

OCALI | Podcast - Episode 13 - We are in This Together and We Need to Stay Connected

SIMON

Hi. It's Simon Buehrer from OCALI's *Inspiring Change* podcast. We first started

BUEHRER:

talking about an OCALI podcast, I think it was late 2014. Maybe even earlier than that.

I found an email from 2009 in which my colleague Wendy Szakacs suggested that we supplement our written newsletter with a series of interviews with experts over Skype. Remember Skype? And while we never did do that-- sorry, Wendy-- the idea of our OCALI podcast has been simmering for some time.

I was especially interested, as I'm a former on air radio host, and I've been inclined towards radio, news, music, audio in general, really, for most of my life. It's how my frame and structure my day. I wake up to the radio first thing each morning and pretty much have something running in the foreground or background throughout the day. Audio is my companion, my muse, my way of connecting to and being in the world. So I was especially excited and grateful for the opportunity to bring OCALI's *Inspiring Change* podcast to life in the summer of 2019.

Fast forward to the spring of 2020 and a conversation with my colleague Christine Croyle about the possibility of recording not a podcast with a "p" but a vodcast with a "v". More specifically, an interview with Marla Berkowitz, Lena Smith, and Christy Horne, the teen who provides ASL interpreting services for Governor Mike DeWine's daily press conferences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Was I interested? Yes. Yes. Absolutely yes. 1,001 times yes.

As the name implies, of course, a vodcast is a video version of a podcast. It's also another way to provide content and stories to people who may be Deaf or hard of hearing or are simply inclined towards video-based forms of communication. So we did it. We recorded the interview with Marla, Lena, and Christy using the now ubiquitous Zoom platform, and had John Moore from DSC fill the role of host and moderator. You can find our first vodcast episode at [OCALI.org/vodcasts](https://ocali.org/vodcasts).

And while I'm still an audio guy at heart, I'm really excited to see this work continue. We still have some logistical issues and challenges to work out, but it is our intention that this is just the first of many vodcast episodes to follow. Stay tuned for details

and updates in the coming weeks and months as we pursue another exciting chapter in our continued effort to share stories and connections from our ongoing work of inspiring change and promoting access for people with disabilities.

For now, and consistent with OCALI's aspiration towards providing multiple options and opportunities for accessing and experiencing content, here is the audio podcast version of John Moore's interview with Marla Berkowitz, Lena Smith, and Christy Horne. Please note that John and Marla are both Deaf, so the audio you hear is voiced by interpreters.

Welcome to *Inspiring Change* from OCALI, our forum of stories and connections from our ongoing work of inspiring change and promoting access for people with disabilities. I'm Simon Buehrer. Since early March, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Ohio Department of Health Director Dr. Amy Acton have held daily press conferences that provide important and critical information and details related to the COVID-19 pandemic. It's important that all Ohioans learn about and understand this critical information and the impact that it has on their health and safety and the health and safety of their families. And that includes Ohioans who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

With us today is the superstar team that provides ASL services, or American Sign Language interpreting services, during those daily briefings. We'll talk to them about their work at these press conferences and hopefully get a sneak peek behind the scenes of how they make it all happen. We'll also chat with them in general about the importance of access for all and why communication without barriers is essential for full participation in the community.

With us today are Marla Berkowitz, Christy Horne, and Lena Smith. Marla Berkowitz is a certified Deaf interpreter and contractor for the Deaf Services Center. She's also a faculty member in the ASL program at the Ohio State University. Christy Horne is a staff interpreter for Deaf Services Center. And Lena Smith is a staff interpreter for Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. Our moderator and interviewer today is John Moore. He's the CEO and Executive Director for Deaf Services Center. We've mentioned them a couple times now. And just to let you know, they are the largest provider of services for the Deaf, hard of hearing, and

Deafblind in Ohio.

Marla, Christy, Lena, welcome to this first vodcast edition of *Inspiring Change*. John, I'm going to turn things over to you and turn off my camera and mute my sounds, so we can focus on all of you.

JOHN MOORE: Thank you, Simon. Good morning, everyone. What we'll do for this interview is we'll have a series of questions that we will ask the superstar team. Let's start with the daily press conferences with Governor DeWine. And Dr. Acton, too, of course. How did all three of you get involved with that? Marla, if you would like to start.

MARLA BERKOWITZ: Sure. Well, first, thank you for inviting the three of us to participate, because it really has been an honor to be part of this first vodcast. It's very exciting. So I am certainly looking forward to seeing how this moves forward and future vodcasts to come.

So, how I became involved with this was Governor DeWine has instituted the daily press conferences and his staff. They obviously recognized the need to have American Sign Language interpreters present to make their press conferences and their communication accessible to the community. So my understanding is they went ahead and got in touch with Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, OOD. And then, OOD, of course, works with Deaf Services Center, and that is how Chris and I both became a part of the daily press conferences. It just sort of was that natural chain of command that started out.

The state of Ohio, of course, is how this first came to be, recognizing that there was the need for access. And then, of course, getting in touch with Deaf Services, one of the larger agencies in the state of Ohio to provide access.

JOHN MOORE: All right. Lena and Christy, would you guys like to add anything to what Marla said about how you became involved? No? Marla said it all, right? OK. Now, let's get back to another question. For these daily press conferences, can you expand upon what the behind-the-scenes action is like. You know, you don't just randomly show up and interpret and then peace out, right? Can you expand upon that please?

MARLA BERKOWITZ: Well, sure. This is Marla. I can.

JOHN MOORE: Yes, please, please. Marla, go ahead.

