

Deaf History Month and Rochester's Deaf Community

National Deaf History Month was initially recognized and celebrated every year from March 13 to April 15th. The older dates were to reflect three key events that impacted the deaf community that occurred in American History:

April 15, 1817 – the first public school, American School for the Deaf was opened.

April 8, 1864 – Gallaudet University – the world's first institute devoted to advanced education for the Deaf and hard of hearing was officially founded.

March 13, 1988 – Gallaudet University nominated I. King Jordon as their first deaf President.

It was 1997 when National Deaf History Month was first introduced by the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) and, in 2006, the American Library Association partnered with NAD in supporting and spreading awareness of this celebration.

This was changed this year due to recognition of different dates that had significance to the Deaf Community. It was modified in January of this year to April 1st to 30th with the intention of simplifying and incorporating the celebration into one month and to focus on overall celebration of American Deaf history from all parts of the Deaf Community rather than focusing heavily on the schools. It was in part to dismantle racism that has occurred within the Deaf Community and to ensure that our historical lens includes the experiences of BIPOC Deaf People.

As of today, there are 11.5 million Americans who have some sort of hearing loss ranging from difficulty in hearing conversations to total hearing loss. That is about 3.5 percent of the population. Even though the population as a whole is small in the United States, **Rochester, New York has the largest per capita population of Deaf and hard of hearing people in the nation!**