



DEAF WOMEN UNITED

20  
25

A red, faceted gemstone, resembling a diamond or a similar crystal, is positioned between the numbers 20 and 25. It has a starburst effect on its top surface, suggesting a brilliant cut.

**DEAF WOMEN UNITED**  
40th Anniversary Conference

**THE WOODLANDS, TEXAS**

Marriott Woodlands Waterway | July 23-27, 2025

# The Holley Institute

For over 31 years The Holley Institute has provided life-enhancing programs for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing families.

We screen approximately 3,500 infants each year at Henry Ford St. John Hospital for hearing loss and deafness.

The Holley Institute offers annual Family Week programs and an ASL Immersion Week at the Carls Family Village. These experiences are great to bond families while being immersed in Deaf culture

To learn more about our programs and our impact on the community visit our website at [holleyfv.org](http://holleyfv.org).



## Contact Us:

 [www.holleyfv.org](http://www.holleyfv.org)

 313-343-4803

 [jklotz1@hfhs.org](mailto:jklotz1@hfhs.org)

Check out our  
website:





DEAF WOMEN UNITED

#DWUHO2025  
**WELCOME**

## From the DWU Board

Dear Attendees,

On behalf of the Deaf Women United Board, welcome to the Deaf Women United National Conference 2025!

It is with deep pride and excitement that we gather in community once again celebrating the power, resilience, and brilliance of Deaf women across generations, identities, and lived experiences.

This conference is a space where Deaf women come together to share knowledge, inspire one another, and create lasting change. Whether you are here for the first time or have attended before, your presence enriches our collective journey.

As we enter these next few days, we encourage you to engage fully. Attend with curiosity, lead with compassion, and connect with courage. The stories, wisdom, and joy you bring help shape the legacy of this space and our shared future.

We are honored to hold this space with you. Let's lift one another up, build boldly, and leave this conference more connected and empowered than ever before.

With solidarity and gratitude,

**The Deaf Women United Board 2023-2025**





National Association of the Deaf  
[www.nad.org](http://www.nad.org)

Dear DWU Conference Attendees,

On behalf of the women members of the National Association of the Deaf, we extend our warmest congratulations to Deaf Women United on reaching this remarkable 40-year milestone.

For four decades, DWU has been a beacon of strength, creating vital spaces where Deaf women's voices are heard, valued, and amplified. We have come a long way since the first conference in 1985, held in Los Angeles with a great group of visionary women who laid the foundation for this powerful movement. Your organization has consistently championed the unique perspectives and experiences of Deaf women, fostering leadership that has strengthened our entire community.

As you gather in Houston this July, we celebrate not only DWU's legacy but also the countless Deaf women who have paved the way for future generations. Your advocacy has broken barriers, challenged assumptions, and created opportunities that continue to benefit all of us today.

The intersectional leadership that DWU represents is essential to the Deaf community's growth and evolution. We are proud to stand alongside you on this ongoing journey toward equality, accessibility, and empowerment.

Thank you for your unwavering dedication to uplifting Deaf women everywhere. Here's to the next 40 years of connection, advocacy, and sisterhood.

In solidarity and celebration,

Lisa M. Rose  
President

Bobbie Beth Scoggins, Ed.D.  
Interim CEO



Dear Sisters, Friends, and Community,

Welcome to the 40th Anniversary Conference of Deaf Women United.  
Take a breath. You've made it. We've made it.

This moment is more than a gathering — it is a homecoming. A celebration of our stories, our strength, and the unshakable legacy of Deaf women who continue to lead, love, and light the way for one another.

When I placed the bid to bring this conference to Houston back in 2019 at the Phoenix conference, I couldn't have imagined the journey that would follow. A global pandemic shifted everything. The Chicago conference was moved, life kept unfolding, and I found myself navigating a fibromyalgia diagnosis that changed my pace and priorities. But even through it all, something stayed rooted in me — this calling to serve. To complete my education. To lead with heart.

I recently graduated from Gallaudet University and started my master's in Sign Language Education. As you read this, I've just returned from five weeks in Washington, D.C., where I continued supporting this conference from afar. While I was away, an incredible team of Deaf women stepped forward — Board members, committees, and volunteers — all of whom poured their energy and care into making this moment possible. I thank each one of you from the bottom of my heart.

As you check in and settle into this experience, know that everything here was created with deep intention. May you feel held, inspired, and empowered throughout this week. Whether through workshops, shared meals, late-night laughter, or moments of stillness — this space belongs to you.