MARLA

BERKOWITZ:

Yes. That is correct. The work of an interpreter is, of course, even on national TV, is not the typical type of work that we do. Interpreters tend to work in daily settings that does require a bit more preparation. But of course, doing it on national TV, there was a lot more studying and prep work beforehand. So our daily work, as "DeWine's Angels," as we have been designated, [CHUCKLES] what we do is-- it's very vital. I mean, it's just important for us to have that preparation in place.

Of course, we arrive on site about an hour before the press conferences begin. We have a press room to make sure that everything is set up for us, specifically, the lighting, make sure that the cameras are set up appropriately. And we check that we have the appropriate tools in place for communication access amongst the three of us. We have to make sure that those are all set up properly.

An example of that is we have a whiteboard that we use that-- we jot down numbers and anything that the governor or the press conference staff talk about during the press conference. If they have any slides or anything along those lines, we get that information notated ahead of time. Websites that they make reference to, specific numbers about how many positive cases we have, how many people have passed away as a result of COVID-19, how many people have been hospitalized or in the ICU. That's all quite a bit of numbers that we use that whiteboard to notate.

In addition, there are some names that we've had some difficulty getting accurate spelling on. We have had some surprises, of course, while we're interpreting, on the flip side of things, where we're interpreting, and then suddenly, there's new data that comes, so we have to flip that whiteboard around and start making additional notes. But we have made best use of that pre-conference time.

And then, during the actual interpreting work, we have a variety of demands that we are faced with to be sure that we are providing our best work. There are various things that occur, just as an example. I am actually standing in front of the camera, but at the same time, I am working with a wonderful team of interpreters. Christy acts as our-- we call her the "feeder" interpreter. And that means that she is listening to the spoken language that is coming from the press conference staff and then is giving that to me.

And at the same time that she is giving that to me in that feeder capacity, Lena is actually monitoring the work that I'm doing to be sure that the message I am producing is as accurate as possible. Because this information is quite detailed. And there are a lot of vital pieces that have to come and be accessible. We've got Governor DeWine. We've got the Lieutenant Governor Husted. We've got Dr. Acton. And the way that they talk, their tone, their affect, their way that they present the information, has to be made clear, as well.

So of course, Dr. Acton, I'm sure everyone is familiar, has that soft and sweet voice. And we want to make sure that the people that are observing my work and using me for access are able to understand the way that it is being presented. So we have the feeder interpreter, Christy, and we also have Lena monitoring the work. And we're all three working together to make sure that the information is presented as clearly as possible.

We also have what we're calling sort of a sound person that helps me understand the rhythm. And I don't know if you have seen some of the most recent press conferences, the work that we have done, they've been showing quite a few videos. And the videos involve songs. And I will tell you, music is just not my lingo. It's not my strength. So I am heavily reliant on both Lena and Christy, someone that has that knowledge of music-- that I've been very fortunate with Lena that that is certainly one of her strengths, that she understands how to convey the rhythm-- so that I can present it in accordance with the way that it is being heard. I've got to be honest, that's never something I would have imagined doing in this type of work as part of my interpreting work. So it has really been amazing to see.

After all of the work is done during the press conference, we have, of course, a moment after the fact to laugh and breathe and then sort of catch our breath. [CHUCKLES], And just take a moment. Because in the preparatory work, the ongoing work that was occurring during the press conference, it is really rapid pace. So after the conference, we take a minute to just laugh about the different things that have come up during interpreting, different information that caught us by surprise, that sort of thing. So it really has been amazing work.

JOHN MOORE: After the press conferences are finished, you guys come back together and provide feedback for one another and things like that?

MARLA Yes, we call that the post conference. So first, like I said, we do have to laugh. We

BERKOWITZ: have to. And we have to take a breath. And we do that for at least 10 minutes. I will say that we take a breather. And then after that, we talk about the different issues that we need to discuss. We certainly do, and have been for several weeks now, been recording ourselves in our press conference room to be sure that we can view our work after the fact and look at what was being presented and how we modified it, so that we can be better prepared for the following day. So it is an ongoing discussion that we do after the conference, that takes anywhere from 30 to 45 minutes, where we really dig into the details. And then we head on out.

JOHN MOORE: Thank you, Marla. Lena or Christy, could you guys expand upon your role and how you operate behind the scenes with Marla? Please?

CHRISTY HORNE: I think Marla covered it fairly well. One thing that I do also during the pre-conferencing time is I try to see what's going on in the news. I try to see if there are any new headlines. I check out Governor DeWine's Twitter feed, for example, to try to get some ideas of what may be discussed during the daily press conference. Lena has been fabulous with being our connection to the governor's press team. She is very good about getting, like Marla said, any slides, songs, the numbers from Dr. Acton, and so on. So we try to prepare as best we can so we can predict what may be coming up. And then, like Marla said, afterwards, we do a lot of discussion of what happened, what we could do better, what we felt was effective. So I think Marla covered it fairly well. Lena, can you think of anything else?

LENA SMITH: Yeah. So, yeah. Definitely, you both covered it really well. I would say some of my favorite parts is the pre- and post-conferencing, because we really get to look at our work and the sign language and the language itself and how it's impacting us. And we get to talk about the different terms and words that came up, and what does that look like in English? What does that look like in ASL? And it's-- my inner linguistics nerd loves every moment of it [CHUCKLES]. And we just have these wonderful conversations that just help us to get better. And they help every aspect of interpreting in general. So those are my favorite parts. And I'm so thankful that my team is willing to sit and have those conversations. And I just love that.

JOHN MOORE: One question to add for all three of you-- how do you feel? Do you feel as if you're

becoming better interpreters through this experience? Yes, Marla, go ahead.

