

# Believing... Achieving

Success Stories  
from Individuals  
Who are Deaf and  
Hard of Hearing

2005



Editors:  
Tammy Cate  
Miskey Wright

This free publication is available online at <<http://sunsite.utk.edu/cod/pec/publications.html>>. Limited numbers of printed copies are available from the PEPNet Resource Center while supplies last at <[www.pepnet.org](http://www.pepnet.org)>.

This publication was funded by the Postsecondary Education Consortium at The University of Tennessee College of Education, Center on Deafness through an agreement with the U.S. Department of Education, Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Grant Number H324A010003.

The Postsecondary Education Consortium serves the Southern region of the United States, and is a consortium of state outreach and technical assistance centers which are housed at postsecondary programs serving students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The mission of the PEC is to enhance learning environments that empower these individuals. PEC promotes quality programs and services through innovative practices and outreach to postsecondary and training entities. PEC is a member of PEPNet.

The University of Tennessee does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, religion, national origin, age, disability or veteran status in provision of educational programs and services or employment opportunities and benefits. This policy extends to both employment by and admission to the University.

The University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex or disability in its education programs and activities pursuant to the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

Inquiries and charges of violation concerning Title VI, Title IX, Section 504, ADA or the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) or any of the other above referenced policies should be directed to the Office of Equity and Diversity (OED), 1840 Melrose Avenue, Knoxville, TN 37996-3560, telephone (865) 974-2498 (V/TTY available) or 974-2440. Requests for accommodation of a disability should be directed to the ADA Coordinator at the UTK Office of Human Resources, 600 Henley Street, Knoxville, TN 37996-4125.

UT PA #RO1-1810-011-008-05.

.....

# Welcome!

Welcome to the 2005 edition of *Believing . . . Achieving*. This book showcases 32 individuals from across the nation who are deaf and hard of hearing. These featured success stories show us a glimpse into the lives of a group of individuals who are inspiring, full of hope, and determined to succeed.

These are people from a variety of backgrounds, talents and interests as well as from diverse cultures, but all have a common outlook. Each one has continued to pursue a goal. Each one has faced difficult obstacles and barriers. Each one has continued in spite of failures and defeats. And in continuing, each one has succeeded.

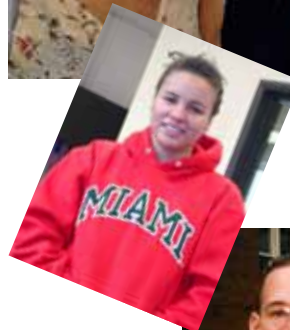
Our hope is that the stories included here will encourage other individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing, in their personal lives as well as their professional lives, to believe and to achieve.

.....



### Postsecondary Education Consortium

University of Tennessee  
A 507 Claxton Complex  
Knoxville, TN 37996-3454  
(865) 974-0607 (v/t)  
(865) 974-3522 (fax)





.....

# Contents

- 6 Foreword: Annette Reichman
- 8 Nakia Brinson
- 9 Sylma Alvarado Carrasquillo
- 11 Jerry Carver
- 12 Patricia Roberts Clincy
- 14 Sheri Farinha
- 16 Steve Farmer
- 18 Eve “Laney” Fox
- 19 Rhonda Fung
- 20 Nicol Gautreau
- 22 Kelli Gavin
- 23 Daniel Girard
- 25 Brad Hermes
- 26 Ben Hollingsworth
- 28 Timothy Kuyrkendall
- 29 Jonathan Leach
- 31 Craig Lemak
- 32 Frank Levine
- 33 Natalie (Nikki) Maxwell
- 34 R. Dale McPherson
- 37 Mathew Molinder
- 39 Janice Diane Morgan
- 41 Leslie Mossholder
- 43 Lucy E. Mossholder
- 45 Shelley Oishi
- 47 Richard “RJ” Oxenham
- 48 Yakov Shifrin
- 50 Chiquita Simmons
- 51 Mahala Slone
- 52 Kathy Smith
- 53 Andrew White
- 54 Amy Wong



.....

## *Foreword: Annette Reichman*

Reading the personal stories of success from all walks of life and ethnic/cultural backgrounds, you will see that the people featured here are true role models for all of us to emulate. They show us the way in how we, ourselves, may be able to think about the future and to make plans for possible careers, families, and personal hobbies or interests.

Success is defined as setting a goal and reaching it. Interestingly enough, this is also the definition of leadership. Leadership is stepping in front of others and showing them the way. Max DePree once wrote: "Leadership is much more an art, a belief, a condition of the heart, than a set of things to do. The visible signs of artful leadership are expressed, ultimately, in its practice." The personal stories included in this *Believing ... Achieving* publication demonstrate both the capacity and the "practice" of leadership.

Many, for one reason or another, don't achieve their personal and professional goals. Usually, the stated reasons for not becoming a success, is "not enough time,"

"limited resources," "lack of opportunity," or "don't understand how my work or contribution fits into the grand scheme." Ultimately, these individuals do not lead within the workplace, with their families, and within the community. Clearly the deaf and hard of hearing leaders in this publication, who have been successful even with limited time, limited resources, lack of opportunities, lack of knowledge, and the added challenges of being Hispanic, African-American, Asian-American and other ethnic or cultural backgrounds, indicate that the above statements are not true reasons.

What then, is the REAL reason, for not achieving personal goals and becoming a leader? The real reason for not achieving all we can be is the fear of making decisions and acting accordingly. It's as simple and as difficult as that. Even when we do have well-defined goals and the necessary knowledge available to achieve those goals, many of us waste time and are unproductive, both in the workplace and at home.

You ask, "how can I emulate the success stories given in this publication?" Begin by committing yourself to life long learning and to continuous improvement of your knowledge and skills. This may mean



*Annette Reichman*

returning to school to improve basic English and math skills, or it may mean learning a new software program, or it may mean taking a parenting skills class.

Second, don't be afraid to take risks both personally and professionally. Be honest with yourself, about your skills and abilities, and what you need to improve. Talk with your friends, teachers, parents, and others to solicit their opinions and

ideas about your goals. Listen carefully to their feedback and be open to new ideas.

Third, as a leader, you'll need to manage demands on your time and energy, by carefully setting your personal priorities. Trust in your own judgment, be purposeful with your life, and adopt long-term, big-picture vision of your career and home lives. Work towards your goals, slowly, steadily and strategically. Be flexible with the changes that occur in your environment, by recognizing and exploiting alternatives as they present themselves to you.

Finally, the stories included in this issue demonstrate that there are many different paths in life to personal and professional success. Hopefully you'll find a story that inspires you to find your own path in achieving your personal goals and in showing others the way on how to succeed; that is, becoming a leader.

•••••

“There are many different paths in life to personal and professional success.”

•••••

.....

## Nakia Brinson



*Nakia Brinson*

Nakia Brinson is on schedule to be the first graduate who is deaf from Floyd College in more than five years. He is working on an Associates degree in General Studies. He mostly has enjoyed and concentrated in classes of art. Nakia is a talented artist and enjoys learning about art history and drawing. Nakia also enjoys working with computers and at

one point wanted to become a computer programmer, but changed his mind after he experienced his first Micro-Networking class. He plans to continue at a four-year college after his graduation in the spring of 2004.

Nakia was born in Alma, Georgia. At the age of five, he moved with his family to Riviera Beach, Florida and attended a mainstream elementary school. He moved back to Alma, Georgia in the fourth grade and attended mainstream schools for all of his education. They accommodated him mostly as an oral deaf student with amplification systems, but he found little use in it so he just went to school without anything. "I learned American Sign Language in first grade but my classes were never interpreted

and my teachers did not sign so I mostly taught myself to speechread to get my education. When I arrived at Floyd College and they provided me with sign language interpreters, learning was so much easier." Nakia played basketball in high school for four years and won the sub-region during his senior year. He was also voted best dancer in his high school.

Nakia graduated high school in 1995 and began college at Brewton-Parker College in 1997. He transferred to Floyd College in the spring semester of 2000. Nakia is a dedicated student and never misses a day or a class. His attendance is always perfect. Nakia uses sign language interpreters for all of his college courses. Nakia has wonderful speech and a very masculine voice. Although he is very quiet and reserved, he speaks up when he needs to.

Nakia has been active in the Black Awareness Society at Floyd College. He has also been active in the Cultural Awareness Society. Nakia is involved in many diversity awareness activities at Floyd College. He was involved in bringing the HIV/Aids Awareness Symposium to Floyd College's campus. Nakia was also instrumental in the planning of Floyd College's first and second annual Deaf Extreme events. Serving as a group leader for Deaf and Hard of Hearing high school students in Deaf Extreme,

.....

Nakia is a talented artist and enjoys learning about art history and drawing.

.....

Nakia encouraged these 8<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade students to continue their educational careers.

Although he is six hours away from his home and family, Nakia has remained very family oriented through out his time at Floyd

College. Nakia loves to get back home to enjoy his grandmother's home cooking. His hobbies are playing basketball, hanging out with his family and friends, playing video games, going to parties, driving around, and of course,...studying.

.....  
*Sylma Alvarado Carrasquillo*

Born Deaf, Sylma Alvarado Carrasquillo grew up in Puerto Rico where she resides currently. As a child, she learned lip reading with the enthusiastic help from her mother. She remembers standing in front of a mirror and observing her lips while she produced sounds. She provides information on how growing up deaf was for her. She states, "As a deaf person I had a very difficult childhood, not because I would not make myself understood, but because in general it seems to be hard for some people to accept handicaps in others." Because of her deafness, many people would avoid her and not invite her into the group. Therefore, she spent most of her time with adults rather than with children. The children her age ignored her, because they were unable to understand her. They saw her as different from them. However, being with adults helped her develop into the person she is today. She states, "Being with adults

helped me to develop my character and the ability to understand others. Even more, I learned how important gaining knowledge was."

Her formal education began at Fray Pedro Ponce de Leon College in Ponce. Following this school, she attended a school for the deaf in Coamo, PR. In addition to these educational experiences, she graduated from a business high school and had her practice at a Westinghouse plant in 1989. She graduated in 1990 and began working for the municipality of Coamo. She continued working for the municipality for five additional years doing secretarial tasks such as filing, typing, photocopying, faxing, document checking and purchase orders.

While working from 1996 to 2000, she decided to continue her studies as a Computer Resource Teacher at the University of Puerto

.....  
"Demonstrate real interest, devotion, endurance, and enough patience. . . prepare yourself the best you can."  
.....



*Sylma Alvarado  
Carrasquillo*

Rico at Ponce. Now she is pursuing a certificate as a Special Education Teacher at the Catholic University in Ponce. This certificate is required to teach in the area of Special Education. With this certificate, she will have the ability to help others, which she has a

strong desire to do. She shows this desire by stating, "The above {experiences in childhood} and many other reasons gave me the certainty and strong desire to do something real to help others like me who consider themselves useful but maybe have handicaps or barriers." She continues by stating, "I want to contribute to their acceptance by others, to help them avoid difficult situations, to help them cope with handicaps which might leave them behind." Sylma remembers people in her life who helped her along the way, and she wants to help others in the same way. She is grateful for the help that so many have provided. To show her appreciation, she states, "I am indebted to so many wonderful people such as my professors, my tutors, my friends, and most of all the special and caring mother God gave me."

