

“Deaf is beautiful.” That is the message shared by millions of people across the world this week, as we gather to celebrate the unique beauty, dynamism and intelligence of the Deaf community.

My hometown of Rochester is proud home to the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at the Rochester Institute of Technology, the world's premiere technical college tailored to the needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

As a result, we know the incredible importance of the Deaf Community to our state and to our nation. Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone, was a son to a mother with hearing loss and husband to a wife who was deaf. Meanwhile, actresses like Halle Berry and singers like Ryan Adams, both of whom have hearing loss, are pillars of the American arts.

Despite some misunderstanding in society, deafness is not a disability. Deafness is a difference in life experience- a difference that is rich in unique beauty, and singular in its understanding of the world around us. This is exactly what we celebrate today.

Throughout the week, events across Rochester are providing countless opportunities to get involved in this year's Deaf Awareness Week. From seminars on Medicare and VA benefits to the Deaf Farm Stand and Thursday night Deaf Trivia, events are open to the entire community. [I encourage you to check out the calendar of events by clicking here](#)

My advocacy for the Deaf community continues everyday in my role as a Member of Congress. For years I have led the effort in Congress to secure funding for NTID, and was pleased to secure \$65.4 million in fiscal years 2011 and 2012. I also had the pleasure of serving on the NTID National Advisory Group to help guide the operation and direction of the institute.

I am also proud to have helped launch the Task Force on Health Care Careers for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Community, which was tasked with expanding opportunities for deaf and hard-of-hearing students to enter health care professions.

From the front lines of education to the research and innovation of our region's biotechnology and nanotechnology firms, members of the Deaf Community are the engines that move our economy forward and the artists that deepen the richness of our culture and community. This week, we pause to honor their contributions and celebrate the incredible talent, innovation, and beauty of our Deaf Community, in Rochester and throughout the world.