



The Deaf Reader

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President's Message

Video/Translated by Dawn Watts

Click blue > [ASL President movie](#)

As we welcome the arrival of spring, I would like to highlight the growth of Ohio Deaf History Month. It is truly encouraging to witness this important celebration gaining momentum in our state. I encourage you to read the newsletter, which details various events taking place this month.

I want to bring to your attention that while April 1 to 30 is not yet officially recognized by the US Congress, Congresswoman Joyce Beatty, along with other sponsors, is advocating for H.Resolution "National Deaf History Month." I urge you to reach out to Congresswoman Joyce Beatty and your local District State Congress member to lend your support for this bill, which has been under consideration for about four years. It is important to express your support as she works towards updating the bill for 2025. For further details, please refer to the following link [insert link].

Additionally, during Legislative Day, there was concern regarding potential budget cuts to libraries. However, thanks to the voices of many Ohio residents who reached out with their support, our legislators received numerous letters and phone calls emphasizing the importance of libraries. As a result, they decided not to cut the funding and instead increased the budget for libraries.

Please take a moment to enjoy reading the newsletter. If you have any questions or need further clarification, feel free to reach out to me.

Warm regards,

Dawn K Watts

ODFL President

www.ocdclibrary.org



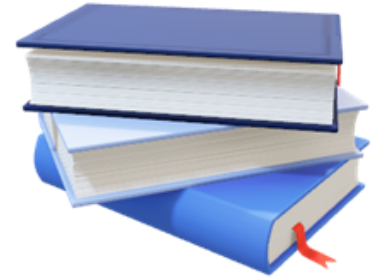
Library Funding Update

Written by: Nancy Levin

Tuesday, April 8th was Library Legislative Day.

We always encourage everyone to be respectful and share their personal stories about what the library means to them and how the library has impacted their lives. The goal right now is not to get into a battle on social media.

OLC has been consistent and honest from the beginning, utilizing facts and information from the Ohio Department of Taxation, the Office of Budget and Management, and the Legislative Service Commission. In addition, the spreadsheet for the new House distribution model came from the House Republican Caucus, not the Ohio Library Council. To be clear:



- Ohio's public libraries experienced a \$27 million loss in state funding in Calendar Year (CY) 2024 as compared to CY 2023. This resulted in libraries being funded at the same level they were 25 years ago in the year 2000.
- The House's version of the budget would reduce state funding for Ohio's public libraries by more than \$100 million over the biennium, as compared to the Governor's proposal.
- Ohio's public libraries have had a partnership with the state to deliver services at the local level for almost 100 years, and that funding is now at risk.
- The House's new distribution formula would cut funding to 93 public library systems in 39 counties on July 1.

Here is the exact language from the Legislative Service Commission (LSC) Comparison Document comparing the House version to the Governor's proposal:

- Replaces the Executive provision with one that repeals the Public Library Fund (PLF; Fund 7065) and its share of monthly GRF tax revenue.
- Establishes a new method of funding public libraries through a direct GRF appropriation.
- Replaces TAX with OBM as the administrator of the payments to counties for public library funding and replaces the current law distribution formula to counties with a distribution in proportion to each county's population.
- Transfers the cash balance of Fund 7065 to the GRF on July 1, 2025, and abolishes Fund 7065 after the transfer and repeal are complete.
- Fiscal effect of Executive Proposal: The Executive estimates additional transfers from the GRF to PLF of \$15 million in FY 2026 and \$16 million in FY 2027. Total appropriations are \$531,700,000 in FY 2026 and \$549,100,000 in FY 2027 in Fund 7065 ALI 110965, Public Library Fund.
- Fiscal effect of Proposal in House Finance: The bill appropriates \$485,000,000 in FY 2026 and \$495,000,000 to GRF ALI 042511, Public Library Funding.

The Ohio House of Representatives passed it! The next step is you need to call your Senator Finance Committee and your local Senator to support the Library. <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/>

5th Annual Deaf-Themed Art Contest

Written by: Margot Regis and Camilla Warren



Laurent Clerc's 4th great-grandson, Laurent Holt, presented in the Zoom meeting.

Sunday, March 9th at the Columbus Museum of Art

Ohio Deaf Friends of the Library, in partnership with Ohio Hands & Voices and Advocates for Kids, is delighted to share that 30 Deaf, hard-of-hearing, Deaf-Blind, and KODA artists throughout Ohio in grades K-12 participated in this year's art contest! We are so proud of the artists and the work they put into their creative, beautiful pieces of artwork. Great job to every artist!

The number of artists participating in this year's event doubled, partly due to marketing efforts by Ohio Hands & Voices, Advocates for Kids, Deaf Education Ohio, and Ohio Deaf and Blind Education Services. We greatly appreciated your enthusiasm for the event and your efforts to reach children and families across Ohio. Thank you!

About half of the artists submitted their artwork by email, while the remaining artists created their artwork at the event in the Columbus Museum of Art, where paper and art supplies were provided. First-place winners in each grade group were awarded \$50, second-place winners of each grade group \$25, and third-place winners of each grade group \$10. Thank you, Advocates for Kids, for your continued support and sponsorship of this event for the past three years.

In closing, we would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Lars Clerc for his wonderful Zoom presentation during the event, which highlighted Laurent Clerc and his historical impact on Deaf education. Finally, a special thank you to our contest judges, Christine Stepien, Margot Repas, and Carrie Davenport!

