



# Deaf Culture

When people share a similar set of values, norms, history, and tradition, coupled with a common language, those people constitute a culture.

## Is there a Deaf Culture?

The use of the cultural label of being Deaf can be a declaration of personal identity rather than an indicator of hearing ability. American Sign Language unites people with profound hearing loss throughout the United States. Deaf Communities have their own educational institutions, social clubs and athletic organizations. A variety of events, conferences and conventions take place on a regular basis, providing individuals who are deaf a wide variety of options in which to interact with others. In addition, the Deaf Community engages in social and political activities exclusive to the Deaf Community.

The Deaf Community provides a sense of belonging for deaf people who might otherwise feel excluded from hearing culture. A belief commonly shared by Deaf people is that deafness should not be regarded as an impairment or a disability.

Fact Sheet

### Missy Keast:

Arizonan Missy Keast was born deaf and is considered to be the “Shakespeare” of American Sign Language. Her clarity and complexity in the use of ASL is unmatched. In addition to college-level teaching, Missy is also a storyteller who fine tuned her skills while touring with the National Theatre of the Deaf. She is the author of “One Day: Our View” which documents Deaf culture using 24 hours of photographs from around the world. She is the founder of Signs for Intelligence, and an internationally recognized and respected member of both the Deaf and hearing communities.

To know more, contact ACDHH directly.

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## How many people in Arizona have hearing loss?

According to 2005 population statistics, about 8.6% of Arizonans are estimated to have hearing loss. One-third of Arizona Seniors have hearing loss. Just under 1% of the Arizona population is Deaf.

## The Deaf Community and the Arts

The Deaf express community and culture through the Arts. There is an ever growing body of ASL poetry and numerous

folk tales handed down through generations. Deaf people have their own shared heritage, history and folklore associated with famous deaf individuals.

## ASL Unites Deaf Community

American Sign Language is a natural, complete visual language that is independent from written or spoken English. As with any living language, ASL continues to evolve. The U.S. Census lists ASL as the third most widely used language in the United States.