MARLA

This work is-- I just see it as a job. This truly is my work that I do. I am always looking to improve and seeking to benefit myself and improve upon my skills to make my work a better product. Various events that we do, you just, you become more knowledgeable. And it is a huge responsibility to just keep up with the news and this information related to coronavirus and all the updates that occur. So there is no way to just simply show up and be like, "OK, let's go." You really have to prepare yourself about how to deliver this information in the most accessible way.

I will say, too, the Deaf community, the feedback we have received has been just phenomenal. One example is my attire. I was given some advice on how to make myself more accessible to Deafblind individuals. And that was something that hadn't been thought of prior to this. And my concern was, how do we provide that access to them? So I am constantly just keeping in the back of my mind that the consumers that are using this for their access-- individuals that grew up with the Deaf culture and language background and the comparison to those that do not have that cultural or language background-- we have to be able to mitigate that and provide the best swing that it's accessible to both sides of the chain there. Sometimes we are more successful than others. And then, of course, we just continue to work and try to improve.

But I will tell you, this job really is just an incredible job for me. Lena and Christy, do you want to add anything about that?

JOHN MOORE: Yeah, go ahead, Christy.

CHRISTY

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, Marla covered it fairly well. [CHUCKLES]

HORNE:

I agree. This is a job, just like any other interpreting job. So my goal is to consistently improve. That's the same no matter where I'm interpreting. And I think that's true for most interpreters. If I am bold enough to make a statement like that. But I think most of us are always trying to improve what we do. And like Marla said, the feedback from the community we serve is our best way of doing that. And we've been very fortunate with the feedback that we're getting from the viewers and from the Deaf community. They've been extremely supportive. And we couldn't do it without them.

JOHN MOORE: Thank you, Christy. Lena, do you have anything to add to that?

LENA SMITH: Yeah, no. [CHUCKLES] I agree with you both. Really, for me, this is a different kind of interpreting. I always talk about interpreting as like a set of staircase. There is no top where you've finally made it and you're the best interpreter you can ever be. There's always another step. And so this is a new step for me, something where I'm learning new skills, learning new aspects of the job. And I'm very lucky that I have this incredible team by my side, helping me up the stairs, as you may say. And it's just always trying to learn something else something new so that you have a new tool in the tool belt to use down the line.

JOHN MOORE: What a wonderful process this all is, and how the three of you work together. And seeing all this is really, it's really awesome. The next question I have, I would like to direct at Marla. When working as a Deaf interpreter, why is it important to have a Certified Deaf Interpreter?

MARLA BERKOWITZ: Yes, that is a great question. A Certified Deaf Interpreter is a certification that has been established by the Registry of Interpreters for The Deaf. They are a nationwide organization that serves as the membership group for the profession of interpreters. One of the certifications that they have established is, of course, the Certified Deaf Interpreter, where you would have a Deaf individual that studies in the same way that a hearing interpreter would, where they go to maybe an interpreter training program for hearing interpreters, or perhaps that they touch base with local states or national conferences to be able to take workshops and training on how to become an interpreter, a Deaf interpreter, for the Deaf.

So back to your question, the reason why it's so important to have a Certified Deaf Interpreter for something like this, where it's a national TV broadcast-- Deaf interpreters, I will say, the usage of them is fairly new. We have been-- here in Ohio, of course, we're still working to grow and expand the number of Deaf interpreters that are available. In comparison to other states, there are some states that have a large number of Deaf interpreters. So that is certainly something we're working towards.

The reason it's important to have a Deaf interpreter, or a Certified Deaf Interpreter, on TV is really because for Deaf people in America, this really is one of the biggest

and first times that they've been exposed to this authenticity of ASL. It is that natural, authentic language.

Prior to seeing a Deaf interpreter, much of the exposure that you see on TV is hearing American Sign Language interpreter or even captioning. So the use of a Deaf interpreter is not really something that most individuals are familiar with seeing. It is tremendously beneficial to incorporate a Deaf interpreter so that the viewers are able to make that connection and understand the language and the culture in its authentic state. It is, of course, including the affect and the tone and the space usage that all comes into play as part of the language, the expression, the body shifting. All of the-- being able to set up the differences between a question and a statement that are all part of the grammar that is inherent within ASL. So being able to have a Deaf interpreter allows that natural access to language.

Now, this does not mean that hearing interpreters are not capable of interpreting. It just-- I just want to be sure-- this is a way to make the hearing interpreters better interpreters, by showing ASL in its natural state. So it is certainly not something that we're doing to defy or look down upon the hearing interpreters. We work together as a team, as I've stated. And we make sure that we provide the most clear and accurate information possible by providing this access to Deaf individuals.

Now, mind you, this is so important because this can be a matter of life or death for most people. So this coronavirus is incredibly invasive and Governor DeWine's team has been very wise in their choices to include ASL interpreters as part of this, because it is the safety of our community at large.

JOHN MOORE: Wonderful. That's wonderful. Lena or Christy, do you have anything to add to Marla's points about that question? No? OK. That's fine. Moving on down with the questions. What kind of feedback or what kind of response have you received from the Deaf and hard of hearing community related to the use of a CDI and these press conferences being interpreted? Anybody? Lena and Christy, who wants to start? Who wants to start today?

MARLA I feel like everybody's looking at me here. [CHUCKLES] I can feel your eyes staring
BERKOWITZ: me down. So all right. I guess I will speak. [CHUCKLES] Really, the Deaf community

has been absolutely amazing. I have been so fortunate, because we are a very tight knit community. And it is easy to have that type of relationship that is just with the individuals in our community. Those that sign and those that are more hard of hearing, as well-- both the Deaf and hard of hearing communities, it is a comfortable, trusting relationship that they have and that we have formed with them.

