

Spring 4-1-2008

# Maine-Lines: A Newsletter for People who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Late-Deafened, Spring 2008

Maine Department of Labor

Maine Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

Maine Division of Deaf, Hard-of-Hearing and Late Deafened

Nancy Melanson

*Maine Department of Labor*, [Nancy.A.Melanson@Maine.gov](mailto:Nancy.A.Melanson@Maine.gov)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalmaine.com/rehab\\_docs](https://digitalmaine.com/rehab_docs)

---

## Recommended Citation

Maine Department of Labor; Maine Bureau of Rehabilitation Services; Maine Division of Deaf, Hard-of-Hearing and Late Deafened; and Melanson, Nancy, "Maine-Lines: A Newsletter for People who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Late-Deafened, Spring 2008" (2008). *Rehabilitation Services/Disability Services Documents*. 24.  
[https://digitalmaine.com/rehab\\_docs/24](https://digitalmaine.com/rehab_docs/24)

This Text is brought to you for free and open access by the Labor at Digital Maine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Rehabilitation Services/Disability Services Documents by an authorized administrator of Digital Maine. For more information, please contact [statedocs@maine.gov](mailto:statedocs@maine.gov).

**DIVISION OF DEAFNESS**

# MAINE-LINES

A NEWSLETTER FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAF, HARD OF HEARING OR LATE DEAFENED

## American Sign Language Classes at the Department of Labor



Alma Simmons, Teacher of American Sign Language

In response to requests by Department of Labor (DOL) employees, a local Deaf community member, Alma Simmons, was hired to teach hearing employees to effectively communicate with Deaf people using American Sign Language (ASL).

When the announcement went out to DOL employees, the response was overwhelming. There were so many requests they added another class to accommodate more employees. There are still employees who are waiting for the next round of classes.

Everyone I have spoken to loves the classes, and they are excited about studying ASL. I see people practicing in the Central Maine Commerce Center hallways and in the DOL break rooms. The classes are a huge success for the employees.

The Division of Deafness (DoD) took a few minutes to ask Alma a few questions about her classes.

DoD: Hi Alma, congratulations, I've been hearing great things about your classes.

Alma: Thanks.

DoD: When did you start teaching ASL classes?

Alma: I started teaching ASL perhaps seventeen years ago, and I still enjoy teaching the classes very much.

DoD: When did the DOL classes start?

Alma: They started on January 27, 2008.

DoD: How many people are in your classes at DOL?

Alma: About fifteen people in each class, thirty total.

DoD: Is Deaf culture included in your classes?

Alma: Yes, we will have Deaf visitors coming in to visit this Monday and Tuesday to discuss Deaf culture.

DoD: Do you feel your students are learning and improving?

Alma: Yes, I feel they are learning and improving. They seem to better understand the communication between Deaf and hearing people.

DoD: Are you enjoying teaching ASL classes?

Alma: Oh yes, very much so.

DoD: Do you teach other places as well?

Alma: No, unfortunately, not at this time.

DoD: Are you interested in teaching in other state departments? If so, how can they contact you to make arrangements?

Alma: Yes, I am interested. People can call me through the Video Relay Service (VRS) 1-866-327-8877; then give the relay operator the phone number 207-582-5062. We can make arrangements on the phone. If I am not home, I will check for your missed call and return your call.



Department of Labor's American Sign Language class

Thank you so much, Alma, for giving the Division of Deafness and other people a chance to get to know you better. Your teaching ability is very much appreciated. Hope to see you teaching more departments within the State of Maine.



### **A Family for ME**

By: Jennifer Hutchinson

A Family For ME (AFFME) is a nonprofit agency that works in collaboration with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to find foster and adoptive families for children in the custody of the state of Maine. Several of these children in need of families are Deaf or hard of hearing. Based in Gardiner, AFFME was started in 2000.

Children come into the custody of DHHS because their birth families are unable to provide adequately for them. The first goal when a child comes into custody is to work with the birth family members to reunify the family. However, sometimes the family is not able to make satisfactory changes, and the child will remain in the care and custody of the state. These children, ranging in age from infancy to 18 years, have experienced emotional abuse, sexual and physical abuse, or neglect.