Although Sylma has many people to be thankful for, she also has many accomplishments that are meaningful to her. These accomplishments include an award in mathematics, the Governor's Office Medal for youth, and trophy for reciting a poem at a

deaf convention in Puerto Rico. In addition to these awards, she has received several other honors. She was on the Roster of Honor at the Interamerican University, participated in a TV program to present sign language, interviewed by La Perla Newspaper as a "Courageous Puerto Rican Young Woman", and she was honored at the "Fiestas Patronales" in her hometown. The "Fiestas Patronales" is dedicated to special people who have done outstanding deeds on behalf of others.

Aside from academics, Sylma enjoys several activities including going to church, working with the community, and exercising. In addition, she is a part-time cashier at a hardware store and a deacon at an evangelist church. She also participates in an educational committee at a co-op organization and practices karate when time permits.

When asked to provide advice for other deaf students, Sylma has some good recommendations. She states, "I recommend deaf students attending high school to demonstrate real interest, devotion, endurance, and enough patience. Prepare yourself the best you can so that you can have a good job and are able to keep it." Overall, Sylma provides a great role model for other students and recognizes the many people who have had a role in her success. One important influence on her life has been her mother. She concludes by saying, "I consider myself a simple person. I am lucky because I have excellent friends and a wonderful mother."

.....

## *Jerry Carver*

Two years ago, Jerry Carver literally “walked into” his current job. A student at Pellissippi State Technical Community College, he heard about a sign language class that was being offered for credit on campus and decided to check it out. The instructor was thrilled to meet him, and she offered him a job as a teaching assistant on the spot. He became a lab instructor for 25-28 students, and he continues to teach every semester.

Taking chances and meeting new people are not new experiences for this nontraditional student. Jerry, who became deaf at age four, moved around a great deal as a child. His father served in the military, which meant Jerry had to change schools every few years. He attended a variety of schools, including MSSD, before graduating from the Eastern North Carolina School for the Deaf. He then attended NTID, but decided to pursue other options before completing his degree.

Jerry married his high school sweetheart, Mary, and began raising a family. He and his wife have three children, ages twelve, ten, and four. He put his educational goals on hold while he began a career working with computers and technical equipment. After being laid off from his job, Jerry decided to once again start working on his degree.

Pellissippi State Technical Community College (PSTCC) seemed like

a perfect fit for this busy family man. Jerry says, “I chose Pellissippi because it’s close to home, and the staff and students are willing to work with deaf students. Also, the education and activities offered there are accessible.” He first thought he wanted to become a computer programmer, but after taking some classes in that discipline, he decided that a General Technology degree would better satisfy his career goals.

Although his classes and his job teaching sign language keep Jerry busy, he still finds time to fish, travel, and work with his wife and her home-based business. He also enjoys coaching his kids’ sports teams, and he has coached everything from girls’ basketball to his son’s football team. Jerry says that his family is his top priority, and it would be impossible to achieve his educational goals without their help. He tells other deaf students to “always make sure you have good family support” when pursuing an education.

Jerry and his family have become closer

.....

“Get a good education. Make careful plans for your future after high school. Have faith in the people who love you, but follow your heart and not only what other people say you can do.”

.....

*Jerry Carver*



after rallying to assist his youngest son, who was diagnosed with Neuroblastoma at only four weeks of age. Neuroblastoma is a rare type of cancer with a very small survival rate. His son had surgery to remove the tumor when he was only five weeks old. He is now four years old and in remission. Jerry and his family are thankful, and they are looking forward to taking a trip to Disneyworld sponsored by the Dream Connection.

According to Jerry, planning for future goals is a critical step for every deaf student. He advises, "Get a good education. Make careful plans for your future after high school. Have faith in the people who love you, but follow your heart and not only what other people say you can do."

---

## *Patricia Roberts Clincy*

Patricia Roberts Clincy believes in taking advantage of all opportunities to improve her skills. Her employer is currently sponsoring her in English training for employees who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing at Georgia Perimeter College. This training is an opportunity to improve reading and writing skills for the workplace as well as for one's personal life.

As a well-established citizen in the community, it is important to Pat that people see her as "no different than anyone else without a disability. I own my own home; I drive and spend my spare time with my family and friends. I enjoy exercising, watching television, and spending time with my children." Pat has two daughters, Vontressa Alise Clincy, who is fourteen years old, and Alexandria Shalise Clincy, who is six years old. They live in Lithonia, Georgia. Pat Clincy is a successful federal employee and mother.

Pat has worked for a federal agency for the last twenty-four years. She began her career in December of 1979. As a mail clerk, Pat's job requires that she have a knowledge of administrative services in her department. She is involved with the management of supplies and mail. Her responsibilities include examining, verifying, and comparing data for accuracy.

"I like my job because of the support from my co-workers. I always have someone to talk and laugh with; however, I wish that more people at work would learn sign language."

"I am bilingual. I take advantage of all training opportunities to become an effective communicator on the job. I always try to improve my English skills in reading and writing."

Pat consistently takes advantage of training opportunities and education in the community. She took ten English workshops for Employees who were Deaf and Hard of Hearing in 2001. These workshops were offered by Georgia's State Outreach and Technical Assistance Center. Her employer is sponsoring her in additional training at Georgia Perimeter College. The individualized English course for people who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing meets twice a week for six hours a week. Even though that number of training hours is a big commitment, Pat is determined to complete the training and maintain her job. She is a dedicated worker. She cares about the quality of her work, and she believes it is important to continue to improve no matter how long you have been working at your job.



*Patricia Roberts Clincy*

“I would like people to know that people who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing are caring people. I have been Deaf since I was born. I attended the Georgia School for the Deaf, and I got my diploma in 1971.”

It is clear, however, that Pat's education did not stop in 1971! Her commitment to continuing education in her life has contributed to her success as an employee for many years.

.....  
“I would like people to know that people who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing are caring people.”  
.....

---

## *Sheri Farinha*

“The learning never stops.” That statement is certainly true for Sheri Farinha, the CEO of NorCal Center on Deafness, a social service organization in Sacramento, California. She oversees the day-to-day operations of the company, providing direct social services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals in twenty-four northeastern counties of California.

In the mid-sixties, Sheri was the first deaf student to be mainstreamed in San Juan Unified School District. Her parents chose this placement because the special day school focused on Oral Education, which was not the right fit for her. Mainstreamed throughout school,

*Sheri Farinha with friend Alice McGill*



she graduated from La Sierra High School in 1977.

She believes the key to her success during her school years was support from family. “Because of my experience living in a hearing world, often I would feel dissatisfied with the way things were, and how my role as a deaf student fit in society. I was never content, and knew then that things could be done better.” She noticed that lead actors on television were mostly men, and decided that when she grew up she would be a doctor, a lawyer, or maybe Superwoman! School life without any role models then caused her to think that she couldn’t do those things because she was Deaf. Her family would challenge those thoughts by saying, “You can be whatever you wish, don’t let it stop you!”

After high school, Sheri took classes at American River Community College (ARC) for two years, to ‘search’ for the right field. During high school, and through her courses at ARC, she was uncomfortable with the teaching tools used for deaf kids. She then decided to become a teacher, and began her studies at California State University, Northridge (CSUN). She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies, and a Master of Arts in Special Education.

While attending CSUN, she received the Graduate Student of

the Year award from the National Center on Deafness. Sheri also became the first deaf person to serve as Senator, School of Education, for the General CSUN Student Body Government. When she decided to pursue that office, she was overwhelmed by the support and encouragement she was given. This type of support was something that was missing during her K-12 years. The variety of activities and leadership experiences at CSUN provided training in conference planning that would help in later years, as well as helping Sheri develop good leadership skills.

Sheri states that the diversity among the deaf and hard of hearing population attending CSUN was unforgettable. "The ability to still interact with hearing students and activities was prevalent throughout, so I never lost touch with that community while I was 'finding' myself as a deaf person in the deaf world. Leaders and role models who worked at NCOD were primarily who shaped who I am today."

By the time she graduated with her Master's degree, Sheri had developed a role of advocacy, and was introduced to the Greater Los Angeles Agency on Deafness (GLAD). Her career at GLAD was reinforced with the support she received from the CEO and Founder. Sheri served as Chief Administrative officer for that organization for ten years, before moving into her current position at NorCal Center on Deafness.

Throughout her academic challenges, there was always an expectation of "You will do it, Sheri" from former professors, colleagues, mentors or friends. She says, "Support was the key word that stayed in my mind throughout. Support for me, and I in turn gave this same support to others. This is what inspires me. It's what all leaders need when they tackle hard issues." Sheri believes that mentoring and role-modeling can't be emphasized enough, especially in high school.

In her involvement with co-workers and interested individuals in leadership and management, Sheri constantly asks questions. This method helps target the problem presented and ultimately find the right fit for the solution. She believes that problems arise in the workplace no matter who you are and where you work. Asking for help is always a sign of strength and good leadership.

Sheri advises, "Nothing is going to happen unless you make it happen with, of, by, and for the people you are serving!"

.....  
"Nothing is going to happen unless you make it happen."  
.....

.....

## Steve Farmer

.....  
"Never, ever,  
ever give up!"  
.....

Steve Farmer believes that in order to be successful, one must be willing to risk failure. This philosophy has helped Steve achieve much in both his educational and professional careers. He has obtained two college degrees, and has accomplished his lifetime goal of working as an administrator at a school or program for the deaf.

Currently, Steve, who resides in Knoxville, Tennessee, works as the Director of Student Living at the Tennessee School for the Deaf. He supervises approximately eighty staff members and is responsible for twenty-four buildings on campus. Steve's duties also include coordinating after-school activities including a recreational program, and managing transportation for the students' weekly trips home.

Steve was born deaf. He began his education at the age of eighteen months, when his parents enrolled him in a pre-school program. At the age of four, his parents enrolled him in a residential school program, where he attended for seven years. Unfortunately, Steve did not progress much academically during these years at the residential school. Steve says, "In those seven years, my reading level only increased by two grade levels. My mother was not satisfied with this lack of progress, so she enrolled me in a private school." His mother served as his interpreter until he began high school.

After graduating from high school, Steve attended Tennessee Temple University, where he originally planned to prepare to become a missionary to the deaf. However, he soon felt a different calling. He explains, "Many of my deaf friends were asking me for help with their writing. I started to tutor them, and realized that I might want to become a teacher." Based on these experiences, Steve decided to double major in Deaf Education and Bible.

When Steve completed his studies at Tennessee Temple, he moved to Knoxville to work as a cottage counselor at the Tennessee School for the Deaf. After working as a counselor for one year, Steve was offered a job teaching at Red Bank High School in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He taught at Red Bank for four and a half years and supervised 17 interpreters in 9 schools before being offered the opportunity to apply for the Director of Student Living position at TSD.

A chance meeting at the Southeastern Regional Institute on Deafness (SERID) helped Steve find his current job. He was introduced to Alan Mealka, the current superintendent at TSD, at the conference. Mr. Mealka informed Steve of the job possibility. Approximately one year after that first meeting, the opportunity opened up and he applied for the position and accepted the job offer. Steve was excited about the challenge of working as

the Director of Student Living. He says, "I've always wanted to be an administrator."