We are open to their feedback and listening to their questions and their preferences so that we can be sure that we modify our product to best fit their needs. I will tell you, I am just-- I've been the most surprised. Just-- I have three fan pages. I mean, that has just been such an honor. And that is just demonstrating the feedback that I have received. I mean, it really is just phenomenal. Christy and Lena will tell me, and Cherise, my partner, will tell me, it is just-- thank you. I just-- thank you to all the fans. And I thank you to both the hearing and Deaf and hard of hearing communities, as well. You are enabling us to be prideful in our work, and I just-- I thank you so much for that.

JOHN MOORE: That's wonderful. This is wonderful that that's happening. Oh, Christy, go ahead. Sorry.

CHRISTY HORNE: All right. I wanted to add, also, we've been hearing from the interpreting community. We've had many interpreters, Deaf and hearing, reaching out also to show their support and to thank us for our work. So it's the Deaf community and the other communities that are intermingled with the Deaf community, like the interpreting community. So overall, we've had tremendous support.

JOHN MOORE: Wonderful. That is great. Thank you, Christy. Lena, go ahead.

LENA SMITH: Yeah. It's been really cool to be in contact with other interpreters around the country and see how they're working with CDIs, see what their press conferences look like. We've been able to share tips and ideas and experiences. And it just makes us stronger as a community at large. It's been really amazing.

JOHN MOORE: Wonderful. I'm very impressed with all the work that you do, and the work that you're doing here in Ohio to provide access is really amazing. How do you feel that the work that we have done is influencing other states? We've been setting an example. And the example we set is really wonderful. Are you aware of any other

states who have done something similar to what Ohio is doing or perhaps done something better? Or even other states that may be lagging behind in terms of access? How do you feel?

MARLA Well, this is Marla. [CHUCKLES]

BERKOWITZ:

JOHN MOORE: Yes, please go ahead, Marla.

MARLA That is a great question. It is always important to just keep a pulse on what's

BERKOWITZ: happening across the nation. And I have been quite fortunate. I am part of a group that is called the CDIs in The News. It's a Facebook page, a Facebook group, that I've been able to be a part of. And it's excellent to touch base with them to see what's happening in various states and how they're handling with the teaming relationship, or if they're doing the one-on-one or if they're doing the two-on-one, like we're doing, where we have two hearing interpreters and one Deaf interpreter. And some have two-on-two, where they have two hearing interpreters and two Deaf interpreters. There was even one time where we were so fortunate to have a group where we actually brought in the hearing interpreters to meet with us as part of that page. So I had both Christy and Lena join in that Facebook group discussion. And we all could get a feeling of what's happening across the country and how things are addressed.

And I know Lena mentioned this already, just having those connections in place and checking in with others of, how are you doing this? And how are you handling that? And gives us various ideas and tools on our tool belt to use.

One state, I do know, has a Deaf interpreter that is in the same room as their press conference staff. And that was actually how we started here in Ohio, back in the beginning. That's how we were. But of course, then the concern became the social distancing, of how do we keep each other safe? So as a result, we got moved to a studio. And in the studio, there were other broadcasting stations that were present. And again, the concern became, how do we keep the interpreters safe? Is social distancing being practiced? So we got moved yet to another studio. So I'm sure individuals have seen the visual changes that have occurred that's been a result of us being moved.

Right now, we have the picture-in-picture that is being utilized. And that seems to be the most effective for both safety purposes and general public access to the communications that's vital.

I do know in other states, they have had to fight to even be able to get a CDI approved to be on the news. Just one example is over in New York, there are four Deaf attorneys that actually sued the governor to be able to get a picture-in-picture with the interpreter. One of the challenge was, their picture-in-picture was at the very bottom right side of the screen and was so small that they were not able to be viewed clearly. So we've been fortunate here in the state of Ohio that our press conference listens to us and takes our feedback, so that they understand the importance of having a large screen that is viewable for the public, that we have to be able to show the interpreters.

So it's been interesting to see how other states have had various issues that have come up and how they've handled them. If I could give an award to one interpreter and one of his work-- I know that that has occurred, I believe, that they've just had various states that have really celebrated their CDIs, where others are having to fight to include CDIs. And it's-- I'll admit. My experience thus far has just been a smooth and really fantastic process. And I can say I have been very lucky because of OOD's partnership with the governor and his team to make that successful.

JOHN MOORE: Those are some wonderful comments. Lena and Christy, do you have anything to add to Marla's comments about that? No? I mean, what she said was wonderful. Moving on down with the questions. Why do you think that people who are not Deaf, who are not hard of hearing, who are not involved in the Deaf community, when they see that level of access front and center, they're kind of taken aback by it. What is that? How do you feel about that reaction? Marla, please.

MARLA
BERKOWITZ: Well, as I've mentioned earlier, the visible, that exposure to seeing someone standing there and signing is really demonstrating ASL. And it's a wonderful way to show this and use that platform to raise awareness of American Sign Language and Deaf individuals. And really, it's just this-- it's essential. It's part of their life. They are being affected just as anyone else. And really, Deaf individuals have the right to the same access.

And it's a huge responsibility, too. I will tell you. For me, interpreting is one of the most sacred professions. And how we raise awareness for people that don't know sign language is just a tremendous burden. We have so many inspirational stories that have been shared with us of hearing individuals that know sign language. I mean, we're inspiring them to learn. We're inspiring them to improve. For other individuals that maybe have a little bit of sign language, they're getting better because of us. And it really truly is a win-win situation.

