

New Family Support Specialists to help FSC reach families across Minnesota

The Family Support Connection has added six additional Family Support Specialists to provide services to families throughout Minnesota.

These new mentors are all parents of children who have hearing loss who can offer other parents the support and encouragement that's made more valuable through first-hand experience.

"Our whole program is based on parent-to-parent support," said Candace Lindow-Davies, Family Support Coordinator. "We're thrilled to add these parents to our staff. They bring a lot of wonderful skills, life experiences and diversity. I know we'll do a much better job now reaching families in out-state areas," Candace added.

The service areas for the Regional Family Support Specialists are the same as those of the State's regional offices

for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS). (See the map below.) The Specialists/Mentors will work with DHHS staff to coordinate services for families in these regions.

"Parent Mentors will be an excellent resource for DHHS staff," said Cindy Otto, Regional Manager for Northeast Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, who has an office in Virginia. "We often get a sense from parents that they would benefit from talking to another parent," Cindy said. "Having a trained parent mentor in our region to refer these parents to will be very helpful.

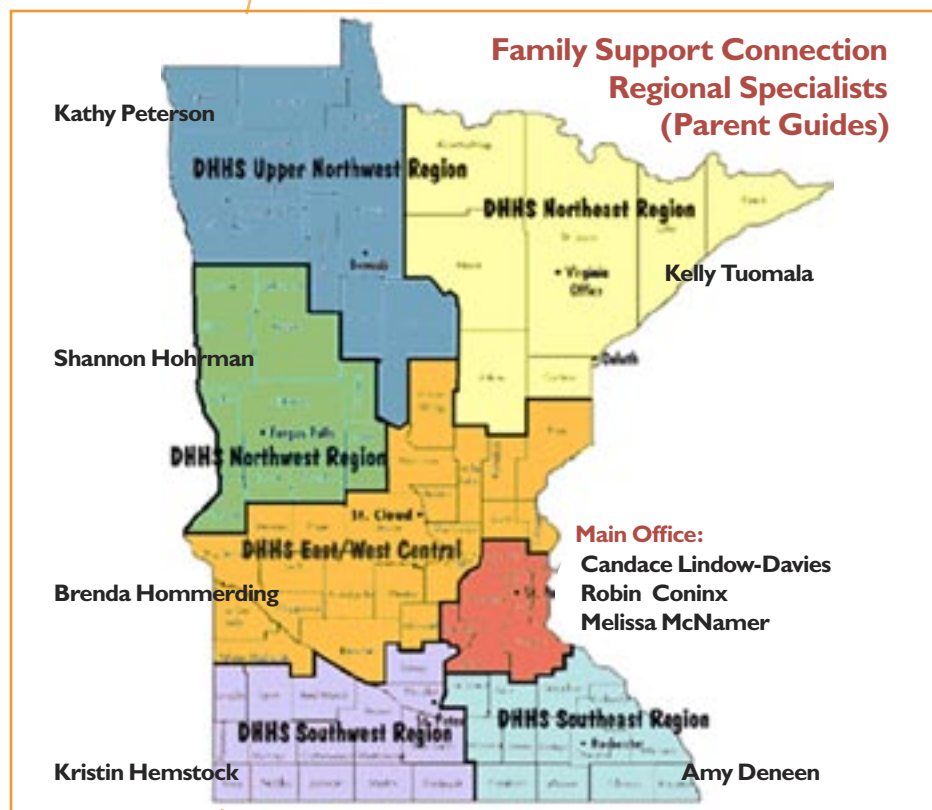
"We also look forward to working with the Parent Mentors to help us determine regional service gaps, collaborate on regional activities and to work together on community presentations," she added.

Cindy will be working with the new Family Support Connection Specialist, Kelly Tuomala, who is from Biwabik on Minnesota's Iron Range. Kelly and her husband, Darren, have 3 children: Luke, 13, Logan, 8, and Landon, 4. Landon was diagnosed with a hearing loss at his newborn screening. He received hearing aids at 5 weeks old and a cochlear implant when he was 17 months. Speech is his main method of communication.

