



The Family Support Connection FOCUS

—News from Minnesota Hands & Voices—

APRIL 2007

Getting child with hearing loss enrolled in Kindergarten takes extra planning

It's the time of year when schools across the country host Kindergarten "round-ups" to gather information from families that have kids who will enter school in the Fall. For most families, Kindergarten Round Up simply means a visit to their neighborhood school. For a child who is deaf or hard of hearing, the neighborhood school might not be the best option—or the school might need to make special accommodations. So for these kids, enrolling in Kindergarten takes much more planning and research.

Brenda Hommerding, our East/West Central Minnesota Parent Guide, has 5-year-old twin girls who will be attending Kindergarten this Fall. The girls are both hard of hearing and wear hearing aids. Their hearing loss was diagnosed through Newborn Hearing Screening. The girls have had intervention services both at home and through Early Childhood classes at school.

"We have gone through our share of IFSP and IEP meetings," Brenda said. "But it wasn't until the most recent IEP meeting I attended that I realized I am not as prepared for my girls' transition into Kindergarten as I had hoped." (IFSP stands for Individualized Family Service Plan and covers services through the Birth to Three system. IEP stands for Individualized Education Program, which outlines Special Education services for students during their school years.)

Even though her daughters are in preschool right now, the transition to Kindergarten feels BIG, Brenda said. She is concerned about how her daughters will hear in a class with nearly twice as many kids as their preschool class. She doesn't know if the new FM "boot" the girls will wear on their hearing aids will help enough for them to understand the teacher. And, she's concerned about the class time they'll miss when they go to speech therapy.

"I am also concerned how tired they are going to be after attending school all day," she added.

Brenda shared these concerns with her daughters' IEP team at their recent meeting.

"I was grateful for the rest of the team's opinions and for them to get an idea for what I am feeling and to see things from my point of view," she said. Still, Brenda said this first Kindergarten IEP meeting was intimidating.

"This was the biggest group ever to attend an IEP meeting, and I was nervous that the girls' needs were not going to be met," she explained. "With many budget cuts in the school system, I was concerned about classroom size being bigger and my girls having an even harder time hearing." She felt reassured, though, when one IEP team member pointed out that her daughters will have a whole IEP team looking out for them so they don't fall behind.

As Brenda knows, navigating that first school-age IEP can be overwhelming. The Hands & Voices' website can help parents/guardians who are passing the same milestone as Brenda. [See www.bandsandvoices.org and then scroll over "Resources," open "Topics" and choose "Education" for a list of articles related to elementary and secondary education.]

One document on the website, "Preschool/Kindergarten Placement Checklist for Children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing," lists questions parents can ask teachers or school representatives to decide if a school will meet their child's needs. The list covers issues about what is taught in the classroom, how it's taught, and how behavior problems are handled. It also covers the physical environment of the classroom to ensure that the room itself won't hinder a child's ability to hear or to see to speechread or sign.

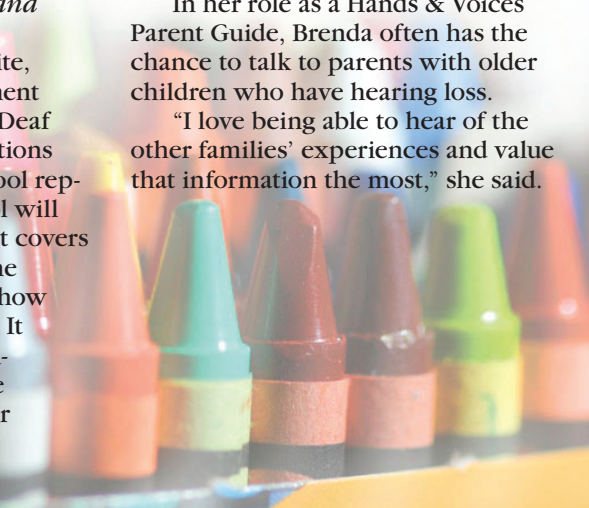
Considerations include the size of the room—"a large room/high ceiling can distort sound"—and the "acoustics" of the room. The checklist points out that materials such as bare walls or floors can make hearing difficult.