And I have been approached by several people both in private and in public, and they've really just expressed to me how much they have learned just from watching me. Again, that's a tremendous responsibility. And I know some people have come up to me or maybe they've bumped into me-- and I've said, oh, we've got to stay back, six feet, six feet. [CHUCKLES] But I tell you, I just want to say thank you so much for this, for all of this. It's been wonderful.

JOHN MOORE: Oh, yes. This is all wonderful. Lena, please. Please go ahead.

LENA SMITH: Yeah. So I think that just seeing a sign language interpreter on TV has inspired people to want to learn sign language. They have time while they're at home, and so they're getting on the internet, and they're seeing what they can learn. They're trying to learn more about the Deaf community, which is awesome, because that just benefits the Deaf community. Because then it's one more chance to go into the grocery store and see somebody say, "oh, hey, how are you?" In ASL, which is absolutely wonderful.

I think also there was one day where I was struggling with my mask, and so I left it on. And one of the things that I noticed is that then people started talking about my mask, which has a see-through panel over my lips, because that is something that people need to be aware of. And hopefully, seeing that makes people think, OK, what is that? Why is she wearing that? And then that starts that conversation, which then hopefully we'll just see more of it in the community.

I think that sign language also just gives people a visual to what they're hearing, which then helps people remember the topic. I know Marla, last year, you had an individual come in, who was a professor at Gallaudet University, and he talked about how using visuals will help you remember the topic. And so there's this

picture of Nigel Howard, he's a Certified Deaf Interpreter in Canada, where he's going like this [DEMONSTRATES TWO FINGERS A FOOT APART], and it's become so popular. And people are remembering, stay six feet away, you have to physically distance.

JOHN MOORE: Yes, thank you. Christy, would you like to add anything? These are such wonderful comments. And these are the types of things that we can really capitalize here, bringing awareness to the interpreting process, bringing awareness to the benefits and how to utilize a Certified Deaf Interpreter. How to even entice people into becoming interpreting. What is interpreting? Is this a profession? How does it work? Also, with CDIs, as well.

MARLA BERKOWITZ: Oh, yes. Marla, go ahead. OK. Well, I can speak to that a bit. I really just wanted to emphasize. One of the things I have noticed is, quite frequently, the focus is on the CDI-- and the CHI is what we're referring to the Certified Hearing Interpreters. So just to be clear on that. We have noticed that there has been that focus. But of course, there's one thing I want to emphasize is we tend to overlook the community that are being serviced, that we're servicing. In particular, the Deafblind community. We as interpreters need to find a way to make sure that they have the same access. And I actually call it the--

INTERPRETER CLAYTON: Co-navigators?

MARLA BERKOWITZ: Let me spell it again to be sure. So it is the co-navigators. So I call it the co-N. But we are co-navigators. Now, before, there was something that we called the SSPs, support service providers. And now, the Deafblind community is making their voices heard and stating that, no, we need more access so that they are able to develop the pro tactile method of communication, which is primarily responding on touch.

Now, going back to that co-navigator mindset, we're seeing that professional grow and expand in a way that hadn't been. Unfortunately, funding sources always become an issue. But that group really is something that we need to focus on so that we are able to address the community that is heavily reliant on touch for access. That is the way that they communicate. That pro tactile communication is a touch-based communication.

And with coronavirus, how do we handle that? How is that made accessible? Because we have to focus on social distancing and avoiding this closeness. But for the Deafblind community, as a result, they end up isolated and completely separated from any communication access. And that is utterly heartbreaking to me. So it is time for us to take the focus and place it where it should be, of making sure that everyone has access in a co-navigator sort of model.

JOHN MOORE: Marla, those are wonderful points that you just brought up. Underserved communities, and especially the Deafblind community has been underserved and neglected for quite some time. They lack support from funding. And they lack support from other areas of the community. And it's just-- it's really disheartening. I'm sure at another point in time, we can have an in earnest discussion about that. But the three of you, during your press conferences, what are the things that you have learned? Is there anything that you have done doing differently because of the knowledge that you've gained from doing these interpreting assignments? Anybody? Who wants to start? Who wants to do this one? Christy? Why don't we go with Christy?

CHRISTY HORNE: That's kind of difficult to answer. I have learned how to work with a CDI. That is a newer skill to me, and it is quite different than your standard interpreting. So that is something that I am learning. Also, by default, learning a whole lot about our state government and how it is set up and all the different agencies and the heads of the agencies. I'm learning that. And even to a greater degree, that's causing me to be even more involved in current events around the nation, because again, I try to gather as much information as we can. So I am doing quite a lot of accidental learning about government these days.

JOHN MOORE: Thank you, Christy. Marla, did you want to add to that? Or moving on to Lena, how do you feel?

MARLA Lena hasn't responded in a while. Let's give her the charge.

BERKOWITZ:

JOHN MOORE: Yeah. Yeah, let's go. Let's go.

LENA SMITH: Yeah. Definitely. Yeah, I've learned more about how to work with a CDI. And constantly, we're all working together to try to find new tools, new avenues, to make

access more attainable. Because that is always the goal, is access. Access in a variety of different manners so that no matter what, it's always there. And so we are constantly working on changing our approach. And I think that that willingness to change has made the process smoother. So that's-- yeah.

JOHN MOORE: Thank you.

MARLA I can add to that.

BERKOWITZ:

JOHN MOORE: Yes, please go ahead.