Next to Kelly's region is the Upper Northwest where Kathy Peterson has been hired. Kathy and her husband live in Warren in the Red River Valley. Two of their sons work with them on the family farm. Their other son, who is deaf, is a commercial pilot and flies for the family's agricultural aviation business. Kathy works at the University of North Dakota in the office of Disability Support Services as an interpreter and a consultant for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. She also is pursuing a degree in Rehabilitation Counseling.

Just below Kathy's region is the Northwest region, which is Shannon Hohrman's territory. Shannon and her husband, Jeff, live in Fergus Falls. Jeff is a police sergeant. Their sons are Thomas, 16, and Nicholas, 6. Nicholas was born profoundly deaf and received a cochlear implant at age 4. The family uses both ASL and oral communication.

In the East/West Central Region, Brenda Hommerding is the Regional Family Support Specialist. Brenda is currently a stay-at-home mom who also has a day-care and does office work out of her home. She and her husband, Lynn, have twin 4-year-olds named Amanda and Ashley. Hearing loss runs in the family—Brenda and her mother are both hard of hearing and wear hearing aids, while her mother's parents were both profoundly deaf and communicated in sign language. Both twins have hearing loss and wear aids. The family communicates orally, but is adding more signing.



What's Happening Around Town

- Saturday, April 8** **The Deaf Easter Bunny** visits Thompson Hall Deaf Club, 1824 Marshall Ave. in St. Paul from 1 to 4 p.m. for a party with activities including face painting and carnival games. Cost is \$2/child.
- Wednesday, April 12** **Learn about Minnesota North Star Academy** for students who are deaf, hard of hearing or deafblind. Information night runs from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. at MNSA, Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church, 1669 N. Arcade St., in St. Paul. (Enter through green doors on the south side.) RSVP by April 10 to info@mnnorthstaracademy.org or call 651-771-2000 (v), -2112 (tty).
- Wednesday, April 12** **SASE: The Write Place presents ASL/School Signs Reading**, a free ASL Poetry performance at 5 p.m. at Metro Deaf School, 265 W. Lafayette Rd S. in St Paul. For more information, call 612-822-2500 or visit www.saseonline.org.
- Saturday, April 15** **Minnesota North Star Academy hosts Deaf/Hard of Hearing Teen Night** for kids ages 12- 18. The night includes open gym, games and movies from 6 to 10 p.m. at Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church, 1669 N. Arcade St. in St. Paul (use the south entrance with green doors). Cost is \$2.
- Tuesday, April 18** "Cue Clutch" meets at Java Jacks, 46th & Bryant in Minneapolis from 6:30 to 8 p.m. For information, contact Katherine Burns-Christenson at 952-929-3965 or e-mail kbc29@aol.com.
- April 20-22** **Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf (MSAD) presents "New Clothes for the Emperor"** at 7 p.m. at MSAD in Faribault and April 26 at St. Cloud Tech High School. Tickets are \$5 for adults and \$3 for students.
- Tuesday, April 25** **"The Future is Now"** is a free workshop presented by PACER from 7 to 9 p.m. at Minnesota North Star Academy. See Page 6.
- April 27 & 28** "Art in Bloom," the annual tour at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts is ASL-interpreted on Thursday, April 27 at 7 p.m. and Friday, April 28 at 11:30 a.m. For information, call Visitor and Member Services at 612-870-3131 (v) or 612-870-3132 (tty).
- Saturday, April 29** **Spring Open House** from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Woodlake Lutheran Church, 7525 Oliver Ave S. in Richfield features deaf consultants for various home party retailers including Creative Memories, Discovery Toys, Longaberger Baskets, Mary Kay, and Tupperware. Contact Marla at MKohl10423@aol.com.
- Saturday, April 29** **2006 Deafblind Technology Expo** runs from noon to 4 p.m. at the Anderson Human Services Building, 540 Cedar St. in St. Paul. For details, e-mail Sarah.Maheswaran@state.mn.us.
- Saturday, April 29** **North High School presents "Brigadoon"** with ASL interpretation at 7:30 p.m. Order tickets (\$8 adults; \$6 students/seniors) at www.northhightheatre.org or call 651-748-6090.
- Saturday, May 6** **See the benefit showing of Secret Love (Stille Liebe)**, the story of Antonia, a Deaf nun, who falls in love with a Deaf pick-pocket, Mikas, with whom she can sign. Rated PG-13. Proceeds go to the Miss Deaf Minnesota Pageant. Doors open at 10 a.m.; show starts at 10:30 a.m. at Riverview Theater, 3800 42nd Ave S. in Minneapolis (www.riverviewtheater.com). Tickets are \$5.
- Saturday, May 6** **The St. Paul Public Library presents Deaf Storytime** at 10:30 a.m. at the Merriam Park Branch Library, 1831 Marshall Ave. For details, call 651-642-0385 (v) or 651-298-4184 (tty).



