



# News Release

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## **First-Ever Michigan Deaf Health Fair Draws Crowd of 400**

LIVONIA, Mich. – In mid-October, Madonna University was host to the first-ever, state-wide Deaf Health Fair. The free, all-day event, presented by the University of Michigan Hospital, Michigan Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Madonna, drew a crowd of about 400, many from the Deaf/Hard of Hearing community.

Participants attended medical workshops and lectures, gained advice on healthy living, received health screenings and flue shots. Several of the speakers and the majority of the guests were Deaf/Hard of Hearing, and 25 interpreters donated their services for the day. Deaf professionals including a doctor, audiologist, lawyer, psychologist, dentist and nutritionist all gave presentations in American Sign Language (ASL), with vocal interpretation. Panels on diabetes, carpel tunnel, HIV/AIDS and addictions also were presented in ASL.

“The fair was a great success due to the fact that it was empowering for the Deaf community, and was something that everyone could enjoy together,” said Rebecca Shriner, director of Madonna’s Office of Disability Resources.

The key message of the event was equality and impartiality between the Hearing and the Deaf/Hard of Hearing communities. Therefore before and during the event interpreters and guests used the ASL sign for “fair” meaning impartial, unprejudiced and equal, rather than the sign meaning an exhibit or event.

Shriner added that Madonna will be involved with the next Michigan Deaf Health Fair, expected to take place in two years. The location has not been determined, although Madonna, well known for its sign language studies (SLS) program, is being considered. “Participating in community events such as this, fits well with our Franciscan values, as well as with the SLS commitment to the Deaf community,” Shriner added.

Madonna University ([www.madonna.edu](http://www.madonna.edu)) has offered a Bachelor of Arts degree in sign language studies (SLS) since 1975 and is the only bachelor’s program in Michigan. By the year 2012, all sign language interpreters must have a bachelor’s degree in sign language to qualify for national certification. The program prepares students for careers as interpreters, or enhances their skills as teachers, social workers, family counselors, community advocates, law enforcement officers or gerontologists. The SLS curriculum places emphasis on the socio-cultural aspects of the Deaf and their right to learn and use ASL. The SLS program is offered at Madonna University’s main campus in Livonia, and at the University Center in Gaylord.

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