

NATIONAL DEAF HERITAGE WEEK

WHEREAS, Approximately 21.2 million persons in the United States have hearing impairments; and this number will increase due to illnesses, noise pollution accidents, heredity, greater longevity, and ironically, better medical care which now saves the lives of children but may leave them with a hearing loss; and

WHEREAS, Deafness is an invisible disability which is unrecognized and misunderstood by most hearing people; it is not only the disability of not being able to hear normally, but also the communication challenges faced by many individuals, which, in the words of Helen Keller, "separate people from people"; and

WHEREAS, The term Deaf Community implies a body of persons having a lack of or are deprived of hearing, whether wholly or in part scattered through a larger society. The Deaf Community consists of eight groups appropriately subdivided, in terms of their information and communication needs; and

WHEREAS, The general public has become more aware of the Deaf Community and deafness through such efforts as:

- . The National Theatre of the Deaf, which has toured throughout the United States and appeared on television;

- . "Children of a Lesser God," which was first a Broadway play, then a movie, has reached many hearing persons in theaters across the country and in private homes through videorecorders;

- . The deaf actresses who have starred in this play and movie about deafness have both won national awards (The Tony Award--Phyllis Frelich, and The Oscar--Marlee Matlin);

- . A television drama about deafness, "Love is Never Silent," was produced by a deaf woman, Julianna Fjeld, who was honored with an Emmy;

- . Each year more television programs are close captioned;

WHEREAS, Libraries have been instrumental in Deaf Awareness and Deaf Heritage, such as:

- . Since 1974, the libraries of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area have annually observed a week of special recognition for the Deaf Community; now called Deaf Heritage Week, it is celebrated in December;

- . The Free Library of Philadelphia coordinated the first celebration of Deaf Awareness Week in Philadelphia and has helped with all succeeding activities;

- . The San Francisco Public Library has conducted a special project on Deaf Heritage and Culture and has developed a set of unique videos which are available to libraries throughout the country;

- . Public, school and academic libraries are acquiring literature and media on deafness and Deaf individuals as well as materials presented in formats which are accessible to the Deaf Community;

. Since 1978, a unit concerned with Library Services to the Deaf has existed within the American Library Association "to promote library and information service to deaf persons; by fostering deaf awareness in the library community at large and the deaf and hearing populations at large..." and

WHEREAS, The heritage of Deaf people in America has been recognized in the publication of DEAF HERITAGE, the first comprehensive history of the Deaf Community in America, and American Sign Language has been acknowledged as a language by itself and is taught throughout the United States; and

WHEREAS, Deaf persons, persons with partial or normal hearing alike, need to know and understand the heritage of the Deaf Community; and

WHEREAS, The month of December contains these important dates in the Deaf Heritage of America:

. Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, one of the first pioneers of America's public education, one of ten educators honored in the Library of Congress and for whom Gallaudet University was named, was born on December 10, 1787;

. Laurent Clerc, the first Deaf teacher of Deaf people in America and the original role model for and inspiration to Deaf people in America, was born on December 26, 1785;

. Laura Bridgman, the first deaf-blind person to be successfully educated and who served as a model for Helen Keller and many other deaf-blind persons, was born on December 21, 1829;

. Henry C. Rider, founder of the Deaf Mute's Journal, the publication which served as the springboard leading to the founding of the National Association of the Deaf, was born on December 14, 1832;

. The first transistorized electronic hearing aid was offered for sale on December 29, 1952;

. December 1982 was proclaimed as "National Closed Captioned Month" by the President of the United States; NOW, THEREFORE BE IT

RESOLVED, That the Council of the American Library Association urge the President of the United States to declare a National Deaf Heritage Week to be held December 6-12, 1987, and to be celebrated by libraries, especially public libraries, in cooperation with the Deaf Community throughout the nation.