Families evaluating Kindergarten placement for their children who are deaf or hard of hearing also need to look at the child's mode of communication, academic skills, and the opportunities the child will have to make friends at school. There are many options available for school, including mainstream classrooms, self-contained classrooms where all the students use the same mode of communication (for example, American Sign Language or Cued Speech), and residential programs. The Family Support Connection/MN Hands & Voices' website describes these options. [See www.familysupportconnection.org, click on "education resources" and choose "K-12 Options."]

Another resource families have for evaluating Kindergarten/schools is the vast network of parents who have already walked this path. At the Family Support Connection/MN Hands & Voices, we can talk with you about our experiences and connect you with families that are similar to yours.

In her role as a Hands & Voices Parent Guide, Brenda often has the chance to talk to parents with older children who have hearing loss.

"I love being able to hear of the other families' experiences and value that information the most," she said.



Here's What's Happening Around Town

April 6-8

DeafTeen Quest hosts a rally with ASL songs, drama and ice cream at Deaf Dakota Hills Church located in Mt. Olivet Church, 14201 Cedar Ave. S. in Apple Valley. The rally runs Friday and Saturday at 7 p.m. and 9:30 a.m. Easter Sunday. For more information see www.ddhcmn.org.

Saturday,
April 7

The Merriam Park Branch Library presents Deaf Storytime with Egina Beldon at 10:30 a.m. at 1831 Marshall Ave. For details, call 651-642-0385(v) or 651-298-4184(tty).

Tuesday,
April 10

The 916 Auditory/Oral Program Parent Support Group welcomes Mary Bauer of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at Parkview Center School in Roseville. Free for 916 district families, \$5 for others. Childcare and ASL interpreter are provided. For more information, call 651-415-5548.

Thursday,
April 12

Metro Deaf School hosts an Open House for the community from 6 to 8 p.m. to show off their new location: 1471 Brewster St. in St. Paul. For directions, see www.metrodeafschool.org

Friday,
April 13

Open swim for the deaf/hard of hearing community runs from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Arlington High School, 1495 Rice St. in St. Paul. Cost is \$4 for adults, \$3 for children 12 and under, and \$1 for spectators. For more information, e-mail Mary. Livingston@ci.stpaul.mn.us or call 651-266-6366(v), -6378(tty).

Tuesday,
April 17

Practice Cue Clutch meets from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at Java Jacks, 818 W. 46th St. in Minneapolis. Contact Katherine Burns-Christenson at 952-929-3965 or e-mail kbc29@aol.com.

Wednesday,
April 18

Family Fun Night at Skateville in Burnsville from 6 to 8 p.m. is open to all students with hearing loss and their families. \$3.50 admission includes free skate rental (+\$3 for inline skates or bring your own). Kids must be accompanied by an adult, and skate at their own risk. Questions: e-mail Kristine. Cinealis@district196.org or call 651-683-6969, ext. 95299.

Friday,
April 20

Metro Deaf School holds its 13th annual fundraising spaghetti dinner from 4:30 to 7 p.m. For details and driving directions, see www.metrodeafschool.org.

Saturday,
April 21

ASL performer Bernard Bragg presents Theatre in the Sky, a humorous, heart-warming show for all ages. 7 p.m. College of St. Catherine, St. Paul—FREE parking in O'Shaughnessy event lot. Directions at www.stkate.edu. Tickets are \$10 in advance, \$13 at door. Voice interpretation provided. Other accommodations should be requested by April 7 by e-mailing medeafie@hotmail.com.

Thursday,
April 26 &
Friday, April 27

An ASL-interpreted tour of "Art in Bloom" begins at 7 p.m. Thursday, 11:30 a.m. Friday in the second floor Rotunda at 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.

Friday,
April 27

Music In The Park Family Concert Series brings folksinger Jill Trinka to St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, St. Anthony Park, for shows at 6:15 and 7:30 p.m. with ASL interpretation. Tickets are \$5 in advance, \$6 at the door. Call 651-645-5699 or see "Family Concerts" at www.musicintheparkseries.org.

