

# RE/MAX TIMES ONLINE

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## Deaf Link Helps You Serve the Underserved

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People who are deaf aren't immune to current real estate challenges, says **Dayton Schrader**, a longtime subscriber to the sign language service Deaf Link.

"Offices have designated parking spaces and accessible restrooms, as well as Braille on signs and in elevators, but there's generally nothing done for the hearing impaired," says Schrader, a Broker Associate and Chairman's Club member with RE/MAX Associates in San Antonio. "When times are tough, it's even harder for people who are deaf to find the services they need because businesses start cutting back."

To assist these clients, Schrader (ABR, CCIM, CDPE, CLHMS, CRB, CRP, CRS) subscribes to Deaf Link, which provides certified sign language interpreters around the clock via a videoconferencing system. The program allows Schrader to review closing details, contracts, financing and other critical information with his hearing-impaired clients. The interpreter translates clearly and accurately so that all parties understand the details. Because Deaf Link interpreters are certified level-three translators, contracts they assist with are legally binding, whereas translations conducted by family members or friends aren't always valid.

Deaf Link has various service plans beginning at \$45 a month. In addition, Deaf Link offers pre-recorded interpretation services to create sign language videos explaining various aspects of your real estate transaction process, such as a listing presentation, making an offer, inspections and closings. For more information, visit [www.deaflink.com](http://www.deaflink.com).

Deaf Link Founder and CEO Kay



Photo courtesy of Deaf Link

**CLEAR COMMUNICATION:** A person who is deaf watches a Deaf Link sign language expert on a videoconferencing monitor while meeting with a hearing person.

Chiodo compares the importance of consulting an expert signer to the importance of consulting a translator to serve hearing consumers who don't speak your language. Chiodo says there's a common misconception in the United States that sign language mimics English when, in fact, it's legally classified as a native language itself.

"You shouldn't and probably wouldn't have someone who can barely order a cerveza interpret for one of your Spanish-speaking clients, particularly in the case of a serious transaction such as buying or selling a home," Chiodo says.

"It's not uncommon that people who are deaf are accompanied by friends or family members with remedial sign language skills. The term 'earnest money' could mistakenly be signed or interpreted as 'serious money,' which wouldn't convey the proper meaning.

"I've bought eight houses, and as a native English speaker, many aspects of the transactions were way over my head. For non-native speakers of English, which includes the deaf community, the steps can be even more confusing."

Another challenge, Chiodo says, is finding businesses that offer the services. She suggests that any RE/MAX office or agent who subscribes to Deaf Link should heavily promote their participation. Local organizations for the deaf or

any of several local and national conferences that are held each year make great starting points.

"When reputable, accessible businesses are discovered, word of hand travels fast among people who are deaf and the hearing people who care about them," Chiodo says. "Ninety percent of deaf babies are born to hearing families, which means there's a pretty huge peripheral market when you serve deaf clients. If a RE/MAX office advertises use of the Deaf Link service, they're sending a message that they'll go out of their way to serve everyone's real estate needs."

Chiodo says Schrader has set the standard in his market for serving people who are deaf, emphasizing that he earned the sign for his name.

"Hearing people don't create signs for a person's name; deaf people do," Chiodo says. "The sign for 'Dayton' is a D over the heart and the sign for house."

Schrader says subscribing to the service is worth it to see the look on a client's face when he's able to help them on the spot, even if it means he doesn't use the service every month. He hopes to see more RE/MAX offices participate in the Deaf Link program.

"This is a way for RE/MAX to be out in front of the issue and further differentiate itself from everyone else."

### ● What you will need

To use the Deaf Link service, Schrader simply turns on his computer, makes sure the Web camera is working and logs in to the Deaf Link site. Within minutes, a sign language expert is ready to assist. The following items are required to connect to the system, in addition to a monthly subscription:

- Videoconferencing unit
- High-speed Internet connection
- Video camera designed for Web use

### ● Information

Learn more about the **Americans With Disabilities Act**, which outlines for businesses the required accommodations for consumers with disabilities.



SCHRADER