

Finding daycare difficult, but not impossible

Finding the right childcare for a child who is deaf or hard of hearing can feel like an impossible task, but, with some extra effort, knowledge and the right connections, it can be done.

At the Family Support Connection, we occasionally learn of someone who provides daycare and has experience signing or cueing, but that doesn't happen very often.

"Families do call us, but we don't really maintain any kind of list," said Candace Lindow-Davies. "We really can't. It's a moving target."

What the Family Support Connection can do for parents looking for daycare is connect them to other parents who have kids with similar needs. For example, if we get a call from the parent of a child who uses Cued Speech, we can connect that person with families who cue and may have children in a daycare setting that can accept more kids, or may have older children and can share how they handled daycare. Learning from parents who have "been there" is one of the foundations of our organization.

Daycare Resources:

Some of the organizations in the Twin Cities that help parents and providers.

Resources for Child Caring
10 Yorkton Court, St. Paul
651-641-0305 (v), 651-641-0332 (tty)
www.resourcesforchildcare.org

Minnesota Child Care Resource & Referral Network
380 Lafayette Road, Suite 103, St. Paul
651-290-9704, 1-888-291-9811
www.mnchildcare.org

Greater Mpls Day Care Association
1628 Elliot Ave S. 612-341-1177
gmdca.nonprofitoffice.com

Jewish Community Center of the Greater St. Paul Area
Special needs coordinator: 651-255-4753; www.stpauljcc.org/childcare.html

Assistance paying for childcare:
<http://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Legacy/DHS-3551-ENG>

Melissa McNamer, Parent Guide in the St. Paul office, got a list of daycare providers from the county when she was looking for a place for her 3-year-old son, Connor, who is hard of hearing. She called about 10 of the providers and narrowed it down to three to visit.

"A lot could be determined over the phone—if they were yelling at kids in the background, if their voice was harsh..." Melissa said. To review the final three, Melissa's family all visited with the providers when the daycare kids were gone.

"That way we could get a sense of their personality and ours for compatibility," she explained. "One was actually ruled out when her bird flew across the living room and landed on my husband Mark's shoulder and walked across his neck for 45 minutes!"

After personal interviews, Melissa arranged to see the last two in action.

"I'd call the morning of my visit and let them know that I was going to drop by so they didn't have too much time to prepare," she added.

The result of Melissa's thorough search was finding a daycare provider her family adored.

"She provided wonderful experiences—taking the kids to milk cows at her friend's farm, going roller skating, taking train rides, taking a boat ride on the Mississippi, taking the kids to pick vegetables and fruits," Melissa said. "All of these experiences are great for the tactile learner that most often defines our children with hearing loss."

Brenda Hommerding, our East/West Central Parent Guide, found a different path around the daycare dilemma. She chose to stay home with her twin daughters who are hard of hearing and take in another child who is hearing and the same age (5) as her kids.

"I don't really consider myself a child care provider, but merely a stay-at-home, hard-of-hearing mom that has a play date for my hard-of-hearing twin girls," Brenda said. She says the little boy holds his own in her "hearing loss house."

"He understands that when he talks

to the girls they have to be facing him," she explained. I find him repeating himself, sometimes speaking louder, and calling one daughter's name until he has her complete undivided attention. Just the other day I overheard a conversation and the little boy was correcting the girls' speech. It was like the girls had their own speech therapist!"

Finding daycare for a child who signs or cues can present a bigger challenge. Sometimes you have to create the perfect provider, like Shannon Hohrman, our Northwest Parent Guide, did for her son, Nicholas, when he was a baby.

"Our daycare provider had never had a hard of hearing or deaf child before, so this was all new to her," Shannon explained. "She allowed our DHH teachers and speech teachers to come into her home to work with Nicholas. She took sign language classes as did her own kids. She used sign at daycare and had the other kids learn it so they could communicate with Nicholas. She put up posters with the signed alphabet and other signs. She applied for grants to get books and toys for the deaf and hard of hearing kids. She really went above and beyond the norm as a provider."

