

The Family Support Connection FOCUS

—News from Minnesota Hands & Voices—



MARCH 2007

Researchers gather data on babies born with virus

Researchers at the University of Minnesota are looking for participants for a study on congenital Cytomegalovirus (CMV) in children with hearing loss.

Parents/guardians only need to give written consent so a child's newborn screening blood sample card can be retrieved from the Minnesota Department of Health. The sample will be checked for the presence of CMV at the University of Minnesota at no cost to participants. Each child's results will be shared with family, and if they wish, also with their health care providers. The results from all children will be anonymously incorporated into the study results.

"Those results will hopefully give us a better understanding of the role congenital CMV plays in childhood hearing loss and help us find future treatments for congenital CMV and its consequences," said Bazak Sharon, MD. Dr. Sharon is a fellow at the Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases, University of Minnesota, Department of Pediatrics and a study researcher.

CMV is a member of the herpesvirus family, which includes the viruses that cause chickenpox (varicella-zoster virus), infectious mononucleosis (Epstein-Barr Virus), and fever blisters and genital herpes (Herpes Simplex Virus I&II). Like other herpes viruses, once CMV enters a body, the virus can become dormant for a while and be reactivated at a later time.

"CMV is a common virus that infects most people at some time during their lives, but rarely causes obvious illness," Dr. Sharon said. "The virus is carried by people and is not associated with food, water or animals."

"Congenital" CMV infection simply means that a baby is born with the infection, Dr. Sharon explained. This can happen if the mother becomes infected

for the first time during pregnancy, or if pre-existing CMV is reactivated during pregnancy. CMV is the most common congenital infection. It is estimated that 1% of all babies in the US are born with congenital CMV.

Only 10 to 15% of babies who are born with congenital CMV have any symptoms at birth. Symptoms of congenital CMV range from isolated mild hearing loss to severe illness with growth and developmental retardation and deafness.

Hearing loss is the most common consequence of congenital CMV infection. Sometimes the loss is apparent and can be picked up by newborn hearing screening. However, "most babies with congenital CMV have normal hearing at birth," Dr. Sharon added. These babies may develop mild to profound hearing loss in the first few years of life, he said.

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— Bazak Sharon, MD
University of Minnesota

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When a baby contracts CMV after birth but in the first few days of life, it is called "perinatal" CMV.

"Perinatal CMV infection is usually mild, and not associated with hearing loss," Dr. Sharon said.

CMV infection is diagnosed from samples of body fluids or tissue. To diag-



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for you to make your
summer plans. See
Page 5 for ideas!***

nose congenital infection, the sample must be obtained in the first few days of life.

"If CMV is found in samples taken after the first 3 weeks of life, it is impossible to differentiate between asymptomatic congenital CMV and 'perinatal' CMV," Dr. Sharon said.

That's why the University of Minnesota study is using newborn screening samples to identify children infected with congenital CMV.

"In the first days of life, a few drops of blood are collected from all babies born in Minnesota," Dr. Sharon explained. The blood samples are dropped onto a special card. "Those 'newborn blood spots' are used for the 'newborn screening' for several congenital/genetic diseases—sometimes called 'PKU screen'."

The Minnesota Department of Health holds these cards in storage for years. The blood spots on the cards can be tested—even years later—to see if a child was born with congenital CMV.

"The retrospective diagnosis of congenital CMV in a child with hearing impairment can be very beneficial to the child and his/her family," Dr. Sharon said. "Studies have shown that a significant percentage of childhood hearing loss can be due to congenital CMV infection. Knowing the probable cause of the hearing loss can provide a helpful tool for the doctor to discuss with the families the expected outcome for their child's hearing and development. It will also assist the health-care provider to give better counseling about hearing problems in future children."

To participate in the University's CMV study, e-mail cmv@umn.edu or contact your child's audiologist or physician who can connect you with the doctors at the University of Minnesota.

What's Happening Around Town

**Fridays through
March 30**

Shoot hoops during Open Basketball for adults and teens, ages 16+ from 7 to 9 p.m. at Homecroft Recreation Center, 1845 Sheridan Ave. in St. Paul. Cost is \$8 for 10 weeks or \$1 each night. (No basketball on Feb. 2 and March 2.) Sponsored by CSD-MN and St. Paul Parks and Recreation.

**Thursday,
March 8**

Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deafblind Lobby Day happens at the Capitol starting at 9 a.m. Support legislation such as funding for the Family Support Connection/MN Hands & Voices, mandated newborn hearing screening, and hearing aid funding for children. Contact Mary.Hartnett@state.mn.us. or call 651-297-7305(v), 888-206-2001(tty).

