



Deaf Awareness Week September 2022

By Donna Sorensen, Superintendent
North Dakota School for the Deaf / Resource Center

Did you watch the TV series *Switched at Birth*? What about *America's Next Top Model* when Nyle DiMarco was a competitor? *Dancing with the Stars* when Marlee Matlin, Nyle DiMarco, and now Daniel Durant are dance contestants? Did you watch the movie *The Hammer* starring Russell Harvard about the deaf wrestler Matt Hamill? Or even more recently, *The Quiet Place* or *CODA*?

These mainstream TV shows and movies prominently featured Deaf actors in roles for Deaf characters. What were your thoughts as you watched those shows? Did you feel sorry for them? Or did you feel like your world expanded seeing Deaf people being successful?

I want to offer you a challenge this week for Deaf Awareness Week. Our society values and expects “normalcy.” Part of that “normalcy” is using all 5 senses (seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and touch) and using spoken English. Would you be willing to consider that “normalcy” can include people experience senses differently? Would you be willing to see others as differently-abled rather than dis-abled?

Part of Deaf Culture is being proud of being Deaf. Deaf people have added to our world in so many ways. Consider the football huddle brought to the world by a Deaf football team and baseball ump signals for balls and strikes was brought to the world by a Deaf pitcher. North Dakota's own Phyllis Frelich was the first Deaf actor or actress to win a Tony award. Deaf people develop strong identities, they see and understand things in unique ways, and they have instant friends and connections with other Deaf people wherever they go.

Each year in September, schools and entities celebrate and honor Deaf Awareness Month with learning activities, festivals, and celebrating the *Deaf Community. The last full week in September is often designated as Deaf Awareness Week (DAW). The purpose is to raise awareness about language, culture, and diversity in the Deaf Community. Other purposes include promoting equal access for Deaf people, educating others about misconceptions of being Deaf, and providing an opportunity to learn about the educational programs and support services available to Deaf people. This week is also an opportunity to examine how Deaf people and Deaf culture enrich the world and celebrate the positive aspects of being Deaf.

Being bilingual (English and American Sign Language) has given me the ability to see things from different perspectives more easily. Knowing ASL has brought Deaf people to

my life who have become close supportive friends who I consider my family. I have been able to travel to other states and countries because of my connections with Deaf people and Deaf Culture. I invite you to take this week and consider how others who are different from you have contributed to your life.

If you would like to learn more about Deaf people, Deaf Culture, or American Sign Language, check out the resources below. Visit our website and Facebook page or call and arrange for a visit to our school to learn more about what we do!

<https://www.ndsd.nd.gov/> or
<https://www.facebook.com/NorthDakotaSchoolfortheDeafResourceCtr/>

* You will notice a capital “D” is being used for Deaf. This term is used to be inclusive of individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, and deaf with disabilities.

References and Resources:

<https://deafchildren.org/2021/09/asl-resources-deaf-awareness-month-sept-2021/>
<https://wfdeaf.org/iwdeaf2022/#:~:text=19%20to%2025%20september%202022>
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