Thursday,
May 3

Ramsey County Interagency Early Intervention Committee hosts a **Service Providers Resource Fair** at Arlington High School, 1495 Rice S. in St. Paul, from 4 to 6:30 p.m.



ASL-Interpreted Performances

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland
IN ASL: April 19, 20, 21 - 2007 at 7 p.m.
MN State Academy for the Deaf, Faribault,
www.msad.state.mn.us

You Can't Take it With You
Saturday, April 14, 7:30 p.m.
Lyric Arts Main Street Stage, Anoka; 763-422-1838; www.lyricarts.org

You Can't Take it With You
Saturday, April 14, 7:30 p.m.
North High School, 2416 E. 11th Ave.,
North St. Paul; 651-748-6090;
www.northhightheatre.org

Beauty and the Beast
Friday, April 27, 7:30 p.m.
Burnsville High School at Mraz Center, 600
E. Hwy. 13, Burnsville, 952-707-2320;
www.mrazcentertickets.com

Barefoot in the Park
Saturday, April 28, 7:30 p.m.
Bloomington Center for the Arts, 1800 W.
Old Shakopee Road; 952-563-8587;
www.bloomingtonartcenter.com

The Arabian Nights
Saturday, April 28, 8 p.m.
Rarig Center's Kilburn Arena Theatre,
University of Minnesota's West Bank Arts
Quarter, 330 21st Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-624-2345; theatre.umn.edu

Seussical
May 23, 10:30 a.m. & June 1, 7:30 p.m.
Children's Theatre, 2400 3rd Ave. S., Mpls;
612-874-0400; www.childrenstheatre.org

Ask about VSA offer for reduced tickets!

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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.

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In Your Corner

By Candace Lindow-Davies,
Family Support Coordinator

I hope you enjoy our discussion of transition to Kindergarten in this month's issue. I remember my own son making the leap from preschool at Rondo ECSE in St. Paul to attend Como Elementary. We were fortunate that the two schools worked so closely together, so the transition was really a non-event. We had been attending Parent nights at Como for years, so my son was already familiar with the building and the staff. I would highly recommend families do whatever they can to allow their future Kindergartner to become accustomed to their new surroundings...take a Community Ed. class, ask for a tour, or spend a few hours observing in the classroom and cafeteria. While it's a big jump for any child, it can also be an incredible confidence-building experience.

Spring is always a busy time for our program. Metro Parent Guide, Melissa McNamer, and I just returned from the 2007 National Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Conference in Salt Lake City. With record numbers attending this year, participants were able to connect with representatives from across the country and the world. The focus still centers on improving the quality of newborn hearing screening programs, but has moved beyond to methods to reduce the number of children who do not return for diagnostic testing, the role of genetic testing, and new technology, among others.

We found one especially interesting development to share with you: Georgia Tech and Atlanta Area School for the Deaf are working together to develop new sign language technology. For a peek at what they've come up with, see www-static.cc.gatech.edu/program/cats/.

We also noticed one obvious trend at the conference —the growing number of states becoming Hands & Voices chapters. Many also are implementing the Guide By Your Side program. This is certainly an exciting movement, and we are eager to continue the family support dialogue at the National Hands & Voices Leadership conference in July and the National Family Support Conference in Nashville in October.

We wish all of you a beautiful Spring. Hope you can make it to the May 5th Tech Expo!

Register now for Parent Child Institute

Registration for the Parent Child Institute June 8-10 at Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf in Faribault is due by May 1. This weekend workshop, "ABC, Come Write With Me: Literacy through Writing," costs \$50 per family and includes workshops, lodging at MSAD, meals, and daycare/children's sessions. It is open to all Minnesota parents, grandparents, caregivers and guardians of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. It is sponsored by the Minnesota departments of Health and Education, MSAD, and the Minnesota Resource Center for the Deaf/HH. For more information or to register, contact Lola Brand at 800-657-3996 or e-mail lola.brand@msad.state.mn.us.

