



DECEMBER 2010

Minnesota Hands & Voices FOCUS

—supporting families with kids who have hearing loss—

Happy Holidays to everyone in the Hands & Voices community!

Heading to holiday gatherings with your child who is deaf or hard of hearing? Consider sending ahead our “Holiday Tips for Guests with Hearing Loss.” You can find this helpful list on our website. Go to www.mhandsandvoices.org and click on “Fact Sheets.”

While you’re on our website, click on “Lending Library” where you’ll find many holiday-themed books, cartoons and movies in ASL or Cued Speech to share with your child. Library materials are free to check out for everyone in the MNHV community—these movies also are great for students who are learning to sign or cue.

There’s still time to make a year-end charitable contribution to MNHV and help us support families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing. We didn’t mail out requests for donations this year, choosing instead to save those precious dollars you’ve given us for programming, and relying on our newsletter to reach you.

If you or someone you know has found help through FOCUS, our email alerts, website, lending materials, workshops or social events, please take the next step and make a year-end contribution to ensure the continuation of these offerings.

Progress Monitoring keeps focus on IEP goals

Many of our *FOCUS* readers are parents of school-aged children who are deaf or hard of hearing. As such, we’re familiar with IEPs (Individualized Education Programs). We’ve been to the meetings, reviewed the assessments and helped write the goals. But, after we’ve filed away the IEP, how do we monitor our children’s progress in school toward those goals?

“Goals must be measurable so the IEP team, including the parents, will know if the child is making real progress,” said Carolyn Anderson, Parent Advocate with PACER Center in Minneapolis. “IDEA (the Federal law governing Special Ed) requires that parents receive, at a minimum, a progress report on each IEP goal with the same frequency that a child in regular education gets report cards,” Carolyn said. Report cards typically come out at the end of each quarter, which is too late to influence how much a student is learning in a class. Fortunately, parents can use the IEP to set up how often they’ll receive progress reports, she added.

Shannon Hohrman, our NW Parent Guide, ensures that her child’s IEP has measurable goals and that she knows how he’s doing toward reaching those goals.

“As a parent of a deaf child, I feel that knowing my child’s progress is very important in order to keep him at grade level,” Shannon said. “This is especially important the older he gets—it is much easier for him to fall behind and not be able to catch up.”

The Minnesota Resource Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing created a manual to help teachers conduct appropriate assessments and monitor student progress. The manual is online at <http://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/groups/SpecialEd/documents/Manual/036981.pdf>. In the manual, the writers explain the benefits of monitoring student progress, which include providing documentation for informed decision-making regarding placement, giving students feedback and motivation to learn, and, providing objective evidence that a student is progressing academically. Their recommendation is that “progress monitoring...should occur ideally on a weekly basis and minimally, monthly.”

Progress Monitoring actually is a practice in classrooms that has been growing

in the years since No Child Left Behind (enacted in 2001) required more accountability from schools. The National Center on Student Progress Monitoring explains, “A teacher who uses Progress Monitoring works with the goals in the IEP, and the state standards for the child’s grade level, to develop goals that can be measured and tracked, and that can be used to divide what the child is expected to learn by the end of the year into shorter, measurable steps.” The teacher then tracks the child’s progress with these steps weekly or on a schedule determined by the child’s IEP team. That way, the teacher can make changes as needed to help the child stay on track. (For more details on the practice of Progress Monitoring, go to www.studentprogress.org/family/default.asp.)

In her presentation at the National Hands & Voices conference this summer in Minnesota, Lisa Kovacs from the Indiana chapter encouraged parents to ask these questions in the IEP meeting to ensure that Progress Monitoring will provide meaningful results: How will the student’s progress be evaluated? How often will it be measured? Who will do the monitoring? She also recommended that the data collected by Progress Monitoring be presented in chart form—“a picture is worth a thousand words,” she added. Seeing their progress on a chart also can motivate students to shift that graph line upwards.

In the article, *Making Progress: The One for One Rule*, Cheryl Johnson, Ed.D., from the Colorado Department of Education and President of Hands & Voices’ National Board, writes: “At a minimum, every child who is deaf or hard of hearing, given no additional learning or language issues, should be making, on average, one year’s growth in a one year period of time.... At a minimum, IEP services should be constructed to support this rate of growth.” To achieve this 1:1 expectation, the IEP team needs to write goals with weekly or monthly means of tracking a child’s progress, Cheryl writes.

