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President's Message

Written by: Danny Lucero

Dear Members of ODFL,

April is already here! I hope everyone is managing their spring allergies and finding time to enjoy the sunshine. While the weather has been unpredictable, warmer days are just around the corner. It's hard to believe how quickly time is passing.

I'm pleased to share updates as I continue serving as President and keeping you informed about our ongoing work and upcoming initiatives.

Organizational Updates & Highlights

We are saddened to share that our Library Advisor, Allison Knight (Youth Services and Program Director at Dayton Metro Library), has submitted her resignation due to an ethical conflict. We appreciate her time and contributions to ODFL.

On a positive note, we have identified a potential replacement: Kristie Wilson, Community Impact Specialist at Dayton Metro Library. Kristie is a fluent ASL signer and would be a tremendous asset to ODFL. A formal vote will take place at our next board meeting.

Success Stories

OINK Event – April 11, 2026

ODFL hosted a booth at the OINK event held at St. Rita—and it was a success! Thank you to Christine Stepien and Cassandra Schrienk for your support and dedication in making this outreach effort impactful.

Statewide Recognition

Danny Lucero and Dawn Watts have been selected as a guest speaker for the Library Council Convention & Expo, taking place October 21–23, 2026, in Sandusky, Ohio. This is a great opportunity to highlight ODFL's mission and expand our reach.

Programs & Events

ASL Storytime Series – Dayton Metro Library

We are excited to announce a series of upcoming ASL Storytime programs:

- * June 13, 2026
- * June 27, 2026
- * July 25, 2026
- * August 8, 2026
- * August 22, 2026

Location: Main Library
215 E. 3rd St., Dayton, OH 45402

We encourage everyone to help spread the word! In addition, three *Storytime@Home* videos will be released on YouTube to expand access. Proceeds from honorariums totaling \$400 will support ODFL initiatives.

Community Impact

ODFL would like to extend a sincere thank you to everyone who contributed to programming in the Fairfield District Library. Your efforts in storytelling, training, ASL education, and Deaf culture awareness are making a meaningful difference in our communities.

Upcoming Meeting

Next Board Meeting: April 16, 2026

We look forward to a productive discussion and continued growth, especially in expanding ASL storytelling opportunities across Ohio.

Looking Ahead

More exciting updates and events are planned for August 2026—stay tuned!

As summer approaches, please stay safe and take time to enjoy the season with family and community.

With appreciation,

Danny Lucero

President, ODFL

“Hózhóogo naasháa doo” — Walk in Beauty



6th Annual Deaf Themed Art Contest

Written by: Juanita Hall, Co-Editor, and Pictures: Dawn K Watts

On March 8, 2026, Ohio Deaf Friends of the Library (ODFL) proudly collaborated with Ohio Hands & Voices and Advocates for Kids to host the 6th Annual Deaf-Themed Art Contest at the Columbus Museum of Art. This joyful and inspiring event brought together children and families for a creative celebration of Deaf culture and community.

Children enthusiastically created Deaf-themed artwork using vibrant colors and imaginative designs. Their pieces included fingerspelled words, *Eyeth* (Deaf Earth), cochlear implants, eyes, flowers, expressions of diversity, and comics—all sharing positive messages about Deafness, Deaf culture, and community pride.

Winners were selected across four age groups: K–2, 3rd–5th, 6th–8th, and 9th–12th grades. Participants joined the contest both in person and online between 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. The winning artworks are featured in the images shown here. We hope you enjoy browsing through these amazing Deaf-themed creations and celebrating the creativity of our young artists! Next year, we will have the 7th annual Deaf Themed Art Contest on Sunday, March 7, 2027, at the Columbus Museum of Art.

 [6th Annual Deaf Themed Art Contest 2026](#)



Children Deaf-Themed Art Contest Winners

First Place:



Ava Biggs, Grade 1

“A cute turtle in a tutu at a performance.”



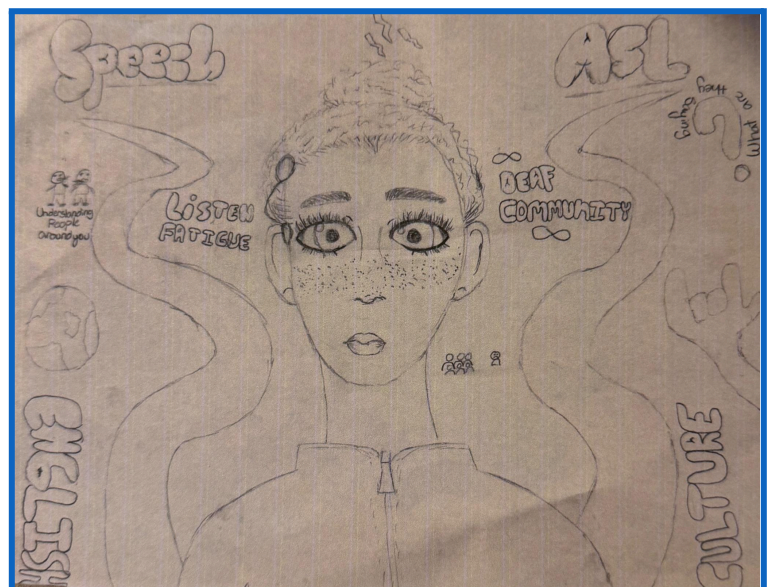
"School" Ariel King, Grade 4.

“I feel for being able to go to Deaf School. So I can grow as a person with education and social experience that I get”



Khloe Olipas, Grade 6

“You can achieve anything in the world you want!”



Caelan Pudelski, Grade 10

“The different communication methods, rise and their own unique journeys. Each has its own bumps and turns because every journey is full of them.”

Second Place:



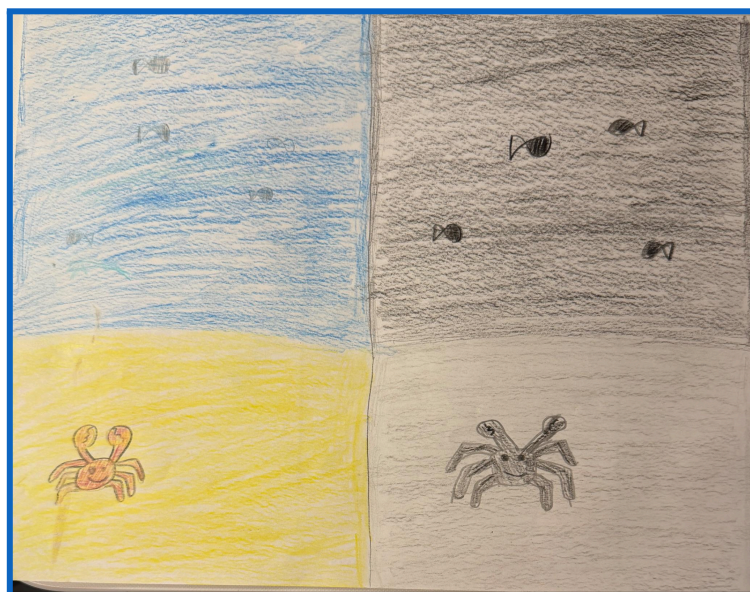
Niko Parsons, Grade K
"Love in ASL"