ASL-Interpreted Performances

Little Women

Friday, April 28, 7:30 p.m.
\$12, \$10 students/seniors, \$14 box seats
Lyric Arts Theatre, 420 E. Main St., Anoka;
763-422-1838, www.lyricarts.org

Cabaret

Saturday, April 29, 8 p.m.
\$12-17: 612-624-2345 or utheatre@umn.edu
Rarig Center, U of M West Bank, 330 21st Ave. S., Minneapolis; theatre.umn.edu

Constant Star

Saturday, April 29, 7:30 p.m.
Tickets reduced to half-price.
Park Square Theatre, 408 Saint Peter, St. Paul;
651-291-7005, www.parksquaretheatre.org

Cinder Edna

Sun. May 7, 2 p.m.; Wed., May 10, 10 a.m.
Tickets: \$14, \$11 children & seniors
Hopkins Center for the Arts, 1111 Main-street, 952-979-1111; www.stagestheatre.org

Paul Bunyan & Other Minne-Tales

Sunday, May 21, 2 p.m.
Call for ASL + half-price tickets: 612-623-9080
Howard Conn Fine Arts Center, 1900 Nicollet Ave., Mpls; www.youthperformanceco.com

The Music Man

Sunday, May 21, 2 p.m.
\$12, \$10 student/senior: 651-429-5674
Lakeshore Players, 4820 Stewart Ave., White Bear Lake; www.lakeshoreplayers.com

Pippi Longstocking

Wed., May 31, 10:30 a.m., Fri., June 2, 7:30 p.m.
Children's Theatre Co., 2400 3rd Ave. S., Mpls,
612-874-0400; www.childrenstheatre.org

FOCUS is published by the Family Support Connection at Lifetrack Resources. 709 University Avenue West St. Paul, MN 55104-4804 651-265-2435(v); 651-265-2379(tty) Toll-free: 1-866-DHOHKID (346-4543) Toll-free TTY: 1-866-857-2379 fsc@lifetrackresources.org www.familysupportconnection.org

Our mission is to build better lives for children who are deaf or hard of hearing by providing parent-to-parent support.

Newsletter Editor: Audrey Alwell

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The View from Here

By Kristin Hemstock,
Southwest Region Parent Guide

For the fifth year running, agencies in the Southwest have hosted a Family Getaway Weekend in Mankato for families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing. This year over 20 families participated in the event.

The children took part in many great activities, including swimming, learning about Minnesota wildlife, making sand art and bird houses, playing relay games, learning about safety from a local police officer, and making balloon animals, hats, and “flying mice.” It was clear, just by looking at the smiles and hearing the excitement in the children’s voices, that connections were made and friendships were formed.

