

“Children with involved, loving fathers are significantly more likely to do well in school, have healthy self-esteem, exhibit empathy and pro-social behavior, and avoid high-risk behaviors such as drug use....”—National Fatherhood Initiative

Children explain Dad’s valued role in their lives

10 Traits of a Good Dad

A good dad:

- Respects his kids’ mother
- Spends time with his kids
- Listens to his children
- Disciplines with love
- Is a role model
- Is a teacher
- Eats dinner with his kids
- Reads to his children
- Shows affection
- Realizes that a father’s job is never done

Adapted from the National Fatherhood Initiative’s list of “10 Ways to Be a Better Dad.”

It may be the time of year—Father’s Day is just around the corner—but it seems as though everyone is talking or writing about the value or role of a father in a child’s life. Psychiatrists and child development specialists are touting ways dads can connect with their kids, even if they don’t live in the same house.

In families where a child has hearing loss, the role of Dad seems even more valuable *and* more challenging. In these families, dads often must learn a new way to communicate—signing or cueing—just to “talk” to their kids. Sometimes, the child who is deaf has other medical or behavioral issues Dad needs to understand and deal with. All of this takes more time, more effort and more *involvement* than what’s expected from the traditional role of a father.

Experts say a father’s involvement pays off in a child’s physical, intellectual, emotional, and behavioral development. Kids say it makes them feel loved.

“My dad helps me with math and signs to talk to me—he loves me,” explained Natalie Coninx, 11.

Maeve McDevitt, 7, appreciates that her dad knows Braille so they can read together. She also finds Dad to be a source of security.

“He helps me at night when I am scared,” she added.

“My Dad makes me feel special when he listens to me and prays with me every night,” said Bekah Johnson, 10. “It is important to have a dad in my life because he teaches me a lot of things.”

Child development experts agree that dads play an important role as teachers both directly and indirectly. They have found that dads often choose nonfiction books to read with their kids.

They usually like to explain how things work, and kids often see Dad as “the expert.”

“My dad helps me with things I can’t do, like change the batteries in my toys and fix my e-mail,” said Luke Davies, 11. “He sits down and discusses things with me.”

Kids really seem to appreciate that focused attention they get from their dads that they might not get from their multitasking moms.

“He makes me feel important because he helps me with my camping gear,” Luke explained. “He taught me how to set up my own tent when I was little. I’m older now and I know how to do it.”

Dads also teach kids through their interactions. Dads tend to be the ones who encourage children to take risks—sometimes scaring moms half to death.

“Dads are more flexible and not too worried about risks like some mothers are, which give us more chances to learn and experience new things,” said Aaron Peterson, who’s in his 20s. “I think it is very important to have a dad—it’s a ‘guy thing’ where we can rough it up and have fun.

“He knows what I need and want, and tries to give me what I need—and, if I’m lucky, what I want, too!”

“He makes me feel special by giving me jobs that he normally would have someone else do,” Aaron added. “If I made a mistake, no big deal, he would take that chance to show me how, why it happened, and how to avoid it next time.”

Aaron summed up the impact of having an involved father in his life:

“If my dad wasn’t here yesterday, I wouldn’t be where I am today, nor would I know what to do tomorrow.”

What's Happening Around Town

Tuesday,
June 13

CSD of Minnesota and St. Paul Parks and Recreation host an open meeting on recreation opportunities for kids and adults who are deaf or hard of hearing. The meeting gives families the chance to offer suggestions and runs from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at North Dale Recreation Center, 1414 N. St. Albans in St. Paul. Refreshments served. Contact Mary Livingston at 651-266-6366 (v), 651-266-6378 (TTY) or Jessalyn Frank at 651-487-8872 (TTY) or e-mail jfrank@c-s-d.org

Friday,
June 16 & 30

Cue & Play dates give kids who cue the chance to make friends with others while parents have the time to socialize and practice cueing. June 16 cuers meet at Jensen Lake Park in Eagan. June 30 meet at Wooddale Park in Edina. For more information, contact Katherine Burns-Christenson at 952-929-3965 or e-mail kbc29@aol.com.

