



### **Matlin Receives Achievement Award**

Actress Marlee Matlin received the Children's Miracle Achievement Award at the fourth annual Children's Miracle Network Celebration in Orlando, FL. According to Children's Miracle Network president and CEO, Mick Shannon, "Marlee Matlin has demonstrated a lifelong commitment to children and has contributed in many ways to bettering the lives of children everywhere. For deaf and hearing impaired children as well as children affected by AIDS, Marlee is breaking down barriers and opening a new world of possibilities."

Among Matlin's many child-related activities are the Children Affected by AIDS Foundation, and the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation. She constantly gets involved with many other children's causes as well, whether it's helping babies through the Center for the Education of the Infant Deaf, cheering up seriously ill children through the Starlight Foundation, or reaching out to kids with disabilities through VSA Arts, Easter Seals or Best Buddies. She has also lobbied Congress to pass closed captioning legislation and encouraged legislators to support advances in assistive technology.

Over the years, Matlin's volunteering spirit and activism on behalf of children have earned her recognition as a presidential appointee to the Corporation for National Service board. She has also written a children's book entitled "Deaf Child Crossing," starred in children's programming, and is raising four children of her own. In receiving the award, Matlin joins a long line of distinguished past recipients including actor/director Christopher Reeve, then First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, children's rights activist Marian Wright Edelman, CNN's Larry King, Entertainment Tonight's Mary Hart, actor Edward James Olmos, and sports figures Jackie Joyner Kersey and Sugar Ray Leonard.

### **Deaf Poet's Verses Set To Music**

Ayisha Knight is the Deaf daughter of a white Jewish mother and a Black-Cherokee father. She has faced racism and discrimination, and at age 13, was raped by a family friend. She has used the arts--mainly photography and poetry--to express her life and feelings. "I just wake up full of ideas, and I can't wait to write them down," she said. "Being deaf, I see the world through a different pair of eyes." Knight, with the help of a deaf therapist, was able to cope with her emotional wounds and attend Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. That's where she first began presenting her poems in sign-language performances at a coffeehouse 10 years ago.

Last year, with the help of several friends in the Boston arts community, Knight created a CD with her poems set to music. It is possibly the first musical album structured around the verse of a Deaf poet. Knight, now age 33, is a short, vibrant woman whose eyes dart behind wire-rim glasses. She answers questions so expressively through her signing that you can see the charisma that rallies everyone around her. "Some people said I was crazy to [encourage] this, but I just trusted the people around me," she said.

The CD is a multi-cultural collaboration. Music was composed by Francis Phan, a Vietnamese-American and is mainly hip hop beats and other contemporary rhythms. Several friends, including Toni Asante Lightfoot and Oz Okoawo, recited the poems. The CD, titled "Until" has been co-released by two new multicultural labels -- Phanai Records and Empowerment Records. Knight hopes to launch a national performing tour and envisions the album playing behind her as she performs a sign-language interpretation. She also wants to make a videotape in different languages of the poems on the CD, as well as a dance production based on the music.

### **Broadcasters Drop Offensive Signs**

British broadcasters are dropping some signs considered offensive in British Sign Language (BSL). Abandoned signs include "Jewish", in which a hand mimes a hooked nose; the sign for "gay", a flick of a limp wrist; and

"Chinese", in which the index fingertips pull the eyes into a slant. Another dropped sign is that for "Indian", which is a finger pointing to an imaginary spot in the middle of a forehead.

The signs have been declared off-limits by the makers of Vee-TV, Britain's Channel 4 program for deaf people, for fear of being accused of racism and homophobia. Producers on the BBC's programme for deaf viewers, See Hear, have also dropped some signs that are seen as politically incorrect. Critics labelled the move as silly, saying that the producers were interfering with Deaf Culture.

Polly Smith, the acting chairperson of the British Council for Disabled People, said, "The program makers at Channel 4 are interfering with deaf people's language, culture and view of society, and that is a form of discrimination." Katy Davis, who teaches children in sign language, said that the Channel 4 programme's rush to drop long-established signs might cause confusion among older deaf people.

Ms. O'Neill defended the move, saying that the program, launching its fourth series today, used modern alternative signs that were not offensive. "Before, [the sign for Jewish] was connected to a stereotypical Jewish nose," she said, "but now it's a hand sign that mimics the shape of the menorah [a ceremonial candlestick used in Judaism]."