Many parents of older kids who sign weren't that fortunate in finding good daycare when their kids were young. But, these days, with more parents seeing the value of learning to sign with their hearing babies, daycare centers are incorporating signs in their daily routines. New Horizon Academy uses sign in all their centers. They introduce a sign a week to build vocabulary. The Star Tribune will feature them in a story about baby signing in the Oct. 11 or 18 Strib, which might also list other providers who sign. While baby signs aren't enough for a toddler who signs, there could be someone at these centers who has developed more fluent signing skills.

No matter what means of communication your child uses or what technology she relies on, it seems the best daycare providers are those who are willing to adapt to your child's needs rather than the other way around.

What's Happening Around Town

- Tuesday, Oct. 10** **Deaf Culture Salon features a Night of ASL Storytelling** from 7 to 9 p.m. at St. Paul College Auditorium, 235 Marshall Ave. in St. Paul. Admission is \$5. Registration begins at 6:30 p.m. Deaf Culture salons are conducted in ASL.
- Saturday, Oct. 14** **DeafTeen Quest hosts Family Day** at the McCutcheon Farm, 243 County Rd Y near Baldwin, Wis. (about 40 minutes from St. Paul), from 2 to 8:30 p.m. Enjoy hayrides, horseback riding, volleyball, basketball, kick ball, and more. Hot dogs and smores are provided. Bring a side dish and pop to share. Also bring folding camp chairs, flashlight, and bug spray. For directions and information contact Laurie Johnson at COHDeafOutreach@aol.com or ljinterpreter@tmail.com.
- Tuesday, Oct. 17** **Practice Cue Clutch** meets from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at Java Jacks, 818 W. 46th St. in Minneapolis. Meet CSAM Board members and others for directed activities to increase cueing fluency. For more information, contact Katherine Burns-Christenson at 952-929-3965 or e-mail kbc29@aol.com.
- Thursday, Oct. 19** **The Fifth Annual Auditory Oral Education Conference** runs from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the University of Minnesota St. Paul Campus. See Page 4 for details.
- Friday, Oct. 20** **CSD and St. Paul Parks and Rec offer roller skating** from 1 to 4 p.m. at Saints North (near White Bear Ave. & Hwy. 36). Cost is \$4 per person, which includes skate rental and mini-golf. Laser tag is additional. Register by Monday, Oct. 16. For a registration form, e-mail Mary.Livingston@ci.stpaul.mn.us or call 651-266-6366 (v), 651-266-6378 (tty).
- Friday, Oct. 27** **Get spooked with ValleyScare At Valleyfair** in Shakopee from 6 to 11 p.m. Tickets are \$21.95 for adults and \$9.95 for kids. Parking is \$8. For details, see www.valleyscare.com or contact Minnesota Deaf Events at mndeafevents@mail.com.
- Friday, Nov. 3** **Swim and Gym night** runs from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Wellstone Elementary School, 65 E. Kellogg Blvd. in St. Paul. Swimming is \$4 for adults, \$3 for children 12 and under, and \$1 for spectators. Pool depth is 3 1/2 feet to 9 feet. Lifeguards are on duty. Teens and adults can play volleyball for \$1 per person. For more information, e-mail Mary.Livingston@ci.stpaul.mn.us or call 651-266-6366 (v), 651-266-6378 (tty).
- Friday, Nov. 3** **Apple Valley High School performs "Under the Gaslight"** with ASL interpretation at 7:30 p.m. To request this service and to order tickets, call 952-431-8203 or 952-431-8737 (tty) at least 24 hours before the performance. Tickets are \$7 for adults and \$5 for seniors/students.
- Saturday, Nov. 4** **The St. Paul Public Library presents Deaf Storytime** with Estella Bustamante 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).
- Sunday, Nov. 5** **An ASL-interpreted tour of "A Passion for Paintings: Old Masters from the Wadsworth Atheneum" (special admission charged)** begins at 2 p.m. in the lobby of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. For details, call Visitor and Member Services at 612-870-3131 (v) or 612-870-3132 (tty) or e-mail dhegstro@artsmia.org.



