

DeaFestival 2024 was a milestone year as the City of Riverside and the Deaf Community celebrated 25 years of collaboration with a special event called Deaf Awareness Day. It began in 1999 with a single folding table and two Deaf representatives has grown into a popular annual event known as DeaFestival.

The annual DeaFestival program holds a special place in the hearts of the city and its communities. The City of Riverside and the Deaf Community of Riverside (DCR), a non-profit organization, have partnered over the years to bring this event to life, highlighting the significance and diversity of the Deaf community. The mission is simple but impactful: fostering cultural awareness.

An iconic feature of DeaFestival has always been the portable rock-climbing wall, a favorite for both kids and adults. The KidZone has also been a highlight, providing children with endless fun through three giant jumpers and face painting, thanks to the Family, School, and Community Association (CSDR FSCA).

DeaFestival continues to be a testament to the power of community, culture, and collaboration.

DeaFestival featured a variety of scheduled guest entertainers, including Hula Bella by Monica Foletta and *DEAFinitely Magic* by Greg Kopell and Steve Longarce. Young children delighted the audience with ASL storytelling, jokes, poetry, and more. A special highlight was a surprise on-stage improv performance by Leila Hanauni!

During the event, DeaFestival and City of Riverside Ward 3 Assembly Member Steven Robillard, along with Mike Anderson and President Barbie Gomez, presented special awards to recognize outstanding contributions:

- **Ian Barraza Youth Award:** Christian Deloye
- **Community Business Award:** Rick Calderilla for Audio Services LIVE!
- **Ruth Usher Interpreter Award:** Desere Patterson
- **Community Award:** Lynn Lamberson Real Estate Realtor
- **Ambassador Awards:** Alyce Slater-Reynolds and Terri Davenport

The awards ceremony celebrated the incredible efforts and achievements of individuals and organizations within the Deaf community. It was a memorable and inspiring moment for all who attended.

DeaFestival offered a vibrant mix of activities, including performances, awards, the KidZone, the *Finding Deaf Gnomes* game, various vendors, sponsors, food trucks, and most importantly, the *Show and Tell* exhibitions.

The exhibitions featured representatives from key organizations such as the California Highway Patrol, Riverside Police Department, Riverside Public Utility Crew, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Riverside Fire Department/Cert, the SWAT Team, Riverside Transit Authority, AMR Ambulance, Red Cross of Riverside, Riverside County Sheriff, and many more.

Audiences had the unique opportunity to interact directly with these organizations, fostering meaningful communication and engagement. Many of them also provided hands-on materials, giving attendees a chance to explore and learn in a fun and interactive way.

A wonderful highlight of the event was the chance to support many Deaf-owned businesses, including three amazing food vendors: Magaly's, Piooa, and Oliver's, as well as Brave's Kitchen and Kona Ice.

The event featured over 90 vendors, sponsors, educational organizations, social services, and more, all lining two full street blocks along the beautiful Main Street walkway. We must take a moment to honor the incredible main sponsors whose contributions made this event possible: the City of Riverside, Center on Deafness Inland Empire (CODIE), RUHS, IEHP, Molina, Altura Bank, Kaiser Permanente, Athens Services, RISE Interpreting, Riverside City College S.A.I.D., Hadley Bajramovic Immigration Law, Sorenson, and the Deaf Community of Riverside.

It was heartwarming to witness how the event continues to evolve each year, welcoming people from all walks of life—new friends, old friends, and those eager to learn about Deaf culture and the challenges faced by the Deaf community.

We can't wait to see you next year!

Mark your calendar: September 20, 2025!

Credits to Ryan "RyRy" Fingerle, Humberto Guzman, Jens Rechenberg, Kaveh Angoorani, April Getten, Jenni Kysella, Dyan Kovacs, Maisha Franklin, Scott Berdy, Brad Miles, Sam and Kala Anderson, Tina Anderson, Josh Gray, Lisa Price, David Reynolds, Moon Feris, Mike Anderson, Barbie Gomez, and the hidden crew: volunteers from CSDR, MLK HS, Poly HS, RCC, Rise Interpreters and more!