



## **2022 Virtual Gala: The Power of Possible**

**May 11, 2022**

### **Transcript**

**Isidore:** Hello there everyone!

**Leila:** Hello!

**Isidore:** I'm thrilled to be here tonight to celebrate our Gala "The Power of Possible." I should take this opportunity to introduce myself, my name is Isidore Niyongabo and I'm the CPO or Chief People Officer here at The Learning Center for the Deaf. I'm thrilled to be here to be your Emcee along with my wonderful co-emcee and best friend Leila. I'm going to go ahead and turn the time over to her so she can introduce herself and share a brief message with you.

**Leila:** Hello everyone! I am Leila Hanaumi and I am really excited to be a part of this special annual event along with all of you. I love this year's theme: The Power of Possible. It brings to mind one of my favorite quotes by Margaret Mead. She stated: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." That is so true and tonight, here we are, a small group of thoughtful committed citizens of The Learning Center for the Deaf.

**Isidore:** Wow I couldn't agree with that sentiment more. We are here to celebrate those people who make it possible for the Learning Center for the Deaf to continue to serve our students, our community, and our people. This Gala is also in honor of our



wonderful staff. We have a few whom we plan on mentioning here but First, we will start with our amazing CEO Sarah Glenn-Smith, and then we will turn the time over to Board of Trustees Chairperson Ralph Hinckley, and after we will look at an incredible slideshow of the many memories we've made here. I'm so excited to celebrate with you here tonight.

**SARAH GLENN SMITH:** Hello and good evening! Welcome to The Learning Centers 2022 Virtual Gala. This evening we have many exciting and inspirational stories to share about The Learning Center the Deaf's staff. Their work over the past few years has help showcase our organization as a leader within the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Community. Our theme this year is "The Power of Possible." I'd like to take a moment to say a bit more about that theme.

The concept of "power" is rooted in our mission statement. The Learning Center for the Deaf is to ensure that all Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing children and adults thrive by having the knowledge, opportunity, and power to design the future of their choice. We look to the word "power" as a celebration of the great strength of our community to succeed in anything.

Possible. Over the past two years we have asked ourselves many times "is that possible?" when faced with unpredictable changes and then need to adapt. Whether those changes were in our health guidelines, or how we work and socialize together, that question of "possibility" has been asked time and time again. Tonight we will show how passion can make anything possible and create new opportunities. This evening will showcase our staff and their unwavering commitment. They show up every day, ready to inspire, educate, and advocate. This evening will spotlight all of the programs and their hard-working staff.



As an organization, The Learning Center values each and every individual staff for who they are. I commend how quickly they were able to adapt and adjust, how deeply they care, and how much they have accomplished. We hope you will join in and watch this evening as we celebrate that sense of inspiration and connection. Our work would not be possible without your support and commitment to our organization. We would not be The Learning Center without the incredible people who show up every day. Thank you for celebrating with us.

**RALPH HINCKLEY:** Hello TLC Community! My name is Ralph Hinckley, and I am Chair of the Board of TLC. I am honored to share a few remarks about our wonderful staff.

When the pandemic started in 2020, everything was shaded with uncertainty. We were concerned about our ability to continue to provide services and programs. We didn't know if the towns and State would continue our funding and we were concerned about our wonderful staff. How would everyone be able to navigate this unprecedented experience and how could we support our most valuable asset: the employees of TLC. It was no surprise that with each passing day, week, and month, the transition to working in the pandemic was met with professionalism, compassion, resiliency, and excellence.

Programs such as WCS, Audiology, and Interpreting shifted overnight to remote work, a term unfamiliar to so many. Technology challenges, the eternal search for PPE, clients with varying needs, virtual appointments; all of this was tackled head-on. Nothing held you all back from continuing to provide a high level of service for the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. Marie Philip School transitioned overnight to remote learning like so many schools across the Nation. Using Zoom and figuring out how to support families who are struggling to engage their children, well, you did this selflessly, doing



everything possible to ensure the students would not fall behind. Our WaldenSchool and Nursing staff: amazing. You navigated a 24-7 program, leaning on each other, to problem-solve complicated health and safety guidelines. You exemplify professionalism, while on the frontlines of a pandemic, and continue to put your students ahead of yourselves.

