I am Deaf with a capital "D"
The Special Kindergarten for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing of Argyroupolis was founded in 1986.

It is housed in a privately owned space at 1 - 3, Feidiou and Patriarchou Gregoriou E' Street in Argyroupoli.

It is a public school and is funded by the Municipality of Elliniko - Argyroupoli.

The transportation of students to and from the Kindergarten is done with leased vehicles of the Region of Attica, without any cost for parents.

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Wellcome

The book was created as a result of the European project "Deaf Adults as Role Models for the Hearing World: Links of the Same Chain " entitled Sign Links. Through the Support groups for Parents and Deaf Children, the participation of Deaf adults, who act as Role Models, was a valuable contribution and at the same time an innovative idea for the programme’s partner countries and beyond.

Our goal was and is to inform the Deaf and the hearing, teachers, special professionals, parents and the wider society, in order to get to know deafness and develop communication skills with Deaf children. The parallel goal is to encourage and utilize skills, so that they can better manage the difficulties that appear in communicating with each other, as well as the enrichment and expansion of knowledge, but also to change attitudes and perception of deafness.
Hello! My name is Panagiotis. I am 6 years old and I am Deaf! Like all children, I like to play with my doggies. I have fun with them and I have a full schedule, which I will talk to you about.
Did you know that...

For adults...

In the international literature it is reported and research shows that 1 in 1000 children is born Deaf. Each parent has a different reaction when she discovers that her child is Deaf. However, there is no right or wrong reaction.

There is a wide range of support available for you to understand the deafness of the child and what we mean by that term. Support can come from professionals, from services, from adult Deaf Role Models, from organizations, or by other parents of Deaf children.

For little ones...

The ears of Deaf people function in a different way than the ears of hearing people. There are about 10,000 Deaf people in Greece. In Bulgaria (according to incompletely confirmed data) - 12,000 Deaf people. Deafness can be different for different people. Some do not hear anything (deaf), while others hear some sounds (hard of hearing).
Being Deaf means, you don't hear. That's why I wear hearing aids in my ears, which help me hear sounds better and sometimes help me distinguish speech.

Also, in order to cover the deficiencies due to hearing loss, I use all my other senses.

Do you see the letters at the bottom of the TV?

They are called subtitles, so I can read and watch them. That's how I understand what people are saying on TV.

And when there are no subtitles? I try to lip read, that is, to "read" the lips of the speakers!

So remember, don't talk to me with your back turned if you want to communicate with me!
Greece proceeded to the subtitling of broadcasts and news, based on the adaptation of Greek legislation to the provisions of the European Union directive, which states that the administrative bodies and the authorities, when dealing with people with disabilities, are obliged to provide appropriate means of communication and access to information.
People with hearing impairments use various aids to enhance their residual hearing.

Some wear hearing aids and others have surgically placed a cochlear implant. But they are all people with hearing impairments!

My hearing aids and the processor of my cochlear implant are very expensive! That’s why I have to take great care of them so that nothing will go wrong or I lose them!

And no one should take them from me out of curiosity or touch them except me!
I am born Deaf.

I live in Athens with my mom and dad, who are also Deaf. Deaf people usually write the word Deaf with a capital D, because they feel proud to be Deaf and have their own community and their own culture.
For you parents...

However, most children who are Deaf, have hearing parents. 95% of Deaf children are born to hearing parents and only 5% of Deaf children have Deaf parents.

Babies can be born deaf. Some people lose their hearing, due to other reasons, for example from serious injury, an infection or some diseases.

The arrival of a new child is the moment of change in a family. When there is a Deaf child in the family it can mean that as parents you have extra things that you should learn. Every emotion you feel is normal, there is no right or wrong feeling.

The acceptance of the Deaf child is an evolutionary process.

It is very useful to meet other parents and families, but mostly Deaf adults who will be Role Models for Deaf children.

This enables you to find out what they did and how they coped with whatever obstacle they encountered in their lives. Gathering information and meeting with other parents can help unravel the mystery, banishing fear of deafness and the Deaf child.

The Deaf child having contact with a Deaf adult-Role Model can experience a positive experience that will allow him to have a positive attitude towards diversity.

It is also an opportunity to see a perspective of your Deaf child.
I do what all the children of my age do!

I like to read, draw, play with my friends.

I also do various sports, either in hearing sports clubs or in sports associations of the Deaf.

Deaf people can do anything and can be distinguished!
Role Models

Usually people have as an idol a sports star, an actor, a politician, a teacher or even a family member, which was their model as they grew up.