MARLA I certainly want to support what both Christy and Lena have stated. But I do want to
BERKOWITZ: emphasize two things. It really takes a special type of person to do this type of work-
- someone that is willing to work with a CDI and a CDI that's also comfortable and trusting their hearing team. That is vital. That trust in the relationship is an absolute necessity for this type of work.

And of course, the secondary thing to consider is, this is high-profile type of work. This is not your regular classroom interpreting or one-on-one interpreting in a medical setting or even in a business environment. There's of course all sorts of possibilities for interpreting. But this is on national TV. This is a highly visible profile setting, where it takes some of the most qualified and knowledgeable and mature interpreters that are able to handle the high demand of this job. You have to make decisions with particular sign choices. We have to make decisions with how we present the concepts and the information that are vital, that they have to be presented in the most accurately and the most clearly as possible.

We have-- I've worked closely with Christy as my feeder interpreter. And her ability to really watch what I'm doing, and me being able to watch what she's doing, that I'm understanding what she is producing, and then she has to figure out which concepts to prioritize, and which concepts that maybe I may not be familiar with. So she has to then expand upon that for me. So that is a huge burden on her to really read me and understand how best to work with me. And I'm sure Christy can speak to that much more than I can.

But this type of work, I tell you, is so demanding. One of the things I have learned is

you absolutely can't afford to figure it out on the spot. You just become so engrossed in the work. And I'm sure at a later date, when things have resumed, and we're able to celebrate, of course, we can take a moment to calm and look back and figure out, do some of that self-assessment, and figure out what options may have been better. Of course, with Dr. Acton, she always mentions that. We don't know enough about this quite yet. We don't know about the virus. That's Dr. Acton's phrase. We're akin to that. That we don't know enough quite yet. We're still assessing it and still looking into it. So we're trying to answer as best as possible right now. feet. [CHUCKLES]

JOHN MOORE: Thank you, Marla. Christy, would you like to add to what Marla talked about, her comments involving you?

CHRISTY HORNE: Sure. She's right. We are constantly changing. And it's a learning process as we go. I'm fortunate in having such a great team, that we just get one another for the most part. And that doesn't happen by accident. We've been actively working toward how we can make it the most effective team possible.

And I'm very excited about the fact that we've started recording behind the scenes, because someday, one day when we're able to, we would love to put together a workshop for interpreters on how this type of-- how we have found a way to do this type of interpreting. It's not the exact, perfect way for everybody, but to share our process. And hopefully enlighten some interpreters who have not done this type of work before. Or even those who have, but it didn't go very well. And like Marla said, to also figure out what we're doing. A lot of it, we have to go back and look at, because it is an hour and a half of intense interpreting. And we don't really have time to stop and analyze what we're doing in the moment. And once we realized that, when we decided to start videoing ourselves, I think that has-- that is going to provide a lot of information later.

JOHN MOORE: Thank you. You all make such a wonderful team. And really, here, all of us in Ohio, we thank all three of you so much. I'm going to skip a few of these questions that we have and move further on down the list. Let's talk more about access for people who are Deaf and hard of hearing. Marla, this may be a question geared more toward you. Where do you see the lack of access out in the community, such as schools, homes, community events, things like that?

MARLA

BERKOWITZ:

OK. Well, we're talking about lack of access. I guess-- I want people to-- of course, everyone's going to imagine that differently, how it applies to them specifically. But for the Deaf and hard of hearing community, that maybe lack of access could occur in school. What that may look like is-- of course, which school? feet. [CHUCKLES] To the teachers out there, are the teachers trained to work with that specific Deaf and hard of hearing population? Do we have Deaf education as a training program? Is that available to our instructors? I believe we do. But that sort of foundational practices for individuals that are instructors and teachers, who have the responsibility of teaching our Deaf and hard of hearing community, is key.

Even such choices as far as which language that they use. For Deaf and hard of hearing children from families with hearing parents, which is, I believe, roughly 95%, 96% of Deaf individuals have hearing parents. So what is their home life? What language are they using at home? That's certainly a key. Language, typically-- and I know Spanish at home is a spoken language. So Spanish and English and what have you. So of course, how does that impact the Deaf and hard of hearing community? If there is a Deaf child that is growing up in that sort of environment, do they have access to language that they are able to enter kindergarten on par with their hearing peers?

What we see, unfortunately, is, most often, they are not. That lack of access takes away their native language, where they're-- normally, children have a native language that they acquire at home and when they enter school, and they have a basic language foundation, that they are prepared. And really, having that foundational language is key to their future. It gives them access to English. It gives them access to learning math and science and social studies and basic history. All of those things are all impacted by an ability to understand the language.

Our history shows that unfortunately, we don't teach children and we don't give them that opportunity. So that's certainly a lack of access that's important to recognize and how it makes its appearance in school.

Lack of access in the community could be anytime an individual-- a Deaf or hard of hearing individual-- goes into, say, a restaurant or they want to-- oh, I don't know-- open a bank account or perhaps they will want to get medical services. Really, any

just everyday task that is needed to survive requires communication. And what language is being used? From the general public, what do you see? What language do you see? Of course, it's English being spoken. That, then, of course, takes away the access for Deaf individuals. So Deaf individuals are having to learn to modify their communication so that they can understand what's happening.

Some hard of hearing individuals or some Deaf individuals may be comfortable with speaking. But what about the individual that is responding back in spoken language? Maybe using a paper and pen to show what you're trying to say. Or technology. There's a variety of apps where they have the talk-to-text that makes its appearance. Or there is one app, I believe, that is Live Transcribe. Or there is a variety of different apps that can be used that will take the spoken language and mimic it in a visible sense. But of course, that comes with some issues.

