

>>> MAY 2025

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

Planning for Success: The Power of Early Transition Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

Transition is the path every student takes as they move from middle and high school into adulthood. For students who are deaf or hard of hearing, this journey often involves additional barriers—such as communication challenges, lack of accommodations, and subtle forms of discrimination. That’s why early transition planning is essential.

As many deaf and hard of hearing seniors across West Virginia prepare to graduate this month, this topic becomes especially timely and critical. These students are standing at a pivotal point in their lives, and having access to effective transition planning can make all the difference in shaping a successful and confident step into adulthood.

A strong transition program helps students (and their families) prepare for life after high school—whether it’s college, vocational training, a career, or independent living. It builds not only skills, but confidence and self-determination.

Why It Matters: Key Benefits of Transition Services

Self-Advocacy and Self-Determination: Students learn how to recognize and communicate their needs, understand their rights, and confidently advocate for themselves in school, work, and community settings.

Career Exploration and Goal Setting: Through structured experiences, students can explore career options, build workplace skills, and set realistic goals for their futures.

Post-Secondary Planning: Transition services offer guidance on applying to colleges or training programs, securing disability accommodations, and finding financial aid.

Independent Living Skills: Practical life skills—such as managing finances, using public transportation, and finding housing—are crucial for successful independent living.

Social and Emotional Support: Programs also address mental health and social development, helping students build a strong sense of identity and emotional resilience.


Improved Long-Term Outcomes: Early preparation leads to higher rates of post-secondary enrollment, sustained employment, and more successful transitions into adulthood.

Pre-ETS in West Virginia: A Statewide Support System

In West Virginia, Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) are offered through the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS). These services are designed to prepare students with disabilities (ages 14–21) for the workforce and/or further education and are mandated by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity.

Pre-ETS Services include:

- **Job exploration counseling**
- **Workplace readiness training**
- **Postsecondary education counseling,**
- **Work-based learning experiences**
- **Instruction in self-advocacy**

To learn more about DRS go to:
<https://wvdrs.org>
or
Scan the QR code 

Pathways to the Future: Your Journey Starts Now

West Virginia’s Pathways to the Future initiative brings together the tools, people, and resources students need to plan their futures. Visit: <https://www.pathwayswv.org> to explore topics like:

- **Career and job exploration**
- **Education and training after high school**
- **Independent living skills**
- **Supportive partners and programs**



Your future begins now!

It’s never too early to start planning—and with the right support, every student can succeed.



Community Spotlight



WVCDHH Board Member Angela Wilson



Hello! My name is Angela Wilson, and since approximately 2010, I have had the honor of serving on the West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (WVCDHH) Board as the designated representative for the Commissioners of the West Virginia Division of Labor and the West Virginia Department of Commerce.

I am hard of hearing and wore a hearing aid only on my right side, until 2020, when my left ear was identified as functionally deaf. Right before the pandemic hit, I received a cochlear implant (CI) for my left ear. I honestly didn't use the CI much for a few years, as I found it overwhelming. I use it daily now, but I often look at my husband and ask, "What is that noise?"

I grew up in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, with hearing parents. I attended public schools in Greenbrier County before earning my Bachelor of Science in Geology and Master of Science in Safety Management from Marshall University in the mid-2000s. I currently work as an Industrial Hygienist with the OSHA Consultation Program at the West Virginia Division of Labor.

My husband, Jason, and I have been happily married for 16+ years. I have no biological children, but I love to spoil my nieces and nephews. I also have several furbabies, both dogs and cats. We moved from Huntington, WV, where I lived for nearly 25 years, back to my hometown of White Sulphur Springs, WV, in June 2024. I enjoy being outside, camping, kayaking, hiking, and my hometown is perfect for all of that.

What do I bring to the board? I focus mainly on worker safety but cover anything related to the agencies I represent. Deaf and hard of hearing employees need different information and training to perform their jobs safely. For example, when I am working at our main office at the Capitol Complex, my coworkers know to get my attention when a fire alarm goes off. I cannot hear it normally and there are no flashing lights that accompany the alarm.