Role Models are an important part of every person's life.

**For the Deaf, finding these Role Models is even more important.**

Deaf adults can be great Role Models for Deaf children and their families. By leveraging their own experiences, they can show families that deafness doesn't have to be an obstacle to achieve their goals.
Alexandros Papadatos (born July 31, 1993) is a Greek athlete of the National Wrestling Team and a member of the Hellenic Federation of Sports for the Deaf.

He is also known by the nickname "Golden Lion" because of his potential and the gold titles he holds. He represented Greece in many events for the Deaf with many distinctions. He won the Gold medal in Greco-Roman wrestling in 2017 at the 23rd Olympic Games for the Deaf held in Samsun, Turkey.

Since then, he has won many gold medals and distinctions.
Did you know that...

**Deaf - Role Models**

Many times we come across the term "Deaf Role Model", which describes the Deaf, most often adults, with a Model Role, that is, with the role of a positive Role Model.

Deaf Role Models can provide information and support, from their own experience, sharing their experience with experts and services they have already addressed.

Understand and share the feelings of parents and children, talking about them and how they have dealt with the obstacles they encountered, with the passage of time.

They can offer support in communication and can answer questions that may exist about deafness.

The Deaf child growing up will see other Deaf adults, who will be a useful source of information for the Deaf community and their culture.
Deaf Role Models work with Deaf children and young people to help them improve their communication skills, self-confidence, aspirations, self-protection skills and positive Deaf identity.

One of the key factors of a Deaf Role Model is shared experience. And with this in mind, young Deaf people need the presence of adults so that they can see how they behave and how they respond to situations, such as opposing challenges in higher education or the workplace.

They are therefore expected to share their personal experiences as Deaf people and act as positive role models for Deaf children and the young people they work with.

They help families identify practical solutions to manage common challenges faced by Deaf children and young people as they move into adulthood.
Did you know that...

**Best practices for the Deaf-Role Models**

Deaf Role Models should contribute with their knowledge and experience by providing:

1. information and support to parents.
2. awareness of deafness.
3. perception and analysis of obstacles;

They can also:

4. empower parents to feel less anxious and more able to help their children develop appropriate skills.
5. support the strengthening of the parent-child bond.
6. to enhance children's levels of self-confidence and self-esteem and to strengthen the sense of self-worth and the construction of a strong identity.
7. develop skills in SL and expand the possibilities for accessible communication.


**Benefits for Parents from Deaf Role Models:**

- They realize that the Deaf achieve their goals.
- They have an opportunity to ask questions, which they never asked the experts.
- They explore childhood through the perspective of the Deaf child.
- They gain information about deafness - positive attitude and more confidence in the future.
- Have personal and direct guidance on individual issues related to the child.
With my parents and other Deaf friends we use Greek Sign Language. It is the language used by Deaf people in Greece and which allows us to communicate two ways and effectively without obstacles.

The Deaf in Bulgaria use Bulgarian Sign Language.
People who use the SL have a special "name sign", so that they do not have to fingerspell it constantly. A "name sign" is given by a Deaf person to a Deaf person (or to a hearing one) and arises from something she is used to, loves or from someone another feature.

My own "name sign" was given to me by my parents!
The Manual Alphabet consists of 24 Handshapes corresponding to the 24 letters of the Greek alphabet.
Greek Sign Language (GSL) is the natural language of the Deaf people in Greece, as well as the Bulgarian sign language in Bulgaria. In addition to people with disabilities, the Deaf are also a linguistic minority, and a particular social group in the respective country. The use of Sign Language is a prerequisite for becoming a member of the Deaf community. Sign Language is used by the majority of Deaf people, by hearing children of Deaf parents (CODA), by hearing experts dealing with Deaf people and by hearing parents of Deaf children.

On September 7, 2017, the bill of the Ministry of Labor, Social Security and Social Solidarity for the Recognition of Greek Sign Language as Equal to Greek was passed. And on January 21, 2021, the Bulgarian Parliament officially adopted Bulgarian Sign language Act, which recognizes Bulgarian sign language as equal to Bulgarian language. In the texts of these exceptionally important documents have been incorporated provisions for the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
Many confuse language with speech. Language is an innate mechanism, which means that all children have this ability-tendency and can develop it, and therefore Deaf children too.

