

Upcoming "Sip & Sign" Event Teaches American Sign Language at Grafton Winery

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
November 6 2023 11:37 AM



GRAFTON - You can enjoy a glass of wine and learn American Sign Language (ASL) at Grafton Winery's upcoming Sip & Sign event.

From 2–4 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 18, 2023, attendees will learn ASL fundamentals (and some “winery terminology”) courtesy of ASL teacher Angela Ashworth. Ashworth, who teaches ASL classes through her company [ILove Learning ASL](#), explained that ASL is the third-most used language in the U.S. and anyone can benefit from learning it.

“Everybody knows a little bit of Spanish, right?” she said. “If you know just a little bit of ASL, it will help to provide access for all of these people that it is their first language.”

Ashworth teaches ASL to many people who just want to learn as a hobby, but she also works with families who have communication barriers. She explained that ASL is regularly used by people who are Deaf, hard of hearing, nonverbal or who otherwise have challenges communicating through spoken English.

An Atlanta native, Ashworth started hosting Sip & Sign events across the country after developing a friendship with one of her students, a special education teacher who lives in Grafton. Ashworth would teach the teacher and her friend over Zoom every Thursday at 10:30 p.m.

“And those ladies love to drink wine,” Ashworth laughed. “They’d always be drinking wine. And they’re like, ‘Angela, you have to get in and drink wine with us,’ and I was like, ‘Well, it is the end of the day.’ So slowly I started to sip on some wine with them while we were signing and over time we all just became really good friends.”

Their nights of drinking wine while learning ASL soon stretched into the early mornings and became a tradition. Ashworth looks forward to bringing this tradition to Grafton, meeting her friend in person for the first time and enjoying handcrafted wine at the Grafton Winery’s Vineyards location.

But more than that, she is excited to spread the use of ASL. She said just knowing the fundamentals, such as the alphabet or numbers one through ten, can make a huge difference to people who communicate with ASL.

“The suicide rates among Deaf and hard of hearing people are pretty high. There’s a lot of isolation that happens when they have no one to communicate with,” Ashworth said. “When I see families like that overcome those hurdles of being able to talk to each other, to communicate, it does more for me than just my checkbook. It does a lot for my heart.”

Most Deaf and hard of hearing people are born to hearing parents, and sometimes these young people have no one in their home to communicate with. Ashworth once worked with a family who had such a severe language barrier that their Deaf child didn’t know his siblings’ names. By teaching ASL over Zoom and in person in Atlanta, she hopes to open those lines of communication for more families and people who use ASL.

Tickets for the Grafton Sip & Sign event cost \$25, and proceeds from ticket and merchandise sales go toward the I Love ASL scholarship fund, which allows Ashworth

to offer free ASL classes to “families that need to learn how to communicate a little bit better.” With the purchase of that \$25 ticket, attendees who are 21+ also get a complimentary glass of handcrafted Grafton wine. Ages 8–17 can also attend with an adult for \$10.

Ashworth promises fun, raffles, games and more at the Sip & Sign event, scheduled from 2–4 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 18, 2023. The day will be hosted by Grafton Winery Vineyards, located at 21028 Eckert Orchard Road. You can [register for the Sip & Sign event](#) and learn more about Ashworth’s ASL classes at the [official website ILoveLearningASL.com](#).

“We would love to see a huge turnout for this,” Ashworth added. “Not only to have some fun and learn some ASL, but to just raise the awareness that this language is definitely used for Deaf and hard of hearing people, but there is no reason that anyone couldn’t learn — our police officers, our first responders — because you never know who you’re going to encounter that potentially it could make a big difference in their life.”