ASL-Interpreted Performances

The Hound of the Baskervilles

Sunday, Oct. 15, 2 p.m.
 Tickets: \$15, \$12 senior/student.
 Bloomington Center for the Arts, 1800 W. Old Shakopee Road; 952-563-8587;
www.bloomingtonartcenter.com

Gypsy

Thursday, Oct. 19, 7:30 p.m.
 Tickets: Reduced for ASL patrons.
 Theater Latté Da at Loring Playhouse, 1633 Hennepin Ave. S., Mpls; 612-209-6689; www.ticketworks.com

The Big Friendly Giant

Oct. 25, 10:30 a.m.; Oct. 27, 7:30 p.m.
 Mention the VSA Offer for \$13 tickets.
 Children's Theatre Co., 2400 3rd Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-874-0400;
www.childrenstheatre.org

Little Bird That Was Caught—The Story of Jane Gibbs

Sunday, Oct. 29, 2 p.m.
 Tickets: \$11, \$9 student/senior.
 Theatre for Youth Development, Landmark Center, 75 W. 5th St., St. Paul; 651-225-9265; www.steppingstonetheatre.org

The Boxcar Children

Sunday, Oct. 29, 2 p.m.
 Tickets: Reduced to half-price.
 Ritz Theater, 345 13th Ave. NE, Mpls; 612-623-9080; www.youthperformanceco.com

Lost in Yonkers

Friday, Oct. 27 & Thursday, Nov. 2, 7:30 p.m.
 Tickets: Reduced to \$17.
 Guthrie Theater, 818 2nd St. S., Mpls.; 612-377-2224, 612-377-6626 (tty);
www.guthrietheater.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-DHOKID (346-4543) Toll-free TTY: 1-866-857-2379 E-mail: fsc@lifetrackresources.org Website: 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.

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In Your Corner

By Candace Lindow-Davies,
Family Support Coordinator

This month, we are highlighting the unique challenges parents of children with hearing loss face when looking for childcare. Finding childcare in general is difficult and very stressful, but the added considerations needed to address the needs of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing can be downright overwhelming.

I distinctly remember reading a variety of family's stories on the "GoHear.org" web site several years ago. The child's level of hearing loss differed, the communication method each family used varied, but one common thread remained: in every story, one parent quit their job and stayed home out of frustration. They were not able to find childcare that accepted or was capable of providing sufficient attention for their child with hearing loss. I found this quite sad that in this day and age of enlightened sensitivity, families still found it nearly impossible to locate a childcare provider who embraced their child for their uniqueness, and was willing to take on the challenge.

I will never forget one prospective child care center suggesting my son would simply watch what the other children were doing and would follow along. They didn't understand this wasn't enough. And, I will always remember visiting another center and watching as the child care providers just looked at my son like he had landed from another planet. They seemed completely unable to even attempt communication or interaction with him. With this and other experiences, I resigned from my former position and started working opposite shifts from my husband.

Now that being said, I do recognize that caring for multiple children can be daunting. I always look at caregivers in awe when they can manage a whole army of young children with calm structure. I admire anyone with that unique gift. But, I also have profound admiration for caregivers who listen to you describe your child's need for hearing aid checks, added communication training, help in socialization etc...and respond confidently that they can make it work. Those are the people who see your child as just that: a child—not a problem.

Our family has been blessed to have several people like that in our lives, and I only wish that you have had the same. After all, our children are part of a larger community, and the lessons our children can teach by interacting with the adults and children in that greater community are profound and life-changing.

On another note, our office is looking for a new Parent Guide (see the job description to the right). Our colleague, Robin Conninx, is leaving us to focus on her growing family. She will be greatly missed. We have so appreciated her 2 and a half years of dedication to families and the mission of our program. We are pleased that Robin will continue to serve on our Advisory Board and be a mentor to families. We wish her all the best.

Public meeting sheds light on IDEA changes

The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) will hold a public meeting Oct. 25 at PACER Center, 8161 Normandale Blvd. in Minneapolis. National representatives will explain the new regulations in the updated Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The meeting is open to parents, teachers, school administrators and related service providers.

