Caring Hands Foundation Profile

Deaf people ‘listen’ with their eyes and ‘talk’ with their hands

Introduction

Caring Hands Foundation is a non-profit organisation dedicated to improving the quality of life of those who are Deaf. The organisation was established by Deaf leaders and their hearing colleagues from affiliated organisations in 2006. These capable individuals, who have a passion to serve their peer group, and the ability to rise above their invisible disability, manage the organisation.

Our main objectives are to provide advice, information and support to the Deaf. We also promote communication access and raise public awareness of the issues associated with being Deaf. We follow a holistic approach and seek to meet the needs of the Deaf on a spiritual, social, physical and material level.

In a nutshell Caring Hands Foundation assists the Deaf to get the most from life!

Did you know that South Africa has an estimate of 380 000 Deaf people, of whom 65% are unemployed? Gauteng alone is home to 60 000 Deaf people.

Vision and mission

Vision:
To provide a spiritual home for Deaf people and a place of care for disabled Deaf people.

Mission:
To improve the lives of Deaf people through spiritual growth, in church, in sacraments, in prayer and Bible Study, to work together, to help one another, and to raise funds, all in the love of Jesus Christ and to the glory of God and the extension of His Kingdom.

Deafness in South Africa

There are 383 408 Deaf persons in South Africa, of whom 65% are unemployed. Due to the unique culture and language of Deaf people, a special approach needs to be taken to help them. Caring Hands is an organisation that understands this culture and speaks the language, but more than that, wants to provide a platform of caring for Deaf people. Caring Hands dreams of Deaf people caring for their peers. The diagram gives an indication of the distribution of Deaf communities in South Africa. Gauteng, the smallest province, has the third largest group of Deaf inhabitants.
Facts and figures

- 10% of the SA population are disabled
- 3.5% or 1.5 million of the population have some hearing loss
- 90% of Deaf people have hearing parents
- There are currently 7 000 Deaf pupils in schools or institutions or classes for Deaf people
- 7 000-10 000 Deaf and hard of hearing children are not in school (from disadvantaged backgrounds)
- 33% of all Deaf adults cannot read or write, because of insufficient education
- 65% of all Deaf are unemployed
- Most Deaf persons never attend a school or start attending very late (age 9+)
- Average income of Deaf persons is lower than that of hearing persons
- HIV/Aids awareness education, presented through the mass media, is not accessible to Deaf people
- Deaf school leavers have the average language ability of an 8-year old hearing child
- In 2004 only 40 Deaf people graduated in South Africa
- Only one university in the country is open to Deaf scholars
- There are 37 schools for Deaf and 3 schools for hard of hearing learners in South Africa

Facts about the Deaf Culture

Deafness is an invisible disability. Unless the Deaf wears hearing aids, deafness is not immediately apparent. Deaf people use their hands to talk with sign language and their eyes to listen. Let us introduce you to a few concepts in our culture:

Deaf Culture

It often comes as a surprise to people that many deaf people refer to themselves as being members of Deaf culture. The South African Deaf culture is a unique linguistic minority that uses South African Sign Language (SASL) as its primary mode of communication.

*Deaf* - This term refers to members of the Deaf community who share common values, norms, traditions, language, and behaviours. Deaf people do not perceive themselves as having lost something (i.e., hearing) and do not think of themselves as handicapped, impaired, or disabled. They celebrate and cherish their culture because it gives them the unique privilege of sharing a common history and language. They have their own culture and at the same time live and work within the dominant South African culture.

*Deaf, hard of hearing, and deafened* - Within the Deaf culture these words refer to a person’s audio logical status. Notice lower case "d’" is used. People who describe themselves as “hard of hearing” or "deafened" do not see themselves as members of the Deaf culture. Some may know sign language but their primary language is English/Afrikaans.

*Hearing Impaired* - This term often is used by the media and society in general to refer to people with a hearing loss. A more acceptable generic phrase is "deaf and hard of hearing" to refer to all people with a hearing loss. Within the Deaf culture, the term "hearing impaired" often is seen as offensive. It suggests that Deaf people are "broken" or "inferior" because they do not hear.