Sign Languages are complete languages, allowing the Deaf to communicate effortlessly, easily, naturally, two-way and effectively, as there is no obstacle either to the reception of information, nor to the production, since they are particularly suited to the visual nature of the Deaf, with "their potential to see."
I go to the Special Kindergarten for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing of Argyroupolis. There I always have two teachers, one hearing and one Deaf, and they teach me both languages, GSL – which is the first and basic language of the school – but also the Greek written and spoken language.

I do so many things in my school and I like it so much!!
Not all Deaf children go to my own school. Some go to the general school and in order to have support they enter the integration classes or have a parallel support teacher in their class to support them. Some use a GSL interpreter to understand their teacher while others do not need any help in-school, as they do individual sessions daily with special educators and speech therapists.

**Did you know that...**

In bilingual education, sign language is used as a target language and is systematically taught and cultivated. The goal is for Deaf students to transfer language skills from the first language to the second! In bilingual educational programs, bilingualism also implies biculturalism, that is, an understanding of the culture of the Deaf community. There is no suitable school framework for all Deaf children.

However, choosing a school is one of the important options for the child's progress, but it is not irreversible. The decision is made by parents, following the proposal of the special professionals or bodies, depending on the specific moment, on the basis of which they evaluate what best meets the educational needs of the Deaf child.
There does not need to be perpetual competition about what is the best method and approach to communication for Deaf children. It is important to give everyone, without exception, all the information and the whole range of communication and education methods.

The right way to approach communication is the one that works best for each family, in order to meet the communication needs of the Deaf child. There are many options regarding the communication approach you will use with the Deaf child, but it is important to remember that the choice is not made once for life.

You may need to change your approach as you learn more about your own child's needs and preferences.
FAMILY & FRIENDS

Sometimes it may be necessary for the extended family, relatives or friends to stay to take care of your child, allowing you to have a short break.

Others, then, can be an important source of support for you and your child. They can be close to you as well, to discuss when you need to share thoughts and feelings.

For this reason, if they are not familiar with deafness, they will need your help to get acquainted with the child.

Look for the Deaf Role Models to meet friends and relatives, as this will strengthen the family and the wider environment of the Deaf child.
My relatives live in Patras. That's where my uncles and cousins stay, which I love very much! Luckily I can easily communicate with them every day. In the past, this was not so easy but with the help of technology and with a simple video call I can communicate with them whenever I want!
Did you know that...

Technology in recent years has greatly improved the lives of Deaf people. The hearing aids, the bells with light, the alarm clocks with vibration and of course the mobile phones with the capabilities they have, have helped the Deaf to have an accessible and comfortable life.

Notification devices

Notification devices work with visual alert (light), touch notification (vibration), or hearing alert (sound), and many of them have the privilege of synchronizing with each other.
Parents of Deaf children sometimes need to call a GSL Interpreter in order to be served in some places. I really like to watch the interpreters. And we sometimes invite interpreters to school, for example, if we want to go to the theater or a museum and we need to have equal access.
Did you know that...

The work of the Interpreter ENG is very special and difficult. There are several Interpreters in recent years who serve Deaf people for daily communication needs or some more specialized needs. Also, there is a service in Greece called relay service that helps us in remote interpreting. In recent years in Bulgaria sign language interpretation has been provided at official meetings and events in state institutions, as well as in the central newscasts of the larger public television stations.

In order to become a sign language Interpreter, one must study Sign Language of the respective country and to know it very well. Essentially, like the Deaf, interpreters are bilingual!

The Sign Language Interpreter is a professional who makes it possible to communicate between people who do not speak the same language. They follow a specific code of conduct, which commits them to keep confidential information about interpretation and the people who participated in it.

The SL Interpreter, many times, acts as a linguistic model, especially for Deaf children of younger age. The presence of the SL Interpreter on various occasions contributes to the formation of the child’s perception of what an SL Interpreter means and how she can help her in life.
When I grow up I want to study... I want to be great myself and prove that deafness is not a problem and that none of the obstacles I experience are undefeatable! Nothing is going to stop me from doing what I dream of!
Gallaudet University is a Higher Education Institution in Washington, D.C., USA and has been operating since 1864 for Deaf students. It offers undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral programs of study in many specialties. Gallaudet University follows bilingual education and the main language of instruction of the courses is American Sign Language (ASL).
Did you know that...

The world of the Deaf within the Hearing World

The world of the Deaf seeks cooperation with the wider society of hearing people. The main barriers are communication and equal access to all areas of life. Often Deaf people face obstacles such as negative behaviors, prejudices, or even bullying. In the wider hearing society, Deaf people often have to navigate through multiple social, psychological and physical barriers.

