

## **Diversity**

I consider myself deaf first before my other identities even though I am a female and a first-generation child of Asian origin. I have many friends from different cultures and have worked in a variety of industries. Because of the varied background life experiences, we learn from each other and become a better person. We do not judge because we all have different upbringing and that helps us overcome our differences. For us, our language is the reason why we enjoy each other company. We look forward to be a part of a culture that allows us to communicate fluently and give back our talents. The deaf community is very large considering how many of us have hearing loss to a degree. Our community has people with mild hearing loss who doesn't sign as much to people who has profound hearing loss and cannot communicate fluently without sign language. This is a gift to help us learn how to adjust and communicate with each other.

We also unite to support one another to make our community a stronger force. I have a few deaf friends who are lawyers. I have a deaf friend who works for grocery stores. I have a deaf friend who works for a stockbroker company. Some work for construction companies. Some are nannies. We all face the same barriers in each industry. The barrier is the communication even though we have the brains and the ability to do our job well. Most of us graduated from college, ready to work hard but because of our needs, we are not hired as often. CEG, Illinois always ensure that I am accommodated. We have interpreters that come in for weekly staff meetings and we use video remote interpreting service for any meeting that comes up during the week. ASL lessons were taught for a few weeks and some colleagues were able to communicate using sign language.

I am very involved with the deaf community. There are many access issues that we need to change. There are many people out there who has no knowledge on deaf community and how well they can benefit from our fun culture.

**Farah Piatek**