### **Actress Gets Role**

A new aspiring hard of hearing actress came out in London's theatre recently. Sarah Moshe, from Pinner, played the part of Lydia in a professional production of Children of a Lesser God at the Salisbury Playhouse in the UK this spring. Jacqui Press, co-coordinator of the Jewish Deaf Association's young people's groups, persuaded the 24-year-old to return for a second audition last December. Sarah said, "Jacqui was extremely supportive and truly believed I could take on this role, because she knew I needed the challenge."

### **Aiello Receives Business Award**

Myrna Aiello, President and CEO of TCS Associates, has been named "Entrepreneur of the Year" by Professional Woman's Magazine. Grace Abboud, Editorial Director of Professional Woman's Magazine said, "After reviewing hundreds of nominees, Aiello stood out due to her knowledge of her industry, perseverance in becoming the first Deaf Woman to receive the 8(a) certification in the nation and dedication to customer service."

Aiello is involved in the Jewish scene in Maryland and active in her synagogue. She started her business in Maryland 22 years ago. Being Deaf has not prevented her from working closely with her employees. Dana Marlowe, Director of Marketing and Communications for TCS Associates said, "I particularly enjoy working for Myrna because she is remarkably understanding, patient, and professional with all the employees. Myrna is an excellent listener and really understands not only the business, but also how to keep her employees happy. Her Deafness is only one dimension of her character, it's just another part of who she is and I had to get used to doing some activities differently."

Commenting on her award, Aiello said, "When I was informed that I was awarded 'Professional Woman Entrepreneur of the Year' I was in awe and thrilled by this terrific honor especially as a Deaf woman. I never believed something this wonderful could happen to me. I hope to be a good role model for other entrepreneurial women. I have worked hard for many years to prove that Deaf people can do anything but hear."

TCS Associates is a small company that focuses on assistive technologies, information technology consulting, systems development and integration, and network solutions in Wheaton, Maryland. Clients include the Department of Defense, Internal Revenue Service, Social

Security Administration, Library of Congress and several other large U.S. governmental agencies as well as corporations, businesses, communities, and universities. For further information, please call Dana Marlowe at 301/9429766 (Voice) or Dana@TCSassociates.com.

### **California School In Robot Competition**

Mark Grossinger is part of a five-member Robotics Team from California School for the Deaf in Fremont (CSDF) which demonstrated a robot in a competition with 36 other teams in March in Sacramento, CA, coming

in 20th place. They earned a chance to compete in the Silicon Valley regional robotics competition.

The goal of these regional competitions are to build self confidence, knowledge and life skills while motivating young people to pursue opportunities in science, technology and engineering. Ten years ago, the FIRST (For

the Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics Competition began with 28 teams and a single 14 x 14 foot playing field in a New Hampshire high school gym. Today, FIRST has more than 800 teams participating nationwide and internationally, in 23 Regional events and a Championship event.

The CSDF team had only six weeks to build a robot using a kit and information provided for this year's game. In "FIRST Frenzy: Raising the Bar," students had to design their robots to race around a playing field collecting and passing 13" balls to human players who then shoot the balls into fixed and moveable goals. Additionally, robots could attempt to hang from a 10' bar. They had to finish building the robot by the third week of February to ship it to the competition site or be disqualified.

It was an anxious moment for CSDF students to find out if their robot would operate as they arrived in Sacramento to pick up the crate that had been shipped several weeks before. Working together as a team to achieve their goals proved to be a rewarding experience and they looked forward to the next regional competition scheduled for March 27 to 29 at San Jose State University.

### **Schwartz Joins Law College**

Michael Schwartz, an attorney and Ph.D. student in the Disability Studies program in Syracuse University's School of Education in New York, accepted an offer to join the law faculty at the University's College of Law. Schwartz will be law professor and director of the law school's civil rights clinic, the Public Interest Law Firm, which handles civil rights litigation in the federal and state courts. He will supervise third-year law students in court and will teach the substantive law of disability rights. The clinic handles civil rights cases for people of color, women, and people with disabilities.

Schwartz is the first deaf law professor to join the law faculty at Syracuse.

### **Deaf Film Festival**

Movie lovers and members of the Deaf community came to Tampa, FL on May 20 to 23 for the first Florida International Deaf Film Festival. Highlights of the event were feature films and short films made by Deaf filmmakers, directors and actors. Ms. Liz Tannebaum was the Festival Director and the event was hosted and coordinated by Florida Association of the Deaf (FAD), the Tampa Deaf Advocacy Network (DAN) and Hillsborough Community College. The program was produced by the Chicago Institute for the Moving Image, Festival for Cinema of the Deaf. For more information about Cinema of the Deaf and future events, visit [www.Deafcinema.org](http://www.Deafcinema.org).