Saturday,
June 17

Deaf Day at Valleyfair in Shakopee goes from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Cost is \$21, \$9.95 for those under 48" tall, or free for ages 2 and under. Purchase tickets that day at Valleyfair's group sales window or avoid lines at Valleyfair by buying tickets in advance at CSD of Minnesota, 2055 Rice St. in St. Paul during business hours. For more information, contact Jessalyn Frank at 651-487-8872 TTY or e-mail jfrank@c-s-d.org.

Saturday,
June 17

PACER Center presents "Fathers Workshop" from 9 to 11:30 a.m. at PACER in Bloomington for fathers of children who have disabilities. To register, call 952-838-9000 or see www.pacer.org/workshops.

Tuesday,
June 27

PACER Center presents "Challenging Behaviors in Young Children" from 6:30 to 9 p.m. at PACER in Bloomington. To register, call 952-838-9000 or see www.pacer.org/workshops.

June 28-30

A workshop for educators, "Foundations of Literacy: Audition, Language, and Speech" happens at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul. Speakers include Carol Flexer, Ph.D. Registration is due by June 14. For details, contact Tasha Honkola at 218-748-7605.

July 11 -
Aug. 15

The free Summer Reading Program will be ASL-interpreted at 2 p.m. Tuesdays at Merriam Park Library, 1831 Marshall Ave. in St. Paul (across from Thompson Hall Deaf Club).

July 11—The Magic of Brian Gilbertson

July 18—Circus Manduhai

July 25—Wendy's Wiggle, Jiggle and Jam

August 1—Alan Johnson Comedy Juggler Extraordinaire

August 8—The Banjo Dancers

August 15—Brodini Comedy Magic Show

Thursday,
Aug. 10

The Family Support Connection hosts the Annual Family Picnic at Como Park Pavilion from 5 to 8:30 p.m. We provide dinner at 5:30 p.m. as well as face painting, games and activities. We also have door prizes. RSVP by Aug. 7 so we know how much food to order. See the contact information in the box to the right.

Aug. 11-13

Camp & Cue at Lebanon Hills in Eagan. Camp with your family or just come for the Saturday night party around the campfire with s'mores. For information about reserving a campsite, contact Mary Stadelman at mstadelman@earthlink.net.



ASL-Interpreted Performances

The Glass Menagerie

Friday, June 23, 7:30 p.m.
\$12, \$10 senior/student
Bloomington Center for the Arts, 1800 W. Old Shakopee Rd.; 952-563-8587;
www.bloomingtonartcenter.com

The Wizard of Oz

Sunday, June 25, 2 p.m.
Half-price for ASL patrons: \$6, \$5 student/senior, \$2.50 children 10 & under; (+\$1 at the door)
Osseo Senior High School, 317 2nd Ave. NW; 763-391-ARTS (2787);
www.crossplayers.org

Tasty Baby Belly Buttons

Sunday, July 16, 2 p.m.
\$9: 651-225-9265
Weyerhaeuser Auditorium in Landmark Center, 75 W. 5th St., St. Paul;
www.steppingstonetheatre.org

Wicked

Sunday, July 16, 1 p.m.
\$30-\$81; ASL or AD offered if requested in advance: 612-373-5639 (v), -5655 (tty); e-mail accessible@orpheum.com.
Historic Orpheum Theatre, 910 Hennepin Ave. S., Minneapolis;
www.hennepintheatredistrict.com

Seussical

Sunday, July 23, 2 p.m.,
Wednesday, July 26, 10 a.m.
\$14, \$11 children (age 2-17) & seniors
Hopkins Center for the Arts, 1111 Main St., Hopkins; 952-979-1111;
www.stagestheatre.org

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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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In Your Corner

By Candace Lindow-Davies, Family Support Coordinator

As promised, this month's issue puts the spotlight on fathers and their relationship with their children who are deaf or hard of hearing. A lot of research has been done and many books have been written about the impact of a father figure in a child's life, or more precisely, the absence of a father figure. Certainly the importance of fathers holds true especially for our children who have hearing loss.

