Connections
Intentional Communities Are the Way Forward
Dr. Asiah Mason, Chief Executive Officer

Strengthening connections between one another and with our own communities helps us to live more resiliently, more sustainably, and with greater happiness. This is especially important when our own family or community includes people who have different abilities, and who may face daily challenges because of how others view those differences. How do we create greater support, belonging, spirituality, happiness, and growth in our lives and community?

Our approach is to be purposeful about developing intention communal communities. These are communities that form by people having a common intention — a uniting interest, a set of values, a common vision for the world and how to live in it. The reasons for building and living in an intentional community may seem obvious, but we really have to give those reasons the proper attention, we must be goal oriented about our intention and staying Mission-True.

But developing intentional communities – including nurturing interdependent connections with each other – isn’t always easy.

Sometimes, we must expose how vulnerable, imperfect, and fallible we are in order to feel understood, accepted, nurtured, supported, and respected. Social media encourages us to show the world only what is pretty, happy, successful, and acceptable. Life is not actually like that. With intentional communities, we learn to share not only the positive pieces, but also our challenges.

Learning, relationships, parenting, physical or mental health, world conflict, and pandemics can be exhausting. But these life challenges are exactly why we need to focus on intentional communities.

Since February 2020, when I arrived at Mill Neck Manor, I have had to make tough decisions for the future of Mill Neck Manor. I have also had the joy of leading my team to connect with nearby neighbors and with leaders in surrounding towns and businesses leaders. We wanted to share our Mission and wanted others to join our Mission.

We did not want to just ask others for help. We wanted to share our hopes and dreams, and we wanted them to join us in our journey to achieve our Mission.

Many people still are not aware that we are more than the Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf. Using feedback from our neighbors and community: We are opening the gate to our 86-acre estate to the neighbors for family and community activities while respecting the residence. We united with our neighbors to maintain the historical and pristine Village of Mill Neck against a commercial cell tower on our property. We are restarting our summer sign language camp for hearing kids. A preschool is operating on campus. We have monthly Chapel Services. I am speaking at public events and we are on the news more to share our impact stories. Our “tea- &-tour” will start this summer. Our Apple Festival will back in person.

I invite you to join our Mission.
Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf’s Student Body Government leads our students with exceptional ideas and events. Our SBG serves in a variety of incredible ways. We think it is important to support other communities and donate whenever we can. When a hurricane struck Texas, SBG fundraised for the victims and sent Amazon gift cards to damaged schools. We also participated in our annual Valentines for Vets, where our students made heartfelt cards for our Veterans in Nassau County.

SBG has played a large role in ensuring that our activities and celebrations were fun for all. This included hosting both the Halloween and Christmas parties and providing fun activities for all grade levels. We will be hosting our annual Easter Egg Hunt with prizes. SBG is also raising funds for the entire school and facilities team with an end of the year celebration BBQ/Picnic. For the first time ever, SBG will be hosting a “Spring Fling” after school in the Manor House.

SBG members are leaders and role models to other students and take every opportunity they can to educate. For example, SBG students model how to make changes in the school, such as using bottle refill water fountains. SBG members have traveled to other public schools to teach them about Deaf Culture! Just last month, the Huntington Fencing Team came to MNMSD and had the opportunity to speak with all of our students and it was such a great learning experience for both schools!

A big thank you to Michelle O’Brien, Kelli Kleva, Bryan, Brandon, Judy, and Jackie!
Mill Neck’s School for the Deaf’s Track & Field Team is set to compete in the Eastern School for the Deaf Athletic Assoc. Tournament, the first since the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020. The tournament begins at the Maryland School for the Deaf on Friday, May 6.

We will be competing against American (CT) Delaware, Lexington, Marie Katzenbach (NJ), Marie Philips (MA), Maryland, NYSD (Fanwood), Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Rochester, St. Mary’s (NY), and Western Pennsylvania.

This year’s team is set to compete and to be successful! Judy Alvarado, Jacqueline Rodas, Lia Araujo De Leon, Winny Ferreira, Bryan Alfaro-Ulloa and Marlon Teo have been training to perform at their best in the tournament. Team members Ola Adisa and Mario Viveros-Zambrano have been training alongside their teammates and will support their team members from home. Coach Larry Manning and female chaperone Deborah Tortola are ready to lead our athletes to finish with honors in the 100m, 200m, 400m, 1600m, long jump, shot put, discus contests.

We are excited about this event, as it is Mill Neck’s first ESDAA Tournament since 2019. This will be Seniors Judy and Jacqueline’s last tournament and we wish them the best of luck. For the rest of the team, it will be their first time attending the ESDAA Tournament and we root for their success. Go Team Mill Neck!

Edwards Shares Her Experiences Celebrating Black History Month

This February, we had the honor of having Treshelle Edmonds visit our campus to share her experiences and journey as a Deaf entertainer. We were fortunate for this opportunity for our students to wrap-up Black History Month. Treshelle connected with each of our students and emphasized the importance of pursuing their dreams. Many students mentioned how much her presentation resonated with them, and for that, we are extremely grateful. This was also part of our “Deaf-Signer/Speaker Series” meant to expose students to careers and Deaf role models from all walks of life.

“You can’t be what you can’t see” - Michelle Obama.

Mill Neck Family of Organizations

The Mill Neck Family of Organizations is dedicated to creating a world in which Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals are included, empowered, celebrated and embraced as equals. Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf serve students from 34 school districts in NY. Our ASL interpreting services is open 24 hours a day (person or remote.) The Manor House is a mansion available as a rental venue for special events.

Lutheran Friends of the Deaf “Better Together”

On March 18, LFD hosted a Roundtable meeting at Mill Neck Manor with a diverse group of people to discuss collaboration for sharing the Gospel with Deaf adults and youth. This successful meeting was attended by participants from denominations from Australia, Texas, Ohio Washington DC and New York.

We had robust conversations about best practices in integrating Deaf, Hard of Hearing and non-Deaf people in faith communities. We planned the inaugural annual Deaf Ministry Conference to be hosted by LFD in 2023. The theme will be “Better Together.” It’s a fitting name for this varied group of people who are seeking to make faith more accessible to the Deaf community. You’ll hear more about this in our upcoming newsletters!
An event that we all look forward to every year is the Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf Spring Talent Show. It was a full house in our school's auditorium. The various acts from all grade levels showcased dance, music, skits, animation and plenty of laughs and joyous faces! Students practiced hard and performed well!

We are very proud of our own SBG for organizing the show like a pro. These student leaders have a bright future in the entertainment business.

We are thankful for all the hard work of our school teachers, teacher aides, and staff in mentoring the students.

There are too many pictures to share here, but there will be plenty more pictures and videos posted on the Mill Neck website!