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Lives Transformed



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Spotlight: Cat Riddley Felton DCCS ASL Interpreter



Cathleen "Cat" Riddley is the American Sign Language (ASL), Interpreter, Administrative Assistant, and Referral and Intake Coordinator for Felton Institute's Deaf Community Counseling Services (DCCS). A native of Des Moines, Iowa, Cat is the middle sister of three. From an early age, Cat felt the call of the spotlight; she knew she wanted to be an actor.

"Acting appealed to me because I was what you might call an energetic child who always enjoyed being theatrical, telling stories, and imagining myself as all the characters I saw on TV. When I

took my first acting class as a child, I was hooked," Cat smiles.

She also learned family values that guide her to this day.

"From my mother, I learned that patience and kindness are two of the most important attributes one can have. It has taken me this whole life to try to emulate these qualities she has, and I will keep trying. From my sisters, I learned that, no matter how you may disagree about things, in the end you should always be there for each other with love, advice, and understanding. I love my sisters," Cat shares.

Cat left Des Moines after graduating from high school and briefly entertained different career options, including teaching Special Education or becoming a marine biologist or a psychologist. Ultimately, she followed her heart and pursued acting. She earned a BA in sociology from Hunter College in New York.

"I took quite a circuitous path to get where I am today," Cat recalls. "I went to four different undergraduate institutions before I finally got my BA in sociology, which says to me that it's okay to keep searching, and you're never too old to stop learning or to change direction. I'm an alumna of The Juilliard School drama division, and eventually received an MA from University of Pennsylvania. After acting school and before Hunter College, I ended up working with National Theatre of the Deaf, which is where I learned ASL."

Cat traveled all over the U.S. with National Theatre of the Deaf over a period of two years, hitting every state, except Alaska and Hawaii. She then alternated between acting and interpreting while living in NYC. "I just came to love and honor the language of ASL, the Deaf community, and the richness of Deaf culture. I wanted to be of service to a marginalized community that I learned so much from in my two years with National Theatre of the Deaf. I wanted to give back to a community that had given so much to me," Cat said.

Cat has been a member of Felton's DCCS team for more than six and a half years.

"Prior to this job, I was a freelance interpreter, as well as a staff interpreter for a level 14 group home and a non-public school that had a mix of hearing and Deaf students and staff. The person who was my supervisor at the previous program where I worked came to Felton to become the Program Director for DCCS, and she asked if I'd be interested in being the staff interpreter and administrative assistant here. I decided I would like that, so I applied, interviewed, and got hired!

"I find client successes, in whatever form they take, the most rewarding thing about my job. I believe that Felton is exceptional at providing client-centered care, by always having the client directly involved in decisions about their care and treatment here. I think we are great meeting clients where they are, and supporting them in being their best selves.

"It is also deeply rewarding to see Deaf people who have been struggling learn skills to improve their lives. I am continually in awe of some of my colleagues who work so wonderfully with our clientele. And, of course, I am proud to be a member of the awesome DCCS team."

When she is not working at Felton, Cat continues her acting career. As a professional actor, she regularly performs at major theaters in the Bay Area. Cat glows when she talks about her craft. "Creating different characters, working with wonderful actors and directors, honing my skills as an actor, and creating a whole new world is why I love theatre so much. I want to tell stories that can change minds and hearts and lives. I also sing in nightclubs from time to time."

Cathleen Riddley's grandfather taught her to take pride in her work, no matter what that work was. It is clear that Cat has taken that advice to heart and has woven it into her personal mission and vision for life, "if you can dream it, you can be it. Tell your story, and empower others to tell theirs."

Felton DCCS at DeafNation Expo

Felton's Deaf Community Counseling Services (DCCS) did exceptional outreach at DeafNation's expo on April 13, 2019, at Alameda County Fairgrounds in Pleasanton, California. DCCS Program Manager Joni Teague and her team provided a 30-minute presentation at the annual event that attracted more than 2700 attendees.

"There were over 100 booths of different agencies, service providers and small business owners, all who have a product or services for those who are Deaf or hard of hearing," noted Joni Teague. "DCCS provided information about services, as well as brochures, flyers about new services and a new upcoming event, "My Mind Matters," a mental health workshop in sign language for the Deaf community."

If you'd like to know more about Felton's DCCS team members and the services offered, please [click here](#) to watch the team video or call (415) 474-7310.



First Five Honors Madonna Stancil



On April 18, 2019, Madonna Stancil, Program Supervisor at Felton Institute's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Center, was the subject of a profile video as part of her Excellence in Teaching Recognition Award from First Five San Francisco. The First Five Award ceremony will be held on June 19, 2019. Felton COO of Children Youth and Family and Transitional Age Youth (TAY) programs Yohana Quiroz was among those interviewed to share observations and accolades about Madonna.



