

>>> SEPTEMBER 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 Executive Director

Celebrate Deaf Awareness Month & Meet the New WVAD Board!

September is Deaf Awareness Month 2025, a time to celebrate, advocate, and raise awareness for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. It's a chance to honor Deaf culture, promote accessibility, and support inclusion across our state. Related observances include Deaf Awareness Week in May and International Week of Deaf People during the last week of September, which this year carries the theme:

"No Human Rights Without Sign Language Rights."

Why It Matters:

- **Celebrate Culture:** Recognize the rich traditions, values, and languages of Deaf communities.
- **Advocate for Access:** Encourage ASL interpretation, accessible technology, and support for Deaf-owned businesses.
- **Promote Inclusion:** Highlight the challenges faced by Deaf individuals and advocate for equal rights.

Welcoming the New WVAD Board:

The WVCDHH is excited to collaborate with the newly appointed West Virginia Association of the Deaf (WVAD) board:

- President: **Hal Hunter-Suddreth**
- Vice President: **Jimmy Harrison**
- Secretary: **Franny Lawrence-Walker**
- Treasurer: **Veronda Harrison**
- Trustees: **Jean Marie Hunter-Suddreth, Joanne Shaffer, Troy Osborne**

We look forward to working together to advance advocacy, accessibility, and awareness for West Virginia's Deaf and Hard of Hearing community.

Questions or want to get involved?
Contact me at: erik.j.essington@wv.gov





Deaf-Friendly



WVCDHH Board Member, Angela Wilson

During recent travels to attend a quarterly Board meeting, my husband and I stopped in for lunch at this local gem, and It turned out to be an experience that went far beyond the food.

The chef and owner not only impressed us with his menu, but also with his personal story—he previously worked with Deaf and DeafBlind individuals in Pennsylvania. As he came to our table, he naturally signed while speaking, creating a moment that was both welcoming and inclusive.

As someone with a hearing loss, I was deeply moved by his effort to communicate directly—it turned an ordinary lunch into an extraordinary reminder of the impact accessibility and awareness can have in everyday life.

Big Belly Deli History

Founded in 2013 and located in historic Davis, WV. Big Belly Deli was started with the idea that food should be not only quick, but fun, filling and inexpensive. We searched the globe (or at least our little corner of it) to bring you the best ingredients that we could find for our made-to-order sandwiches and deli salads, soups and baked goods to meats and cheeses by the pound.

FRESH/LOCAL INGREDIENTS

We take pride in gathering all of our ingredients in the locals of West Virginia. When you come to visit us, you'll taste the localness of the state we all love!

VEGETARIAN OPTIONS

We provide food for everyone, including vegetarian options that are as tasty as they are compatible. Just like our new Veggie Reuben!



Ron Tate, Chef and Owner



**438 William Ave
Davis, WV 26260
(304) 259-2222
bigbellydeliww.com**

**Hours
Wednesday - Monday
10a - 4p
Closed Tuesday**



Community Spotlight

WVSCDB Outreach



West Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind • 301 East Main Street Romney, West Virginia 26757

WVSDDB Outreach is a West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) Technical Assistance Center (TAC). By working closely with the West Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind (WVSDDB), the Outreach team ensures that students who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing (DHH), Visually Impaired (VI), or Deafblind receive consistent, high-quality support no matter where they live in West Virginia.

Beyond their work on campus, WVSDDB Outreach is deeply engaged in school communities across West Virginia. The team collaborates directly with county school students, families, and educators, providing specialized services, professional development, and individualized guidance from early intervention for infants and toddlers to literacy support, psychological services, audiology, and lending library resources. By combining their expertise with close collaboration across the state, WVSDDB Outreach strengthens student outcomes and educator capacity, creating a truly integrated model of statewide support.

Led by **Director Mary Anne Clendenin**, WVSDDB Outreach is a team of highly skilled experts who work closely with WVSDDB staff while extending their support into county schools, homes, and communities across the mountain state. This collaborative approach bridges campus-based programs with statewide services, ensuring students, families, and educators have consistent access to high-quality resources and guidance.

Meet the WVSDDB Outreach Team:

- **Dr. Melanie Ashworth** – Audiologist
- **Wendy Bailey** – Statewide Visual Impairment Coordinator
- **Jennifer Casto** – Statewide American Sign Language Coordinator
- **Dr. Kurt Metz** – School Psychologist
- **Shaynon “Shay” Remillard** – School Psychologist Intern
- **Ali Stevenson** – Deaf/Hard of Hearing Literacy Specialist
- **Nora Stevenson** – Statewide Deaf/Hard of Hearing Coordinator

In addition to providing specialized services, professional development, and individualized guidance, the WVSDDB, WVDE, and WVSDDB Outreach maintain the following lending libraries to allow teachers and related staff working with children with vision and/or hearing loss to borrow specialized educational items and tools to support their students' learning:

- **The Hearing Assistive Technology Loan Library** includes the latest assistive technology devices and is managed by our Educational Audiologist. Counties can now request to borrow a device from our state-of-the-art library and speak directly to a knowledgeable professional regarding the device.
- **The Assessment Loan Library** was created to support the efforts of WV House Bill 4414 and includes a variety of evaluation tools and resources that can be lent to counties for their trained staff to use for students with hearing loss. This library contains appropriate evaluations for children with hearing loss to assist in assessing the performance areas most vulnerable to challenges due to access issues.
- **The Resource Loan Library** houses a statewide low-incidence resource lending library that allows teachers and related staff working with children with vision and hearing loss to borrow specialized educational items and tools to support their students' learning. Items are available for a 60-day trial period at no cost to the county to ensure the item is appropriate for the student.

