



DEAF ACCESS SERVICES
an affiliate of People Inc.

Spring 2021 Biannual Newsletter



Deaf Access Services responds to the interests of Deaf and hard of hearing people by promoting communication access, awareness and opportunities in the greater community.

Deaf Advisory Council Spotlight

The Deaf Advisory Council is comprised of people with a genuine interest in the work of People Inc., our parent agency, Deaf Access Services and a desire for the advisory to do well. Members are expected to attend the quarterly meetings regularly and contribute to the process, as well as adhere to the confidentiality policy.

We are currently looking for more members to join our Deaf Advisory Council.

Do you have an interest in supporting the Deaf community? Are you interested in opportunities to develop and participate in leadership opportunities? Do you want to make a difference?

Contact us today! To express an interest in joining or for more information, email Jodie Chibi, director, Deaf Access Services, at JChibi@wnydas.org.

Recently, we welcomed three new members: Michael Lackey, Lisa Rafalson and Karen Ward.



Michael Lackey

A native of Geneseo, NY, Michael currently resides with his family in the Amherst area. He holds a Bachelor's of Art degree in economics from University at Buffalo and worked as part of the

Deaf Access Services team for five years before pursuing self-employment and starting his own

business, Boston Tax Party, LLC. Currently, he is a tax preparer and has completed the voluntary IRS CE program for Annual Filing Season and is soon to be officially registered in New York State. Michael enjoys traveling with his family and is an avid sports fan.



Dr. Lisa Rafalson

Dr. Rafalson was named as dean of the School of Health Professions at D'Youville in January 2021. In this capacity, she oversees eight academic departments, as well as the

Office of Accessibility Resources, which makes accommodations for students with disabilities. Prior to this appointment, she was assistant vice president of Academic Affairs since August 2019, and oversaw new academic program development.



Karen Ward

Karen lost her hearing over many years due to inner ear disease and has bilateral cochlear implants. She serves on the Board of Buffalo Implant Group and is happy to

represent the Hard of Hearing community as a member of the Deaf Advisory Council.

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Message from the Director

Dear Friends,



While it is safe to say we have left 2020 behind and we can begin looking forward to what 2021 will bring, there are some folks I want to thank.

Thank you to all of our staff who have helped confront the extraordinarily difficult circumstances that 2020 brought us. Your willingness, ability and flexibility to meet the challenges of working from home to continue supporting the community have supported what we boast about often – we have a committed team at Deaf Access Services, who wants to help make the community a better, more accessible place to live.

To all of our dedicated interpreters who have continued to provide valuable services throughout this difficult time, thank you for making a difference. You have continued to demonstrate to the community that you are not only valued every day for communication, but in times of crisis you are critical, dependable and courageous. You show up and make a difference!

Thank you to the community for entrusting us to be your ally, advocate and friend.

Thank you to our community partners and supporters for championing the significance and relevance of our mission and values. Through your contributions, collaborations and donations, you continue to ensure that Deaf Access Services is able to grow, expand and adapt to the needs and challenges we face.

I am happy to see us move into a new year and I am grateful for those who join me in welcoming 2021 with hope and optimism. If the saying, absence makes the heart grow fonder is true, then we will all enter 2021 loving our family members, friends and coworkers a bit more.

Have a safe, happy and healthy year.

Jodie Chibi
Director, Deaf Access Services

2020 Fundraising Totals

Thank you for your support

We're pleased to share that we raised over **\$22,000** in 2020 through various fundraisers and donations to benefit Deaf Access Services! This was through Giving Tuesday, our Virtually Winter Event, our t-shirt sale through 26 Shirts and more. This helps our agency provide even more support for the community. Thank you for your generosity!



Events and Community News

Upcoming Fundraising Events

D'Youville Series of Event: Origin of Deaf Language

During March 13 to April 15, it is Deaf History Month. D'Youville College is thrilled to be working with Deaf Access Services on a series of events. The community is invited to watch, learn and participate. The events will be spread over three separate dates and include a panel discussion on the different experiences of being Deaf or hard of hearing, while growing up in a hearing society; presentation on the origins of Deaf language and depending on COVID-19 restrictions. We also hope to host a film night.

Deaf History Month – March 13-April 15

- Celebration of contributions of the hard of hearing and Deaf community to American society.
- Recognizes Deaf champions and increases awareness of the Deaf community's rich history.

Deaf Access Services is hosting its annual fundraiser virtually on April 15. This an important annual celebration for the community through fundraising to support our great programs and services. For updates, refer to our Facebook page and website, wnydas.org.

Deaf Parent Appreciation Day – April 26: Showing appreciation to Deaf Parents (DoD's) and explains about language privilege and being a part of the Deaf community.

National Interpreter Appreciation Day – May 6: This is a day to honor the interpreters who make life a lot

easier to navigate for the Deaf, hard of hearing, Deaf/Blind and hearing loss community. Thank you for everything you do to help, guide and support the Deaf community.