The parents spent time getting to know one another, sharing experiences and challenges, and listening to engaging speakers. On Friday evening Susan Pearson, M.D., spoke about the Medical Evaluation of Hearing Loss. She answered medical questions and clarified techniques and common medical practices as they relate to hearing loss. Tracy Bell Koster, Ann Vaubel, and Sandy Bohnenblust gave updates on deaf and hard of hearing services in Region 9.

Saturday morning, Ron Lybarger, Ph.D. spoke in detail about his experience in conducting psychological evaluations for children with hearing loss. He discussed reasons for evaluation, techniques used, and implications of results. He discussed specific issues of concern relating to cognitive, educational, social, emotional, and mental health in the context of hearing loss.

The information gained by listening to the speakers and the time spent together with other families experiencing hearing loss were priceless.

Families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing can attend the Family Getaway in the Northwest Region April 21-22 at the Best Western Holland House in Detroit Lakes. Dr. Lisa Marshall will present the Top 10 Ways to Raise a Psychologically Healthy Deaf Child. For details, contact Marcy Schutt at 800-456-7589 (V/TTY).

Website explains viral cause of deafness

The government has a new website about cytomegalovirus (CMV), the virus responsible for about a third of cases of deafness in children. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) created the website, www.cdc.gov/cmV, to answer questions about CMV and explain the symptoms, testing and diagnosis. The site also discusses treatment and current research for a vaccine.

Bill to change newborn screening halted in House, still pending in Senate

Last month, the Family Support Connection forwarded news about a bill that would change Minnesota’s newborn screening statute, including hearing screening. We’re happy to report that the bill (HF 3387) did not pass the Health Policy and Finance Committee. However, it is still being considered in the Senate (SF No. 3344).

The bill would change the screening law so parents would be asked if they want to have their children tested—parents would “opt-in” rather than “opt-out” as the program allows now. This has the potential of substantially reducing the number of infants screened for life-threatening or life-altering conditions.

For more information about the bill or how you can share your opinion on this issue, contact Mark McCann, Supervisor, Newborn Screening, Public Health Laboratory, Minnesota Department of Health at 651-201-5450 or e-mail mark.mccann@health.state.mn.us.

PACER Benefit features Michael Bolton

PACER’s 24th Annual Benefit and Auction takes place May 6 at the Minneapolis Convention Center and includes a concert by Grammy winner Michael Bolton.

The evening begins with a gourmet dinner at 5 p.m., followed by a silent auction at 6 p.m. and the concert, live auction and raffle at 8 p.m. Tickets can be purchased for individual events or the entire evening. Prices range from \$55 to \$550. Proceeds from the Benefit support the programs, workshops, and individual assistance PACER provides to families that have children or young adults with disabilities.

For reservations, call 952-838-9000 or see www.pacer.org.

Fair features resources in Ramsey County

Lifetrack Resources is helping to organize a Community Resource Fair for Ramsey County that highlights new programs for newborns through age 5.

The fair will be Thursday, April 27 from 4 to 6:30 p.m. at the Fairview Community Center Great Room, Fairview & County Road B in Roseville. Presentations on newborn screening and other topics will be offered. Certificates of participation for CEUs will be available.

To register, e-mail SueR@lifetrackresources.org.

Job wanted: University of Minnesota student looking to nanny for deaf child(ren). I have four semesters of ASL experience and would like to use my skills! Prefer full-time hours during summer and possible part-time before or after summer. Available May 22nd-Aug 30th for full-time. Resume, references, background check available. Please contact Melissa at krau0245@umn.edu or 507-217-7309.

Regional Specialists...continued from Page 1

In the Southwest region, Kristin Hemstock has been hired. Kristin is a psychologist. Her family includes her husband, John, and three children: Evan, 10, Carter, 8, and Claire, 4. Carter was diagnosed with mild to moderate hearing loss bilaterally when he was in kindergarten and now wears hearing aids. Speech is his main method of communication.

