



# Deaf History Month

Throughout the month of April, we celebrate the accomplishments and contributions of the deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) community.

## Notable Deaf History Moments in Education

- In 1817, Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet founded the first permanent school for the deaf in the United States, **the American School for the Deaf**, located in West Hartford, Connecticut.
- In 1864, The Columbia Institution for the Deaf was founded in Washington D.C. The school later became **Gallaudet University** and is the only institute of higher learning of its kind in the United States.
- In 1988, Irving King Jordan became the first Deaf president of Gallaudet University after an activist movement led by Gallaudet students.



- American Sign Language (ASL), the fourth most popular language in the world, is independent of English with its own grammar and linguistic properties.
- There are variations of ASL, such as Black American Sign Language, used in different regions among various cultures in the United States. There are more than 300 different sign languages in the world.
- ASL is accepted by many high schools, colleges, and universities in fulfillment of modern and foreign language academic degree requirements throughout the United States.
- People who identify as culturally Deaf will use a capital "D." The term "hearing impaired" is no longer accepted in Deaf culture, which favors "deaf" or "hard of hearing" instead.
- The acronym CODA means child of deaf adults. "CODA," released in 2021, is an award-winning film, including three Academy Awards, that grossed over \$1 million at the box office.
- The **Illinois School for the Deaf** (ISD) is located in Jacksonville. Any student PreK-transition age who is deaf or hard of hearing may attend ISD.



## Equity Heroes

**Warren “Wawa” Snipe** is a Deaf rapper who works to unite the deaf and hearing communities through his work called “dip-hop” or “hip-hop through Deaf eyes.” Wawa performed during the halftime show of Superbowl LVI.



**Antonia Phillips** is a deaf student who attends Alton High School (AHS) in Illinois. Antonia is the first girls wrestling sectional champion and Illinois High School Association state qualifier from AHS.



**Dr. Carolyn McCaskill** is the founder of the Center for Black Deaf Studies at Gallaudet University and co-author of *The Hidden Treasures of Black ASL: Its History and Structure*. She is part of the Black ASL Project, which works to study the history of and amplify Black American Sign Language.



**Haben Girma**, a passionate advocate for disability rights, is the first DeafBlind student to graduate from Harvard Law School. She was recognized by President Barack Obama as a “Champion of Change” and also received the 2018 Helen Keller Achievement Award.



## How can you support the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community?

**Develop**

inclusive environments in the classroom, at work, and in the community by providing sign language interpreters and/or captioning.

**Support**

a person’s right to self-determination and independence. Ask to help before assuming.

**Visit**

The National Association of the Deaf

Illinois State Board of Education: Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, and Visually Impaired.

**Learn**

sign-language from a DHH person for whom ASL is a native language. Enroll in available local classes or visit websites or apps that teach ASL.

If you have a suggestion for an Equity Hero theme, please email [equity@isbe.net](mailto:equity@isbe.net).