I consider myself very fortunate to live in an age where fathers are much more involved in the day-to-day details of their children's lives. Yes, mothers are most often the primary caretakers for their children. They are more likely to stay home or work part-time, or coordinate the medical care for their children. Fathers tend to be the one to work full-time and be the primary breadwinner. However, today there are so many fathers who are extremely active in their children's lives. And when a father is absent, I see mothers actively engaging father figures for their kids, aware of the critical role they play.

Consider this quote from an article by Rexanne Mancini: *"For daughters, Daddy is the first man they adore ... the first man whose eyes shine with overwhelming amazement when they look at us. He is the first man to fall in love with us. For sons, Daddy is the idol they first aspire to emulate ... their mirror image of what will be and possibly the only man they will ever feel comfortable loving. Daddy is the first man who held us, as a loving parent, with a lump in his throat so huge, only the joy of that love could erase the overwhelming pain of choking on unexpected raw emotion. I think when a father holds his newborn baby, he is touched by pure vulnerability for the first time in his adult life, leaving him forever humbled by the unexplained miracles of life."*

I distinctly remember when my husband "bonded" with our son. It was not in the delivery room, when I thought it would be, when I remember my own heart melting. It was when my son was three months old and my husband had just torn his ACL and needed surgery. My husband lay flat on his back on our futon, with all the food, diapers and other supplies he would need for the few hours I would be at work until I could rush home on my lunch hour to restock supplies, bathe our baby son, and rush back to work. (Sound like any given day in your life...?) Anyway, I remember coming home one lunch hour to find my husband cradling our little boy. I knew something was up when he looked up and said to me with a wistful voice, "He's so incredible, isn't he? He's just so beautiful." I instantly knew what happened while I was gone. He fell in love with that boy, and his love and devotion to him and our daughter continues to this day. And to this day, I see his injury and recovery time not as a nuisance and a low point, but as a precious gift to our family.

So, to all you fathers out there, falling in love with your children and devoting your lives to their care...thank you. To the male role models who step in to play a part that is so important...thank you. And lastly, to the grandfathers who take the time to dote on their grandchildren...thank you.

As some of you know, I lost my own father recently. When I was digging for some information for the funeral home, I came across a letter he had written following my son's diagnosis of hearing loss. He wanted to assure me that he and God would "carry" me. He reminded me my son was and will always be such a blessing in our lives. And, like always, he was right.

Happy Father's Day.

Recent legislative session includes bills concerning deaf

As the State Legislature goes into summer recess, they put to bed several issues affecting people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The Minnesota Commission Serving Deaf and Hard of Hearing People (MCDHH) rallied support to defeat the Parents Right to Know Bill, which would have resulted in fewer babies screened at birth for a number of conditions, including hearing loss. If passed, this bill also would have hurt MCDHH's efforts to get the newborn hearing screening bill passed next year.

MCDHH also worked with Minnesota Association of Deaf Citizens and other groups to defeat changes to the Educational Interpreter Law. Currently, school districts are required to hire certified or provisionally certified interpreters for the classroom. The bill would have made certification optional.

Another bill that was defeated in the Legislature was the Signing Bridge Bill. This would have given \$225,000 for a pilot project to teach 600 "child relevant signs" to early childhood directors and teachers in K-6 classrooms. Proponents claimed the project would help children learn languages and improve their concentration skills. MCDHH along with the University of Minnesota's American Sign Language Program and the American Sign Language Teacher's Association opposed this bill, noting there are no "child relevant signs" and no literature that supports the proponents' claims. They also said this would exploit a language that is treasured by the deaf community.

MCDHH succeeded in changing the law that required deaf citizens to send a certified letter to their local party representative requesting interpreters 30 days before the precinct caucus date. The new law allows interpreter requests to be made to central party headquarters where paid staff can follow up quickly, removes the 30-day requirement and lets the request be made by e-mail.

MCDHH also got a budget boost from \$95,000 to \$200,000, which is \$40,000 short of what was requested.

"Thanks to all of you for all of your great work in making this another successful year at the legislature!" said MCDHH's Mary Hartnett. To sign up for e-mail alerts, see www.mncdhh.com.