The new Regional Family Support Specialist for the Southeast is Amy Deneen. Amy is an occupational therapist and heads the community ed's karate program. Her family consists of husband Brian, and sons Matt, 10, and Casey, 8, plus two coon hounds and three cats. Matt was diagnosed when he was 3 with a moderate bilateral hearing loss for which he wears hearing aids. He has chosen to be oral, but "has discovered that an occasional sign comes in handy now and then," Amy added.

These new Regional Family Support Specialists will be called "Parent Guides" in keeping with Hands & Voices' Guide-By-Your-Side Program. The Family Support Connection is aligning its programs with Hands & Voices, a national nonprofit organization that offers support to families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing. The organization is based in Colorado and has chapters in 11 states.

The Guide-By-Your-Side Program is

designed to provide emotional support and specialized knowledge from trained parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Guides help parents of newly identified deaf or hard-of-hearing babies understand the diagnosis and the options for managing hearing loss. The Guides are trained to present all options without bias. They also mentor families through the years, offering an experienced parent's insight into the early intervention program and educational system.

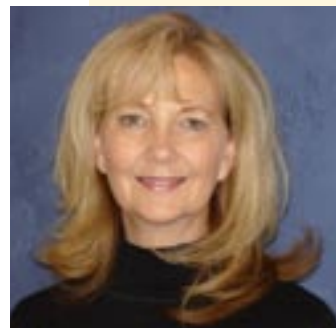
"Hands & Voices gives us national support for things we're already doing in Minnesota," Candace explained. "With these regional Parent Guides, we're hoping to collaborate with state agencies and national organizations to complement and enhance the work they're doing.," she added.

In addition to having Parent Guides, the Family Support Connection also has an Advisory Board that includes a diverse mix of parents and professionals. This group includes parents of children at schools for the deaf, parents of mainstreamed kids and parents of kids in special programs. The Board also has professionals, including some who are deaf and sign and some who have a hearing loss and communicate orally.

For more details on the Guide-By-Your-Side Program as well as other information about Hands & Voices, see www.handsandvoices.org.

E-mail addresses for Parent Guides:

- CandaceD@lifetrackresources.org**
- RobinC@lifetrackresources.org**
- MelissaM@lifetrackresources.org**
- KellyT@lifetrackresources.org**
- KathyP@lifetrackresources.org**
- ShannonH@lifetrackresources.org**
- BrendaH@lifetrackresources.org**
- KristinH@lifetrackresources.org**
- AmyD@lifetrackresources.org**



Kathy Peterson is the Parent Guide for the Upper Northwest Region.



**Back row: Robin Coninx, Kristin Hemstock, Shannon Hohrman, Janet DesGeorges (Hands & Voices)
Front row: Amy Deneen, Kelly Tuomala, Candace Lindow-Davies, Brenda Hommerding, Melissa McNamer**



More Summer Opportunities

Gallaudet hosts scholars

Gallaudet University in Washington, DC, offers its Young Scholars Program again this summer for gifted and talented high school students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

In "Camp Media" (July 9-21), students will produce a documentary based on historical sites in the area using state-of-the-art technology.

"Crimes and Clues" (July 16-28) lets students find and analyze clues to solve a fictitious crime.

"Camp Gallaudet" (July 16-28) is for nonsigning students who want to learn about Deaf Culture and ASL. Activities such as stone carving, digital media development, scuba diving and an archeological dig will help students discover Deaf history and culture.

"The Congressional Forum: LEAD America" (July 11-16) gives students an up-close view of government, showing how the three branches interact and address the issues facing the nation.

The cost for each program is \$1,200. Scholarships are available. Call 800-383-9931, e-mail summer@gallaudet.edu or see ysp.gallaudet.edu.

New camp spurs girls' interest in science, technology careers

Girls entering 8th grade who are deaf or hard of hearing can attend Tech Girlz, a new summer camp from July 30 through Aug. 5 at Rochester Institute of Technology's National Technical Institute for the Deaf in New York.

