

**DAD Annual/Statewide Meeting
Green Turtle, Dover Delaware
October 19, 2024**

Board Roll Call: President Feta Fernsler, Vice President Keith Robertson, Treasurer Gordon Bergan, Past President Billy Bowman, Secretary Mary Ann Richmond, Sussex County Representative Suz Dennis, Kent County Representative Judy McGuigan and New Castle County Representative Karen Miller

Absentees: Kent County Representative Robert Chisholm, Sussex County Representative Joe DeLusant and New Castle County Representative Grace Walker

Representatives from the Affiliated Organizations: Kelli Adasko, Delaware School for the Deaf (DSD) and Martha Sheridan, Delaware Deaf Senior Citizens (DDSC)

Attendees (Including the board members): 29

President Feta Fernsler started meeting at 11:30am.

Introductions

Board members, County Representatives, Delaware School for the Deaf (DSD) affiliated organization representative Kelli Adasko, Delaware Deaf Senior Citizens (DDSC) affiliated organization representative Martha Sheridan, Delaware Office of the Deaf (DelODHH) Public Information Officer Christina Feil, first past DAD President Richard Baugh 1975- 1984, Past DAD President Loretta Sarro 1986-1987, President of the Wilmington Deaf Club (WCD) Brian Connor, Alanna Smith from Independent Resources Inc. (IRI), Statewide Programs for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (SWPDHH) Director Mindi Failing.

Approval of the Minutes for the 2023 Statewide Meeting

Billy Bowman (Suz Dennis) moved to accept the minutes for the 2023 Statewide Meeting. Passed

President's Report

President Feta Fernsler shared the updates and information about different things listed below:

1. EMS cards were completed last Spring and are being distributed to EMS providers now.

2. Group Homes

a. Marcella Little is our D/HH Coordinator, she works for a group home. The state has given her the job to coordinate services.

3. Emergency Preparation

- a. Attended a DHHC Philadelphia Summit in September
- b. I still attend the AFN (Access, Functionality Needs) group quarterly which is under DEMA (Delaware Emergency Management Agency) as AFN is tasked with ensuring access for disabilities and such. Their meeting is in December.
- c. 988 Videophone (Direct, no VRS) and Texting is available for mental health needs. This is mainly managed by DeafLEAD.
- d. Smart911 is basically reverse 91, and DEMA encourages everyone to sign up. It will help them be aware of any medical or communication needs during an emergency.
- e. I have collected a lot of information on a variety of disasters and I am hoping to develop a webpage with ASL tips. FEMA and a few others do have some ASL videos out there.

4. I have been reaching out to other potential affiliates as requested.

DSD and DDSC assigned representatives to serve as our affiliated representatives.. Other unofficial affiliated organizations are Delaware Relay, ODHH and IRI.

5. Received Three Requests for Monetary Donation

- Help with expenses to send one DSD student to NAD YLC
- Nancy Letts, a Deaf Marathon runner
- NAD Region 1 State Association Day

6. Legislation Updates:

- a. The Hearing Aid Amendment is still on Rep Paul Baumbach and Rep Madinah Wilson-Anton's list of bills to work on.
- b. Rep Eric Morrison is still working on the EDP bill.

7. E-mail and Social Media

- 886 subscribers. Most are through Facebook. Twitter has been discontinued due to cost. Instagram is newer and growing.

Vice President's Report

Vice President Keith Robertson shared what he has done and shared the updates:

- He attended the NAD convention June 30th - July 7th, 2024 as COR representing DAD with President Feta Fernsler..
- Delaware Telecommunication Relay Service (TRS) no longer provides Captel relay services.
- The law committee met via Zoom in August of 2024 and came up with a few proposed changes to be made to our bylaws. The law committee members are: Suz Dennis, Fred Hartman and Judy McGuigan.
- Delaware Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DODHH) Bill
We continue to hit dead ends in trying to find a representative to sponsor our ODHH bill. Some representatives gave us some excuses. Cut in budgets, no new funding for new hires, different priorities, etc. Potential Sponsor: Legislator Eric Morrison

Proposed Changes to the ByLaws

Vice President Keith Robertson led the review of the proposed ByLaws changes.

For the proposed change to the Bylaws, Article 3.01 Classification: Membership to reflect the change of deaf to Deaf and deaf-blind to DeafBlind. The discussion for this proposed change was a lengthy one.

Mary Ann Richmond (Patsy Bowman) moved to change deaf to D/deaf and deaf-blind to DeafBlind. Passed.

For the proposed change to the Bylaws, Article 4.03 Terms of Office: the law committee came up with three options and a nomination requirement change. Again, the discussion for this proposed change with the three options was a long one.

Mary Ann Richmond (Billy Bowman) moved to table this proposed nomination requirement change to the next board meeting or statewide meeting.

There was no change to the terms of office, thus leaving the original term in place (option item #1). The majority of the people chose option 1.

Secretary's Report

-DDSC Open Letter to the ACLU-Delaware

Secretary Mary Ann Richmond shared the background/ purpose for the DAD to write an open letter to the ACLU of Delaware.

