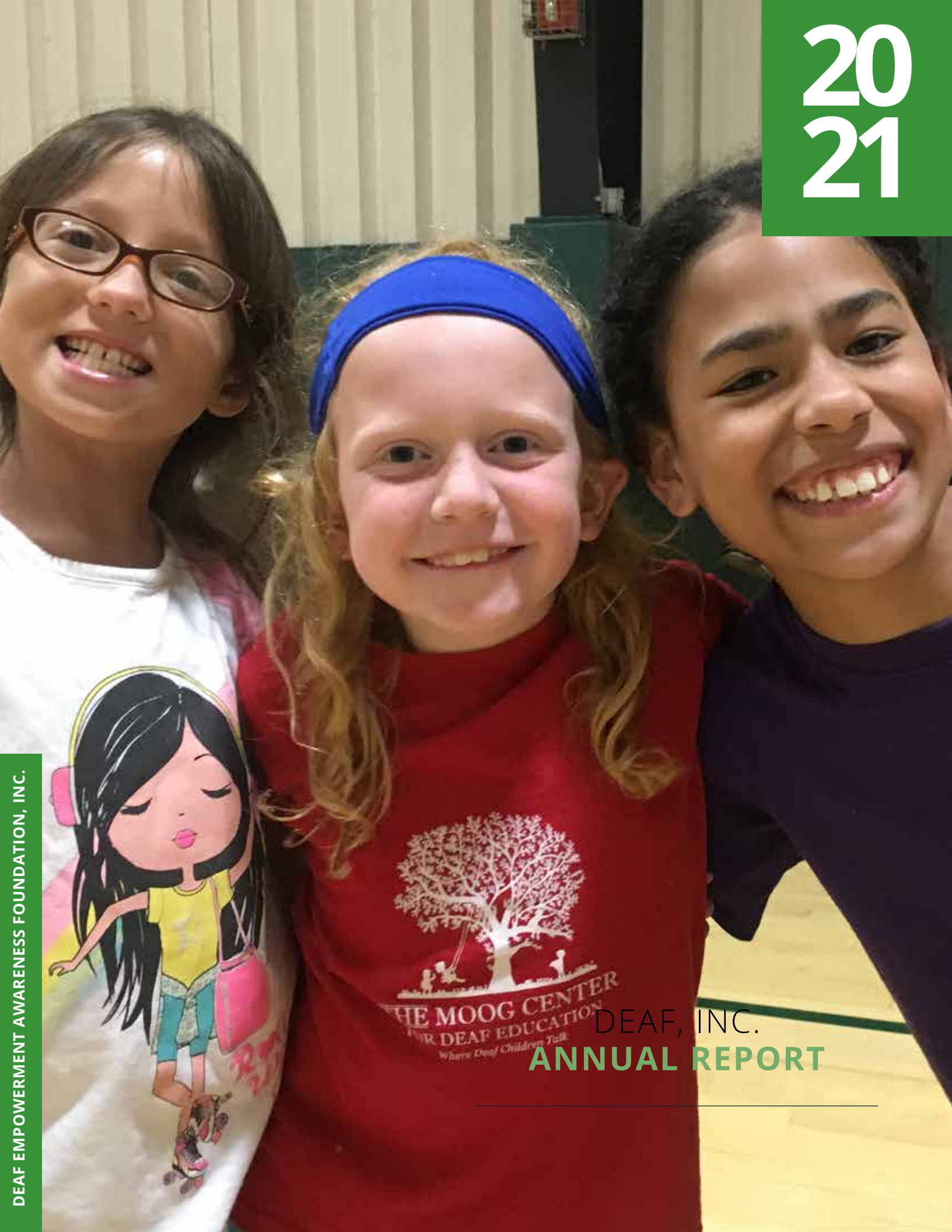


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DEAF EMPOWERMENT AWARENESS FOUNDATION, INC.



DEAF, INC.  
**ANNUAL REPORT**





*Photo Left  
A youth receives her gifts from a signing Santa and Ms. Claus at the Breakfast with Signing Santa event.*

## DEAF, INC.

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



*"The choices we make today create the future that we are dreaming of" – Anonymous*

The above quote perfectly represents the exciting changes that have occurred within DEAF, Inc. These changes will allow stability in the present, while creating a better future for all.

Hello! I am the newly elected President of DEAF, Inc.'s Board of Directors. I have been privileged, over the years, to observe DEAF, Inc.'s heart - the Staff, Executive Directors, and the Board of Directors. What I have observed from all facets of the organization is a commitment to its mission and vision. Their heart is the driving force of their activities and goals.

I want to take the time to thank the past and present Board of Directors for their support and service. Their choices and vision created the DEAF, Inc. we know and love today. It lays the framework which allows me to continue leadership consistent with the organization's mission and vision.

The Staff of DEAF, Inc. is one of our most valuable resources. The pandemic brought light to how DEAF, Inc. could best support its staff during difficult times. The Board re-evaluated its purpose and position, and recognized the need to invest in our employees.

The Board of Directors approved and implemented a retirement savings plan. The Board also approved funds to upgrade technology and equipment, for professional development and to promote diversity and inclusion within the workplace - boosting team morale, employee growth, and retention. We are planting the seeds of growth to benefit our communities in the present and in the future.

As a long-time Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and the current Assistant Director for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind and Independent Living for the State of Missouri's Vocational Rehabilitation Services, I find programs like DEAF, Inc. are rare, and necessary to bridge the communication gap between persons with hearing loss and the communities in which they reside.