Participants will receive a copy of the regulations on a CD, a CD Tool Kit on Teaching and Assessing Students With Disabilities, plus copies of the three model forms required under the reauthorization: Individualized Education Program (IEP), Notice of Procedural Safeguards, and Prior Written Notice.

The meeting will start at 5:30 p.m. with a reception. The presentation will run from 6:30 to 9 p.m. with an opportunity for comments and questions. To register, contact PACER Center at 952-838-9000, 952-838-0199 (tty), or go to www.pacer.org/workshops.

Scholarship offered to DHH teachers

Teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing can apply for free tuition to the acclaimed Educational Consultant Training Program offered by Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

The National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management (NCHAM) is sponsoring eight teachers for the Winter 2007 course from Jan. 8 to Feb. 13 in San Francisco. This comprehensive training program prepares teachers to develop and implement auditory-oral educational programs for children who have cochlear implants.

Applicants who are accepted in the course are able to attend at no cost in addition to receiving a stipend to defer costs of housing and food while they are enrolled. Graduates of the program are eligible for nine hours of academic graduate credit from Smith College.

To learn more about the Educational Consultant Training Program, see www.chop.edu/ectp.

The Family Support Connection has an opening for a "Parent Guide" (formerly known as "Family Support Specialist") in our St. Paul Office. This is a paid, 10-hour per week position with flexible hours.

Applicants, preferably parents of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing, should embrace our mission of supporting families through parent-to-parent contact and be able to present options to families without bias.

Inquiries can be directed to Candace Lindow-Davies at 651-265-2435 (v), 651-265-2379 (tty) or candaced@lifetrackresources.org.



The View from Here

Northwest:

Get together with families that have children who are deaf or hard of hearing at a social Saturday, Oct. 14 from 1 to 3 p.m. at First Lutheran Church, 619 Broadway in Fargo. For more information, contact Linda Ehlers at North Dakota School for the Deaf, 701-239-7116.

East/West Central:

The Disability Awareness Task Force will hold a **Celebration of Abilities** at the Whitney Senior Center in St. Cloud on Wednesday, Oct. 25 from 5 to 7 p.m. The free event will feature food and prizes plus entertainment by The AMAZING Jeffo, a blind magician.

Southwest:

Barnes & Noble in Mankato hosts **ASL Storytime** with Sara Gerdts at 10 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 4 in the children's book section.

Northeast:

Magic Morgan, a deaf magician, will perform at the Duluth Children's Museum, 506 W Michigan St., Friday, Oct. 20 at 10:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. \$2 donation requested. Contact Sue Hite-Kirk, Deaf & Hard of Hearing Services-Northeast, at 218-723-4962 (v) or 866-488-3833 (tty).

U of M site of Oral Education conference

The Midwest Auditory Oral Education Conference for parents and professionals who support the development of spoken language skills in children who are deaf or hard of hearing will be Thursday, Oct. 19 from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the University of Minnesota-St. Paul Campus.

The main presenter will be Warren Estabrooks, M.Ed., Dip. Ed. Deaf, Cert. AVT. He is the Director of the Learning to Listen Foundation (LTLF), in Toronto, Canada, and a global consultant on Auditory-Verbal therapy, auditory (re)habilitation, auditory learning, childhood hearing impairment and cochlear implant habilitation. His lengthy book list includes "Do You Hear That?" (1992), "The ABC's of AVT" (1995), "Cochlear Implants For Kids" (1998), "The Six-Sound Song" (2003), and, "We Learned to Listen" (2005).

The conference is jointly presented by Amplifon USA, MN AGBell, and Northern Voices. Vendors of assistive listening devices and classroom resources will be displaying their wares. The day also will include discussion by a panel of students who have hearing loss and have been mainstreamed in school.

Cost for the conference is \$35 for parents and family members, \$90 for professionals and \$45 for students. Registration deadline is Oct. 13. For registration and additional conference details, see www.northernvoices.org.

Read about the president protest happening at Gallaudet University at www.gufssa.org or see the blog www.deafread.com.

Workshop looks at metal health issues

PACER will hold a workshop Oct. 17 on mental health issues in children with disabilities and how parents can help their kids.