Thank you for being here. Thank you for being part of our story.

With heartfelt love,

**Tiffany Scofield**

Conference Co-Chair

Deaf Women United 40th Anniversary Conference

# #DWUHO2025 WELCOME



Dear Attendees,

Welcome to the Deaf Women United National Conference 2025!

My name is Candace Sexton-Ruiz, and I am honored to serve as the Co-Chair for this year's conference. It is with great excitement and pride that I welcome you all to this incredible gathering, taking place from July 23 to 27, 2025.

This conference is a unique opportunity for Deaf women from all walks of life to come together in celebration, reflection, and empowerment. Whether this is your first time attending or you are a returning participant, I hope you arrive with open hearts and minds—ready to learn, share, and grow alongside one another.

Together, we will explore new ideas, honor our shared stories, and continue building a strong and supportive community. Your presence and voice are vital to making this event a meaningful and enriching experience for all.

Thank you for being here. Let's make this an unforgettable journey!

With warmest regards,

**Candace Sexton-Ruiz**

Co-Chair, Deaf Women United National Conference 2025

## A Brief Herstory of DWU

**Deaf Women United is an organization of, by, and for Deaf women.**

Founded in 1985, its goals are to provide tools, information, communal support, and training in organizational management, personal growth, and empowerment.

Before DWU's birth, in 1984, Marcella Meyer — then Executive Director of the Greater Los Angeles Council on Deafness (GLAD) — and others formed a committee that led to the highly successful 1985 Deaf women's conference titled "Deaf Women United." At this conference, the concept of a national Deaf women's organization was born, and the name Deaf Women United, Inc. was adopted.

The keynote speaker was Barbara Brauer. Our first DWU Board of Officers included Chris "CB" Buchholz, Allie Joiner, Marcia (Kessler) Nowak, Sheila Conlon-Mentkowski, Dr. Betty G. Miller, Sandra Ammons, and Gwendolyn (Speaks) Trujillo — pioneers of the Deaf women's movement.

The founding Board developed DWU's mission statement and action plans with funding and assistance from the Women's Technical Assistance Project. They drafted bylaws and secured nonprofit tax-exempt status. Participants at the 1985 conference reached consensus on DWU's core purposes:

- To learn more about ourselves as Deaf women, communicate our needs, and develop inner resources to meet those needs.
- To acknowledge and accept the diversity of individual Deaf women, explore how Deafness and womanhood affect our lives, and empower women to commit to positive change by taking control of their lives.
- To formally establish Deaf Women United and share the vision and resources needed to empower Deaf women locally.

#DWUHO2025

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Bronze Level (\$500+)



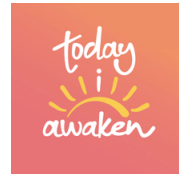
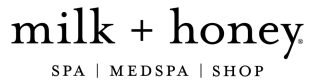
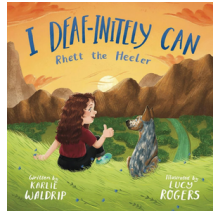
Woodlands Waterway (\$500)



# Thank you!

# SPONSORS

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#DWUHO2025

# BOARD + COMMITTEE



DEAF WOMEN UNITED



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**Rach Burton**  
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**Venesse Guy**  
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**Brianna Keogh**  
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**Morgan Campbell**  
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**Tiffany Scofield**  
Conference Chair



**Candace Sexton-Ruiz**  
Conference Co-Chair



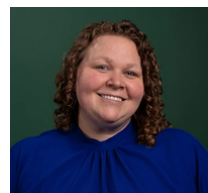
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**Jennifer Carberry**  
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Hospitality Chair



**Jamers Speier**  
CEU Coordinator



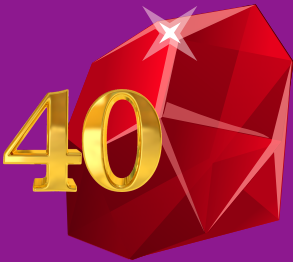
#DWUHO2025

WEDNESDAY, JULY 23

TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
10 AM – 5 PM	Registration	Montgomery Foyer
7 – 9:30 pm	Welcome Event	Waterways 6–8

Did You Know?

- The ruby is the traditional 40th anniversary gemstone, symbolizing passion, protection, and vitality.
- DWU held its first conference in Santa Monica, CA in 1985.
- Rubies were once believed to protect warriors in battle and bring peace.