- 30 Artists ages 6 – 18 participated

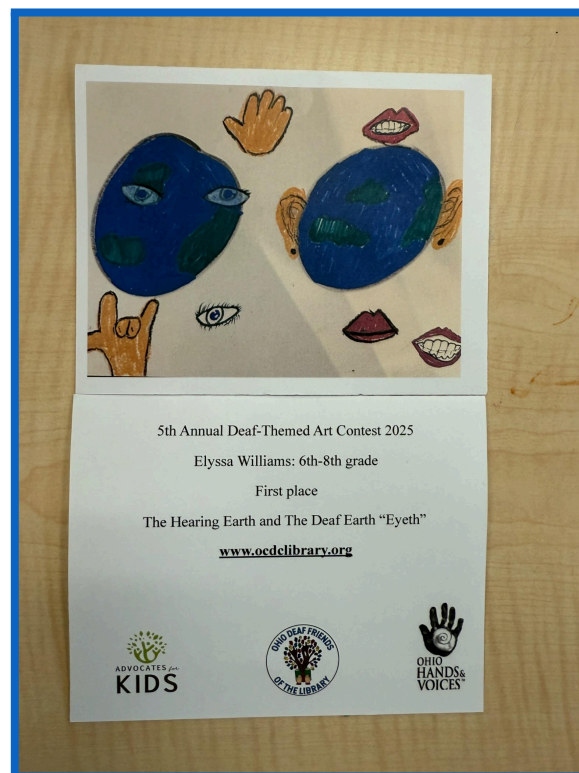
- o 13 Artists - Deaf
- o 12 Artists - Hard of Hearing
- o 1 Artist - Deaf-Blind
- o 4 Artists - KODA

- Artists' artwork came from these Ohio cities

Akron, Ashley, Avon Lake, Brunswick, Cincinnati, Columbus, Dayton, Defiance, Fremont, Hilliard, Huber Heights, Lancaster, Medway, Oak Hill, Powell, and Westerville.

- Winners per age group

- o K-2nd : 1st Ava Biggs, 2nd Indi Bostelman, 3rd Birdie Warren
- o 3rd – 5th: 1st Khloe Olipas, 2nd Mila Parsons, 3rd Gwenneth Kelly
- o 6th – 8th : 1st Elyssa Williams, 2nd Ani Vigilante-Sloan, 3rd Angela Pham
- o 9th – 12th 1st Teresa Warren, 2nd Toby Warren, 3rd Arrow Stanforth



Notes are now selling for \$12.00. Look up "Art Contest" in www.ocdclibrary.org.



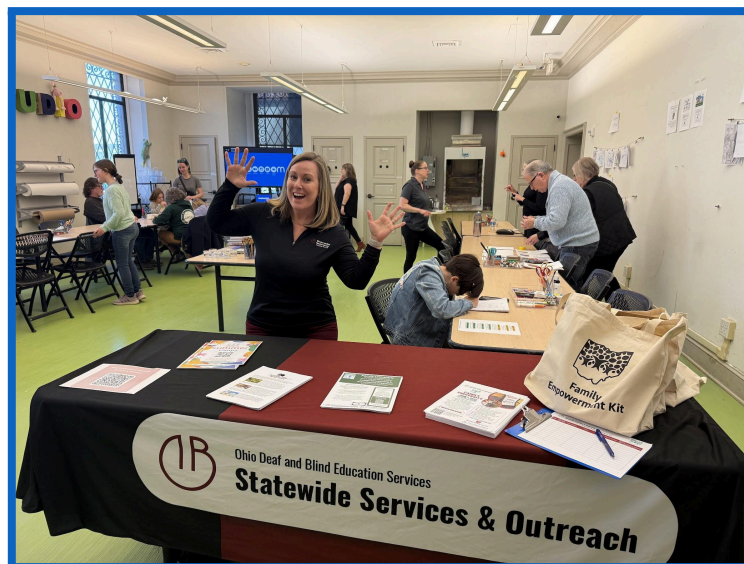
Front entrance of Museum Art room with ODFL Banner



Hard of Hearing girl drew a picture



Dawn Watts with a deaf boy from Akron, Ohio



Abby White, Ohio Deaf and Blind Education Services

Winner 1st place

K-2nd grade Ava Biggs



3rd-5th grade Khloe Olipas



6th-8th Elyssa Williams



2025 Ohio Deaf History Month Ohio Statehouse

You can visit the Ohio Statehouse on weekdays from Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and on weekends from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. until April 15, 2025.



Children's Book "I Deaf-initely Can" at Ohio School for the Deaf

Written by: Christine Stepien

On Thursday, March 20 at 10 am, Ohio Deaf Friends of the Library invited Deaf author Karlie Waldrip and her deaf dog to do an hour-long Zoom meeting with the deaf students at the Ohio School for the Deaf. Christine Stepien, ODFL Secretary, introduced herself to the large audience made up of K-12 OSD students by explaining what ODFL does. She introduced the stars, Deaf Author, Karlie Waldrip, and her Deaf dog, Rhett. The books are I Deaf-initely Can and We Deaf-initely Can. Karlie read to the eager audience the book about her deaf dog, Rhett, who was in a dog shelter and was adopted by her. Karlie held a Q & A session with the student audience and answered lots of questions that were posed to her. Thank you to OSD Librarian Nancy Boone, ODFL President Dawn Watts, and ODFL Treasurer Debbie Brown for their help in making this a wonderful event.



Scioto County Public Library

Pictures and Written by Christopher Cooley

The Scioto County Public Library and I worked hard to get the word out on social media that there was going to be an ASL Storytime led by myself, Chris Cooley, and my guide dog, Larkin. As you can see from the pictures, I dressed up for the occasion as a Leprechaun while Larkin was a rainbow. I couldn't have done it without the help of the ASL interpreter. The turnout was a big success as we had around 50 people overall. I had a total of 3 preschools and elementary schools come to the ASL Storytime. We were also joined by some elderly folks with Alzheimer's. After reading the book, I had a table set up with all different kinds of technologies and magnifiers where the children could get hands-on by touching and trying them on. I honored the library by giving them an ASL clock and painting it with Disability pride colors.



Coventry Village Public Library, Cleveland Heights

Written by: Liliana Pokorny

I conduct storytelling sessions at the public library in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, once a month. I have been doing this faithfully for nearly two years.

During my sessions, I first read the story aloud. Then, I close the book and retell the story from memory, focusing on its central themes. Afterward, I show the pictures from the book and engage the audience with questions. Sometimes, I use props to make the story more vivid. For example, when telling the story of *The Rainbow Fish*, I wore a sweater with glitter spots to represent the fish's beautiful scales. I acted out how the fish was initially selfish, then realized it had no friends, and finally transformed by sharing its scales with others, which made it feel better.

