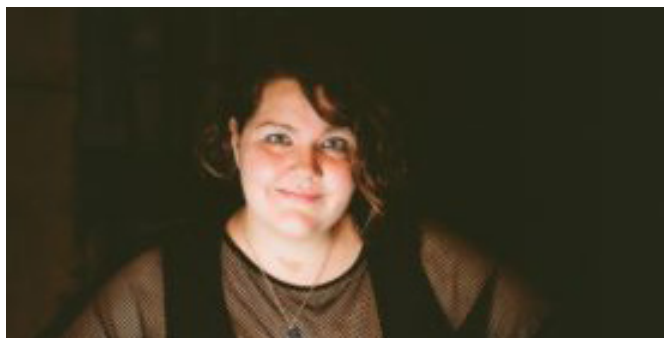


Honourable Mention



2019 Dr. Paul E. Garfinkel Awards for **Entrepreneurial Achievement**



 deafspectrum.com

Sage Lovell

As a Deaf person, Sage Lovell understood first-hand how hard it can be to navigate a world with many barriers. Even in Toronto, with its extensive population, they still found there was a noticeable lack of sign language accessibility for the Deaf community. They often witness their Deaf friends skip over important information if it wasn't accessible to them.

Sage decided to fill this accessibility gap by founding Deaf Spectrum. Yet, having lived on a low income and a poor credit history, they found it difficult to access funds to grow the business. Sage also faced many other barriers getting the business off the ground, from hiring interpreters to battling ongoing stigma and misconceptions about their abilities.

Rising Up

Despite numerous challenges, Sage persevered, and was able to save money for a formal studio with a backdrop, new lights, and a proper camera – sometimes working other part time jobs to make ends meet while their business grew. They started with vlogs, eventually adding in services such as workshops, consulting, training and grant writing. They even began working with non-deaf people to help them engage with the target community.

In four years, Deaf Spectrum has produced almost four hundred vlogs and has helped Sage and others in the community gain meaningful employment opportunities. Sage's company has hosted sign language classes at the University of Toronto, worked with several theatre and art festivals to ensure accessibility, created text translations into sign language videos, and offers grant writing services that boast a 90% success rate through three different arts councils.




Leveraging the support of Rise, through Rise's Youth Small Business Program, Deaf Spectrum has grown to the point that Sage now generates enough revenue to support themselves as well as other contractors. Sage looks forward to bringing more opportunities to others through the Deaf Community Spectrum, which would enable the company to apply for grants to set up specific programs.

"I used to charge a really low rate for my services, but Rise encouraged me to charge more and also helped me put together a business plan. I honestly don't think I would've been successful without the support of Rise, especially when they were more than accommodating by providing sign language interpreters during classes. There are not enough accessible business classes for members of the Deaf Community, but Rise changed that for me." – Sage



Empowering people
Launching ideas

Rise Asset Development is a registered **charity** that provides low interest small business loans, training and mentorship to men and women with a history of mental health and addiction challenges.

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