

FRANKFORT —While the Girl Scouts of America celebrates 100 years of service to girls and young women, the Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing celebrates the tenacity of Girl Scouts founder Juliette Gordon Low, who was deaf at the time of the youth organization’s founding in 1912.

Low is only one of many deaf people, both famous and unsung, whose contributions to American quality of life and advancement are celebrated during Deaf History Month, March 13 through April 15.

Low suffered chronic ear infections early in her life and had lost most of her hearing in one ear because of improper treatment, according to her biography on the Girl Scouts of America website. In 1886, after the 26-year-old woman’s wedding ceremony, a stray grain of good-luck rice thrown toward her became lodged in her ear, puncturing the eardrum and resulting in an infection and total loss of hearing in that ear.

On March 12, 1912, Low gathered 18 girls in Savannah, Ga., to register for what was then known as American Girl Guides. Today the organization boasts 3.7 million members and has influenced the lives of more than 50 million girls in its 100 years.

Deaf History Month includes three key moments in American History for the Deaf community: 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 seminal events 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.

Deaf culture has come a long way from more than 2,000 years ago when the deaf were deemed unworthy of education and denied the opportunity to worship, to the present day with a roster of high-profile deaf advocates, entertainers, and business leaders. KCDHH encourages all Kentuckians to reach out into their communities and learn more about the people who inhabit this fascinating culture and the unique language that binds them together.

For more information on deaf culture and history, visit the Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing website, [www.kcdhh.org](http://www.kcdhh.org).