

Spring Issue

34th Year, Issue 1, 2016



Communicator

Serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community of Kentucky

Calendar

July 22

150th Commission Bd. Mtg.
Paul Sawyer Library
Frankfort
1 p.m. - 4 p.m.

August 9

Book Lovers Day

August 29

Individual Rights Day

September 3

DeaFestival 2016
Kentucky Center
Louisville

September 9

E-Board Meeting
KCDHH Office
1 p.m.- 3 p.m.

September 19-25

International Week of the Deaf

September 25

World Deaf Day

September 25-October 1

World Hearing Aid Awareness Week

October

(World) Blindness Awareness Month

November 20-26

National Family Week

November 24

Thanksgiving

Commission Serves as Resource in Teaching American Sign Language



Virginia L. Moore
Executive Director

When thinking of the most used languages in the country, American Sign Language seldom comes near the top of the list.

That's a big mistake, said Virginia L. Moore, executive director for the Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. In fact, ASL is the fourth most used language in the United States, according to the Gallaudet Research Institute.

According to a study in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1 in 5 teenagers suffer from some type of hearing loss. And according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, about three out of every 1,000 children in the United States are born with a detectable level of hearing loss in one or both ears. There are nearly 700,000 deaf and hard of hearing individuals in Kentucky, according to data extrapolated from the 2010 Census and from a 2005 survey by the National Institutes of Health.

"When we consider all of these facts," Moore said, "it is imperative that we encourage more schools to teach ASL."

The Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KCDHH) acts as an advocate for deaf and hard of hearing people 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.

"The Commission (KCDHH) has a rich history and track record of advocacy and providing information and services to the Commonwealth's deaf and hard of hearing community and to anyone whose life is affected by hearing loss," said Moore. "KCDHH also serves as a hub for school administrators, teachers and many other service providers to learn more about deaf culture, history of deafness, as well as provides a lending library of DVDs used by instructors, service providers, family members and a multitude of others whose lives have been affected, in some way, by hearing loss."

Since its establishment more than 30 years ago, the commission has been instrumental in several efforts to level the playing field for the deaf and hard of hearing community. One such effort was a bill passed by the legislature in 1992 that required American Sign Language to be recognized and taught for foreign language credit in Kentucky's colleges and universities.

While ASL was recognized as a credited foreign language in a handful of colleges, universities and public schools, it was never widespread.

(continued on page 2)

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for the Deaf Representative

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Alexander Graham Bell Association
Representative

Kelly L. Daniel

Kentucky Speech-Language Hearing
Representative

Vacant

Parent Representative

Vacant

AARP Representative

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Hearing Loss Association of America
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Kentucky Association of the Deaf
Representative

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(Michelle Niehaus, Designee)
Cabinet for Health & Family Services

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Nina Coyer

President
Kentucky Association of the Deaf

Holly O'Mary

Kentucky Association of the Deaf

Commission, continued from page 1

ASL, accepted as a true language by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1989, has its own system of grammar and syntax and is constantly changing as it grows within its culture. As a result, the Kentucky Department of Education's (KDE) Foreign Language Department is partnering with the commission to expand the process of getting ASL accepted as a foreign language in Kentucky's K-12 classrooms.

"Working with KDE to achieve this partnership is just one aspect of what we need to do to get ASL into K-12 classes," explained Moore. "We also have to make sure we have plenty of deaf teachers and let everyone know that KCDHH, Eastern Kentucky University, Kentucky School for the Deaf and the Statewide Educational Resource Center on Deafness are resources for teachers and administrators who want to learn more about ASL and what it takes to get it in their schools."

For teachers, having deaf or hard-of-hearing students in a classroom can be a challenge to keeping the class accessible. On the other hand, it also can serve as a catalyst for making effective, focused changes that improve the classroom experience for all students. The KCDHH can serve as a vital resource to reinforce those teacher's efforts.

"We want schools to know that there is another choice when it comes to foreign language," said Moore, "and it's a choice that has great potential to do wonderful things in the community as a whole. If children learn ASL at a younger age, then the possibility of becoming interested in the culture and language may lead to studying it in college and becoming interpreters or teachers of ASL, deaf studies, etc., while also allowing deaf and hard-of-hearing students to have more effective communication with their peers. It's a win-win for everyone."

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Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

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"I am Cursive 'd'"



Back in the early 70's, when I was diagnosed with a severe/profound hearing loss, life was different. There was no such thing as the internet, Facebook or YouTube. You knew only what you were exposed to in person and if you lived in a rural area, as I did, you weren't exposed to a lot. As the only deaf individual in a hearing family, I did not meet another person with a hearing loss until I was in high school. Well, if you don't count the old deaf peddler guy that used to go door to door selling handmade yarn dolls attached to an ABC card.