And for situations like this, especially going into even the hospital or communication as far as wearing a mask, that really, truly can be life or death. And this is one of the most serious issues that we need to make sure that Deaf individuals have access to, so that they can make the appropriate decisions that will impact their life.

So for the Deaf and hard of hearing community, there are certainly concerns. That is one of the biggest reasons why we have fought to emphasize the need for having that clear cut out when they're wearing a mask. And I am so proud of the bobblehead that has been made of me, because we can use that. People are buying that. I'll tell you that I think it's been over 500 that have been purchased thus far, within a week, give or take. And the money that is being earned from those sales are being donated to our local nurses and people in Columbus, the Columbus City Health Care. We have CCEC, the Columbus Elderly Care.

These people that know sign language. But at the same time, they have some staff and nurses that they work with there that maybe perhaps don't know sign language. And so they've been putting on masks. And of course, because not every Deaf individual knows sign language-- so that's another consideration, as well-- where the individuals that are relying on lip reading for communication access. If someone is wearing a mask, they don't have that access.

So I'm so excited of the opportunity and awareness that this has raised to be sure

that we are doing a variety of things to provide access for the Deaf and hard of hearing community. And I'm hopeful that the hospitals and medical providers will take the lead to purchase those masks to make sure that access is guaranteed for Deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

JOHN MOORE: Speaking of that got one right here.

MARLA That's great.

BERKOWITZ:

JOHN MOORE: Those kinds of masks, those are the ones that Marla's talking about. This is just a standard surgical mask that they inserted a clear window in. And there's a nursing home that serves Deaf and hard of hearing residents. And it's very important for them to be able to communicate with the staff. I have one of those masks with a clear window in it. And it is for communication purposes.

While we're talking about access, there's two things that I've learned recently concerning the Deaf and hard of hearing community. When we go into a building, when we try to go into a building, the door is locked. OK. Press button to speak here. OK. We press the button. *Wah, wah, wah, wah, wah, wah.* You know, I'm Deaf. I can't hear anything. I just keep pulling on the door. How do I get into something like that? That's a sort of barrier that Deaf and hard of hearing people experience out in the community.

And of course, this list could go on. Marla, she just covered basically the tip of the iceberg. When speaking about access, access is a barrier that Deaf and hard of hearing people face every day. If we want to go to a mechanic, we want to get our car fixed, are they going to be willing to write back and forth? Well, I can use my phone. Well, they might not be willing to touch my phone. Again, and it comes back to the access issue. And with masks, and then, of course, you have social distancing and things like that. Yes, please. Marla.

MARLA I'd like to add to that, of course. Yeah. The converse of that. For individuals that are
BERKOWITZ: learning sign language, the Deaf community is sort of giving them that permission. It is-- Deaf gain is something that we have recognized. I'm sure you may be familiar, if you can imagine. If you think of, in a nursing home, there are multiple individuals that have their loved ones that are living in a nursing home, and they can't visit

them. And it really is heartbreaking to not be able to see them.

But of course, being able to communicate through a window in sign language is a fantastic gift that we have been given. That's our Deaf gain. That is our opportunity to capitalize on our basic language access. So individuals maybe that are trying to visit their friends and family in a nursing home, maybe they learn something like the "I love you" sign or the "thank you" sign, or "I miss you", where you can use those basic communications through a window. And it's just simple, basic sign that has allowed for that strong connection to maintain.

Again, that phrase, "we are in this together and we need to stay connected".

JOHN MOORE: Absolutely. Right on. So Marla, as a Deaf person, what tips could you suggest to businesses, colleges, banks, mechanics, doctors' offices, dentists, all sorts of areas that Deaf and hard of hearing people use? What would you tell them?

MARLA Well, I could say a few things. Of course--

BERKOWITZ:

JOHN MOORE: They have to be practical.

MARLA They have to be practical. And of course, recognizing that learning sign language is

BERKOWITZ: not an easy task. But don't give up. First and foremost, keep trying. That's number one. If it is not possible in that moment, use gestures. Gestures are phenomenal. Use your body language and gestures. Don't be afraid to use your face and body and institute that movement to communicate. Get creative.

And the biggest thing is, don't be afraid. If you see a Deaf person, oftentimes, you see that person shut down. They think, oh, I can't. Don't be afraid. You can. Go ahead. Deaf individuals are very friendly people, right? Christy, Lena, you agree with me on that? Yes?

JOHN MOORE: We don't bite. We don't.

MARLA Right. We don't bite. Right. Just as John said, we do not bite. But one thing that is of
BERKOWITZ: absolute importance-- have a paper and pen with you ready. If you know that you're going to be interacting with someone that is Deaf, if you're going to be interfacing with them, don't be afraid to write back and forth with them. But don't write a whole

page worth of language. Keep it short and simple. And just communicate through writing.

Also, don't depend on family members to help you with communication. I have heard multiple horror stories. Some people are more comfortable using their family as far as mediating communication. I understand that entirely. But maybe some of those family members would be doing more harm than good, unfortunately. There's various reasons that would support that. One example would be domestic violence, sexual assault. It could be autism. Just really, that power and control of the hearing person taking the right for the Deaf person to make their own choices away from them. Access to funds, what have you. Really, that's important that Deaf individuals have that power. And it can be a very dangerous situation to rely on a family member to interpret for that Deaf person in those instances. I could go on and on for hours. But I'm sure I need to cut myself off here. Christy and Lena, do you want to add something?

JOHN MOORE: Christy, yes, please. Go ahead.

