

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION  
2020 MIDWINTER MEETING  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, 2020  
11:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.  
DEAF CULTURE FORUM

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## **Deaf Seniors of America**

>> MOLLY RAPHAEL: Thank you. And now we will move onto deaf seniors in America, of America, excuse me, Alfred Sonnenstrahl, please.

>> ALFRED SONNENSTRAHL: Hi, everyone. Can you see me just fine? Okay. Great. Hello. I'm Alfred or Alfred Sonnenstrahl. I'm president of Deaf Seniors of America. As Melissa said I don't want to talk about the history of the organization, but we have over 2,000 members from all over the United States.

About 20 percent of them don't have access to the Internet, and this is for a group of people that could afford coming to a conference that could really afford to pay their dues but what about the other people who are not familiar with our organization or can't afford to attend a Convention like that. I'm sure that there would be many more people out there who do not have that access to the Internet in remote areas.

Do you know why that is? ,So, we do have a website, and it's called deafseniors.US. And we just finished rolling it out, and it's going to become more resourceful and more informative about issues surrounding deaf health, travel, financial planning, all of that will be packaged in that design for deaf

people.

And I'm sure there are deaf people out there who really need this kind of information, caregivers right now who don't have a caregivers license, who really could sign and provide that service. So, we are trying to develop further outreach in alignment with NAD and various other organizations and sources to really promote deaf awareness. So that deaf people really can die happily instead of being lonely and isolated.

So, you are probably wondering why local libraries around the country, why they can't develop programs to be more deaf friendly, so that deaf senior citizens in those areas can go and make use of the Internet there. And it's available at no cost, and then they can become more well informed. So, we need to develop these partnerships between NAD, DSA, and also different libraries. And I'm more than happy to install deaf library services. It's all going to be housed on our website so people can know which libraries are deaf friendly.

And if you meet a deaf person in your local library and you want to have a conversation, you can set up video remote interpreting, VRI. It's a program that's on a device, for example, last summer I was in Martha's Vineyard. And they have a library, so I don't know if you know the history of Martha's Vineyard, but it used to be full of deaf people and they all used sign language there. This is a long time ago. They do have a library there that was built and donated by a deaf family.

So I went in and they had a whole wing for deaf programming and talked about how the building was established, and then the woman came up to me and didn't sign as well, but my friend could lip read, so she talked about Martha vineyard's sign language. Martha's Vineyard had their own form of sign language. The librarian was well versed in that which I thought was interesting. Even though they couldn't sign but trying to communicate because deaf people would come there and so they would establish video remote interpreting to provide access. And so, there are VRI companies that you can establish relationships to provide service in your local libraries.

I think this is something we can do working together to make more accessibility for deaf senior citizens. Thank you for your attention.

(Applause).

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