

Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

NEWS RELEASE

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Kentucky celebrates Deaf History Month March 13-April 15

FRANKFORT, Ky. (March 11, 2016) – The Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KCDHH) urges everyone to recognize and celebrate March 13 - April 15 as National Deaf History Month.

It straddles two months to highlight three of the key milestones in deaf history: the March 13, 1988, Deaf President Now protest; the April 8, 1864, signing of the Gallaudet University charter by President Abraham Lincoln; and the April 15, 1817, establishment of American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Conn., as the first permanent public school for the deaf.

Each of these milestones represents significant advancements for deaf and hard of hearing people in the United States. The establishment of the American School for the Deaf was the beginning of a long proud tradition of schools for the deaf in this country, which continues to this day. Preservation of these schools is of paramount importance to the community. Gallaudet University is a central icon within the community, representing the only university in the world that is solely for deaf and hard of hearing students.

March 13 represents the day that the deaf community seized its fate during the Gallaudet University Deaf President Now movement when Gallaudet selected its first deaf president, declaring that never again would they not be allowed to lead themselves.

Among other things, Deaf History Month also promotes the contributions of individual deaf Americans to U.S. society. Locally, Gerry Gordon-Brown, a black woman with a profound hearing loss, was a student at Kentucky State College at the time of Dr. Martin Luther King's 1964 visit to Frankfort, and was one of several thousand who marched in support of civil rights in the state. That day helped springboard Brown into a life of advocacy for minorities, including people with disabilities. For her dedication to the mission of promoting equal rights, Brown was inducted into the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights in 2007. Brown also spoke to KCDHH about her experience and the full interview can be viewed in "Coffee Chat" on the KCDHH website at <http://www.kcdhh.org/vlog/>.

Other famous Americans who were deaf or hard of hearing include Thomas Edison, inventor of the phonograph; Vinton Gray "Vint" Cerf, one of the Internet pioneers; Louis Jude "Lou" Ferrigno, an actor and fitness instructor; Marlee Matlin, an actress; and Juliette Gordon Low, founder of the Girl Scouts.

The KCDHH serves the nearly 700,000 Kentuckians who have a hearing loss. KCDHH also acts as an advocate for the deaf and hard of hearing persons on legislative issues, as well as a consultant to the governor, general assembly and various state and local governmental agencies concerning policies and

programs that pertain to people with hearing loss. The commission also provides information, referral and advocacy services and an interpreter referral service for state agencies.

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