



# JOHN K. ELLEFSON

## COMMUNITY SERVICE

Mr. John Ellefson graduated high school in Japer, Minnesota in 1963 and joined the U.S. Army. He served in Germany, Okinawa & Thailand from 1964 to 1967. In 1969, he married Margaret Ellefson and the next year, he received his BA from Augustana College majoring in Special Education and Education

of the Deaf. He became a counselor for the Deaf in the

SD Division of Rehabilitation Services from 1970-1974. He was the first counselor hired by the SD Division of Rehabilitation Services to have a caseload of only deaf and hard of hearing individuals. In 1974, Ellefson received his Masters from the University of South Dakota in Guidance, Counseling and Personnel Services. He moved to Denver and worked for the Denver Community College as a counselor for the Deaf.

Ellefson moved back to South Dakota in 1976 to work at the SD Division of Rehabilitation Services as a counselor for the deaf until 1979. In 1979, Ellefson became the first Coordinator of Deaf Services for the Division of Rehabilitation Services, where he worked until 1998. During his time as a Coordinator of Deaf Services, he was instrumental in administering the funds generated by the telephone for the deaf surcharge for the funding of TDD distribution and TDD relay services. Ellefson played a vital role in establishing and administering a sign language interpreter certification program along with the South Dakota Association of the Deaf. He also helped find funding for CSD to establish services for the deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the areas of employment, independent living, social services, interpreting services, and telephone equipment. Ellefson was a pioneer who spearheaded the efforts to mandate interpreter certification and licensure in South Dakota. Ellefson encouraged students to receive postsecondary education by going to colleges or vocational schools out of state. Most of them successfully graduated and obtained employment.

In 1998, he became the Counseling/Supervisor of the Pierre District Office until his retirement in 2004. He was a staunch advocate for the deaf community for many years and helped bring South Dakota to the forefront in progressive programs and services.