Every month, several people of all ages approach me, asking where they can learn sign language and how they can help. Sometimes, I offer to teach them in my free time. Currently, I am teaching a young deaf boy at his home weekly, along with his parents and siblings, who are all eager to learn ASL. It is very important to expose the community to the importance of learning ASL for everyone.

I have provided numerous titles. I will list them as best I can. I wish I had written them all down and kept them in my booklet; however, I did not think I would need them in the future.

The attendance varies, with an average of 15-20 people of all ages.

Here is the list of titles:

1. The Mother Goat and Her Seven Kids
2. Goldilocks and Three Bears
3. The Red Riding Hood
4. The Red Hen
5. Rainbow Fish
6. The Talking Eggs
7. The Ugly Duckling
8. The Three Little Pigs
9. The Three Billy Goats Gruff
10. The Giving Tree
11. Deaf History, Culture, and Language
12. Sylvester and The Magic Pebble
13. Strega Nonna
14. Something From Nothing

Napoleon Public Library



Dawn Watts and Amy Panning (Voice Interpreter)



Dawn Watts taught children how to finger spell A, B, C...



Dawn signed "Frog" to the children.

Columbus State Community College



Stephen Rute questioned Deaf CSCC Panelists about their deaf life

Stark College at Springfield, Ohio



About 3 years ago, Becky Center checked the Stark College Library for ASL books, and only two were there. Today, there are over 20 ASL/Deaf Culture/Deaf Bio Books.

Karl Public Library

Written by: Brad Race

On Saturday, April 5th, 2025, Ohio Deaf Friends of the Library (ODFL) hosted an ASL Storytime at the Karl Public Library in Columbus, Ohio. Ohio School for the Deaf Student Felicia Williams was our Deaf ASL Storyteller. She was joined by Karl Rd's Youth Services librarian, Hilary Tufo, Interpreter Christine Corner, and ODFL's Columbus Representative and book holder, Brad Race. Together, we collaborated on a wonderful ASL Storytime that had all those who attended enjoying themselves.

Hilary started the ASL Storytime with the introductory short and sweet "Hello Song." Once that was completed, Hilary led with another song called "Shake My Silly Sillies Out." Not only was this a fun song for the kids, but it was also a sight to see Interpreter Christine Corner twisting and turning as she interpreted the song.

When the songs ended, our Deaf Storyteller, Felicia Williams, magnificently signed our first book, *I DEAFINITELY Can*, to the children, parents, and other guests. She had everyone mesmerized with her signing. The book is based on a true story about a deaf dog in a dog shelter being adopted by the author, who is deaf herself. The story went on to explain their journey together.

After reading "*I DEAFINITELY Can*," Hilary led another song called "Jumping and Counting." Again, not only did the kids enjoy the music, but it was fun seeing Interpreter Christine Corner jump and count as she interpreted it.

Felicia Williams, our Deaf Storyteller, signed a second book, *Little Blue Truck's Springtime*. This book was about a Little blue truck's daily journey, passing by many animals on a beautiful springtime day. Again, Felicia captivated the audience with her highly animated signing.

Finally, we did an arts and crafts activity to conclude the ASL Storytime. The children colored an "I Love You" hand sign with a big heart above it. After coloring, one of the deaf children in attendance ran up and gave her copy to Asl Storyteller Felicia. This was her way of expressing what a great job Felicia did signing the books.

ODFL ASL Storyteller Chairperson

Written by Danny Lucero

On March 13th, 2025, the Storytelling Grant Committee held a productive Zoom meeting with the ODFL stakeholders. The committee presented significant progress in writing and gathering essential information to support the grant writers, ensuring all deadlines are met efficiently and accurately.

During the meeting, several key issues were addressed, including the potential inclusion of the Cleveland Heights Library in our grant writing efforts. This collaboration could provide valuable resources and support for our initiative.

Another important topic discussed was the need to find ways to compensate storytellers for their expertise and contributions, particularly for those sharing authentic stories in American Sign Language (ASL). This would help move beyond the traditional model of volunteers and encourage greater participation from skilled individuals, ensuring the storytelling project remains vibrant and diverse.

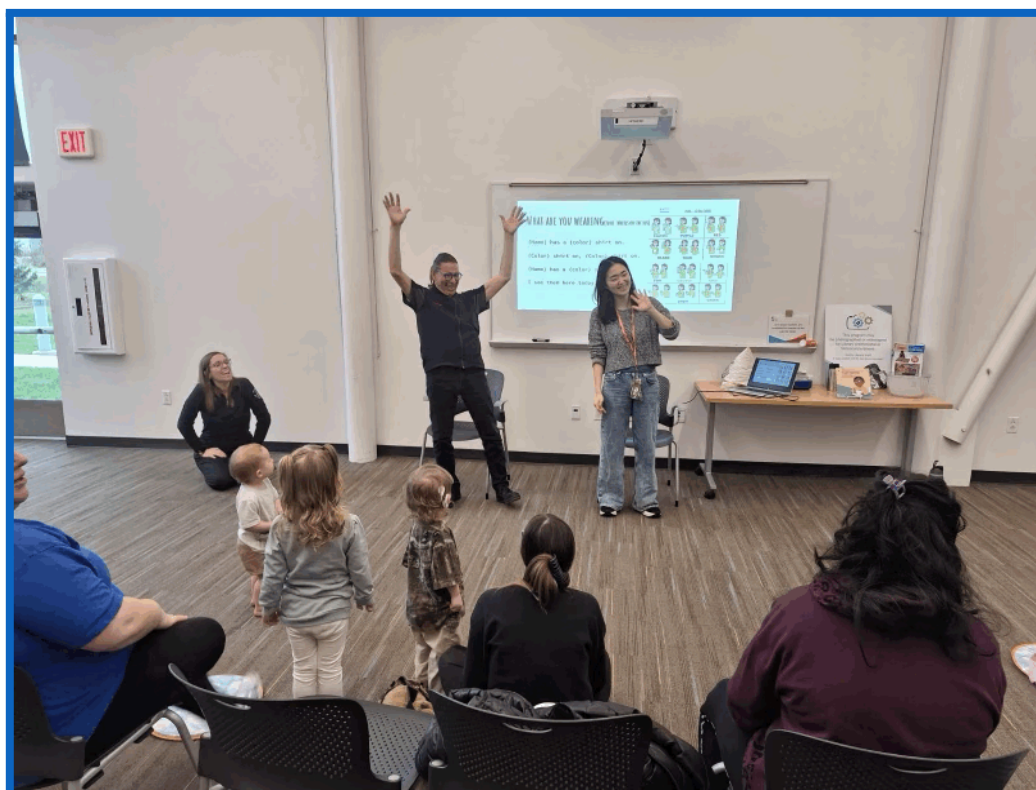
In a generous offer, Advoc4Kids has committed to covering the cost of a sign language interpreter for our meetings, including those dedicated to grant writing. This support will significantly enhance the inclusivity and efficiency of our discussions, allowing everyone to participate fully and ensuring our efforts are accessible to all.