Currently there are 2,189 children in the custody of the State of Maine, but there are only 1,189 licensed foster homes for those children. There are 156 children in the state's care that are available for adoption. Of these, 111 have been waiting over a year for a permanent family. DHHS has a process that families must complete to become foster/adoptive parents.

Foster/Adoptive parents can:

- be single, married, divorced or in partnerships
- have other children living in the home
- live in a house, apartment, condo, or mobile home
- have no parenting experience

Foster/Adoptive parents in Maine have many responsibilities and opportunities to influence and improve the life of a child. During the reunification process, foster parents are a large part of the communication with DHHS, providing feedback about visits with birth family and current strengths and needs of the family. This is often a challenge for foster families, balancing the needs of the birth family with the feelings of the child. Children will develop attachments to the foster parents who have been providing for their care while their parents are getting the help they need.

Additionally, children already have attachments to their birth families and are often confused by this divided loyalty. If reunification is not the goal, foster parents work hard to prepare the child for adoption; teaching skills and lessons a child would need to prepare them to live within a family again.

We would like to introduce our readers to Andrew, who is hard of hearing and hoping for a foster or adoptive family soon.



Pictured: Andrew

Andrew is a delightful and affectionate young man with a great sense of humor and a robust personality. He was born in August of 1992. Although Andrew is an avid video game guru, he is developing an appreciation for outdoor activities, and enjoys playing basketball or tossing a football in the backyard with his peers and staff members. If Andrew were to boast (and its likely he might), he has a great outside shot in basketball, and you can believe he is telling you the truth. Andrew is also a die-hard Red Sox fan and (pardon the bumper sticker reference) a fan of any team that beats the Yankees.

In the past, Andrew has been helpful in planting both a flower garden and a vegetable garden; however, his enjoyment is perhaps related more to the one-to-one time with adults he so enjoys.

Andrew's level of interest in a task sometimes fluctuates depending upon the amount of adult interaction it involves. However, adults who have worked with Andrew note his high work ethic in the past. He is very often motivated to complete his chores at home.

As one might expect of any child, Andrew enjoys and responds well to receiving encouragement and praise for his successes. Andrew has also enjoyed participating in swimming and running events at the Special Olympics. Andrew enjoys playing card games such as Rummy or Cribbage, and he is getting quite good at both!

Due to the experiences in his birth home, Andrew can at times feel unsafe and will try to control his environment.

When feeling unsafe Andrew may exhibit oppositional and defiant behavior. Andrew continues to work on being able to listen to adults, express his needs through use of language, and improve his choices about his behavior and his impulses when he is feeling anxious. It is important to Andrew to be able to trust the adults working with him. He also needs to know that the adults in his life are able to keep him safe when he is struggling.

Andrew wears glasses for a stigmatism. He is also hard of hearing, and wears hearing aids in both ears and is able to function very well with them. In addition to hearing aids, Andrew has a special device he wears at school called an FM Trainer. This device helps to amplify the teacher's voice so his educational needs can be met. The device would also be available to Andrew's family if it was deemed necessary or would be considered beneficial for certain events. Andrew is also able to read lips and has proven very capable of engaging in daily conversation with little difficulty. Educationally, Andrew has made great gains in school this past year, both in his academics and by reducing his oppositional behaviors.

Andrew looks forward to having a loving, adoptive family to call his own. Andrew is in need of a family that will be patient and understanding about his difficulty with trusting adults to keep him safe. Andrew also needs a family that is able to advocate for his special educational needs. Andrew's permanent family will need to understand the importance of participating in therapy to continue to address issues related to Andrew's loss of his biological family, as well as those issues that may arise with the transition to his permanent family.



Interested families should contact Paul Bastien, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), 35 Anthony Avenue, State House Station #11, Augusta, Maine 04333, phone 624-5580 or 1-800-452-1926, if calling in state. Subsidy may be available for the most appropriate family.

