

PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

CONTACT: Maura K. Burns
Development & Digital Marketing Coordinator
516-628-4204

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Deaf Awareness Week 2014 at Mill Neck Manor School

Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf celebrated “*Deaf Awareness Week*,” September 15-19, as September is National Deaf Awareness Month. This engaging and educational week inspired students and staff alike with an opening ceremony, returning alumni, accomplished professionals who are Deaf, an actor, interactive game show and even magic! Doreen Bobick, Lisa Bonacia, Rose Madera de Farruya, Larry Manning and Rebecca Pilson are the dedicated staff members that made up the Deaf Awareness planning committee that coordinated this meaningful week.

The opening ceremony began on Monday in the auditorium where the valuable purposes of Deaf Awareness Week were presented to the students. The purposes outlined were to celebrate the culture, heritage and language of people who are Deaf; to recognize their achievements, and to understand that individuals who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing are just as capable and intelligent as hearing individuals. All of the programs scheduled for the week supported these crucial purposes. Following the initial ceremony, students returned to their classes to create personalized flags describing their personality and hobbies. Once the flags were created, students, teachers and staff members marched together from the Deaf Education Center, across campus, to the Manor House Formal Gardens, all in honor of Deaf Awareness.

On Tuesday, students were introduced to a panel of individuals who are Deaf. The panel discussed their experiences while growing up Deaf, attending school (Deaf school or mainstream), attending college

and pursuing a career. They also took time to offer words of advice and encouragement as our students face their future. The Deaf panel included: Laura Rosenberg, a former Mill Neck Manor student, who is the current President of Mill Neck Manor Alumni Association, and works as a graphic designer for Newsday; Michael Pilson, who pursued a career in industrial design and mechanical engineering, and went on to create, troubleshoot, and promote technical communication devices for people who are Deaf, and who was part of the USA ice hockey team that won the gold medal at the 1995 Winter Deaflympic Games; Donna Geffen, another former student of Mill Neck Manor, who has been working for Good Samaritan Hospital on Long Island as a Medical Lab Technician for more than thirty years; Christopher Tester, the current Interpreter Supervisor for the Mill Neck Interpreter Services branch in New York City, who is fluent in American Sign Language (ASL), British Sign Language (BSL), and International Sign (IS), and can communicate with some German Sign Language (DGS); and, Donald Street III (aka "D3"), a professional sailor, who has successfully sailed around the world three times and has crossed the Atlantic five times!

On Wednesday, after having the opportunity to view the 1979 film "...And Your Name Is Jonah," students were introduced to special guest Jeff Bravin, the very actor who played the part of Jonah (a misdiagnosed and misunderstood Deaf boy). Although the movie is not based on Jeff's own personal life, he did express to the students how he related to the situations, emotions, and challenges endured by the character of Jonah. In addition to his previous acting experience, Jeff Bravin is the current Executive Director of the American School for the Deaf (ASD) in West Hartford, Connecticut. Founded in 1817, ASD is the oldest permanent school for the Deaf in the United States!

Students engaged in an interactive game show on Thursday, hosted by the dynamic Mill Neck Manor School Teacher Assistant Tony Albicocco. Questions about Deaf culture were presented to dueling teams ("The Converse Team" vs. "The Tom & Jerry Team") in the style of the classic TV show Family Feud. Everyone in the auditorium found themselves participating. There was certainly no shortage of hoots and giggles.

Finally, on Friday, the last day of Deaf Awareness Week at Mill Neck Manor School, International Deaf Magician Matthew Morgan (aka "Magic Morgan") and his wife Liliana surprised the students with a visit to the campus. Students, teachers and staff shared laughs, and even got to participate on stage with Magic Morgan himself! What a blast! Later in the afternoon, and one of the greatest highlights of the

week, students had the privilege of watching the new superhero flick "No Ordinary Hero: The SuperDeafy Movie," released in 2014. The newly released film is a family drama about an actor who is Deaf who plays a super hero on a TV show who must look beyond the cape to inspire a boy who is Deaf to believe in himself.

Founded in 1947 by Lutheran Friends of the Deaf, Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf opened in 1951. It is part of the Mill Neck Family of Organizations, a not-for-profit group dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for people who are Deaf, or who have other special needs, through excellence in individually designed educational, vocational or spiritual programs and services. For more information, please call (516) 922-4100 / (800) 264-0662 or visit www.millneck.org.

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Photo Captions:

1. Students created flags for Deaf Awareness Week at Mill Neck Manor School
2. Preschool students marching across the Mill Neck Manor School campus for Deaf Awareness
3. Students, teachers and staff of Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf
4. Preschool students marching across the Mill Neck Manor School campus for Deaf Awareness
5. High school students with Deaf panelist Michael Pilson and his wife and Mill Neck Manor School Teacher Assistant Rebecca Pilson
6. Deaf panel from left: Laura Rosenberg, Michael Pilson, Donna Geffen, Christopher Tester, and Donald Street III
7. Students on “The Converse Team” conferring together over the answer to a Family Feud question concerning Deaf culture
8. Mill Neck Interpreters Donna Gualberti and Toni Kretzmer with special guest Jeff Bravin, Executive Director of American School for the Deaf
9. Mill Neck Manor School Teacher Assistant Rebecca Pilson, special guest Jeff Bravin, Superintendent of Schools Fran Atlas Bogdanoff, and Physical Education Teacher Larry Manning
10. Students assist Magic Morgan and his wife Liliana with one of the magical tricks
11. Students marching together from the Deaf Education Center across Mill Neck Manor campus to the Manor House Formal Gardens in honor of Deaf Awareness Week



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