Madonna was nominated by teaching coach Casey Federico, who was also interviewed for the video. Casey mentioned that, in addition to Madonna's laudatory academic achievements and impressive credentials, what has impacted her most is the compassion and curiosity that Madonna exhibits. One day, Casey walked into Madonna's office and saw her cradling a young boy who was asleep in her arms.

His baby sister had been born early that morning and he needed a little extra TLC.

When Madonna was interviewed, she shared that coming to teach at Felton's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Center was a true calling.

"I'm a wife and mother who brought up five children in this neighborhood," Madonna said. "I had prayed for the opportunity to work in this arena, and it is a dream come true. I handle the work with flexibility and a sense of urgency, keeping our teachers and students in mind at all times."

Portions of the videotaping were completed in the garden area, which was beautifully redesigned last June, thanks to a collaboration of Janet Moyer Landscaping and the Genentech team of volunteers. To see their work, please [watch the video here.](#)

Felton And You

When preparing children and families beginning their journey with Autism, Felton Early Autism Program (FEAP) is decidedly a tremendous place to start.

Tammi had noticed something was not quite right with Josh's language development, and she had noticed other behaviors in her two-year old that she described as "quirky."

As an educator, Tammi was well-versed on age-appropriate benchmarks. And, it was her experience as an educator that raised questions for her about Josh's progress and ultimately led her to seek answers from her family physician.



After several doctor appointments and assessments, Tammi and Josh were referred to Felton's Family Developmental Center (FDC).

On their first visit to FDC, Tammi had not yet been told that Josh was officially on the autism spectrum; unprepared for the shocking news, Felton's Early Autism Program (FEAP) team delivered Josh's diagnosis to her with gentle care and concern for both Tammi and her son. As the Inclusion Director and, Josh's soon-to-be Early Interventionist, began to explain Josh's diagnosis to Tammi and discuss the ways in which the FEAP team were going to help him, Tammi quickly realized FEAP care is not only for the children, but for the parents as well.

"As I personally received the quality of care and attention as a parent, it made it transparently clear that my son was in the best possible place for his needs," said Tammi.

Felton's Early Autism Program (FEAP) is an inclusive early intervention program for infants and toddlers with autism which brings together an evidence-based intervention model specifically designed for children on the autism spectrum and the child's natural learning environment. FEAP is the first inclusive center-based

program in San Francisco with a curriculum designed specifically for children with autism. FEAP provides the benefits of delivering treatment within an enriched educational environment in which children with autism and typically developing children play and learn together. All teaching staff and families receive ongoing consultation and training from FDC's on-site multidisciplinary Early Intervention team.

Tammi was provided a wide scope of resources to help her understand autism and what she could do from home to help her son. When she explained her situation as a working, single mom and the difficulty with coming to the FEAP campus during the workday, the FEAP staff came to her.

"Our home visits allowed me to fully understand my son's diagnosis, as well as implement the strategies in our home that they were using at school," she said. "I was provided a plethora of resources: discussion of pertinent literature, modeling of techniques and strategies I could use with him, as well as observing the ABA approach firsthand as faculty interacted with my child in our home. I was also invited and attended the Back-to-School Night and other community events. We certainly felt welcomed and embraced by FDC's community," Tammi said.

After only six months attending FEAP, Josh had increased positive interactions with his peers, was motivated to express himself using signs and a picture board, and showed readiness to excel in speech and language development.

When asked her impressions of FEAP, Tammi replied, "Perfection. The ratio of Early Interventionist to child in FEAP is a rare find, and it is why my child attained the maximum amount of progress while he was under their care and instruction. My child truly loved and was loved by each and every teacher he had the opportunity [with whom to] work. The specific care each student receives is the best you will find in San Francisco, bar none."

On Josh's third birthday he "aged out" of the program, but his team at FDC worked to help him successfully transition to the best possible and least restrictive academic setting in the school district in which his family lives.

"Although we miss the faculty at FDC each and every day, I know that through FEAP, my son has been prepared to accept the challenge of a rigorous program designed for his age. We are truly blessed and are set up for success to have had them at the beginning of my son's journey," said Tammi.

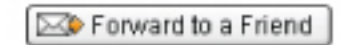
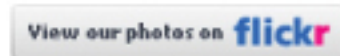
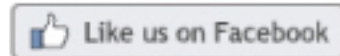
FEAP serves children ages birth to three who have autism or exhibit autistic-like behaviors, five days a week for three hours each day. Children receive intervention from staff who are trained and/or certified in Early Start Denver Model (ESDM) under a 1:2 staff-to-child ratio. In some cases, families who attend the program may receive 1:1 individualized instruction and home visits.

Please consider giving a gift to Felton Institute today. With your gift, you can help to provide much needed support and services to children and families affected by autism.

To give to the cause for which you have passion, text FELTON to 41444 on your mobile device; it's quick and easy.

For more information about Felton Institute call (415) 474-7310. For more information about FEAP call (415) 282-1090 ext. 104.

Your generous donations transform lives. Thank you!



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