Across the organization, you have all experienced a schedule that became all-encompassing while each working through your own personal and family needs. As a board, we cannot thank you enough. You've done an incredible job and we will continue to utilize any at all available resources to support you in these endeavors.

We are committed to ensuring that the Organization can thrive for years to come and the wonderful people at TLC are the key to making that happen. Your work matters. You are leaving an amazing, indelible imprint on this community. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

**COMMISSIONER OPEOLUWA SOTONWA:** MCDHH wishes the Learning Center for the Deaf a happy and successful Gala. Congratulations on another wonderful year of exceptional education services to your students. I want to say a special thank you to the teachers, staff, interpreters, professionals and their families for all that you do. We wish you all the best.

**MAYOR CHARLIE SISITSKY:** Good evening, I'm Mayor Charlie Sisitsky from Framingham and it is my pleasure to offer congratulations to The Learning Center for the Deaf on its 52nd anniversary.



From infants through High School, you support deaf and hard-of-hearing students, adults, and their families in a compassionate manner to provide an outstanding educational experience. The City of Framingham is proud to have the Learning Center as a vital resource, not only in our community but also with the many other communities that you serve.

52 years ago, Warren Schwab recognized the need to create the first school in the United States to adopt the ASL-English Bilingual Educational model and you continue to excel at it today. My sincere thanks to the more than 400 faculty and staff members who make “The Power of the Possible” a reality for the students they serve. Thank you and congratulations on your anniversary.

**Leila:** Wow

**Isidore:** Wow

**Leila:** Whew, a lot can happen in one year.

**Isidore:** Right.

**Leila:** It’s inspiring. If you are excited to see more such work continue in this coming year, you can help. How you may ask? Make a donation. You can simply text “INSPIRE” to the number you see on the screen above me.

**Isidore:** Yes please do support us. Thank you. Next up we ‘re gonna shine the spotlight on two big projects The Learning Center for the Deaf undertakes, those being our educational programs: the Marie Philip School and Walden School.



**Leila:** Take it away!

**NOZOMI TOMITA:** Hello! My name is Nozomi. I am the TLCPA's Vice President. Despite the impact of COVID this year, our teachers and staff have worked hard to ensure that our children continue to grow. I've seen this in my own child too. This year, the TLCPA was able to distribute gift cards and baskets full of a variety of snacks. We also posted a number of inspirational signs outside of different buildings throughout campus as a show of appreciation for those who walk by. We are so grateful to our staff and teachers for continuing to invest in and inspire our children. Thank you!

**GLENNIS MATTHEWS:** Hello hello hello! I am GIEnnis Matthews. I'm the superintendent here at The Learning Center.

I've been reminiscing about my short time here and thinking about how exceptional our staff are. And what I noticed is they all have big hearts. From our community, to our families, to our students, our staff has made these incredible connections and that is so unique. There are many other places that our staff can work but they have chosen to stay here at The Learning Center.

So thinking about my time here, I always think about the heart of our staff. I have had opportunities to sit down with many of them, and I see that same pattern across departments. The commitment to work together. The commitment to make The Learning Center a wonderful place; to be a model school for all schools. And the reason why that is, is because of our amazing staff. I am proud to continue to work together knowing that we can make The Learning Center for the Deaf that beautiful magical place for everybody. Thank you all so much for your services and for your commitment. Happy Gala!



**KAREN BISHOP:** Hi, I'm Karen Bishop, COO and interim Walden School Director, here at TLC. I want to say, "thank you so much" to the Walden School staff. We really appreciate everything you do. To the teachers and aides, thank you for keeping our academic program running and our students engaged in what they are learning. Thank you so much to the Residential staff for keeping our kids busy even though field trips were limited due to COVID. Thank you to the Overnight staff who are there to greet our kids every morning with a smile and get them ready for their day. Thank you to the Nurses for working through the toughest health crisis of our time. Thank you to our program leaders for continuing to steer the ship. Thank you to our Clinical team who worked tirelessly to make sure our kids were healthy, safe, and happy. Thank you to our administrative assistant, Karen who kept our front office open and running smoothly no matter what was happening. Thank you all so much for all that you do to keep Walden School a safe, healthy, and happy place for our students. Thank you!