The speaker will be Dr. Barry Garfinkel, an expert in psychopharmacology, attention and learning disorders, and depression and suicide in children and adolescents. Dr. Garfinkel will identify mental health disorders that commonly occur with other disabilities, their symptoms, and treatments and medications. PACER Staff also will give information about special education plans using the Individual Interagency Intervention Plan (IIIP) to facilitate better coordination of services and supports in school, home, and community.

This free workshop, "Understanding Mental Health and Disabilities," goes from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 17 at PACER Center, 8161 Normandale Blvd. in Minneapolis. To register online see www.pacer.org/workshops, or call 952-838-9000 (v), 952-838-0190 (tty), or toll free 800-537-2237.

Deaf culture, education, implants topic of national radio broadcast, webcast Oct. 12

Deaf culture and education will be the focus of a National Public Radio (NPR) broadcast Oct. 12.

NPR's "Talk of the Nation" host Neal Conan will be speaking with outgoing Gallaudet President, Dr. I. King Jordan about his legacy and the controversy around the appointment of his successor, Dr. Jane Fernandes.

"Talk of the Nation" begins at 1 p.m. on Minnesota Public Radio (91.1 FM in the Twin Cities).

Dr. Jordan plans to retire at the end of this year as president of Gallaudet University, the world's only university dedicated to deaf and hard of hearing students. He has been the first deaf president of the institution, beginning in 1988 after the Deaf President Now movement.

A second hour of the show will examine the shifting climate surrounding cochlear implants. Once an issue that divided the Deaf community, the use of cochlear implants is now more accepted. Guests during this hour will include documentary filmmaker Josh Aronson, whose film, "Sound and Fury," portrays the controversy in the Deaf community. Aronson recently completed a follow-up to his film, "Sound and Fury: Six Years Later." Peter and Heather Artinian who were featured in both films also will be on the show.

The show will be captioned live on www.npr.org. The captioning technology enabling the streaming of broadcast captions on the Web is developed and provided by the Media Access Group at WGBH Boston. Since "Talk of the Nation" is a call-in show, access for people with hearing loss will be available via TTY and e-mail. Audio and text of the show will be available later at www.npr.org.

Tactile art tours offered at MIA

The Minneapolis Institute of Arts hosts "Art Beyond Sight Awareness Month" with free tours for people who are blind or have low vision. The tours include tactile diagramming of Van Gogh's *Olive Trees* plus "white glove" touching of sculptures. Dates are Oct. 17, 19, 24 and 26 at 2 p.m. To register, schedule another time or request an interpreter for a deafblind visitor, call 612-870-3140 or e-mail dhegstro@artsmia.org.

Annual writing, art contest features Olympic theme

Gallaudet University is sponsoring a contest for high school students to win tickets to the Winter Deaflympics from Feb. 1 to 10 in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The 2007 Gallaudet National Essay, Art, and Sign Contest has an Olympian-related theme: "What does 'going for the gold' mean to you? How do you go for the gold in your life?"

Top winners in all three contest categories will win tickets to see the world's top deaf and hard of hearing athletes compete for medals in winter sports, such as skiing, hockey, and ice skating. Winners also will get \$100, plus place winners in the essay category will receive scholarships (beginning at \$1,000) to the postsecondary program of their choice. All scholarships will be doubled for those who choose to attend Gallaudet University.

Winning entries in the essay and sign categories and all art entries will be displayed on the contest website: <http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/deaflympics/contest.html>. See the website for rules, entry forms, and other information. The contest deadline is Oct. 31.

Contest rewards computer art, animation skills

Students with hearing loss in grades 9-12 can compete for prizes and an all-expenses-paid trip to Rochester, New York, in the inaugural Digital Arts and Animation Competition, sponsored by Rochester Institute of Technology's National Technical Institute for the Deaf.

This national competition recognizes students' artistic expression with awards for first place and honorable mention(s) in the following categories: Mixed Digital Media, Web Page Design, Graphic Media, 3-D Animation, Interactive Media, Photo Illustration and Free-Hand Art in Digital Form.