### **Hurwitz Takes Dean Post At NTID**

T. Alan Hurwitz, who in November was named vice president for Rochester Institute of Technology and CEO/dean of RIT's National Technical Institute for the Deaf, was officially installed in his new post on Monday, April 26th in a ceremony in the Robert F. Panara Theatre at NTID, Rochester, NY. Hurwitz, of Pittsford, NY joined NTID in 1970. He replaces Robert Davila, who retired Dec. 1.

### **Summer Program for Jewish Young Adults**

The Brandeis Collegiate Institute (BCI) has one full-tuition scholarship available (\$100 materials fee not included) for its summer program, a 26-day experience of self-exploration for Jewish young adults ages 18-26. Set on 3,000 acres of beautiful ranchland in Simi Valley, CA, BCI combines the best of university learning, kibbutz living, and artistic exploration to offer a once-in-a-life experience for its participants. The program runs from July 14-August 8 and includes a full staff of interpreters on site during the entire program. BCI is also looking for a residential interpreter to join a team providing ASL interpreting for two deaf participants during this summer. Successful candidates will have collegiate-level interpreting experience, good social skills, and must be able to work well as part of a team. Candidates should be available to be in Simi Valley from July 7-August 8. For more information or to apply, please contact David Weisz, BCI Program Director, at [bci@thebbi.org](mailto:bci@thebbi.org).

### **Hayward Auction Features Israeli Artist**

In the spirit of promoting nonviolent community, DeafHope presents "Life of Hands", an auction of art by Uzi, a Deaf artist from Israel sharing his worldly artistic experience. The event is on June 5th and includes a wine and cheese reception from 3 to 7 p.m., and a live auction from 4 to 6 p.m. Admission is \$15 per person or \$25 per couple (children age 13 and under free). There is a maximum of 70 people; RSVP by June 3rd by emailing to Jane@DeafHope.org or calling 510/733-3133 (TTY). Make check payable to DeafHope and mail to DeafHope, 22418 Mission Blvd., Hayward, CA 94541. The Uzi Gallery will remain open for viewing from June 7 to 11, 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. with an admission fee of \$10 per patron. Part of the funds from the auction will be donated to DeafHope for its Deaf survivors' services.

Uzi was born in Afula, Israel, and was the first deaf child in the town. He used drawing as a way to communicate with his family and others. He attended Jerusalem School for the Deaf throughout his childhood and adolescent years. At the age of 11, Uzi began studying art at the Museum of Israel in Jerusalem. From 1973 to 1975, he studied lithography and sculpture at the Art Museum of Tel Aviv. After this, he continued studying art in an art residency, Ein Yod, in Hafia. In addition, he danced with a professional dance company, Kol Demama (sound-silence), which was internationally known for its deaf and hearing dancers.

While with Kol Demama, Uzi traveled all over the world and designed and created many different background settings for the group's performances. Afterwards, he continued to travel all over Europe for several years where he began including the beauty of signed languages into his art style, a composition of colors and hands with stories of similar experiences, artistically depicting the language and culture of deaf people. Uzi's works are represented in collections in Israel and all over in Europe and the United States. He is fluent in three languages: Israeli Sign Language, American Sign Language, and Hebrew.

### **Hospital Settles Suit With Posners**

Parkway Hospital in Forest Hills, NY has agreed to pay the family of a deaf patient, Sarah Posner, \$125,000 for violating the Americans with Disabilities Act by failing to provide a qualified sign language interpreter during an extended hospital stay in 2001.

According to the suit filed by the U.S. Attorney's Office on March 23, 2001, Norman Posner, 85, brought his wife, then 77, to Parkway after she complained of dizziness, poor balance and having difficulty breathing. The couple explained to admission staff that they would need an interpreter to make sure they understood clearly any prospective medical procedures and health risks. During Sarah Posner's extended stay, the hospital failed to follow through with interpreters, instead using a variety of methods including lipreading and writing, neither of which was satisfactory. In addition, attorneys for the couple charged that Mondays through Fridays the hospital utilized a full-time physical therapist, Joseph Potenza-who had only limited knowledge of sign language-as the family's interpreter.