Dayton Public Library



Danny Lucero signed ASL to the children.



DeafBlind People

The Ohio Association of the DeafBlind will host a Retreat Camp from Thursday, August 14th, to Sunday, August 17th. It will include a three nights stay at Heartland Retreat Conference Center in Marengo, Ohio, which is north of Delaware. To register click there:

<https://forms.gle/KQj6gnF349zDtSm27>



DeafBlind Culture Workshop Friday, May 2nd 2025, Strongsville, Ohio (click) for registration.

DeafBlind Culture Workshop Saturday, June 7nd, Cinn. Ohio (more information will be posted the Columbus Speech Center) <https://columbusspeech.org/deafblind-action/> (click)



On March 22, Donna Schultz, President of the Ohio Association of the DeafBlind took part in a social event and the members had an elections had an election of officers held at the Columbus Colony Housing I. DeafBlind people signed up for the HB 96 Amendment of the DeafBlind Fund for the Support Service Provider/Co-Navigator.

Ohio Support Service Provider and Co-Navigator for the DeafBlind people

Written by: Brad Race

On Wednesday, March 19th, 2025, several members of Ohio's Support Service Provider program for the Deaf Blind were invited to appear on VoiceCorps radio show hosted by Annette Lutz of the National Federation of Blind Ohio.

For those of you who may not know, VoiceCorps, based in Columbus, Ohio, has been serving Ohio's Blind/Visually Impaired community since 1975.

The radio panel members included Julia Felts, Program Director of Ohio's Support Service Provider program, Brad Race, Support Service Provider (SSP), and Lynn Jansen, Deaf Blind.

Julia Felts was instrumental in explaining the plight of the Deaf-Blind in Ohio. She explained that there are 80,000 plus Deaf-Blind individuals in the state of Ohio, an at-risk population that is vastly underserved and highly isolated. Furthermore, Julia shared the unfortunate news that State Funding for Ohio's SSP program will end on June 30th, 2025, with no additional funding.

Brad Race, a Support Service Provider, shared that he is a trained professional who provides environmental and visual information, mobility guidance, transportation, and communication support to the Deaf Blind. He further explained that without continued State funding, the Deaf Blind will no longer have access to SSPs to accomplish everyday tasks and activities that you and I take for granted.

Lastly, Lynn Jansen, a Deaf blind person, explained how the Support Service Provider program has been life-changing positively. She further shared how SSPs were a lifeline to the Deaf Blind and enabled them to feel independent and liberated. Lynn concluded by imploring all Ohio legislators not to leave the Deaf Blind isolated. She pleaded for them to support and continue funding for the Deaf Blind Support Service Provider program.



Ohio House Finance Committee HB 96



April 10, 2025

Front row: Eric Duffy, Brad Race

Second row: Ray, Jamae Miller, Ohio House Rep. Schutz, Jana Alo,
Julia Felts

Third row: Jason Judy, Brittanie Maddox, Hannah Helts

Last row: Dawn Watts and Scott Meri.

Testimonies: Ohio House of Representative Legislators

[How to sign up and support \(click\)](#)

Written by Jason Judy, Janae Miller, Jana Alo, and Brad Race

Jason Judy:

Hello, Honorable House of Representatives. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

My name is Jason Judy and I am DeafBlind from Akron. I am able to be here because my co-navigator drove me and helped me navigate through the statehouse.

I have Ushers Syndrome type 1, which means I was born deaf, but my vision declined around age 18.

There were many things I loved when I had vision – like watching Star Wars and playing sports.

Losing my vision rapidly was an uncharted territory for me and I couldn't find help, nor knew where to look for it.

There were so many barriers like accessing transportation and work. It hampered my ability to live independently and autonomously.

My hearing family tried to help, and God knew they desperately wanted to, but they had busy lives. For a few years, I had no support and little contact with the world outside my home.

I finally had help to look for services when my mother retired. But many of the organizations for the blind we went to didn't have funding for a sign language interpreter and didn't know of any resources.

One even admitted they were uncomfortable working with DeafBlind individuals like me.

Finally we found Cleveland Sight Center to provide braille lessons, but the wait was long and I was very lucky to have my mother be able to drive me each week.

You can't imagine how wonderful it felt to be able to take the braille lessons when I was going through a hard time. It gave me a new hope for a better life.

The Support Service Provider/Co-Navigator program fills this very needed gap of services for DeafBlind Ohioans.

While my experience felt unique, it is not. There are 84,797 Ohioans who have dual vision and hearing loss. The SSP program will spare them the years of isolation and frustration I went through. SSP services are essential and fill a huge gap in Ohio's resources. I urge you to support the DeafBlind amendment, line item GRF 415515.

Janae Miller:

Hello honorable members of the Ohio House of Representatives. My name is Janae Miller. I live in Columbus, Ohio. I am a person who is blind, and I wear a hearing aid in both ears. I am also a home owner. Having SSP services is vital to my life and independence.

It is important to me to navigate my life with independence and safety. My family and friends—everyone works during the day. In the evening, they have a life of their own to lead.

Having kids, grandkids, and husbands to tend to. The world cannot revolve around me. But, I still need groceries. I still need to schedule and go to doctor appointments during the day. My SSP takes that burden off my family and friends. My SSP allows me to accomplish all of those tasks independently.