According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, hearing loss occurs in one out of five men and one out of eight women. Additionally, three of every three-thousand children in the United States are born with a detectable hearing loss. DEAF, Inc.'s Mission is accomplished through "meaningful unity of community outreach, training, education, advocacy, media, visual arts and interpreting." As part of their Mission, DEAF, Inc. is expanding their education outreach as well as their youth programming to address the challenges that youths face on a daily basis: isolation, lack of identity, and lack of connections. DEAF, Inc. is in the right place, at the right time to support persons with a wide range of hearing loss.

I thank you, the community, for your support and belief in DEAF, Inc.'s Mission and Vision. DEAF, Inc. is here because of you. We look forward to seeing all of you at any one of our events, especially the upcoming Fifteen Year Gala!

Best,

EMILY BORGEL  
Board President

*Photo bottom*  
In December, new Board members visited DEAF, Inc. for a tour and introductions.



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## DEAF, INC. AT A GLANCE

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Year 2021

### YEAR AT A GLANCE

Fundraising. Virtual Events. Volunteer Recruitment. Internal Communications. Community Engagement. These five challenges were brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and continued through 2021. With social distancing measures and mask mandates in effect, DEAF, Inc. was forced to re-evaluate the way we interact with staff, donors, volunteers, and the broader community.

Through most of 2021, our team continued to work from home and worked diligently to digitalize most of our program services and activities. DEAF, Inc. invested thousands of dollars into equipment to improve internal communication so that team members can keep up with regular discussions and engagement while working remotely. With social distancing and mask mandates limiting in-person fundraising, we shifted donations to virtual spaces such as participating in the annual St. Louis Community Foundation campaign as well as our Holiday campaign. We relied more on our social media, website, and eNews for donations and to connect with constituents. As community engagement is crucial for building strong relationships with community members and growing support for our cause, our team's resilience and innovation led to more creative ways to host events virtually and manage daily operations with the help of technology.

In 12 short months and with a highly passionate and energetic team of 12, we have risen above to overcome these challenges. We reignited and piloted new program activities, which we highlight later in this annual report. Education and Advocacy efforts emphasized communication access as we're all still learning how to adapt to communication with masks while making sure that COVID-related information released by the broader media is fully accessible to the deaf, hard of hearing and DeafBlind community. Our sign language interpreting department has been hard at work, delivering over 9,200 hours of interpreting services, in-person and remotely, with a fill rate of 96%. Our success in 2021 would have not been possible without the commitment and support of our amazing team, community members, donors and volunteers.

*Our partnership with St. Louis County Department of Public Health strengthened this bridge with the coordination of a Deaf Vaccination Day at the North County Health Center and all St. Louis County Health COVID-19 news briefings fully accessible with sign language interpreting services available at no cost to community members.*

*Photo Right Page  
DEAF, Inc. thanking ASL Interpreters  
for their hard work during a picnic at  
Creve Coeur Lake.*



## DEAF, INC. COMMUNITY PROGRAMS



**PINK WINGS OF HOPE**  
PWOH is a one-of-a-kind program established to provide cancer support through awareness, education, and guidance to cancer patients and survivors.



**ADVOCACY**  
Through self-advocacy and effective communication, we offer 1:1 support to empower clients and involved parties to turn obstacles into opportunities.



**ASL CLASSES**  
Community/Business ASL Classes are offered virtually or in person throughout the year. All skill level welcomed!



**YOUTH**  
We offer education, leadership, and advocacy services as well as inclusive and accessible events and activities to promote healthy development for youth.

### INTERPRETING SERVICES

DEAF, Inc.'s Interpreting Department works hard to stand out! We are able to offer round-the-clock services for anyone needing support 365 days a year. Customers can reach a live coordinator at any time, day or night, for whatever needs or questions they may have.

In addition to our constant availability, our scheduling platform, ūsked gives customers control over their own requests. Each customer receives a unique log-in, which allows them to create, view, or edit requests at any time – and more! Many customers especially love being able to cancel requests on their own, assuring them that the change is immediately reflected in our schedule.

Since the increase in demand for virtual services, our interpreters have become experienced in remote settings. If customers aren't sure how to optimize services through virtual platforms, our interpreting department and interpreters can help make suggestions for the best outcome for all. We pride ourselves not only on our ability to accommodate needs, but our sense of urgency and attention to detail with each and every request.

*Photos left page. From left to right, top to bottom:*

*Showcasing a purse prize awarded to a winner during our annual Designer Bag Bingo fundraiser.*

*During the Tower Grove Pride Festival, woman showed interest in our ASL Classes.*

*Staff talks about leadership with a deaf teen.*

*Santa and Mrs. Claus greet a deaf child during Breakfast with Signing Santa Drive-thru event.*

*Photo top right*

*DEAF, Inc. & John C. Murphy Health Center partner to host vaccination event with ASL Interpreters available.*

*Photo bottom right*

*Hosted an "appreciation" picnic for ASL Interpreters at Creve Cover Lake.*



## OUR TEAM

**SARAH PRECHTEL**  
*Executive Director*

Sarah Prechtel is in her third year as DEAF, Inc.'s Executive Director. She embodies our passion for improving the lives of Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind individuals, specifically in the areas of accessibility and mental health. As COVID-19 restrictions relax, she looks forward to getting out of the office again to personally interact with the community we serve.