Disability ADA Awareness Day – July 26: Disability Pride Parades seek to change the way people think about and define disability, along with ending the stigma of disability to promote the belief that it is a natural and beautiful part of human diversity, in which people living with disabilities can take pride. This date is also the day the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed in 1990.

Deaf Awareness Week: Third week of September: Deaf Awareness Week is a national week of celebrating deafness. It is observed annually throughout the last full week of September. The week focuses on promoting the positive aspects of deafness, encouraging social inclusion and raising awareness of the organizations that support those who are Deaf.

Walk for Hearing, where we call it Walk for DAS! September: Get together safely to take a walk to fundraise and support Deaf Access Services and the hearing loss community. 40 percent of the money raised goes directly to Deaf Access Services.

Giving Tuesday – First Tuesday after Thanksgiving – November 30: Giving Tuesday is a global generosity movement unleashing the power of people and organizations to transform their communities and the world.

Get Involved with Community Organizations

Want to become more involved in our community? Contact the below organizations directly or reach out to Deaf Access Services and our team will be happy to connect you.

Buffalo Club of the Deaf: facebook.com/BuffaloClubOfTheDeaf

Buffalo Civic Association of the Deaf: facebook.com/BCAdeafWNY

Empire State Association of the Deaf: esad.org

Buffalo Implant Group: buffaloimplantgroup.com



Irish Classical Theatre Company Production Includes Closed Captioning and ASL Interpretation



If you were able to join Deaf Access Services and the Irish Classical Theatre Company this past November for the interpreted performance of *Sea Marks*, thank you! With the success of the streamed accessible performance, another production has been added to the calendar, which will include closed captioning and ASL interpretation. We are working together to bring you the performance of *Year of Magical Thinking* by Joan Didion, an account of the year following the death of her husband John Gregory Dunne. It will be available to view virtually, streaming April 9 to 25. For tickets and more information, go to the Irish Classical Theatre Company website, irishclassical.com.

DAS Career Pathways Program

The Deaf Access Services Career Pathways Program has services available to fit everyone's needs and communication requirements. It works to support clients through the whole career search process. There are job and college services for adults and transition services for youth.

As an adult, you will work with Deaf Access Services staff to gain valuable pre-employment skills, such as how to interview, how to determine your career goals

and which jobs would work best for you. As a youth, either transitioning into work, college or a trade school, you will learn important skills to take with you. If you are interested in any of these services, contact Deaf Access Services Career Pathways staff at 716.833.1637.

If you are an employer who wants training or information on working with Deaf and hard of hearing employees, contact us as well.

ASL Program: Register Today!

We had 110 students participate in our ASL classes in 2020. It was a big transition going from in-class to virtual, but it was a success. If you are interested, we are still having classes for the 2021 year! Sign up or

for more information, go to wnydas.org/services/asl-classes-outreach or contact Mary Mullen at mary.mullen@wnydas.org.

Mentor Opportunities Available through Compeer Buffalo

Are you interested in being a mentor? Deaf Access Services is collaborating with Compeer Buffalo to support their efforts to ensure that they are accessible to the Deaf and hard of hearing community. Compeer Buffalo supports good mental health through meaningful friendships. For more information, contact Lisa Johnson, director of Volunteer Engagement, at Lisa@CompeerBuffalo.org or 716.883.3331, ext. 312.



“Storytime In Your Neighborhood” Presented by Every Person Influences Children

Every Person Influences Children (EPIC) is presenting the “Storytime In Your Neighborhood” series, in collaboration with Jericho Road and Deaf Access Services.

Storytime is geared toward children ages 2 to 6 and will feature themes of diversity, empowerment, community and more. These events are offered virtually via EPIC’s YouTube channel. The program is held at 5:30 p.m. on the third Wednesday of every month. Through collaboration with Deaf Access Services, each storytime is ASL interpreted.

For more information, email Alexis Hutsko, EPIC program coordinator, at hutskoa@epicforchildren.org.

Remaining dates are:

- March 17
- April 21
- May 19
- June 16
- July 21



Thank You to Our Sponsors

Our biggest sponsor for 2020: Sorenson Communication



Our Igloo Sponsors: BestSelf, ECMC and Hodgson Russ





Winter Blues

By Brynn Brewington, AmeriCorps Member, People Inc.

The “Winter Blues” is a common problem for many people living in northern areas with cold winters, like Western New York. Winter days are typically cold and dark in Western New York. The sun sets early, and we experience little sunlight compared to the rest of the year. This can cause our “internal clocks” (also called circadian rhythm) to change, causing tiredness during the day, difficulty sleeping at night, trouble concentrating and moodiness.

Some people experience a more severe form of the “Winter Blues,” called Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) or seasonal depression. SAD will often cause intense depression, changes in eating habits, difficulty sleeping, anxiety, withdrawing from friends and family and can impair your quality of life.

If you think you are experiencing the Winter Blues or SAD, please speak with your doctor. Medication is sometimes prescribed to help your brain make the right chemicals to lessen your symptoms until Spring returns, when the “Winter Blues” and SAD symptoms tend to improve or disappear.