The WVSDDB is also thrilled to announce its upcoming Fall Conference, which will be held on the WVSDDB campus from Thursday, September 25th to Friday, September 26th, 2025. The conference will unite educators and service providers in workshops, expert-led sessions, and hands-on training focusing on best practices, emerging research, and innovative education and student support services strategies. **For further information, contact Ms. Mary Anne Clendenin via email at mclenden@k12.wv.us or by phone at 304-822-6660.**

For additional WVSDDB Outreach information and resources, visit their website at: <https://www.wvsdb2.state.k12.wv.us/page/wvsdb-outreach> or scan the QR code



CELEBRATING GLOBAL AND NATIONAL MILESTONES IN DEAF ADVOCACY

Establishment of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD)

The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) was founded in 1951 in Rome, Italy, bringing together national associations of the Deaf from across the globe. Its mission is to advance human rights for Deaf people, preserve and promote sign languages, and improve access to education, employment, and civic life. Today, WFD represents over 70 million Deaf individuals through more than 130 national member organizations, serving as the united global voice for Deaf rights and inclusion.



International Week of the Deaf

To amplify these goals, the WFD established the International Week of the Deaf, observed annually during the last full week of September. This week celebrates Deaf identity, language, and culture, while raising awareness about the need for equity and accessibility worldwide. Communities around the globe mark the occasion with marches, cultural events, workshops, and campaigns promoting sign languages and human rights.

Deaf Awareness Week in the United States

In the U.S., recognition aligns with the International Week of the Deaf and is often referred to as Deaf Awareness Week. Observed in late September, this week shines a spotlight on Deaf history, culture, and achievements, while encouraging advocacy for communication access. It is also an opportunity to highlight the richness of American Sign Language (ASL) and recognize the ongoing efforts of Deaf Americans in education, the workplace, and community life.

How Schools, Communities, and Businesses Can Show Support

The International Week of the Deaf and Deaf Awareness Week in the U.S. are not only times for celebration but also opportunities to build stronger, more inclusive connections. Here are some meaningful ways to get involved:



- **Schools**

- Host an ASL awareness day or invite Deaf speakers to share their experiences.
- Incorporate lessons on Deaf history and culture into the curriculum.
- Encourage students to learn basic ASL phrases to promote inclusivity.



- **Communities**

- Organize Deaf culture events such as film screenings, art exhibits, or community forums.
- Partner with local Deaf organizations to provide resources and raise awareness.
- Ensure public events are accessible by providing qualified interpreters and captioning.



- **Businesses**

- Offer staff training on Deaf awareness and communication strategies.
- Make sure services are accessible by providing interpreters or captioning when needed.
- Celebrate Deaf Awareness Week by spotlighting Deaf employees, customers, or community partners.

A Call to Celebrate and Support

Together, the establishment of the WFD, the observance of International Week of the Deaf, and the celebration of Deaf Awareness Week in the U.S. remind us of the importance of unity and advocacy—both globally and locally. By celebrating Deaf culture, promoting sign languages, and committing to accessibility, schools, communities, and businesses can play a vital role in creating a future where every Deaf individual is fully included and valued.





Code of Silence **BritBox Series**

Alison, a Deaf catering worker struggling to make ends meet, is unexpectedly recruited by a police detective superintendent to lip-read the conversations of criminals. She is portrayed by Rose Ayling-Ellis, a well-known actress and member of the Deaf community who uses both British Sign Language and lip-reading. The series Code of Silence was created by Moulton, who is herself partly Deaf. Inspired by Ayling-Ellis after watching her on Strictly Come Dancing, Moulton wrote the show with her in mind. The cast also features Deaf actors Fifi Garfield and Rolf Choutan, who play Alison's mother and ex-boyfriend, respectively.



Legends of the Eldertree

National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes (NDC – nationaldeafcenter.org)

Legends of the Eldertree is the latest installment of Deafverse, the world's first ASL-accessible online educational game designed specifically for deaf youth. Throughout this immersive quest, players explore real-life college scenarios such as navigating the college application process, evaluating financial aid, accessing campus resources, building community, and requesting accommodations.

Things to Do



WEST VIRGINIA DEAF SERVICE CENTER (WVWSC)

Deaf Coffee Chat

Join us for ASL Activities, Deaf culture, games, snacks, and more! All ages and skill levels welcome!