**Friday,
March 9**

Deafhood: Understanding Deaf Culture is the topic for a Deaf Culture Salon from 7 to 9 p.m. at Saint Paul College Auditorium, 235 Marshall Ave. Admission is \$5. Registration begins at 6:30 p.m. Deaf Culture salons are conducted in ASL.

**Wednesday,
March 14**

Advanced Bionics presents free "webinars" (online seminars) about cochlear implants at 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. Register at www.bionicear.com/support/harmonywebinars.asp.

**Tuesday,
March 20**

Practice Cue Clutch meets from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at Java Jacks, 818 W. 46th St. in Minneapolis. Directed activities increase cueing fluency. For more information, contact Katherine Burns-Christenson at 952-929-3965 or e-mail kbc29@aol.com.

**Wednesday,
March 21**

"Through Deaf Eyes," a documentary on the lives of Americans who are deaf, airs at 8 p.m. on TPT (ch. 2 -- check TV listing that week). PBS will host a website at www.pbs.org (it's not up yet) where viewers can submit their own stories, photographs, and films. These will become part of the archival collection of Gallaudet University. The university also is publishing a companion book for the documentary.

**Thursday,
March 22**

Take a peek at Minnesota North Star Academy during their Open House beginning at 6:30 p.m. The school is located at 1669 N. Arcade St. in St. Paul. For details, call 651-771-2000(v).

**Friday,
March 23**

Dance with friends at the Statewide DHH High School Teen Dance at Coon Rapids High School from 7 to 10:30 p.m. Student ID required. E-mail jay.fehrman@anoka.k12.mn.us.

**Saturdays
March 24 - May 19**

Exercise and learn to relax during Family Yoga for adults and children ages 6+ at North Dale Recreation Center, 1414 N. St. Albans St., St Paul. Class runs 11 a.m. to noon. \$25 for adults, free for kids in same family. E-mail Mary.Livingston@ci.stpaul.mn.us or call 651-266-6366(v), 651-266-6378 (tty).

**Sunday,
April 1**

An ASL-interpreted tour of "Heaven on Earth: Arts of Islam" 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.

April 13-14

Upper Midwest CHARGE Syndrome Conference takes place at the Grand Rios Water Park and Hotel in Minneapolis. For details or to register, see www.dbproject.mn.org/news.html.

**Friday,
May 11**

Regions Hospital's Spring Workshop on Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) runs 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the University of Minnesota - St. Paul Campus. Contact Kristen Swan at 651-254-2742 or e-mail Kristen.L.Swan@HealthPartners.com.



ASL-Interpreted Performances

Journey of the Drum: a Taiko Fable

Sunday, March 11, 2 p.m.
Landmark Center, 75 W. 5th St., St. Paul; 651-225-9265; www.steppingstonetheatre.org

Zombie Prom

Sunday, March 11, 7:30 p.m.
Hennepin Stages, 824 Hennepin Ave., Mpls; 612-673-0404; www.hennepintheatredistrict.org/guestservices/aslad

Invigorate the Common Well: When Water is Frozen

Friday, March 23, 7:30 p.m.
Avalon Theater, 1500 E. Lake St., Mpls; 612-721-2535; www.hobt.org

The Chosen

Saturday, March 24, 7:30 p.m.
Park Square Theatre, 408 St Peter St., St. Paul; www.parksquaretheatre.org

The Light in the Piazza

Sunday, March 25, 1:00 PM.
Orpheum Theatre, 910 Hennepin Ave. S., Mpls.; www.hennepintheatredistrict.org

Huck Finn

March 28, 10:30 a.m., March 30, 7:30 p.m.
Children's Theatre, 2400 3rd Ave. S., Mpls; 612-874-0400; www.childrenstheatre.org

The Merchant of Venice

Friday, April 13, 7:30 p.m.
Guthrie Theater, 818 2nd St. S., Mpls; 612-377-2224; www.guthrietheater.org

The Lost Boys of the Sudan

April 11, 2 p.m., and April 13, 7:30 p.m.
Children's Theatre, 2400 3rd Ave. S., Mpls; 612-874-0400; www.childrenstheatre.org

Mention VSA Offer for reduced tickets!

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

Newsletter Editor: Audrey Alwell

Information in this newsletter about events, services, or other organizations does not imply endorsement by the Family Support Connection or Lifetrack Resources.