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#DWUHO2025

THURSDAY, JULY 24

TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
7 - 8 AM	Morning Fitness	Montgomery A
7 - 9 AM	Breakfast	Montgomery Foyer
8 - 8:45 AM	DWU First-Time Orientation	Waterways 6-8
9 - 9:30 AM	Opening Ceremony	Waterways 6-8
9:45 - 10:45 AM	Plenary Session A	Waterways 6-8
11 AM - 12 PM	Plenary Session B	Waterways 6-8
12 - 1:30 PM	Lunch	Waterways 6-8
1:45 - 2:45 PM	Workshops	Montgomery A, B C
3 - 4 PM	DWU Board Panel	Waterways 6-8
4 - 7 PM	Pickleball Clinic (no fee)	PALA Pickleball 20100 Holzwarth Rd. Spring, Texas 77388
6 - 9 PM	Rosie the Riveter Painting Class (fee)	Waterways 6-8



Take a Mindful Minute

Breathe in...  
Hold for four seconds...

Breathe out...  
You're exactly where you need to be.

#DWUHOU2025

THURSDAY, JULY 24



## Painting Class

*Hosted by Sheri Youens-Un*

Join for some Rosie the Riveter painting fun, led by Sheri Youens-Un, owner of Deafroot! This is an admission-only event.

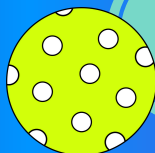
## Pickleball Clinic

Thursday, July 24

4 - 7 PM

Location: PALA Pickleball  
20100 Holzwarth Rd  
Spring, Texas 77388

**Free clinic for  
DWU attendees,  
hosted by Austin  
Deaf Pickleball!**



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#DWUHO2025

FRIDAY, JULY 25

TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
7 - 8 AM	Morning Fitness	Montgomery A
7 - 9 AM	Breakfast	Montgomery Foyer
9 AM - 12 PM	DWU Business Meeting	Waterways 6-8
12 - 1 PM	Lunch	Waterways 6-8
1 - 2 PM	Workshops	Montgomery A, B, C
2:15 - 3:15 PM	Workshops	Montgomery A, B, C
3:30 - 4:30 PM	Plenary: Cancer Here, Cancer There, Cancer Everywhere!	Waterways 6-8
6 -7 PM	Self Defense Class	Waterways 6-8
6 - 8 PM	Visual Storytelling through Zines Class	Montgomery B
7 - 10PM	Public Night Out Gathering (open to public)	Kirby Ice House 1700 Lake Robbins Dr, The Woodlands, TX 77380

Conference Bucket List

Before I leave DWU 2025, I want to:

☐ Attend a session outside my comfort zone

☐ Exchange contact info with a new friend

☐ Take a photo with someone inspiring

#DWUHO2025

**FRIDAY, JULY 25**



## Self Defense Class

*Led by*  
*Missy Keast*

**6 – 7 PM**

Waterways 6-8

Learn how to protect yourself in any outfit – heels, sneakers, or bare feet! All attire welcome, no fee. Led by Missy Keast, a proud mom of three, behaving like a bear mom but with black belt karate with 11 years of training experience. As an ASL teacher for 30 years plus, she incorporates fun demonstrations of self-defense in her classroom for high school students! Now, it's your turn to be a student and learn from her!

## Visual Storytelling through Zines Class

*Led by*  
*Youmee Lee*

**6 – 8 PM**

Montgomery B

Youmee Lee, a Deaf animator, educator, and advocate based in NYC, explores storytelling through ASL animation, zines, and children's books. In this hands-on workshop, Youmee will guide participants through zine-making as a powerful tool for self-expression, advocacy, and Deaf representation. No art experience or fee needed—just a willingness to share your story and explore identity through creative mediums.



## Public Night Out

*Hosted by*  
*Deaf Artisan Market Day*

**7 PM**

Not hosted by DWU

This gathering at Kirby Ice House is open to ANYONE to mingle and enjoy! Walking distance from the hotel. Bring your friends! 21 and up.





