

Jeanine Byrnes, MHIS Program Director

Jeanine has been with the TRI/MHIS program since 1996 starting as a 10-hour per week advocate for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing (Deaf/HH) community. Her understanding of Deaf culture is due to her own personal experience from birth: she was born with hearing loss as a result of her mother contracting German Measles. Her community advocacy has resulted in Closed Captioning in the local Regal Cinemas and Dutchess County Government social media sites, and implementation of hearing loop systems for the Town of Poughkeepsie Town Hall, Pine Plains High School auditorium and Senior Housing Community Room, to name a few. Jeanine believes that advocating for the Deaf/HH community about effective communication for their medical appointments, court proceedings, education and employment will be an ongoing service of MHIS in order to continue to raise awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In 2017 Jeanine was promoted to Program Director of MHIS where she oversees 60 Sign Language Interpreters providing services in the five neighboring counties to TRI, while continuing her advocacy for the Deaf/HH community in Dutchess County. "Working for TRI/MHIS has not only been challenging, but rewarding, as I have been able to help individuals secure jobs, find a place to live and assist them with in applying for government assistance, such as food stamps," says Jeanine.

As one consumer new to hearing loss commented: "I have learned more in 45 minutes with Jeanine than I did from my audiologist and doctors over the years."

Jeanine is grateful that she is able to virtually visit her grandsons during this pandemic. She enjoys hiking, reading Jodi Picoult novels and trying different varieties of M&M's.