Emersyn Korecky, Grade 4
"Roblox Love"

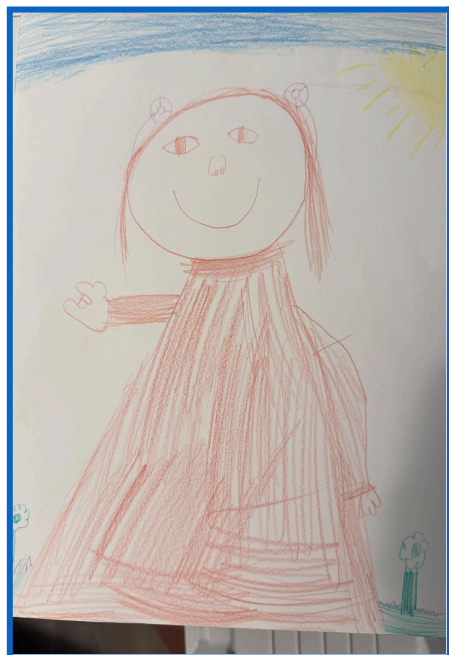


Mila Parsons, Grade 6
"Flowers: Spring will be here soon. This Art celebrates diversity and inclusion while also showing different flowers from around the world."



Toby Warne, Grade 10
"The difference of hearing aids: Left side with hearing aids and right side without hearing aids."

Third Place:



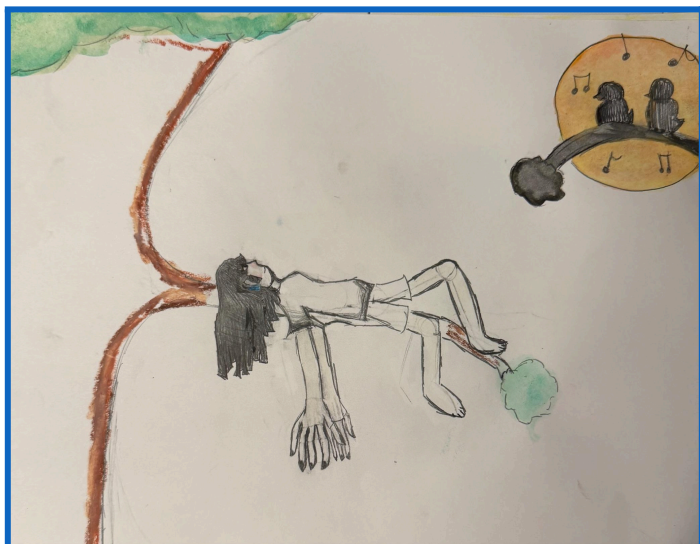
Penny Hernan, Grade 1

“I am proud to be Deaf! I love sign language! I am special!”



Leia King, Grade 5

“My two sisters, who are hearing and deaf, go into a cave. The little deaf sister wanders deeper in the cave and meets some baby bats. My big hearing sister’s ears hurt because of the bat’s screeching. Never, ever, go near bats if you are hard of hearing.”



Gwenneth Kelly, Grade 6

“A girl lying down on a tree branch listening to birds sing.”

Ohio Deaf History Month | Athens Public Library

Written by: Juanita Hall, Co-editor

Since the establishment of Ohio Deaf History Month (ODHM) through Ohio Senate Bill 27 in 2017, the Ohio Deaf Friends of the Library (ODFL) has proudly worked to participate in, support, and raise awareness of ODHM. Each year, ODFL members collaborate with libraries and communities across Ohio to host events during the official celebration period of March 13–April 15. This year, we are excited to highlight in July's and this month's editions the various events that helped promote Deaf awareness in counties throughout the state.

I am so excited to say that the two ODHM library events were a great success! This is what Professor Kim of Ohio University and I, along with an amazing interpreter/Ohio University Professor Katherine "Katie" Franklin, did for these two events:

Monday, March 23, 2026

- Juanita Hall gave a 1-hour workshop presentation on Ohio Deaf History. We covered topics such as
 - Historical View on Deaf People and American Sign Language
 - Lipreading and Oralism
 - William C. Stokoe Proving ASL is a True Language
 - National Association of the Deaf & Robert P. McGregor from Ohio
 - William “Dummy” Holy, Deaf Baseball Player
 - Columbus Colony Elderly Care, Westerville, Ohio, Akron, Ohio
 - Largest Deaf Population, 1910s – 1950s in Akron, Ohio
 - Matt Hamill, First Deaf in Professional UFC Wrestling, 2005
 - First Deaf in Professional Golf (PGA), 2005
- There were about 10 people in attendance (which is not bad for a small community)

The participants were awesome! They asked a lot of wonderful questions about ASL, Deaf's community, culture, and accessibility issues, etc. We had some excellent



discussions with the participants. They asked wonderful questions about Deaf culture, community, ASL, and accessibility.

