

DEAF, Inc. Long-Time Executive Director Sharon Applegate Announces Her Retirement



Sharon Applegate announced her retirement as DEAF, Inc.'s Executive Director, effective at the end of August, 2021. During her outstanding tenure as Executive Director, DEAF, Inc. has:

- Increased visibility of Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, and Late-Deafened people and successfully influenced policies that address disparities in health access and access to other critical services for basic needs across the Commonwealth.
- Increased focus on the needs of Deaf seniors, including implementing independent living services for seniors.
- Successfully increased awareness of the needs of DeafBlind adults, and successfully advocated for increased funding for DeafBlind Community Access Network (DBCAN) Provider services.
- Implemented the American Sign Language Program and expanded offerings to online classes (including ASL, Japanese, and Russian sign languages), monthly ASL social events, online tutorials, and opened registrations to students beyond MA.
- Embraced the Black Lives Matter movement, acknowledging the impact on the Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, and Late-Deafened community and recognized the need to increase representation on staff and in programming; and initiated staff-driven diversity education and outreach.
- Responded to the COVID pandemic by seamlessly transitioning in-person services online.

DEAF, Inc. Board President, Wesley Ireland, said, "We are grateful for the incredible leadership and inspiration that Sharon has provided to our organization throughout her time as Executive Director. She leaves DEAF, Inc. in a position where we can continue to provide the life changing services that benefit the Massachusetts Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, and Late-Deafened community. The DEAF, Inc. Board is committed to finding a new Executive Director who will continue Sharon's legacy and capably lead the agency into the future. The Board has already begun the process of looking for a new DEAF, Inc. Executive Director. We will share those updates soon."

"Serving as Executive Director of DEAF, Inc. for the past 18 years has been an honor and a privilege," Sharon shared. "Independent living is about having and taking control of your life. Like the individuals we serve, we know at DEAF, Inc. we can't do what we do alone. With our many partner agencies, we have worked together towards success. Together we are stronger!"

"Over the years at DEAF, Inc.," said Sharon, "I have been honored to meet and work with many wonderful people; staff and Board members, as well as colleagues and foundations, members of the Deaf community in Greater Boston and throughout Massachusetts, and the wider community. I am proud of DEAF, Inc. and all we have been able to accomplish towards our mission to inspire Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, and Late-Deafened people to achieve their personal and professional goals, and the bridges we have built across communities."