To qualify, students must submit an entry form, a 150- to 300-word descriptive essay and artwork on CD or DVD. Additional requirements and information is available at www.rit.edu/NTID/Arts. The submission deadline is Dec. 1.

Learn more about Deaflympics at www.2007deaflympics.com.



A Little Grin

By Kelly Tuomala

Whenever it starts to rain or sprinkle and my son, Landon, is outside, he runs in to get a baseball cap to cover his cochlear implant. He puts his hand over his magnet on his head saying, "I am covering my 'coke.'" (That is what he call his CI.)

One day he was playing outside and it started to sprinkle. He was playing with a couple of his good friends—who have often inquired why they don't/can't have a "coke"—when all three came running in the house to get baseball caps. Each child had his hand cupped on his head just like Landon, who was protecting his CI. Since only Landon has an implant, I asked the other kids why they were holding their heads.

"We're covering our 'cokes,' too," was their reply. They were so insistent that they had implants, too. What wonderful friends my son has!

New vaccine targets ear, sinus infections

A new vaccine to eliminate childhood ear and sinus infections and many cases of bronchitis in adults is being developed.

Vaccines already exist for streptococcal bacteria and Haemophilus influenzae B, which were the leading causes of ear and sinus infections and bronchitis. This new vaccine will target Nontypeable Haemophilus influenzae or NTHi. Unlike nearly all other vaccines on the market, this one will not be aimed at saving lives, but at preventing illnesses, some of which can cause permanent hearing loss.

Researchers at the University of Rochester Medical Center are working on the vaccine. The University has received a \$3.5 million grant from the National Institute of Deafness and Communication Disorders, one of the National Institutes of Health, to develop the new vaccine.

A team at Rochester also helped develop the vaccine Prevnar, which is used to protect infants and toddlers against some strains of bacteria that can cause pneumonia, meningitis and ear infections. Data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that Prevnar has reduced bacterial pneumonia rates by 78 percent.

Restaurants make progress in serving deaf

Drivers who are deaf or hard of hearing are getting a boost from new technology that helps them place orders in the drive-thru lane at some fast-food restaurants.

Order Assist, a \$700 device created by Chicago-based Inclusion Solution, is being tested right now at Culver's Restaurants in Chicago. Customers pull up to the order panel, see a touch-pad to ring for assistance and then drive up to the pickup window where they are handed a pen, paper and menu. To learn more about the device, visit www.inclusionsolutions.com.

Scout troop welcomes girls with special needs

Girls in grades 1-6 who have special needs can join a combined Brownie/Junior Girl Scout troop that will meet in St. Paul monthly on Sunday afternoons.

The girls will form Troop 2606 and will have an opportunity to earn badges and take part in scouting activities. Depending on the interests of the girls, an outing or two and maybe a camp out will be planned. An ASL interpreter is being requested for troop meetings.

There will be an initial parent meeting at St. Mark's Catholic Church (2001 Dayton Ave. in St. Paul) on Sunday, Oct. 8 from 3 to 4 p.m. For more information or to RSVP for the parent meeting, contact Liz McDevitt at 651-646-9659 or jusliz@earthlink.net.

Church provides ASL-interpreted service

Bloomington Covenant Church, 102nd & Xerxes Ave. S. in Bloomington now offers an ASL-interpreted service at 10:30 a.m. on the 2nd and 4th Sunday each month. The church is part of the Evangelical Covenant Church. For more information call 952-831-8339 or see www.bcov.org.



Off the Shelf

By Robin Coninx, FSC Specialist

The subject for this month's newsletter is Child Care. We have a book in our library that can help a caregiver learn to sign with a child who has hearing loss. It is titled "Caring for Young Children, Signing for Day Care Providers & Sitters," by S. Harold Collins. The book is divided up in sections applicable to daycare. For example, in the Activities section there are signs for common activities like drawing. This 30-page book has an index in the back so you can look up specific words.

Another helpful book is "Signs for Me: Basic Sign Vocabulary for Kids, Parents & Teachers" by Ben Bahan. This book has signs paired with pictures of more than 300 primary words. It has an index in English and a variety of languages: Spanish, Vietnamese, Hmong, Tagalog, Lao and Cambodian.