#DWUHO2025

SATURDAY, JULY 26

TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
7 - 8 AM	Morning Fitness	Montgomery A
7 - 9 AM	Breakfast	Montgomery Foyer
9 - 10 AM	DWU Jeopardy!	Waterways 6-8
10:15 - 11:15 AM	Workshops	Montgomery A, B, C
11:30 - 12:30 PM	Workshops	Montgomery A, B, C
12:30 - 1:30 PM	Lunch	Waterways 6-8
1:30 - 4 PM	Special Interest Groups	Montgomery A, B, C
1:30 - 4 PM	Pool Party	Pool
5:45 PM	Group Photo	Montgomery Foyer
6 - 11 PM	Gala & Dinner	Waterways 6-8

SUNDAY, JULY 27

TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
Before 11 AM	Check out (breakfast on your own)	Marriott
12 - 8 PM	Pickleball Tournament	PALA Pickleball 20100 Holzwarth Rd Spring, Texas 77388

Finish this sentence:

When I think of DWU, I feel \_\_\_\_\_



#DWUHO2025

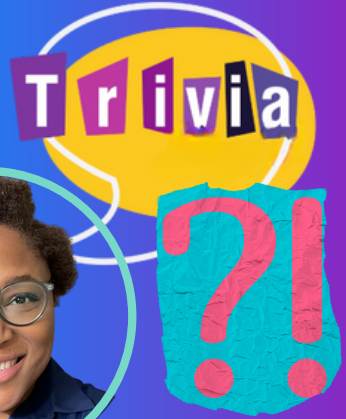
**SATURDAY, JULY 26**

## **DWU Jeopardy!**

*Hosted by Callie Frye*

**9 – 10 am**

Join us for a fun and educational game of DWU Jeopardy! hosted by the one and only Callie Frye!



## **POOL PARTY**

**Saturday, July 26**  
**1:30 – 4:00 pm**



## **40th Anniversary Gala**

**6 – 11 pm**

**Waterways 6-8**



***Come As You Are***

Keynote Speaker: **Allie Joiner**  
Entertainment, Awards, & Cake Auction  
with Morgan Campbell as MC

## SMASH THE CEILING

*Women Doubles Scramble*

**Sunday, July 27**

**12-8 pm**

PALA Pickleball

20100 Holzwarth Rd.

Spring, Texas 77388

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# #DWUHO2025 KEYNOTE

## Allie Joiner *DWU Pioneer*

A true trailblazer and champion for Deaf empowerment, Allie “AJ” Joiner’s journey began at Gallaudet University, graduating in 1957. With a rich foundation built over 8 years at Arkansas School for the Deaf and 2 years at Louisiana School for the Deaf, AJ became a powerhouse educator and role model in the Deaf community.



Her dynamic career spans 13 years of teaching, 6 years of vocational counseling, and an inspiring 44 years as a passionate advocate for Deaf rights. AJ also dedicated 22 years serving on the Board of Washington School for the Deaf before her retirement.

But that’s not all—AJ is a founding force behind Deaf Women United, ignited in 1985 at the legendary Santa Monica Deaf Women Conference. Today, AJ continues her fearless advocacy as a board member of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Center in Corpus Christi, where she lives with her wife, Estie Provow.



**Visit *Pink Wings of Hope* and join our community of hope today!**

**<https://www.deafinc.org/pwoph>**

**or follow us on Social Media**



*Standing by Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind individuals through their cancer journey!*

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Pink Wings of Hope shall empower the Deaf and Hard of Hearing with education and support to make well-informed decisions in regard to their health and cancer treatment options.

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Phone: (314) 714-6405  
Email: [pwoph@deafinc.org](mailto:pwoph@deafinc.org)



# PLENARY

## Amanda Tuite

### How to Harness the Power of Networking Now & Why We Do It

Do you know where you're going? This question from Alice in Wonderland reminds us that direction matters. Amanda found hers through networking across Deaf and hearing communities. This session explores how authentic connections can shape your purpose, build your brand, and open doors—especially for Deaf professionals, where face-to-face networking is key. Amanda is the Co-Founder and CEO of Access Vine, where she leads efforts in accessibility, Deaf advocacy training, and communication access. With extensive experience in the Deaf services sector, she also serves as President of the Texas School for the Deaf Foundation.



Thursday, July 24.  
*0.2 GS CEU*  
9:45 am – 12 pm  
(with a break)

## Stephanie Wilcox

### Cancer Here, Cancer There, Cancer Everywhere!

Cancer can affect anyone—regardless of age, gender, background, or status. This workshop will help participants understand what cancer is, its causes, treatment options, and available resources. You'll leave feeling informed, empowered, and better prepared to support yourself or loved ones on their cancer journey. Stephanie is a lung cancer survivor and passionate advocate for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind individuals affected by cancer. Through her work with Pink Wings of Hope, she supports those navigating cancer or caregiving, drawing from her own lived experience to offer guidance and hope.



