



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.

## Erie County Legislature Recognizes Deaf Access Services



The Erie County Legislature recognized Deaf Access Services, an affiliate of People Inc., during a special session with two proclamations. Presented by Minority Leader Joseph C. Lorigo of District 10, Deaf Access Services was presented with a proclamation recognizing the Deaf and hard of hearing community in honor of Deaf Awareness Month. The second proclamation recognized Deaf Access Services and the tireless work our team has done during the pandemic to ensure that the Erie County press briefings are interpreted and to support the Deaf and hard of hearing communities across Western New York and beyond.

"Deaf Access Services, an affiliate of People Inc., extends our thanks to the members of the Erie County Legislature for recognizing the Deaf and hard of hearing community with a proclamation in honor of Deaf Awareness Month," said Jodie Chibi, director of Deaf Access Services. "On behalf of the entire Deaf Access Services team, we thank the members for their special recognition of the work we have done throughout the pandemic and beyond, as we continue to support not only our local Deaf and hard of hearing community, but people around the country."

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## Message from the Director

Dear Friends,



As we continue to navigate this pandemic and reflect, 2021 was a roller-coaster of a year! Deaf Access Services, an affiliate of People Inc., has continued to work hard to ensure we were available for the community and supporting our Deaf, Deaf-blind,

hard of hearing and hearing loss community members.

There were some important initiatives and events that celebrated not only the Deaf community, but the work that Deaf Access Services has been doing to ensure access and inclusion for everyone:

Early in 2021, we welcomed a number of new AmeriCorps members to our team who have provided support to our staff and programs.

Deaf Access Services partnered with D'Youville College to offer a special three-part series, which focused on educating the community about the Deaf experience, Deaf culture and a Deaf-produced film.

In collaboration with Compeer, Deaf Access Services is continuing to helping to connect volunteers with the Compeer agency to support fellow community members.

Our staff have provided a number of training sessions for various organizations and service providers. Through two of our trainings provided for the Office of New Americans, we were able to reach people across the United States and Puerto Rico!



In July, our staff enjoyed a muddy retreat day. While the plans were to enjoy the beautiful park at Evangola, we ended up tip-toeing through muddy, soggy ground. That said, we all had a lovely afternoon re-connecting with each other.

Deaf Access Services and St. Mary's School for the Deaf had the first-ever flag raising ceremony in the City of Buffalo, recognizing Deaf Awareness Week, occurring annually in September. Buffalo Mayor Byron W. Brown issued a proclamation recognizing Deaf Awareness Week in Buffalo, NY. As a result, we have a great partnership with the City and Mayor Brown announced publicly during the flag raising that he would be providing interpreters for press conferences and emergency news briefings in the community, on the news and social media channels.

Deaf Access Services was recognized in September with two proclamations given by the Erie County Legislature. These proclamations recognize Deaf Awareness Week in Erie County and Deaf Access Services for all of the services provided for the county throughout the pandemic, including our interpreting and advocacy, which support not only the residents of Erie County, but extends across the country.

As part of our Deaf Awareness Week activities, we held a 14-day fundraising event in collaboration with St. Mary's School for the Deaf and 26 Shirts. The 2021 shirt design featured "7-1-6" ASL handshapes. Together, a total of \$2,500 was raised to support the community and students in Western New York.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, over 17,032.96 hours of interpreting were provided this past year and our staff welcomed countless new customers who reached out for services. In addition, our ASL classes continued for the community, plus our ASL Program has been expanded to include teaching for a local school – a total of 71 young students, for continuing education programs and our private lessons.

As we look forward to 2022, we envision a year of growth. On behalf of our team, all the best to you and your families for a healthy, safe and happy 2022!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jodie Chibi".

Warm regards,  
Jodie Chibi  
Director, Deaf Access Services

## Remembering and Celebrating

Deaf Access Services is celebrating its 39th year serving the community across all eight counties of Western New York. Let's take the time to remember and thank the founders of Deaf Access Services, originally Deaf Adult Services, who made the past 39 years possible!

### DAS Founder, Alice Guinane

Alice Guinane has been a part of DAS from the start. Alice served on the Western New York Services for the Hearing Impaired (WNYSHI) Advisory Council until she became the first board president for Deaf Access Services. Alice was honored to become the second Board Member Emeritus and continues to be an active part of the Deaf community in Western New York.



### Theresa Pordum

(February 15, 1930 - May 30, 2007)

Terri was a founding member and long-time board member of Deaf Adult Services. She was a valiant leader in the Deaf community whose accomplishments are countless. Her dynamic presence and warm heart will be deeply missed and forever remembered.



February 2022, will mark three years we have been affiliated with People Inc. Deaf Access Services wants to say thank you to People Inc. and all the staff for welcoming us into their family; supporting our mission; and standing with us to advocate for accessible services for the Deaf, Deaf-blind, hard of hearing and hearing-loss community members across Western New York.