## DEDICATED STAFF

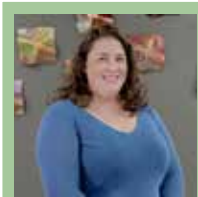
*Staff listed by years of service*



Tony Nitko  
Marketing Director  
12 Years



Devon Whitmore  
Community Advocate  
9 Years



Katie Roberts  
Staff Interpreter  
6 Years



Leslie Brown  
Interpreter Coordinator  
6 Years



Michele Steele  
Finance Director  
5 Years



Guinevere McCausland  
Interpreting Manager  
2 Years



Hope Shrake  
Media Specialist  
2 Years



Shannon Rapp  
Interpreter Coordinator  
1 Year



Jennifer Helton  
Interpreter Coordinator  
1 Year



De Linda Brite  
Community Programs  
<1 Year



Rachel Ebner  
Community Support  
<1 Year

*Members listed by length of term(s) served*

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Eric Driskill  
Treasurer



Sheryl Kalman



Sarah Meiers



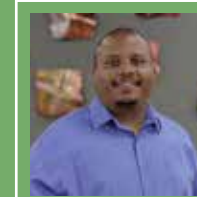
William Sheldon



Emily Borgel  
President



Ante Čolić



Forrest Booth Jr.  
Vice President



David Wasserman  
Secretary



### INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS

#### *Interpreters & Instructors*

Our roster of independent contractors, including sign language interpreters and ASL Instructors, is now 75+ strong. It is because of our amazing contractors that our customers and Deaf consumers can feel confident in the highest quality of services in all settings: legal, medical, business corporate, educational, vocational, conferences, mental health, social events, etc.



### VOLUNTEERS

#### *Community Members, Parents & Students*

The heart and soul of our organization is our volunteering community, including but not limited to DEAF, Inc. friends/ supporters, parents of deaf youth, and interpreter training program students. Our volunteers graciously invest their time and resources to support our mission, and lend their expertise to the board of directors, from fundraising campaigns and special events, and to work in direct customer service roles.



### PARTNERS

#### *Corporations and Non-Profits*

No one is an island. 'The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.' Partnership and collaboration go a long way in creating a strong and better community. It can provide stability and more. We are so grateful for the support of our corporate and non-profit partners, who share and support our vision to break barriers to communication access and are committed to helping others.

*We are an equal employment opportunity employer. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability or any other status which may be protected by Federal, State or local law.*



Photo top left - Photo top Right

The process of renovating our parking lot during Summer 2021. New lot gives an improved look and walking safety, and now has two designated accessible parking spaces.

## ORGANIZATION STRATEGY

*Planning for the Future*

*All companies hit bumps along the road to growth. They usually have less to do with external factors like the industry and marketplace and much more to do with the natural way organizations evolve. DEAF, Inc. is no exception to this. The organization has maintained steady and respectable financial health and strong program activities over the years, however fell stagnant in the areas of organizational visibility, diversified public support, and community engagement in recent years. Year 2020 was the year of recalibration in which the Leadership and Executive team re-evaluated business processes, identified and defined areas of improvements and updated our Strategic Plan for years 2021-2024.*

The areas of focus this year are continuing to improve and strengthen DEAF, Inc.'s infrastructure, which includes continuously reviewing organizational structure to ensure operational effectiveness; supporting our employees' growth through training so they can better serve the community; and building diversity and inclusion in the workplace and within all program services and activities.

In addition to building public support through donation and grant funding, we are expanding to add revenue-generating advocacy services to help diversify DEAF, Inc.'s funding. Our ASL Program will begin offering customized ASL Classes, Communication Access and Sensitivity Trainings to businesses and First Responders. Our education outreach for support groups like Pink Wings of Hope will reach further out to serve not only St. Louis but other cities and states. The core of our mission is awareness and empowerment. Our work remains true in this area as we continue

to provide advocacy and empowerment workshops at no cost to the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind community throughout the year.

We take great pride in our ability to deliver top-notch quality sign language interpreting and customer service. In order to continue to provide high quality services, we must invest in training and mentorship opportunities for all staff and independent contract interpreters, and education for our customers.

Our strategic plan is important to us because it not only provides a sense of direction, outlines measurable goals, course corrects when need be, but it also brings our team together and motivates them to work in tandem. Most importantly, it will enrich our community for a better tomorrow.

DEAF EMPOWERMENT AWARENESS FOUNDATION, INC.

## MISSION & VISION

### MISSION

The mission of Deaf Empowerment Awareness Foundation, Inc. is to Empower, raise Awareness, and bridge a sustainable Foundation of communication and equal access for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, and the Hearing communities.

### VISION

The organization's primary vision is to provide services for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, and Hearing individuals, and the community as a whole to ensure effective communication and cultural awareness. This purpose is accomplished through a meaningful unity of community outreach, training, education, advocacy, media, visual arts, and interpreting. The vision reflects a strong sense of community where the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind and Hearing communities are empowered and aware of the importance of equal access to all.

### OF, BY, FOR AND WITH THE DEAF

DEAF, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization founded by deaf individuals. DEAF, Inc. provides high-quality interpreting services at low cost in an effort to bridge the communication gap between the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind and Hearing society. Any net income generated from our services is reinvested into programs promoting awareness of issues related to Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind communities.

*Photo top*  
Community Advocate trains Rock Community Fire Department.



### DEAF, INC. STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

DEAF, Inc. is committed to and accountable for advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in all of its forms. Our vision and mission reflect our fundamental belief that all people belong and deserve equity and inclusivity. Our strength comes from our diversity, and we celebrate the visible and invisible qualities that make each person unique, including race, gender, age, sexuality, ability, religion, national origin, gender identity, and other identities. We commit to aligning our culture, business practices and services we provide to be a beacon of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging for all people.

*Photo bottom*

*Summer Sign Day Camp participants are being silly during their break.*



*Photo bottom*  
During our Breakfast with Signing Santa event, volunteers worked together to safely provide breakfast for our deaf families.