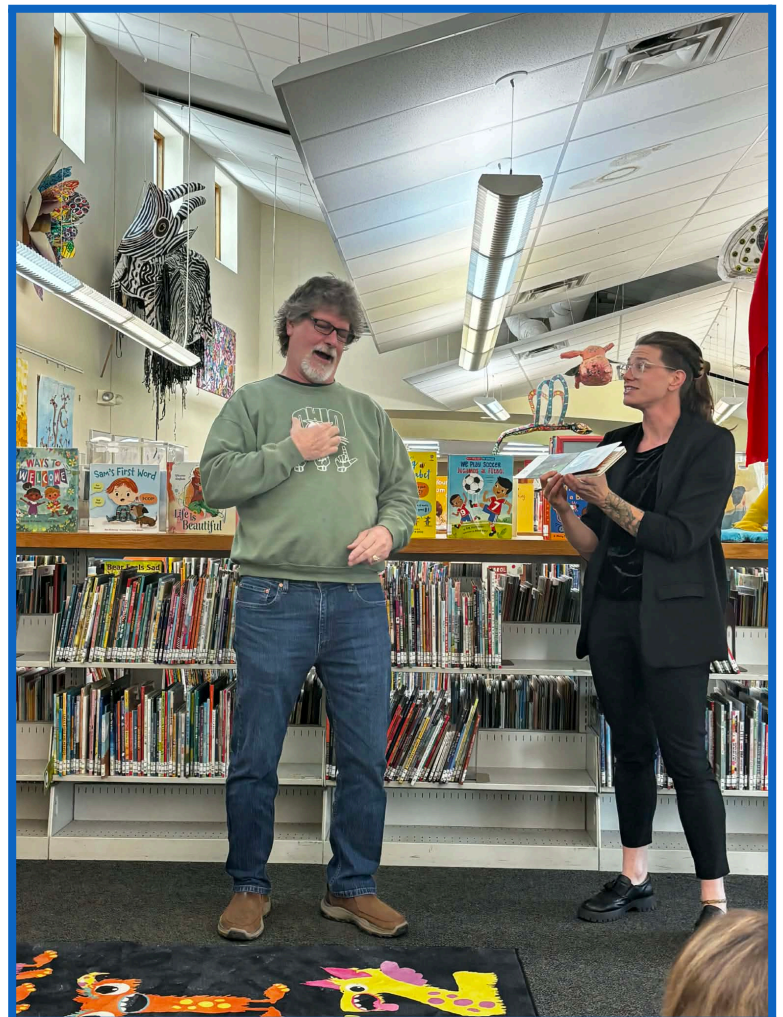
Wednesday, March 25, 2026

- Kim Sutton signed (3) ASL stories to the children and adults. He did a fabulous job, and everyone loved it! He signed the following stories:
 - The Very Hungry Caterpillar
 - Jack and the Beanstalk
 - The Stolen Smell
- Katie Franklin sang the nursery rhyme, "Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed," while the audience signed it in ASL alongside me. This was so much fun!
- Crafts: Some coloring of ASL signs, paper, and drawing and coloring hand signs on paper for the children

Enjoy watching this video of Kim signing [*The Very Hungry Caterpillar*](#) storybook.

<https://youtu.be/qgxweudWtmY>

What really impressed me was that the librarians and the adults want us to start up an ASL class at the Athens library and host the Deaf History Month program again next year. I am thrilled with this great success. I also want to extend my most heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Sutton and Ms. Franklin for their wonderful contributions to the program. They were true "stars"!



Oink Deaf Artisan Market

Written by: Christine Stephein

On April 11, 2026, Kassandra Schreffler and I were setting up the booth for the event OINK's Deaf Artisan Market at St. Rita School for the Deaf, featuring our remarkable Ohio Deaf Friends of the Library (ODFL) logo, from 10 AM til 2 PM.

People everywhere at the event were amazing; about 15 of them came to my booth and asked me questions about ODFL. I handed out new ODFL Brochures to them whom interested in learning more about ODFL experiences.

One lady asked me about ASL storyteller/storytelling at the Library. She is interested in ASL Storytelling at the library. I explained my experiences as an ASL storyteller to the kids with their families and friends getting together and learning about the story books and songs by me to share with American Sign Language in three months last year. To teach kids to learn ASL.



Afterward, we blew bubbles in the air using bubble machines in front of them in the audience in the conference room at Westerville Public Library. I shared information with those who came to the booth. We have sold our Old and New Deaf Themed Art Contest Notecards at the booth. They learned more about ODFL and were very impressed with ODFL. It was a great success!!

The next event, "Oink Deaf Artisan Market and Chili/Dessert Cook off will be held on Saturday, November 7th. For more information, contact Michelle Schreffler at mschreffler@hearingspeechdeaf.org

Irene Tunanidas, Deaf Author

Written by: Irene Tunandias

Contributor bio adapted and condensed from publicly available author materials and press descriptions; rewritten to align with anthology style.

Irene Tunanidas is a deaf educator and author from Ohio. She earned a master's degree in Deaf Education from Kent State University and later completed a second master's degree in Counseling at California State University, Sacramento.

Tunanidas dedicated approximately 40 years to the education of deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Her career included long-term service with Youngstown City Schools as well as additional teaching with Poland Local Schools. Her work in public education reflects sustained engagement with deaf students and their families across multiple decades (Gutierrez, 2026; Tunanidas, n.d.).

She is the author of *Rising from the Abyss of Grief*, a reflective work grounded in her experiences as a caregiver following a family loss. The book examines grief, isolation, and the process of emotional recovery, drawing on lived experience to offer perspective to readers facing similar circumstances (Irene Tunanidas

References

Gutierrez, M. (2026, February 28). *In Rising from the Abyss of Grief, Irene Tunanidas Writes Through Grief, Caregiving, and Faith*. AFVnews.

<https://afvnews.ca/2026/02/28/in-rising-from-the-abyss-of-grief-irene-tunanidas-writes-through-grief-caregiving-and-faith/>

Tunanidas, I. (n.d.). *About the Author*. Rising from the abyss of grief. <https://risingfromtheabyssofgrief.com/>