Reports from the County Representatives and Affiliated Organization Representatives

Delaware School for the Deaf Representative, Kelli Adasko

Kelli Adasko, DSD Bilingual Literacy Specialist, is one of two affiliated DSD representatives serving on the DAD board. She shared these information with us:

- Public events hosted by DSD
- Daily substitute teacher needed, contact her to get more information if you are interested.
- Interested in becoming an ASL instructor in Kent and/or Sussex on a weeknight? Contact her to get more details.
- DSD as a host for the future regional or national events:

-Possible Academic Bowl Spring 2026

-ASLRT Conference Fall 2026

-ESDAA Basketball February 2029

- DSD is collecting and sharing news digitally, it is called *ASL Community Newsletter*. If you want to subscribe to receive the ASL Community Newsletter, contact her via email to subscribe and to share any information/news.

County Representatives' Reports

New Castle County- Karen Miller

DAD Deaf EXPO

We had a good crowd even though it was nasty weather. We had over 450 attendances. We invited 3 special guests to the expo. Mark Drolsbaugh from Philadelphia, he is an author, Deaf advocate. Mark decided to give 20 free books to the parents. Chad Grabousky, from Harrisburg, PA Deaf Fireman and Billy Doris DEAFBLIND fireman-he graduated from DSD 1983.

Kent County- Judy McGuigan

Judy McGuigan shared her concerns about how hard it is to find Deaf People living in Kent County /Dover. Some of them have their own personal challenges which may need to be recognized /helped.

Sussex County- Suz Dennis

Suz Dennis informed us that the Sussex County Deaf / Delaware Deaf Senior Citizens residents are always doing something! Activities that are ongoing:

- Women's lunches and Men's breakfasts
- Monthly Deaf Night Out
- Group activities include pickleball, cycling, walking, kayaking, bowling and crafting

The Annual Labor Day Picnic was successful and so was the 2nd Pickleball at the Beach tournament.

We hosted the DAD's Annual St Patrick's Day Dinner and fun was had by all!

Delaware Deaf Senior Citizens (DDSC) Representative, Martha Sheridan

Martha Sheridan came up with a list of things the Delaware Deaf Senior Citizens (DDSC) non profit organization have done/been working on:

- DDSC Pickleball at the Beach Tournament was held during the weekend of September 14-15, it was a big success with nearly 75 players registered.
- Voting Rights and Election Information Workshop On August 12th DDSC and Delaware Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing co-sponsored a Voting Rights and Election Information Workshop with speakers from the League of Women Voters and the Delaware Community Legal Aid Society, Inc.'s Disability Law Program. About 30 people attended the workshop.
- Martha Sheridan and Mary Ann Richmond are currently working on creating a list of suggested books about Deaf, hard of hearing and DeafBlind children for the Sussex County Public Libraries to purchase.
- Mobile Phones: There is a need for financial assistance and services for deaf seniors and deaf people of all ages who cannot afford to purchase a mobile device and internet service.
- Home Repairs: There is a need for home repair services for deaf individuals and deaf seniors who are physically and/or financially unable to make or purchase home repair services.

Alanna Smith, Independent Resources Inc. (IRI)

Alanna Smith shared the information regarding Independent Resources Inc. (IRI). IRI is a nonprofit center for independent living serving people with disabilities. To provide them services so they can achieve and maintain independence. We have three offices: Wilmington, Dover, and Milford.

Unfinished Business

None

New Business

Election of Officers- Vice President and Secretary

Gordon Bergan (Mike Childs) moved to have Keith Robertson serve as the Vice President. Passed.

Suz Dennis (Dave Staehle) moved to have Mary Ann Richmond serve as the Secretary.

Swearing In of the Officers

President Feta Fernsler led the swearing in of the officers elected to serve the new term 2024-2026.

Public Comments/ Feedback and Announcements

NAD Region 1 State Association Day, March 8, 2025, 9:30a-5p via zoom on mental health and other related topics.

DINGO events are still happening. Wilmington Club for the Deaf (WCD) has one on Nov. 2 and Deaf Outreach (DO) has it on Dec. 15.

Adjournment

Billy Bowman (Suz Dennis) moved to adjourn the meeting. Passed. The meeting was adjourned at 3:13 pm.

We had a discussion about who were the past DAD presidents Here are the list of the Past Presidents:

Richard Baugh, 1975-1984

Loretta Sarro, 1986-1987

Valerie Sherrill, 1998-2000

Richard Pelletier ?

Jay Innes, 2011-?

Billy Bowman, ? -2018

Feta Fernsler, 2018-Present

According to the DAD website:

DAD was formed in Wilmington, DE on November 18, 1982 under Sterck School for the Deaf (now DSD) teacher Frank Bock. (Source: NAD State Association handbook)

Jay Innes, former President, reported restarting DAD in 2011.

We need to collect missing information to complete the history of the DAD presidents and officers as well.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Ann Richmond, Secretary