## WITH GRATITUDE

### Corporations & Foundation(\$10,000+)

Anonymous  
Nitko-Seaman-Huynh Foundation  
The Winnefred Lesindrini Trust

### Corporations & Foundation(\$5,000+)

Jefferson Foundation  
Mid-America Arts Alliance  
Missouri Arts Council  
St. Louis Community Foundation

### Corporations (\$1000+)

Missouri Commission for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind RIT/NTID  
Pujols Family Foundation  
Sorenson

### Corporations (\$500+)

Communication Service for the Deaf, Inc.  
Fenton Family Dentistry  
Relay Missouri  
The UPS Store #0558

### Corporations (\$499 and under)

Amazon Smile  
American OnLine Giving Foundation, Inc.  
Bright Funds Chipotle  
Convo  
Costco UW Campaign  
Freddy's Creve Coeur, LLC  
The Garden Kingdom  
GSLAD  
Give Lively Foundation Inc.  
Network for Good  
PayPal Giving Fund  
St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
UK Online Giving Foundation  
Watlow Electric Manufacturing Company

### Individuals (\$1000+)

Anonymous  
Ante & Maria Colic  
Debbie Crowell  
Linda & Foster Friess

### Individuals (\$500+)

Anonymous  
Dr. Gerald Buckley

### Individuals (\$100 - \$499)

Anonymous  
Mitchell Berger  
Jennifer Bevell  
David Binning  
Tim Brandau  
Denis Brady  
De Linda Brite  
Scott Campbell  
Samuel Culbertson  
Tara Davison  
Nader Dissi  
Eric Driskill  
Susan Eshbaugh  
Stephen Foster  
Loretta Freeman  
Mark Gersten  
Kathie & Gene Hanneke  
Clayton Johnson  
Paul Kaufman  
Joseph Kramlinger  
Brodie Meister  
Catherine Nagle  
Taleen Nazarian  
Anthony Nitko Jr.  
Anthony & Veronica Nitko Sr.  
John Prechtel  
Kayla Raquel  
Jeff Reburn  
Jerome Rufkahr  
Mike Ruprecht  
Kathleen Ryan  
DiAnn Sances  
William B. Sheldon  
William Symons  
Virginia Tanakatsubo  
Andy Tao  
Colby Tecklin  
Lesta Watson

### Individuals (Under \$100)

Anonymous  
Mackenzie Britton  
Debra Alexander  
Amy J. Anderson  
Anthony Andino  
Brevlyn Bates-Whetstone  
Kathi Beckmann  
Billy Beyer  
Denise Jacquin Bishop  
Sandrita Boo  
Mary Alice Boyaris  
Edward Boyer  
Mike Brabo  
Killeen Bridget  
Mary Brown  
Alison Burnett Stevens  
Debbie Burton Scarpace  
Alasdair Cairns  
Patricia Campbell-Kockanek  
John Cherry  
Lori Childers Marks  
Stephanie Clemens  
Natalie Como  
Janice Conrad  
Chris Cook Phelps  
George Corkran  
Letitia Cornelius  
Kait Cramer  
Susan Cronk  
Jonty de la Hunt  
Robert J. Delfino  
Desiree Desalle-Baron  
Steven DeShetler  
Tony Donatello  
Nicole Douet  
Ryan Douglas Parr  
Dawn Drester Inman  
Sandra & Dionne Drisdorn-Dawson  
Mitchell Douglas Duncan  
CJ DuRage  
Dave A. Eaker  
Rachel Ebner  
Carol Ellison  
Doc Evel

Julie Foulks  
Elizabeth A. Gaines  
Kathleen Gallagher Fay  
Margie Gallant Rozelle  
Ashley Gann  
Stacy Gann  
Mark Gersten  
Eric Gjerdingen  
Wanda Gonzalez  
Christy Gookin  
Russell Gookin  
Dorothy Gould  
Shirley Gulden  
Brandon Hallas  
Susan Halley  
Cynthia Harkness  
Emily Harnacker Nienaber  
Robert Hatterick  
Paul Heidbrier  
Marynell Hendricks  
Melinda Henry  
Autumn Heppler Lenzner  
Linda Hicks  
Christy Higham  
Leslie Hill Lee  
Brian Hoskinds  
John Hsu  
Jennifer J. Hudgens  
Pati Hudson Brewer  
Jordan Irby  
Phil Jacob  
Richard Jeffrey  
Robert Jeffrey  
Fay Jenkins  
Charlene Johnson Brown  
James JJ Jones  
Jaykayla Jones  
Susan Jones  
Margaret Jordan  
Kenyln Kamario Ellis  
Thomas Michael Kennedy  
Letha Kivinen  
Daniel Knights  
Michael Koopongsakorn

Olivia Kriss Tsosie  
Terri Lee  
Suzanne Lemanski Babich  
Tony Lisauckis  
Robert Lograsso  
Dianne Loves-Dogs  
Janice Lozano Conrad  
Carissa Lucas  
Taylor Marie  
Kristen Marti  
Carlisle Mason  
Aldalee McAlmond  
Guinevere McCausland  
Joan Mestres  
Holly V. Metcalf  
Milan Milans  
Suzanne Milford  
William Moran  
Tia Jenice Morris  
Lorna Mouton Riff  
Patricia Muckey Rioux  
Mary Kay Mueller North  
Lynn Muscente  
Catherine Nagle  
Anuki Nakhab  
Taleen Nazarian  
Frederick Nelson  
Stephanie Nichole  
Blake Nitko  
Marya Nitko  
Meghan Nitko Sperduti  
Betty O'Keefe  
Dorothy-Anne O'Keefe  
Robert Officer  
Barb Parker  
Shawn Marie Parker  
Suzi Patterson  
Carlos R. Penilla  
Sunshine Ponder Cowan  
Sarah Prechtel  
Jeff Reburn  
Rachel Priscu  
Megan Nicole Pyper  
Miles Quammen  
Diane Ramsey