**Isidore:** Wow as you can see our wonderful staff clearly makes an everlasting impact on the lives of our students and a special thanks to you the members of our community who support us. Thank you.

**Leila:** Mhm \*agreement\*

**Isidore:** I'll turn it over to Leila for the next part.

**Leila:** Now we have a special treat for you. I am absolutely delighted to introduce someone who is exceptionally talented at making music with his hands. Here is Ian Sanborn.



**Leila:** Wow! If you feel inspired by Ian's beautiful poetry, you can text "INSPIRE" to make a donation. We also want to recognize and give a heartfelt thanks to the sponsors of this event...

**Isidore:** Yes, thank you, thank you!

**Leila:** Without them, this would not be possible. Thank you.

**Isidore:** All right, now we'd like to recognize the outstanding contributions of the staff that works so hard through our community service programs. First, we have Walden Community Services or WCS, our Audiology clinic, our Public School Partnership program, and our wonderful staff Interpreting Department. These groups are a significant part of the fabric that makes up The Learning Center for the Deaf's contributions to our community. Our Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer Kyle Amber Clark, wants to recognize these incredible community service staff before we wrap up this celebration.

**EMILY GRAVES-HARRISON:** Hello everyone! My name is Emily Graves-Harrison. Some of you might know me, I grew up in Western Massachusetts and I'm a CODA, my father is Paul Batch. I'm here at the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing where I work as a Children's Specialist for Western Mass.

Many families that I work with need help with their children and sometimes the adults need our support as well. I work closely with families to figure out how to meet both language and cultural needs. This is how I found Walden Community Services, or WCS. This program is exceptional. I am so thankful for the work they do to help meet the diverse needs of the families that I work with. By partnering with myself, we can better serve our Deaf, Hard of Hearing and CODA communities.



I think we all owe a big thank you to WCS for their collaboration, their motivation to provide such a wide variety of services, and their out-of-the-box thinking. Myself and MCDHH always appreciate you and are so very thankful. If I were to describe WCS in 3 words they would be: Family, Partnership, and Commitment. Thank you for all of your hard work, commitment, and motivation as you continue to serve our Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and CODA communities. We are lucky to have you and I am personally lucky to have your partnership.

**ELISA VALLES:** Hello, I'm Elisa Valles, Director of Walden Community Services. I'm here to acknowledge and thank my staff for their hard work and perseverance through an incredibly difficult year. They prioritized the health and well-being of the families and children we support throughout the Commonwealth.

This past year saw much change, our Springfield office moved locations, changes occurred with insurance and policies, and throughout that they remained positive and continued to provide services to the families we support, all the while taking care of themselves. They are incredible people who I am humbled to have work for me and I am always amazed by their work, day in and day out. I'd like to thank them for being who they are and for their extraordinary work. Thank you.

**THEA CABRAL:** Hi, my name is Thea Cabral. I'm a Learning Center parent. I have two kids in the MPS program. I wanted to take time to recognize The Learning Center's Audiology Department. The amazing communication access, the addition of MassHealth, and the Newborn Hearing Screening is an amazing experience. Oftentimes at hospitals it's a struggle to communicate, but here has been a very positive experience and I wanted to thank the Audiology Department for all of their support.



**LYDIA COLON:** Hi, my name is Lydia Colon. I'm the director of Audiology here at The Learning Center. I want to say thank you to my staff. This year has been a very challenging year but you have been very motivated and jumping and doing the work that needed to be done. You worked through the Audiology Clinic renovation, increasing the number of insurance companies that we serve, and learning new technology to add to our services. You've done it all with great flexibility and I appreciate your hard work.

I also wanted to thank the PSPs staff who traveled all throughout the state, worked with multiple school districts, and went into schools with varying mask and COVID requirements and still, you showed your passion through all of it. Thank you!

**ELIZABETH REYNARD:** I am Elizabeth Renard and I am a special education teacher at the preschool level at Franklin Public Schools.

One of the best parts of working with PSP has been working with Teachers of the Deaf. So, those folks have come into the classroom and worked one on one with myself and my teaching staff and also come in and observe our students. They've gotten to know all of our students and it's been so helpful because they can see things that I can't see, so they're able to point out things we should work on. And they also create a relationship, not only with that child but with the child's family so when we have IEP meetings and any questions from families, they're another resource.