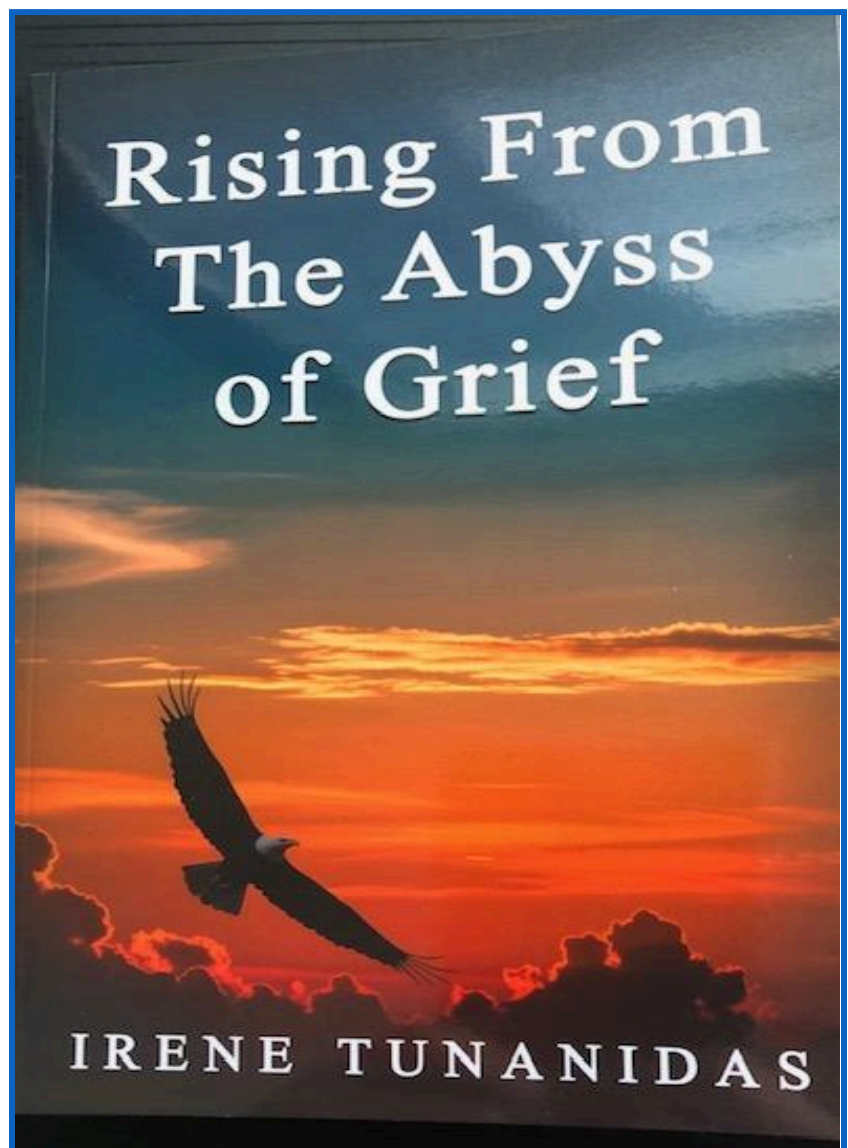
From the Author Herself

Written by: Irene Tunandias

When I began writing about my experience as Mother's caregiver in 2011, I did this to help me overcome depression and loneliness at that time. I could not complete my personal story as I was having some difficulty dealing with the grieving process and fighting loneliness. I waited until I was well enough to write again. I finished my personal story, and, during my free time I re-read past episodes and a second section was added to this story; Words of Comfort for the Mourning Soul. Each page is filled with real-life episodes after the passing of a loved one. A biblical verse is added on each page to help the reader find ways to cope with loneliness and isolation. Having my 52-page book published was not my idea. A family relative and a church friend encouraged me to have it published to help readers dealing with isolation and loneliness after losing their loved one(s).

Rising From The Abyss of Grief can be purchased from AMAZON or Barnes and Noble's Online store for \$15.00 and on Kindle at \$9.99. Any questions, contact me at irene.tunandias67@gmail.com.

Image Credit: Google Images



A new location for the State Library of Ohio

The State Library of Ohio is relocating to 35 E. Chestnut St. (near Arena District) while the archives move to 1831 Deffenbaugh Ct. in Gahanna.

The relocation is expected to take time, with the library citing the aging condition of the old building as a factor in the move.

For updates on services during the transition, users should check the State Library of Ohio website.

[State Library of Ohio website.](#)



Image Credit: Google Images

The Deaf Women of Ohio



On Saturday, March 21 at Worthington Public Library had strategic planning goals for the Deaf Women of Ohio. There were about 12 Deaf women. Tammy Penney, Advisor of the Deaf Women of Ohio.

The next General Meeting will be on Wednesday, May 20th at 6 pm at the Columbus Metro Library, Dublin Branch at 75 N High Street, Dublin, Ohio

Any questions, please contact us at deafwomenofohio@gmail.com



Ohio Deaf and Blind Education Services

Statewide Services & Outreach

BOOK BUDDIES

A Virtual Reading Opportunity for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deafblind Students

[Register Here!](#)

DATES:

MARCH 31, 2026 FROM 6:30 PM TO 7:30 PM

APRIL 7, 2026 FROM 6:30 PM TO 7:30 PM

APRIL 21, 2026 FROM 6:30 PM TO 7:30 PM

***APRIL 30, 2026 FROM 11:00 AM TO 12:00 PM**

MAY 5, 2026 FROM 6:30 PM TO 7:30 PM

Book Buddies invites students from Kindergarten through 3rd grade and families to come together for shared reading experiences that spark connection, curiosity, and conversation. Through engaging stories, participants explore identity, build relationships, and discover what they love along the way. Led by Deaf Storytellers, each session offers rich, fully accessible language experiences in a welcoming community. Students using all communication modalities are welcome!

*** April 30th is offered during the school day**

[Register HERE
for April 30th](#)

Email white@osdb.oh.gov for more information



Dingo



Columbus Senior Citizen of the Deaf



Jan. 8 & 22

July 9 & 23



Feb. 5 & 19

Aug. 6 & 20

March 5 & 19

Sept. 10 & 24



April 9 & 23

Oct. 8 & 22



May 7 & 21

Nov. 5 & 19

June 4 & 18

Dec. 3 & 17



President-Willis Cook
 Vice Pres. -Sharon Shiplett
 Secretary - Nancy Buza
 Treasurer - Kathy Kline
 Assistant Treasurer Sharon Brooker

Board of Committees



Jean O'Rourke
 Kenny Stephens
 Karon Felter
 Larry Waisner
 Susan Buza
 Shannon Morris
 Bob Donaldson-Pirc
 Georgia Garrison
 Julie Levine

Member = \$7.00

Non-Member = \$10.00

Time

Board Member at 10am

Member Open at 11am



Want Join Member \$15.00 a year



CCH 2 at Multi Purpose Room

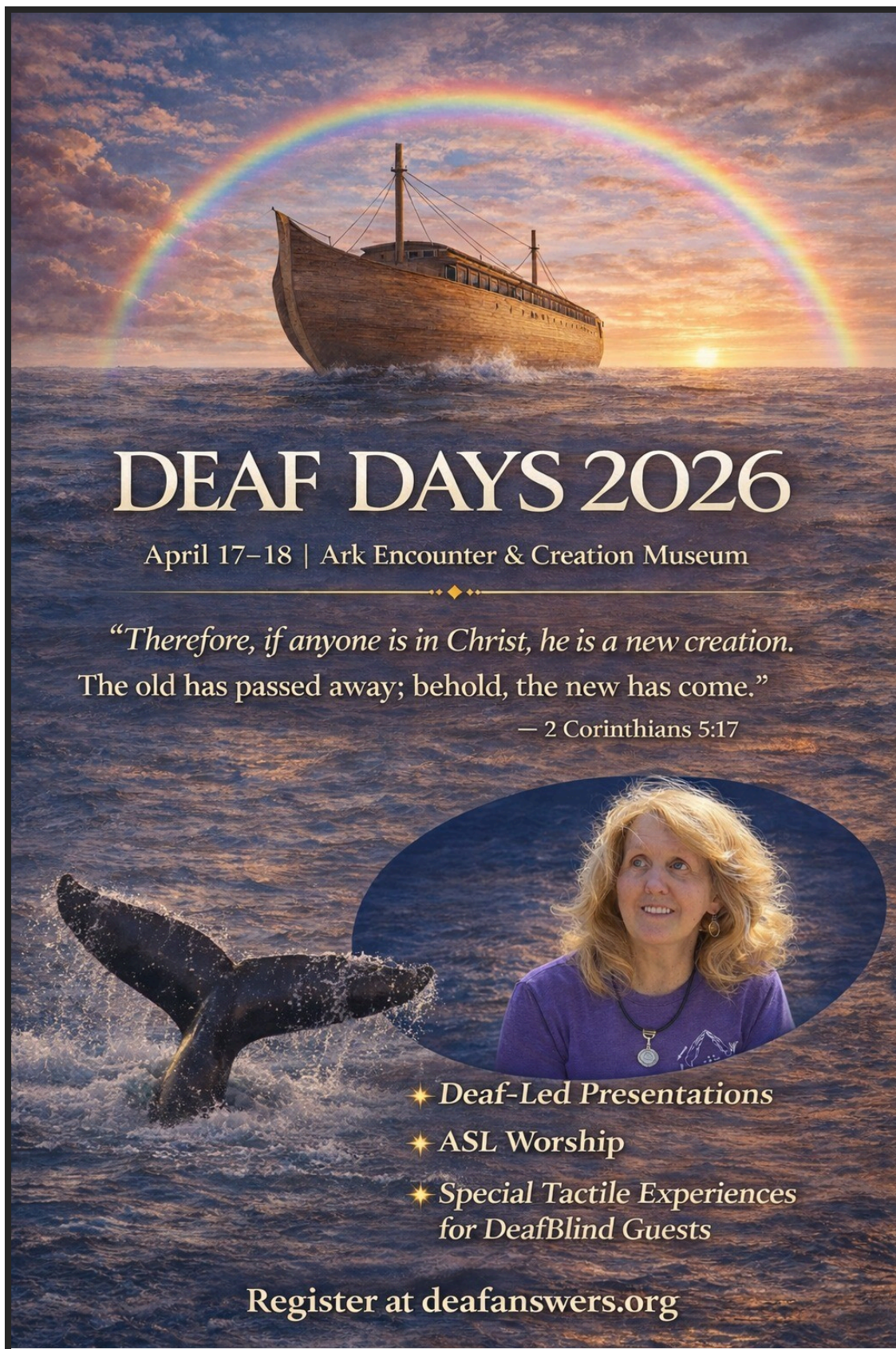
1105 Colony Dr. Westewrville, Ohio 43081