*Hearing* - Within the Deaf culture the term "hearing" is used to identify people who are members of the dominant South African culture. One might think the SASL sign for "hearing" is related to the group’s ability to hear (e.g., pointing to the ear). However, the sign for "hearing" is related to the ability to “talk.” The act of talking is clearly visible to Deaf people, whereas listening or hearing is not. From the Deaf culture perspective, it is the act of “talking” that clearly separates the two groups.

*Translator* – a person who gives an accurate translation from sign language to spoken language, and vice versa. *Facilitator/Interpreter* – someone who mediates and translate between speakers of different languages.

Our members

Ekurhuleni

Effata-for-the-Deaf in Ekurhuleni was established in 1991. The church council is a strong driving force behind Caring Hands and their contagious enthusiasm for strengthening and supporting Deaf people has a wonderful ripple effect.
Tshwane
Pretoria Deaf is the second member of Caring Hands. There is an active youth group, a Bible study group for Deaf people in Mamelodi and an outreach to senior youth at the Transoranje School for the Deaf. Transoranje is close to the church centre and 250 Deaf learners from all denominations participate in Bible study and Sunday school.

Max Ordman Deaf Association (MODA)
MODA is an active role-player of Caring Hands and has over many years developed schools, social clubs and social services for Deaf people. One of the specialist services of MODA is caring for Deaf and Deaf/Blind seniors. The Colonel Rowland Home for the Aged Deaf and Deaf/Blind in Ekurhuleni is run under MODA’s management. It is the only institution of its kind in Gauteng with full frail care facilities and medical supervision where SA Sign Language is used – service workers and other staff are either Deaf people or fluent in sign language.

Effata Service Centre
The Effata Service Centre is a registered Section 21 not for profit company, for the benefit of disabled and unemployed Deaf people (NPO number 11-607NPO). The Service Centre was established in 1998 as a safe haven for Deaf people who are unemployed owing to multiple disabilities and communication problems. Caring Hands’ dream is to develop a self-sustaining centre for job creation and further training.

Our services

Hands that nurture
Two churches in Ekurhuleni and Tshwane are Caring Hands members. Using sign language, they reach out to Deaf people from diverse backgrounds. Deaf people find spiritual support and a social home at the churches, where sermons are delivered in sign language by hearing pastors with special visual techniques to address the need of the Deaf.

Deaf people cannot read written communication as easily as hearing people. Most international research shows that the Deaf school leavers have an average reading and language ability of an 8-year old. Therefore they need special Bible translations, basic reading material and visual aids to simplify communication.

• 450 Deaf people in Gauteng attend church services, Bible studies and other initiatives.
• Deaf congregation members in outlying areas are visited regularly.
• 120 learners between three and 20 years of age at the Transoranje School for the Deaf take part in Bible studies and Sunday school.
• 15 elderly Deaf people receive spiritual care at their old age homes.
• 1000 children at schools are being reached through practical messages allowing them to integrate into society and receive spiritual development with short term outreaches.
• Caring Hands is involved in the training of Deaf missionaries through Deaf Christian Mission Africa.
• Evangelical outreaches to Deaf people in the Atteridgeville Township take place regularly.
• Deaf-friendly counselling services to troubled Deaf.
• Deaf leadership development and mentoring within the Churches.
• Life skills short courses (Stress Handling, Career Guidance, Financial skills, etc.) suitable for the Deaf.

Hands that speak
Caring Hands provide facilitation services where Deaf people have communication problems. This is an expensive and rare service since interpreters are not readily available. Few hearing people know sign language and understand the specific culture of the Deaf. This is especially true of health care professionals and the corporate environment. Caring Hands facilitates communication in prisons, hospitals, and the workplace, enabling Deaf people to communicate clearly and therefore giving them the opportunity to be understood. They also provide facilitation between hearing and Deaf members of families.

Hands that care
In Gauteng, North West, the Free State and Mpumalanga food and clothes are provided to impoverished Deaf persons. The Max Ordman Deaf Association (MODA) is also a member of the Caring Hands Foundation. MODA administrates a care centre for elderly Deaf people – the only one in Gauteng where both caregivers and those in management speak sign language. Some people we serve have multiple disabilities and are unable to function
independently. Transport is provided to ensure that they are not excluded from activities and therefore isolated from the world.

