



Proclamation

WHEREAS, **Deaf Awareness Month** initiated in 1958, has historically aimed to enhance the human rights of deaf individuals, broaden the teaching of national sign languages, and improve access to education, information technology, and services; and

WHEREAS, the deaf population encompasses individuals born profoundly deaf who primarily use American Sign Language (ASL) for communication, as well as those with varying degrees of hearing loss who utilize hearing aids, assistive listening devices, or other amplification and communication methods; and

WHEREAS, statistics indicate that across all age groups, approximately 600,000 people in the United States are deaf, with over half of them aged 65 and above; and

WHEREAS, according to the Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in North Carolina (DSDHHS), approximately 15% of Gaston County's population experiences hearing loss, a number expected to rise; and

WHEREAS, individuals who identify as deaf are part of a vibrant cultural and linguistic community, sharing language, social norms, behavioral rules, and a rich history, inspiring our unwavering commitment to support and uplift the deaf community; and

WHEREAS, it remains imperative to ensure equitable access for individuals who are deaf to the numerous benefits and opportunities within our community; and

WHEREAS, Nita's Silent Hands, Incorporated, is dedicated to fostering greater understanding of the American deaf and hard of hearing community and its culture and heritage, promoting sign language as an inherent human right and highlighting its increasing popularity, providing valuable resources such as sign language classes within our community, and exploring avenues to advocate for the human rights of deaf individuals and improve access to education and technologies; and

WHEREAS, Nita's Silent Hands, Incorporated, is also committed to facilitating inclusivity within businesses through workshops, training sessions, audits, and innovative interpreting services, to ensure that the deaf and hard of hearing are fully integrated into the workforce and customer experiences; and

WHEREAS, Nita's Silent Hands, Incorporated will annually host Signfest at the Rotary Pavilion in September, a celebration fostering connections, bridging communication gaps, and celebrating diversity within our community.

NOW THEREFORE, I, Richard Franks, Mayor of the City of Gastonia and the City Council of the City of Gastonia, do hereby proclaim the month of September 2024 as

DEAF AWARENESS MONTH

IN WITNESS THEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the City of Gastonia to be affixed, this the 20th day of August in the year of our Lord two thousand and twenty-four.

Richard Franks, Mayor

ATTEST:

Suzanne J. Gibbs, City Clerk