

Contact: Janet DesGeorges

Hands & Voices

janet@handsandvoices.org



PRESS RELEASE

Hands & Voices welcomes first deaf parent as board president and three new directors to its national board.



Boulder, Colorado, August 22, 2023: Karen Hopkins, a parent, current executive director of The Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and the incoming executive director of The Children's Center for Communication at Beverly School for the Deaf in Beverly, Massachusetts, has been named president of the Hands & Voices board of directors. Hopkins is the first deaf board president of Hands & Voices, the nation's largest non-profit organization of its kind supporting families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing. "From the moment I learned of Hands & Voices over 15 years ago, I knew this organization was the missing link for families with Deaf and hard of hearing children," Hopkins said. "The parent-to-parent and Deaf Community connections H&V embeds into the organization

embrace the value of lived experiences. I am truly honored to lead this board and support the organization into our next phase of growth and service."

Immediate past-President Djenne-Amal Morris, who served from 2014 to 2023 and was term-limited on the H&V board, announced the results of the unanimous election as well as the appointment of new directors on August 2, 2023. "Being the board president has been the highlight of my career to date. I have had the opportunity to serve with brilliant, dedicated individuals, and sharpen my skills as a leader," Morris said. "I know each new board member personally and the talent and heart they bring to the organization. I have great hope that they will guide H&V into an even more representatively diverse and inclusive future."

A large, nationwide pool of competitive candidates were considered to replace Morris (parent/GA), Tony Ronco (parent/CA), and Rick Hauan (school administrator/WA). "We're looking forward to the diverse skillsets and lived-experience our new members bring," noted Cheryl Johnson, an H&V founder and its first board president who coordinated the 2023 election process. H&V Executive Director Janet DesGeorges added, "Karen brings a wealth of perspective as a Deaf individual, a parent, and a professional in the field. We are really excited to have her unique leadership abilities at this level of our organization."

Hopkins, and new board directors Tammy Beard (parent/CT), Rashaun Davis (parent/DE), and Rana Ottallah (parent/LA), will be formally welcomed at the Hands & Voices Leadership Conference in October 2023.

The Hands & Voices board is comprised of a parent majority with relevant professionals and members of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing community working in support of its mission. Board members may serve up to two four-year terms. H&V is a parent-led, professionally-collaborative organization dedicated to serving families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing. H&V provides support without bias around communication modes or methodology, and infuses its programs with strong values for the life experiences of adults who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, and the diverse cultures and lifestyles of our community.

New Board President

Karen Hopkins, EdD, is a parent and co-founder of the Maine H&V chapter. Karen has worked in the field of Deaf education for 32 years creating family-centered systems and renowned educational programming for deaf and hard of hearing children. She has worked as a collaborative teacher of the deaf, special educator, early interventionist, and educational administrator. Currently the executive director of the Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and the principal investigator of Maine's HRSA grant, Hopkins is preparing to transition into the role of executive director of the Children's Center for Communication/Beverly School for the Deaf in Massachusetts.

New Hands & Voices Board Members

Tammy Breard is a parent leader who helped set up the Connecticut H&V chapter, coordinated CT H&V's Guide By Your Side program, and is former regional coordinator for H&V Regions 1,2 and 3. "She is definitely the type of material we need in our field today and will be an asset to any organization," assured Luisa Gasco-Soboleski, former American School for the Deaf principal, and president of the Connecticut Association of the Deaf.

Delaware H&V's **Rashaun Davis** is a dad who "knows first-hand the challenges of navigating complicated medical and educational systems; the effectiveness and application of federal, state, and local policy; the critical role of relationships with stakeholders and trust of families," wrote Georgia's H&V Executive Director Deshonda Washington.

Rana Ottallah is a parent leader with Louisiana Hands & Voices. As a professional advocate, her "level of commitment, her exemplary preparation, and forthright presentations have served the children and families she has supported and represented well," according to Louisiana Deafblind Project Director Michael Norman, PhD.

For more information:

<https://handsandvoices.org/about/board.htm>

www.handsandvoices.org