



## 2022 Newsletter

### ***ISOLATION – COMMUNICATION – COMMUNITY!***

**Community gatherings are back!** Though we never stopped serving individuals and families, one of the pillars of our work has always been bringing isolated sub-groups together to feel community, “I’m Ok we’re OK,” the joy and normalcy of being together AND understanding, sparking the motivation to move forward. We held SSP Training and a DeafBlind Thanksgiving Social in November and CTK/DeafCAN! luncheon in December

**Halfway Haven:** While community gatherings are increasing for those who have mostly met their basic needs, we’re also investing energy into finding safe, communication-friendly housing for Deaf folks who are struggling, alone, and need a haven---those who become homeless, victims of domestic violence or other crimes, those new to the USA, those just released from prison, and others. For years, our staff and volunteers have offered their own homes as temporary havens, but we want to do more. We are considering various options, from several apartments to multi-unit houses, to provide more opportunities and hope. If you have or know of any such potential havens, please let us know!

**DeafBlind:** Post Covid we held our first Sensory Support Provider training and then held our first DB Social. Trainees were able to interact with a variety of DB folks in the community at the social. With service hours finally back up, we are looking to increase our SSP staff.

**Deaf Refugees/Immigrants/Asylees (RIAs):** Classes, socials, and case support have continued in West Chester and Philadelphia, but sadly, we were not able to continue services in S Central PA due to lack of funding. Some of you lucky ones saw SE PA Deaf RIAs perform their second “In Their Own Signs” drama in Nov. 2021, each showing their journeys to the US, while the other actors played supporting roles as family, teachers, soldiers... Several of their hearing family members attended and we provided both Spanish and Arabic interpreters for them. Again, while learning through their class work, many became US citizens. We also provide opportunities for deeper, creative, self-affirming activities and community.

**National Deaf Refugee resource center?** For almost a year, we have been meeting with others around the USA who have similar services for/with Deaf RIAs but who, like us, struggle to find such individuals who are usually hidden and unserved. Our coalition’s goal is to establish a national resource center to support organizations, Deaf RIAs and their families, to help ease their often-frightening journeys in the USA, and to find community!

**Criminal justice:** While our advocacy efforts never stopped, our prison visits finally restarted last January. However, the challenges of DHH people in the criminal justice system remain unconscionable. Even after 50 years of “guaranteed equal access” via the Rehab Act of 1973, and 30 years (1990) of ADA, “our” corrections mega-system still stubbornly refuses to provide even minimum access to their programs and services for DHH people in their “care.”

There are over 100 federal, state, and county jails in PA, housing roughly 70,000 inmates, plus another 300,000 in various stages of parole or probations. About 150 of them are Deaf, and another 1,800 very hard of hearing. Yet, despite our advocacy for over 25 years, an absolute minimum level of interpreting is provided, often using in-house, hearing inmate ‘interpreters,’ for about 30 cents an hour, NO Realtime captions, no caption phones ANYWHERE in PA, and Videophones that repeatedly freeze after a mere 10 to 30 seconds. Inmates & parolees suffer greatly under these illegal and inhumane conditions. They often serve longer sentences or are returned to jail for parole ‘violations’ they never understood. Yes, they need community too!

**DeafCAN!** is honored to continue this work, though we pray for the day we are no longer needed. In the meantime, our work with these isolated sub-groups is supported entirely with contributions and grants. In 2021, we received an amazing \$60,000 from individuals that fueled our service with 210 different individuals. In 2022, individuals continue to show their support, and we also received our largest grant ever from the Thomsen Family Trust. We ALL need community and, for those who are Deaf, that starts with care and communication. Thanks to those we serve, our staff and volunteers, and all those who support this work!

Beth and Bill visit DeafCAN! consumer isolated from the community



Deaf Community gathers outside for our large Deaf Expo with 30 vendors in April. Out of isolation into communication!



All smiles with new shoes for new jobs in the community given by DeafCAN! donor



Colombian, Iraqi, and Liberian pals from DeafCAN! play in World Deaf Refugee Day game