To read more about one year’s growth in one year’s time, go to www.handsandvoices.org and scroll over “Resources> Topics> Education.” You’ll find Cheryl’s “Making Progress” article along with an earlier one titled “One Year’s Growth in One Year, Expect No Less.”

Here's What's Happening Around Town

Sunday, Dec. 5
Thursday, Dec. 9

The **annual tour of holiday traditions in the Period Rooms is ASL-interpreted** at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. The tour starts at 1 p.m. Dec. 5, and 7 p.m. on Dec. 9. Tours begin in the Bell Decorative Arts Court, third floor. Holiday Traditions at the Purcell-Cutts House is interpreted on Dec. 5 at 2:30 p.m. **Art of the Native Americans: The Thaw Collection (special exhibition admission charged)** will be the interpreted tour Sunday, Jan. 2 at 1 p.m., beginning in the museum lobby. For details, call 612-870-3131 (v); -3132 (tty) or e-mail dhegstro@artsmia.org.

Saturday, Dec. 11

Learn what it's like to grow up hearing with deaf parents in "Looking Up At Deaf Culture" with Windell Smith, Jr. at 7 p.m. at St. Catherine University in St. Paul. Tickets are \$10. Sponsored by the Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (MRID) and St. Catherine University's ASL Club. For details, see www.mrid.org.

Sunday, Dec. 12

Naturally Kids, a free, hands-on nature discovery program for parents and children (5 to 12) with any disability, offers "Holiday for the Animals" from 1 to 3 p.m. at Fort Snelling State Park in St. Paul. Make a bird feeder for the visitor center and one for your home—bring a suitable container (aluminum pie plate, milk jug (with cap), liter pop bottle (with cap), etc.). Requests for interpreters are supposed to be made two weeks in advance. For future topics, see www.naturallykids.org.

Sunday, Dec. 12

See an ASL Christmas Pageant performed by students in all grades from Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf who are in Christ Through Hands Ministry. The pageant is from 4:30 to 5 p.m. followed by a potluck until 7 p.m. at Our Saviors Lutheran Church in Faribault. Contact joyce@christthroughhandsministry.org.

Tuesday, Dec. 14

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS), Metro Office hosts a "Meet and Greet" networking meeting for service providers and community leaders involved with individuals who are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing. The meeting is from 10 a.m. to noon at the DHHS office, Suite 105 of the Golden Rule Building, 85 E. 7th Place in St. Paul. For details, contact Marie Koehler at 651-431-5964 (V), 651-964-1514 (VP) or email marie.koehler@state.mn.us.

Saturday, Dec. 18

The Andover Lions Club hosts **the annual Signing Santa Pancake Breakfast** from 9 a.m. to noon at the Andover Senior Center, 1685 Crosstown Blvd. There is no charge for the pancake breakfast or pictures with Santa (who is deaf). RSVP to Tom or Candy Conniff at 763-434-6682 or Motley0465@aol.com by Dec. 6.

Saturday, Dec. 18

Metro Deaf School's Jr. NAD chapter hosts a Waffle Breakfast from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. at Thompson Hall (Deaf Club), 1824 Marshall Ave. in St. Paul. Tickets are \$5 for adults, \$3 for children under 12. Proceeds will help send chapter delegates to the Jr. NAD conference at the California School for the Deaf-Riverside next fall.

Sunday, Dec. 19

Thompson Hall's annual Christmas Program with Santa starts at 1 p.m. at the hall, 1824 Marshall Ave. in St. Paul. Kids' crafts, hot cocoa, cookies and milk provided. Photos with Santa are \$5. For more information or directions, see thedeafclub.com.



Join us for our annual PRIVATE party for the MNHV community at the Roller Garden in St. Louis Park Sunday, Jan. 30 from 5 to 7 p.m. Skate, eat (hot dog, chips & pop) and socialize—it's all free! (Donations are welcome.) Please RSVP to mnhv@lifetrackresources.org.