We are happy to be a part of People Inc. and look forward to thriving together!



**Thank you Buffalo Business First for honoring People Inc. and David Wantuck with IDEA 2022 Awards**

**People Inc. strives to promote a culturally inclusive and equitable community.**

*Diversity is our strength, equity our virtue, inclusion is our passion.*

**People Inc. provides comprehensive supports for people with disabilities, families, older adults and the community to lead healthy, independent and productive lives across Western New York and the Greater Rochester region.**



[people-inc.org](https://people-inc.org)     

## Buffalo Business First Recognizes David Wantuck and People Inc. with 2022 IDEA Awards

Annually, Buffalo Business First celebrates companies and people in Western New York who prioritize the importance of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA). On behalf of the staff at Deaf Access Services, we congratulate both David Wantuck and People Inc., recipients of the 2022 IDEA Awards.

David has been a valuable member of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee at People Inc. and works continuously toward the goal of the Buffalo and the Western New York region become fully accessible to Deaf and hard of hearing people.

In addition, he strives to continue training and educating organizations and businesses on what inclusion, diversity, equity and access means for Deaf and hard of hearing people.

People Inc. is committed to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for everyone. Their vision is to work toward a future where all persons whose needs limit their integration into the community can reach their highest level of human potential as responsible members of society. As part of that commitment, a special DEI committee has been established to help unite communities and create a better future for all, and they have taken intentional steps toward ensuring that they are creating a working environment that honors the DEI beliefs.

Congratulations to both David and People Inc. for all you have done and continue to do to help make our community an accepting, accessible and inclusive place to live and work.



## Deaf Awareness Week 2021 Recap

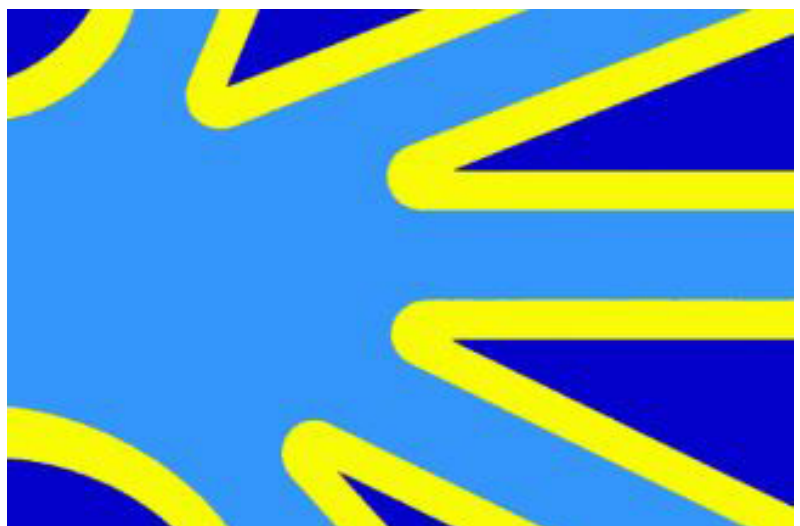
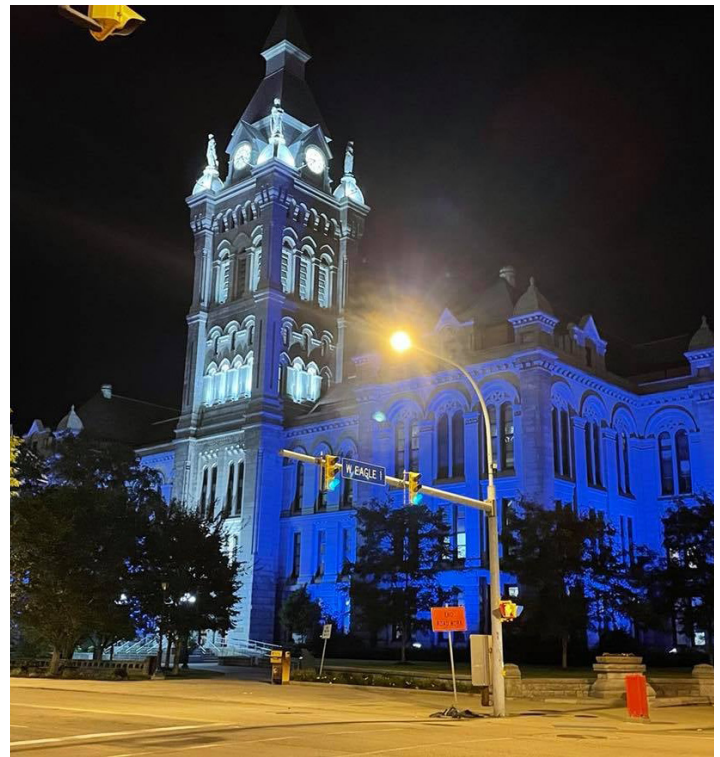
Leaders in Buffalo kicked off Deaf Awareness Week on Monday, September 20, 2021 with the first flag raising ceremony for the Deaf community, hosted by the City of Buffalo. The City of Buffalo also worked with several buildings to light up the City in blue and gold/yellow, in recognition of the colors on the International Deaf Flag.