**Hands that strengthen**
Long-term empowerment and upliftment of the Deaf are high priorities on the Caring Hands agenda. Caring Hands has a registered service centre (NPO1998/007181/08) and envisages a working village and community centre for Deaf people, with employment opportunities and eventually additional accommodation for the Deaf with multiple disabilities.

**Hands that commission**
Only 1% of the 400 000 Deaf in SA are spiritually serviced in some form. The need to reach out to the Deaf that is not in churches is tremendous. Caring Hands is involved in the only training project in Africa for Deaf missionaries – people who use sign language themselves and are intimately familiar with the dreams, aspirations and needs of their own people. Caring Hands have a number of students in this training programme that they support financially and emotionally. Training is provided by Deaf Christian Mission Africa (DCMA) in Worcester, and hearing Caring Hands pastors are assistant lecturers at the training facility. One of the founding members of Caring Hands was appointed as the head of DCMA in the beginning of 2007.

**Gauteng is only the starting point of Caring Hands**
Caring Hands’ core areas of care are Ekurhuleni and Tshwane, but it reaches out to Deaf people over a wide geographical area. Pockets of Deaf people are found in many places and Caring Hands assists them to live full lives in their communities. Caring Hands therefore works beyond the Gauteng province boundaries to reach scattered pockets of Deaf people in the Free State, Mpumalanga, North-West and Limpopo.

The people behind Caring Hands
Caring Hands Foundation was launched by a group of Deaf and hearing people who are pioneers in providing services to Deaf people in the Gauteng province. Each of them is also a pioneer and star in their own lives, who live full lives in the Deaf as well as the hearing community.

- **Paul Frylinck** is an accountant with 38 years’ experience at Auto Industrial and Grosvenor Ford. He is an elder of Effata-for-the-Deaf and responsible for administration and financial management. The Effata Service Centre is his life’s dream.
• **Petro Frylinck** was one of the first Deaf learners to attain Matric at Worcester and was typist for 14 years at Sanlam in Bellville. She is secretary of Effata-for-the-Deaf. Together with her husband Paul, Petro is a founder member of the church and of Caring Hands.

• **Arina Visser** was one of the first Deaf learners who attained the Senior Certificate at Transoranje School for the Deaf in 1963. She runs her own business and is council member of Pretoria Deaf, where she chairs various church committees. She was chief elder for a number of consecutive years.

• **Nico Beaurain** was one of the first four Deaf learners to attain the Senior Certificate at Transoranje School for the Deaf in 1963. He was accountant at Volkskas (later ABSA) for 33 years and is still actively involved in the Deaf community, particularly sports events. He was the first Deaf chair of the National Council for the Deaf (now Deafsa) and is currently chair of Max Ordman Deaf Association.

• **Rev Andries Scholtz** is hearing and the full-time pastor of Effata-for-the-Deaf. He is fluent in SA Sign Language and often facilitates on request between Deaf people and the community. His brief is to establish a full-time ministry to Deaf people that fits into the Deaf culture. This includes Deaf-friendly material, holding church services in sign language and pastoral care via various service points available to the Deaf community.

• **Rev Jan Oberholzer** is hearing. Until the end of 2006, he was pastor of Pretoria Deaf, and currently he is pastor at the Worcester De la Bat congregation and head of DCMA (Deaf Christian Mission Africa), where he is responsible for training Deaf missionaries. He is also fluent in SA Sign Language.

**Conclusion**

Caring Hands is the only organisation in Gauteng that provides a holistic service to Deaf people, caring not only for their spiritual needs but for their physical and social needs as well. Its strongest financial supporters are individuals – ordinary people who have caught the vision and who give through debit orders, sms donations, once-off donations and bequests. Corporate funders are being brought on board for larger projects that will bring benefits to Deaf people across religious and language boundaries.

**Contact us**

**Office**

0861 CARING
0861 227464
info@caringhands.co.za

**Postal address**

Caring Hands
PO Box 1926
Kempton Park 1620
South Africa

**Main Contact person**

Rev. Andries Scholtz
ajscholtz@telkomsa.net
Tel. +27 11 815 1173
Fax 086 682 5602
Mobile +27 72 212 3204
Skype: andries.scholtz

**Caring Hands**

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