My life journey has given me a unique perspective, and I love to take from both my professional background and personal experience as an individual who is hard of hearing and share information and ideas to try to enhance and evolve how we as a board help our constituents.

Two of the main issues facing the DHH community in West Virginia are the shortage of qualified American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters and the lack of knowledge regarding DHH needs. The general population simply doesn't understand what accessibility truly looks like for us.

Education is key. I talk to my clients, to the public, to friends and family and anyone who will listen, about the needs and culture of the DHH community. Although my current American Sign Language (ASL) skills are limited, I was introduced to it as an infant. Unfortunately, the old saying rings true: if you don't use it, you lose it. Still, I can both sign to some extent and speak English, which allows me to help bridge communication gaps and raise awareness.

While I may not be able to solve the interpreter shortage on my own, I can encourage others to consider ASL interpreting as a career or to support their children in doing so.

It truly takes all of us—bringing our individual strengths—working together, to build a more inclusive and supportive world for the DHH community and to create a better quality of life for the constituents we serve.



»»» FROM THE ARCHIVES: STORIES THAT SHAPED US «««

From Exclusion to Inclusion: The 1880 and 2010 International Congress on the Education of the Deaf

The International Congress on the Education of the Deaf (ICED) has long influenced global policy and attitudes toward Deaf education. Two pivotal gatherings—one in 1880 and another in 2010—mark a dramatic shift in how Deaf people are viewed and how Deaf education is approached.

The 1880 Congress: A Historic Injustice

Held in Milan, Italy, the 1880 International Congress of the Deaf is remembered for its devastating impact on Deaf education and culture. At this meeting, a majority of delegates—most of whom were hearing and unfamiliar with sign language—voted in favor of oralism, a teaching philosophy that emphasizes speech and lipreading while banning sign language in the classroom.

The resolution declared that oral methods were “superior” to sign language, and as a result, sign languages were systematically removed from schools worldwide. Deaf teachers lost their jobs, and generations of Deaf children were denied access to their natural language and cultural identity. This decision, made without meaningful representation from the Deaf community, caused lasting harm.

The 2010 Congress: A Public Reversal and Apology

Exactly 130 years later, at the 2010 ICED in Vancouver, Canada, the Congress took a historic step toward justice and reconciliation. The Vancouver Congress publicly rejected the 1880 Milan resolutions and issued a formal apology for the harm caused.

The 2010 Vancouver Declaration recognized the rights of Deaf people to use and be educated in their native sign languages. It emphasized respect for Deaf culture, endorsed bilingual education (sign language and the written/spoken language of the broader community), and acknowledged the importance of Deaf leadership in shaping educational policy.

Why It Matters

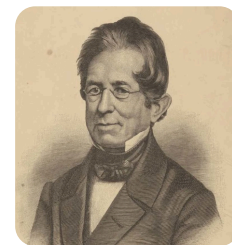
The journey from 1880 to 2010 represents more than just a change in educational philosophy—it reflects a growing global recognition of the linguistic and human rights of Deaf individuals. While challenges still remain, the 2010 ICED marked a critical turning point in reaffirming the value of sign languages, Deaf identity, and inclusive education.

Today, we must continue to build on that progress by supporting educational models that respect Deaf culture, promote language access, and ensure that Deaf individuals have a voice in shaping their future.

**The Milan Congress
was attended
by 164 delegates
of various countries.
Out of the 164
only 3 were Deaf.**



Milan, Italy 1880 by Mary Thornley.
Photograph by Gallaudet University



E. M. Gallaudet



T. H. Gallaudet

Five delegates represented the United States at the 1880 Congress: James Denison, Edward Miner Gallaudet, Reverend Thomas Hopkiins Gallaudet, Isaac Lewis Peet, and Charles A. Stoddard.



CHEERS TO THE CLASS OF 2025: DREAM BIG, RISE HIGHER, AND LEAD BOLDLY!



Congratulations on reaching this incredible milestone! Your hard work, perseverance, and determination have brought you to this proud moment, and you deserve every bit of celebration.