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In Your Corner

By Candace Lindow-Davies,
Family Support Coordinator

March has started off with some good old Minnesota snowstorms. My kids, like yours I'm sure, are thrilled to be able to get outside and play after our winter drought. And, I hope you parents have been able to get out and enjoy it, too (other than the necessary shoveling and snow blowing!)

Spending some quality time with my kids this past weekend was just what I needed after a busy few weeks. As you know, we testified before a House Subcommittee in support of a bill requesting funding for our program. The day of the testimony, I was driving my daughter to school. Obviously, she had overheard my husband and I talking about my morning at the Capitol. So, in the car, my daughter asked, "Mom, what state are you going to again?" I told her that I was going to downtown St. Paul... the Minnesota State Capitol. "So, why are you going there again?" she asked next. Exaggerating, I said, "I'm going to beg the people who work there for money for my program." She tried to understand, "So, you'll stand outside and beg for money?" I realized she thought I meant that I was planning to literally panhandle for money and reassured her that I was going inside and asking them very nicely for some of the money we all pay in taxes. She came back with, "Well, that doesn't sound very hard. Why did you tell Daddy that you were nervous?" I said, "Well, they will ask all sorts of questions, and I just want to make sure I have the right answers. That's why I'm nervous." To which she said, "Are they going to be mean?" I responded, "I certainly don't expect them to be mean." "Well then you have nothing to worry about" was her reply.

She was right. It went well, and the bill was passed over for further consideration—the result we were looking for. So, thank you to all who took time to contact your legislators. We will need your support for this and many other bills this session. *I hope you can fit a visit to Lobby Day March 8 in your schedule.*

Also, I am really excited about an event coming up Saturday, May 5 from 9 a.m. to noon in downtown St. Paul. Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services has been collaborating with our program to offer an exciting hands-on Technology Open House. We are stepping away from our usual formal presentation format, and offering 5 short 15-20 minute mini-presentations about how to integrate technology in your home, your child's school, and your community. You will also get a chance to visit different demonstration areas to check out all the latest stuff. Bring your young kids/tweens/teens, your kid's gear, and your questions to ask knowledgeable staff, and adults and teens who have hearing loss themselves. Free refreshments, free parking, free event...what more could you want? Make sure to mark your calendars. See the flyer with this newsletter for more details.

Otherwise, have a terrific March and enjoy the snow!

Proposals increase funds for deafblind services

The Governor and the Minnesota Department of Human Services are seeking support for proposals that would increase services for people who are deafblind.

They have proposed funding increases for the state's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS) to cover two additional staff members who would work with the deafblind community to ensure people get appropriate supports.

They also are proposing that Medical Assistance (MA) and General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC) pay for the cost of sign language interpreting services whenever deaf or hard-of-hearing recipients of MA and GAMC need interpreter services to ensure effective communication with their health care providers. Right now, MA only pays for interpreters when the health care provider has less than 15 employees. As a result, health care providers that have more than 15 employees sometimes won't take patients who are deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing because they have to pay for interpreting services.

Both of these recommendations are in the governor's budget proposal for the Department of Human Services, p. 197-199, which is online at www.budget.state.mn.us/budget/operating/200809/gov/338419.pdf. For more information, e-mail jan.radatz@state.mn.us or curt.micka@state.mn.us.

Plans call for Treatment Center at MSAD

Over the past four years, the Department of Human Services, Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf (MSAD), and Volunteers of America-Minnesota (VOA-MN) have combined efforts to establish a residential treatment center for deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing children in Minnesota who have emotional or behavioral problems. The groups recently approved a proposal for VOA-MN to lease Pollard Hall at MSAD, and be responsible for the residential treatment component. MSAD would provide the education component.

Prior to this proposal, children with emotional or behavioral problems requiring residential treatment had to be sent to programs in Florida, New Jersey or Pennsylvania. This was not only expensive, but also made it difficult for families to be involved in treatment.

According to the group's proposal, funding and community support need to be obtained before the residential treatment center can be established. Pollard Hall will need renovations. The coordinator and facilitator for workgroup meetings is Deb Olson, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services program planner.

Audiology group offers \$500 scholarship

High school seniors with hearing loss who will be attending a post-secondary school can be nominated for a \$500 scholarship from the Minnesota Academy of Audiology.

Contact your audiologist for details or see the MAA web site at www.minnesotaaudiology.org. Deadline for applications is May 30.