Summit helps parents advocate for kids

Family Leadership Summit runs from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. April 21 at PACER Center in Minneapolis. The workshop will focus on preparing parents to advocate for kids with special needs through serving on state and local advisory committees. The workshop is open to Minnesota parents who have children with special needs. Parents will be paid a stipend; accommodations, mileage and expenses will be covered for parents traveling in from greater Minnesota.

The summit helps participants develop or enhance leadership skills, broaden perspective on family leadership, and learn how to network. It is cosponsored by PACER Center and the Minnesota Departments of Health and Education.

Parents may register online or by phone by April 16. Contact Rebecca Karbon at 952-838-9000(v), 952-838-0190(tty), or 800-537-2237. To register online, go to www.pacer.org and click on "Workshops." Scroll down to The Second Annual Family Leadership Summit (under "Early Childhood") and click on "register."

Expo helps kids go far with technology

The Family Support Connection/MN Hands & Voices has teamed with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services to offer families a hands-on test drive of the latest gadgets that make life easier for children/teens who are deaf or hard of hearing.

"Oh the Places You'll Go" Tech Expo runs from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, May 5 at the Elmer L. Andersen Building in St. Paul. There will be short presentations every half hour on using technology at home, school and in the community. Bring your gear to test compatibility with other devices. Plus talk to other families about their experiences using the latest technologies.

This event is FREE. Parking is FREE. And, there's free FOOD! For a map to Tech Expo, see the attached flyer or visit www.familysupportconnection.org under "Current Events."

Federation of Blind offers scholarship

Students who are blind or deafblind can apply for a \$2,000 scholarship for college through the National Federation of the Blind Minnesota affiliate. Applicants must be legally blind and residents of Minnesota. In addition to receiving the monetary award, the scholarship recipient will attend the state convention of the National Federation of the Blind of Minnesota in the Fall at no cost. The scholarship will be awarded at the banquet of this convention. The deadline for applications is June 1. To request an application form, contact Sheila Koenig at 612-977-9110 or e-mail shekoenig@comcast.net.

PACER benefit May 5 features Jennifer Hudson

PACER's 25th Annual Benefit and Auction May 5 at the Minneapolis Convention Center features singer Jennifer Hudson, the American Idol favorite who recently won an Oscar for her role in the movie "Dreamgirls." The events begin with dinner at 5 p.m., a silent auction at 6 p.m., and a live auction and Hudson's performance at 8 p.m. Tickets range from \$55 to \$550. For more information, see www.pacer.org or call 952-838-9000.



The View from Here

Upper Northwest:

Fargo-Moorhead Community Theatre presents *The Little Mermaid* April 20 to

May 6. Request ASL interpretation: 701-235-6778 or 877-687-7469.

Families with children who have hearing loss gather for a day of fun in East Grand Forks Friday, May 4. For details, e-mail Kathy Peterson at kathyp@lifetrackresources.org.

Northwest:

“Connections,” a FREE social event & workshop, takes place at the Fergus Falls YMCA Saturday, April 21 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. MN Hands & Voices’ Parent Guides, Shannon Hohrman and Candace Lindow-Davies present on “hot topics” for parents of kids who have hearing loss. Mary Bauer from Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS) talks about technology. Register by April 10. For a registration brochure, contact DHHS at 800-456-7589 or e-mail Marcia.l.Schutt@state.mn.us.

Northeast:

The University of Minnesota Duluth Theatre presents *A Streetcar Named Desire* with ASL interpretation Sunday, April 22 at 2 p.m. For tickets, call 218-726-8561 or see www.d.umn.edu/theatre.

The National Cued Speech Association Fall Board Meeting and InCert Training comes to Duluth Oct. 19-21 (MEA weekend) at the Radisson Hotel. Rooms are available for \$99/night. For details, contact Joan Christenson at MinnCuer@aol.com. Cued Speech supporters can share concerns and ideas with their local and national boards.

East/West Central:

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services presents an **emergency preparedness seminar** from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, April 28 at North Junior High School, 1212 29th Ave. N., in St. Cloud. Emergencies and disasters can strike without warning. This free seminar will help you create a family emergency plan and a disaster supplies kit. RSVP by April 6th: 1-800-456-3690(v), 1-866-488-3909(tty) or e-mail dhhs.stcloud@state.mn.us. ASL interpreters, real-time captioning and lunch will be provided.

