

For Immediate Release
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Pawtucket City Council Passes Resolution Recognizing September 2018 As Deaf Awareness Month

Pawtucket: On August 8th, the Pawtucket City Council unanimously passed a resolution recognizing September 2018 as Deaf Awareness Month.

The purpose of National Deaf Awareness Month during is to increase awareness of Deaf people in America, celebrate their sign languages and cultures, and recognize the need for their inclusion as equal members of the community. Along with celebrating American Sign Language (ASL) and over 138 documented sign languages around the world, Deaf people, regardless of their hearing and speaking abilities, should not be viewed as objects of charity excluded from decisions that impact them, but rather as citizens with rights who make contributions as productive members of the community. It recognizes that American society has much to gain and learn from Deaf people, their sign languages, and cultures. Working together, with full inclusion, it is possible to address human and civil rights issues such as language acquisition accountability, education equality, economic opportunities, and inclusion in all levels of public life.

“We are delighted by Pawtucket City Council’s proclamation to be part of Deaf Awareness Month,” said Michael Baer, Coordinator for the Emergency and Public Communications Access Program at the Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (RICDHH). “RICDHH believes that the City of Pawtucket is the first city in Rhode Island to recognize the Deaf community as part of its diverse community in this way. We commend this effort.”

“Deaf people have faced significant barriers to inclusion in politics and public life,” said Timothy Riker, Pawtucket resident. “For so long, the word ‘public’ in American Sign Language has been synonymous with ‘hearing people’ because of those barriers, but is evolving to a new word that means ‘open to all’.” Riker continues, “Working with Councilor Kallman and other members of the council over the past year has been empowering and opens up opportunities for the Pawtucket City Council to become a model for effective collaboration between local governments and the Deaf community.”

“I have learned a tremendous amount working with organizers and advocates in the Deaf community,” said City Councilor Meghan Kallman, sponsor of the resolution. “Different abilities are forms of cultural diversity, and I am proud that Pawtucket recognizes this.”

Deaf Awareness Month will include a number of different events in several cities and towns throughout Rhode Island. For more information about Deaf Awareness Month and a calendar of events, visit RICDHH’s website at <http://www.cdhh.ri.gov/> or contact them at (401) 256-5511.

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