ASL-Interpreted Performances

Request the VSA discount.

A Christmas Carol

Captions: Wednesday, Dec. 8, 7:30 p.m.
ASL: Thursday, Dec. 9, 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, Dec. 11, 1 p.m.; Tuesday, Dec. 21, 1 p.m.
Guthrie Theater, Minneapolis;
612-377-2224; www.guthrietheater.org

La Befana

Saturday, Dec. 11, 3 p.m.
In the Heart of the Beast Puppet & Mask Theatre, Mpls; 612-721-2535; www.hobt.org

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever!

Sunday, Dec. 12, 2 p.m.
SteppingStone Theatre, St. Paul; 651-225-9265;
www.steppingstonetheatre.org

A Christmas Story

Friday, Dec. 17, 7:30 p.m.
Children's Theatre, Mpls.; 612-874-0400;
www.childrenstheatre.org

Joseph & the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat

Captioning: Friday, Dec. 17, 7:30 p.m.
AD & ASL: Saturday, Dec. 18, 2 p.m.
Ordway Center, Sr. Paul; 651-224-4222;
www.ordway.org/accessibility

The Holiday Pageant

Sunday, Dec. 19, 4 p.m.
Open Eye Figure Theatre, Minneapolis;
612-874-6338; www.openeyetheatre.org

Billy Elliot: The Musical

Sunday, Dec. 19, 1 p.m. (captioned at 6:30)
Historic Orpheum Theatre, Mpls; 612-339-7007;
www.hennepintheatretrust.org/accessible

A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court

Sunday, Dec. 19, 2 p.m.
Lakeshore Players Theatre, White Bear Lake;
651-429-5674; www.lakeshoreplayers.com

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Website: www.mnhandsandvoices.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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Information in this newsletter about events, services, or other organizations does not imply endorsement by Minnesota Hands & Voices or Lifetrack Resources.

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In Your Corner

By Candace Lindow-Davies, Minnesota Hands & Voices Coordinator

I have been spending a lot of time recently reflecting on the past. Must be the 10th anniversary of MNHV and all the conversations about how the program started and where we are today. I also think it has to do with the time of year—the holidays and the end of the year that makes me nostalgic.

I have had many memories flash through my mind recently. Just this morning, I looked out at the fresh coating of snow over the sidewalk of my house and, for some reason, recalled a morning some 14 or so years ago. I looked out my front door and realized that someone had shoveled my sidewalk right up to my front door. This kept happening over and over when it would snow. My neighbors' walks were covered in snow, but mine was freshly shoveled. My husband and I were puzzled because we never could figure out who was being so kind. One morning, I awoke early and heard the scraping of a shovel and threw the door open to see a man who I had only caught a glimpse of once or twice in the neighborhood. I obviously startled him, but I was determined to thank him for being so kind. Before I got many words out, he scuttled away...down the street and disappeared into a house of an older couple I had only nodded to, but never spoken. I assumed this man was their adult son, who from what I only could assume, may have some developmental issues. I was stunned and wondered, of all the neighbors, why he would shovel our walk and wondered if it had to do with the "Deaf Child" signs. Or maybe this man felt moved by our son who spent his summers racing along behind what we called his "runner" instead of his "walker" as he tried to overcome his cerebral palsy and learn to walk independently while we signed away, offering him all sorts of encouragement. Either way, I was so very touched at this stranger's generosity.

Flash forward to the beginning of this school year. From my column earlier this fall, you may recall I fretted about my son's transition to our local high school. Every day, I would ask him if he made any friends, if he sat with anyone at lunch, and about the bus ride. Every day, he would say he sat alone and my heart sank, thinking this was a huge mistake and we'd need to consider a change. Then, several weeks into school, I gently probed again. This time, my son said that a girl sat with him! She signed to him, "Are you deaf? My parents are deaf." She sat through lunch with him and then in the days to come, she would move her group of friends to my son's table. Several of them had emerging sign skills of their own and I was so pleased he wasn't alone. Again, I was determined to find out who this girl was and if some adult had asked her to befriend my son. From what I could figure out, she made this gesture on her own. Good parents, great kind, simple act that meant so much to him and to me. I found myself humbled again by how innately gracious people can be. The past ten years of MNHV has been a similar experience. So many people have reached out to this program over the past ten years... kind families, the most incredible co-workers, amazing professionals, and the most inspirational children! I am so very grateful for the journey we have shared together.