"It was very frustrating for us at the beginning with their failure to provide a qualified interpreter and because of the lack of communication between Norman and the doctors," the couple's daughter-in-law, Marlene, explained. "That made us think about other deaf people who were admitted to Parkway. We didn't want to see them suffering."

As part of a settlement agreement, the hospital agreed to begin ADA training for staff members who have contact with Deaf patients and made other changes that would

ensure effective communication in the future for Deaf patients. Dr. Frank Mazzagatti, senior vice president of Parkway Hospital, said the facility has already installed an audio-video conference center to connect patients to a sign language interpreter. Live interpreters will be supplied upon request.

"Norman is elated that Parkway has agreed to provide better service for deaf patients," Marlene Posner said. "It's important for deaf people to communicate with their doctors better."

### **Deaf Lawyers Forum**

Thanks to the Americans with Disabilities Act and other similar laws, the number of Deaf and hard of hearing

lawyers and law students has grown dramatically. Many of today's young lawyers can recall at least one law school class or bar review session in which an interpreter signed to a deaf student in the front row, in which computer assisted real-time ("CART") captioning was provided to a non-signing deaf student, or in which a hard of hearing student used hearing aids or other auxiliary aids and services. There is no "typical" deaf or hard of hearing attorney or law student. In fact, perhaps all they have in common is that they are lawyers who happen to be deaf or hard of hearing.

In mid-1999, a small group of deaf and hard of hearing attorneys, including Bernard R. Hurwitz, decided to find out if a community of deaf lawyers was possible. Because most cities have at most one or two deaf lawyers, the group decided to form an online discussion group. Originally hosted on a commercial listserv, the group has grown over the last five years into [www.deafga.org](http://www.deafga.org), a full-fledged proprietary web site replete with a full-featured message board and numerous links to helpful resources. More than fifty deaf and hard of hearing attorneys across North America have joined "DeafGA."

One of DeafGA's most-accessed forums is entitled "Legal Accessibility Issues," where members discuss discrimination, access, and technological issues affecting their careers as well deaf and hard of hearing people as a whole. That forum and others like it serve as clearinghouses of information and assistance that previously did not exist for deaf and hard of hearing attorneys and law students.

DeafGA has also launched a disability law blog, or "blawg," entitled Disablawg ([www.disablawg.com](http://www.disablawg.com)), the first of its kind, and is working with the American Bar Association (ABA) Commission on Mental and Physical Disability Law (on which a DeafGA member sits) to share resources and create a formal program for mentoring deaf and hard of hearing law students.

At some point, DeafGA will no doubt reach the critical mass of deaf and hard of hearing attorneys necessary to establish a presence at ABA meetings. At that point, attorneys who are deaf and hard of hearing will have an increased involvement in ABA affairs.

### **Avi Bokler Wins 3 Medals in Karate**

The 12th Deaf World Championship in Martial Arts in Moscow, Russia, ended with resounding success of Russian athletes in judo and karate. The host nation collected a total of 24 medals, including 7 gold, 8 silver and 9 bronze. However, the biggest surprise of the World Championships was the performance of Avi Bokler of Haifa, Israel, who won a full set of medals - gold, silver and bronze - one for each of three different disciplines of karate. In honor of Bokler, the flag of the State of Israel was raised high three times at the medal stand in front of many competitors, officials and spectators at the Grand Sports Complex of Izmailovo in Moscow.

Bokler is a native of Tashkent, Uzbekistan, but his parents are originally from the city of Bukhara, Uzbekistan. The family moved to live in Israel in 1990, when Avi was 9. In his interview with Rafael Pinkhasov, a prominent deaf sports journalist from New York, Avi said that winning the three medals in Moscow was his proudest moment in his illustrious karate career and that he hopes one day soon the sport of karate will be included as an official medal event in the program of the Deaflympic Summer Games. Bokler said, "I hope one day soon to become the first ever Deaflympic champion from Israel."

Although Israel has been participating at the CISS-sponsored Deaflympic Games since 1957, it has not produced a single Deaflympic Games gold medalist. The only medal won by Israel at the Deaflympics was a bronze in 1993 by the men's Israeli basketball team.

At the Moscow championships Avi was accompanied by the two officials from Israel - Shimon Maman as a delegation leader and Tzvi Bronfman, his coach and manager. The Moscow championships included male and

female athletes from 14 countries of Europe, Asia and South America in four different disciplines of judo, karate, taekwondo and wushu.