American Sign Language (ASL) just did not exist in my world. It wasn't avoided. It just did not exist. There was no one that used it and no one to suggest that I use it. I was the only kid with a hearing loss in my entire school district and, quite frankly, no one knew what to do with me. I was placed in the front row and teachers would write assignments on the board. The rest was up to me. When I became a freshman, someone finally suggested to my parents that perhaps, I should attend the Kentucky School for the Deaf. An hour and a half in the car and several hours of testing later, administrators told me and my parents that I did not belong at KSD because my English skills were too good and they were afraid that I would stop speaking once I learned ASL. I was heartbroken, because although I was able to "hold my own" academically and had a nice diverse group of friends, I never had any true peers. No one that understood what it was like to keep a smile plastered on my face even though I had no idea what was going on around me, no one that could understand what it was like to be a gathering of family or friends and feel

so totally alone. No one with whom I could let my guard down.

Due to the rubella epidemic, I was invited to attend Gallaudet College as a preparatory student during my senior year of high school. I was absolutely thrilled. I was fully convinced that I would arrive and be greeted by "my people" only to find out that I didn't fit in there either. This was my first introduction to the concept of Big D/Little d and many years of asking myself who and what am I?! By hearing definition, I was deaf. By deaf definition, I was hearing (sign: think like hearing).

Over time, I begin to resent the whole Big D/little d idea. While I totally understand that it is an effort to distinguish between individuals who are a part of deaf culture and those who are not, it is a label that forces me to choose one or the other. I don't want to. I do not want limitations placed on me based on my ability/inability to hear, speak, read/write English and use ASL or a combination of any or all of these. When in reality, my ability to do any of these things changes from situation to situation. On any given day, from one situation to the next, I can function as Big D, little d, hard of hearing, deafblind and even hearing. So, where does that put me?

Most importantly, where does this put deaf/hard of hearing kids who are currently being mainstreamed, who by hearing definition, are deaf and by deaf definition, are hearing (sign: think like hearing.)?

I have always identified myself as deaf with no emphasis on the d but this always tends to lead to questions from the person I am speaking to as they try to analyze which d to assign me. It also leaves me feeling like a fraud as my life experiences have not provided for me to be 100 percent one or the other.

I have decided that I am "cursive d" deaf. I am all of the above and refuse to be limited.

KCDHH Mourns Loss of Respected Commissioner



The Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KCDHH) mourns the loss of a "wonderful advocate in Rebecca "Becky" Crawford, whose impact is beyond measure," according to Virginia L. Moore, KCDHH Executive Director. "The number of deaf and hard of hearing lives Mrs. Crawford touched is countless."

Moore added that, through her career as a nurse, Mrs. Crawford suffered a severe hearing loss but never let the loss stop her from doing anything.

"Becky traveled the world—her hearing loss was a small part of who she was but she never let it define her," Moore said. "She made a tremendous impact on the deaf and hard of hearing community and was passionate about getting hearing screenings in schools for children."

"The debt of gratitude we owe for her service to the Commission and the deaf community, as a whole, cannot be described," Moore said. "We will truly miss her guidance and generous heart."



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DeaFestival-KY 2016 Applications Accepted

Applications for crafters, visual artists, exhibitors and volunteers for DeaFestival 2016 are now being accepted. Deadline is July 1.

DeaFestival, the state's only daylong celebration of deaf and hard of hearing art, language and culture, will be held Sept. 3 at the Kentucky Center in Louisville.

DeaFestival 2016 will include three performance programs beginning in the morning with the Children's Program and will continue that afternoon in Spotlights, a showcase for theatrical performers, dancers and comedians, and round out the day in the Jam Tent with the top deaf and hard of hearing hip hop and rock 'n' roll musicians in the nation.

DeaFestival 2016, is the 12th celebration, the seventh to be held in Louisville. For applications or information on performers, artists, or schedules, visit DeaFestival 2016 at www.deafestival.org or call 1-800-372-2907.

www.deafestival.org

SAVE^{the} DATE

**DeaFestival
2016**

*There's
no place
like home!*

Louisville, KY
-September 3, 2016-

Poetry* #Storytelling* Theatre* Music* Arts

www.deafestival.org

The poster features a green background with white and red text. At the top, it says 'SAVE the DATE' in a stylized font. Below that, 'DeaFestival 2016' is written in large, bold, red letters with a black outline. In the center, there is an illustration of a pair of red high-heeled shoes. To the right of the shoes, the text 'There's no place like home!' is written in a cursive font. Below the shoes, 'Louisville, KY' and '-September 3, 2016-' are written in bold, red letters. At the bottom, there is a graphic of several hands in various colors (white, green, yellow, red) reaching up, with the text '*Poetry* #Storytelling* Theatre* Music* Arts*' written in a cursive font around them. The website 'www.deafestival.org' is printed at the very bottom in a bold, white font with a black outline.