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# Joyful Hands leader resigns



Photo by Megan Hartman

**By: Chelsea Sydnor**

Joyful Hands, Gardner-Webb's sign language ministry team, will soon be undergoing new leadership. Stephanie Oliver, its advisor of four years, is leaving her job as an interpreter for GWU to earn her Master's degree in Foreign Languages with a concentration in Spanish from North Carolina State University.

Oliver was first drawn to Gardner-Webb for the opportunity to major in American Sign Language (ASL). She became involved with Joyful Hands during her time as a student under the instruction of Emily Robertson.

"[Emily] influenced the group as a whole, and she influenced the way that I lead it now," said Oliver.

Oliver then served as the advisor-in-training under Rachel Buck when she became an interpreter for GWU the following year after Robertson left.

She was motivated to lead Joyful Hands from her love of the people in the group.

"I've gotten to know a lot of them pretty well over the past few years," said Oliver. "Some of them have been involved for three years, and some have only been involved for a semester, and I will really enjoy getting to know them on a deeper level and seeing how things are going in their lives."

This love of those she leads in Joyful Hands is reflected in her attitude toward the group.

“She is so enthusiastic about her job and interacting with students,” said Joyful Hands president Madisan Shattuck. “She always has a smile on her face.”

According to sophomore member of Joyful Hands Morgan Ransom, Oliver has been a huge part of her life during her time at Gardner-Webb.

“I am so thankful for her friendship and sad to see that she is leaving,” said Ransom. “But, I’m happy to see her pursuing what she wants and know she will do well wherever she is.”

Oliver appreciates Joyful Hands because it has given her the opportunity to worship God using ASL.

“It’s a beautiful language,” said Oliver. “We’re also able to spread awareness of deaf culture and ASL when we perform, as well as reach deaf people if they happen to be at our performances.”

Joyful Hands typically performs four to five times a semester. However, there are more performances in the spring in order to give the team more time to learn songs in the fall. Some of these performances are specifically scheduled at deaf churches and events.

“Joyful Hands has been a way that I can connect more with people than I could in the classroom as an interpreter,” said Oliver. “Hopefully I have been able to show them that they are loved and that someone cares about them.”

Joyful Hands closed the elections for their next advisor as of Wednesday, April 20.



**Oliver displays the ASL sign for “I love you.”**

**Photo by Megan Hartman**