It was the dream of working as an administrator that led Steve to pursue a Master's degree in Educational Administration and Policy Studies at the University of Tennessee. This program is designed to promote the "cohort concept", which Steve says was the most helpful aspect of his educational program. "The cohort philosophy encourages networking," he says, "and I used networking to develop relationships with other school administrators." At graduation, Steve was recognized as the top student in the Educational Administration Program.

Although his academic and professional careers have been fulfilling, Steve is most proud of his family. He and his wife have three children, and he is involved in a variety of activities with them. He also enjoys participating in church activities, traveling, reading, and turkey hunting.

Recently, Steve has embarked on another educational journey. He has started working on an Ed.D. in Educational Administration and Policy Studies at the University of Tennessee. He believes this degree coupled with his experience as an educational administrator will help him achieve his future goal of becoming, "the next superintendent of the Tennessee School for the Deaf."



*Steve Farmer*

Steve advises other students who are deaf to remember that experience is the best teacher, and to not be afraid to pursue their dreams. He states, "Never, ever, ever give up!"

## Eve "Laney" Fox

Eve "Laney" Fox credited her parents for giving her the support and encouragement she needed to set and to reach her goals. Laney's parents held high expectations for her, giving her confidence to strive to fulfill her potential. In May 2003, Laney will graduate from Trinity University with a major in classical studies and minors in anthropology and psychology.

Laney became profoundly deaf at the age of nine months after an illness with a high fever. She attended a school for the deaf, an oral school, until age nine. There she learned to read lips and talk. Laney attended public schools for grades 4-6, and a private school for grades 7-12. In both settings, she was mainstreamed. Laney relied on lip-reading, board work and friend's

notes to get what she missed. Her senior year in high school, Laney started American Sign Language (ASL) classes at a community college.

When Laney arrived at Trinity University, she requested an oral interpreter for one class and note-takers for the rest. (Oral interpreters soundlessly repeat or reword what the speaker is saying for

lip readers.) Soon, however, she discovered that Trinity courses were more challenging than her high school classes. The material was more complex. Professors talked faster and moved around the room more. She had trouble reading lips and following class discussion. Laney had particular problems in her Latin class where slight differences in wording proved significant.

The Trinity disability service provider recognized an opportunity to use computer assisted real time captioning (CART). She arranged for a transcriber to sit next to Laney in Latin class and record, word for word, the professor's comments and classmates' contributions. Laney read the transcript as it appeared on a laptop computer screen in front of her. For the first time, Laney knew what was being said as it was being said! This service allowed Laney to participate in class more fully than before.

As Laney became familiar with oral interpreting and CART, she requested services in more and more classes. By spring semester of her sophomore year, Laney was using either interpreting or CART in every class. Laney continued her ASL classes and began to benefit from oral interpreting with "sign support." Now Laney uses ASL for conversations with friends, but prefers oral interpreting or CART for classes and scholarly lectures.

Eve "Laney" Fox



In addition to her success at Trinity, Laney made a name for herself on the San Antonio scene. Laney won the Miss Deaf San Antonio contest and was first-runner up for the Miss Deaf Texas title. Laney has used her title to help educate individuals in both the deaf and hearing communities about what people who are deaf can achieve.

For life after graduation, Laney is considering service in the Peace Corps. She is also interested in continuing her education, perhaps a doctoral program in anthropology. Ultimately, her goal is to teach

educators in other countries how to communicate with children who are deaf. Laney said, "I want to give something back. A lot of people helped me when I was a child, and I want to help children in other countries who don't have as many options as children who are deaf in America.

What advice does Laney give high school students who are deaf? "Talk with someone in Disability Services at each college you are considering before you decide. Make sure they will provide the services you need." Laney encourages students who are deaf to tackle college. "You can do it!"

.....  
Laney encourages students who are deaf to tackle college. "You can do it!"  
.....

.....  
*Rhonda Fung*

Rhonda Fung is an alumnus of Louisiana School for the Deaf (LSD), and returned to LSD on January 27, 2003, as Residential Therapeutic Specialist of the after school program. Rhonda holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Communication Arts and a Master of Arts in Mental Health Counseling from Gallaudet University, as well as an extensive history of working with deaf children.

Before returning to LSD, Ms. Fung worked at St. Elizabeth Hospital in Washington, D.C. as a Mental Health Intern, then with the National Mental Health Institute on Deafness as a Psychotherapist. After approxi-

mately five years, Rhonda accepted a position at Deaf Networks, Inc., which is now known as National Deaf Academy.

As part of her responsibilities, Ms. Fung not only conducts one-on-one therapy sessions with students in the after-school program, but she also organizes group therapy sessions and



*Rhonda Fung*

.....  
Rhonda is a wonderful role model for our students.

workshops that revolve around monthly themes that Rhonda has established for different topics, such as bullying, self-discovery, appropriate conduct, etc. She additionally coordinates the use of the PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) program in the After School Behavioral Center and administers weekly Student Review Team meetings in each dormitory, which may involve Team Leaders, Student Development Specialists, Residential Advisors, and the School Counselor.

Although Rhonda has only been back to LSD for less than one year, she has already demonstrated her ability to develop a strong rapport

with our students that facilitates their ability to internalize techniques and develop the ability to utilize self-control. Several of these students were previously considered "hopeless" cases and had confounded our systems and attempts to improve their behavior. However, thanks to Ms. Fung, these students are now well on their way to improvement.

Rhonda Fung is a wonderful role model for our students. Our students will surely benefit from working with someone with such an extensive background in mental health counseling and a desire to do anything necessary to help a student in need.

.....  
*Nicol Gautreau*

Be willing to take any risk, and don't be afraid of failure. Do not let anyone hinder you from achieving your goals. You need to be happy with your life and live your life to the fullest. Take opportunities to be involved in different schools and in the community to see what you want to do with your life. These are just a few words of wisdom from Nicol Gautreau.

Nicol became deaf from meningitis at eight months old. She attended the Louisiana School for the Deaf (LSD) in Baton Rouge and

graduated in 1992. During that time she also was mainstreamed at two different public schools while attending LSD. She enjoyed attending both schools since using interpreters in the classroom was different than having signing teachers. After she graduated from high school, she attended Lenoir Rhyne College in North Carolina, Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., and Hinds Community College, where she completed her A.A. degree in General Studies. She then attended the University of Southern Mississippi, where she graduated with a

B.A. Degree in Deaf Education. Through her college years, Nicol participated in the video leadership teleconference, was founder of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Connection (student recruiters), student leader for Summer Orientation Program, secretary for the Deaf Club, student worker, member of Associate Student Government, Student Advisory Board, Signing Eagles, and a member of the American Instructors of the Deaf. She was also named Who's Who in the American Junior and Community Colleges and on the Dean's List.

Currently, Nicol is employed at the Louisiana Career Development Center (LCDC) in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Her job title is Instructor/Recruiter. She teaches communication skills, independent living skills, and work ethic to people who are deaf-blind. Before working there, she had no experience working with people who are deaf-blind, but was willing to take a risk and try something different. Wow, what a challenge! It is a challenge since different types of people who are deaf-blind exist. Some of the types include those with tunnel vision, Ushers Syndrome, and those who are totally deaf-blind and use tactile communication. Nicol enjoys learning new communication methods such as Visual Signing, Tracking, Tactile, Print- on- Palm, and Fingerspelling on Palm. She is fascinated with her job, and is learning something new everyday. LCDC is definitely special to her, and she continues to enjoy her job working the deaf-blind.

Nicol also travels on business



*Nicol Gautreau (left) with Jackie Broussard.*

trips to the American Association of the Deaf- Blind Conferences in San Diego, California, and the Helen Keller National Center in Sands Point, New York. She enjoys meeting the various exhibitors, collecting their business cards so she can keep in touch with them, and exchange new ideas.

•••••

Nicol is a very adventurous person who wants to know all that she can and be all that she can be.

•••••

In her free time, Nicol enjoys traveling, surfing the web, reading books, doing indoor/outdoor activities, exercising, sightseeing, shopping, and spending time with friends, family, and especially her four nieces. Sometimes, she volunteers as a Support Service Provider with deaf-blind individuals. Her goal is to travel the United States, foreign countries and islands to explore and learn about the other cultures, foods, clothes, and history. Nicol is a very adventurous person who wants to know all that she can and be all that she can be.

.....

## *Kelli Gavin*

.....

“Success comes from making wise decisions, being yourself, following your heart, staying away from drugs and bad influence and resisting peer pressure.”

.....

Kelli Gavin is a 19 year old female who was born deaf and raised in Palatine, Illinois. As a child, Kelli was mainstreamed part time at a school that has support services for deaf students. In ninth grade, she briefly attended Illinois School for the Deaf for three months, but decided to return to John Hersey High School in Arlington Heights, IL. Kelli felt she would benefit most from education by being mainstreamed in classrooms in addition of support services such as sign language interpreters and notetakers. John Hersey High school is one of the few public high schools that is well known for its excellent services for students who are deaf and hard of hearing. Kelli graduated from high school in 2003.

*Kelli Gavin*



Currently, Kelli is a full-time student at a two-year community college, Harper College in Palatine. After Kelli graduates from Harper College, she would like to transfer to a four-year university, such as Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) in Rochester, NY or Arizona State University (ASU) in Phoenix, AZ. Kelli is interested in earning a bachelor's degree in social work. She decided that social work would best fit her interests and needs because she had seen how much she liked to help her friends with personal issues and had seen how her mother was actively involved in her home neighborhood and community.

Kelli chose to attend Harper College for many reasons; she knew that Harper has a great reputation for its support services for deaf and hard of hearing students, Harper as a community college offers great quality education at a low cost, and finally, its close location to her home. Kelli states she has great confidence in Harper due to its low college dropout rate compared to many four-year universities. Kelli expects Harper's support services will help her to improve on her writing and reading skills to prepare for college-level courses.

She participates in many extracurricular activities at Harper College such as Deaf Club, Big/Little Brother/Sister club, and a variety of workshops specifically for the deaf and hard of hearing. Kelli is interested in joining and playing basketball

and volleyball next semester. During her free time, Kelli enjoys playing in sports-basketball and volleyball, reading books, and being with her friends. Currently, Kelli volunteers for a church by encouraging deaf people to attend church.

Kelli believes that success comes from making wise decisions, being yourself, following your heart, staying away from drugs and bad influence and resisting peer pressure. Kelli also believes happiness comes from expressing, not suppressing, one's feelings, sharing experiences with others, and being a good listener.

---

## *Daniel Girard*

Daniel Girard's decision to major in Psychology was due to the encouragement of his high school counselor, who was also his role model. Now he is a strong advocate in making a difference in students' lives.

Born Deaf, Daniel was raised by supportive parents. "My parents are like my best friends in terms that I share all my experiences with them and I rely on them for their opinions and advices. They believed in me and I am grateful for having them as my parents."

Daniel began his education at age three, where he attended Boston School for the Deaf (BSD), a residential school in Randolph, Massachusetts. From fifth to eighth grade, he started taking classes at Randolph Public Schools with his peers from BSD. After eighth grade, he decided to transfer to Newton North High School, where they have

a program that serves deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

Daniel attended California State University, Northridge (CSUN), as a full-time student and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. The National Center of Deafness (NCOD), located at CSUN, provided interpreting, notetaking, and real-time captioning services. Daniel chose to attend CSUN because he enjoyed having the experience of both deaf and hearing worlds, and believes that "having experienced both worlds helped me get perspectives from both sides (deaf and hearing)."