Tech Girlz helps girls learn about careers in science and technology. Campers will learn through hands-on activities such as building their own computer to take home, discovering the secrets of roller coaster design, and becoming a commander on a simulated mission to Mars. They also will meet other girls with similar interests, get their own lab coat, and engage in social activities. Camp classes are taught in English and sign language.

The cost is \$650 and includes tuition, housing in a residence hall on campus, and meals and snacks for the week. Parents are invited to opening and closing activities.

For more information or an application, see www.rit.edu/NTID/Tech-Girlz6, call 585-475-6723, or e-mail TechGirlz@ntid.rit.edu.

MSAD offers summer programs

Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf (MSAD) offers two summer school programs for students who are deaf.

The Summer Academic Enrichment Program runs June 18-30 for students who just completed grades K-7. The program helps kids improve their English skills through formal academic instruction in reading and writing along with improving expressive and receptive sign language skills.

Students have the option of staying at MSAD for the program or attending daily. The residential program offers opportunities to improve communication/social skills through activities such as swimming, games, sports, captioned movies, picnics and fieldtrips. There is a \$75 activity fee.

The school day is from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., Monday-Friday from June 18 through June 30. Parents are responsible for transporting their children or making arrangements with their local school districts.

Applications are available at www.msad.state.mn.us under "Forms" and "SAEP." Applications are due by May 1. For more information, contact Janet Pauley at 800-657-3996 or e-mail janet.pauley@msad.state.mn.us.

For students in grades 8-12, MSAD offers Preparatory Assistance Summer School (PASS) July 5-21. This program is designed to help students who are deaf or hard of hearing pass the Minnesota Basic Standards Tests (BST) in Reading, Writing and/or Mathematics. At the end of the program, students will take the BST and scores will be sent to local school districts.

Students can participate as either day or residential students. All students may participate in the evening activities, which will include a dance, roller skating and sports outings. There is a \$60 activity fee.

Applications are available at www.msad.state.mn.us under "Forms" and "PASS." Applications are due by May 12. For more information, contact Sean Virnig at 800-657-3996 or e-mail sean.virnig@msad.state.mn.us.

Camp teaches cue & sign

CueSign Camp offers a unique opportunity for all ages to learn to cue and sign in a camp setting. The camp runs July 14-20 at Towson University in Baltimore, Maryland.

While CueCamps primarily teach the system of Cued Speech, CueSign Camp has a dual-lingual approach, teaching both cueing and signing in classes. CueSign Camp explores two cultures—mainstream, hearing America, and the Deaf community.

Early Bird registration before May 1 is \$200 for adults and \$150 for kids. Costs go down for additional family members. See www.cuesigncamp.com for details and registration forms.

Oral kids excel at LOFT

The April 15 deadline to apply for Leadership Opportunities for Teens (LOFT) is next week.

LOFT is AG Bell's annual program for teens entering grades 9-12 who have a hearing loss and use spoken communication. Teens participate in group and individual activities, explore models of leadership, and develop new skills in areas such as self-advocacy and self-esteem, team-building and conflict resolution.

LOFT runs June 20-24, just prior to the AG Bell 2006 Convention in Pittsburgh. The registration fee is \$250, which does not include airfare or lodging. Program participants will be sharing a room at a cost of \$65 per night.

Applications are available at www.agbell.org. For more information about the program, e-mail dhughes@agbell.org or call 202-337-5220.

Bible camp offered to deaf kids

The Minnesota District Council Assemblies of God will hold Deaf Kids Bible Camp June 12-16 at Lake Geneva Christian Center in Alexandria.

The theme this year for the 5-day camp for kids entering grades 2-6 is Camp Narnia. Cost is \$150 if registered by May 15, \$190 after that.

For registration forms or more information about the camp, see www.mnaog.org and click on "Kids Camp." Scholarships are available. Contact Sherelyn Chellin at dansherc@comcast.net or call 612-332-2409.



