

# West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing **NEWSLETTER**



**“Advocacy is empathy, compassion, and community at work.” - Janna Cachola**



**Letter from the WVCDHH  
Executive Director  
Erik Essington, Ph.D.**

**[Erik.J.Essington@wv.gov](mailto:Erik.J.Essington@wv.gov)**



## **WVCDHH IS RECRUITING COMMITTEE MEMBERS!**

The West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (WVCDHH) is seeking passionate individuals to join three key committees and help shape the future of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) community in West Virginia.

### **Who We’re Looking For:**



- Members of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind communities.
- Parents and guardians of DHH children.
- Educators, interpreters, and advocacy professionals.
- Legislators and community leaders committed to accessibility and inclusion.

### **Committee Opportunities**

#### **1. Legislation Related to Deaf Issues**



This committee focuses on ensuring the rights and needs of the DHH community are addressed through state laws by:

- Advocating for accessible communication in healthcare, legal, and emergency services.
- Promoting equitable workplace accommodations and opportunities for DHH individuals.
- Updating outdated statutes to align with modern accessibility standards and technologies.

*By bringing together community representatives, legal experts, and legislators, this committee ensures that policies reflect the experiences and needs of the DHH community.*

#### **2. Deaf Education**



This committee works to close gaps in educational access, quality, and outcomes for DHH students by:

- Ensuring early language acquisition through ASL, spoken language, or bilingual approaches.
- Promoting inclusive learning environments with qualified educators trained in Deaf education methods.
- Establishing state standards for academic and social-emotional support for DHH students.

*Collaboration with schools, families, and advocacy organizations to ensure that DHH children in West Virginia have equitable opportunities to succeed.*

#### **3. Interpreter Standards**



This committee addresses inconsistencies in interpreting services across West Virginia by:

- Developing and implementing statewide qualifications and certification requirements, such as the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA).
- Establishing continuing education programs to ensure interpreters stay current with best practices.
- Creating accountability mechanisms, including a code of ethics and a system for addressing complaints.

*This committee collaborates with interpreter training programs, service providers, and the Deaf community to create a framework that guarantees access to qualified and skilled interpreters.*

**If interested, please email me at: [Erik.J.Essington@wv.gov](mailto:Erik.J.Essington@wv.gov)**



**Deaf-Owned**



**BON APPETIT**



When approaching the counter at Crêpe Crazy you will find a sign that reads "Point and ye shall receive," where a menu lists a smorgasbord of sweet and savory options. That's because most people who work there—including the owners, husband-and-wife team Vladimir and Inna Giterman—are deaf and use American Sign Language.

The Gitermans, Inna from Kyiv, Ukraine, and Vladimir, from Rostov-On-Don, Russia, immigrated to the United States in their late 20's and settled in Brooklyn, New York. In search of a more affordable town with better work opportunities, they relocated to Austin, Texas, home to the Texas School for the Deaf and a large deaf community.

Inna and Vladimir dreamed of owning their own business and being their own bosses. They noticed an opportunity in the local dining scene, which mainly featured Mexican food, pizza, and barbecue. Motivated by their passion for diverse cuisine, they decided to start their own food venture. Inna learned to cook crepes and other dishes from Vladimir's mother, Evelina, while in Russia. Over the course of three years, she developed a menu and experimented with different ways to serve crepes.

In 2006, the Gitermans embarked on their journey by serving their unique custom crepes at festivals throughout the state, quickly winning over the hearts of many. By 2014, they transformed their passion into a thriving café in Dripping Springs, followed just two years later by a bustling restaurant in Austin. Today, their children, Michelle and Sergei, proudly manage the Crêpe Crazy in Austin, ensuring that the family's legacy continues. In 2020, the Gitermans expanded their vision by franchising a third location in Baltimore to Ruslan Kukilov. Furthermore, in 2022, they took another exciting step by franchising the Dripping Springs café to Tammie Fish and Sam Oates Jr., both Deaf entrepreneurs.

Michelle, Sergei, and the majority of the staff at all three locations are Deaf, reflecting the vibrant community they represent. At Crêpe Crazy, as in many Deaf-owned businesses, the practice of hiring Deaf contractors, electricians, woodworkers, painters, and talented Deaf artists for wall art is a cornerstone of their operations. This intentional support not only fosters a thriving business but also strengthens the Deaf Ecosystem as a whole.



**Baltimore Franchisee Owner  
Ruslan Kukilov**



**Dripping Springs  
Franchisee Owners  
Tammie Fish and Sam Oates Jr.**



**Crêpe Crazy Owners  
Inna and Vladimir Giterman (Center)  
Austin GMs  
Michelle (Left) and Sergei Giterman (Right)**

TO VISIT THE CREPE CRAZY WEBSITE  
GOTO [CRÉPECRAZY.COM](https://www.crepes-crazy.com) OR SCAN THE QR CODE



## >>> Things to Do <<<



### WEST VIRGINIA HANDS & VOICES

#### Family Fun Virtual Events

Each event will include storytime, crafts, and lots of fun!