While attending CSUN, Daniel was very involved in several organizations. He was active in Lambda Sigma Pi Fraternity and Deaf CSU-Nians, holding offices in both groups. He was also involved with the Multicultural Psychology Association, as well as the National

Center on Deafness Student-Staff Cross Cutting Team.

In addition to awards received from his fraternity, he was also given the President's Award from University Ambassadors, and several National Center on Deafness Outstanding Leadership Awards.

Daniel is now a full time graduate student at Gallaudet University, working on his Master of Arts in School Counseling and Guidance. He is also working part time as a Student Development Advisor for the Campus Activities Department at Gallaudet. His duties include advising and assisting six student organizations, as well as serving as a staff leader for many events planned by the department. Daniel also serves as a co-leader of Student Leadership Lecture Series, whose purpose is to create workshops that benefit students while they are at Gallaudet.

"Communication is convenient." That's one reason Daniel chose Gallaudet. He felt he could benefit from having class taught by profes-

sors who know sign language, which would also allow him to participate fully in class. By working in the Campus Activities Department, he also gains experience in working with students, organizations, and promoting leadership.

Next year, Daniel will be doing his practicum at Maryland School for the Deaf in Frederick, working twice a week as a counselor. "I have decided to continue my interest in investing my time with student organizations, camps, and leadership."

When he has free time, Daniel loves to travel, and has driven across the United States three times. Last summer he worked at Aspen Camp School for the Deaf, and participated in backpacking trips, horseback riding, and kayaking. His volunteer experiences include working for the Collegiate National Association for the Deaf and the Miss Deaf America pageant.

Daniel advises anyone interested in pursuing postsecondary education and training to take full advantage of the time at their community college, college, or university. He encourages students to work hard academically, because it does make a difference if they want to pursue a higher degree.

.....  
Daniel encourages students to work hard academically.

.....



*Daniel Girard*

.....

## *Brad Hermes*

Deafness should never hold you back from your dreams. That's the belief of Brad Hermes, former University of Texas football player and current auditor at KPMG LLP.

Brad was born hearing, but high fever with chicken pox resulted in deafness. Mainstreamed since the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, Brad became interested in accounting after his junior year of high school when he took an accounting class and became involved with UIL – Accounting, an academic competition. He also participated in a summer program that gave students the opportunity to meet and talk with accountants and learn more about the field. At that time, Brad decided accounting was his future.

Brad chose to attend the University of Texas because of their Professional Program in Accounting (PPA), which allows students to get a BBA and MPA in a combined 5-year program. This program is ranked number one in the nation. Brad credits this program with helping him get a good job and in preparing him to take the CPA exam.

Brad was successful in school, being awarded with the Dean's Dozen Award in 2003 and the Athletic Director's Honor Roll in 1999 and 2001. He was also involved with the student organization, Students Advocating Deaf Awareness, in 2002.

While at UT, Brad played on the UT Longhorn Football team as both a walk-on member and as a defensive back. He was fortunate enough to play in one Cotton Bowl and two Holiday Bowl games. He passed on his experience as an assistant coach for JV and Varsity football at the Texas School for the Deaf.

His educational experiences led him to his current job. Brad worked as an intern at KPMG in Austin during the summer of 2002, and at the end of the internship, the firm offered him a full-time position. Brad works as an Associate in the Business Measurement Process division. He audits a variety of types of clients, doing financial statement audits and single audits.

.....

"It is important to remember who you are. Being Deaf is just part of you and should never hold you back from your dreams."

.....



*Brad Hermes*

KPMG is involved with a variety of community service, which Brad is beginning to become involved with, such as the 2003 People4People Events. He also enjoys watching sports (especially football!) and playing sports such as handball and golf.

Brad emphasizes that it important to have an education that matches your career goals. "It is

important not to take the easy track and challenge yourself to improve. Don't let other people put you down and look up high for success." He says not to feel intimidated about requesting services that you need.

"It is important to remember who you are. Being Deaf is just part of you and should never hold you back from your dreams."

---

## *Ben Hollingsworth*

Ben Hollingsworth says that the best aspect of his job as an advocate for the Tennessee Protection and Advocacy is that he "is able to help clients empower themselves to ask for what they want from Vocational Rehabilitation." Ben, who lives in Knoxville, Tennessee, began working for Tennessee Protection and Advocacy in May, 2003. His primary job responsibility is to advocate for persons with disabilities under the guidelines of federal disability law.

Ben was born deaf, and he attended Tennessee School for the Deaf for one year. He then transferred to a mainstream program in Morristown, Tennessee, for his elementary and secondary education. After graduating from high school, Ben moved to Washington, D.C., to attend Gallaudet University.

At Gallaudet, Ben enjoyed the opportunity to socialize with deaf

peers. He joined a fraternity, and received a scholarship for new students. The accessibility of all programs and services was an aspect of Gallaudet that Ben particularly appreciated. Ben took a variety of interesting Deaf Studies courses at Gallaudet, but after three years, he says he became "disenchanted" with the university.

Ben decided to leave Gallaudet and explore a different academic program. He transferred to the University of Maryland, where he completed a Bachelor's Degree in American Studies. Ben says the "person-centered" teaching approach used by the University of Maryland was very beneficial to him.

After graduating from the University of Maryland, Ben returned to Knoxville. He decided to pursue a degree in Rehabilitation

Counseling at the University of Tennessee. After a discussion with one of the professors in that program, Ben realized he could use the knowledge he gained in his American Studies program and apply it to the field of rehabilitation.

Ben appreciates the support services that he has been able to utilize during his educational career. He adds that the interpreting services provided by the Office of Disability Services at the University of

*Ben Hollingsworth*



Tennessee were the “best services of any of my postsecondary programs.” He also appreciates the assistance of his family. He states, “A lot of support I got while going through school came from my parents, Bob and Karen.” In December 2003, he graduated from the University of Tennessee with a Master of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling. He hopes to continue his education by going to law school in the future.

Whether the decision is to pursue a career or a degree, Ben recommends that individuals be allowed to make their own choices. He says, “When I started my first year at Gallaudet University, I went to see my academic advisor. At that time, I wanted to take 17 or 18 hours the first semester. She said that perhaps I should take 12 or 15 hours instead. That experience set the standard of the school telling me what to do with my education. With that story, this is my advice for students: Don’t let people tell you what to do with your education. They can advise you, but the decision is ultimately yours. Do whatever you want to do, because you are the only one who knows your potential.”

•••••  
“Do whatever you want to do, because you are the only one who knows your potential.”  
•••••

.....

## *Timothy Kuyrkendall*

Mr. Kuyrkendall is an alumnus of Louisiana School for the Deaf (LSD) and graduated from Gallaudet University. Before returning to LSD, he was employed as a student development advisor at Gallaudet from August 1991 to May 1993. In the summer of 1993, Timothy worked at Courage North Camp in Minnesota as a Camp Counselor. He was then employed as Residence Counselor Relief at the Family Service Foundation from August 1993 to December 1994. He was later employed as a Senior Student Development Advisor at Gallaudet University from August 1993 to November 1995. From August 1995 to November 1995, Mr. Kuyrkendall worked at the Texas School for the Deaf as a Residence Counselor.



*Timothy Kuyrkendall*

Timothy finally returned to LSD in November 1995 when he was recruited for a teaching position for LSD's after-school program. Tim's performance as an instructor from 1995-1999 was exemplary. He was responsible for providing social and recreational activities for dormitory students, conducted artist and residence programs, and provided daily tutoring services for students in the Junior High and High School dormitories. As Mr. Kuyrkendall is an alumnus of the school, and experienced both residential and non-residential life as a student, he is able to relate exceptionally well with the students.

In addition to Mr. Kuyrkendall's work experience in the dormitory program, he has worked successfully as a teacher of General Science and Mathematics, and then as Communication Specialist. He was promoted to Residential Team Leader of High School Student Life in January of 2002, and now oversees High School Student Life. Timothy is known throughout the campus as the "king" of American Sign Language. Numerous students and staff members often turn to him for guidance.

Mr. Kuyrkendall has extensive expertise working with deaf students. He served as co-coordinator at Youth Leadership Camp in the summers of 1998, 1999, and 2000. He has presented AIDS workshops to high school students since 1997, in addition to art workshops, for

which he is very well known. Due to his experience and rapport with all the students, he was selected to develop a new curriculum for the junior high and high school levels in July 2000. Mr. Kurykendall has also served as Youth Drama Director since 1998, and is now the Miss LSD Pageant Director. The students are very fortunate to have him as a role model!

While not working at LSD, Mr. Kurykendall spends time with his cat Nina and his dog Belle. He enjoys watching movies and making stained glass, sewing, drawing, painting, or carving. He has plans to obtain a master's degree in School Administration/Deaf Education in

order to further his career working with Deaf children.

When asked to give advice to other students, he has many words of wisdom. He states, "In my thirteen years of working with high school students and Gallaudet prep students, I have always encouraged young people to believe in their own abilities and challenge themselves in life, as this will prepare them for success..." He continues his advice by discussing his notions on the idea of the students' value. Tim says, "I strongly believe that all youth who are deaf and hard of hearing are valuable to our society as future teachers, leaders and citizens."

.....  
"I strongly believe that all youth who are deaf and hard of hearing are valuable to our society as future teachers, leaders and citizens."  
.....

.....  
*Jonathan Leach*

As an adjunct faculty member, Jonathan currently teaches at North Harris College in Houston, Texas. He teaches a class on Deaf Culture for the Interpreter Training Program.

Jonathan was born deaf and began attending school at the age of seven months at the TSD East Campus. Following TSD, he moved to Houston and attended Hancock Elementary. He attended a mainstream program until graduating from Langram Creek High School with an Honor's Degree.

Following high school, Jonathan continued his education by attending the University of Houston. He graduated the University of Houston with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering (Aviation Mechanic). Following his bachelor's degree, he attended Gallaudet University for one year before moving onto North Harris College. Once there, he received his Master's degree in the field of general studies. Each school had interpreters and various accommodations. During his years in school,



*Jonathan Leach*

Jonathan received many honors. Some of them include: Who's Who at Gallaudet, a \$500 reward for writing, Deans List, and graduated Summa Cum Laude from the University of Houston.

.....  
"Make the most of your life. Focus on what you have instead of what you don't have."  
.....

In his spare time, Jonathan enjoys flying. He has a private pilot's license for a single engine plane, which he has maintained for four years. In addition, he is a member of a Deaf Pilot's Association. When he is not flying, he helps out at church and school. Jonathan enjoys spend-

ing time with his family. He and his family are very close, so he enjoys every opportunity to see them.

Jonathan works hard pursuing his goals and encourages other students to do the same. His goal is to obtain a good paying job that will be satisfying to him. He provides some great advice for upcoming students. He encourages good studying habits and paying close attention to teachers. "Teachers are there for you to listen to the valuable information they provide". Additionally, he reminds students to keep activities to a minimum in order to focus on studying.

Not only does he have advice for students, but also for Deaf people in general. He encourages Deaf people to focus on their capabilities. Jonathan states, "What Deaf people can do far outweighs what they can't." He enjoys surprising people by telling them he is a pilot. Their awkward responses give him the satisfaction of proving himself. He concludes by exclaiming, "Make the most of your life. Focus on what you have instead of what you don't have."