Jimmy Rapp  
Meghan E. Rapp  
Monica Rapp  
Shannon Rapp  
Sally Rapp  
Tom Rapp  
Patti Reid  
David Ritchey  
Abby Rodriguez  
Ruben Rodriguez  
Ramell Malik Rolon  
Margie Scheel  
Sharon Miller Schlicker Collins  
Richard Schoeffler  
Amie Shepler  
Karen Shrake  
Michele Steele  
Connie Streck-White  
Sonjoria Sydnor  
Jerymiha Joshua Sylvr  
Kevin Symons  
Mary Kay Talley  
Tracy Tao  
Tad Taylor  
Colby Tecklin  
Matt Tracy  
Lisa Trout Tabita  
Rhonda Tullis  
Dena Villemaire  
Carla Denise Virtue  
Ronald Walker  
Rhiannon Wallstedt Woo  
Grace Wayant  
Jennifer Weiser  
Sharon Whitmore  
Kim Williamson  
Priscilla Wilson  
Victoria Wilson  
Bryce Winders  
Wanda Wisher Woody  
Andrew & Kim Wylie  
Marcia Yager

## OUR PARTNERS

- Contemporary Arts Museum - STL
- Central Institute for the Deaf
- Chick-fil-A Kirkwood
- Chipotle - Kirkwood
- Deaf Interlink
- DeafLEAD
- Explore St. Louis
- Freddy's Steakhburgers
- The Garden Kingdom
- Gateway Arch Park Foundation
- Hearing Loss Association of America - STL Chapter
- Helen Keller National Center - National Community of Practice
- Kaldi's Coffee - Kirkwood
- Great Rivers Greenway
- Greater St. Louis Association of the Deaf
- The Magic House
- Mid-America Arts Alliance
- Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum
- Missouri Arts Council
- Missouri Assistive Technology
- Missouri Association of the Deaf
- Missouri Botanical Garden
- Missouri Commission for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind
- Missouri Historical Society
- National Association of the Deaf
- National Institution on Disability - Financial Literacy Task Force
- Nonprofit Marketers Network - STL
- Paraquad/Deaf Way
- Pujols Family Foundation
- RelayMO
- Rochester Institute of Technology/National Technical Institute for the Deaf
- St. Louis Aquarium
- St. Louis Cardinals
- St. Louis Community Foundation
- St. Louis Community College - Florissant Valley
- St. Louis County Peer Advisory Committee
- Saint Louis Regional Health Commission
- Signing Edge
- Sorenson
- Southwestern Illinois College Advisory Board
- Starkloff Disability Institute

## BRINGING AWARENESS THROUGH ART

*Deaf Visual Arts Festival*

DEAF, Inc. is constantly pursuing opportunities to bring awareness about relevant issues as it relates to deafness and its cultural diversity to broader audiences. One of most effective ways to do this is through art.

This year, we hosted our first Youth Arts Program and our 5th annual Deaf Visual Arts Festival. This was the most comprehensive art program we have ever held, which was very exciting for us!

The Youth Arts Program was inspired by an opportunity afforded to us through a grant and the desire to offer an arts program for the youth. Storytime encourages language and pre-reading skill development that help your child grow into a successful reader. Many library branches offer regular story times; however, they are not accessible to children with hearing loss. To address this gap, DEAF, Inc. developed a series of five (5) ASL translated videos of children's books. Each book portrayed characters that identify as a person with hearing loss or represent Deaf Culture. This not only addressed accessibility, but also provided a safe space for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind children to feel empowered and develop a better understanding of or to embrace their uniqueness. To promote deaf cultural education and awareness, videos have been posted on YouTube and can be accessed by the broader community. In addition to this fun activity, we welcomed back deaf artist, Jon Savage, to teach young children the essentials of filmmaking while creating a fun and supportive environment to bring a story to life with moving images.

September is Missouri's official Deaf Awareness Month. What better way to recognize and celebrate deaf culture than to host our 5th annual Deaf Visual Arts Festival online! A website was dedicated to the event - we provided a space for 30 deaf artists to display their artwork and a link to their online store. We hosted two (2) panel discussions, two (2) museum tours with a deaf docent (or tour guide), and three (3) education workshops which focused on art inspired by various groups within the Deaf community. And, back by popular demand, our third annual 1904 Deaf Film Festival featured 25 outstanding Deaf-inspired films. New this year was the Filmmaker's Lounge Chat, which gave the participants an opportunity to chat with our filmmakers. All-in-all, over 30,000 individuals visited or participated in DEAF, Inc.'s art program this year!

This event would not be possible without the generous support from our grant funders, corporate sponsors, local museums, artists, volunteers, and our media department.



**The number of responses this year alone has validated the need for unique programs such as DVAF. With confidence, artwork and films presented increased our (mainstream) audience's awareness and understanding of the Deaf experience. I believe that this experience will enrich relationships and further expand career opportunities for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind artists.**

**Tony Nitko**  
Marketing Director

*Photo left page*  
During a meet & greet, DEAF, Inc. staff introduced themselves to new Board Members.

*Photo top page*  
Jennifer Tandoc, a returning artist, won an award for Best of Show during the 2021 Festival.

## INVESTING IN OUR DEAF, HARD OF HEARING AND DEAFBLIND

*Youth Program Overview*

DEAF, Inc.'s Youth and Family program focuses on creating a healthy and safe community environment where youth, teens and families are valued and encouraged to reach their full potential.

The future is in the hands of our youth. We must equip them with skills, resilience, and self-confidence to lead us into a more equitable and economically successful future. The youth who do not have advantages and are behind the eight ball for various reasons need help to achieve their potential.