Friday, July 24  
*0.1 CEU PS*  
3:30 – 4:30 pm



# Deaf Women Are Leading in Every Field

Let's make sure the world sees you!

From classrooms to career paths, we're here to support deaf women in building strong futures.

We share tools and real-life stories to help people learn, connect, and take action.



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See facts and trends on our **Data Dashboard**.



Watch deaf women share their paths in **healthcare, art, tech, trades, and more**.



Explore **FREE** resources to support every stage of life beyond high school.



## **Together in Action: Enhancing Support for DeafBlind Women**

Melvia Nomeland

Led by advocate and retired educator Melvia Nomeland, this roundtable invites DeafBlind participants to share experiences, address challenges, and explore solutions for equitable access. With the AADB currently inactive, the session focuses on revitalizing support networks for the DeafBlind and Hard of Seeing communities. A Houston native, TSD alumna, and co-author of *The Deaf Community in America: History in the Making*, Melvia brings 25 years of experience at KDES and MSSD and now advocates for the DeafBlind community.



1:15 – 2:45 pm  
Montgomery A  
0.15 CEU PS



## **The Beauty of Grief**

Rochelle Carty-Bauman

Grief isn't just something to endure—it can be a path to healing and transformation. This session explores how embracing grief, breaking taboos, and sharing stories can lead to deeper self-care, purpose, and empowerment beyond loss. Rochelle is an educator, mentor, and entrepreneur who turned personal loss into purpose. She empowers others to navigate grief, embrace self-care, and create financial freedom, inspiring healing and intentional growth.

1:45 – 2:45 pm  
Montgomery B  
0.1 CEU GS

## **Healthy Plant-Based Lifestyle**

Sandria Graham

Sandria Graham, a Deaf dietitian and founder of ASL Vegan Nutritionist, LLC, has provided plant-based nutrition coaching since 2018 and has a B.S. in Dietetics from Madonna University and over a decade teaching at Michigan State University. Participants will review major chronic diseases and explore the impact of diet and lifestyle, comparing fad diets, plant-based eating, and the standard American diet. Topics include nutrition labels, carbs, Blue Zones, and physical activity.

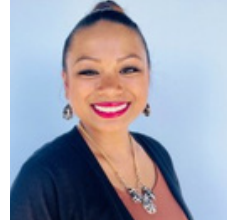


1:45 – 2:45 pm  
Montgomery C  
0.1 CEU GS

## **Advocacy and Mentorship: Nonprofit Organizations Run by/for the Deaf**

Aliza Long

Aliza, a young advocate in Corpus Christi and South Valley, TX, empowers the Deaf community through workshops and serves as communications chair for TAD. Mentorship is vital to sustain Deaf-led nonprofits nationwide, especially as leadership thrives more in residential and day schools than in mainstream settings. This session invites Deaf female leaders to share successes and challenges in advocacy and mentorship across states.



1 - 2 pm  
Montgomery A  
0.1 CEU GS



## **Travel Tips as a Female Traveler**

Melinda Harrison Jones

Melinda Harrison Jones, an avid traveler to 24 countries and former high school English teacher, now manages operations and educational tours at Hands On Travel. Living in Indiana with her Deaf family, she inspires her Deaf daughters' love for travel. She inspires to travel with confidence! Learn practical safety tips, packing strategies, and cultural insights tailored for women travelers—whether solo or in groups.

1 - 2 pm  
Montgomery B  
0.1 CEU GS

## **Women & Entrepreneurship: Practical Business Tips from a Deaf Woman Business Owner**

Sheri Youens-Un

Sheri Youens-Un, owner of Deafroot, shares her journey as a Deaf woman entrepreneur, highlighting common business challenges, success stories, and essential guidelines. This workshop offers practical advice and a checklist to help participants decide if starting and maintaining a business is the right path for them.



1 - 2 pm  
Montgomery C  
0.1 CEU GS

## **Cycle of Success**

Amanda Leccese

Amanda transitioned from a career-driven woman to a stay-at-home mom and then to a six-figure online business owner by mastering her mindset and embracing continuous growth. This presentation introduces the Cycle of Success, a framework blending business principles and personal development to empower Deaf women. Drawing on works by Mel Robbins and Jamie Kern Lima, it offers practical tools to overcome limiting beliefs and achieve personal transformation.