Other ways to combat SAD or the “Winter Blues” include:

- Light therapy: Sitting in front of a light box in the morning as a substitute for sunshine.
- “Talk” therapy: Going to see a therapist regularly to discuss your mental health and what is happening in your life that may be causing your stress or anxiety.
- Physical activity: Going for a walk on a nice winter day, lifting weights in your home or other forms of physical activity are great for your mental AND physical health!
- Reach out to loved ones: Keeping in contact with friends or family can help you feel less isolated.
- Learn a new hobby: Engaging your brain and helping distract yourself in a healthy way.
- Keep or create a routine: Having a normal schedule can help you feel grounded and focused.

Most importantly, remember that there is nothing wrong with you if you experience any kind of mental health issue. The brain is an organ and does not always work correctly 100 percent of the time. Sometimes we all need a little help, but that does not mean we are broken! Be kind to yourself! Better days are ahead!

COVID-19 Vaccination Webinar with ASL Interpreting and Captioning

Deaf Access Services recently held its first webinar for the community, in partnership with the Erie County Office for the Disabled and the Erie County Department of Health. The focus was to answer questions and provide accurate information about COVID-19, the vaccinations and the PODs (Point of Dispensing). Thank you to presenters Pati Aine Guzinski, training coordinator, Public Health Emergency Preparedness of Erie County Department of Health and to Frank Cammarata, executive director, Erie County Office for People with Disabilities, for their time and assistance. Many thanks to all of the community members that were able to join us. Please watch for additional webinars to be announced in the upcoming months.



People Inc. News Affordable Apartments Now Accepting Applications



People Inc. Affordable Apartments Accepting Applications

Looking for an apartment or know someone who is?

As part of its Affordable Apartments, People Inc. is accepting applications for available apartments and for people to be added to waiting lists. The apartments include: Kitchen with refrigerator, stove and dishwasher; utilities for water and garbage removal; on-site laundry facilities; safety features; air-conditioning and on-site management. Amenities may vary. Tenants may have one small pet. Section 8 vouchers are accepted. Some apartments are designed specifically for people who may have mobility issues, are legally blind or who may be Deaf or hard of hearing. Here's more information and eligibility requirements for some of the apartments:



Jefferson Avenue Apartments, located at 1140 and 1166 Jefferson Avenue, Buffalo, NY: 18+ years of age who are income-eligible, physically disabled and or intellectually/developmentally disabled. One- and two-bedroom apartments available. Rental applications are currently being accepted for one-bedroom units for people who are intellectually/developmentally disabled.

Info: Email housing@people-inc.org or call 716.880.3890

The apartments listed below, with eligibility requirements, have a waitlist for the one- and two-bedroom units:

Grant Street Apartments, 25 Grant Street, North Tonawanda, NY: 18+ years of age and who are income-eligible, physically disabled and or intellectually/developmentally disabled.

Highland School Apartments, 105 Highland Avenue, Tonawanda, NY: 18+ years of age and who are income-eligible, traumatic brain injury (TBI), physically disabled and or intellectually/developmentally disabled.

Linwood Lafayette Senior Apartments, 637 Linwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY: 55+ years of age and who are income-eligible, physically disabled and or intellectually/developmentally disabled.

To learn more about these apartments, email housing@people-inc.org or call 716.880.3890.

People Inc. Senior Living in Southern Tier and Lockport Accepting Applications

NOW available: One-bedroom Tax-Credit apartment unit at Academy Place Senior Apartments in Gowanda, managed by People Inc. The apartment building, ideal for older adults in the Southern Tier, is located at 1 School Street in Gowanda, NY. The HUD Section 202 Affordable Housing and NYS Tax-Credit apartments provide housing for independent, older adults age 62 and up who meet income guidelines. Vouchers are accepted for the Tax-Credit units.

Info: Call 716.817.9090

People Inc. Pine Senior Living in Lockport, NY (border of Amherst), provides affordable apartments, with rent based on income and offers numerous safety features for independent older adults age 62 and over who are income-eligible. Tenants may have one small pet. The apartment building is located off Transit Road near Millersport Highway.

Info: Call 716.433.3381

To learn more about other People Inc. Senior Living locations throughout Western New York, email Seniorliving@people-inc.org or call 716.817.9090.





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Telling the People Inc. Story for 50 Years

People Inc. is proud to recognize its 50th anniversary! The agency started with just a small group of parents and professionals who joined together to address the needs of people with intellectual disabilities and formed what would grow to become People Inc. The variety of programs and services offered has evolved to support over 10,000 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, families and older adults. Over the years, People Inc. has expanded these offerings to support even more people in their efforts to live, work and thrive – to be independent, to have access to supports and health services, as well as affordable, safe housing. To mark this milestone, local landmarks were illuminated blue this past summer and the agency’s historical moments are included in a photo album on the People Inc. Facebook page. People Inc. will celebrate its anniversary through the end of the year and looks forward to safer times ahead.



Niagara Falls, NY.
Photo by Roxane Albond-Buchner.

DEAF ACCESS SERVICES
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