The Flag was designed by Arnaud Balard: “Your hands are wings that fly in Freedom.”

The special flag-raising ceremony was held in Niagara Square with Deaf Access Services, People Inc., St. Mary’s School for the Deaf and members of the community. Several Deaf community organizations were recognized, such as Buffalo Civic Association of the Deaf, Buffalo Implant Group, Buffalo Hearing and Speech, ASL Buffalo, Buffalo Deaf Club and the Buffalo Deaf Senior Citizens.

Approximately one in every 20 Americans is currently Deaf or hard of hearing. Locally, this annual week-long celebration recognizes the contributions made by Buffalo’s Deaf community and encourages people and organizations to be more inclusive for those with who are Deaf, Deaf-blind, hard of hearing and experiencing hearing loss.

“Providing interpreters for a lot of your events and captioning your TV commercials, movies, everything you can think of – that will not only benefit the Deaf community but it will benefit everyone,” said David Wantuck, community engagement specialist/ASL coordinator, Deaf Access Services, an affiliate of People Inc.



## Take the Path Less Traveled – Join Us

People Inc. is recruiting people for local AmeriCorps positions to begin in February and serve through January 2023. The program known as the People Inc. E.T.H.O.S. AmeriCorps Program, focuses on Empowerment Through Helping Others Succeed.

The members will work with staff, within People Inc. or at partner agencies, engaged in the services that are typically offered, such as therapeutic recreation programs for veterans, day habilitation services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, case management services for Deaf, services for people with traumatic brain injury, admissions, low income or senior housing. The members will assist staff in the delivery of services or program development. New for 2022 – an additional focus of the member's service will include assessing the needs of the people we support as it related to the impact of COVID-19. An assessment tool is used to identify challenges people are experiencing along 20 life areas. The member works with the person supported, staff and advisors to create bridges to solutions and to develop resources. Regular peer support meetings and case conferences are held to offer guidance and training on client engagement, effective communication and tools for assessment and service delivery. American Sign Language (ASL) fluency is needed for assignments with the Deaf program.

AmeriCorps members receive a living allowance, student loan deferment, an education award toward college and other benefits. Applicants cannot be current People Inc. employees and must be at least 18 years of age. Those who have served in the U.S. Military (including the Guard and Reserve), their families and those with a disability are encouraged to apply. If you are interested or know someone who is, visit [my.americorps.gov](http://my.americorps.gov) to apply. Learn more at [people-inc.org/ethos](http://people-inc.org/ethos). For more information, contact Pam Kefi, program director, at [AmeriCorps@people-inc.org](mailto:AmeriCorps@people-inc.org) or call 716.833.1637, ext. 100.



## AmeriCorps

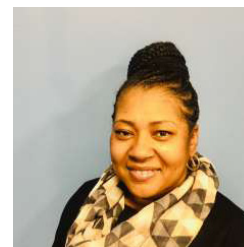
## Staff Kudos – Stacey Allen

Stacey has been with Deaf Access Services since 2013. In August, she will celebrate nine years with us and we couldn't be happier to have her as a valuable member of our team. Anyone who visits our office is greeted by her friendly and welcoming smile, and on the days when Stacey is not at the front desk, clients are often asking about her whereabouts.

Stacey is our administrative assistant and throughout the global COVID-19 pandemic, she has played an integral role in our Interpreting Department, assisting

with scheduling services for community members and their service providers. In addition, she is always willing to jump in and lend a hand to other staff for projects and events.

We are so lucky to Stacey as a part of the Deaf Access Services family and look forward to working with you for many more years!



### THAT DEAF GUY

BY MATT & KAY DAIGLE





## Upcoming Events

Your support is needed! Deaf Access Services relies on our interpreting services and donations from the community to continue providing services and community-based training.

### **Annual Fundraiser – April 2022.**

Information will be announced soon.

Our **annual fundraiser**, typically a dinner event, is an opportunity to recognize everyone who has contributed and/or supported Deaf Access Services. It is also a time when we come together to celebrate milestones and plan for the future! More information will be announced as it becomes available, whether it will be in-person or virtual.

[Pending COVID 19 restrictions and safety, we will be getting back to:](#)

**ASL Food Truck Tuesdays** the second Tuesday of June, July, August and September.

Where: **Larkin Square**

Time: **5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.**

**DAS Annual Dinner** will be a BBQ take out and an Annual online basket auction.

### **We are also planning on:**

A **Flag Raising Ceremony Proclamation**, more information to come soon.