Our program promotes the healthy development of children and young people with hearing loss transitioning to adulthood through education, leadership, and advocacy as well as accessible and inclusive events and activities. To support our program growth needs, we expanded the Community Department to add a Community Support Specialist (CSS). This opened doors and allowed DEAF, Inc. to further our outreach locally, regionally, and nationally.

The year started off slowly with very few activities as we were all still navigating through the pandemic and working remotely, but as soon as things began looking up, we took advantage of opportunities to re-open our doors and welcome back the youth we missed having at DEAF, Inc.

Deaf Teen Club, which provides a safe place for teens ages 13-19 to meet to socialize with other teens like them, reconvened in-person in September. Each month they schedule fun activities such as game nights, ice skating, a visit from a Deaf college representative, volunteering at a Trunk-or-Treat event, and more. While they're having fun, they are also building leadership skills. With the support and guidance from our Community Support Specialist and a volunteer club advisor, four teens learned about governing a board, officer roles and responsibilities, and courageously took on a role within the Deaf Teen Club Board. Our goal is for teens to learn the necessary tools to build their confidence, which will give them the ability to be a leader in their community, at their job, and within themselves.

Our Community Support Specialist, Rachel Ebner, truly came a full circle. Rachel, who is also deaf and a former member of Deaf Teen Club shares, "as a former member of DTC, I learned to expand my comfort zone... to build my social and leadership skills which have helped get me to where I am today. In my current role at DEAF, Inc., I have confidence in my ability to empower, instill and support our teens today."

We were determined to continue our most popular annual event, Breakfast with Signing Santa, for the 6th running year. However, with a twist – a drive-thru. Our drive-thru cashed in on its holiday celebrations with a signing Santa and his

*Continue to page 22*



*Tribute picture of Linda Wiggham, a Summer Sign Camp volunteer and a long-time Deaf Youth Camp director in Missouri.*

“

**The support and guidance I received throughout my childhood helped shape who I am and get me to where I am today. Our Youth & Family program is all about giving our youth the same opportunities I was very fortunate to have, and simply just opening doors and being available for support.**

**Sarah Prechtel  
Executive Director**

“

**We are humbled and driven by the opportunity to provide the highest level of support for individuals with varying degree of hearing loss who are living with or impacted by cancer.**

**De Linda Brite  
Director of Community Programs**



*The Cocoon*

*Photo right page  
Digital Media specialist filming  
The Cocoon's host, Stephanie  
Wilcox, for Pink wings of Hope's  
vlog series third episode.*

## EXPANDING CANCER AWARENESS

*Pink Wings of Hope*

Pink Wings of Hope, a DEAF, Inc. Program, was founded in 2009 by four women with a mission to empower Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind individuals with cancer through education, advocacy, and support so that they are able to make well-informed decisions regarding their health and treatment options.

Pink Wings of Hope experienced a setback in 2019 -2020 with the loss of one of the four founders, Annette Nitko, who had a significant role in the program's success, and changes within the organization's leadership. Cancer does not impact only the person who has it, but it can impact others around this person, and that grief comes in all different shapes and forms. There is no set amount of time it takes to heal. Pink Wings of Hope is no exception to this. Concurrently, the pandemic happened.

Then, De Linda Brite and Rachel Ebner, our new Director of Community Programs and Community Support Specialist came along in 2021. With their leadership, passion, and energy, Pink Wings of Hope is bouncing back! Our focus has shifted back to cancer and survivorship awareness. Cancer awareness is the key to early detection and better health-seeking behavior. Cancer is quite common in developed countries, but awareness is yet poor among the general population – especially among individuals with hearing loss due lack of access to information. Poor awareness may lead to poor uptake of screening modalities and delay in diagnosis.

To bring and increase awareness about various cancers, Ping Wings of Hope developed 30 infographics, which all were released across all of our social media platforms monthly. Infographics included a brief description of the cancer as well as what signs and symptoms to look for, screening and treatment options, and how to reduce one's risk(s). The second project, which we're very excited about, is the development of an educational vlog series, The Cocoon. The Cocoon is delivered in sign language with captioning available to bring awareness to any topics related to cancer and survivorship. The host of the vlog is deaf and a cancer survivor, and a valued volunteer of the Pink Wings of Hope program. To date, the series has reached over 5400 individuals across the country. Our goal is to increase funding to further expand this project and increase collaboration with oncology healthcare professionals and support organizations. While we are experts in deafness and communication access, we must collaborate with medical and oncology professionals and support organizations for their expertise in cancer treatment.

The pandemic continues to halt in-person activities, but that did not stop us from pursuing virtual opportunities. In June 2021, Pink Wings of Hope hosted its second

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## INVESTING IN OUR DEAF, HARD OF HEARING AND DEAFBLIND

Continued from page 20

companions - Mrs. Claus and a live reindeer, and their elves, characters from Frozen, Star Wars, Toy Story, and Black Panther. The Bubble Bus van was a new this year and was a MAJOR hit with both adults and children. There's no greater feeling than seeing our children's faces light up!

In the spirit of trying something new and different to work around limitations due to COVID, our program hosted its first annual Trunk-or-Treat event at DEAF, Inc. A host of various local nonprofit organizations that support or serve the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind community came together to decorate their trunks and hand out candy. We also had a best decorated trunk and costume contests as well as a photobooth set up. Despite the rainy weather we had, it was a spook-tacular night!

Day camps help all youth feel like they belong, try new things, make new friends, and have the best summer ever. Due to COVID, we were unable to continue our camp tradition; however, we are better prepared and equipped to bring back this activity in 2022!

Our Youth and Family Program would not have achieved its goals this year without the support of our amazing group of volunteers, participants, and sponsors.

For new and interested teens, please contact our Community Support specialist at youth@deafinc.org.

