

# Sharing the Human Experience

Rochester School for the Deaf specializes in high-performance education and life enrichment

BY KAREN MARLEY

**THERE IS A WIDESPREAD MISCONCEPTION ABOUT DEAFNESS AMONG THOSE WHO CAN**

**HEAR** — the idea that being deaf is an impairment or a handicap. This way of thinking is wrong. Being deaf is a human condition that creates a different human experience. One that is shared among those who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Rochester School for the Deaf (RSD) provides a place where persons who are deaf and hard of hearing can learn, grow and develop in the context of this unique human experience. The premise that the lack of ability to hear can be inconsequential to leading an accomplished, fulfilling life is embedded in all aspects of life at RSD, which exists to provide and enhance the educational and life-growth experiences in an optimal environment for children and students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

## History

Founded in 1876, RSD opened with 20 students and two teachers and a few support staff in downtown Rochester. Teachers and students lived together. By the end of the first year, enrollment had increased to 70 students.

Within a few years, enrollment grew to the point where the school needed to relocate. At that point, it moved to its current site near the outskirts of Rochester on the banks of the Genesee River. Over the years, RSD repurposed buildings and the property, growing into a tight-knit community known for its rich and accomplished history, continued successes, and meaningful relationships forged between students, families and the faculty. That early tradition of teachers and students living together continues today. Of the school's 128 students, 31 reside in the

