people with little or no knowledge of amplification who may not know how to insert an earmold.

Each summer the Elderhostelers seem to be more knowledgeable about

assistive devices. When the Elderhostel programs started in 1981, none of the participants were familiar with assistive devices. Throughout the years, however, increasing numbers of people have arrived with information about devices or have brought their own systems; approximately one-third of the 60 participants in the two Elderhostels offered during the summer of 1987 either owned assistive devices or were contemplating purchase. The increasing sophistication with assistive devices is paralleled by increasing awareness of consumer advocacy groups, particularly Self Help for Hard of Hearing People.

The Elderhostelers as a group have been well educated, interested in new learning experiences, and highly motivated to improve their communication. They have travelled to Gallaudet from all parts of this country and Canada. Most have attended many other Elderhostels and are proud of that fact. A few people are still employed; most are heavily involved in volunteer activities.

Instruction in Communication Strategies

Initial instruction is based on two communication models: (a) the traditional sender-medium-receiver model (A) shown in Figure 1, and (b) the communication event-time continuum (B) shown in Figure 2. These models and the instruction based upon them are described in detail in Bally, Wilson, and Bergan (1984).

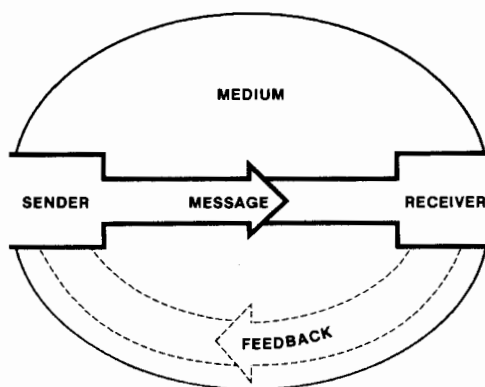


Figure 1. Traditional sender-medium-receiver model of communication used for instruction of communication strategies.

Model A is used to demonstrate the changing role of communicators in a given situation as well as the concept of communication as a shared responsibility. The participants analyze communication situations and enumerate reasons for their success or failure. In instances of communication breakdown, they must determine where in Model A the breakdown has occurred and if the breakdown is related to hearing impairment. For example, if the problem can

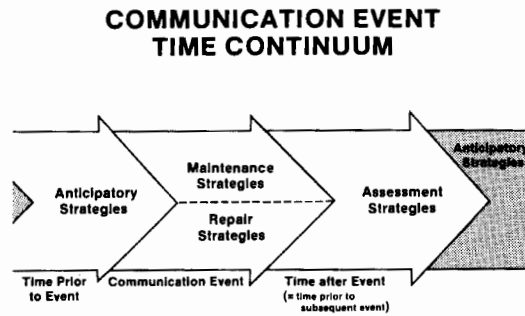


Figure 2. Communication event-time continuum used to analyze when to apply various communication strategies.

truly be attributed to the unclear speech of the sender, the communication difficulty is not caused by the hearing loss. The shared responsibility concept is illustrated by the "feedback" arrow connecting sender and receiver in Figure 1.

Model B in Figure 2 shows when to use various strategies; before, during, or after the communication event. Communication events are initially analyzed in order to select anticipatory strategies. Environmental factors including lighting, sound, space, and spatial relationships are discussed first because they are more concrete and, therefore, easiest to identify. Next, the interpersonal aspects of the anticipated event are reviewed, including the verbal and nonverbal characteristics of both speaker and listener. In each situation, the participants decide if the problem can be modified and with what possible consequences. For example, asking a friend to remove gum from the mouth may have different consequences than asking the company president to do so. Finally, contextual parameters are anticipated. For example, whom are you talking with? What is the likely topic? What are the related circumstances? What is a likely script? The concept of the redundancies of language is then introduced. Such factors as frequency of occurrence of limited contextually-based vocabulary, recurring word order and syntactic structures, sequence of ideas, and idiomatic phrasing are emphasized. At this point a demonstration occurs, highlighting the amount of predictable information in a given communication situation.

A common situation used to illustrate the use of language redundancy is the asking of directions to a point of interest in Washington, DC. The Elderhostelers identify limited direction-giving vocabulary such as "left," "right," "turn," "continue," "blocks," "miles," "cross"; numbers, letters, and state names to designate streets; and landmark names such as "Capitol," "Union Station," "Lincoln Memorial," and "Dupont Circle." Recurring carrier phrases used in direction-giving such as, "turn left at . . .," "continue for . . .," and "you will pass . . .," are also elicited. Finally, the predictable sequence of

language in the communication exchange is identified (e.g., "How do I get to Georgetown?" "Are you driving or taking public transportation?" "Driving! Continue down Florida Avenue about five blocks until . . ."). This kind of exercise is used to illustrate that awareness of the language redundancies of a situation facilitates successful communication.