Providing a stable, loving home for a child is the best gift anyone could give. DHHS is also looking for adults who can provide other assistance to children in care, giving them life long connections and providing support and assistance throughout their lives. Could you open your heart and home to a child who needs a family? Please contact A Family For ME at 1-877-505-0545 for more information about how you could help!





***hear ME now!* Welcomes New  
Executive Director**



Pam Dawson, Executive Director of *hear ME now!*

***hear ME now!***, an auditory oral learning center in New Gloucester, has announced the hiring of a new executive director, Pamela Dawson. Our reporter caught up with Pam at their preschool facility on the beautiful Pineland Farms campus.

DoD: Welcome, Pam Dawson! So, how did you first learn about *hear ME now!*?

Pam: Well, last fall, after 17 years as the owner of Building Blocks Preschool in Cumberland, I made the decision to look for another job. Building Blocks was an inclusive learning center that served children with many different types of developmental needs. My heart has always been in early childhood education, and it was my deepest desire to continue to work with young children and their families.

DoD: So, your past experience has been in early intervention?

Pam: That's right. I have a master's degree in Early Childhood Special Education and have spent many years working with families, service providers and the state Department of Education to provide educational programming for young children with disabilities.

DoD: Have you had much experience with deaf education?

Pam: Not to the degree I have now! But, when I was contemplating my recent job change and I learned about *hear ME now!*, I spent time researching and talking to people within the field of oral deaf education. I learned that today, even children with profound hearing loss can learn to listen and talk at *hear ME now!* We are living in a time of rapid and exciting changes in the field of deaf education. Early screening and incredible advances in technology have opened the world of sound and spoken language to children with hearing loss.

Did you know that until five years ago, an oral deaf education center was *not* available for the children of Maine? *hear ME now!* was developed through the grassroots efforts of several committed families who felt an oral education was the best choice for their child. Their hard work captured the attention of OPTION schools, an international organization of nonprofit auditory oral schools with over 40 schools in the United States. *hear ME now!* is the only OPTION education center in Maine.

With the guidance of the OPTION organization and the support of committed individuals, we are facing a future bright with possibility for Maine children with hearing loss.

DoD: Are they keeping you busy at *hear ME now!*?

Pam: Oh yes! We are all working on many exciting new initiatives and programs to meet the needs of young children with hearing loss. We have ongoing services for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, school age children and even adults! We have begun to reach out to families and service providers in rural parts of Maine to see how we can support their needs. We even have plans to co-host a conference on hearing loss, literacy and reading achievement in May!

The following are specific *hear ME now!* programs.

**Parent/Infant/Toddler Program (PIT)**

Our PIT program gives parents and caregivers of children up to 36 months the opportunity to observe techniques to facilitate spoken language at home in ways that are play based and developmentally appropriate.

The program meets once a week at our center. It includes time for parents to interact with other parents and professionals, as well as a structured children's program facilitated by an early childhood educator and a speech/language pathologist with specialized training in audition and language development in children with hearing loss. Additional home-based services are also available for qualifying families.

### Preschool

Our unique preschool classroom blends a traditional early childhood curriculum with highly individualized teaching methods that target each child's unique auditory and language needs. The ultimate goal for every child is successful transition into a traditional kindergarten classroom.

Our preschool meets daily from 9 AM to 12 PM. Two, three and five-day options are available, with optional extended care.

### Speech, Language and Audition Therapy

We provide individualized instruction by therapists specifically trained to work with children with hearing loss. Auditory oral and auditory verbal therapies are available to children participating in our programs and as a stand-alone service.

### Cochlear Implant Habilitation

Many of the children enrolled at *hear ME now!* have cochlear implants. Our staff is trained to continually evaluate each child's listening and speaking skills, and to individualize instruction to create an optimal auditory learning environment.

### School Age Services

We offer a range of services for older children, including direct service and consultation to school systems. We are available for staff training and support, classroom observation and equipment support.

DoD: That all sounds very interesting. How can people find out more?

