Announcer (00:00:03)

The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

Adair Seifert (00:00:10)

September is Deaf Awareness Month. The purpose of this month is to increase public awareness of Deaf issues, people and culture. I'm Adair Seifert, and today we are joined by Dr. Karen Engler, clinical professor and graduate program director of special education-education of the deaf and hard of hearing at Missouri State University.

Today, we will cover obstacles that the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community face, resources offered in the Ozarks and how we can support their community.

Dr. Karen Engler (00:00:51)

I think one of the main struggles that the Deaf community face, whether inside or outside of the classroom, is equal access to language.

Language must be accessible. It's not just important academically but also socially.

So, if you think in a classroom, what are they learning? What is the academic side of that? But we learn a lot with our peers and there's a lot of importance to the social aspect. So, recess is important. Being able to have access to language at lunchtime is important. So, I'd say that's probably one of the biggest obstacles.

Adair Seifert (00:01:21)

Included in the recent Missouri State University realignment, the sign language studies minor now falls under the College of Education. Engler explains the realignment and how this will help equip future educators.

Dr. Karen Engler (00:01:34)

The way in which providing instruction in American Sign Language (ASL) as conceptually accurate signed English, case classes provide students to build that sign language knowledge and skill set, and knowledge of Deaf culture and the Deaf community. Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing play a crucial role in supporting students with a wide range of hearing levels and communication needs.

Having this minor shows that the learning of that skill set is not just for those who are going into this field but for educators and beyond. Overall, we want to provide more access to language within the greater community, including ASL.

Adair Seifert (00:02:30)

She covers resources offered in the Ozarks for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community.

Dr. Karen Engler (00:02:35)

There are a variety of resources that are available to the Deaf community in the Ozarks. For example, the local fire department provides and installs free fire alarms for fire protection. You get smoke alarms that can be installed in the homes that are louder than traditional fire alarms. These alarms also have a strobe light to get visual attention of the individuals in the household.

There’s also a lot of different organizations that support individuals who are Deaf and hard of hearing to seek employment and to maintain employment.

Another thing available for the Deaf community is that Missouri State has a Deaf preschool. We have had a Deaf preschool through our program for about 35 years now. We offer on-site preschool services for children who are Deaf and hard of hearing, regardless of their communication modality, whether it be visual as in some form of sign language or ASL language, a separate language or spoken English, and regardless of the type of amplification or assistive listening devices they use or choose not to use.

Adair Seifert (00:04:10)

She offers insight into how hearing people can support the Deaf and hard of hearing.

Dr. Karen Engler (00:04:16)

I think one of the things with the Deaf community is embracing diversity within the community. Embracing all aspects. So, whether someone is capital D Deaf, culturally deaf, I just think we really need to embrace the culture. We need to embrace the language differences. It's about making language accessible at all times to this population.

Adair Seifert (00:04:42)

That was Dr. Karen Engler, clinical professor and graduate program director of special education-education of the deaf and hard of hearing at Missouri State University.

I'm Adair Seifert for the Missouri State Journal.

Announcer (00:04:55)

For more information, contact the Office of Strategic Communication at 417-836-6397, the Missouri State Journal is available online at ksu.org.