.....

## *Craig Lemak*

Craig Lemak comes from a family where both parents have a college education. He believes that foundation helped him to be self-determined to receive his own college education.

Hard of hearing since 18 months old, Craig spent his elementary school years at Tennessee School for the Deaf. He was then mainstreamed into South Knoxville Middle School and Bearden High School.

Craig continued his education at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee. There he earned a Bachelor of Science in Human Ecology with a Recreational Therapy emphasis. He then earned a Masters degree in Counseling, concentrating in Rehabilitation

Counseling. While he was a full time student, he also stayed active working in the deaf community.

As an Academic Facilitator at Jefferson Tech College in Louisville, Kentucky, Craig works primarily with deaf and hard of hearing college students. By helping them to fill in gaps they may have in math, English, and other subjects, Craig teaches them how to become more effective students.

In his free time, Craig enjoys mountain biking, socializing with friends, and teaching in a second job. He says, "Work and study hard. Admit that you need help and ask for help from appropriate professionals. Be prepared ahead of time for anything."

.....

"Admit that you need help and ask for help from appropriate professionals. Be prepared ahead of time for anything."

.....



*Craig Lemak*

.....

## Frank Levine

.....

From a simple cleaning to a major overhaul, “Doctor Brailier” can fix what’s wrong with his customers’ ailing Braillewriters.

.....

When you are born deaf, and then go blind later in life, it’s kind of like getting the “double whammy” of disabilities. But Atlanta, Georgia resident, Frank Levine, hasn’t let it get in his way too much or keep him from ultimately going back to work.

Frank was born in South Africa and moved to the U.S. when he became an adult. He worked as an auto mechanic until his loss of vision from the progressive eye disease Retinitis Pigmentosa became too severe. As he came close to becoming totally blind, Frank began to learn Braille, knowing that it would eventually become his only method of reading.

Two years ago, with the encouragement from his Department of Labor Vocational Rehabilitation counselor, Diane Conley, Frank embarked on a new career. He decided to apply his years of me-

chanical experience and become a repairperson of Perkins Braillewriters, the standard Braille “typewriter” for people who read and write Braille.

The first step to starting this cottage industry was to receive training. Susan Lascek, the Southeast U.S. representative of the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Adults in New York, arranged for Frank to receive Perkins repair training at their center. Following this training, Dr. Robert Crouse, the executive director of the Blind and Low Vision Services of North Georgia in Smyrna, found space and administrative support for Frank’s new business at his center.

Frank uses standard tools and hundreds of small parts. He keeps the small parts in empty styrofoam egg cartons. For his internet access, the Department of Labor’s Assistive Work Technology Unit recommended special screen reader software to drive a paperless Braille display device with mechanical Braille dots magically changing to allow him access to the text on the screen.

Today, Frank is the only Perkins Braille writer repairperson in Georgia. By advertising at conferences, over the internet, and through friends, the word has spread about Frank’s new career and business. From a simple cleaning to a major overhaul, “Doctor Brailier” can fix what’s wrong with his customers’ ailing Braillewriters.

*Frank Levine*



.....

## *Natalie (Nikki) Maxwell*

Natalie (Nikki) Maxwell is currently a student at Floyd College in Rome, Georgia. Nikki is in her last semester before graduating with an Associates degree in Human Services. She is planning to transfer to Savannah State University in the fall of 2004 and earn her bachelor's degree in social work. "I have always wanted to help other people, particularly other people who are deaf, so my goal has been to get the education I need to be able to make a difference in other people's lives." This has been Nikki's motivation to excel in college.

Nikki, at the age of four, had spinal meningitis. She was left with a bilateral sensory neural hearing loss. Her family placed her in the Hope School for the Deaf from pre-school through the middle of fourth grade, where she learned American Sign Language and met other children who are deaf. She mostly received a mainstream education for elementary through high school with some accommodations. She used sign language interpreters in her classes. Her favorite class during this time was history classes.

Nikki began her college studies at Floyd College in the summer of 1999. She had to begin Learning Support classes in reading, English, and math. Math was the most difficult for her. "I have never liked math, and math doesn't like me." She originally wanted to become a nurse, but later changed her mind and decided to become a social

worker. Nikki chose Floyd College because she liked the idea of attending a small college where faculty and staff really get to know their students and are concerned about them. Once she started taking psychology and sociology classes, she was hooked and knew for sure that her major should be in social work.

While a student, she has also worked part time and given a lot of her free time to activities at Floyd College. As a student worker on campus Nikki has served as the American Sign Language Interpreter Training Program office assistant for two and a half years. Nikki has served as Vice president of Public Relations for the Floyd College Student Government Association in 2002-2003. She was elected to this position by her peers. While serving out this duty, she participated in

.....

"My advice for any student who is deaf and wanting to go to college, is to get started."

.....



*Natalie Maxwell*

the University System of Georgia's Student Advisory Council to the Georgia Board of Regents. Nikki was the only voting delegate to the Student Advisory Council from Floyd College. During her time at Floyd College Nikki has been very active in the Cultural Awareness Society. Nikki helped raise funds for and participated in the first annual cruise to the Bahamas sponsored by the Cultural Awareness Society.

While finishing her studies, Nikki also served as an intern at the Open Door Home for girls in Rome, Georgia. In this capacity Nikki served as a mentor for young girls while working closely with a licensed Social Worker.

"My advice for any student who is deaf and wanting to go to college, is to get started. You may have to start in developmental classes, but everything you learn helps to make you a better person."

---

## *R. Dale McPherson*

Dale McPherson had a passion for fish (and fishing) since before the age of three, which is when he was diagnosed with a hereditary sensorineural hearing loss. Dale reports, "As a child my parents used to take my sister and me to Lake Allatoona for a week vacation each summer. I can remember sitting in my elementary school classrooms and day-dreaming about the one week out of the year I would get to fish non-stop." His passion continued and by the age of fifteen, he was fishing in a bass club where he soon received second place "Angler of the Year Award".

Fish are still a focal point for this determined young man. Currently, Dale is a full time graduate student and works as a graduate assistant at the University of Georgia (UGA),

Warnell School of Forest Resources and the Institute of Ecology. Of course his major is in fisheries. Dale explains, "It seemed only reasonable to combine my passion with learning." He certainly does just that. His primary responsibilities as a research assistant are to collect and analyze data that he gathers at six study sites that he visits seasonally. His research project is entitled, "An evaluation of fish community structure and seasonal habitat use in wetland and headwater streams of the lower Flint River Basin, southwest Georgia." Friends tease him about his many "field trips" and wonder if Dale has simply gone fishing again.

Dale was interested in the fisheries program at UGA because it is the top program in the state. The



relatively small classes allow more student- professor interactions. Because UGA is such a large institution, Dale states, “I also receive the benefit of having world-class scientists and instructors.” Having a large Disabilities Services department was also a benefit. His interactions with his own disability specialist as well as other staff members have always been extremely positive and helpful. “I’ve always been a DAWG,” he explains, referring to the UGA Bulldogs, “I would’ve wanted to come to this university even if I had chosen a different major.”

Most of Dale’s interests revolve around outdoor activities such as his beloved fishing, golfing, hiking, camping, and traveling. He also enjoys photography, chess, billiards, and bowling. “When time permits,” he adds, “I enjoy spending time with my family and friends. I still speak to and see many of my friends from elementary, middle, and high

school.” Because of his varied interests, Dale is actively involved in several UGA organizations. Since transferring to UGA, he has been a member of Sound Off, a networking organization of students who are deaf and hard of hearing, serving in the capacity of Co-President and Vice-President. As a charter member of Leadership, Education and Advocacy for Disabilities (LEAD), he has participated in presentations given to department heads, Graduate Teaching Assistants, and university health care professionals. The presentations focused on effectively communicating and accommodating people with disabilities. He is currently the Vice-President of the UGA Fisheries society, an organization he has been involved with for the past several years.

“My primary goal for the future is to be successful. For me success is doing a job I really enjoy and

•••••  
“For me, success is doing a job I really enjoy and doing it well.”

•••••  
doing it well. I want to positively impact as many people as I can during my lifetime.” Dale is working to become a state fisheries biologist and foresees the possibility of working with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources as a career option. He maintains a balance of recreation, hard work, and plans to continue working to improve the good relationships he has with his family and his girl friend’s family. When asked about his plans for a family of his own in the future, he reflected on having a child with a hearing impairment. “If I have a hearing-impaired child, I expect to relate to the child in a manner that my hearing parents were unable to relate to me.” Having a hearing loss gives him a perspective that his family did not have.

Dale suggests that students come to terms with their disability as quickly as possible, even though that may be easier said than done. He shares his thoughts by stating:

“Personally, I have only come to terms with my hearing loss in the past few years. I never requested the academic assistance that was available to me through the first four years of my college career. Currently

having notetakers in every class is the only assistance I consistently receive. In addition, I communicate to my professors that I have a hearing loss and will therefore miss material, especially in classes with a discussion format or in labs, where students are scattered throughout the room. Getting these accommodations has made a tremendous impact on my transcript and on my self-esteem. I used to make B’s and C’s with the occasional A, though I have done much worse. After receiving the accommodations, I have consistently made mostly A’s. I finally understand I’ve always had the ability to learn, I’ve just never had the ability to hear all the information presented to me.”

Another suggestion Dale shares is in relation to social interactions. Never one to ask for things, it was always difficult to meet someone for the first time and ask them to repeat something three times. Dale now believes, “It is my responsibility to educate those around me. No one understands my hearing loss the way I do. So, to effectively communicate, I must say ‘I have a hearing loss, can you...repeat...that please...speak slower...look at me when speaking.’”

.....

## *Mathew Molinder*

As a teenager Mathew Molinder, known as Matt, often drove past a group of buildings in Greenfield, Indiana, but he didn't know what they were. Some of the buildings seemed a bit exotic, almost as if they were from Spain. He had no idea that he would work in one of these buildings for more than 20 years.

Matt was born deaf. The rest of his family, with the exception of his older brother, is hearing. As a young boy, he attended mainstreamed classes in Valparaiso, Indiana for a few years, but transferred to the Indiana School for the Deaf in Indianapolis for the remainder of elementary school and high school. His family moved to Greenfield so they could be closer to the school.

After high school, Matt worked for Captioned Films for the Deaf until he decided to go to college. When Matt was a young man during the 1970s, there were fewer opportunities for deaf students than there are today. His older brother went to Gallaudet University, but that didn't interest Matt. He decided to go to St. Paul Technical-Vocational Institute, known as TVI, to study graphic arts. After completing the program, he worked as a printer for First Bank of Minneapolis.

Missing his friends and family in the Indianapolis area, Matt decided to return home. He accepted a new job at AFNB, which is now known as

Bank One, but he didn't feel challenged by the responsibilities. "My friends told me that there were good opportunities at Eli Lilly and Company, a pharmaceutical company based in Indianapolis" said Matt. In fact, the Lilly Greenfield research laboratory was hiring new workers. Greenfield? That was Matt's hometown, and the Spanish-looking buildings were part of the Lilly Greenfield laboratory. He finally found out what they were! Pharmaceutical companies develop and manufacture medicines to treat diseases in people and animals. It sounded like an interesting place to work.