Show your support for MN Hands & Voices/Family Support Connection by sponsoring FOCUS with a tax-deductible* donation. Contact us for details: 651-265-2435(v) or e-mail fsc@lifetrackresources.org.

*Contact your tax advisor about your own tax situation.



The View from Here

Upper Northwest:

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

May 6. To request ASL interpretation call 701-235-6778 or 877-687-7469.

Northeast:

The University of Minnesota Duluth Theatre presents *Life Is a Dream* with ASL interpretation Sunday, March 25 at 2 p.m. *A Streetcar Named Desire* will be performed with ASL interpretation Sunday, April 22 at 2 p.m. For tickets to either performance, call 218-726-8561 or see www.d.umn.edu/theatre.

East/West Central:

Central Lakes College Signers present "Trix Bruce: *The Hearing World Around Me*" at 7 p.m. Friday, March 16 at Central Lakes College, 501 W. College Drive in Brainerd. Trix, an ASL performer, shares what it is like to be a deaf person among the hearing—most embarrassing moments, learning experiences, greatest challenges and growing sense of pride (best for teens/adults). Tickets are \$5. Contact clcsigners@yahoo.com or 218-851-9315(v). Voice interpreter provided. RID CEU available. See www.trixbruce.com.

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.

Southeast:

SERTOMA Club brings ASL interpretation to *WIT*, performed by Rochester Repertory Theatre Friday, March 23 at 8 p.m. For tickets call 507-289-1737, e-mail BoxOffice@RochesterRep.org or see www.RochesterRep.org.

Cochlear implant movie showing at Disney World

EPCOT Center's Innoventions building at Walt Disney World in Orlando now includes the cochlear implant.

The center offers continuous showings of a DVD called "Back to the Hearing World," which features interviews with people who have received cochlear implants. Included is Paula Rosenthal, the creator of hearingexchange.com, and her daughter, who talk about life with their implants.

The Minnesota Association of Deaf Citizens is looking for signers ages 14 to 21 to help with the group's 2007 conference on June 29. For more information, e-mail Conference2007@gmail.com.

Camp ASL teaches advanced signers

Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (MRID) is holding its annual Camp ASL April 13-15 for interpreters and ASL/interpreting students (age 18+ —could be parents).

The weekend includes instruction time and fun activities at the Confidence Learning Center on East Gull Lake (near Brainerd). The student track features "Storytelling" with Tracy Koster. Participants should be familiar with the basics of ASL storytelling (grammar structure, role shifting, expressions, classifiers, etc.). Non-manual markers and classifiers will be discussed along with opportunities for practice.

Cost is \$125 for the student track and includes lodging, meals and workshops. Registration is due by March 27. To register online, see www.mrid.org. For more information, contact Toni Fairbanks at claytoni@tvutel.com.

Workshop explores signed languages

Carol Padden, a University of California professor and co-author of two textbooks on ASL—*A Basic Course in ASL* and *Learning ASL*— will present "What New Sign Languages Can Teach Us About ASL" Saturday, April 27 at Grace Church in Roseville. The presentation is a Center for Teaching & Learning and the Minnesota American Sign Language Teacher's Association Discipline Workshop.

This workshop introduces sign language teachers and interpreters to the most recent research on signed languages used around the world. The workshop runs from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Cost is \$50 and includes breakfast, lunch, CEUs and workshop materials. Registration is due by March 20. To register, see wwwctl.mnscu.edu/facdev/user/event-list.php?eventtype=discipline_workshop&eid=101 or contact Sherri Rademacher, 320-308-6088, srademacher@sctc.edu.

Summer Institute focuses on writing

The Parent Child Institute runs June 8-10 at Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf (MSAD) in Faribault.

This weekend workshop, "ABC...Write With Me: Literacy through Writing," is geared toward parents of young children. Cost is \$50 per family and includes registration, lodging at MSAD, meals, and daycare. This institute 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.

Gallaudet offers sessions for parents/pros

The 2007 Summer Institute at Gallaudet University offers workshops for parents and professionals who work with children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Topics include play therapy, sexuality, bully prevention, literacy, transition, visual phonics, cochlear implants, and Science and Technology. Workshops vary in length from one to five days between June 25-29 or July 16-20. To see workshop descriptions, fees and registration information go to clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/tpd/summer-institute.



2007 Summer Camps

This list highlights camps in our area or those with a national reputation. For an exhaustive list of camps specifically for kids with hearing loss, see clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/InfoToGo/142.html.