A free **“Spring Fling”** for students who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families takes place Saturday, April 14 from 10 a.m. to noon at Monticello Middle School, 800 East Broadway, in Monticello. Activities include a visit from the Easter Bunny, egg hunt, cookie decorating, a deaf magician, games and prizes. Register by April 10: 320-257-7396 or nsturlaugson@bentonstearns.k12.mn.us.

Southwest:

Barnes & Noble in Mankato hosts **ASL Storytime** at 10 a.m. Saturday, April 14.

Minnesota State University Mankato presents *Gypsy* with ASL interpretation Saturday, April 14 at 7:30 p.m. For tickets call 507-389-6661 or see www.MSUTheatre.com.

Record crowd encourages lawmakers to consider bills related to hearing loss

More than 300 people—a record turn out—attended Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind Legislative Day at the Capitol last month to encourage lawmakers to consider issues affecting people who are deaf or hard of hearing. A total of nine bills related to hearing loss issues are currently in the State Legislature, **including one (HF462) that would help fund our MN Hands & Voices’ Parent Guide program.**

“Our dream of having mandated newborn hearing screening and building a system that supports families with babies with hearing loss is getting closer to coming true,” said Mary Hartnett, MCDHH Executive Director (Minnesota Commission Serving Deaf & Hard of Hearing Persons). “And, we are one step away from passing one of the strongest hearing aid insurance bills for kids in the country.”

Legislators will be back from their Spring break April 10 when they will form conference committees to negotiate final funding totals. The MCDHH website (www.mncdhh.com) will have updates on these committees as well as the names of the major proponents of these bills. Mary encourages parents to write a note of thanks to these legislators, which she calls “our chief authors and heroes.”

“It makes a difference,” Mary said. “They stuck their necks out for us, and they deserve our thanks. They may also be on conference committees and hopefully will remember us fondly!”

For a complete description of the bills in the Legislature, see the MCDHH website.

Parents needed for national meeting on early language, literacy development

The Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center will hold the second in a series of stakeholder meetings July 18 and 19 at Gallaudet University Regional Center in Haverhill, Mass. Parents of children ages newborn to 5, professionals in early intervention and parent-infant programs, administrators, and state-level supervisors are invited to apply by April 22 to be included in the meeting, which is limited to 20 participants. Travel and accommodation expenses will be covered by the Clerc Center. For details, see clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/stakeholder/form.asp.

Website recruits teachers for deaf

A new website encourages students to enter the field of Deaf Education to counteract an expected shortage of teachers and program administrators in the next few years. This recruitment website (www.deafed.net/diversity) provides information for prospective students who are considering majoring in Deaf Education. The site explains the role of a Deaf Ed teacher and shares stories from current teachers in the field. It also offers links to resources on schooling and financial aid.

To request a Deaf Ed recruitment flyer to post at your school, e-mail Joyce Daugaard, University of Minnesota, at dauga001@umn.edu.

The Deaf Education website (www.deafed.net) has many resources for professionals who work in the field.

Gallaudet's summer sizzles

Gallaudet University in Washington, DC, offers a variety of summer "camps" for high school students who are hearing, deaf or hard of hearing. Applications are due by April 30. See <http://summer.gallaudet.edu>.

"Caring about Community" June 24-July 6 focuses on community service for students who are deaf/hard of hearing.

"Camp Gallaudet" July 1-13 is for non-signing deaf and hard of hearing high school students to learn about Deaf culture and ASL.

"Hearing ASL Camp" July 15-21 is for hearing students who have no or minimal sign language experience.

The following "camps" are offered through the Young Scholars Program for students who are deaf or hard of hearing:

"The Gally Code Game" July 8-20 has students design and produce a board game.

"LEADAmerica" July 9-14 offers an up-close look at American government and politics.

"Crimes and Clues!" July 15-27 focuses on forensic science.