After working for a while in laboratory production making medications, Matt transferred to the histology department and learned to be a histology technician. Histology is the microscopic study of tissues, and Lilly scientists use histology to better understand how the medications they're developing might affect people. Even though he has worked in this department for a long time, Matt still participates in regular training to learn new skills. He works with very sophisticated laboratory equipment, and "I need to be very precise," said Matt.

Histology technicians work with a team of scientists as they study the effects of compounds on animals for medications under development. The studies usually involve samples of tissues from many

.....

"Part-time jobs might help you figure out what you'd like to do. Stay in school so you can learn skills to get a good job."

.....



*Mathew Molinder*

animals, and must be able to be replicated exactly. Matt must follow very specific procedures and document his work very carefully. Histology technicians work with large numbers of very small samples of animal tissues from necropsy and process them so the pathologists can study them. This process includes trimming the tissues to fit into cassettes. The cassettes containing tissues are placed in a tissue processor which dehydrates (removes the water) the tissue through several changes of alcohol, and then impregnates them with paraffin (wax). Tissues are removed from the processor by the technician and placed in the embedding station to be blocked in paraffin to allow sectioning on a microtome. Matt uses a microtome to prepare very thin slices of tissue. He attaches the

tissue slices to glass microscope slides and stains them so their characteristics are more visible. The pathologists look for changes in the tissue cells to determine the effect of the compound on the animal.

When Matt started working at Eli Lilly and Company in 1977, there were quite a few other deaf workers at various locations in the Indianapolis area. Over the years, many of them have retired. Matt is now only one of a few remaining, and he is the only deaf worker at the Lilly Greenfield research laboratory. Some of his co-workers have learned to sign a bit. "I'm a pretty good lipreader, so I can communicate well with most of my co-workers," reported Matt. However, he uses interpreters during training sessions and during discussions with his supervisor. For several years, Matt was also responsible for ordering supplies for his group. There is a TTY near his cubicle, and Matt regularly uses email to communicate with his co-workers.

Working at the Lilly Greenfield research laboratory has given Matt many benefits, and not all of them were related to work. Early in his career, he met a young hearing woman named Pat who also worked there. Pat didn't know sign language, but she learned quickly. Soon they were married. They are the proud parents of four hearing children: Anna, Brett, Chad, and Danessa. Their daughter Anna is married to Zach who's in the military; the rest of their children are still in school. Pat now works as an educational interpreter, and they're both involved in community activities.

"I always encourage my children to try things that are interesting," said Matt. As high school students, his sons participated in a student exchange program and traveled to Japan. Several years ago, the family hosted an exchange student from Japan. Because of their interest and involvement in the exchange program, Matt and Pat were also able to travel to Japan for six days. While on the trip, Matt visited a school for Japanese deaf children.

"We really enjoy traveling," reported Matt. The family has a

camper and has visited many states while on vacation each year. "It's our dream to go to Alaska someday," shared Matt.

Matt reflected that things are very different now than when he was a young man who had just finished high school. "Students today have so many opportunities. Your family and other people you trust can give help you make plans for the future. Part-time jobs might help you figure out what you'd like to do. Stay in school so you can learn skills to get a good job."

.....  
*Janice Diane Morgan*

Janice Diane Morgan - or Dee as she's know by her friends - is a firm believer in continually learning throughout life. At 55, she currently teaches at the college level and is furthering her own education. Currently working at the University of Arkansas — Monticello College of Technology - Crossett, Dee is an instructor of Industrial Instrumentation, Electricity and Electromechanical Skills. Among her many responsibilities include preparing syllabi, lesson plans, labs, testing, and teaching both through lecture and demonstration. Standing tall at four feet and eleven inches, many have been amazed at what this part Native American woman can and will do. She has been a woman in a man's world for quite some time

and has taken a lot of harassment over the years. But she and God always knew her purpose.

Born with a profound hearing loss, she had surgery at age fourteen to remove growths which had caused nerve damage. As a result, she regained a little of her hearing. Her mother, ashamed of Dee's hearing loss, would not allow her to be "handicapped". Dee's father repeatedly told her she could do anything that she wanted to do. As she grew up, her father and her older sister were very persistent in helping her develop good speaking skills. Because of her good speech, throughout her life, people often do not realize the extent of her hearing loss. Dee was a shy girl with a



*Janice Diane  
Morgan*

carbuncle hunch on her back and would sometimes hide behind the bushes at the public school she attended. Her teachers realized she had a hearing loss and were willing to work with her. She was never embarrassed about her hearing loss and, at times, she would get up and go look at the teacher's lips if his or her back were to her. Dee worked hard at becoming proficient at reading lips.

Originally majoring in Business Administration, Dee attended college in Hattiesburg, Mississippi full-time for a couple years. Then she went to work setting up central filing systems in medical facilities. Soon the job offers started coming in. She worked in the medical facilities for a time. But as a single mother with three children, she needed to find a job that would pay her enough money to help get her children through college. Having topped out in the medical records field in regards to pay, she decided to go back to school at Baton Rouge Technical College to gain instrumentation and electromechanical skills. Throughout college, Dee let her instructors know about her hearing loss and what she needed in order to succeed in her studies. There were always students and instructors willing or more than willing to help her when needed.

She was hired by Dow Chemical as a field instrument technician. As far as Dee is aware, she is the first and only female instrumentation technician in the state of Louisiana to do actual field work - including climbing down manholes and hanging from the sides of ships! Female technicians typically do analytical work with a computer. Because of her diligence, good work ethics and ability to stand up for herself, she was promoted to coordinate new instrumentation installations for new plants. Dee was determined to do what needed to be done so she could help her children. One important lesson she learned from a co-worker was to watch what he did and learn to do the work neatly so that those who worked on a system later would not have problems. Throughout her teaching career, she has endeavored to pass this same lesson on to her students.

Her teaching experiences have taken her to Texas State Technical College and Louisiana Technical College. After moving to Crossett, Arkansas (population approximately 6,100), she approached the university to see if they had a need for an instructor with her skills. After all, it never hurts to ask. Soon after, she was hired by the College of Technology. Currently she is also taking classes. Her goal is to earn a Bachelors and eventually a Masters degree in engineering.

In her spare time Dee enjoys a myriad of activities including remodeling her home (naturally she does her own electrical work) and

landscaping, gardening, home decorating projects and crafts. She also enjoys teaching her 13-year-old granddaughter how to sew. As a person who attends church regularly, she hopes to join the choir. How can a woman who can't hear her own voice sing in a choir? While in college, she minored in music. By sitting cheek to cheek with an instrument to learn the notes, Dee learned how to sing. She also now owns new digital hearing aides which she believes will be helpful.

Dee has three successful children: a son who is a superintendent at Georgia Pacific Plywood in Crossett, Arkansas, a son who is a

missionary in Peru, and a daughter who teaches 4<sup>th</sup> grade in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Dee has several thoughts to pass along to other students who are deaf. "Don't let anyone tell you that you can't. Just because you can't hear, doesn't mean you can't learn." "Don't use hearing loss as a crutch, use it as a stepping stone." She also believes that students should let instructors and support service personnel know as soon as possible about one's hearing loss as it is easier to get support services. And whatever you do, "do it to the best of your ability."

•••••  
"Whatever you do, do it to the best of your ability."  
•••••

•••••  
*Leslie Mossholder*  
•••••

Leslie Mossholder is an Occupational Therapist (OT) who lives in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She was born with a severe hearing loss in bilateral ears. She was born in Auburn, Alabama. From her very first attending school, she has been mainstreamed in hearing classrooms. She used an auditory trainer/FM system during classes and had weekly and monthly visits with a resource teacher all through elementary and middle school. In 1991, she moved to Baton Rouge, LA. There, she finished middle school, and then graduated from St. Joseph's Academy with honors.

Currently, she works at Hamond Development Center (HDC), a home for adults with developmental disabilities. She is responsible for a caseload of fifty-five people (assessments, equipment, sensory, nutritional, and physical support issues.) and followed them on a monthly basis. However, recently she has given up that caseload with the intention of focusing on developing an assistive technology (AT) department. The goal of the AT department is to address all equipment fittings and modifications, evaluate and fabricate therapeutic positioning equipment, and assess



*Leslie Mossholder*

.....  
“You can accomplish anything that you set your mind and sights on to achieve.”  
.....

and provide augmentative communication devices for all the individuals at HDC. Additionally, she is working toward becoming certified as an Assistive Technology Provider (ATP) for this new department. Her first year of employment was completed in mid-October 2003.

In August 1997, Mossholder went to school as

a full-time student, completing three years of prerequisite courses before applying to OT school. She was assisted by a captionist, provided by LSU, for real-time captioning (transcribed note taking like the closed captioning on TV) during classes. This service helped Leslie tremendously. She was able to take her own notes from the computer screen as the captionist typed what the professor was saying. Additionally, Leslie was involved in some extra-curricular activities and organizations, as well as holding a job as swim coach with the Bengal Tiger Aquatics Club for children ages twelve and under. Although she originally considered studying athletic training or physical therapy, Leslie decided during her senior year of high school that she preferred OT as a career. She met with an OT director while looking at various colleges, and she decided that OT

was much more “life-focused” and would allow her the personal interaction and job satisfaction that she was searching for in a career. Therefore, in May of 2000, she moved to New Orleans to begin her OT program at Louisiana State University. In August 2002, she graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Occupational Therapy with a cumulative GPA of 3.4.

In her spare time, Leslie enjoys spending time with family, friends, and her chocolate Labrador retriever. Additionally, she plays tennis weekly in a USTA adult league and enjoys various forms of outdoor activities. Currently, she is in the process of obtaining certification as a coach so she can volunteer as a Special Olympics swim coach. Her future plans are to enhance her professional development and community involvement, and eventually marry and have a family.

Her advice to other deaf students considering postsecondary education and training is, “Absolutely go for it. Work hard in school to do the best you can and find a program that will support you in your college or training experience.” She additionally provides advice to deaf students regarding gaining the types of services needed. Leslie states, “Take advantage of the services to which you are entitled! You don’t have to go at it alone, don’t be afraid to ask for help or use the support services provided.” She concludes her advice by showing the importance of a enjoyable job and the limitless potential each person has. Leslie advises:

"...you will spend too much time at your job to be doing something you do not like or are not motivated to do. You can accomplish anything that you set your mind and sights

on to achieve. Look at me, I'm living my dreams both personally and professionally, and feel blessed that I've been able to accomplish such things thus far."

---

## *Lucy E. Mossholder*

Lucy Mossholder was born in Auburn, AL. Approximately one year after she was born, she was diagnosed with a severe hearing loss. She states, "Growing up with a hearing impairment is something you must become accustomed to." However, she adapted well with the help of friends, family, and technology. For her, lip-reading has been a great help. She cannot understand words unless she is looking directly at the speaker. Throughout elementary school in hearing classrooms, she wore an auditory trainer to amplify her teacher's voice in the classroom. In 1991, her family moved to Baton Rouge, LA where she continued to utilize the auditory trainer until the fifth grade. Additionally, she visited a speech therapist once or twice a week. In high school, she had no assistance in her classes with technology or resource teachers. Instead, she worked on her own and had support from her parents and friends.