Recently I spent 5 months living in a hotel due to a burst pipe in my home that caused substantial water damage.

My SSP Hanna, was very vital to me during that crisis. A lot of the work and communication required for home restoration and mitigation happened during the day when my family and friends were working. My SSP helped me check on the work that was being done. It was crucial to have a set of eyes that I could trust to describe the work being done. I wanted to make sure it was being done properly. She helped me get to doctor appointments, get groceries, get to the bank, and communicate with the insurance company.

I trust my SSP. She provides information and mobility guiding to help me to remain independent and accomplished and safe.

I respectfully request your support of the DeafBlind services amendment so that Ohio can continue providing this essential support to the community.

JANA ALO:

My name is Jana Alo. I am 20 years old, and I live in Blacklick, Ohio. I am deafblind and have been using SSP services for about a year now. SSPs assist with transportation, mobility, and communication, but they also improve our physical and mental health.

Before I had SSP services, I really struggled with my mental health. I struggled to connect with others, and I felt very alone. Without vision, I could not recognize faces of people. Without hearing, I could not recognize the voices of people. That has changed with my SSP, Hannah. She helps me recognize others and she helps me communicate with them. She goes with me to my support groups. She helps me practice walking in unfamiliar areas with my guide dog. She also helps me run errands like picking up my medicine from the pharmacy, buying groceries, and depositing checks at the bank. My SSP helps get out in the world, both to achieve necessary aspects of life and to do the things I enjoy like getting coffee and walking with my dog.

With SSP services I can accomplish everyday tasks. Today, my SSP helped me get here to the statehouse, navigate the building, and helped me to communicate with others. With SSP services, I have more independence and autonomy, and that makes me feel like I can

accomplish anything. In fact, I am in college, studying to become a psychologist. I want to help others who are struggling with their mental health like I did.

We would like to share with the House Finance Committee the results of a research project conducted by Capital University. The research includes a Needs Assessment of DeafBlind Ohioans and an Assessment of the Columbus Speech and Hearing SSP Pilot Program. The research findings show that SSP Services improve the quality of life of DeafBlind Ohioans.

Many people who are deafblind are alone, isolated, and struggle with depression due to being stuck at home. But by giving us access and supporting us in doing basic life tasks and helping us in doing basic life tasks and helping us socialize, SSP's lift us up, bring us light, and help us feel more motivated, hopeful, and independent.

Please support more funding for DeafBlind services.

Thank you

BRAD RACE:

Hello! Thank you for allowing me to speak about a cause that's near and dear to my heart. My name is Brad Race. I am proud to say I am a Support Service Provider or Co-Navigator for the DeafBlind. A Support Service Provider, or SSP, is a trained professional who works with DeafBlind individuals by providing environmental and visual information, mobility guidance, transportation and communication support. SSPs are trained and skilled in the communication mode and the needs of each DeafBlind individual. There is a wide variety of communication modes among the DeafBlind—these include spoken English, American Sign Language, close vision sign language, tactile signing, and something called ProTactile sign language. You may see some of these communication modes here today.

Using these specific communication modes, SSPs provide information, empowering the DeafBlind to make informed decisions. SSPs do not make decisions for the Deafblind. It is a “with and not for” service model which facilitates independence and access for the DeafBlind.

In Ohio alone, there are more than 80 thousand DeafBlind individuals. The DeafBlind are the most isolated and underserved population. Without continued state funding, services for the DeafBlind will end on June 30th 2025.

Without continued funding, the DeafBlind will no longer have access to SSPs to accomplish every-day tasks and activities that you and I take for granted.

- * Won't be able to ascertain environmental/social surroundings,
- * Won't be able to identify and interact with people,
- * Won't be able to do basic tasks such as clothing and grocery shopping, reading mail, paying bills, banking, scheduling Dr visits,
- * Won't be able to make informed, autonomous choices,
- * Won't be able to attend religious and social activities,
- * Won't be able to complete forms for services,
- * Won't be able to know danger and safety issues

What I stated above isn't the worst of it. The DeafBlind will continue to struggle to communicate and navigate the world without their 2 key senses. The impact of losing access to the SSP's/CN will have a drastic psychological impact. Art is a DeafBlind client who has shared about life without SSP services. Art's high school friend was a POW in the Vietnam war. His friend said that being a POW wasn't the worst of it. At one point, the friend was placed in solitary confinement. He says that COMPLETE ISOLATION led to a rapid decline in his mental and physical health. Unfortunately, Art knows that feeling of isolation and confinement—not being able to interact with and communicate with others and not being able to get out and do things for himself. Without SSP services, Art is completely isolated and confined.

The DeafBlind need you! I implore all of the Ohio Legislators: please do not leave the DeafBlind isolated. Please support the continued funding of the DeafBlind Fund. Say YES and PASS House Bill 96 with the DeafBlind Fund Amendment, GRF 415515 line item.

[Eric Duffy](#)

Hello, I am Eric Duffy. You listened to all the DeafBlind people's testimonies, I am not DeafBlind, I am a Hearing Blind person. DeafBlind Fund is very important to us! We do NOT want you to pity us. We want to work in jobs, like you do. I want you to treat us like equals. Please support House Bill 96 DeafBlind Fund.

[More information, go to the FB: DeafBlind Ohioans Community Action Network \(DBOCAN\)](#)

Call your local Senators and support for HB 96 GRF 415515 DeafBlind Fund

Breaking Silences and Ohio Olmstead Task Force

Letter submitted to Governor DeWine on April 7, 2025

Dear Gov. DeWine,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Breaking Silences Advocacy Committee (BSAC), the Breaking Silences Accommodations Subcommittee (BSAS), and the Ohio Olmstead Task Force (OOTF).

In recent press conferences, given by you, the disability community was disappointed yet again to witness a public broadcast without the use of ASL Interpreters and Captions. As of May 2021, approximately 303,000 Ohio residents were d/Deaf or hard of hearing. By eliminating these alternative methods of communication, these Ohio citizens did not receive the information you provided during this broadcast. Hence, the full participation of our community did not occur.