Off the Shelf

By Robin Coninx, FSC Specialist

Help Wanted: Help me make the Resource Library more helpful to your family.

Is reading one of your favorite pastimes? Have you come across a book, computer game or movie that has been helpful to you in raising your child who has hearing loss? Please share those recommendations with me so I can generate more interest in our library. Send your suggestions to fsc@lifetrackresources.org.

Remember to check our library at www.familysupportconnection.org/html/fsclibrary.htm when you're looking for resources to help you or your child deal with hearing loss. And, if you don't find what you need, let us know so we can add new resources. Thanks—have a wonderful Spring!

Play performed in ASL

“The Deaf Duckling,” Mixed Blood Theatre’s acclaimed touring production about Deaf Culture, returns home for one performance on Saturday, April 8.

Performed in both English and ASL, the play is accessible to both hearing and deaf audiences. The play follows the story of a deaf child born into a hearing family who gradually comes to see the value of Deaf Culture.

The performance begins at 3 p.m. at Mixed Blood’s firehouse theater on the West Bank in Minneapolis. Tickets are \$7 for adults and \$5 for students under 16. Call 612-338-6131 for reservations.

Aware Fair 2006 will run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 16 at Brookdale Center. This free event, which is held every other year, includes entertainment and exhibits about services, products and organizations for people who are deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing.

Deaf Russian troupe performs in St. Paul

A troupe of Russian performers who are deaf will bring their blend of mime and gesture stories to St. Paul College Auditorium for two performances April 21 and 22 from 7:30 to 9 p.m.

TOYS Theater is an internationally known group that was first formed in 1985 in St. Petersburg, Russia. The four performers, Vassily Solonitsky, Ludmila Romanovskaya, Alexander Filimonov, and Ilya Goltsov, and the Director, Oleg Golovushkin, who are all Deaf, use the universal language of humor to entertain their audiences and provide glimpses into Russian and Deaf cultures.

TOYS Theater’s performances are accessible family entertainment, and audience participation is one of their hallmarks. Everyone who comes to a show is encouraged to interact with the performers, and to stay afterward to meet the cast and take pictures.

Advance tickets are \$15 for adults, and \$10 for students with IDs. Tickets are \$20 at the door. For more information about the show, e-mail Neil H. Johnson at NJohn1942@aol.com. To learn more about TOYS Theater, see www.toystheater.com.

State phone numbers change

The TTY numbers for the State’s Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS) offices are changing. Contact your regional office for their updated TTY number. In the Twin Cities, the new TTY number is 651-206-6513.

The Telephone Equipment Distribution (TED) Program also has a new TTY number: 888-206-6555. The TED Program provides telephone equipment to people who are deaf or hard of hearing, or anyone who needs adaptive equipment in order to use the phone. The equipment is loaned out at no cost as a long-term loan. Available equipment include TTYs, Captel phones, VCO phones, light flashing ring signalers, amplified telephones, loud ringers, hands free speakerphones and more.

For information on qualifying for TED devices, see www.dhhsd.org and click on “TED Program” in the right-hand column.

The Future is Now!

**Tuesday, April 25, 7 - 9 p.m.
Minnesota North Star Academy
1669 N. Arcade St., St. Paul**

It’s a big challenge to get our kids ready for “the real world”! This workshop will offer ideas for parents to help move (transition) their deaf or hard of hearing children to the world of post-secondary training, work, home living, recreation, and leisure. The workshop will include:

- IEP transition planning (ages 14 - 21)
- Resources
- Self-advocacy and self-determination

This free workshop is open to **all** parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Funding is provided by a Minnesota Department of Education Parent and Family Training Grant. This workshop will be presented by Carolyn Anderson, Parent Advocate at PACER Center and parent of a deaf adult son.

Please pre-register with MN North Star Academy by contacting Michelle VonBische by phone at 651-771-2000 V or 651-772-2112 TTY or by e-mail at mvonbische@mnnorthstaracademy.org.