Lifetrack Resources announces the appointment of Trixie Ann Golberg as President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) effective July 17. Trixie will succeed John Mohr who will be retiring after 21 years of distinguished leadership.



The View from Here

By Kelly Tuomala,
Northeast Region Parent Guide

Seven families attended the Northern Minnesota Family Workshop in late March at the Laurentian Environmental Center in Brett, Minnesota. This event was offered by the NorthEastern Service Co-op and Lifetrack Resources' Greater Minnesota Assessment Service.

The workshop included many activities. The parents enjoyed the presentation by Ron Lybarger, Ph.D. He talked about the impact of hearing loss on language acquisition and social emotional development. Ron concluded his presentation with a parent interaction and question time which was very enjoyable and interesting.

The older kids went on a nature walk and were able to learn some outdoor survival skills. The younger kids also went on a nature walk and visited the Nature Center to see the different types of animal furs, many of which were from animals that lived in northern Minnesota. They also explored a teepee and built a fire to make popcorn.

It was a lot of fun for everyone and we're all looking forward to the next event.

How to contact your region's Parent Guide:

Upper Northwest — Kathy Peterson
E-mail: KathyP@lifetrackresources.org
Toll-free Phone: to be determined

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Southwest — Kristin Hemstock
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Toll-free Phone: 888-214-0660

Southeast — Amy Deneen
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Hey! Families in the Northeast Region:
Join us Friday, June 9 from 2:30 to 3 p.m. at the Virginia Public Library for a "Singing and Signing" program. We'll gather afterwards for refreshments at Olcott Park (weather permitting). This event is sponsored by the Family Support Connection, PBS, and the NorthEastern Service Co-op.

Resources for Dads

Organizations

The Minnesota Fathers & Families Network supports the fatherhood movement in the state through conferences, events, a newsletter and a website (www.mnfathers.org).

National Fatherhood Initiative provides a website (www.fatherhood.org), a print newsletter and "Dad E-mail" with weekly fathering tips.

Parent Warmline (612-813-6336) is a free telephone service provided by Children's Hospitals and Clinics staffed by volunteers who have experience in early childhood development. They will return calls within a day to answer questions about children up to age 7.

Fathers FIRST! offers a variety of counseling services to fathers, including parenting education and a fathers support group. Contact Stephen Onell, at 612-384-7078 or e-mail sonell@arcstp.org.

Books

"Fatherneed: Why Father Care Is as Essential as Mother Care for Your Child" by Kyle Pruett, M.D. This book includes a section for fathers of children with special needs. The author combines examples from his psychiatry practice with research data to show how fathers parent differently and why that difference is so important to children's development.

"Kid-Friendly Parenting with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children: A Treasury of Fun Activities Toward Better Behavior" by Daria Medwid and Denise Weston This how-to guide, written by two child and family therapists, offers ideas to help parents improve communication, solve problems and enhance their relationship with children ages 3 through 13 who have hearing loss.

"101 Secrets A Good Dad Knows" by Walter and Sue Ellin Browder is packed with stuff, like how to catch a frog or tell time by the stars, to help dads be "experts."

You can find other books about fathering children who have hearing loss in our library (www.familysupportconnection.org) or at clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/InfoToGo/563.html.

Events

Minnesota Festival for Fathers & Families is Saturday, Aug. 12, from noon to 5 p.m. at North Commons Park in Minneapolis. This 16th annual celebration of fatherhood includes free food, entertainment, games, and more. For details, see www.mnfathers.org/festival.html.

Classes teach sign to babies, kids, parents

Kids and babies (plus parents) can learn to sign this summer through St. Paul Public Schools Community Education classes.

Kids entering Kindergarten through Grade 6 can enroll in a class that teaches basic signing through music, movement, art, games and storytelling. From June 19 through 23 there are two sessions: 9 to 10:30 a.m. or 10:30 a.m. to noon at the Expo School (between Randolph and Ford Parkway). The cost is \$45 and includes a book. Register before June 19. Call 651-325-2672.

