

PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

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Opportunity for Expression and Empowerment for Mill Neck Manor Students

Collaboration. Expression. Empowerment. These reigned throughout the three-day music video workshop held recently for the high school students at Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf. This was the second time the students at the Deaf Education Center (DEC) participated in the workshop facilitated by the nonprofit Deaf Professional Arts Network (D-PAN). The Detroit-based D-PAN (deafandloud.com), co-founded in 2006 by musician Sean Forbes, focuses on translating popular songs into American Sign Language (ASL) music videos for Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. Forbes, who is Deaf, channels his passion for music into his outreach to the Deaf community via the ASL videos, and also through workshops and music camps.

Forbes and several other members of the D-PAN team brought their workshop to Mill Neck for the first time last fall. With D-PAN's guidance, the DEC students created their first music video featuring the song, "Shut Up and Dance." This year, the students chose to produce a video with Katy Perry's hit "Roar." Given the reactions of the student videographers, D-PAN team and all attending the video's premiere, the experience once again proved to be enriching.

DEC student William Arnold was part of the camera crew. "I liked how we used a wheelchair as a moving video camera for filming people moving around," he said. Senior Sabrina Russell and fellow DEC student Noel Rodriguez were co-directors of the new video. Each found their second experience working with D-PAN just as rewarding as the previous time. According to Sabrina,

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the video was successful, even with the few struggles and frustrations encountered. “Yes, a few communications errors, but we all managed to get through it together! That’s the key word of the whole thing, together,” she said. Sabrina added that her experiences, both this year and last year, have been beneficial for improving her communication skills and for learning patience.

Noel described “a great experience being a first-time director.” He liked showing his peers what to do in the scenes. He and several other students stayed at school overnight to do final editing. He acknowledged, “The editing was tough, but I’m glad I got to do it. It’s so amazing working with D-PAN!”

Although the videos D-PAN produces are essentially geared toward the Deaf and hard-of-hearing, the hearing population is also expressing a growing interest. To make his music accessible to all, Forbes, who is also an accomplished songwriter and drummer, vocalizes and signs his lyrics simultaneously, while animated lyrics flash on a screen. In his workshops, Forbes encourages total immersion in a project, believing that participants are empowered through their musical expression.

Empowerment is the ultimate goal in D-PAN’s workshops. The professionals provide guidance; from concept through final editing. Otherwise, the students take over, effectively encouraged to make the project their own.

At the debut of the DEC’s 2015 video, the excitement was palpable. The student videographers were clearly proud and, given the prolonged applause, so was the entire audience. Following the video, Sabrina and her back up, performed “Fight Song.” The show concluded with a powerful performance from Forbes.

In her final comment, Sabrina said, “I loved it! She advised any students given an opportunity to participate in a D-PAN workshop, “Take it. You won’t regret it!”

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The Mill Neck Family of Organizations, which includes Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf, founded by Lutheran Friends of the Deaf in 1947, Mill Neck Manor Early Childhood Center, Mill Neck Services, Mill Neck Interpreter Service, Mill Neck Services Center for Hearing Health and Lutheran Friends of the Deaf. For information on programs and services, please call 516-922-4100 or visit millneck.org.



Mill Neck Manor student video producers with members of D-PAN, including Sean Forbes (front at left), Teddy Dorsette, Adrean Mangiardi (front 1st and 3rd from right) and Mark Levin (back right).



Little Joshua Morocho felt inspired to take the stage during Sean Forbes' performance.



Mill Neck high school students Sabrina Russell and Noel Rodriguez join musician Sean Forbes onstage to relate their experiences as co-directors of this year's music video.



During the three-day music video workshop, students were involved in every aspect of the project, from concept through final editing.

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