For this reason, we often recommend Deaf people who are Role Models, i.e. examples to be imitated and cover an important need for successful navigation in such environments.

The Deaf World claims to achieve the full recognition of the identity of the Deaf, the Sign Language and their community.

The goal is accomplished by revealing the knowledge that the Deaf community is strong and capable of anything.

Οι κωφοί μπορούν να ορίσουν την ζωή τους και να αποφασίσουν για το μέλλον τους.
Did you know that...

Thanks to the Deaf community and its allies, its supporters, sign language interpreters, hearing people who learn, live and/or communicate in Sign Language, everyone tirelessly supports, how Deaf people can take on leadership roles in all Deaf services and how a Deaf person can consult or even make decisions that lead to improved accessibility to organizations or services.

So, in order to overcome these challenges, Deaf people must advocate for themselves and educate other Deaf people about these issues.
Did you know that...

Deaf Gain is defined as the re-framing of the term "Deaf" as a form of sensory and cognitive diversity that has the potential to contribute to the greatest good of mankind.

The term "Deaf Gain" was coined in 2005, understanding deafness, not as a disability, but as a benefit and vital aspect of humanity's diversity. In the context of deafness in its spiritual, creative and cultural benefits, Deaf Gain recognizes physical and cognitive difference as vital to human polymorphism.

The concept of Deaf Gain in depth, signifies the approach to deafness as a forgotten way of being, a way that opens up perceptions, perspectives and ideas, less common, to the majority of hearing people.
From parents for parents...

Parents of Deaf children often report that they acquire their parental role in many ways. They learn and become parents for a Deaf child, just like for any child. There are just some variations. Like all children, Deaf children need love, support, safety and guidance.

Variations are highlighted because the parental role is based on communication. Developing good communication is vital for Deaf children and their families. Good communication and good skills allow the child to learn from others and influence the world around her. It is a very important element of emotional and personal development, but also of development of social skills.

Being able to communicate well with your child makes taking on the parenting role easier. Becoming the parent of a Deaf child can become a positive experience.

Research around the world suggests that the factors that influence the socio-emotional development of Deaf children are the influence of the family, the wider social environment of the Deaf child and even the socio-emotional skills that the family must transfer directly or indirectly to the child through daily care and communication.
This lead was also confirmed for the Greek population of Deaf students, where research showed that the development of the Self Image of Deaf children of Deaf parents is higher, compared to that of Deaf children of hearing parents.

In the case of Deaf children, cooperation between school and family is an important factor in the child's progress.

The support of the whole family should be a main concern of all the services and specialists involved in it, so that the family can accept the deafness of one of its members as a reality that must be integrated, functionally, into her daily life.

Some parents have reported that they have experienced that they are under a lot of pressure to make a decision about a choice regarding their child.
There are several options regarding the communication approach you will use with your child, but it is important to remember:

*The choice you make is not for life.*

You may need to want to change your approach as you learn more about your own child's needs and preferences.

The right way to approach communication is the one that works best for you, your family and your child.
From Deaf for Deaf...

The "Deaf Ombudsman" is a concept of international scope, which refers to the defense of the rights of the Deaf by Deaf Role Models. In other words, it is the support from Deaf people for the Deaf.

In this context, many Deaf people, active members of the Deaf community, are active in a leading role, defending equal access for all Deaf people, in all areas of life.

The role of a Deaf leader-Advocate is to disseminate information about the rights that all Deaf people should enjoy without exception.

However, the ultimate goal is not the permanent representation of the Deaf by other Deaf people, but the empowerment of all Deaf people for self-advocacy.
From Deaf for Deaf...

All Deaf people need to know the laws that protect their civil rights and know how to exercise them.

Furthermore, Deaf people learn to describe their own skills and needs, set their own goals and create a plan to achieve them.

They know how, from whom and when they can ask for help.

They make decisions and then take responsibility for dealing with the consequences of those decisions.

Through support from Deaf-advocates, self-advocacy skills are increased, quality of life and general well-being are increased.

Skills such as communication, cooperation, continuous training are important skills needed by anyone who is a Deaf Ombudsman.
Little Panagiotis is Deaf with a capital "D" and wants to share with you information about the life of himself and other Deaf people in his community.

The book is addressed to parents, teachers and those who want to get an idea about the deafness and everyday life of people with hearing problems.