**ASL Story Time** through our Facebook Channel

[And we will be celebrating:](#)

**National Interpreter Appreciation Day**, the first Wednesday of May.

**International Day of Sign Language Day**, September 23

**Deaf Awareness Month**, September

**Deaf Awareness Week**, the third Week of September

**CODA/KODA (Child/Kids Of Deaf Adults) Awareness Day**, June 21

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## ASL Program

It has been a successful year for our agency's ASL Program – we were able to have a total of 161 students learning ASL, from Level 1 to Level 5.

We are proud to be working with a local school in Buffalo, NY, where we have two of our Deaf teachers and an interpreter at the school twice per week throughout the entire school year. They are teaching ASL to kindergartners and first graders ASL. This is a great example of community collaboration, which spreads awareness and educates young children about the Deaf community's culture and language.

We look forward to continuing this throughout the year.

We will be continuing our ASL community classes virtually. If you have questions or if you know anyone who would like to join, contact [communications@wnydas.org](mailto:communications@wnydas.org).

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## Community News

Deaf Access Services, NFTA (Niagara Falls Transportation Authority) and Sorenson are all working together to ensure there are placements at certain locations around Western New York. This is a project we are all collaborating on to ensure that accessibility is provided to the community if any phone

calls are needed to family, friends, traveling locations and more. More information will be announced as it becomes available. If you have any questions, contact David Wantuck, [communications@wnydas.org](mailto:communications@wnydas.org).

## People Inc. News

### Now Accepting Applications: People Inc. Affordable Apartments and Senior Living Locations in Erie and Niagara Counties



People Inc. provides a wide-variety of apartments across Western New York that are accepting applications. Options include:

**People Inc. Affordable Apartments:** Provides those who are income-eligible and meet the qualifications for set-aside units, based on our funding sources with safe, affordable apartments. Specific locations include:

**NEW – Oakwood Senior Apartments**, 15 Oakwood Avenue, Blasdell: 55+ Years, income-eligible. Additionally, there are seven furnished set-aside apartments for people 55+, who are income-eligible and are frail elderly homeless individuals.

**Grant Street Apartments**, 25 Grant Street, North Tonawanda: Age 18+ and income-eligible or who has an intellectual or developmental disability.

**Highland School Apartments**, 105 Highland Avenue, Tonawanda: Age 18+ and income-eligible; have a traumatic brain injury or an intellectual/developmental disability. A two-bedroom unit with hearing and vision accommodations available.

**Linwood Lafayette Senior Apartments**, 637 Linwood Avenue, Buffalo: Age 55+ and income-eligible, physically disabled and/or intellectually/developmentally disabled. Market rate units available.

**Locations for the Olmsted Apartments, managed by People Inc., include the following (preferences for people with physical disabilities or vision impairments are provided):**

- Austin Manor Apartments: 395 Tonawanda Street, Buffalo, NY
- Elizabeth Harvey Apartments: 525 Oliver Street, North Tonawanda, NY
- Gratwick Manor Apartments: 840 Tonawanda Street, Buffalo, NY
- Haskell Stovroff Apartments: 30 Alpine Place, Cheektowaga, NY
- Nelson Hopkins Apartments: 5562 Davison Road, Lockport, NY

**People Inc. Senior Living:** Affordable and maintenance-free one-bedroom apartments for independent older adults age 62 and up who are income-eligible. Many locations are accepting applications, including Amherst, Angola, Blasdell, Buffalo, South Buffalo, Gowanda, Grand Island, Lackawanna, Lockport, Springville and Wheatfield. Two benefits of People Inc. Senior Living are affordable rent based on income and safety features. (\*Our Gowanda location provides HUD Section 202 Affordable Housing and NYS Tax Credit apartments for seniors age 62+. Accessible unit available. Amenities vary. TTD/TTY: 1.800.662.1220).



**For additional info about any of these apartment options, email [housing@people-inc.org](mailto:housing@people-inc.org) or call 716.880.3890.**



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A rewarding career supporting the goals and dreams of people with disabilities awaits. We have a place for people of all skill levels – from entry level to many years of experience. Openings include direct support, RN/LPN, clinical and social workers.

**Paid Training • Consistent/Flexible Schedules\***

**Tuition Reimbursement • Affordable Insurances**

**Generous Time Off/PTO Buyback Option**

**Career Pathways/Development • Sign-On Bonus (exclusions may apply).**

\*Direct support staff receive overnight and weekend shift incentives.



**Take the first step at**  
**[people-inc.org/careers](http://people-inc.org/careers) or call 716.322.7050**



EOE

### DEAF ACCESS SERVICES

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