ASL Interpreter Marla Berkowitz was visible during the broadcast of press conferences in 2020, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Captioning was available as well. In recent years, these accommodations have not been present and/or visible during broadcasts.

Access issues create barriers for individuals with disabilities. When organizers include accessibility in the planning of meetings, webinars, broadcasts, and events, the community will experience the full benefit of the contributions and participation of everyone who attends. This forethought eliminates communication barriers and demonstrates respect for the disability community.

We believe Ohio can and must do better. Ohio must adhere to, and go above, the minimal requirements outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act. When you design for disability, everyone benefits. People with disabilities want and deserve a seat at every table. As the largest minority group in the United States, our perspectives are crucial in developing policies, solving problems, and helping Ohio grow.

You have demonstrated in the past that Ohio cares about, and has a commitment to, accessibility and the inclusion of people with disabilities. By not having interpreters and closed captioning provided while speechmaking, you are not staying true to your word.

In the opening remarks from your Inaugural Accessible Ohio Conference and Expo speech on July 25, 2024, you said:

“Ohio's strength lies in its people, and we can't afford to leave anyone behind. Accessibility is a mindset that we should always be thinking about, from education and employment to recreation and civic engagement. We're grateful for the positive impact individuals with disabilities have had on Ohio's workforce and communities. By breaking down barriers and providing opportunities, we tap into the tremendous potential of all our citizens.”

In addition, you stated in Executive Order 2019-03D: Establishing Ohio as a Disability Inclusion State and Model Employer of Individuals with Disabilities:

“**WHEREAS**, it is the policy of this administration to encourage and support individuals with disabilities to fully participate in the social and economic life of Ohio and engage in competitive integrated employment; and

WHEREAS, the State of Ohio has an opportunity and responsibility to lead by example, ensuring individuals with disabilities have access to employment opportunities in public service;”

The disability community is a melting pot of individuals who are taxpayers, employers/employees, voters, and are active community members who have the drive and the right to participate in all aspects of meetings and events. Therefore, access should be part of the planning process of any meeting and event, not an afterthought, as these features benefit everyone.

We respectfully request that all future press conferences and public appearances given by you include an ASL interpreter and closed captioning.

When Ohio promotes itself as a leader in disability inclusiveness and accessibility, we must follow through on that promise.

Thank you in advance for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Breaking Silences Advocacy Committee
Breaking Silences Accommodations Subcommittee
Ohio Olmstead Task Force

Profiles:

The Breaking Silences Advocacy Committee formed in 2020 to address the COVID-19 pandemic and the lack of emergency preparedness for individuals with disabilities. The focus of the committee is to create an active space for advocates to work together to develop and create community awareness and change in the communities that we live, work and participate in.

The goal of this committee is to establish relationships with local and state officials as well as to partner with community organizations around disability related issues.

BSAC can be contacted at maria.matzik@acils.com

The Ohio Olmstead Task Force (OOTF) is a statewide grassroots coalition of Ohioans with disabilities of all ages, family members, advocates and organizations advocating for the right to live, work and participate in their communities. OOTF enforces the 1999 Olmstead United States Supreme Court decision that states unnecessary institutionalization is discrimination against people with disabilities.

OOTF can be contacted at jenniferkucera134@gmail.com

Signatures

Ability Center of Greater Toledo Jules Patalita, PhD, Ability Center of Greater Toledo, Disability Rights Advocate Access Center for Independent Living, Inc. Dayton, Ohio Allison Boot, Access Center for Independent Living, Independent Living Specialist Dylan Boot, Access Center for Independent Living, Independent Living Specialist Melody A. Burba, Access Center for Independent Living, Independent Living Specialist, Independent Living Specialist Shawna Collins, Breaking Silences Member, Beneficiary of Closed Captioning Kathy Wyenandt, Butler County Democrats, Chair Jennifer Kucera, Healthcare Outreach Coordinator, Center for Disability Empowerment, Chair, Ohio Olmstead Task Force Julia Felts, Columbus Speech & Hearing, Program Manager Megan Menikheim, Deaf Services Center, Director of Operations, ASL Interpreter Julie L. Williams, Psy.D., ABPP, Disabilities Liberated LLC, Psychological Practice, Owner, Board Certified Rehabilitation Psychologist Amber Cowart, Hamilton County Developmental Disability Services, Employee Michael Ginn, Hamilton County Developmental Disability Services, Advocate Amy Hayden, Hamilton County Developmental Disability Services,

Advocate James Harley, Hamilton County Developmental Disability Services, Advocate Caiman Hobeika, Hamilton County Developmental Disability Services , Advocate Diana Mairose, Hamilton County Developmental Disability Services, Employee Victoria Miller, Hamilton County Developmental Disability Services, Advocate Anna Leah Swafford, Hamilton County Developmental Disability Services, Advocate Terrence (Terry) Blosser, Helen Keller Services (HKS) Board of Trustees , Board Member, DeafBlind Advocate Mike Moroski, Human Services Chamber of Hamilton County, Executive Director Rob Festenstein, Independence Alliance, Executive Director Dee Henry, Independence Alliance, Disability Rights and Advocacy Specialist Laura Sullivan MSW LISWS , JustChoice, Director of Programs Molly Rampe-Thomas MSW LISWS, JustChoice, Executive Director Colleen W. Hart, Living Arrangements for the Developmentally Disabled (LADD), Housing Resource Specialist Beth Glass, Linking Employment, Abilities & Potential, Executive Director Jim McCarthy, Miami Valley Fair Housing Center, Inc., President/CEO Darnell Pierre Benjamin, Northern Kentucky University, Professor, Multidisciplinary Artist Jeff Prince, Ohio Deaf Golf Association, Secretary, Lifelong Ohio Resident H.A. Musser, Jr., Santa Maria Community Services, President and CEO Pam Davies, Western Reserve Independent Living Center, Executive Director Charlotte Rudolph, UHCAN Ohio, Executive Director Brittanie Maddox, Advocate Charlene R. Brumbaugh, She/Her, Parent of an Adult, Deaf Family Member, Disability Advocate, Resident of Dayton, Ohio/Harrison Township Cindy Fox, Debbie Baker, Self-Advocate, MyCare Dual Options / Medicare / Medicaid / Waiver Member, Devon Anderson, M.S., Disabled Disability Advocate, Elias Brumbaugh, Elieen Earnest, Freelance Interpreter in Cincinnati, Elizabeth Brassell, Resident of Lake County, Ohio Felicia Frantz, NAD, NIC Certified Interpreter Heather Emmert, Student, Wright State University Linda Tucker, Resident of Butler County Ohio Jaclyn Herd, Resident of Hamilton County Ohio, Katie Cos, Karlton “Skip” G. Bergquist Jr., Retired State Employee, Program Specialist for the Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing Georgie Elson, Disability Advocate Grace Schuermann, ASL Interpreter Maria A. Matzik, She/Her, Disability Rights Advocate / Employer / Employee / Taxpayer / Voter Veronica Lynn Day Millette, Professional American Sign Language Interpreter Mary Ellen Pfeil, Advocate with a physical disability Molly Sweeney, Educational Interpreter Sara Birkofer Sarah Morgan, Qualified Interpreter Sally Fish, Advocate Susan Koller, Self-Advocate Dawn Watts Zoe Wenk, Individual Advocate

