

August Newsletter

In a Time of Pandemic, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children turn to Virtual Camping

When schools close their doors for the summer, it signals to many children that the best time of the year is approaching -- summer camp. Cabins await them in the woods with newly chlorinated pools, while camp counselors gear up with a full schedule of activities. For parents, it's an outlet for their kids to take a break from the technological grasp of social media, video games, and television. In other words, summer camp is the time when kids truly enjoy being kids.

Prior to 1992, a camp with these amenities for Deaf and Hard of Hearing kids was non-existent in the state of Georgia. For many D/HH children, summer wasn't a season to look forward to. Instead, many D/HH children found themselves separated from their signing teachers and friends, spending their summers isolated without language.

Then in 1992, Camp Juliena, made its debut as a gathering ground for D/HH campers to engage in the same summertime activities they didn't formerly have access to. All of the camp counselors are signers and nearly all are D/HH themselves. Thanks to teams of passionate members from the Georgia Center of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (GCDHH), it remained successful for 28 years. That is, until 2020 shook their world.

When COVID-19 started creating headlines in the spring, GCDHH was concerned it would result in its first cancellation of the beloved summer camp. The idea of dropping the camp this year was halted when staff agreed to try something new -- leading to the birth of Camp Juliena Journey, a free virtual camp for D/HH kids.



GCDHH staff, Lara Whitfield-Garfinkel is at the helm of this project. She coordinates a team of volunteers to appear on Zoom where D/HH kids can partake in live activities and field trips. “I didn’t want the camp to stop and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing children to not go to camp where it’s fully accessible for their language,” she explained. “Why not have a virtual camp journey?”

The virtual camp is held every Tuesday and Thursday throughout the summer. Events have included journeys such as a field trip to the Georgia Aquarium, where a GCDHH staff member filmed onsite with an interpreter. The aquarium’s expert gave a private tour throughout its facility and introduced the kids to some of their animals including a blind penguin, a whale shark, and sea turtles. Children were able to ask the experts questions regarding the animals and their facility.



Co-owners Jessie Romer/Nancy Romer with Elizabeth Peterson

Five Freedoms Farm in Loganville also graciously allowed GCDHH to film live at their sanctuary of rescued animals. Throughout the hour-long virtual field trip, the kids met every animal from cats to miniature ponies and learned their story. There, the young audience learned the importance of kindness to animals.

Camp Julienna Journey includes volunteers that are Deaf and Hard of Hearing adults as well, such as Angelo, a local Deaf artist who showed the kids how to dance to hip hop, and Miss Mel, a Deaf resident of Arizona that’s well-known for her origami designs. She walked the children through making origami in the shapes of cats and boats.

For kids that were curious about science, Dr. Scott, a local Deaf resident on his way to a PhD showed his audience what happened if they mixed certain compounds together, which resulted in laughter when mixtures combined into brilliant colors and creations.

Other impressive journeys include a trip to the Atlanta Zoo, a class on making puppets at the Center of Puppetry Arts and a yoga session with Ms. Raymonda. When school resumes, GCDHH plans to continue with the virtual camp every third Saturday of the month.

Executive Director of GCDHH, Jimmy Peterson, shared his sentiments, “we do not want our D/HH children to be alone during summertime, so we are offering virtual camps twice a week to access ASL events.” Being Deaf himself, Peterson knows the importance of language accessibility. He added, “we didn’t want to give up.”

We thank our sponsors Quota International of Northside Atlanta, GaRID, and Sorenson for making Camp Juliena Journey happen.

CAMP JULIENA JOURNEY:
DEAF SCIENCE IN SPACE WITH
MR. SCOTT AND MR. DREEK

AUGUST 15TH, 11AM

HOSTED BY GEORGIA CENTER OF
THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING.
LIKE US ON FACEBOOK AT
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/GCDHH

The graphic features a space theme with a planet, stars, and test tubes. It includes circular portraits of Mr. Scott and Mr. Dreek, and a logo for Camp Juliena Journey.

GCDHH is still hosting Camp Juliena Journey, an online opportunity to take Zoom field trips from the comfort of your couch! Our class this month is Deaf Science in Space with Mr. Scott and Mr. Dreek on August 15th at 11am.

Register Now!



We'd like to thank the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Area Agency on Aging and Eleanor Pye for helping out so much in the community.

The Heart of Georgia Altamaha Area Agency on Aging (AAA) serves a 17-county area and is the focal point to provide information and support services for individuals to remain in the community.

Here are some of the great things they offer:

- Counselors that screen individuals for potential services, provide resource information, and assist in obtaining assistive technology.
- A conduit to a tremendous network of service agencies and collaboratives that reach all



populations and provide person-centered supports.

- A Care Consultant/Dementia Specialist that focuses primarily on Caregivers, people with Dementia, and their unique set of circumstances.
- A Wellness Coordinator that collaborates with the Local Senior Center Directors to provide Evidenced Based Wellness Programs and local initiatives to expand and enhance the general well-being of older adults.
- Maintain a local/ statewide database to inform of local resources in order to support and maintain community living.
- Always evolving to meet the ever-changing spectrum of older adults and people with disabilities along with their family and caregivers.

All populations are served and encouraged to reach out to them. They strive to provide a warm, cordial, and welcoming atmosphere in these stressful times.

GCDHH CLIENT TESTIMONIAL:



"Think about this. Have you ever interacted with a product for a very short time and almost immediately fell in love with it? This is what happened when I unboxed and began using the focus display Monday night back in Jackson. The device worked smoothly with both my phone and computer, allowing me to switch connections on the fly while also offering a nice case that allowed me to carry it safely. I am extremely impressed with the design of the Focus, as it is made of Aluminum and steel. This device has given me a truly amazing experience that no other display ever had. Thank you so much for going out of your way to allow me to have this wonderful experience. Focus40 for the win!

Keep up the great work for other clients."

-Jake McMahon

This equipment was offered via our i Can Connect program.

iCanConnect

XLCgo by Clarity

Georgia Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program is proud to add a new wireless equipment to their list of distributed equipment. The XLCgo is a personal amplifier with a Bluetooth and will sync with your cell phone. It looks like a miniaturized Walkie Talkie and can go up to 50 decibels. Consumers can use them outside, in the car and clip them to their belts as they go about in their day.

Additional features include Tone Control, Extra Loud Speakerphone and a Boost Button. It makes a great alternative to the Quattro Pro neckloop, a personal amplifier that syncs with your phone but is worn like a necklace.

Both amplifiers are no cost to qualified applicants and is ideal for Hard of Hearing individuals.



[Apply Now](#)

Literacy
FRIDAY



GCDHH is hosting "Literacy Friday" every second Friday of the month starting this month. There will be a new children's story posted to GCDHH's Facebook page and Kid's Zone. Be sure to check them out!

GCDHH
Facebook

GCDHH Kid's
Zone

[View Email as Webpage](#)