2:15 – 3:15 pm  
Montgomery A  
0.1 CEU GS



## **Co-Parenting**

Dr. Angela K. Trahan

Dr. Angela K. Trahan brings a rich background in Deaf Education, ASL instruction, and advocacy, shaped by her experiences living across the U.S. and traveling internationally. As a lifelong educator, advocate, and mother, she empowers Deaf women to balance life at home, school, and work. Drawing from personal challenges with co-parenting, she offers practical tools and resources to support families in overcoming difficulties and fostering healthier relationships.

2:15 – 3:15 pm  
Montgomery B  
0.1 CEU GS

## **Attuning into Our Bodies: The Connection of Physical and Mental Health**

Luba Maria Douziech

Luba Maria Douziech is a licensed mental health therapist specializing in alternative, non-traditional approaches, currently supporting survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. She emphasizes the deep connection between trauma, mental health, and physical well-being, helping clients understand how repressed stress affects the body and mind to promote healing and holistic wellness.



2:15 – 3:15 pm  
Montgomery C  
0.1 CEU GS

#DWUHO2025

# WORKSHOPS

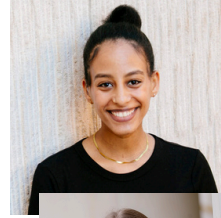
Saturday, July 26

## **Authentic Advocacy: Using Social Media to Empower Deaf Women**

Leele Girma and Sara Fair

10:15 – 11:15 am  
Montgomery A  
0.1 CEU GS

Sara Fair, Communications Director at NDC, and Leele Girma, social media coordinator, use digital platforms to amplify Deaf voices and create inclusive advocacy. Drawing from their personal experiences, they empower others to share stories, bridge community gaps, and tackle barriers Deaf women face in education and employment through impactful social media strategies.



## **Then, Now, Becoming: A Reflective Art Activity**

Loren Ashton and Christine Ellis

Christine Ellis, MSW, LCSW is a licensed therapist, coach, and consultant. Loren Ashton, LPC is a Deaf licensed professional counselor at DeafLEAD. Through drawing, color, and imagery, Deaf women will express their past, present, and future selves in a safe, affirming space. The session invites both creative processing and silent or optional group sharing in ASL.

10:15 – 11:15 am  
Montgomery B

## **Financial Trivia: See How Much You Know!**

Stephanie Summers

Stephanie Summers is one of five Deaf financial advisors at Kramer Wealth Managers, a Deaf-owned firm serving clients nationwide with personalized wealth management. Stephanie is the first Deaf woman to earn the Series 7 license, highlighting her expertise. Join their fun, interactive Kahoot session to learn about investing, retirement, estate planning, and more—perfect for all levels to boost financial confidence.



10:15 – 11:15 am  
Montgomery C  
0.1 CEU GS

#DWUHO2025

# WORKSHOPS

Saturday, July 26

## Deaf Women in Technology

Cady Macfee

Cady Macfee, Relationship Manager at T-Mobile Accessibility with 15 years in telecom, advocates for recognizing and celebrating Deaf women in technology—a field often overshadowed by men. A dedicated mother and sports fan, Cady balances work and family while inspiring others to shift the narrative for women in tech.



11:30 am - 12:30 pm  
Montgomery A  
0.1 CEU GS



## Architecture is Not Interior Design!

Danielle Koplitz

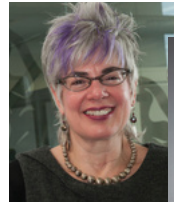
Danielle Koplitz, a Deaf architect with a Master's from UT Austin, brings experience from MASS Design Group and teaching DeafSpace at Gallaudet. In this session, she invites Deaf women to explore architecture through a Deaf lens, sharing design concepts, tools, career paths, and a free hands-on program—encouraging them to shape the future of design with their unique perspective.

11:30 am - 12:30 pm  
Montgomery B  
0.1 CEU GS

## The Clock Turned Back: Reclaiming Mentoring for Deaf Women Professionals

Pamela Conley and Deirdre Schlehofer

Professors Pamela Conley and DD from RIT/NTID lead this session on the power of mentoring for Deaf women professionals. With expertise in Deaf literature, women's studies, and sign language assessment, they create space for open dialogue on adapting mentorship to meet the unique needs of Deaf women. Participants will explore practical strategies to foster inclusive, supportive professional growth.



11:30 am - 12:30 pm  
Montgomery C  
0.1 CEU GS



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