In August 2001, she entered Louisiana University (LSU), and she currently is in her third year majoring in dietetics. Most of her fresh-

man year, she was undecided and considered several career options. In the end, she decided to follow in her mother's footsteps and enter the field of nutrition. Sometimes, her classes are a struggle with the material to be learned. Usually, she has no problem obtaining the notes to prepare her for the tests. The Disability Services office at LSU provides special services for people with hearing disabilities, and she was given three choices of assistance for her classes. These options were a paid student note taker, a supplied recorder to record the professor's lecture and have the tape captioned, or have a team of captionists in the classroom captioning the lecture. She chose the option of having a team of captionists in the classroom. The captioning service is just as it sounds; a laptop is used for typing the professor's lectures. Sitting next to the captionist, she can read off the laptop screen which gives her the benefit of being able to follow the lecture and take notes at the same time. She is fortunate and appreciative of the services available, because she would not have been

.....  
 “Like you and me, most people need some help every now and then. Never feel embarrassed or afraid to ask someone for help. That is part of what being human is all about.”  
 .....

*Lucy Mossholder (left) with sister Leslie.*



able to perform as well in her classes without them.

Her hearing disability does not slow her down. She has been socially active at LSU in several ways. For two years, she was a member of the Delta Zeta (DZ) sorority. Through DZ, she met several wonderful people and formed some life long friendships. Additionally, she volunteered for many projects with the Baton Rouge Speech and Hearing school, Canned Food drives, American Heart Association Heart Walk, Alzheimer’s walk, and many more. For the 2003-2004 school year, she is the secretary of the Student Dietetics Association (SDA). Through SDA, she does additional volunteer work. Not only is she involved in SDA, but also with the Agriculture Student Council. LSU provides countless opportunities for her to get involved and meet new people.

After class, she baby-sits for three boys varying in age from nine months to five years. This job keeps her busy for two hours a day, five days a week. For close to a year she has been babysitting the boys, and she considers it a joy to be with them as they grow bigger. The first time

she babysat the boys, the oldest one, Jake, asked why she sounded different. She explained to Jake that she had a problem and could not hear as well as him. Being a kid, he quickly accepted her and since then no problems have arisen. She knows she does not sound the same as other people, but that does not bother her as long as she knows she is intelligible to others. Lucy appreciates the incredible help Jake provides in the house with his two younger brothers. Additionally, she considers the middle child Sion a delight, and appreciates being around the infant at such an early age. Neither Sion nor the infant have noticed a difference in her and others. Lucy states, “Kids seem to adapt the easiest.”

When not in school or baby sitting, Lucy enjoys spending time with her friends. They go out to eat, watch movies, or just hang out. Her friends look past her disability and are there any time she needs help.

Her future plans involve having a career she loves, marrying when she finds the right man, and having kids. When she has kids, she will teach them about kids who are “different” from them, but they will see and know that down deep they really are quite similar.

When asked to give advice for other students who are D/deaf or Hard of Hearing, Lucy has some great truths to share. First, she reminds students not to allow anyone to make them feel inferior. She states, “Having a better hearing does not make someone superior to you.” Additionally, she reminds

students they can do anything, and always ask help when they need it. She concludes by stating:

“I have come across many people who overlook me and prefer not to take the time to get to know me or understand my hearing impairment. That is okay. There will

be a time in their life when they meet another person with some form of disability and will then want to learn more about them. Like you and me, most people need some help every now and then. Never feel embarrassed or afraid to ask someone for help. That is part of what being human is all about.”

---

## *Shelley Oishi*

Shelley Oishi began her education early in life. She was only three years old when she began school. Since she was born Deaf, her mother wanted Shelley to begin school early to learn sign language and to be able to develop social skills with her peers. When the time came for kindergarten, she was the only deaf student in her school and her primary mode of communication was Signed Exact English (SEE). She attended kindergarten in the mornings and a deaf program in the afternoons. This continued until she was in the third grade.

When she entered fifth grade, all of the deaf students in the deaf program went to Vancouver, BC to attend the deaf institution. This left Shelley as the only deaf pupil at her elementary school. While her teacher encouraged Shelley to go with the other deaf students, Shelley stayed in the mainstream school. Her parents felt the mainstreamed program would be more beneficial

for her, and the distance to the school for the deaf was also a factor in their decision.

Shelley had the same interpreter from kindergarten through elementary school, and then had several interpreters during her junior high and high school years. In ninth grade, Shelley had an interpreter who was only a few years older than her. At first, it was a struggle because Michelle didn't know the role of an interpreter, and didn't have a teacher for the Deaf to guide her. But by the end of the year, they developed a better working relationship, and Michelle interpreted for her during all but two months of her high school years.

During high school, Shelley learned from Michelle about Gallaudet University in Washington, DC. Shelley realized she wanted to go to a school that had other deaf students like her. After visiting



*Shelley Oishi*

.....  
“It’s important to discover what one really wants to do and pursue it to their heart’s content.”  
.....

other schools, she finally decided to enroll at Rochester Institute of Technology, in New York. She was excited because she finally found Deaf people who were just like her, and had experienced mainstreamed programs. She was also thrilled to move away from her family in order to become more independent.

Shelley received her BFA in graphic design, and AAS in interior design. She also participated in the skiing and snowboarding club, Sigma Sigma Sigma Sorority, and the Panhellenic Council. Due to interests in art in high school, she majored in graphic design. Later she discovered other career options and continued her education by taking courses at Arizona State University, and then moving to Western Oregon University. She is currently working on her masters in Rehabilitation Counseling for the Deaf. Shelley hopes her masters degree will open even more doors for her in the future.

Currently, Shelley works for Northwest Human Services, in the Connection Program. She is a case manager/interning counselor, and provides mental health counseling, advocacy, and case management for deaf and hard of hearing clients. She also works for Pacific Vocational Services in Oregon, as a job developer. In this role, she provides job development as well as workshops for deaf and hard of hearing clients.

At first, Shelley thought it would be a tough challenge to juggle family, work, and school. It was also a challenge having her husband in the same classes, and trying to maintain her perspective as a student.

Shelley believes she is lucky to have another chance in deciding a career path. She states that, “it’s important to discover what one really wants to do and pursue it to their heart’s content. Most importantly, follow your true instincts. If someone told me that I had choices to choose from, it would have been beneficial for me to sample different majors instead of graduating with a bachelors degree that I did not like. Regardless of the choices I made, I do not regret it because I see it as a learning experience. It has made me be who I am today.”

.....

## Richard "RJ" Oxenham

Richard Oxenham has worked at Louisiana School for the Deaf for three years. He began his employment as a Dorm Counselor in the High School Boys' dormitory in October of 1999 and worked his way up the ladder to his current position. While working as a Dorm Counselor, Richard took child development courses at Louisiana Technical Community College, mastered the Sign Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI), and obtained a CEASD (Conference of Educational Administrators Serving the Deaf, Inc) Class A certification. In August 2001, Richard was promoted to Student Development Specialist of the Middle School Dormitories, and after only a few months in this position, he was again promoted in the same department. He became the Residential Team Leader. In this position, Mr. Oxenham reports to the Dean of students and manages the work and performance of twenty employees. Additionally, he oversees and coordinates the care and education of fifty students in the after-school program.

As a prime example of an innovative self-starter, Mr. Oxenham has exceeded everyone's expectations. He grew up hard-of-hearing in the United Kingdom. However, because he had the ability to function in a hearing society, his parents placed him in an all-boys' school with other hearing children. After completing secondary school, he pursued a

career within the field of Electrical Engineering, earning an Associate Degree in this discipline, and then worked for approximately eight years before the company closed. He held several odd jobs before deciding to return to college to major in Philosophy at the University of Wales, Swansea. This course was extremely challenging. He had to turn to his textbooks instead of attending lectures. This paid off, as he graduated with honors.

After obtaining his Bachelors Degree, Mr. Oxenham decided to look into the field of Social Work. He worked with a Spina Bifida client for several months and took British Sign Language classes before deciding to pursue a Masters degree in Social Work at Oxford University. While waiting to begin

.....

He is a model of a dedicated employee doing whatever it takes to help a child in need.

.....



*Richard Oxenham*

his Masters program, in the fall of 1997, Mr. Oxenham visited the United States and met an American woman, whom he married in 1998. Instead of returning to the UK to pursue his Masters in Social Work, Richard remained in the USA, awaiting his work permit.

Upon receiving his work permit approximately one year later, Richard obtained temporary employment at a swimming pool manufacturing company while looking for a permanent job. It was during this time that Mr. Oxenham learned of a position at LSD, and the rest is, as they say, history!

In the time that Mr. Oxenham has served at LSD, he has distinguished himself as a conscientious and energetic leader working with the Deaf. Not only has Richard mastered the SCPI and obtained a

CEASD Class A Certification, but also he is a certified Crisis Prevention Intervention Instructor. In addition, Mr. Oxenham serves on several committees at LSD, including the Safety Committee, Literacy Committee, and has instituted many impressive programs for the after-school program, such as the TARGET behavior program for the Middle School Dormitories and PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies).

Richard's continued interest in programs and opportunities related to the social and emotional development of Deaf children has served not only him but LSD as well. He is a model of a dedicated employee doing whatever it takes to help a child in need. LSD is honored to have Mr. Oxenham as part of the team. He certainly employs the LSD motto: "At LSD, Kids Come First."

.....

## *Yakov Shifrin*

Yakov grew up in the Ukraine, in a deaf family. His parents, aunt, and twin sister are deaf. When Yakov was six years old, he began his education at a special school for the hard-of-hearing in Kiev, Ukraine. He lived in a dorm until he graduated from high school.

Yakov currently works as an Administrative Assistant in the Program for Deaf Adults (PDA), a program within the Division of Adult

and Continuing Education, at LaGuardia Community College in Queens, New York. LaGuardia is one of the 19 City University of New York (CUNY) campuses. His responsibilities include providing necessary information concerning education programs at LaGuardia; coordinating communication between students, teachers and associates, and student sponsors; administering academic placement tests, collecting payments, summa-

.....  
"Don't delay getting your education. It is impossible to have a successful life without an education."  
.....

rizing statistical data reports, and maintaining the program's student database and others.

In his job, Yakov enjoys meeting and assisting people, also taking care of accounting matters. As a valuable staff member, he often shares with students the struggles he has overcome as being a foreigner and coming to the United States without knowledge of English or ASL, as well as American culture. He also serves as a Russian translator, translating from Russian spoken and sign language.

Throughout this time, Yakov always maintained a strong connection with LaGuardia. He began his education at LaGuardia learning English and American Sign Language when he first came to the United States in 1993. He soon registered into LaGuardia's credit program, and later to Baruch College. In spring 2002, Yakov obtained a BBA degree in Accounting from Baruch College. It was PDA's Assistant Director who asked Yakov if he would like to work as a staff member, beginning in fall 2002.

Yakov always attended school as a full-time student. Deciding on a major was easy for him since he always had a love for numbers and number games. The study of businesses had always been an interest to him. His goal is to build a business career. Yakov received numerous awards while in school including the Berman Award, the Award for Achievement from the Accounting and Management Department at LaGuardia Community College, and the Astoria Federal Bank

Award. Yakov was on the Dean's list from 1998-99.

In addition to studying, Yakov tutored many students in mathematics and accounting courses. Outside of college, with his sister and another individual, created the first Russian Deaf Club in New York City, working as a treasurer of the club. During his free time, Yakov likes to spend time with his 13-year-old daughter, his wife, and his extended family. A goal of Yakov's is "to support and help the Deaf community in order that they may achieve their goals in life."