September 5, 2025, 5:30-8:30 PM

Restore
815 Court Street
Charleston, WV

September 20, 2025, 10:00 AM-1:00 PM

West Huntington Public Library
901 14th Street, West
Huntington, WV

September 9, 2025, 4:00-7:00 PM

2501 Dudley Ave.
Parkersburg, WV

September 26, 2025, 6:00-9:00 PM

Clarion Inn
4328 William L. Wilson FWY
Harpers Ferry, WV

To learn more about WVWSC go to www.wvdeafservicecenter.org

OR

Scan the QR Code



West Virginia Hands & Voices (WVH&V)

12th Annual Open House Picnic

Saturday, September 27, 2025, 2:00-5:00 PM

Veterans Memorial Park - Sycamore Shelter
2 Veterans Memorial Drive
Clarksburg, WV

Exhibitors & Information
Family Games & Competitions
Food & Drinks
Door Prizes and Drawings

Scan the QR Code to connect with WVH&V on



Celebrate Deaf Awareness Week with us! Join us for a fun-filled afternoon of food, games, prizes, and more! Visit our exhibitors to learn about resources and services available to deaf or hard of hearing child in West Virginia.



LUKE LEE LISTENING, LANGUAGE & LEARNING LAB

Hear We Go 5k Run/Walk

Tuesday, October 4, 2025

Registration: 7:30 am,
100-yard dash kids race: 8:30 am,
5k run/walk: 9:00 am

Registration Fees:
5K Race: \$25 Pre-registration
\$30 Day-of Registration,
Kids' Race: \$5 Pre-registration
10 Day-of Registration

Scan the QR Code to register



Learning Lab (The L) at Marshall University is hosting a 5k run/walk and a kids' race this fall at Ritter Park. This event aims to raise awareness and support for children who are deaf and hard of hearing who use listening and spoken language.

DeafNation

Saturday, October 11, 2025, 9:00 AM-5:00 PM
Battelle North at Greater Columbus Convention Center
400 N. High St., Columbus, Ohio 43215

We are the foremost touring trade show for, by, and about deaf people. Since 2003, the DeafNation Expo showcase has attracted over 1 million attendees with hundreds of events throughout the United States.

Scan the QR Code to register



LANGUAGE FIRST

Cultivating New Beginnings: A REAL South x Language First Conference
September 12-14, 2025

Atlanta School for the Deaf
Clarkston, GA

It will be from 12-6:30 pm on Friday, September 12, 8:00 am - 4:00 pm on Saturday, September 13, and 8:00 am - 12:00 pm on Sunday, September 14. All registrations include a hotel stay at the Atlanta Evergreen Resort at Stone Mountain.

Cost: from \$90

Scrolling for Support: How Parents of DHH Children Seek Answers Online
Sunday, September 21, 2025, 4:00 - 6:00 pm ET

This presentation reviews a qualitative study that examined the types of information parents of Deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) children seek and receive in online communities. Findings highlight the central role of online networks in meeting parents' informational and emotional needs, as well as implications for professionals seeking to engage and support families in digital spaces.

Workshop Fee: \$39 *This course offers 0.20 ASHA CEUs.

Transition Considerations from an Educational Interpreter's Perspective
Sunday, September 28, 2025, 4:00 - 6:00 pm ET

The presenter will provide an overview of her capstone project, highlighting key insights and showcasing several resources she developed to support Deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) children during the transition from early intervention to school-based services. The session will include a focused presentation on, *Training Your DHH Child to Use an Interpreter*.

Workshop Fee: \$39 *This course offers 0.20 ASHA CEUs.

For additional information or to register go to

language1st.org/events

OR

Scan the QR Code



West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and hard of hearing (WVCDHH)

How Work Affect Benefits

Thursday, September 18, 2025, 10:00-11:00 AM via Zoom

Join us for a FREE monthly virtual workshop series presented by Kimberly Stephens, Social Security Public Affairs Specialist covering 27 SSA offices across West Virginia and Western Pennsylvania. With over 20 years of experience—including roles such as SSI Claims Specialist—Kimberly brings deep insight into Social Security programs and services. ASL interpretation and captioning provided.



Scan the QR Code to register



The College of Health and Human Services

7th Annual Scarlett's Park Conference

Friday, September 19, 2025, 1:00-9:00 PM PST

Saturday, September 20, 2025, 8:00-5:00 PM PST

Virtual and In-Person Presentations on: "Autism in Deaf Education" Featuring keynote speakers, a team of selected teachers, professionals, Deaf Autistic Adults, Parents, Rosangela Jaech, Bonita Ewan, and Elizabeth Kunze.

Presentations

- *The Role of ABA and Behavior Analytic Professionals in the Education of Deaf Autistic Individuals*
- *Deaf and Disabled Affirming Approaches in Deaf Education*
- *All Behavior is Communication*
- *How Classroom Teachers Can Work Successfully with the Parents of a Deaf Autistic Child*
- *Teaching Reading to Deaf Students with Autism*
- *Managing REAL Behavior in Deaf Students with Autism*
- *Deaf Autistic Adults Panel*
- *Breaking Down the Math Process for Deaf Students with Autism*
- *Collaboration and Advocacy Between ABA and Education*

For additional information or to register, go to:
https://chhs.fresnostate.edu/thesilentgarden/scarletts_park/index.html

OR

Scan the QR Code

