

Living/Learning Center Programs
The University of Vermont
<http://www.uvm.edu/lcenter/>

SIGN House

Overview

By the end of the school year, we hope for our members to have gained a basic knowledge of American Sign Language. This would include the ASL alphabet, numbers zero through one hundred, and other everyday signs. Also, we would like our members to be able to hold a basic conversation in ASL. Finally, we hope that all participants of the program will be able to appreciate Deaf culture and learn what it means to be Deaf in America.

We plan on holding weekly meetings, during which we will learn signs and about Deaf culture. We also want to organize a monthly ASL meal where the participants of the program, as well as other members of the L/L community, can practice signing in a pressure-free environment. Lastly, we plan to find movies and other events (plays, lectures, etc) that either deal with or are related to ASL and/or Deaf culture.

This program would give its members a chance to learn to communicate using ASL as well as opportunities in which they can practice in real life situations. Movies and other events will help to enhance the experiences of participants in respect to Deaf culture. The totality of all activities will leave participants with a deeper understanding of ASL and the culture that surrounds it.

Learning Objectives:

1. Each member is expected to gain an understanding of basic American Sign Language.

Action Steps:

- There will be weekly meetings to introduce new vocabulary and brush up on the old – the content of these meetings will be determined by the members via suggestions or a vote. During the first semester we will be teaching the members signs. For the second semester we will have the members teaching the group. **(\$0)**
- Attend ASL Skit Nights and encourage members to participate in the skit nights. **(\$0 – Attendance is free!)**
- Meetings will have a specific theme such as foods, sports, holidays, etc, in relation to what the members respectfully request the program learn more about. **(\$0)**
- We will have a “silent hour” where oral communication will be prohibited as much as possible, and signing is required as much as possible. Miming is allowed where signing skills are somewhat lacking. **(\$0)**

- We plan to attend at least one (1) ASL-interpreted UVM play during the year.
 - We plan to have one (1) “ASL Dinner” each month. Members will be asked to use their knowledge of ASL rather than speaking. We would like to have one (1) meal per semester out at a restaurant, with all others being in the common lounge where we will all pitch in and cook together. These dinners will help members sharpen their signing skills and experience dining out as a Deaf person would.
2. Member will learn about the Deaf Community and the role that it plays in the lives of people both directly and indirectly involved in the community.

Action Steps:

- Attend ASL Skit Night, Deaf Awareness Week events and other Deaf social events that are happening in the community. **(\$0)**
 - Guest speakers may come and discuss with the house various topics concerning ASL and/or Deaf Culture.
 - Guest speakers may include ASL professors at UVM and St. Michael’s College and also possibly members from the Deaf Community within the greater Burlington area.
 - Other suggestions from members that come along throughout the year will be taken and communication will be attempted.
 - We will likely invite guests at the end of the semesters and if interest declines, a guest may be used as a tool to rejuvenate the interest in and out of the program.
 - View movies that deal with this subject and help our members better understand what it is like to a part of the Deaf Community. There is a documentary that Holly made, called *Sign, Hear*, which speaks on the subject of Deaf culture. There are also movies in the Bailey/Howe Library, such as *Sound and Fury*, that we could show for this objective. **(\$0)**
3. Members will be informed of various sign languages and accents.

Action Steps:

- We will learn about the above in our weekly meetings. **(\$0)**
- There will be occasional evenings where the ASL House will interact with other programs (Shalom Home, No Boundaries, etc).
- We may also ask any Guest speakers who come to talk to our program to also talk on this subject. For this reason we would not ask for additional funding. **(\$0)**

Plans for Interactions with Other Programs

We believe that SIGN House will have many opportunities to interact with other programs. We hope to work with a few of the Global Village programs by teaching each other words from our respective languages, and by learning signs from the signed languages of the countries that have programs in Global Village. Specifically, we would like to hold an event

with Japanese House where we show the movie *I Love You*, a Japanese movie about a group of Deaf performers.

We also hope to work with programs in the Arts Initiative. One idea we have is to work with the Photography Program to hold a photo shoot and possibly make a calendar with photos of people signing. We could also interact with the Fiber Arts program by having an ASL Knit Night where we teach each other signs and how to knit. We are hoping that calendars and items made at a knit night could be sold to raise money to increase awareness about Deaf culture (This would likely require an addition to the budget). Other ideas for collaboration with members of the Arts Initiative are to interact with the Pottery Program and make sculptures and imprints of the hands in signing positions, and to interact with the Creative Writing and Music Appreciation programs by translating poems and songs into ASL, and encouraging some members of these programs to perform with us at ASL Skit Night.

SIGN House would also like to interact with No Boundaries, a program that is dedicated to teaching and learning about diverse cultures. We will invite No Boundaries members to attend some of our meetings, and encourage them to come to any events we hold.

Community Service

We will spread knowledge and understanding of the importance of Sign Language to the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing community for the public to learn. We will try to expand the Sign Language program here at the university by working with our advisor, Keri Ogrizovich, as well as open up weekly meetings to the public. Members will also be informed of, and encouraged to attend, events put on by other L/L and campus-wide programs. Also, during Deaf Awareness Week, members will be asked to participate and help out with events that are happening not only in L/L but also in the community.

As mentioned above, if the Photography and Fiber Arts programs would like to work with us to create a calendar and knitted pieces, these items could be sold to raise money to increase awareness about Deaf culture. By doing such a fundraiser, we especially hope to help inform hearing parents with deaf children about their options.