Pam: You can call *hear ME now!* at 207-688-4544, or email us at [info@hear-me-now.org](mailto:info@hear-me-now.org). Visit our website at [www.hear-me-now.org](http://www.hear-me-now.org), and *of course* – we welcome visitors!

DoD: Thank you Pam! We look forward to hearing more about *hear ME now!* in the future.

Pam: You are most welcome! Thank you.

**In our next issue of Maine-Lines we will be interviewing Lynn Schardel, Director of Statewide Educational Services (SES) from the Maine Educational Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing.**



Joe Roquebecil, Rehabilitation Counselor of the Deaf

### A Message from Joe Roquebecil, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf:

Dear Client,

I hope this New Year finds you well. I would like to serve you better by having a regular schedule in the various parts of Maine where I work as a Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf.

I'm at the Augusta CareerCenter on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays; Bangor CareerCenter on Thursdays and the Rockland CareerCenter on the last Tuesday of the month. I can also meet you at a different CareerCenter as needed. I am off Fridays between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

It is a good idea to contact me first to make sure I'm free. If you have any suggestions, please let me know.

Take care,  
Joseph D. Roquebecil, MA, CRC  
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II  
[Joseph.Roquebecil@maine.gov](mailto:Joseph.Roquebecil@maine.gov)  
207-624-5111 (TTY)  
1-800-633-0770 (TTY)

**In Memory of James Levier  
June 23, 1940-March 16, 2001  
You are missed.**



**Lutheran Social Services  
Deaf Services of Maine  
Is  
Growing!!**

**We Are Seeking Direct Service  
And Management Staff Who Are  
Competent In ASL To Join A  
Growing Deaf Program!!!**



**Earn Up To \$10.15 (Or More For Management!) Per Hour Assisting  
Deaf Consumers Who Are Residents of LSS Homes Located In  
Standish, North Gorham, and Westbrook, Maine.**

LSS employees who regularly work 20 or more hours per week are eligible to receive agency benefits, including:

- Health Insurance Blue Cross/Blue Shield HMO (85% of premiums paid by employer for both Individuals and families!)
- Dental Insurance
- Vision Insurance
- Long Term Disability Insurance
- Fidelity 403B Retirement Plan
- Flexible Spending Accounts
- \$1000 Tuition Assistance
- 28 Paid Days Off Per Year (prorated for part time staff)
- Employer Paid Training....All trainings are done by ASL competent instructors! No interpreters are used!
- Life Insurance

***Frequent opportunities for promotions in a growing company***

For more information or to apply for a job contact us at:



Deaf Services of Maine  
Lutheran Social Services  
39 Mechanic Street, Suite 300  
Westbrook, ME 04092  
Email: [BruceML@LSSNorth.org](mailto:BruceML@LSSNorth.org)  
Video Phone: 207/591-6714  
Voice: 207/797-3935

Maine Department of Labor  
Division of Deafness  
150 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0150

Return Service Requested

### **Bureau of Rehabilitation Services**

Jill Duson, Director

### **Division of Deafness**

The Division of Deafness provides a program of services to Deaf, hard-of-hearing and late-deafened people in Maine, which includes information and referral, advocacy, and accessibility promotion.

John Shattuck, Director

Tel: 623-7957 (V)

1-888-755-0023 (TTY)

E-mail: [John.G.Shattuck@maine.gov](mailto:John.G.Shattuck@maine.gov)

Alice Crandall Johnson

Rehabilitation Consultant

Tel: 623-7964 (V)

1-888-755-0023 (TTY)

E-mail: [Alice.C.Johnson@maine.gov](mailto:Alice.C.Johnson@maine.gov)

Nancy Melanson, Assistant to the Director

Tel: 623-7998 (TTY), 623-7958 (V)

1-888-755-0023 (TTY)

287-5292 (FAX)

E-mail: [Nancy.A.Melanson@maine.gov](mailto:Nancy.A.Melanson@maine.gov)

*The Maine Department of Labor provides equal opportunity in employment and programs.  
Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.*