

**PRESS RELEASE**  
*For Immediate Release*

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### ***Dance, Theater and Photography on View*** **During Deaf Awareness Week at Mill Neck**

Throughout the school year, students at Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf partake in ongoing Deaf Awareness events. These events typically run an entire week, with each day exploring the visual and performing arts as they pertain to Deaf culture. In addition to presentations of Deaf fine and visual artists, past events have included performances by The Little Theater of the Deaf and a variety of workshops and discussions. To round out the experiences, many of the events are interactive, allowing students the opportunity to thoroughly participate.

Last month's Deaf Awareness Week opened with an energized start when siblings Paul and Brian Herman, the dance team behind Double Up Dance Group, treated Mill Neck students to morning and afternoon performances. Along with their dazzling dance moves and engaging personalities, these two young entrepreneurs presented their messages of following one's dreams and the importance of education, which are core principles behind the "Move to Succeed" program they developed. Brian, who is hard of hearing, emphasized that even though every day might bring challenges, "you can't run away, you need to push yourself." At the conclusion of their presentation, the students did just that when the Herman brothers invited everyone to join them on stage for a dynamic dance routine.

A few days later, students were back in the auditorium to enjoy a spirited theater performance by Crom Saunders, a professor of American Sign Language (ASL) and Deaf Culture at Columbia College in Chicago. Saunders, who is Deaf, presented a one-man show of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Using photos of the play's characters, he acted out several abbreviated scenes, incorporating a good deal of humor into his performance. Though this was Saunder's first visit to Mill Neck, he travels three weeks out of four every month, often internationally.

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The third guest during Deaf Awareness Week, Alnoe Paler, is an award-winning Deaf photographer. Originally from the Philippines, Paler moved to California in 2009 and now resides in New York. Currently a freelance photographer, Paler has worked as a press photographer for the Cebu Daily News in the Philippines and has taught at the College of St. Benilde-De La Salle University in Manila in the Sign Language Learning Program. As Paler entered photo competitions and began garnering awards for his work, he gained further confidence in his abilities. "I was inspired to keep going," he said. Winning awards and gaining recognition, though certainly gratifying, provided Paler with the satisfaction of knowing he was helping to further dispel the belief of "certain things hearing people didn't think Deaf people could do."

Paler's introduction to Mill Neck began last year when he participated in Mill Neck's annual Fall Harvest Festival, where he captured many wonderful moments throughout the two-day event with his camera. At his presentation during Deaf Awareness Week, he shared his story and photos with students and staff. He acknowledged the struggles he faced at the beginning of his career, but reminded the audience that perseverance and hard work do eventually pay off.

Through his travels and workshops, Paler's mission is to bring hope to people with disabilities. For Paler, photography allows him to express himself and he is grateful for his success, in part because it permits him to be a visible advocate for the Deaf, saying, "Deafness is not a hindrance to success."

Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf is part of the Mill Neck Family of Organizations, a not-for-profit group dedicated to serving Deaf and hard of hearing individuals through educational, vocational and spiritual programs and services. For more information about any of its programs, please call (516) 922-4100 or visit <http://www.millneck.org>.

*Photo Captions:*

- 1) Brian (left) and Paul Herman of Double Up Dance Group lead Mill Neck students through some dance moves.
- 2) Crom Saunders, a professor and storyteller performs his one-man show of *Romeo and Juliet*.
- 3) Mill Neck Manor Deaf Education Center principal, Katie Kerzer (left) joins photographer Alnoe Paler and his wife, Zelda Sagun before a presentation of the photographer's work.

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