As you take your next steps, remember that your voice matters, your experiences are powerful, and your identity is something to be proud of. You bring a valuable perspective to every space you enter.

There may be challenges ahead, but you've already proven your strength. Continue to advocate for yourself and others, stay connected to your community, and never stop reaching for your goals. The world needs your leadership, creativity, and vision!

You are not alone on this journey. The Deaf and hard of Hearing community stands with you, proud of what you've accomplished and excited for what comes next.



Jackson Elliott Bryant

Capital High School

Future plans:

Interested in the field of Forensic Science



Noah Lee Eperson

Doctor of Occupational Therapy

West Virginia University



Elizabeth Morgan Lowe

Capital High School

Future Plans:

Enroll in The Veterinary Technology Program at Bridge Valley Community and Technical College



Mark Star Mallory

Capital High School

Future Plans:

Interested in the field of Surgical Pathology



Brody William See

Moorefield High School

Future plans:

Enroll in the Business Administration Program at Fairmont State University

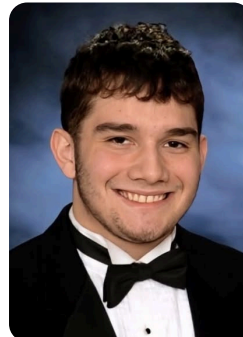


Casey Wade McDaniel

Capital High School

Future Plans:

Interested in the Field of Cyber Security



Keep shining, Class of 2025—Your story is just beginning!



>>> **Things to Do** <<<



WEST VIRGINIA DEAF SERVICE CENTER (WVDSC)

Deaf Coffee Chat

ASL activities, games, Deaf culture, and More!
All ages are welcome!

Charleston

Fridays, 5:30-8:30 PM

May 9, 2025, May 23, 2025

912 Young Street, Charleston, WV

Parkersburg

Tuesdays, 4:00-7:00 PM

May 13, 2025, May 27, 2025

2501 Dudley Ave., Parkersburg, WV

Family Camping

June 20-22, 2025

4800 Watoga Park Rd., Marlinton WV

Free for families of deaf or hard of hearing children. We will be swimming, fishing, camping, and enjoying time together!

Limited number of spots available.

ASL Summer Camp

August 4-7, 2025

160 Old Jacksons Mill Rd.
Weston, WV 26452

Come join us for swimming, STEM, literacy, ASL activities, s'mores, and more!
FREE for deaf/hard-of-hearing children ages 8-13.

For more information on the WVDSC, scan the QR Code



OR

Go to: wvdeafservicecenter.org

Scan the QR Code to register



Scan the QR Code to register



WEST VIRGINIA HANDS & VOICES

Let's Go Fishing

Whether it's your first time trying fishing or you're a seasoned pro, we'd love for your family to join us for a relaxing and fun day by the water! In addition to fishing, we'll have games and activities, so there's something for everyone.

If you have your own fishing gear, feel free to bring it! We'll also have some equipment available to share, but supplies are limited.

Two Dates to choose from:

Sunday, June 8, 2025, 5:00 PM

Barboursville Park – Shelter 8
Co Rd 31/6, Barboursville, WV 25504

Saturday, July 12, 2025, 10:00 AM

Castaway Paylake
2036 Hawver Road, Hico, WV 25854

Scan the QR Code to register



WEST VIRGINIA COMMISSION FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Night

June 27, 2025, 6:35-10:PM

GOMART BALLPARK
601 Morris Street
Charleston, WV 25301



Join us for a fun-filled evening at the ballpark celebrating the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community!

LIMITED TICKETS AVAILABLE!

Each ticket includes free General Admission and a voucher for a hot dog and a 20 oz. soda.

Scan the QR Code to register





June 7, 2025, from 7:00 - 9:00 pm ET

Educational Audiologists: Partners in Language Acquisition for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children

This presentation will focus on educational audiology as a key area of support for global language development of DHH children. Participants will learn about the roles of educational audiologists as members of multidisciplinary teams, how to partner effectively with educational audiologists, and how educational audiologists can make a positive difference in language acquisition -- including both sign and spoken languages.