Klfelter57@gmail.com



Welcome & Have Fun & Laugh
Hope to see you



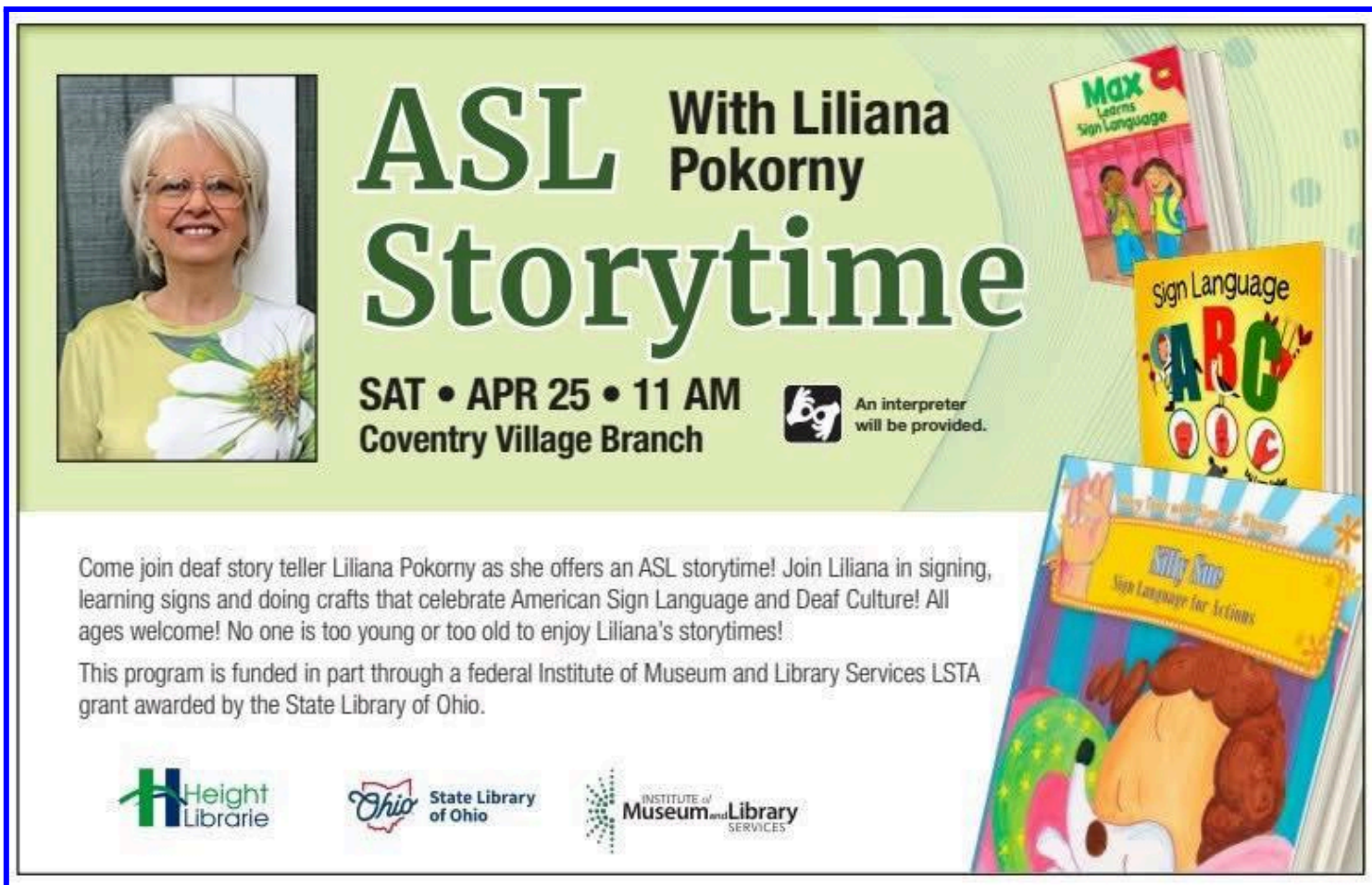


DEAF DAYS 2026
April 17–18 | Ark Encounter & Creation Museum

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.
The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”*
— 2 Corinthians 5:17

- ★ Deaf-Led Presentations
- ★ ASL Worship
- ★ Special Tactile Experiences
for DeafBlind Guests

Register at deafanswers.org



ASL With Liliana Pokorny Storytime

SAT • APR 25 • 11 AM
Coventry Village Branch

An interpreter will be provided.

Come join deaf story teller Liliana Pokorny as she offers an ASL storytime! Join Liliana in signing, learning signs and doing crafts that celebrate American Sign Language and Deaf Culture! All ages welcome! No one is too young or too old to enjoy Liliana's storytimes!

This program is funded in part through a federal Institute of Museum and Library Services LSTA grant awarded by the State Library of Ohio.

