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American Sign Language exercise helps students learn

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Intern Student Journalist

GAINESVILLE -- A group gathered to enjoy a meal and to chat at Gator's Dockside in Gainesville on Friday night (Oct. 27); however, these conversations were silent.

The whole group was chatting by using American Sign Language (ASL).

Gators Dockside is at 3842 W. Newberry Road Suite 1A. It is a family-friendly, sports-themed restaurant and bar that offer a fun atmosphere. This bar and grill is in other cities as well as its home in Gainesville.

Deaf Night Out is an event which brings people of all ages and backgrounds together over one common interest- sign language.

The deaf and ASL students meet for a Silent Dinner approximately once a month at Gator's Dockside, with as many as 60 people in the entire group. It's a great way for ASL students to practice their signing, as well as for the deaf to interact with each other.

In addition to Silent Dinners, there are many other events ASL students and the deaf can attend in Gainesville. With an increasing number of University of Florida and Santa Fe College students taking ASL, more people attend deaf events and are becoming involved with deaf culture.

Learning ASL requires patience as well as practice. Therefore, students will attend ASL club meetings such as Signing Gators and Signing Saints for UF and Santa Fe, respectively.

Other events include Deaf Panels, where a few deaf people will come together to share experiences and answer questions.

ASL students from UF also sign the national anthem and the Pledge of Allegiance at Gator sports events. This Veterans Day, members of Signing Saints will be signing the anthem and pledge at Kanapaha Park's annual event.

One of the largest deaf events is coming up in December -- Silent Gala. For this black-tie occasion hosted at Upper Room Ministries in Gainesville, a silent meal is held, as well as some ASL performances. The proceeds from this event benefit deaf children in the surrounding areas.

Publisher's Note: Alison Pataky is an Intern Student Journalist for HardisonInk.com. She is a dual-enrollment student who is taking classes at Santa Fe College.

Those learning ASL are always encouraged to attend such events for experience signing as well as spending time with the deaf and learning about their culture.