

Heidi Burghardt

I have been a proud resident of Howard County for the last 20 years and a proud member of Howard County Association of the Deaf (HCAD). I have worked with the organization in different capacities for the last 15 years, including holding positions as Social Director, Board Member, and Secretary, before serving in my current position as President. Under my leadership, HCAD promotes an educational social environment for local citizens, enhances the quality of Deaf people's lives, establishes a solid and healthy partnership with the Howard County government, and develops a beneficial relationship between the Deaf and Hearing constituents in Howard County.

During my employment with the United States Secret Service, I served for 10 years as the Special Emphasis Program Manager for People with Disabilities. I was responsible for fostering awareness about disabilities by coordinating the Disability Month programs and events. I invited keynote speakers to educate audiences that included the Director, Assistant Directors, managers, and employees of the Secret Service. My responsibilities included promoting the hiring of individuals with disabilities for the agency and conducting training for recruiters to bridge the gap between hiring managers and individuals with disabilities.

For more than a decade, I have been involved in several Deaf organizations and panels with regard to the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing community. This experience has enabled me to serve the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Government (DHHIG) National Training Conference (NTC) as a Job Fair Coordinator. I also worked with the DHHIG as Board Member, Vice-President, and President. During my tenure with the organization, I gave a testimony to the Chair, Vice Chair and several Commissioners at the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) addressing issues related to employment retention, and promotion of Deaf and Hard of Hearing employees in the federal workplace.

I received my B.S. in Psychology and Criminology at the University of Maryland, College Park, MD, in 1988. I was born Deaf in Wisconsin and after learning how to talk and lip-read at age 3 until age 8, I was mainstreamed into public schools. I didn't learn sign language until I was 21, when I came to Washington to attend Gallaudet University as a special student.

I enjoy reading biographies, keeping up with current events, and being involved with my local community as an advocate for the Deaf. My other hobbies include traveling, photography, biking, walking and reading.