Height Librarie
Ohio State Library of Ohio
INSTITUTE of Museum and Library SERVICES

On Thursday, April 30, 2026, at 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm at Marysville Public Library by Angela Lizanor, and Dawn Watts

231 S Plum St
Marysville, Ohio 43040

Children will use paint and draw animals on their hands, then model the ASL sign with the painted hands. There will be an informational component/ASL advocate to add an educational aspect to the activity (can speak of Deaf Culture, values, background, or debunk misconceptions).

DeafBlind Culture Workshop – Toledo

Larc Lane Center Training Center (Door O), 1155 Larc Lane, Toledo

April 30th, 2026 9:30am–5:00pm

8:45 AM Check-In

APPROVED CEU INFORMATION

Scan the QR Code for more details.

DeafBlind Simulation Activity

Led by Dawn Watts and Julia Felts

9:30 – 10:30 AM

Participants will experience guided simulation activities designed to increase understanding of DeafBlind communication, access needs, and environmental barriers. This Professional Studies program is offered for 0.1 PS at the Little/None Content Knowledge Level

“I’m So Amazing” Documentary with DeafBlind-Led Small Group Discussions

Led by Dr. Jamie McCartney

10:45 AM – 1:45 PM

Participants will view the documentary and engage in small-group discussions led by DeafBlind community members. This Professional Studies program is offered for 0.35 PPO– Little/None Content Knowledge

DeafBlind Panel Discussion

Panelists: Art Roehrig, Terry Blosser, Jimmy Reardon, Jason Judy

Facilitated by Dr. Jamie McCartney

1:45 – 2:30 PM

Panelists will share lived experiences and perspectives on communication access and independence. This Professional Studies program is offered for 0.1 PS at the Little/None Content Knowledge Level

ProTactile (PT) Basics

2:45 – 4:00 PM

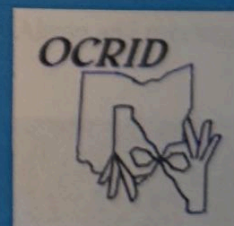
Presented by Jason Judy

Introduction to ProTactile communication and tactile information sharing strategies. This Professional Studies program is offered for 0.05 PS CEU – Some Content Knowledge

CEU Survey & Closing

4:00 – 5:00 PM

Participants complete CEU documentation and workshop feedback.



Fee: \$20 for the whole day. Cancellation by Friday, April 17th will result in a 100% refund. The target audience is agency representatives serving community members with combined vision and hearing loss, Deaf, non-deaf community members, interpreters, and students. Please reach out to jmccar15@kent.edu with any questions regarding this event and accommodations before April 17th.

The hosts of this event will foster a learning environment free of bias and discrimination, and on that promotes mutual respect of all participants.

OCRID is an Approved RID CMP Sponsor for continuing education activities.

DeafBlind Culture Workshop – Toledo

Panelist BIOS

Jimmy Reardon — Toledo

Jimmy Reardon lives his life beyond his deafblindness. While he faces challenges navigating his hometown, he remains determined to learn, explore, and experience the world as fully as possible. Jimmy strongly believes Support Service Providers (SSPs) can transform the lives of deafblind individuals by helping them access and understand the world around them. Jimmy hopes to connect with people who can guide and share what the world can see.

Arthur Roehrig — Central Ohio

Arthur “Art” Roehrig, a Wisconsin native, attended St. John’s School for the Deaf and St. Rita’s School before earning a Mathematics degree from Gallaudet University in 1968. He taught at the Maryland School for the Deaf, later returning to Gallaudet for a master’s in Rehabilitation Counseling and serving in several roles until 2012. He also completed doctoral coursework in Special Education Administration. Throughout his career, Art has been a dedicated advocate for people with DeafBlindness through AADB and MWADB, serving as AADB Vice President (1996–2005) and President (2005–2009). He has presented widely on DeafBlindness, mental health, and communication access, including Protactile. He is an enthusiastic Green Bay Packers fan.

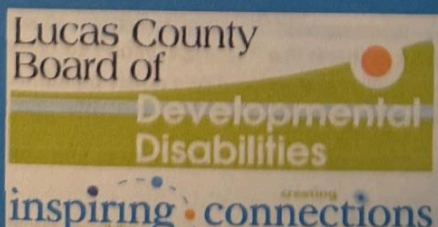
Terrence “Terry” Blosser — Central Ohio

Terrence “Terry” Blosser lives in Marysville, Ohio with his wife, Marina. He holds a BA in History, a Master of Public Administration from Portland State University, and ADA Coordinator certification from the University of Missouri. Terry has Type 2A Usher Syndrome; born hard of hearing, he began losing vision in his late twenties and identifies as DeafBlind. He serves on the Helen Keller National Center National Advisory Board, its Consumer Advisory Committee, and the Helen Keller Services Board of Trustees. Deeply committed to the DeafBlind community, Terry previously chaired Ohio’s Ad Hoc SSP/Co-Navigator Legislative Committee, playing a key role in securing both initial and ongoing state funding for the SSP/CN program.

Jason Judy — Akron, Ohio

Jason (Jace to his family and friends) has lived almost his entire life in the state of Ohio. He attended Rochester Institute of Technology as a dual major in digital Imaging & Printing Technology and Graphic communications. Jason completed a number of solo and collaborative web and print projects as a creative designer before losing his vision rapidly due to Usher Syndrome Type 1. Jason was a speed demon, finishing his braille lessons at Cleveland Sigh Center in 10 months, a record at CSC he was prod of. While receiving independent living skills training at Tactile Communication sin Seattle, Jason was immersed into ProTactile (PT) education. Jason has been a trainer for iCanConnect (ICC), specializing in working with DeafBlind consumers who use braille devices. ICC is a federally-funded program that provides computer equipment and training for DeafBlind individuals. Jason has participated in many DeafBlind activities and also several DeafBlind-related projects, one that successfully launched Ohio’s first ever statewide SSP Pilot Program in 2023. Jason enjoys reading books, especially urban fantasy, and playing chess, dingo, UNO, to name a few. Jason also is a hardcore fan of the Cleveland Browns and regularly follows their football games. He enjoys taking walks in the park like Sand Run in Akron and meeting and giving treats to dogs at One of A Kind, a pet rescue center.

THIS WORKSHOP IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE FOLLOWING COMMUNITY PARTNERS:



17 YRS + UP - HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Primary Election | May 5th, 2026

Youth at the **Booth**

Get paid to serve...

- **School Training Session: \$60.00**
- **Online Training: \$25.00**
- **Monday Night Setup: \$50.00 (optional)**
- **Election Day: \$133.72**



Franklin County
**BOARD OF
ELECTIONS**

Save the Date for Family University Conference!

A special gathering for families of children who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Blind, Visually Impaired, and Deafblind.