In addition to our teachers of the deaf there's also wonderful, all the audiologists who help us and it's so great to have that expertise with the equipment that we have in here. I feel like at this point we're really outfitted really beautifully with our sound field system and also I feel like now I finally feel comfortable with making sure students' hearing aids are working properly and just being a good resource and a good advocate for students.



I would say reliable, compassionate, and knowledgeable would be three words I'd use to describe. Thank you so much! We really really appreciate you here at the ECDC!

**MICHELLE MAROTTA:** Yes, absolutely. We have been so fortunate to call The Learning Center for the Deaf, a partner in our work. We have mostly worked with your interpretive services department to provide accessible programs that focus on a range of challenges and opportunities in the community, particularly addressing mental health and wellbeing for kids, families, and really our entire community.

**LEAH PARKER-MOLDOVER:** If I may add, I would just say we adore all of the TLC interpreters we've worked in, worked with, and so appreciate the immense diversity of your teams. There's been such purposeful consideration to the speakers that we have in our series and the assignment of the interpreters to really ensure that there's a really good match in voice. And the interpretation is so thoughtful and the depth of your team is so diverse and that's a wonderful asset to our series.

And I have to give a special shout out that we've been privileged to have the opportunity to have some students join our program. And our always, I just have to give a special shout out to the students. It's a unique opportunity to have a student join when there's a team interpreting. And we're so excited when their energy is there too. So lots of love for all the interpreters. Thank You!

**VERONICA BARRY:** Hi, I'm Veronica Barry, Professional Services Manager and staff interpreter for TLC Interpreting Services.

**BETTY FILIPKOWSKI:** Hi, I'm Betty Filipkowski, Interpreting Services Manager and staff interpreter for TLC



**VERONICA:** We wanted to take this opportunity to recognize and wholeheartedly thank our staff of interpreters and schedulers.

Throughout the past 2 years, we've faced the challenges of continuing to work during a pandemic, both remotely and in-person, heavy work schedules, and unfortunately, staff turnover.

Even with these challenges, our staff have continued to work tirelessly because they care deeply about our consumers and clients.

**BETTY:** We want to thank each of you for your amazing work and for continuing to show up every day during this tough time. We are so proud to call you our staff and friends.

Thank you!"

**KYLE AMBER CLARK:** Hello everyone! I am Kyle Amber with the Equity and Inclusion Office here at The Learning Center for the Deaf. I want to thank the group of people that are responsible for starting with PSP, Audiology, Interpreting, and Walden Community Services. Through the pandemic these programs shifted from in person work to remote work, coming up with creative ways to engage the community. Here at The Learning Center we want to thank you for all of those changes.

For example, the Audiology Department was recently approved for a Newborn Hearing Screening, partnering with the PSP to service children all over the state of Massachusetts. Walden Community Services just got a grant to support equity work and how to collaborate best with our families. The Interpreting Department has become



creative in how to work within our school community here at The Learning Center and the greater Massachusetts Deaf Community.

We just want to say thank you so much for your important work and your service for our Learning Center Community and the external community. Thank you for all that you do.

**Isidore:** Wow, I never miss an opportunity to be inspired and I'm now more inspired by our community service programs. Thank you for your outstanding work.

**Leila:** Now I am pleased to present two awards: the Warren Schwab Award and the David Schwab Alumni Award.

**JONAH MEEHAN:** Hello everyone! My name is Jonah Meehan and I am very excited to announce the winners of this year's Warren Schwab Memorial Award.

Back in the year 1970, Warren Schwab, realizing there was no fully accessible educational environment for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students, established The Learning Center for Deaf.

Annually, we present this award to an individual who has continued to prioritize their work for the deaf and hard of hearing communities./ Like Warren, the recipients of this award go above and beyond to ensure their advocacy work makes a lasting impact.

We're honored to announce that this year we have selected two winners for this award. They are Dr. Robert (Bob) Hoffmeister and Dr. Terrell Clark.



