

COMMUNICATOR

KENTUCKY COMMISSION ON THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

33rd Year, 3rd Issue, Fall 2015

632 Versailles Road ♦ Frankfort, Kentucky 40601 ♦ www.kcdhh.ky.gov

Yesterday...

Today...

Tomorrow...

As we draw down to the end of the year, most of us reflect on the past and what we have accomplished. I believe this is very important; however, we are in the middle of a CHANGE. We have elected a new Governor and he has promised CHANGE. This can be exciting and scary at the same time. We are not sure how that CHANGE



Virginia L. Moore
KCDHH
Executive Director

will impact us individually or as a community, but one thing I have seen from this new administration so far has been some statements made with common sense. For example, Governor Bevin, at his inaugural address, said one thing over and over again; you should “treat others as you would want to be treated”. A very simple statement to make; however, it is something that we, unfortunately, struggle with every day.

This is my second attempt at an article for this edition of this newsletter. The first attempt was to push for reform and a new way of thinking by interpreters and others who serve the deaf and hard of hearing community. I subsequently trashed that version in favor of Governor Bevin’s statement where we should “treat others as you would want to be treated”! This article is titled “Yesterday...Today... Tomorrow” which I was hoping would give the impression that I would write about KCDHH’s success “yesterday” and what we are planning “today” for “tomorrow”. However, we can all look back at yesterday and know about the successes we’ve had and the issues we face. We can and should analyze “the today”, but my question is, what are we going to do about TOMORROW? This new administration will be chiseling out a path for us all. How are we going to make sure we are part of this new path? I worry about tomorrow’s issues of equality for the deaf and hard of hearing community! If we truly wanted to treat everyone the way we, ourselves, would want to be treated, then equality would be a natural occurrence. Perhaps it is time that the deaf and hard of hearing community stands up and gets involved with state government, reminding them that the deaf and hard of hearing community should be treated just as other communities are treated. This statement does not only apply to the state government and its agencies, but also to all of those who work with the deaf and hard of hearing community. The interpreting community should respect and treat the deaf community as they, themselves, would want to be treated, namely with respect and cultural understanding. Kentucky’s educational system should recognize that the deaf and hard of hearing community does not have equal access to quality education and that they should begin to look for ways they could provide the least restrictive environment to which deaf and hard of hearing students could obtain the same quality education that their hearing counterparts currently enjoy.

Governor Bevin also emphasized that Kentucky’s motto is “United We Stand, Divided We Fall”. Words could not ring more true! As we all look towards tomorrow, let’s stand united and treat others as we would want to be treated. Once this is accomplished, equality for all will be that much easier to achieve!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Virginia L. Moore".

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New Early Intervention Partnership

In an effort to assist families of newly identified deaf and hard of hearing infants and toddlers with education, training and resources a new partnership has been formed between First Steps, Kentucky's Early Intervention System, and the KSD Statewide Educational Resource Center on Deafness (SERCD) Outreach staff.

Staff from KCDHH, First Steps, the KSD Administration and SERCD consultants collaborated to create and provide an all-day training for First Steps Service Coordinators across the state. Eight trainings were given regionally between September 30 and November 18.

The goal of the training was to ensure that First Steps staff understands the unique challenges for providing early intervention services for children/families with hearing loss and that hearing loss is NOT about hearing, but is primarily about access to and development of language and communication. Equally important was that First Steps staff recognizes the importance of addressing the WHOLE child rather than focusing solely on the hearing loss and understands the importance of using an unbiased approach and respecting a family's choices.



Before the trainings were even complete, First Steps staff were contacting the SERCD consultants to ask for resources and assistance. This serves to validate the need for this partnership.

Over time, this new partnership will evolve and expand to better meet the needs of the families and their deaf and hard of hearing children.

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The Incredible Norma Lewis

Norma Lewis – Anyone in Kentucky involved with the deaf community knows the name of Norma Lewis, and knows the service she has been devoted to all her life! At 93 years old, she still leads a life of service. For the past 39 years she's worked as a sign language interpreter for the Archdiocese of Louisville and continues to work with the deaf as an interpreter in other situations.

Norma was part of the “Honor Flight” of the Bluegrass this past summer, where 67 veterans traveled from Louisville to Washington DC, at no cost to the veteran. Thirty-six (36) served from World War II, 23 from the Korean War and 8 from the Vietnam War. Norma was one of two women to participate. The group traveled on the 71st anniversary of D-Day to visit the memorials built to recognize their service, and to see Arlington Cemetery which was very emotional. Norma said the WWII memorial struck her the hardest as that was “our war”. The whole experience was surreal, a whole day of joy and sadness

for which she says she wouldn't take a million dollars.

Norma Lewis is certainly a hero, a brave one at that, and she

is still wearing it well after all these years. We are proud to call her one of our heroes here in Kentucky.

Norma was just 21 years old when she joined the Navy in 1943. She grew up in Connecticut and remembers

the day that changed everything in 1941.

She said when they heard the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor, everyone said, “Where's Pearl Harbor?” No one

knew where it was, but they would soon enough; young boys would

enlist while women worked at the home front and in factories. But

Norma wanted to serve in another way, like the men, and heard that the Navy was ready to enlist women.

She did her naval training in

Iowa and was assigned to Naval Intelligence and was

stationed in Charleston, S.C., tracking German

submarines off the coast of the United States.