Workshop Fee: \$39 *

June 22-August 3, 2025, from 7:00 - 9:00 pm ET

Signed Language Intervention for Clinicians and Educators

This is a 6-week course that consists of two 3-week subcourses which build on each other. It is intended for speech-language pathologists (SLPs), deaf educators, or American Sign Language (ASL) specialists. Students will learn about morphology and MLU, phonology, syntax, language analysis, and glossing in ASL.

Workshop Fee: \$39 **

*This course offers 0.20 ASHA CEUs.

**This course offers 0.20 ASHA CEUs and is an automatic ACE Award.

For additional
information
or to register,
go to

language1st.org/events

OR

Scan the QR Code



THE LUKE LEE LISTENING, LANGUAGE, AND LEARNING LAB at Marshall University

2025 Summer Preschool Program Ages 3-6

- The L Lab is offering 4 different weeks that will include 3 intensive days of sessions for DHH children who listen and talk.
- The 3-day sessions include the child attending preschool Monday-Wednesday, from 8:30 am - 12 pm, with instruction from a speech language pathologist seeking listening and spoken language certification.
- Monday and Tuesday afternoons, parents and children will get to participate in a listening and spoken language intervention session.
- Each morning, parents/caregivers can stay for a guided observation of the morning preschool session.

Week #1 June 23-25 Theme: **Beach and Ocean**

Week #2 June 30-July 2 Theme: **Camping**

Week #3 July 7-9 Theme: **Bugs and Insects**

Week #4 July 14-16 Theme: **The Zoo**

For additional information
or to register, contact

Jodi Cottrell, Au.D, CCC-A, LSLs Cer.

AVEd, by June 1, 2025

Phone: 304-696-3455

Email: cottrellj@marshall.edu



MARSHALL UNIVERSITY American Sign Language (ASL) Summer 2025

Courses will be offered on the campus of the West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and Blind, located in Romney, West Virginia. Housing is available at no cost to the student.

Combined, all three instructors have more than 50 years of professional experience in the field. These courses are fun and incredibly valuable. You will be amazed at what you can learn in just a few days!

\$250 for three credit hours • Seating is limited • Get on the waiting list today!

Co-Sponsors: MU - DHH Teacher Certification Program | WVSDB | WVDOE-OSP

For additional information contact **Julie Barie**, barie1@marshall.edu or 304-546-8499

ASL I & ASL II

(2 Separate Classes)

6/16 - 3 pm - 7 pm

6/17 - 06/20 - two sessions

6/21 - 9 am - noon

6/22 - 4 pm - 7 pm

6/23 - two sessions

6/24 - 9 am - noon

ASL III

6/20 - 1pm - 6 pm

6/21 - 9 am - 2pm

6/22 - 3 pm - 7 pm

6/23 - two sessions

6/24 - 9 am - noon





Center for Disabilities

Virtual

Summer 2025: An Introduction to Deafblindness

This first course will provide foundational knowledge of deafblindness and the impact of hearing and vision loss on learning and communication, as well as key evidence-based instructional strategies for supporting those with deaf-blindness.

This course includes content from the following Open Hands, Open Access modules: Overview of DeafBlindness, The Sensory System, the Brain and Learning, Building Trusted Relationships, Touch for Connection and Learning, Maximizing Vision and Hearing, The Role of the Intervener, and Intervener Strategies.

- \$450 registration cost
- Option to add 3 graduate credits through the University of South Dakota (separate registration link) \$120
- Course begins on June 10 (7 weeks)
 - 3 synchronous meetings on June 10, June 24 & July 22 from 10:00-12:00 CST.

»»» Learning Opportunities Cont. «««

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: CONCENTRATION IN DEAFBLINDNESS

For more information
contact

Brandy Sebera
brandy.sebera@usd.edu

Scan the QR Code
to register



WEST VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF

Opportunity for Interpreters to Earn 8 hours of CEUs!
FRIDAY AUGUST 8, 2025, AND SATURDAY AUGUST 9, 2025

Canaan Valley Resorts, Davis, WV

Reserve your room using Group ID Code: 1057WK

Target Audience:

Educational Interpreters, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, Teachers of the Deaf, School Counselors, Administrators of Schools and Districts, and Parents or Guardians .