A one-hour workshop, "Baby Signs Parent Workshop," gives parents the basics of the Baby Signs Institute program for teaching hearing or deaf babies simple gestures to communicate at a young age (6 to 24 months). The \$25/family fee includes a video. The workshop runs from 10 to 11 a.m. June 20 at Dayton's Bluff Rec Center. To register, call 651-793-3885.

Conference focuses on teens

A conference packed with presentations focusing on issues related to deaf and hard of hearing teens comes to Tennessee this Fall.

"Deaf and Hard of Hearing Adolescents: Leaving No One Behind!" is scheduled for Sept. 18 through 20 in Memphis. The keynote presenters include Dr. Martha Sheridan, author of "Inner Lives of Deaf Children: Interviews and Analysis," and Dr. I. King Jordan, retiring president of Gallaudet University.

A listing of concurrent workshops is posted on the website www.flagler.edu/about_f/gallaudet.html. The site also has registration information.

In addition to the conference, participants can sign up for a tour of Elvis Presley's home at Graceland.

This conference is co-sponsored by the Gallaudet University Regional Centers and the University of Arkansas Rehabilitation Research and Training Center for Persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Supporters include Hands and Voices, Sorenson VRS, ADARA, CEASD, American Society for Deaf Children, and the Memphis City Schools Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program.



A Little Grin

By Melissa McNamer

While doing a home remodeling project involving a nail gun and an air compressor, my husband and I realized how loud the tools were. We wanted to remove our two-year-old son from the area but, being a boy, he loves getting involved in anything manual. So we let him watch for a moment.

We recently had been working on helping our son, who wears hearing aids, understand the concept of loud versus soft sounds. So, with the air compressor buzzing in the background, I asked him if it was loud. His eyes perked up, and he shook his head yes. I told him to cover his ears if it was too loud and that would help. He proceeded to stick his index fingers into his ear molds! Goes to show how much modeling of behaviors our kids actually do pick up on! Now when we hear loud noises, we all cup our hands over our ears, which works much better to muffle loud noises from hearing aids.

Cue at the Zoo

The Cued Speech Association of Minnesota sponsors a family social event Saturday, July 22 at 10 a.m. at Como Park Zoo in St. Paul (meet at the

Visitor Center). A transliterator will cue the 11:30 a.m. Sparky show. Bring a picnic lunch to enjoy after the show. For more information contact



Katherine Burns-

Christenson at 952-929-3965 or e-mail KBC29@aol.com.

Research's shocking results may lead to better slides

Researchers at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, have measured the voltage of static electricity produced when a child slides down a plastic playground slide and have found levels that are way more than the sensitive electronics of a cochlear implant can handle. This research has prompted a company, which manufactures anti-static coating for fighter jets, to investigate if the coating could be applied to slides.

Cochlear implants can withstand "shocks" of about 8,000 volts, according to Cochlear Americas, one of the manufacturers of the devices. The Washington University researchers measured charges of about 10,000 volts, and even as high as 20,000 volts in the dry air of Tucson, Arizona. They tested different clothing materials and found no reduction in static charge.

Electrostatic discharge—that spark or shock you feel—occurs after two different materials rub together. One of the materials becomes positively charged; the other becomes negatively charged. The positively-charged material now has an electrostatic charge. When that charge comes into contact with the right material, it is transferred, creating a spark or discharge. A plastic tubular slide, for example, will quickly charge a child who then runs to a metal support structure such as a ladder and feels a shock.

These discharges can damage the headpiece or sound processor of cochlear implant systems. Static electricity will not damage the implant which is isolated under the skin. Discharges are more likely to occur in very dry or cold environments. In addition to sliding on plastic slides, common events that trigger shocks include walking on carpets, leaving a car, pulling on or off a sweater, touching TV or computer screens, or changing a bed.

Implant manufacturers caution users to reduce the effects of electrostatic discharge by "grounding" themselves before touching the implant. That can be as simple as touching something else (not metal) to equalize the electric charge so no shock is transferred to the implant when you touch it.



Off the Shelf

By Robin Coninx, FSC Specialist

One way for a dad to connect with a child who has hearing loss is for them to read together in their common language—voicing, signing, cueing or whatever combination works.