There once was a gathering in May,
Where families and friends spent the day.
With learning and care,
Great ideas to share,
So mark May 9th right away!

Saturday,
May 9, 2026
10:00-1:00

Childhood League Center
674 Cleveland Ave.
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Connect with Families 🍀 Learn with Presenters 🍀 Visit with Agencies

Presented by
Statewide Services and Outreach
Ohio Deaf and Blind Education Services

Registration coming soon!

Send questions to
Shelley McCoy-Shehata at
smccoy@ossb.oh.gov

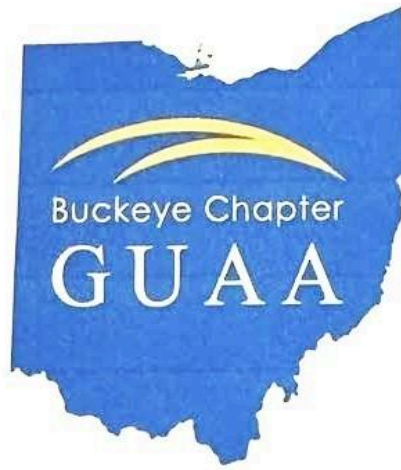


Ohio Deaf and Blind Education Services

Statewide Services & Outreach



Save the Date !!!!



**Buckeye Chapter of Gallaudet University
Alumni Association – BCGUAA**

GUAA Election and Meeting

Saturday, May 16, 2026

Columbus Colony Housing - Community/Recreation Room – CCH 1

10 AM to 2 PM

Address – 1165 Colony Drive

Westerville, OH 43081

RSVP by May 11, 2026

Email: Event Coordinator – Julie Levine at

laurelburch21@icloud.com



OHIO DEAF ASSOCIATION

Written by: ODA President, Dr. Marsha Moore

The Ohio Deaf Pickleball Fundraiser Tournament was a tremendous success, raising approximately \$7,000 in support of Deaf World Against Violence Everywhere (DWAVE), the American Sign Language Instructor Network (ASLIN), and the Ohio Deaf Association (ODA). Seven divisions competed in the tournament, and the winners have been announced. Check our FB page for more details!

We extend our sincere gratitude to our sponsors, Heritage Interpreting, Deaf Services Center, Safe'N'Clear and StageHand Performance, whose generous support made this fundraiser both impactful and meaningful for all three organizations. And a big thank you to all the players who came to play in the tournament too!

We are also excited about the upcoming Deaf KODA Camp, taking place June 18–21, 2026, under the leadership of our talented co-directors. Will Coy-Gonzalez and John Moore. The camp will have several new and exciting activities for our campers ages 7-15. See flyer for details [HERE](#). You can register your child here: [Register Your Child Here](#). Please share it with parents, friends, and community.



Volunteers are always welcome at our events. Your involvement plays an important role in strengthening our community and supporting these meaningful initiatives.

We are also pleased to share a website update from our webmaster, Mania Drosak. Two new sections—Community News & Info and More—have been added. The Community News & Info section features videos and news from Ohio and beyond. The More section includes links to Ohio Deaf Events, Deaf Community Events, and Legislative updates. We encourage you to explore the website and share these resources with the Deaf community.

The Ohio Deaf Association will have a Board meeting on Saturday, May 2 at 10 am to 3 pm at Sight Center of Northwest Ohio, 1002 Garden Lake Parkway, Toledo, Ohio 43614

Also, save the date for Saturday, October 24, 2026, for the exciting ODA/OSDF Masquerade Gala! Click [here](#) for more details, and plan to join in the fun! As always, if you have any questions, please email Marsha Moore, ODA President, at theohioda@gmail.com or Linda Adams, ODA secretary, at odasecry@gmail.com. (Photo credit: Google Images)



ASL Translator by Jason Judy, DB:

<https://youtu.be/Q37UTR-ucd8?si=BskdIxsxdXCjI496>

My name is Terrence “Terry” Blosser. I am writing on behalf of the Ohio SSP/CN Task Force. We want to share the latest update about finding a new agency to manage the SSP/CN program.

As many of you know, Columbus Speech and Hearing (CSH), the agency that ran the SSP/CN program, closed on February 13, 2026. Because of this, all SSP/CN services stopped.

In response, a group of DeafBlind community members and advocates formed the Ohio SSP/CN Task Force. Members include: Terrence Blosser (Chair), Deborah Kendrick, Janae Miller, Jason Judy,

Skip Bergquist, and Donna Foster-Sillanpaa. Julia Felts (former program manager) and

Dawn Watts (statewide SSP coordinator) have also helped us. Everyone has worked very hard to find a new agency for the program.

It is important that the new agency have experience serving DeafBlind, Deaf, and Hard of Hearing individuals who are also blind or have low vision. The agency must also have experience in ASL, Tactile ASL, or ProTactile. Communication is a critical component of any SSP/CN program. DeafBlind individuals receiving SSP services are matched with SSPs based on several factors, including the SSP's ability to communicate effectively with the individual.

We met with various nonprofit and for-profit organizations to determine whether they would be a good fit for the SSP/CN program. Some of the agencies did not have enough experience with the varied communication methods.

Our main goal was to find a new agency quickly so services could start again as soon as possible. However, this has been more difficult than we expected.

CSH still had some money from the 2026 budget and wanted to transfer it to a new agency. But state law says the money cannot be moved easily because CSH was named in the law. We need to change Ohio House Bill 96 to send the money to a new agency. This takes time.

There are three main steps:

- 1.Change the law**
- 2.Find a qualified agency**
- 3.Make sure 2027 funding goes to the new agency**

While we work on this, there are some temporary options. A member of the Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental

Disabilities suggested that county boards (DoDD) may help fund SSP/CN services for some people.

Cuyahoga DoDD held a workshop to help SSPs become independent contractors so they can work with county boards. The Ohio Association of the DeafBlind (OADB) also shared information about how to apply for these services.

Please know that each county has its own rules. Not everyone may qualify. If you need help, contact your local county DoDD office.

The SSP/CN Task Force has also engaged Opportunity for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) for further assistance. We have met with OOD multiple times. OOD has asked their legislative liaison to work with the Speaker of the Ohio House to identify solutions. The Speaker's legislative aide collaborated with OOD's legislative liaison to develop language for the House Reappropriation Bill (HB 730). This

would allow OOD to receive the funds allocated by the state legislature in the previous budget cycle. OOD will then work with the task force to develop a Request for Proposal (RFP). An RFP is a formal document that solicits detailed bids from agencies for a specific project—in this case, administration of the SSP/CN program. It will outline the qualifications and criteria needed to identify the most suitable agency.