Ohio Deaf Association

Written by Marsha Moore, President

Many things are happening with the Ohio Deaf Association. Our website opened on Monday, March 31, 2025, with membership specials for our new members. **This Charter Special Membership pricing is 50% off until April 11th** so go to the link [ODA Membership](#) and become a member today! This organization is for every person in the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind community to help with advocacy, education, systematic change and policy development. We need every one of you!

Dawn Watts has been appointed to be our legislative liaison and will work with us to ensure that the Deaf Community is well represented in the legislative arena. She has many years of experience in this area and can help us be proactive with any legislation that needs attention in terms of education and advocacy. This is our opportunity to build relationships with our senators and house of representatives and work with them on important issues. Welcome, Dawn, to the team!

ODA will be hosting our next board meeting with the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) on Saturday, April 19, 2025. ODA's board meeting is open to the public and will be from 10am to 2pm and NAD's meeting, also open to the public, will be from 2pm to 5pm. Location to be announced on ODA's Facebook page [@OhioDeafAssociation](#).

Please join ODA and NAD by attending Deaf Night Out on Saturday, April 19, 2025 at the Crooked Can, 5354 Center Street, Hilliard, OH 43026. It starts at 7:30pm.

Two events are planned for our ODA members and the Deaf Community this summer and fall.

- The **Ohio Deaf/KODA Youth Camp** starts on July 17th to July 20th and you can register your child at: [Camp Registration](#). Please register one form for each child to ensure that each child is registered individually.
 - We are still seeking some donations to help defray the costs for our campers. So if you are interested or know of a company who can help donate, please let us know at TheOhioDA@gmail.com. Thank you for your consideration.
- The **Ohio Deaf Pickleball Tournament** is on Saturday, September 13, 2025, from 8am to 6pm. **You can register for up to 2 different categories for the price of ONE (\$60). This event is hosted by ODA, ASLIN and DWAVE.**

Remember to have your DUPR number ready when you register for the PB tournament. If you do not have your DUPR number, you can get one by going to this website:

- DUPR: <https://www.dupr.com>
- PB Registration:
<https://pickleballtournaments.com/tournaments/ohio-deaf-pickleball-tournament>

****SAVE THE DATE****

Ohio Deaf Association

SUMMER
JULY 17-20
2025

deaf
dorothy e. ann fund
strengthening the potential
of youth who are
deaf or hard of hearing

ADVOCATES for
KIDS

Ages
10-17

ASL/PSE/Oral
Welcome!

DEAF /KODA YOUTH
CAMP

CAMP MARY ORTON
7925 N. High Street
Columbus, OH 43235

Camp Cost
(Includes Meals)
\$70

Hiking | Ziplining | Team Activities | Crafts

Ohio Deaf Association Website **Registration Open! Click here:**



OHIO DEAF PICKLEBALL TOURNAMENT

8:00AM TO 6:00PM

BILLY MAULDIN, TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2025

HOSTED BY:

AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE
ASLIN
INSTRUCTORS NETWORK

OHIO DEAF ASSOCIATION AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTORS NETWORK DEAF WORLD AGAINST VIOLENCE EVERYWHERE

DWAVE
Deaf World Against Violence Everywhere

 **\$60 Per Player**

LINK: [CLICK HERE to Register](#)

PADDLE TAPS
535 Lakeview Plaza Blvd.
Worthington, Ohio 43085

3.0, 3.5, 4.0+
MEN, WOMEN & MIXED DOUBLES
ROUND ROBIN - MEDAL ROUND



MEDALS AWARDED FOR 1ST, 2ND & 3RD IN EACH CATEGORY AND LEVELS

 All proceeds go to
ODA, ASLIN & DWAVE

 For more information, email:
TheOhioDA@gmail.com

Xavier Sign Language Club and
LGBTQ Alliance Proudly Present

Deafiesⁱⁿ Drag



Purchase Tickets by going to:
[https://engagexu.campusgroups.com/store?
store_id=2951&cglink=1](https://engagexu.campusgroups.com/store?store_id=2951&cglink=1)

Thursday, April 10
7pm
Kennedy Auditorium
Xavier University



Cincinnati
Museum Center



Barbie
A CULTURAL ICON
EXHIBITION

SIXTY-FIVE YEARS OF FASHION AND INSPIRATION

APRIL 4 TO
SEPTEMBER 1, 2025

Deaf Day

at Cincinnati Museum Center

April 27 from 1 to 4 p.m.

In partnership with Cincinnati State Interpreter Training Program (ITP), Deaf and Hard of Hearing guests are invited to explore our featured exhibition, *Barbie™: A Cultural Icon* in a whole new way.

Interpreters from Cincinnati State's ITP will be on-site, ensuring that all guests have equitable access to visit and explore all things Barbie™. Please join us if you are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or just interested in learning more sign language!