## EXPANDING CANCER AWARENESS

Continued from page 21

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**"I'm thrilled to be able to take on the dreams of the founding members of Pink Wings of Hope and make this happen. This is long overdue!" says De Linda Brite, Director of Community Programs at DEAF, Inc. She adds, "Pink Wings of Hope plans to release 6 to 8 episodes per year."**

annual Virtual 5K Walk. Participation included over 35 participants from 10 different States. It was neat to see how many supporters we have outside of our home base (St. Louis), and how they came together to raise almost \$1200. Executive Director, Sarah Prechtel added, "While we all wished that we could be together, it was great to see people across our nation exercising and increasing awareness of a good cause."

To become a volunteer or to follow Pink Wings of Hope, please contact us at pwoh@deafinc.org.

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**2021 has truly been a challenging year, especially for teens. With many obstacles in the way - masks, virtual classes, restricted outings, sign language interpreter shortage, etc. - our teens demonstrated perseverance like no other! We're so proud of our teens and are happy we could provide one constant in their life.**

**Rachel Ebner  
Community Support Specialist**



*Photo left top  
Deaf Teen Club members gathered at the ice rink to celebrate their reunion in person again.*



*Photo left bottom  
Pink Wings of Hope hosted a virtual 5K walk/run/bike. Melissa Yingst participated in a promotional video.*

## EXPANDING OUR HORIZONS

Education

**Education provides stability in life, and it's something that no one can ever take away from you**

One of the reasons we value education at DEAF, Inc. is because it provides direction. Education gives us a roadmap for how to approach life and enables us to make plans to improve our lifestyle. Without education, people cannot progress in society or make changes to their lifestyle. For example, someone who is more informed can plan out their future by understanding their strengths and weaknesses; they may notice a build in their confidence, which increases one's chances for opportunities.

Throughout the year, DEAF, Inc. offers a variety of classes, activities, and events that promote awareness and education about hearing loss, deaf culture and the importance of communication access and what that may look like. In this report, we highlight a few areas we believe have had a profound impact on the community we serve, directly or indirectly.

In early 2021, we invited Christopher Johnson, who is now the President of the District of Columbia Black Deaf Advocates, to moderate a panel discussion, *The Importance of Valuing Our African American/Black Interpreters*. This panel discussed disparities that exist in the practice and education of African American/Black Interpreters and the impact this has had on their professional experience working in the field as well as the impact this may have had on African American/Black Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind individuals receiving sign language interpreting service.

It goes without saying that ASL interpreters play a significant role in our Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind community overcoming communication barriers. In recent years, and especially through the pandemic, DEAF, Inc. recognized a significant gap in opportunities for interpreter growth and CEU credits to maintain their skill competency and their annual licensure requirements. For the second summer, we provided a series of virtual interpreting workshops so the interpreters could maintain their livelihood and continue to provide communication access for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind community.

Through Jefferson Foundation, DEAF, Inc. was able to host a series of Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind sensitivity trainings to Jefferson County staff members. Just like with anyone in the community at-large, there's a general fear of interacting with civil servants or showing up in court for fear of misunderstanding. If a person is deaf, that fear is also intensified. This training aims to build greater understanding and preparedness to put each other at ease.

Rock Community Fire Protection District had DEAF, inc. come out and give a training program designed for first responders, with a focus on firefighters. The class had expressed how knowledgeable and professional DEAF, Inc. was from beginning to end. The class covered how first responders can communicate with individuals who

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**This class was phenomenal, and our firefighters and staff learned a great deal of information to better prepare us for dealing with the deaf community. Devon presented statistics on the number of deaf people who live in our community, state and nationwide. We learned how to communicate with the deaf community using very simple hand signs and gestures that could help in life threatening events such as medical incidents to rescuing people from a fire or other hazardous type situations.**

**Kevin Grimshaw  
Deputy Chief Medical Officer  
Rock Community Fire Protection District**



*Photo right page  
Webster Groves Fire Department participated in our annual Breakfast with Signing Santa. They even learned a few signs while having fun!*

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## BREAKING BARRIERS THROUGH COMMUNICATION ACCESS

*Communication Access Program Overview*

DEAF, Inc. was founded in 2008 by deaf individuals with a mission to address and break communication barriers for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind in the St. Louis.

Breaking barriers is at the core of what we do at DEAF, Inc, and how we accomplish this mission may look different each year. The pandemic slowed us down, but it pushed us to re-evaluate our strategies and think outside of the box. The pandemic, strangely, has been a blessing in disguise in this sense.

With mask mandates in place, many individuals with hearing loss found themselves more isolated and relying heavily on assistive technology, telecommunication supports, and sign language interpreting services more than ever. We saw a drastic increase in communication access outreach – a direct support service we offer to individuals that are facing barriers such as a doctor's office not providing an interpreter for a medical appointment or an employer not understanding why an employee may need an interpreter for a 15-minute follow up meeting. Of the 279 individuals we served, the majority were successfully provided with education and or information and resource referrals.

DEAF, Inc. continues as a demonstration site for the Missouri Assistive Technology Telecommunications Access Program (MO-TAP). MO-TAP provides equipment and accessories at no cost (free) to qualified Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind individuals that may have challenges with using the phone or accessing Internet-based telecommunications because of a hearing loss.

With strong partnership in place already, DEAF, Inc., Mercy Hospital, SSM Health, University of Missouri – St. Louis Nursing, Paraquad, and the Department of Public Health worked together to host special designated vaccination events where ASL interpreters were readily available at no cost to the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind community.

In early 2021, following the success of a push back on a House Bill that would have had a negative, profound impact on the interpreting profession and the community at large, DEAF, Inc. piloted a new service, Legislative Communication Support. This service is available to individuals that want to write a letter to their local and state representatives but need support translating their native language, American Sign Language, to English. This service increases accessibility to government entities, allowing the public to have a voice in what is important to them. Speaking of public accessibility, our VISDIO (visual video) service, continues to grow – particularly among area art and history museums such as the Missouri History Museum and the Mildred Kemper Art Museum to name a couple.