Yakov was pleased with the accommodations provided at both LaGuardia Community College and Baruch College. He was provided with interpreters and notetakers, and was assisted during registration.

When asked what advice Yakov had for deaf students in high school he said, "Don't delay getting your education. If you have the opportunity, aim at least for an Associates degree – it is impossible to have a successful life without an education." Yakov stresses the importance of having an open mind, "We live in two worlds – Deaf and hearing – It is important to reduce the barriers and welcome each other."



*Yakov Shifrin*

.....

## *Chiquita Simmons*

.....  
“Go to college and don’t give up until you get your degree.”  
.....

Chiquita Simmons followed her dreams as a young girl and now is a teacher for the deaf at the Mississippi School for the Deaf. As a young girl sitting in her classes, Chiquita said she dreamed of one day becoming a teacher for the deaf. She had great, inspiring teachers who were good role models for her. She wanted to be a part of assisting other deaf and hard of hearing students in becoming successful adults with an excellent education, and she is doing just that.

Chiquita became deaf at age three from a very high fever. She attended Magnolia Speech School for two years and then mainstreamed into the public school system. In high school Chiquita ran track, participated on the drill team, and was a member of the student council and a cheerleader.

After graduating from high school, Chiquita attended Hinds Community College and majored in Deaf Education. She later attended the University of Southern Mississippi and Jackson State University, where she received her Bachelor of Science Degree in Special Education. Chiquita attributes her success in college to all the

teachers who were always so willing to work with her on a one-on-one basis. She also found having note takers and interpreters in every class very beneficial to her. While attending college, Chiquita was on the Dean’s Scholar List for four straight semesters, and was a member of the HCC Deaf Club.

While attending Jackson State University, she worked as a dorm supervisor at the Mississippi School for the Deaf. She also did her student teaching there and was hired as a second grade teacher upon finishing her degree. She has worked at MSD as a teacher for the past three years and really enjoys her work. She plans to stay there until she retires!

In her spare time, she mainly enjoys spending time with her son, who is very involved in sports, Boy Scouts, and horse events. She also enjoys reading, walking, shopping, and “surfing” the computer. She is active in the local Central Chapter of the Mississippi Association for the Deaf and enjoys teaching sign language to individuals who are interested.

Her advice to other students would be to go to college and don’t give up until you get your degree. In the future, Chiquita plans to go back to college and complete her Masters degree in Education.

*Chiquita Simmons*



.....

## Mahala Slone

Mahala Slone is currently a graduate student at Western Oregon University, pursuing a Masters degree in Rehabilitation Counseling for the Deaf. She believes that high school students should attend college or training to pursue their interests. She says that "it is worth their time and they will benefit from the education."

Mahala was born Deaf and attended mainstream schools in California, Hawaii and Oregon. She attended a community college for two years and then transferred to Western Oregon University, receiving a Bachelors degree in psychology in June 2003. Her major was psychology with a minor in Special Education. Mahala chose psychology as her major out of a desire to work with people. She learned a great deal about human behavior, cognitive behavior, motivation, research methods, experimental studies, and variety disorders.

In her free time, Mahala enjoys quilting, hiking, rafting, running, scrapbooking, visiting her husband's home in Alaska, and being involved in church activities. She was a student staff Young Life leader in Deaf Young Life ministry, but had to resign the position due to becoming a mother and a full time graduate student.

Her future plans include completing her Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling for the Deaf, and becoming a great mother

to her soon-to-be-born child. After graduation, she hopes to find a career position in Alaska, since that is where she and her husband would like to settle down.

Mahala believes that "when high school students continue their education it provides them a greater chance to get a career that they want." She is excited about the program she is in, and uses her opportunities to teach other classmates about deaf culture. "I take the opportunity whenever I can. This program will train me to become a Vocational Counselor for the Deaf and I am learning so much."

.....

"When high school students continue their education it provides them a greater chance to get a career that they want."

.....

*Mahala Slone*



---

## *Kathy Smith*

Kathy Smith began school at Ben Haggard Elementary School in a self-contained program. In second grade, she began a mainstream program and continued in that program through high school. While in the mainstreaming environment, Kathy had interpreters in every class. Growing up as an only deaf child of hearing parents, Kathy had a mother who worked very hard to learn sign language. Her mother communicated with the teachers and school principals to ensure Kathy had the best education possible.

Following high school, Kathy attended Greenville Technical Community College in Greenville South Carolina. While she changed her major several times from 1997 until graduating in 2002, her final deci-

sion was in the field of human services. She wanted to use this degree to help people. Throughout her college experience, Kathy utilized note takers and interpreters. To her, these services were the most important part of getting an education.

Currently, Kathy is employed at the Charlie McKinney House. She began working for the company while going to school at Greenville Technical Community College. Her employment began with a 125 hour internship. Following graduation, she applied to the company and was hired quickly. The Charlie McKinney House is operated by the Department of Mental Health and is especially for Deaf clients. She works with mentally ill people who are also deaf. Since Kathy is deaf, has a degree in human services and a special certificate in Mental Health, she is an ideal employee for this position. She states, "Being deaf myself has been an asset in this job since I can understand the language as well as the culture." Additionally, she adds "Having a degree in human services with a specialized certificate in Mental Health has helped me understand how people who are mentally ill need special help."

In addition to her employment responsibilities, Kathy is also a newlywed. Therefore, she remains busy trying to start a new home. Her new husband is hearing, so she strives to blend living in both the

*Kathy Smith*



hearing culture and deaf culture. This task is also one she deals with at work. While her clients are deaf or hard of hearing, she works with hearing professionals who need to learn about deaf culture as well. When she has spare time, she enjoys reading, working on the computer, and playing with their dog. Currently she is considering going back to school. This time she would like to pursue a major in occupational therapy. She sees this as an important need in her job. She states, "Since working at the McKinney House I know and see how

important occupational therapy is so I am looking at that to add to my skills of helping people become more independent."

In closing, Kathy has some good advice for other students. To her, doing what you enjoy is a good measure of success. She concludes, "Be patient, try different things. You do not have to get stuck with something just because someone says a deaf person has to do that one thing. If you don't know what you want to do just start classes and explore and ask questions."



"Be patient, try different things. You do not have to get stuck with something just because someone says a deaf person has to do that one thing."



---

## *Andrew White*

Andrew White is a twenty-one year old student at Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte, North Carolina. He is originally from York, Pennsylvania, but moved with his family to Charlotte when he was in the sixth grade. Andrew attended a pre-kindergarten class for deaf children in Pennsylvania and was then mainstreamed into regular kindergarten in the public school system where he received interpreting services throughout his elementary grades. After moving to Charlotte, Andrew attended Cotswold Elementary, Piedmont Middle School, and Myers Park High School. Always having interpreting services available made it possible for him to participate in school clubs and activities. He ran cross country and was a member of the Outdoor Adventure Club. He was provided an interpreter for a skiing

trip the club arranged and he also was active in missionary work and community work. Andrew is a firm believer that "no matter what, deaf persons should have equal opportunity and the support services to participate in anything they want."

After graduating high school, Andrew enrolled at NTID in Rochester, NY. He decided after one year to come back to NC and his family and friends. He then enrolled at CPCC in the Physical Therapy program. Going to school and working part-time jobs in local restaurants kept him busy. Soon he realized that the food industry jobs were where he really wanted to be, so he changed his major to Culinary Arts. Since then, things have been falling into place for Andrew. He is now able to work with food in

.....  
“We can and  
will succeed.”  
.....



*Andrew White*

hands- on classes, entertain family and friends with his skills, and has become engaged to his long- time girlfriend, Allison Elliott.

When Andrew finishes the program at CPCC, settles into a job, and marries Allison, he hopes to continue his education by getting a four-year degree in Culinary Arts from Johnson & Wales University. He wants to become an executive chef for a major restaurant or hotel and eventually own his own restaurant. Although working and going to school is not an easy task, Andrew keeps a positive attitude. He says, “I realize that often students have to struggle to make the grade, but to me an “F” is not a failure. It is an encouragement to try harder and not give up. We can and will succeed.”

.....  
*Amy Wong*

If you visit the movie theater this year, you might see some of Amy’s artwork on the big screen. Amy Wong works as a Composer and Visual Effects Artist for The World of Tomorrow, Inc.

She was born hard-of-hearing, but Amy has studied several languages. She learned English as her first language, Indonesian as her second, and French as her third.

In her elementary years, Amy went to a private international

school in Indonesia. She had teachers from a variety of countries, including England, Australia, and the United States. At that time, she had no outside support services, but relied on her parents to help with homework.

During sixth and seventh grades, she lived in Quebec, Canada. She attended an English-French school, and had weekly meetings with an outside tutor from Montreal Oral School for the Deaf. Amy went back to Indonesia for eighth and ninth grade, and then moved to

California for her tenth through twelfth grades. She attended a public school in California, and had a sign language interpreter for only one class – history.

After high school, Amy attended California State University, Northridge (CSUN), where she majored in Fine Arts with an emphasis on Film and Animation. She had always wanted to be involved with films.

Amy especially liked CSUN because of their ability to provide interpreters and real-time captionists for most classes. She also appreciated that it was affordable and close to home. Amy feels she “received a wonderful well-rounded education from CSUN.” Later, Amy also studied graphic design at the Art Center College of Design.

During college, Amy was involved in several extra-curricular activities, such as the Rose Parade Committee and College Bowl. She also participated in the Miss Deaf CSUN pageant, Miss Deaf California pageant, and Miss Deaf America pageant.

In the summer of 1999, she interned at Disney Feature Animation. This was a fantastic experience for Amy, and she was able to meet people and make connections. Upon graduation from CSUN, Disney hired her as a regular, full-time employee. That position gave her a chance to showcase her portfolio, as well as meet directors and supervisors of the digital team.



*Amy Wong*

Those contacts led to her current job at The World of Tomorrow, Inc., where Amy recently worked on a feature film project containing over 1000 digital shots with special effects. She is a member of a digital crew that adds the special effects, which includes computer-generated imagery (CGI), backgrounds, characters, and elements. Amy does animation and compositing in order to make the interaction between the actors and CGI elements convincing. The movie is a Paramount Pictures feature film, and will be distributed to theaters in 2004.

Apart from work, Amy is also busy with many projects. She is currently working on a comic book of her own, enjoys running, and plans to participate in a half-marathon someday. And next year will be even more exciting - she will be getting married!

.....  
Disney hired her as a regular, full-time employee. That position gave her a chance to showcase her portfolio, as well as meet directors and supervisors of the digital team.

# PEPNet

proudly announces the release of **Gates to Adventure**, an online interactive tutorial for individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing and who are setting goals for future employment and training.



## Gates to Adventure

Am I ready for a job or employment training?

What are my options after I finish high school?

What kind of job would be best for me?

What about college?

Can I describe my hearing loss?

How is college different from high school?

What happens now?



Have you asked yourself these questions? PEPNet can help you learn more about your postsecondary options. **Gates to Adventure** is an interactive online adventure that will help you to learn about yourself and make more informed decisions about your career and your future. Visit [www.pepnet.org](http://www.pepnet.org). Click on Online Training. It's free!