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“We all have a movie star or national diplomat that we look up to and for me, that person is Norma Lewis. When I first met her I was awestruck. SHE was “THE” person as a sign language interpreter. Any job, from interpreting for the President of the United States, to Broadway plays, to one-on-one at a doctor's office or courtroom, she gives it her all.....and I consider her the role model and hero of my profession.”

Virginia L. Moore





Norma's family never knew exactly what she did during the war. When asked, she told her deaf aunt and uncle who raised her that she worked in the kitchen with food. After she served, she came home and went to work, never speaking about what she did while in the Navy. She kept that secret for 50 years until she attended a reunion with the crew she served with in 1943 which was when they all decided it was time to the "spill the beans". She eventually told her family, including her two sons. Being a mom is the hat Lewis wears most proudly, but this one is a close second!

Those veterans, "the greatest generation", saved the world and when they came home the very next day, they put their pack down, took off their uniform, put their guns away and they went right back to work. No one recognized their service or welcomed them home.

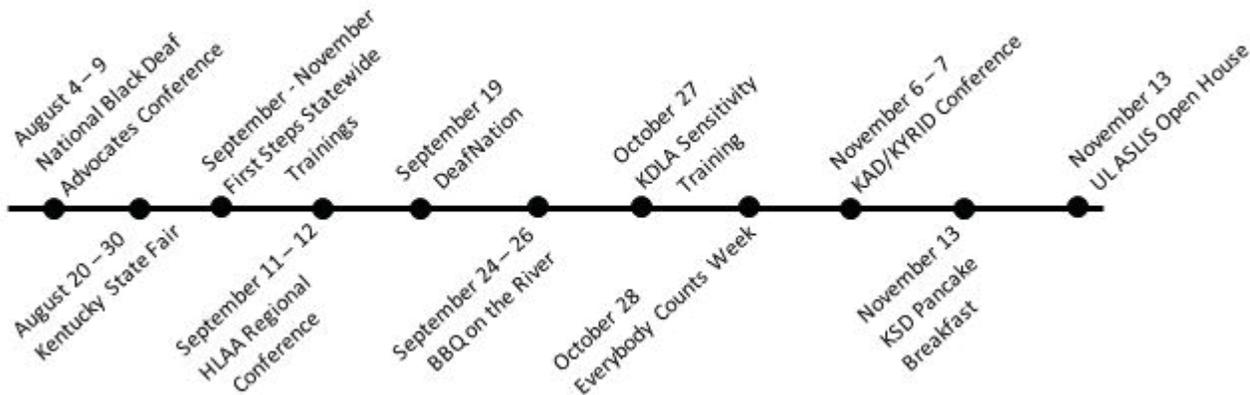
During the Honor Flight trip, Norma was said to have an "infectious laugh" which we all know to be true. She stated that the reception from strangers was amazing. At the Louisville airport, more than 300 people came to thank them for their service. Norma said, "I can hardly believe this is happening. I'm glad I lived long enough to see this – what a feeling when after all these years they all say Welcome Home!"

Norma served as the Grand Marshall of the Louisville Veteran's Day parade in November 2015.



On the road with KCDHH

As we look back on the last few months, the KCDHH has been traveling across the state raising awareness, distributing resources, and empowering constituents. As our timeline shows, we have been quite busy and hope that each person we reached through these outreach efforts received the information they needed and a sense of empowerment whether they heard us present or stopped by our booth.



National Black Deaf Advocates National (NBDA) Conference – KCDHH supported the NBDA as it hosted its national conference in Kentucky for the first time ever. Notable guest speaker – Talila Lewis, founder of Helping Educate to Advance the Rights of the Deaf (HEARD), came to speak about the discrimination of deaf individuals while in incarcerated.

First Steps Training – KCDHH partnered with the Statewide Educational Resource Center on Deafness (SERCD) staff to design and implement deaf awareness training for Kentucky’s early intervention program, First Steps. Eight all-day trainings were given across the state to First Steps staff to help them understand the importance of dealing with the whole child rather than just speech and hearing.

Hearing Loss Association of America Regional Conference — KCDHH gave two presentations at the 2nd Regional HLAA-KY Conference in Louisville. Notable guest speakers – Dr. Michael A. Harvey who presented on relationships and hearing loss, and Justin Osmond who spoke about his experience of growing up with a hearing loss..

BBO on the River –KCDHH made its way to Paducah to distribute resources on hearing loss and inform Western Kentuckians about its programs and services.

KY Department of Libraries and Archives (KDLA) Sensitivity Training – KCDHH gave a refresher course to KDLA staff related to working with and accommodating a deaf/hard of hearing employees.

Everybody Count Week – KCDHH presented about hearing loss and deaf culture at Seton school in Lexington during their annual, “Everybody Counts Week.”

KY Association of the Deaf/KY Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf Biennial Conference – KCDHH participated in a panel discussion related to Video Remote Interpreting in health care settings which was the hot topic during this conference.

KSD Pancake Breakfast – KCDHH attended the KSD Pancake Breakfast/Christmas Bazaar held at Grow Hall on November 13 to promote its programs and services and advertise the 2016 DeaFestival.

University of Louisville ASL Interpreting Studies (ASLIS) Open House – KCDHH attended the UofL ASL/Interpreting Program’s Open House. KCDHH networked with prospective interpreters at UofL and shared information about our agency and its programs and services.



KCDHH

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