I hope this Holiday Season provides you with time to reflect back on good memories of those who have offered you and your child kindness and generosity. I also hope you experience many more kindnesses. Happy Holidays!

Sign language classes offered

MNHV is teaming up with Bread of Life Deaf Lutheran Church in Minneapolis to offer American Sign Language classes for families from Jan. 22 to Mar. 26.

The classes will take place Saturday mornings from 9:30 to 11:30 at the church social hall, 2901 38th Ave. South. This will be a 10-week interactive class in a fun, relaxed environment, focusing on the particular needs of families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Childcare won't be provided. The instructor is Carole Virnig, who is Deaf and has taught ASL at St. Paul College, St. Catherine's University and the University of Minnesota.

Payment options for each adult enrolled are \$10 per class or a lump sum of \$75 (save \$25) for the full 10 weeks. Children ages 5 to 18 can attend classes free.

Register with MNHV by calling 651-265-2435 (voice) or 866-261-0857 (videophone) or emailing mnhv@lifetrackresources.org. Space is limited, so register early.

Webinar focuses on Special Education

MNHV is working with PACER Center to offer a webinar for families with children newly identified with hearing loss. The webinar, "Understanding Special Education," will be online Thursday, Jan. 20 from 6 to 8 p.m. Captioning will be provided. Carolyn Anderson, Parent Advocate from PACER Center, will be the presenter. Look for more details in the January edition of *FOCUS*.

Hilibok picked as head of FCC office

For the first time, the Federal Communications Commission's Disability Rights Office has a person with a disability leading it. Gregory Hilibok, who is deaf, has been named the office's head. Hilibok has been an attorney in the office since 2001. His appointment comes as the FCC moves to implement the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act, which President Obama recently signed.

Hilibok became known nationally for his role as spokesman for the Deaf President Now movement in 1988 at Gallaudet University, where he was student body president. The protest led to the selection of the university's first deaf president. After graduating from Gallaudet with a degree in government, Hilibok earned his J.D. from Hofstra Law School.

Magee receives High Five Award



Candace Lindow-Davies presents a High Five award to Leisa Magee at MNHV's recent Advisory meeting.

MNHV honored Leisa Magee with a 2010 High Five award for her tireless advocacy for children with hearing loss, including her son. Leisa serves on our Advisory

Committee, and contributes to our Annual Picnic as a volunteer, financial supporter, and event planner.



The View from Here

Central

Sign Language at the Mall goes from noon to 3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 11 at the food court in Crossroads Center in St. Cloud. SLAM takes place on the second Saturday of the month.

Southwest

The Annual Ice Skating Event for kids in our region who are deaf or hard of hearing is Jan. 12 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Call our SW Parent Guide, Kris Hemstock, at 1-888-214-0660 for more information.

Southeast

Rochester Civic Theatre puts on **Irving Berlin's White Christmas with ASL interpretation** on Saturday, Dec. 11 at 7 p.m. See www.rochestercivictheatre.org for ticket information.

See an ASL Christmas Pageant performed by students in all grades from Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf who are in Christ Through Hands Ministry. The pageant is Sunday, Dec. 12 from 4:30 to 5 p.m. followed by a potluck until 7 p.m. at Our Saviors Lutheran Church in Faribault. Last names beginning with A-J bring hotdish, K-P bring salad, and Q-Z bring dessert. Coffee and beverages provided. For details, contact joyce@christthroughhandsministry.org.

Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf has a Christmas program from 9 to 11 a.m. Friday Dec. 17.

Northwest

Signing Santa is coming to town Saturday, Dec. 11 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Olivet Lutheran Church in Fargo. The event includes entertainment, activities and lunch courtesy of Quota International of Fargo and the Fargo-Moorhead Sertoma Club. Reserve a place by contacting slhs@mnstate.edu or NW Parent Guide Shannon Hohrman at 866-860-4075.