Educational Objectives:

1. Review, understand, and identify key laws impacting Deaf students' rights.
2. Implement best practices to empower Deaf students while maintaining professional neutrality under WVDE policies and the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct.
3. Recognize systemic barriers to Deaf students' participation in educational decision-making.
4. Apply strategies to collaborate with educational teams while supporting student self-advocacy.
5. Ensure Deaf students actively engage in IEP and 504 meetings, transition planning, and vocational rehabilitation discussions.
6. Address student misconceptions about their rights in education and employment.
7. Analyze the effects of Power, Privilege, and Oppression (PPO) on language access and self-advocacy.

Trainer Charity Reedy Warigon
Fee: \$75
(Includes Saturday Night meal)
Registration:
Email Chris Mick at
WVADPRESIDENT@GMAIL.COM

»»» Conferences «««



WEST VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF 44TH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

Canaan Valley Resort, Davis, West Virginia

August 7-10, 2025

TREASURE OF RESOURCES!

Come join us for a weekend full of resources, socialization, and fun!

- Friday and Saturday Night Socials
- Saturday Evening Entertainment
By Keith Wann, ASL Comedian
- Saturday Lunch
- Workshops
- General Assembly
- Exhibits/Resources

For additional information
or to register go to
<https://www.wvad.org>

OR

Scan the QR Code



Dear Fellow Parent,

Welcome to Holland by Emily Perl Kingsley is a powerful and tender poem that deeply resonates with many parents of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) children. While originally written to describe the experience of raising a child with a disability in general, its message holds special meaning for families navigating the unexpected journey of raising a child who is DHH.

I remember the first time I read the poem. I didn't just read it—I felt it. Every word. Especially that moment when the plane lands and you're told, "Welcome to Holland," when your heart was set on Italy.

When I first learned my child was Deaf, I was flooded with questions and fears. I had pictured a different journey—the one I thought every parent took. I didn't know the language. I didn't know the people. I didn't know what I didn't know. And for a while, I grieved the dream I thought I had lost.

But over time, I began to see the beauty in this new place. I met incredible people I never would have crossed paths with otherwise—Deaf adults, educators, advocates, and other parents walking a similar path. I learned to communicate in new ways. I watched my child thrive in a world rich with culture, language, and connection that I hadn't known existed before.

Like the poem says, Holland has windmills, tulips, and Rembrandts. I've come to know that our Holland is filled with resilience, creativity, community, and pride. Yes, it's different. Sometimes it's hard. But it's also deeply meaningful and endlessly beautiful.

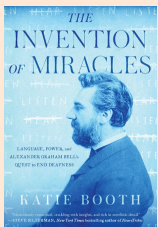
You're not alone here. Whether you're still unpacking your bags or just learning the landscape, know that there's a whole community here to walk beside you. Give yourself grace. Ask questions. Celebrate every milestone. And when in doubt, look around—there is so much to appreciate in this unexpected, remarkable place.

With understanding and support,
A fellow parent in Holland

To read *Welcome to Holland* by Emily Perl Kingsley, please visit her official website:
www.emilyperlkingsley.com/welcome-to-holland



Media >>>



The Invention of Miracles

Katie Booth (Author)



We think of Alexander Graham Bell as the inventor of the telephone, but that's not how he saw his own career. As the son of a deaf woman and, later, husband to another, his goal in life from adolescence was to teach deaf students to speak. Even his tinkering sprang from his teaching work; the telephone had its origins as a speech reading machine.



Deaf President Now!



Since the Deaf President Now (DPN) movement in 1988, its legacy has lived on through the memories of Deaf community members and disability rights activists. Now, almost 40 years later, the story of DPN will finally be shared on a global scale.

Deaf President Now!, a documentary chronicling the eight days of DPN, premieres on Apple TV+ on May 16, 2025. The film is co-directed by Gallaudet alum Nyle DiMarco, '13, and Oscar-winning filmmaker Davis Guggenheim of Concordia Studios.