Nearby Camps for Kids

Camp Sertoma

Brainerd Lakes Area
 Grades 1-6: July 8-13
 Grades 7-10: July 14-20 (FULL)
 Cost is \$50/camper.
 Register at www.campsertoma.com.

Courage North

Lake George
 Teens (13-17): July 25-Aug. 8
 Youth (7-12): Aug. 11-18
 Sliding fee scale. Contact Courage Center, 763-588-0811(v), 763-520-0245(tty), or www.couragecamps.org.

Wisconsin Lions Camp

Rosholt, Wisconsin
 Free for Wisconsin residents. Non-residents can attend with minimal fee if space allows.
 Ages 6-12: June 24-29
 Ages 10-17: July 1-6
 See www.wisconsinlionscamp.com.

National Leadership and Literacy Camp

Camp Lakodia, South Dakota
 Includes all the regular camp activities plus a leadership-building program to spur intellectual and personal growth. Also field trips to Mount Rushmore and the Black Hills. Cost is \$400.
 Grades 5-8: July 22-Aug. 3
 Grades 9-12: July 1-Aug. 13
 See www.nllcamp.com.

Faraway Camps for Kids

Aspen Camp School for the Deaf
 Rocky Mountains, Colorado
www.acsd.org



Camp Isola Bella
 Berkshire Mountains, Conn.
www.asd-1817.org

Camp Taloali
 Cascade Mountains, Ore.
www.taloali.org



Sports Camps

Basketball Camp

Camp Lakodia, South Dakota
 Boys&Girls in Grades 5-12: July 15-20
Football Camp—*NEW*
 Boys&Girls in Grades 7-12: July 15-20
 Cost for each camp is \$400.
 See www.camplakodia.com.

Stan Mikita Hockey School for the Hearing Impaired

Chicago, Illinois
 Ages 5-24: June 16-23
 A FREE camp run by NHL Hall of Famer Stan Mikita. Attendees provide their own hockey equipment and hotel room.
 DEADLINE Mar. 31. See www.ahiha.org.

Gallaudet University Sports Camps

Girls Volleyball, Cost is \$200.
 Texas School for the Deaf
 Ages 10-18: June 24-29
 Basketball camps also for boys & girls.
 For dates/costs, see <http://athletics.gallaudet.edu>. Click on Summer Camp.

Summer Tennis Program

St. Paul Academy & Summit School
 June 18-July 27
 Call 651-696-1355(v).

Family Camps

CNI Cochlear Kids Camps

Estes Park, Colorado
 For families/kids with cochlear implants
 June 13-17 — \$325 per family
 Aug. 9-12 — \$250 per family
www.thecni.org/hearing/kidscamp.htm

CueCamps

For 2007's list, see www.cuedspeech.org.

Family Learning Vacation

Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C.
 Families with kids ages 3-6: June 20-23
 \$200. See clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/TPD/summer-institute/index.html.

Parent Child Institute June 8-10

Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf
 \$50/family. Deadline May 1. See Page 3.

'School' Camps for Kids

Summit 2007:

Today's Learners, Tomorrow's Leaders
 Gallaudet University, Washington, DC
 Grades 9-11: June 24-July 3
 Advanced Placement (AP) preview classes, leadership-building and sight-seeing in Washington, D.C. See clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/Honors/summit.html.

EX.I.T.E. (Exploring Interests in Technology and Engineering)

Minneapolis & Rochester
 6th-9th Grade girls: July 30-Aug. 9
 Free! See www.pacer.org/stc/exite.htm.

NAD's Youth Leadership Camp

Camp Taloali, Oregon
 Grades 10-11: July 1-30
 National Association of the Deaf's camp for motivated high school students.
 Cost is \$1,325. See www.nad.org/YLC.

Explore Your Future

National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester, New York
 Grades 10-12: July 14-19 or 21-26
 Explore careers in information technology, computers, engineering, business, science and art while sampling college life. Cost is \$650; scholarships available.
 See www.rit.edu/NTID/EYF.

TechGirlz

National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester, New York
 Girls entering Grade 8: July 29 - Aug. 4
 Learn about careers in science, technology, engineering and math through hands-on activities. Cost is \$650. See www.rit.edu/NTID/TechGirlz.

Summer at Gallaudet University

Washington, DC
 Variety of programs for high school students, including Young Scholars Program. Applications due by April 30. See <http://summer.gallaudet.edu>.





By Melissa McNamer

Recently I heard a cute story about a child in Kindergarten who was getting set up with a speaker system for class.