CHRISTY HORNE: Also, please if at all possible, bring in an interpreter. A qualified sign language interpreter. Not just somebody who signs. But if it's at all possible, contact an agency in the area and get a qualified sign language interpreter. It's past time that this is something that's just the norm.

JOHN MOORE: Yes. Thank you, Christy. Lena, do you have anything to add? No? One example of talking about using family members to interpret. When I was a child, I went with my mother to a doctor's appointment. It was an oncology appointment. I had no idea at the time what was happening. And of course, they didn't provide an interpreter. And they asked, this child, hey, would you mind interpreting for your mother about this? OK. All right. They went into there. And says, "OK, you have six to 12 months left to live. You have serious cancer. There is no cure." What'd the kid do? And then the kid said, "Mom, why do you-- why are you dying? No, don't leave me!" No. And the kid got very upset. And the mother had no idea what was going on. There was no communication. There was no interpreter provided. Those are the type of situations that you must provide a professional, qualified interpreter, an appropriate person to interpret this role. Absolutely, you have to have that.

OK. All of you have been doing a wonderful job. I know that Simon would like to ask all of us a few more wrap up questions. So I'll let Simon have it for the last question before we get started with our wonderful day.

SIMON

BUEHRER:

Hey, everybody. Thank you so much. This has been a really enlightening, engaging, thought-provoking conversation. I just have one more question for all of you. We are calling this series that we're doing at OCALI "Voices, Visions, and Victories." And really trying to focus especially on that latter part and finding those moments to celebrate, while we're dealing with the pandemic and social distancing and all these new things that are coming at us from all directions that we're just trying to figure out. And so I would ask each of you, in light of everything that's happening, in light of, Marla, your growing fame and your bobblehead success, maybe besides that-- which is really cool-- but do you each have a personal victory or victories that have occurred in the last few months or so? Anybody want to begin? Christy?

JOHN MOORE: Yeah, Christy. Go ahead, please.

CHRISTY

HORNE:

After seeing all the faces of nobody wanting to say anything, I guess I'll start. Throughout this whole thing, I've just been trying to take every day one at a time and focus on the small victories. I'm a mother. And so I'm-- I consider it a victory that I'm still working every day. I'm quite grateful for that. I consider it a victory anytime we get through homework without tears. I consider it a victory-- I'm focusing, like I said, on the small things, on the days that we get to go outside, on the days that we can just make someone else smile. So those are my focuses right now.

SIMON

BUEHRER:

Fantastic. Thank you, Christy. Lena? A victory or two for you?

LENA SMITH:

Yeah. I am currently packing and getting ready to move. So every time a box has the lid put on it, that is a victory. feet. [CHUCKLES] We've been supporting local businesses, so my bicycle is currently at a small business, and I'm looking forward to the victory of it being fixed so I can get out and enjoy this wonderful weather. My mom has been making masks for people and passing them out. And so every time we're able to finish-- she's able to finish a mask that has that clear panel and give somebody else access they wouldn't otherwise have, that's a victory for us. So just

very thankful.

SIMON Outstanding. Thank you so much, Lena. Marla, anything to add?

BUEHRER:

MARLA Something you asked-- now. Lena, Christy, don't be surprised, because when you
BERKOWITZ: asked that, I thought of a song. So the song is called "Little Victories." You know who signs that song? Shawn Forbes, yeah! feet. [CHUCKLES] That song was the first thing I thought of, was, "Little Victories." So I first thought of that song when you asked that question. That was something I immediately thought of.

And of course, as Lena and Christy talked about, just little small wins that they're experiencing day to day, I'm experiencing those same things. Really, it's just an everyday thing that I just have to focus on. Make me feel good and make me feel accomplished. Of course, some days, I feel not so great.

But then I realize that it's still little victories within that day. Because I have to allow myself that opportunity to sit back and think and relax. And if I have taken that opportunity to inspire somebody else to feel happy, or perhaps maybe they've done something different, they're willing to pass on the kindness, that's something that I can be a part of, making someone else feel happy or thankful. For me, those are many victories that need to be celebrated over and over. Maybe getting food from a local restaurant, and just the people there that have been so appreciative of it. I am likewise very fortunate that I'm able to still work. And I have friends and family workers and co-workers that inspire me just as part of their life every day. And I have an absolutely phenomenal partner who gives me love and support every single day. And really, all of these little, simple things are just individual victories that make me celebrate day to day.

You really should try that. Just take a look at that song. It's a beautiful song, it really is. And it's accessible to Deaf people. So there's-- Shawn is out there signing it and it's fantastic. feet. [CHUCKLES]

SIMON It is fantastic. This is the song, "Little Victories" by Shawn Forbes. If you don't know
BUEHRER: him, he's a Deaf hip hop artist from Detroit. Check him out. Learn more about him and purchase his music at deafandloud.com. Again, that's deafandloud, all one

word, dot com.

Special thanks to Marla, Christy, and Lena for participating in this interview, and for your continued, tireless efforts to help keep us engaged and informed and keep things accessible for all Ohioans. And thanks to John Moore from DSC for moderating this discussion. You can learn more about DSC at their website. It's DSC.org.

We had also talked about Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, and you can learn more about them at their website, ood.ohio.gov. Again, that's ood.ohio.gov. And last but not least, we'd like to give a shout out to OCALI's Outreach Center for Deafness and Blindness. Check out their free online training module promoting access for people who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or blind, or visually impaired. Again, it's a free online training module. You can find it at deafandblindoutreach.org. Again, all one word. Deafandblindoutreach.org.

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Thanks again for listening to *Inspiring Change*, because the need for change is everywhere, and inspiration can come from anywhere. I'm Simon Buehrer. See you soon.