Maintenance strategies in Model B include confirming what has been understood, using closed-set or narrowing questions, and directing conversations. Participants are encouraged to self-assess their use of basic pragmatic skills such as turn taking, initiating or ending conversation, and selecting appropriate communication modes (Deyo & Hallau, 1984).

Selection of effective repair strategies requires participants to contrast approaches used when they understand nothing, understand part, or understand all of a conversation. These approaches include repetition, rephrasing, asking for the topic, spelling, and writing. One of the labs, a skit entitled "John and Marcia," reinforces discussion of repair strategies by requiring participants to intervene in a real-life strategy selection process. This lab will be discussed in greater detail in a later section.

The effective use of strategies is based on the ability of Elderhostelers to utilize effective behavioral approaches to communication events. The primary elements of an effective assertive approach are emphasized: courtesy, explanation, and direction. Situations in which passive or aggressive behavior is appropriate are also discussed. In addition, two labs encourage the development of strategy use.

The first lab is a small group effort. A situationally-based topic is chosen from communication problem areas suggested by the participants, for example, an airport or train station. It is analyzed for communication positives and negatives, with the negatives separated into what can and cannot be changed with reasonable efforts. Appropriate assertive language and strategies for modification of remedial environmental, interpersonal, and situational difficulties are selected. An anticipatory script is developed and reviewed for possible pitfalls. Possible maintenance and repair strategies are reviewed. The script is then role-played, emphasizing speechreading. The instructor augments the situation with communication breakdowns not written into the script and requires use of alternate strategies. Those not participating in role-playing suggest different strategies when those employed by the participants fail. Flexibility in strategy selection is stressed.

The second lab includes the entire Elderhostel group and builds on the small group training. A short skit is presented by staff in which characters dubbed John and Marcia act out their communication interactions in various day-to-day situations. A character named "Voice of Reason" narrates and stops the action periodically, asking for audience involvement. The play unfolds in alternate ways depending on audience response. For groups who are reluctant to role-play, the "John and Marcia" skit is presented prior to the small group lab and serves as a model. Sample situations are selected and alternate behav-

iors are demonstrated using passive, assertive, and aggressive approaches. Because participants tend to see these behaviors as distinctly separate, a model is presented to demonstrate that passive, assertive, and aggressive behaviors are part of the same continuum. Following is an exercise based on this model:

The problem situation involves a hearing-impaired person on the board of a condominium association. However, communication is difficult at the meetings because of a poor seating arrangement, no amplification system, lack of written agenda, and random comments from difficult-to-identify speakers in the audience. The group identifies the following possible strategies to deal with the situation:

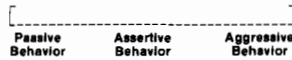
1. Stand up at a meeting and say, "This meeting is impossible! I quit." Then leave.
2. Try to pay better attention.
3. Ask the person in the next seat to repeat everything not understood.
4. Meet with the president or officers of the board. Discuss concerns and suggest solutions. Identify others with similar problems who attend the meetings and those who would like to attend but do not because of communication problems.
5. Make a speech at the board meeting highlighting the lack of sensitivity of the board. Demand reforms.
6. Raise your hand each time something at the meeting is not understood. Ask for repetition or clarification.
7. Make a speech at the board meeting. Explain the problem and ask if others present have similar problems. Suggest that a committee be formed to investigate the situation and prepare a plan of action to resolve the problem.
8. Send a letter to the board tending your resignation. List the reasons.
9. Keep attending meetings but don't say anything. Sooner or later the other members will notice your lack of participation. Then the problem can be discussed.

Each possible solution is discussed by the participants and placed on the passive-aggressive continuum as shown in Figure 3, bottom panel. The probable consequences of each behavior are identified. It should become clear that there is always more than one viable solution to communication problems, and that consequences must be considered when behaviors are selected. If one approach does not succeed, others can be tried.

Instruction in Speechreading

Speechreading skills are taught in an integrated approach, including both analytic and synthetic skills. Analytic training stresses viseme differentiation based on place of production and effects of homopheneity. Exercises with and without context are presented to highlight the effect of context on communication success.

**Continuum
of Communication Behavior**



**Example Behaviors
Relative to Continuum**



Figure 3. Continuum of communication behavior. Bottom panel is an example of the use of the continuum in communication strategy instruction. The numbers refer to hypothetical responses to a problem situation. See text.