On the morning the desk speaker arrived, the DHH teacher and classroom teacher were testing the equipment to make sure the transmitter sent the signal to the desk speaker without any problems. While they were busy, the children were showing up for school. The two teachers wanted to see how far the signal would transmit. The Kindergarten teacher stepped out of the room while talking into the microphone transmitter so the DHH Teacher could see if everything was working correctly. The desktop set was picking up the teacher's voice perfectly. That's when the DHH Teacher noticed a little boy very slowly creeping up to his friend's (empty) desk with a concerned look on his face. Standing not too close, he wrinkled his eyebrows, looked at the speaker and said "Hello?" "Are you OK?" "How'd you get in there?" The DHH Teacher had all she could do to not burst out laughing. Instead, she leaned down to the boy and gently explained how the box worked and how it would help his friend.

Sometimes we forget how little kids can perceive technology!

Deaf History Month is March 13-April 15. To learn about Deaf History, watch "Through Deaf Eyes," a documentary on PBS

March 21 (see Page 2 for details). Explore Deaf History online at www.nad.org; www.rit.edu/deafww2; <http://depts.gallaudet.edu/deafeyes>; or www.pbs.org (search "Through Deaf Eyes").

New book, DVD provide fun way to learn ASL

A new book/DVD package, geared for middle- and high school students, teaches ASL along with Deaf Culture.

"Have You Ever Seen...? An American Sign Language (ASL) Handshape DVD/Book" was created by Adonia Smith and E. Lynn Jacobowitz. It promises to be the first in a series from the co-founders of ASL Rose (www.aslrose.com).

This first package introduces 44 ASL handshapes through questions starting with "Have you ever seen...?" For example, the question for the "d" handshape is "Have you ever seen a mouse brushing her teeth?". Throughout the book, the authors teach handshapes and signs using similar "ASL alliterations": "an owl knowing nothing," "a gorilla acting," etc. The book includes illustrations that not only teach handshapes and signs, but also have references explained in text about Deaf Culture.

The DVD helps show how ASL relies on changes in body movement and facial expressions to convey emotion, emphasis, and other aspects of language. Native signers sign all of the text from the book.

The package sells for \$85. It is available at www.aslrose.com, click on "Store."

Research shows value of bilateral cochlear implants

Two cochlear implants are better than one, according to researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The UW team of researchers presented preliminary findings last month at a meeting of the Association for Research in Otolaryngology. The team's research suggests that deaf children who have a cochlear implant in each ear more accurately locate sounds when they use both implants instead of one. Children with two implants also become more skilled at localizing sound over time. However, the team said more research needs to be done to determine the extent of the benefits of having two cochlear implants.

That's not surprising considering the impact of even one cochlear implant surgery. The surgery and implant costs more than \$50,000. Plus, the device permanently damages the cochlea, which could prevent recipients from taking advantage of potentially superior treatments for deafness that might be developed.

The UW research team studied 55 deaf children who received a second implant one to seven years after being fitted with their first. When the research began, it appeared the group of 5 to 14 year-olds couldn't localize sounds at all. To test this, researchers had the children face a semicircle of loudspeakers arranged at regular intervals, each with a picture attached. When speech or other kinds of sounds came from a speaker, the children were scored on their ability to identify the correct one by pointing to its picture. The children were tested and scored while wearing both implants and again wearing just one.

Researchers found that the ability to localize sounds takes time to emerge—the longer a child had the second implant, the better he or she became at identifying where sounds came from. All of the children in the study received their second implants after having had the first one for some time. Researchers hope to study children who receive two implants at the same time to compare results.

The UW research is funded by the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders.

Minnesotans medal at Deaflympics

Many of the Minnesotans who traveled to the Winter Deaflympics last month in Salt Lake City brought home medals. The US team's total medal count was 11, coming in second to Russia's 20.

The US hockey team won gold. The team included Minnesotans Jon Dickson, Benjamin Johnson, Ryan Krajewski, and Stephen Wangberg. Another Minnesotan, Matt Gustafson, won silver in the Snowboard Half Pipe. Curling made its Deaflympics debut as a demo sport. The US team included Minnesotans Herman Fuechtmann, Valerie Fuechtmann, Elizabeth Matthews, and Calvin Rausch. Both men's and women's teams took Second. Minnesota skier Jonas Virnig finished half-way through the pack in both Super G and Giant Slalom, 19th in Combined Downhill and Slalom, and didn't finish the Slalom on the last day of competition.

To see video clips of the games or medal ceremonies see www.deaflympics.tv.