"Black Washington" July 22-Aug. 3 covers African American heritage in the nation's capital.

"The Mysteries of Gallaudet" July 22-Aug. 3 is a filmmaking course.

"A Writer's Life" July 22-Aug. 3 is a writer's workshop.

School offers ASL interpreter for 'Hello, Dolly!'

Apple Valley High School has offered to have an ASL interpreter for the school's Spring musical, "Hello, Dolly!" at 7:30 p.m. Friday, May 4 if requested. To request this service, call 952-431-8203, 952-431-8208(v) or 952-431-8737(tty) at least 36 hours in advance. Tickets are \$9 for adults, \$7 for seniors age 62+, and \$5 for students.

Several other high school performances are including ASL interpretation this month. See Page 2 for details.

Vacation Bible School, June 18-22, at Diamond Lake Lutheran Church will be Cued Speech transliterated. For more information, see www.dllc.org.



A Little Grin

By Brenda Hommerding

Spring is here, bringing many changes both in the weather and the landscape. One of the changes we are going through at our house is getting our twin girls who are hard of hearing ready for Kindergarten in the fall. They recently had another speech evaluation and both girls qualify for speech therapy.

Their recent speech evaluation combined with the change in the weather has reminded me of an incident last year after the girls and I had watched the movie "Twister." It was clear that one daughter didn't get the correct pronunciation of "tornado" from the movie. She saw storm clouds looming outside of our window and came running to me saying, "Mom—there is a tomato coming!" We still laugh about that. We can all imagine a big tomato splashing into the house!

ASL student seeks job as nanny

A student at St. Paul College, studying to be an ASL interpreter, wants to be a live-in nanny for a family with deaf/hard of hearing children for the 2007-08 academic year. She would provide routine childcare in ASL in exchange for room and board. She'll provide references, has her own car, and doesn't smoke. Contact Rachael Jones at limeturtles@gmail.com.

Need interpreted Sunday school?

Macalester Plymouth United Church, a blended Presbyterian and United Church of Christ community, is considering adding interpreter services for the Sunday school program. The church is located in St. Paul near Macalester College. It has a small, but active group of Deaf/hard of hearing people in the church, and many parishioners have been studying ASL. If you'd be interested in this Sunday school, contact Irene Harris at jirene@tcq.net.

Northern Voices seeks votes for Timberwolves' grant

Northern Voices, an oral school in Roseville for children who are deaf or hard of hearing, has found a unique way to get additional program funds: the school has entered the Timberwolves FastBreak Foundation 2007 Fan Appreciation grant competition.

The Timberwolves Foundation will award a \$10,000 grant to an organization on Fan Appreciation Night Friday, April 13. The organization that gets the most votes online and at games before that night wins the grant.

To vote for Northern Voices, go to www.timberwolves.com, skip the intro, then look down the right-side column until you see the "Fan Appreciation" box and click where it says "Click here to vote." Simply follow the directions on the pop-up window to vote for Northern Voices. People can vote daily.

Teachers, parents invited to education conference in July

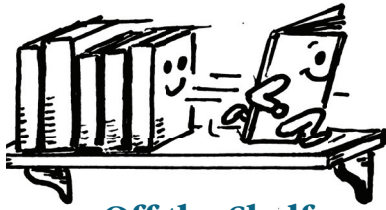
The Midwest Conference on Deaf Education will take place July 30-31 at Augustana College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. The conference helps participants learn new teaching techniques, exchange information and improve the education of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. It is open to parents, teachers, interpreters, speech therapists, and other professionals who work with children with hearing loss in school. To register or find more information, see www.MWCDE.com.

Enlarged Vestibular Aqueduct Syndrome topic for workshop

MN Hands & Voices is joining with The Lions Children's Hearing Center/University of Minnesota to present a workshop from 6 to 7:30 p.m. May 23 for families with children who have been diagnosed with Enlarged Vestibular Aqueduct Syndrome.

Presenters include Dr. Lisa Schimenti, Barbara Friedman, Dr. Tina Huang, and, Marian Hausladen. The workshop will be on the University of Minnesota campus on the 8th floor of the Phillip Wangenstein Building, 516 Delaware Street SE, Minneapolis.