**JONAH MEEHAN** Now I would like to talk a little more about each of our recipients and who they are.

Dr. Hoffmeister established The program's in-depth studies at Boston University in 1979 and was its director for 30 years. Dr Hoffmeister has focused his research on bilingual/bicultural Deaf education, including the relationship between ASL and English and its influence on children's reading skills and academic success. Among numerous publications, presentations, authored books, and years of dedicated service, Dr. Hoffmeister has made an extraordinary impact on the Deaf community.

Dr. Clark has dedicated her career to promoting every opportunity for each child to realize individual competencies and working to assure equitable communication access. Her quality and professionalism have connected deaf children and their families with services and support that are individualized and meaningful.

We are deeply honored to present these Awards to Dr. Robert Hoffmeister and Dr. Terrell Clark.

Thank you.

**BOB HOFFMEISTER:** My name is Bob Hoffmeister.

I feel honored to be one of the people receiving the Warren Schwab Memorial Award for the year 2022.

I appreciate all of the hard work the award committee has undertaken.

The Learning Center will always hold a special place in my heart, now and in the future.



I met Warren Schwab in 1980 and could see him for the wonderful, warm, sensitive man he was and how his work ethic and skill would take The Learning Center to where it is today.

Today, the success of The Learning Center is due to all of the hard work of all of the staff who have been involved over the years.

I am honored and very grateful to be receiving this award.

Thank you. Thank you very much!

**TERRELL CLARK:** Thank you, thank you for this award, I'm both thrilled and honored to receive it. My work for the past 45 years has been at Boston Children's Hospital. We set up a specialized program about 35 years ago focusing solely on Deaf and Hard of Hearing children. We would receive referrals from all over and it has been my job to test and assess each child. Every child is a unique individual and I work at figuring out their full potential, the best way to communicate with them, and the best way to educate them. I am so happy that in Massachusetts we have an option such as The Learning Center for the Deaf, where ASL is the primary language of instruction and social interaction.

Soon I will be retiring, it's hard for me to believe that, but my time to retire has come. I'm happy to have the recognition of this award, it's thrilling. And special because Warren Schwab and his wife, Jodi have been dear friends and colleagues of mine. Thank you, this is wonderful.



**JUSTIN CARRUS:** Hello everyone! Good Evening! I am Justin Carrus, class of '09. I am here and excited to announce the winner of the David Schwab Alumni Award for this year. This award spotlights our alumni's accomplishments and recognizes their passion and motivation to make a positive impact on the Deaf Community. Our alumni are a very meaningful part of our organization and we love to share their stories.

It is my great honor to announce the winner of this year's award is Jeff Mansfield, class of '03. Jeff is a very accomplished designer and works at the MASS Design Group in Boston, MA. He is a 3 time gold medalist in the Deaf Olympics and also the co-author of *The Architecture of Health*. Jeffrey holds a Bachelor's degree in Architecture from Princeton University and a Master of Architecture from the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

A huge congratulations to you Jeff!

**JEFF MANSFIELD:** Wow, I'm so touched and grateful to be receiving this award. The Learning Center is like family. I started there as a preschooler and made my way until graduation in high school. My brother is now a teacher at The Marie Philip School. Marie Philip taught my parents American Sign Language and she also ensured that my peers and I grew up in a language rich environment, not only at school but also at home. Marie Philip sparked our dream and encouraged us to believe that anything is possible.

The Learning Center has provided this foundation and community to allow each and every individual to pursue their dream with love and conviction. So I am so grateful to be receiving this award and I would also like to thank everyone from the alumni to the staff, teachers and parents who continue to support The Learning Center. Thank you.



**Isidore:** Congratulations! Now to wrap up, I'd like to say thank you again to our wonderful staff. As was mentioned earlier, as long as we stay together anything is possible. I'd also like to thank our donors and sponsors. If you haven't yet please donate at our inspiration text number and check out our online auction. Lastly, I want to give a heartfelt thanks to my co-emcee Leila for honoring us with her time and inspiration.

**Leila:** Thank you for having me. I want to share with the Learning Center community, that as someone who stands outside of your community, people are watching. We are continually inspired by the work you do. We respect you. Your unity and strength has a reverberating impact on all of us. Stay strong and keep going; we are with you!

**Isidore:** I couldn't agree with you more Leila.

**Leila:** Have a wonderful evening everyone!

**Isidore:** Good night everyone. Goodbye!