Barnes & Noble purchases support local school

You can make your holiday shopping do double duty on Thursday, Dec. 9 by making purchases during Metro Deaf School's Book Fair at Barnes and Noble in HarMar Mall, Roseville. Barnes and Noble is donating a portion of all receipts (not just for books, but also DVDs, music, food and beverages) that evening to MDS. *The offer is good at ALL Barnes and Noble stores in the country Dec. 9 and online at www.barnesandnoble.com Dec. 9-14.*

To participate in the MDS "book fair," tell the cashier this ID number: 10329274. For online purchases, enter the ID number on the checkout screen.

MDS hopes to use proceeds to expand the school's library. An explanation of the event in ASL is at www.mdsmn.org/news/97/94/.

Note: The website for MDS has changed to www.mdsmn.org. The old website (www.mds-mnsa.org) still works for now. School email addresses also recently changed to NAME@mdsmn.org.

Save the date: The 2011 Minnesota Early Hearing Detection & Intervention Summit: "Building Connections" will be March 6-7.



**Lisa Brummer,
DHH Teacher**

We're saying goodbye to one of the best DHH teachers, who is retiring this month. My family met Lisa Brummer just a few days after Nicholas' diagnosis. I will never forget the day she came to our house; Lisa connected with the whole family and let us know that Nicholas would be just fine. I still have the card of encouragement she left that day.

I would not be a Parent Guide with MNHV if it weren't for Lisa. She emailed me the information about the position; I told her I didn't feel qualified. She was persistent and told me to at least talk with Candace. I've been a Guide for almost 5 years now.

Lisa is not Nicholas' DHH teacher, but she still is a big part of our lives. She is respected by the families she works with, her peers and friends. She will be greatly missed and her shoes are big ones to fill.

Lisa—We wish you the best and hope you enjoy your time with your grandson. - Shannon Hohrman, NW Parent Guide

My name is Lisa Brummer and I currently am one of two teachers for the Deaf/HH employed by the Fergus Falls Special Education Co-op. This is a job that I have held for the past 33 years. The co-op is made up of eight school districts. That means I am an itinerant teacher, traveling to the schools where the students are. During my many years of teaching I had the pleasure of working with only 8 profoundly deaf children. Most of my present and past students are hard of hearing.

When I look back on the past 33 years I think of all the changes that have been made in deaf education. Probably the biggest change is technology. Hearing aids, FM systems and Sound Field systems are so much better than they used to be. Also now the deaf are so connected with texting, face book, and email. I can't remember when I last used my TTY!!

Another change is cochlear implants and the predominant use of American Sign Language. In college in the 70s, I was taught signed English not ASL. When I first started teaching, we always pulled the children out of the mainstream classes to work with them. Then we went to the inclusion model, and finally, we individualized more and worked with them based on their needs and what method of teaching them was most successful.

My job has been filled with wonderful memories, people, students and staff. Being a teacher for the deaf and hard of hearing students has been an awesome career. I will miss seeing my students every day as I am retiring on Dec. 21.

So long kids—it's been fun. As I head to Maui on Dec. 23, I will keep you all in my thoughts. Maui Christmas!!!

Purchases at Lillian's benefit Lifetrack Resources

Lifetrack Resources will be the beneficiary of double-duty shopping Sunday, Dec. 12 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Lillian's Shoppe on Grand Ave. in St. Paul. A portion of all purchases will be donated to support Lifetrack and its mission. Lifetrack is the parent organization of MNHV. See www.lifetrackresources.org/news/blog.

Church offers Sunday school in ASL

Sunday school for kids ages 4-12 who are deaf, hard of hearing or children of deaf adults (CODAs) is offered at Bread of Life Deaf Lutheran Church in Minneapolis on Sunday mornings from 9:30 to 10:15 a.m. Advent and Christmas lessons and activities will take place on Sundays in December. Worship in ASL is at 10:30 am. For more information, contact Joyce Atchison at msjoyceatchison@gmail.com.

ASL classes at St. Paul school open to public

Metro Deaf School in St. Paul is offering 8-week ASL classes that begin in January. You don't need to have a child enrolled at MDS to join a class. Childcare has been added for \$5 per class for each child.