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*Photo right top*  
DEAF, Inc. interpreter interpreting at a Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind Vaccination Day event.



*Please scan with your mobile phone to see some samples of Visdio projects.*

## BREAKING BARRIERS THROUGH COMMUNICATION ACCESS

*Continued from page 24*

If you have yet to take a moment, now is the time to extend your appreciation to sign language interpreters. Interpreters have proven to be a lifeline for the deaf community at a time when face masks are obstacles in daily communication and access to reliable information. Many put their lives at risk being in the front line along with nurses and doctors. We are very fortunate to have the amazing pool of sign language interpreters we have. Through the changes caused by the pandemic and an area interpreting shortage, their commitment and steadfast loyalty to DEAF, Inc. and our mission has not wavered. With their commitment and our fabulous team of schedulers, we exceeded our goals and expectations in 2021 with over 9514.5 hours of interpreting services (compared to 3,874.5 in 2020). We saw a 27% increase in requested services from the previous year, welcomed over 80 new customers and maintained an overall 96% successful fill rate for all customer interpreting requests. This simply validates the work we are doing is very important.

Communication access is a two-fold approach. We must educate not only the community on the importance of equal access to information, but also help foster the sign language interpreting profession to ensure that the appropriate resources are in place for the deaf person. We have been proud to collaborate as much as possible with area Interpreter Training Programs. Due to the pandemic, interpreting students are struggling to find opportunities to get their hands up or interact with deaf and/or hard of hearing communities at all. Whenever appropriate, DEAF, Inc. is eager to partner students with professional interpreters in real-world situations. Students are the future of the interpreting community, and we work hard to act as a resource, advocate, and support system for them, especially during these difficult times.

In summary, you can see that even during challenging times, DEAF, Inc. continued its core beliefs and fought to ensure accessibility for the deaf, hard of hearing and DeafBlind communities.

## EXPANDING OUR HORIZONS

*Continued from page 23*

are deaf, hard of hearing, and DeafBlind. The firefighters and the staff learned a great deal of information to better prepare them for dealing with the Deaf community.

During the pandemic, ASL Classes continued its growth. We were able to provide 25 classes to over 328 individuals through virtual means. Special thanks to our dedicated ASL instructors who faced the challenges of hosting classes virtually and, yet, obtained high remarks from the students afterwards.

Not only providing education to the community externally, DEAF, Inc. made a significant shift internally. It now encourages its staff to participate in at least 16 hours of staff development training or workshops, a minimum of which 2 hours must focus on diversity, equity and inclusion. Each staff can choose a topic that they feel would benefit themselves, especially at their specific job functions.



*Photo left top*  
Community Advocate reviews telecommunication options with a MO-TAP client.

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**Before I was so nervous about getting a vaccine shot. When I found out there would be an interpreter present, I felt so much better about getting the (COVID) vaccine shot.**

**LaShawn Morris, Deaf community member who attended one of the three designated vaccination events**

# FINANCIAL REPORT

*Stability During Uncertain Times*

## Statement of Activities

For the year ended December 31, 2021

### Public Support and Revenue

Contributions	\$626,443.00
Grants	\$167,650.00
Special events (net)	\$6,248.00
Program Service Fees and Misc. Revenue	\$733,270.00
Investment Income	\$596.00

**Total Support and Revenue \$1,534,207.00**

### Expenses

Program Services	\$1,064,488.00
Administration	\$191,487.00
Fundraising	\$19,918.00

**Total Expenses \$1,275,893.00**

**Change in Net Assets \$258,314.00**

**Net Assets, Beginning of the Year \$998,586.00**

**Net Assets, End of the Year \$1,256,900.00**

## Statement of Financial Position

For the year ended December 31, 2021

### Assets

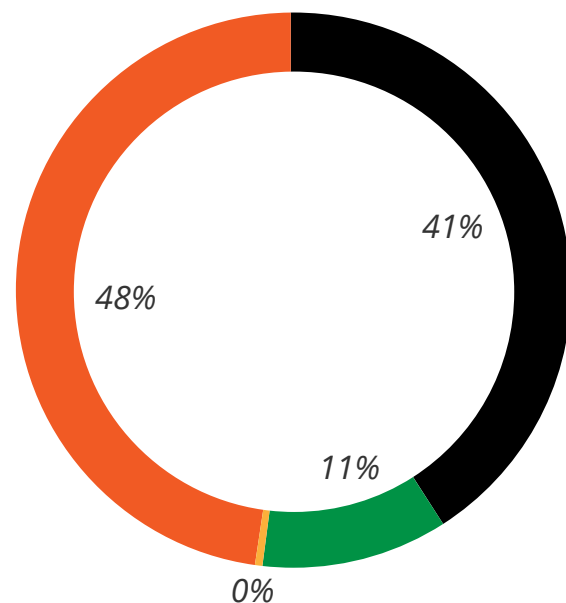
Current Assets	\$1,313,572.00
Property and Equipment, net	\$66,298.00
Artwork and Memorabilia	\$21,700.00
Organizational Costs, net	\$409.00

**Total Assets \$1,401,979.00**

### Liabilities and Net Assets

Current Liabilities	\$145,079.00
Unrestricted Net Assets	\$1,189,966.00
Temporarily Restricted	\$66,934.00

**Total Liabilities and Net Assets \$1,401,979.00**



## INCOME SOURCES

- Contributions
- Grants
- Special Events and Other
- Program Services



# 2021



### DEAF, INC.

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