HB 730 passed the Ohio House on March 18, 2026. It passed in the Ohio Senate on March 25, 2026. It will now go to Governor DeWine for his signature. After that, OOD can begin the RFP process. To clarify, HB730 also set aside funds for building renovations and improvements for the Ohio School for the Deaf and the Ohio School for the Blind. These funds are separate from the SSP/CN funds. They are not the same.

We do not know exactly when the SSP/CN program will start again. This timeline depends on the legislative process, which must run its course. The process takes time, and we must follow the law. We understand how important this program is. We are working as fast as we can.

Please also know:

- Agencies need time to apply after the RFP is released**
- OOD needs time to choose an agency**
- The new agency will need time to hire SSPs, connect with DeafBlind Ohioans, and restart services**

Thank you for your patience and understanding. The loss of the SSP/CN program has affected many people. We are doing our best to bring it back as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

The SSP/CN Task Force
Terrence “Terry” Blosser
Jason Judy
Deborah Kendrick
Janae Miller
Skip Bergquist
Donna Foster-Sillanpaa
Dawn Watts
Julia Felts



Image Credit: Google Images

A New Future for OADB: Progress and Connection

ASL by: Jason Judy

<https://youtu.be/N4sOenrBO2w?si=xyPZAcHupYD9oo2q>

On Saturday, March 28, the Ohio Association of the DeafBlind (OADB) entered a new chapter during our event at Columbus Colony Housing. With over 50 members, volunteers, and guests in attendance, the day was defined by a shared commitment to our community's future.

The highlight of the morning was the official passage of our revised bylaws, which marks a significant shift toward a more inclusive and modern organization. Unlike the previous version, these new rules prioritize accessibility by requiring a 72-hour window for electronic voting to allow for tactile and braille processing. The updated bylaws also move beyond general descriptions to explicitly commit to supporting all communication modes, including Protactile and CART. This transition from a simple non-profit structure to a mission-driven organization ensures that "zero barriers" is now a formal requirement for how we operate.

Following the business meeting, the group enjoyed a pizza lunch and a relaxed afternoon of socializing. Many attendees took the opportunity to reconnect with old friends, while

others participated in a lively game of Giant Jenga. This balance of productive planning and community building created an encouraging atmosphere for everyone involved.

We would like to extend a sincere thank you to the volunteer SSPs who provided vital support throughout the day. Your dedication to accompanying our DeafBlind participants ensures that our events remain accessible and enjoyable for all. We truly appreciate the time you contribute to our mission.

We also want to recognize the students and faculty from Columbus State Community College (CSCC), Kent

State University (KSU), and Sinclair Community College. Your volunteer efforts were a huge part of the day's success, and we are grateful for the ongoing support from your institutions.

For more information regarding future events or general inquiries, please contact Arisa Lomanto, OADB Secretary at oadb.eneews@gmail.com.

OADB Cookout will be on Saturday, May 9th at 10 am to 3 pm at Dogwood Shelter, Blendon Woods Metro Park, 4265 E Dublin Granville Rd, Columbus, OH 43041 Contact Linda Denny what will you bring a dish at purplerose0712@yahoo.com

Members with potluck for \$10.00 and no members with no potluck for \$12.00 SSP: \$5.00 and no members: \$15.00 Contact to Brian Farney at bjfarney@gmail.com

OADB will have pleasure at Blacklick Park at Reynoldsburg on Thursday, June 4th. Contact Jason Judy at jace411@gmail.com

ViaQuest, Inc. Behavioral & Mental Health Services for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Individuals with Disabilities

Behavioral & Mental Health Services

ViaQuest offers specialized mental and behavioral health care tailored to a wide variety of populations, including those in nursing facilities; individuals with intellectual, developmental, or dual sensory disabilities (e.g., deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, CODA); as well as families, couples, and the senior community (ViaQuest, Inc., n.d.a)

Counseling Services

- **Licensed Signing and Deaf Counselors**

ViaQuest’s team includes licensed counselors and social workers who are fluent in sign language. They support individuals dealing with trauma, anxiety, depression, abuse, and other mental health concerns through evidence-based talk therapy.

- **Flexible Service Delivery**

Clients can receive support individually or attend group sessions. These take place in a variety of settings—whether at a ViaQuest office, in community spaces, or within nursing facilities—so that care is both accessible and tailored.

- **Root Cause & Goal-Oriented Approach**

Therapy focuses on uncovering the underlying drivers of behaviors and thought patterns. Together with clients, counselors set clear, actionable goals and replace harmful thoughts with healthier alternatives.

- **Personalized Assessment and Planning**

ViaQuest conducts thorough assessments to evaluate each individual’s unique needs. From these evaluations, customized treatment plans are created, ensuring that each person has a targeted roadmap to success (ViaQuest, Inc., n.d.b).



Image Source: Microsoft Chat | M365 Copilot

Website: viaquestinc.com/contact-us/

References

ViaQuest, Inc. (n.d.a). *Behavioral & Mental Health*. Retrieved from

<https://viaquestinc.com/core-services/behavioral-mental-health/>

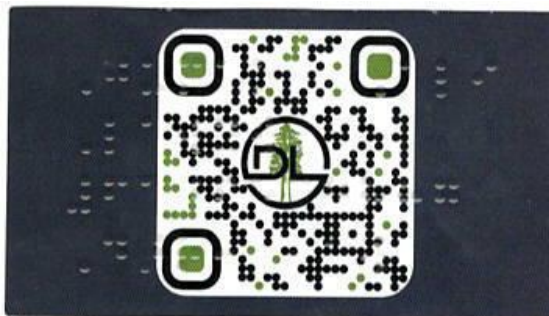
ViaQuest, Inc. (n.d.b). *Facility Services – Behavioral & Mental Health Services*. Retrieved from

<https://viaquestinc.com/core-services/behavioral-mental-health/facility-services/>

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
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 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 2026**

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

- 1) **Senior Citizens for the Deaf at the Columbus Colony Housing II**, Multi-Purpose Room 1105 Colony Drive, Westerville, Ohio, on the first and third weeks every month on Thursday from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm.
 - 2) **Columbus Deaf Club at the Columbus Colony Housing II**, Multi-Purpose Room, 1105 Colony Drive, Westerville, Ohio, on the third week of the month on Saturday, from 5:00 pm to 9:00 pm.
-

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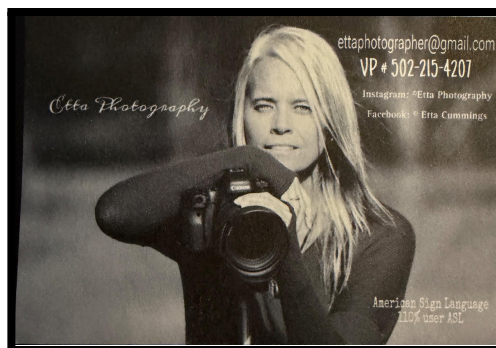
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The Deaf Reader

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