February 4th, 6:00 PM

Make your own Valentine

To reserve your spot, please scan the QR Code

OR

register online at:

<https://forms.gle/yxEzzGCGH7p8GFCp8>



### WEST VIRGINIA DEAF SERVICE CENTER (WV DSC)

#### Deaf Coffee Chat

ASL activities, games, Deaf culture, and More!

All ages welcome

Friday, January 24, 2025, 5:30-8:30 PM

912 Young Street, Charleston, WV

TO VISIT THE THE WV DSC WEBSITE

GO TO [wvdeafservicecenter.org](http://wvdeafservicecenter.org)

OR

SCAN THE QR CODE



## >>> Training and Information Presentations <<<



### FRESNO STATE, COLLEGE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

#### 13th Annual Lecture Silent Garden Virtual Presentations on:

#### 58-IN-MIND: Multilingual Teaching Strategies for Diverse Deaf Students

Saturday, February 22, 2025, 8:00 AM-4:00 PM (PST)

Featuring keynote presentations by a team of selected researchers and P-12 Teachers

Registration is free, however, 0.5 CEUs will be offered for \$35 through RID, BEI, or Fresno State (Generic).

Scan the QR Code to register



### THE MOOG CENTER

For Deaf Education *Where Children Talk*

#### Virtual Early Intervention Workshop Series

Presented 7:00 PM CT

April 2, 2025 Working with Families: Why Empathy is Important

Scan the QR Code to register



## >>> Media <<<

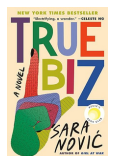
### Gracie's Ears Debbie Blackington (Author, Illustrator)

This is the story of Gracie, your everyday fun-loving kid who does everything that you do, but has trouble hearing. When her family searches for answers, she discovers the wonder of hearing aids and the sounds of the world. Gracie's Ears introduces what hearing aids are to young children needing help to hear and to their friends who wonder - what are those things in their friend's ears and what do they do?



### True Biz Sara Novic (Author)

True Biz follows a year of seismic romantic, political, and familial shifts for a teacher and her students at a boarding school for the deaf. This is a story of sign language and lip-reading, disability and civil rights, isolation and injustice, first love and loss, and, above all, great persistence, daring, and joy.



PBS Digital Studios

### "Otherwords" Dr. Erica Brozovsky, Ph.D. (Presenter)

Season 2, Episode 10, 10/27/2022, *Why Sign Language was Banned in America*

ASL History with Interview from Gallaudet President Roberta Cordano

Scan the QR to view this video





## FEMA Assistance for Victims of Hurricane Helene



Mathew Starr, a representative of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, recently reached out to Paul See, Chairperson of the West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (WVCDHH), to discuss the critical efforts in supporting Mercer County residents impacted by Hurricane Helene. He highlighted a troubling issue: while 600 individuals have registered for assistance, not a single applicant identified as deaf or hard of hearing. This gap underscores the urgent need for targeted outreach to ensure that all members of the Mercer County community receive the help they deserve. If you know anyone in the county who has a disability and is facing challenges due to Hurricane Helena, please encourage them to reach out to FEMA for assistance. **The deadline to apply for FEMA disaster assistance is February 7, 2025.**

### 4 Ways to Apply



#### IN PERSON

Get one-on-one help at a Disaster Recovery Center (DRC)

[fema.gov/drc](https://fema.gov/drc)



#### CALL

Get answers to your questions and apply.

**800-621-3362** \*Video Relay Service (VRS) available



#### REGISTER ONLINE

[DisasterAssistance.gov](https://DisasterAssistance.gov)



#### FEMA APP

Download the FEMA app for Android or iOS

[fema.gov/app](https://fema.gov/app)

# FEMA



### West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (WVSD) College Prep Weekend February 28 - Saturday, March 2, 2025

**Who:** High school juniors, seniors, and recent graduates with documented vision and/or hearing loss who are planning to pursue higher education.

**What:** Valuable insights into the college enrollment process, explore financial aid options, complete their required FAFSA, and learn how to access and navigate accommodations for academic success. Parents are welcome and encouraged to attend.

**Where:** WVSD, 301 East Main St., Romney, WV 26757

Lodging on campus will be available to those registered, and transportation can be facilitated for students attending independently.

### >>> Student Support <<<

Scan the QR Code to register



For additional information, please contact Rachel Lanham, WVSD Transition Coordinator at 304-822-4810



In collaboration with



Please email newsletter questions, concerns, and suggestions to [Gwen.L.Bryant@wv.gov](mailto:Gwen.L.Bryant@wv.gov)



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[FACEBOOK.COM/WVCDHH](https://FACEBOOK.COM/WVCDHH)