Emphasis is placed on synthetic approaches which can yield short- and long-term benefits to the participants (Kaplan, Bally, & Garretson, 1987). Exercises and discussion of synthetic approaches are dovetailed with the unit on anticipatory, maintenance, and repair strategies. The use of word and language associations or “constellations” helps the participants organize their predictions of language for specific communication situations (Kaplan, Bally, & Garretson, 1987). Clients predict the vocabulary they might encounter in a problem situation and that vocabulary is used for speechreading training. The constellations begin with concrete vocabulary and move toward more abstract concepts. At the same time, exercises move from single words to phrases and connected speech. Scripting and role-playing are also employed effectively here.

For example: Group consensus reveals that the check-out procedure in the grocery store is a problem situation. Specific vocabulary that is germane to this situation is generated by the Elderhostelers. This limited set of words is then used for speechreading practice. Next, the group generates statements and questions which include the vocabulary and may be spoken by the clerk, such as:

1. “That comes to seventy-six *dollars* and fourteen *cents*.”
2. “Do you have any *coupons*?”
3. “I need your *drivers license* and a major credit card.”

A brief speechreading sentence identification activity follows, after which the sentences are organized into a logical sequence. Finally, the event is enacted through role-playing, first following the sequenced sentence order as closely as possible, and then trying variations of the scenario. The role-playing is critiqued by the participants who suggest alternate solutions to communication breakdowns which occur.

De Filippo and Scott's (1978) tracking procedure is introduced to advanced level participants as a technique for the practice of speechreading as well as for use of strategies (Owens & Telleen, 1981). During successive sessions, the participants are permitted to use a limited group of strategies with the specific ones varying from one session to the next. The goal is the development of a greater variety and flexibility of approaches. When Elderhostelers use strategies spontaneously during other parts of the program, the behaviors are noted and reinforced. The most important goal is to help the participants realize the benefits and limitations of speechreading training so that they may assess available programs and take an active role in selecting goals, activities, and materials.

DISCUSSION

During the seven years that the Elderhostel Program has been in existence at Gallaudet University, major changes have occurred. Following is a discussion of a few problems and some solutions.

Scheduling

Initially, scheduling followed tracks similar to those of other Elderhostels (i.e., three mini-courses). However, labs and special activities were added to respond to the increasing demands of the more assertive participants for opportunities to practice and develop skills as well as to avail themselves of the broad range of cultural opportunities at Gallaudet University and in the Washington, DC, area. As a result, the schedule became too intense and overwhelming for many individuals. In response, a "lite" schedule was introduced. Sessions were reduced in length, more breaks were inserted, and the number of handouts for later review was increased. Many support activities, including deaf culture programs and field trips became designated as optional. These changes were followed by the introduction of the Advanced Elderhostel program described earlier. This program permitted more in-depth practice and exploration of fundamentals. Portions of the original program that seemed to be at a more sophisticated level were moved to the advanced program.

Evening Events

No matter how full the daytime schedules were, the participants often expressed a desire for evening activities. Campus life during summer evenings is limited and not oriented towards the needs of this population. Therefore, "A Taste of Sign Language" and "A Taste of Cued Speech" were introduced as optional evening sessions. These programs enabled participants to explore two additional systems which might prove beneficial to some of them. In addition, Gallaudet University TV agreed to air during evening hours such deafness-related captioned films as ". . . And Your Name is Jonah" and "Children of a Lesser God." These films served to expand Elderhostelers' understanding

of deafness and also to illustrate the use of captioning in a popular medium.

Spouses' Needs

Separate rap sessions for spouses of hearing-impaired participants have been scheduled as a result of expressed need by the spouses for a forum to air issues too sensitive to be discussed in the presence of the hearing-impaired participants. During these sessions, problem-solving techniques provide a basis for group discussion of shared concerns.

Participant Concerns

Several general concerns became apparent from participant evaluations. First, some participants reported that follow-up services for hearing aid fitting, auditory training, and consumer education were limited, particularly in rural areas. Second, some were dissatisfied with previous analytic lipreading lessons that used material with minimal relevance to their daily lives and were taught by non-accredited or untrained instructors. Third, many of the hearing-impaired Elderhostelers revealed prior to the course a lack of knowledge of their needs as well as their options and rights as consumers.

Although excellent aural rehabilitation programs exist throughout the country, they seem insufficient in number to meet the needs of the hearing-impaired elderly. The responsibility to develop appropriate resources for this population presents a challenge to all professionals in rehabilitative audiology.

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Additional information about the Elderhostel programs, registration procedures, and the catalogue can be obtained by calling (617) 426-7788, or writing to: Elderhostel, Suite 400, 80 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116. Further information on accessible Elderhostel programs can be obtained by contacting the National Academy on Deafness of Gallaudet University, 800 Florida Ave., NE, Washington, DC 20002. More specific information about the handouts from the Gallaudet Elderhostels can be obtained from the National Academy. A detailed schedule indicating the timing and duration of events is also available by writing to the authors.

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