ASL Level 1 is taught by Jennifer Gough. ASL Level 2 is taught by Ronda Jo Miller. Both classes run from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Tuesdays from Jan. 18 to March 8. Class fee is \$50 (ages 10 - adults). Register by Dec. 6 at 651-224-3995 or email kmcdonald@mds-mnsa.org.

MDS is at 1471 Brewster St. near the Minnesota State Fairgrounds. For directions, see www.mdsmn.org

Continuing ed workshops offered for professionals

The annual Spring Workshop sponsored by Regions Hospital's Health and Wellness Program is scheduled for May 20 at the University of Minnesota St. Paul Campus. Curt Micka, J.D., will present "Self-Care: default habits, blind spots and hot buttons and their effects on life and relationships." For a brochure, email Kristen.L.Swan@HealthPartners.com.

The Rhode Island Hearing Assessment Program's annual seminar, "Creating Positive Environments for Children with Hearing Loss," is April 11 in Warwick, R.I. CEUs available. See www.carenewengland.org.

Transition

By Sally Prouty, Minnesota DeafBlind Project Coordinator, and proud parent of Andrew, 29, who works full time with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

It's never too early to plan

Ha! that's NOT what I thought sitting at my son's IEP after his 14th birthday! I couldn't imagine what his IEP team was thinking when they started talking about transition at such a "young age." Heck, I wasn't ready to think about his future—the unknown was too scary! It was intimidating to think about that "big black hole" beyond the safety and comfort of the IEP and educational system. What would happen? What would he do for fun? Where would he live? Where would he work?

That was 15 years ago, and fortunately I came around by the next year. In retrospect, I recognize it IS never too early to start thinking about transition planning. The five transition areas listed on the IEP include; home living skills, recreation & leisure, community participation, post secondary education & training, and employment. There are things you can do now no matter what your child's age, to prepare him/her for adult life.

Home Living: Start with small household chores when your children are young, like feeding the family pet, collecting the recycling, sorting laundry, and cleaning the bathroom sink. As they succeed (or not), increase their responsibilities to include finding the pet food in the store, taking the recycling to the curb, doing the laundry and cleaning the whole bathroom. If you decide to attach allowance money to these chores, it gives a wonderful opportunity to manage money, plan out spending and open a savings account. Encourage your children to choose their clothes each day and be responsible for their grooming.

Recreation & Leisure: This is fun and easy as most of us have no shortage of experience in this area. Try different activities to find what interests your child most.

Community Participation: Your child will learn how to participate in the community by doing things with you when he or she is young. Go to events like the MNHV picnics. Look for opportunities to volunteer as a family. Help your child obtain a library card, and encourage independent use of the library as your child grows.

Post-secondary Education & Training: This may seem far in the future, but start talking now so your child begins to imagine what he or she might do when school is finished. This may include selecting educational settings that align with work or other life goals. Think about community education, adult education, technical college or universities.

Employment: Talk about career interests and develop employability skills, which include decision making, responsibility, accountability and being on time. It is never too early to teach your child these important life skills.

It might seem "too early" to focus on these transition areas, but by not encouraging independence and thinking about the future, we are setting up our children for failure. Focusing on these transition areas helps us raise our children to be successful adults.

Calendar teaches signs

Color of Language produces annual wall calendars with drawings of common signs and their translations in English and Spanish. The 2011 calendar has more than 200 signs focused on bedtime, family, bathtime, food, manners, emotions, colors and more. The calendar sells for \$15 at www.coloroflanguage.com or by phone at 661-393-4658 (V) or 661-368-0427 (VP).

Interpreted ski lessons offered at Hyland Hills

The Midwest Ski Council is again offering lessons at Hyland Hills Ski Area in Bloomington for beginning and intermediate skiers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

Volunteer interpreters are available during the lessons, which run from 9:30-11 a.m. five Sundays, Jan. 9-Feb. 6. Minimum age for participants is 6 years for skiing and 8 years for snowboarding.

Equipment and lift tickets for all five sessions are provided for students at a minimal cost of \$85 (space limited). The people involved in this program donate their time. Parents can volunteer to instruct or interpret (with students other than their own child), once they have participated in training.

To learn more or to register for the program, contact Dave Dent at dad1909@comcast.net or 952-941-7375.