Included with admission to *Barbie™: A Cultural Icon*.

Contact accessibility@cincymuseum.org for more information or questions.

Additional CMC Accessibility information:
cincymuseum.org/accessibility

Cincinnati State



Buckeye Chapter of the Gallaudet University Alumni

**Saturday,
May 3, 2025**



**Where: Harry Buffalo
6150 S Sunbury Road
Westerville, Ohio. 43081**

Day: Saturday, May 3rd at 4:30 pm

**RVSP before April 27, 2025: Contact to Julie Levine at
laurelburch21@icloud.com**

ViaQuest, Inc

Behavioral and Mental Health

We specialize in mental and behavioral health treatment for nursing facilities, individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities; those who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf/low vision or deafblind; those with CODAS; families and couples, and the aging population.

Counseling Services:

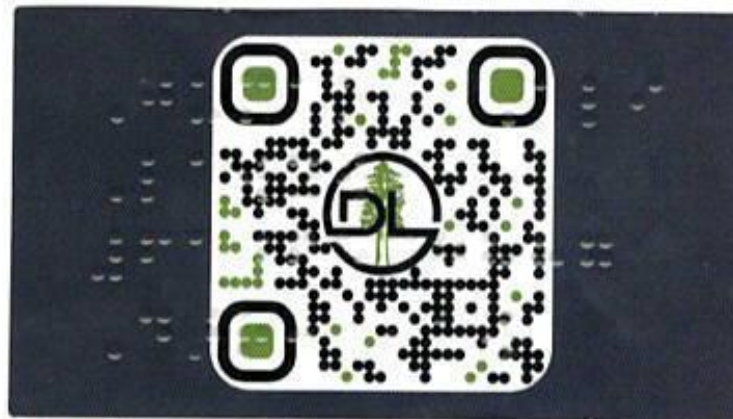
Our licensed signing and deaf counselors and social workers help clients deal with abuse, trauma, anxiety, depression and other mental health disorders through talk therapy. We can provide individual or group counseling in our office or in the community. Counseling focuses on digging into the root causes of behaviors. Our counselors provide a goal-oriented approach to help clients understand unhealthy and harmful thoughts and beliefs and focus on replacing them with positive ones. Our counselors will provide an assessment and customized treatment plan that is tailored to each individual to achieve their goals.

website: viaquestinc.com/contact-us/

Upcoming Events

If you need an attorney for an American Sign Language Access lawsuit, use this QR code below.

Darr Law: Jumana M. Ali
Attorney
JMA@Darr.law
www.Darr.law
614-653-7887



If you have any issues regarding this newsletter, please contact the Director, Editor, or Co-Editors at TheDeafReader@gmail.com

The Next Deaf Reader Newsletter [July 2025](#)

COMPUTER

If you need someone to fix your PC or Apple computer, Justin Watters, a Deaf Computer technician, can help and support you. You can contact him at jwwatters3@gmail.com. He will charge you for the service.

DINGO

Senior Citizens for the Deaf at the Columbus Colony Housing II, Multi-Purpose Room 1105 Colony Drive, Westerville, Ohio on the first week and third week every Thursday at 11 am to 3 pm.

Columbus Deaf Club at the Columbus Colony Housing II, Multi-Purpose Room, 1105 Colony Drive, Westerville, Ohio on the third week on Saturday at 5 pm to 9 pm.

Bingo Game at the Columbus Colony Housing I, Cafe Room, 1165 Colony Drive, Westerville, Ohio on Tuesday on every other week: April 22, May 6, May 20....

Contact Information

The Deaf Reader

Ohio Deaf Friends of the Library
(ODFL) website:

<https://www.ocdclibrary.org/>

ODFL email:

thedeafreader@gmail.com

ODFL mailing address:

P.O. Box 917
Worthington, Ohio 43085-0917

Standing Committees

Library Advisor

Nancy Levin

Librarian for Deaf

Ben Gulyas

Coventry Village – Heights Public Library

Ben Gulyas

Deaf Mentor Program

Danny Lucero

Specialist DeafBlind

Bryan Grubb

Webmaster

Mike Homko

Bylaws

Angie Potosky

Bylaws Parliamentarian

Bob Donaldson-Pirc

President

Dawn Watts

Vice President

Angie Potosky

Secretary

Christine Stepien

Treasurer

Debbie Brown

WE STRIVE FOR ALL
LIBRARIES TO BE
MADE ACCESSIBLE
TO ALL THE DEAF
COMMUNITIES IN
THE STATE OF OHIO

Northwest 1 Representatives None

Allen, Auglaize, Crawford, Defiance, Eric, Fulton, Hancock, Hardin, Henry, Huron, Lucas, Mercer, Ottawa, Paulding, Putnam, Sandusky, Seneca, Van Wert, Williams, Wyandot, Wood

Northeast 2 Representatives Liliana Arseon-Pokorny, Regis Gilchrist, Jenny Jaske and Chuck Williams

Ashland, Ashtabula, Carroll, Columbiana, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Hamison, Holmes, Huron, Jefferson, Lake, Lorain, Mahoning, Medina, Portage, Richland, Stark, Summit, Trumbull, Tuscarawas, Wayne

Southwest 3 Representative Juanita Hall, Scott Van Nice, and Melissa Kelly

Adams, Brown, Butler, Clark, Clermont, Clinton, Champaign, Darke, Greene, Hamilton, Highland, Logan, Miami, Montgomery, Preble, Shelby, Union, Warren

Central 4 Representatives Brad Race and Danny Lucero

Coshocton, Delaware, Licking, Fayette, Fairfield, Franklin, Knox, Marion, Madison, Morrow, Muskingum, Perry, Pickaway, Union

Southeast 5 Representative Chris Cooley

Athens, Belmont, Gallia, Guernsey, Hocking, Jackson, Lawrence, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Noble, Pike, Ross, Scioto, Vinton, Washington

Director: Dawn K. Watts Co-Editor: Brad Race, Vicky Emerson, and Juanita Hall

The Deaf Reader newsletter editors reserve the right to review and make any necessary edits in the enclosed articles.