Beth Jones - Panel

* Panelist Introductions (Organization, Your Name, and Title)

**Nevada Hands & Voices, Beth Jones, Executive Director**

* Please prepare to respond in 2 minutes or less for each question. All questions may not be addressed during our panel session.
  1. What is the biggest challenge in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community at the moment from your organization’s perspective?
* **The most common question Nevada Hands & Voices receives is why our state does not have a School for the Deaf. In discussing with other organization and community members, many of the same challenges individuals identify with could be solved with the implementation of a School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, legislative efforts (with information provided by the community) could help ensure the following:**
  + **Improvement of students’ developmental, social, and cognitive abilities that are crucial to their potential and identity.**
  + [**An education tailored to the needs of deaf and hard of hearing students**](https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=5a79117f3a7b167eJmltdHM9MTcwMDUyNDgwMCZpZ3VpZD0zYzQ1NDhmZi00MjdhLTY5YjctMGQwNC01YWZhNDM3YjY4ODcmaW5zaWQ9NTcxMg&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=3&fclid=3c4548ff-427a-69b7-0d04-5afa437b6887&psq=benefits+of+school+for+the+deaf&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuc2lnbmluZ3NhdnZ5LmNvbS9ibG9nLzgxL0VkdWNhdGlvbitPcHRpb25zK2ZvcitDaGlsZHJlbit0aGF0K2FyZStEZWFmK29yK0hhcmQrb2YrSGVhcmluZw&ntb=1)**.**
  + [**An incorporation of American Sign Language**](https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=f8b5d1b2e986fb3fJmltdHM9MTcwMDUyNDgwMCZpZ3VpZD0zYzQ1NDhmZi00MjdhLTY5YjctMGQwNC01YWZhNDM3YjY4ODcmaW5zaWQ9NTcxNA&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=3&fclid=3c4548ff-427a-69b7-0d04-5afa437b6887&psq=benefits+of+school+for+the+deaf&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuc2lnbmluZ3NhdnZ5LmNvbS9ibG9nLzgxL0VkdWNhdGlvbitPcHRpb25zK2ZvcitDaGlsZHJlbit0aGF0K2FyZStEZWFmK29yK0hhcmQrb2YrSGVhcmluZw&ntb=1)**, listening and spoken language and/or Cued speech**
  + **A chance for** [**students to build relationships and be involved in Deaf culture and community**](https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=b379c70a7e85af89JmltdHM9MTcwMDUyNDgwMCZpZ3VpZD0zYzQ1NDhmZi00MjdhLTY5YjctMGQwNC01YWZhNDM3YjY4ODcmaW5zaWQ9NTcxNg&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=3&fclid=3c4548ff-427a-69b7-0d04-5afa437b6887&psq=benefits+of+school+for+the+deaf&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuc2lnbmluZ3NhdnZ5LmNvbS9ibG9nLzgxL0VkdWNhdGlvbitPcHRpb25zK2ZvcitDaGlsZHJlbit0aGF0K2FyZStEZWFmK29yK0hhcmQrb2YrSGVhcmluZw&ntb=1)**.**
  + [**A sense of identity, understanding, and pride for students and alumni**](https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=539140da98b2f755JmltdHM9MTcwMDUyNDgwMCZpZ3VpZD0zYzQ1NDhmZi00MjdhLTY5YjctMGQwNC01YWZhNDM3YjY4ODcmaW5zaWQ9NTcxOA&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=3&fclid=3c4548ff-427a-69b7-0d04-5afa437b6887&psq=benefits+of+school+for+the+deaf&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cudmVyeXdlbGxoZWFsdGguY29tL2RlYWYtZWR1Y2F0aW9uLWNvbGxlZ2VzLWZvci10aGUtZGVhZi0xMDQ4MzY2&ntb=1) **(who in turn may stay in Nevada and add to the rich Deaf culture rather than moving away for lack of opportunities)**
  + **Potential for a** [**Deaf residential school to provide a more supportive environment for deaf students, which can lead to better academic and social outcomes**](https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=5acdf6493c3f9503JmltdHM9MTcwMDUyNDgwMCZpZ3VpZD0zYzQ1NDhmZi00MjdhLTY5YjctMGQwNC01YWZhNDM3YjY4ODcmaW5zaWQ9NTcyMA&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=3&fclid=3c4548ff-427a-69b7-0d04-5afa437b6887&psq=benefits+of+school+for+the+deaf&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuaWNwaHMyMDE5Lm9yZy90aGUtYmVuZWZpdHMtb2YtZGVhZi1yZXNpZGVudGlhbC1zY2hvb2xz&ntb=1)**.**

**In addition to the above benefits, the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) has a great position statement of Schools for the Deaf and how it applies to the law:**

Deaf schools are not just an educational option, but are the only beneficial placement for many deaf children. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires that states provide a “continuum of alternative placements,” which includes “instruction in regular classes, special classes, special schools, home instruction, and hospitals and institutions.” (34 C.F.R. § 300.115) (Emphasis added.) Schools for the deaf are not optional, but are a mandated placement under law.

2.     What are the legislative issues facing the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community and what changes need to be made?

a.     What are the most critical changes that we must make to face the future effectively?

**There is not one answer to this question as “critical” means something different to everyone. I have heard everything from families not being able to afford hearing devices for early access to language (and therefore moving out of state), to not having an optimal language acquisition program, to those wanting a Deaf assisted living home with appropriate language modalities. Changes cannot be made without representation of these matters by the people if affects, so to make effective change, organizations such as ourselves can provide opportunities to have community members advocate.**



3.     What are common issues that prevent people from being advocates for themselves or for the community?

a.     What is one piece of practical advice you would give to someone starting out as an advocate?

**Advocacy skills are embedded in our everyday life. Making a choice between coffee or tea? Deciding to watch a comedy or action movie? Vacationing at the beach or in the mountains?…… that’s advocating for your wants and needs. It starts by knowing what you want and what works for you. The motto at Hands & Voices is “what works for your child is what makes the choice right”. It begins by knowing what works for YOU and telling others by standing up and “speaking out” when those choices are not available. If the lack of knowledge of the legislative process is a barrier, start small. Attend a board meeting of one of DHH organizations or agencies, have conversation with the community leaders, or do some research by reading or watching past legislative sessions. Are you ready to share your story? Dive right in! We’re here to help, support, empower and encourage you to do so!**

4.     How do we include the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community in planning for the legislative changes?

**EVERY PERSON HAS A STORY, no matter how young. Legislative changes only happen when the people it affects share their experience, both positive and negative. There are so many aspects of everyone’s day which legislators, especially those who have typical hearing or do not have contact with individuals who are DHH, do not have any awareness of or the hardships that may come along with lack of legislative regulations. It is the responsibility of the members of the DHH community, their families, and the allies and professionals who work with them to help shed light on issues which can be improved on. By sharing lived experiences, explaining the challenges faced and by making suggestions on how current practices can be adjusted, legislators then become empowered with the education needed to make appropriate change. One key thing to remember is to support our DHH community, even if the choices other individuals make are different from our own. As in every community, there are many paths to the same destination. Educating others on our individual needs and feeling the support from peers will continue to encourage our community to advocate for their own needs and the needs of others, and make real change to Nevada.**