The Family Support Connection has a variety of easy fiction for dads to read with their children. The first one that I would like to recommend is one of many from the “Shared Reading Project,” a resource produced by the Clerc Center at Gallaudet University. “Lisa’s Daddy and Daughter Day,” written by Eloise Greenfield, is a short story about a dad and daughter out for a special day. The Shared Reading Project has packaged the book with a video and tip sheet to help adults learn how to sign the story and plan extended activities that are tied in with the story.

Another book in our library that can be used with any language approach is “Dad and Me in the Morning” by Patricia Lakin. As father and son hurry out to watch a sunrise, you can sense the anticipation of the young boy to have this special time with his dad.

If these resources are not what you are looking for, please use our website (www.familysupportconnection.org) to search our library to see what is available to read with your children. Or, you can call me at 651-265-2372 and I would be happy to find resources that match what you are looking for.

As always, I am open to suggestion for library resources. Just let me know your ideas on what to add that would be helpful to families that have children with hearing loss.

Sign language decoding glove nearly ready for sale

Developers of a glove that can “decode” sign language say the device will be available to the public sometime next year and will sell for around \$100.

The AcceleGlove was first created by Jose Hernandez-Rebollar when he was a doctoral candidate at George Washington University more than six years ago. Since then, he and his colleagues have improved the device, making it easier to use and more accurate in its translating capabilities.

The glove is placed on the hand and strapped to the arm, allowing the sensors to generate signals from the movement, orientation, and positioning of the hand and the fingers in relation to the body. These signals are analyzed by a microcontroller and compared to a database of ASL words and phrases to find the correct meaning for that hand movement. A computerized voice then speaks the translation. The entire process takes milliseconds. Because of the complexity of ASL, which uses not only hand movements, but also facial expressions, the developers have had a difficult time creating accurate translations. However, they claim the device’s accuracy rate is about 95%.

To see the glove in action, visit www.aceleglove.net.

Implanted hearing aids show promise in clinical trials

Two companies are conducting clinical trials of improved middle ear implants—the newest devices to help people who have moderate to severe sensorineural hearing loss.

The Envoy® Middle Ear Implantable System is made by Minnesota-based St. Croix Medical, Inc. Envoy is the first device that will not need an external processor, making it fully implantable and therefore invisible. It is surgically placed under the skin behind the ear. When sound waves vibrate the eardrum, Envoy processes the vibrations and applies energy to the cochlea, which converts that to signals the brain can interpret as sound. The internal battery needs to be replaced every four years.

The device currently is in Phase II trials in adults with 35 dB or greater sensorineural hearing loss. All costs are covered through the trial. For more information, call 866-950-HEAR or see www.envoymedical.com.

The other middle ear implant in clinical trials is the MET™ Ossicular Stimulator by Otologics, a Colorado-based company. It consists of two parts, an internal component and an external audio processor. The processor houses the digital signal processor, transmitter coil, microphone, and battery. The internal component is made up of a magnet, receiver electronics, and transducer. The device is designed so that sounds are picked up by the microphone, processed according to the wearer’s needs and sent through the skin to a Middle Ear Transducer™ which vibrates the bones (ossicles). It is designed to minimize feedback associated with traditional hearing aids.

The MET is in Phase I clinical trials for FDA approval. To learn more about the device, see www.otologics.com.

Library houses collection focused on Deaf Culture

In addition to having access to all the resources in our Family Support Connection library, you can find materials about Deaf Culture, American Sign Language, and hearing loss at the Merriam Park Branch Library in St. Paul.

The Merriam Park Library has a Deaf and Hard of Hearing Resource Collection that includes books, close-captioned videos, ASL videos, videos about deaf and hard-of-hearing issues, and children’s books. The library continues to build this collection that started with a transfer of materials from the library of the Metro Regional Service Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People.

The Merriam Park library is at 1831 Marshall Ave. across from Thompson Hall Deaf Club. Materials can be checked out to anyone with a current library card from a public library in Minnesota either on site or through interlibrary loan. For a list of materials, see www.stpaul.lib.mn.us. To see what’s available from our library, see www.familysupportconnection.org.