Accommodation requests should be made by Friday, May 18. E-mail fsc@lifetrackresources.org.



Off the Shelf

By Laura Godfrey

If your child is about to make a transition to Kindergarten (or other school transition), you might find these books from our library helpful:

“Our Forgotten Children, Hard of Hearing Pupils in the Schools” by Julia M. Davis, Ph.D. talks about medical aspects of childhood hearing loss, what to look for with the acoustics in the classroom, amplification options in the classroom and educational issues.

“Hearing and Learning, a Guide for Helping Children” by Donna S. Wayner, Ph.D. looks at how hearing works. It briefly covers hearing aids, cochlear implants and communication methods. It also has checklists for schools and describes what a school needs to better help a child who has a hearing loss.

“Effectively Educating Students with a Hearing Loss” by Barbara Luetke-Stahlman and John Luckner covers both the academic needs and the non-academic needs of the child. It is designed for teachers and practitioners, but I found it to be an interesting insight into what strategies work best.

“From Emotions to Advocacy, The Special Education Survival Guide” by Peter and Pam Wright looks at how to plan, prepare, organize and get quality special education services. It is very user friendly and shows what to expect at an IEP meeting.

Attorney Lawrence M. Siegel, Director of the National Deaf Education Project, wrote “The Complete IEP Guide.” It offers help with special-education law, identifying your child’s needs, preparing for meetings, developing the IEP and resolving disputes.

To make a library request, go to www.familysupportconnection.org or call 651-265-2372 or 1-866-346-4543.

Local student wins national art contest

Brienna Herold of Spring Valley, Wis., was one of five winners in the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) Digital Arts and Animation Competition for Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Brienna, 15, won First Place in the category of “Mixed Digital Media.”

Brienna is a freshman who is mainstreamed at Spring Valley High School. The other winners and categories are: Warrance Yu, Ontario, Graphic Media; Michelle Chung, Ontario, Free-Hand Art in Digital Form; Eliazar Salazar, Texas, Photo Illustration; and, Michael Hoyt, Washington, 3-D Animation. The winners received recognition plaques and checks for \$250 each. Their awards were presented in a ceremony last month at RIT in Rochester, New York, in front of a crowd of over 200 people attending the Deaf Rochester Film Festival.

Brienna Herold created this winning entry in the RIT Digital Arts and Animation Competition. That’s Brienna in the bottom left of the collage.



New computer programs make it easy to add captions

Web designers can easily add captions to video on websites now because two new user-friendly captioning programs have been developed.

“CC for Flash,” created by WGBH Access, is a free tool that allows designers to embed captions using Adobe® Flash® technology so that viewers with hearing loss have access to video content. WGBH is Boston’s public broadcaster and a decades-long pioneer in developing media access solutions. A downloadable version of CC for Flash is online at ncam.wgbh.org/webaccess/ccforflash.

CaptionSync, created by Automatic Sync Technologies (AST), also works with Flash. CaptionSync is an online service at www.automaticsync.com/caption.

Both of these programs help government agencies, educational institutions, and television/web broadcasters meet state and federal laws that require them to caption their material.

National free-loan video library changes services

Recent changes to the Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP) won’t affect K-12 schools, but will mean that some individuals won’t be eligible to borrow materials through the free-loan library.

The National Association of the Deaf (NAD) administers the DCMP. The NAD just announced that free-loan media services are only available to K-12 schools (including home schools) and school professionals (including interpreters), plus families of qualifying students in K-12 settings. Deaf adults, college teachers and others no longer qualify for the free-loan service, but can use the website to find captioned media available for purchase. The main reason for this change is that the DCMP is funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, which stipulates that materials be used for educational purposes.

In addition, the DCMP will only be circulating DVDs, not videos. The DCMP will continue to stream many titles on its website at www.dcmp.org. Along with captioned DVDs, DCMP now offers described DVDs for blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind students. Also, all media now will be mailed from a centralized DCMP library in Oklahoma, called the National Accessible Learning Center.