We also have a score of videos that teach sign language for kids and to kids. These include the "Basic Sign Language for Children" series, the Bravo family series and "Talking Hands: a sign language video for children." Many videos are available in Spanish, too.

For all kids, not just those who sign, Virginia Morin's book, "Fun to Grow On: Engaging Play Activities for Kids with Teachers, Parents and Grandparents," offers more than 100 spontaneous, creative and playful ways to interact.

Please call or e-mail the Family Support Connection for your library needs.

It has been my pleasure to write to you about our library, however, after Oct. 16th, I will no longer be at the Family Support Connection. I want to send you my best wishes and say "happy reading" to all who read my column.

Invention lets parents 'call out' to child with hearing loss

At last, someone has invented a device to replace the "unheard shout." (Read the "Unheard Shout" story in the July/August edition of FOCUS, which is online at www.familysupportconnection.org.)

Robert Raab of Mississippi has created a prototype of the Ear-Mounted Alarm and Signaling Device and currently is looking for a manufacturer. Raab thought up the device after driving past a "Deaf Child Area" sign and contemplating all the issues facing parents of children who can't hear. The inventor is not deaf, nor does he have any deaf family members.

The device is a two-piece system. A hand-held remote control sends a wireless signal to an earpiece that looks like a hearing aid. The signal can be an audible alarm or a vibration. The device can have a hearing aid built into it. It also has an internal clock that can be set like an alarm so wearers can use it like a kitchen timer or a morning alarm clock.

Raab wanted to make the device to help parents get a deaf child's attention, especially if a child gets too close to traffic or wanders into other danger. Since the device has a half-mile range, he also thinks it could be used by hunters or others who want to signal each other without making noise.

Cochlear implant makers roll out improved devices

A next-generation cochlear implant made by Advanced Bionics (now owned by Boston Scientific) recently received approval from the Food and Drug Administration for use in adults. The product is expected to be available in early 2007.

The FDA approved the Harmony HiResolution Bionic Ear System, which improves sound delivery by steering electrical currents in a way that boosts the number of spectral bands from 16 to 120. The Harmony system can enhance music appreciation and improve hearing in a variety of difficult listening environments.

For new candidates, the Harmony System has a revolutionary internal component and a behind-the-ear (BTE) external sound processor. Patients who currently have an Advanced Bionic implant can upgrade their BTE to the Harmony BTE and take advantage of the high resolution system. Details about the new Harmony are on the Web at www.bionicear.com.

Earlier this summer, Cochlear Americas received FDA approval for the Nucleus Freedom cochlear implant system, designed to mimic the functions of the human ear. Nucleus 24 recipients now can upgrade to a Freedom BTE or slim, body-worn processor.

Among the improvements the Freedom offers are better hearing performance, long-lasting batteries (up to 5 days) in disposable and rechargeable styles, a Mini BTE that's 12% smaller than the standard BTE, and SmartSound technology that allows users more focused listening and comfort in noisy environments. For complete details, see www.cochlear.com.

New biography shows how deaf wife had impact on Bell's work

In her new book, "Reluctant Genius: The Passionate Life And Inventive Mind of Alexander Graham Bell," author Charlotte Gray sheds light on the influence Bell's wife, Mabel Hubbard, had on his work.

Bell met Mabel, who was deaf, in 1873 when he was a professor of vocal physiology and elocution at Boston University. In this book, Gray recounts their courtship and marriage while detailing Bell's path to inventive genius. She describes, too, Bell's friendship with Helen Keller and Keller's many visits to the Bells' Cape Breton estate. The book shows Bell as both larger than life and as stubborn, stormy and socially uncertain, dependent on his capable wife's support.

Published by HarperCollins, the hardcover lists at \$29.95.

Art-Abilities
 Gallery Opening
 Saturday, Oct. 7,
 10:30 a.m.
 Ridgedale Library
 Original art
 by Minnesotans
 with disabilities.
 Refreshments served.
 Art will be on display
 through Oct. 22.