Program offers college credits in computing

Dec. 31 is the deadline to apply for the 2011 Summer Academy for Advancing Deaf & Hard of Hearing in Computing at the University of Washington. Deaf or hard of hearing students age 16 or older in high school or college can apply and earn college credits. Tuition, room and board, and round-trip transportation will be provided at no cost to selected applicants. 10 spots are available. See www.washington.edu/accesscomputing/dhh/academy.



Dad's Viewpoint

By Curt Leitz, NE Parent Guide

Last year, I wrapped up the holiday season with a single New Year's resolution: to test the hypothesis that if I focused all my autumnal energy on college football and bird hunting, maybe

Thanksgiving would pass overhead like a distant line of southbound geese. If I could achieve that feat, I thought, then perhaps I could avoid Christmas entirely simply by skiing often enough and hard enough all through December.

Alas, the evidence did not support my hypothesis.

Thanksgiving once again found me chewing turkey with my in-laws, most of whom eat so fast that just minutes after the meal is served, only those who have married into the family still have food on their plates. Thus did I again find myself chatting happily with Uncle Pat until all the blood relatives, stuffed but coveting pumpkin pie, stared impatiently at the piles of food still on our plates.

All the blood relatives, that is, plus Uncle John. In years past, Pat and John were my main collaborators in trying unsuccessfully to instill the decency of paced eating and warm conversation during our in-laws' Thanksgiving meal. This year, it appeared, John had turned to the dark side: he stoically emptied his plate as quickly as the rest of the cretins around the table. When the in-laws focused their intimidating postprandial stares on Pat and me, John sat silently at the far end of the table, failing to defend us in word or deed. "Well," I gulped, looking nervously at Pat. "Guess I'm full."

As the din of clanking dishes and cackling aunts enveloped the dining room, I noticed John slipping away, headed for the basement. One of John's hobbies is indoor horticulture, and those ferns and herbs not yet ready for the glam of his bay window are nurtured gently in the silent environs of an artificially-lit basement. To such peace did John retire after dinner, choosing pothos over pie.

I followed John downstairs. There, in the wordless camaraderie of his plants, he confided that he has trouble following conversation in noisy environments. His silent scarfing of the Thanksgiving meal wasn't a betrayal, it was a defense mechanism. "I'm headed there myself," I told him, recounting the difficulty I had understanding anybody at all at last year's company holiday party.

I'm sure every one of us has an older relative who sits quietly during holiday meals, smiling and nodding through complete ignorance of the surrounding conversations. Further, many reading this newsletter have a much younger relative facing the same isolation at every holiday gathering.

This year, resolve before the holidays to do more to connect these loved ones with the rest of the family. You won't entirely change the large gathering's dynamic—my in-laws still eat lightning-fast—but consider asking one or two sympathetic relatives to make a special effort to connect with your child, or with Great-Grandpa. Ahead of time, give some tips and guidance that will foster communication. By their example more than yours, others will follow.

Study needs surveys about hearing kids

The Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences Department at the University of Colorado–Boulder is conducting an international study on the language development of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. A survey sampling of parents of these children has been completed. However, a survey sampling of parents of children ages 2 to 7 with clinically normal hearing is needed for comparison. Parents of these children can complete the 15-minute survey online at www.surveymonkey.com/s/PTNCCL8 through March.

Website opens national forum on hearing loss

The Better Hearing Institute has launched a discussion forum to help families cope with hearing loss. The Institute also has up-to-date information on a variety of topics related to hearing issues on its website, www.betterhearing.org.

The new online forum gives individuals and families a peer support community to exchange information on hearing loss, treatments, tinnitus, hearing loss prevention, and other related topics. To participate in the discussion forum, visit www.betterhearing.org, click on "Discussion Forum," and go to "Welcome!" to register.

Website provides social networking for deaf

Open Chat Night, a weekly online discussion group for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, has developed a large following since its creation just over a year ago. The group also includes members who are audiologists, teachers, ASL Interpreters, and students.

The group "meets" Wednesdays from 6 to 8 p.m. at www.OpenChatNight.com. Recent discussions have included:

- how to learn ASL and find resources
- hearing aid providers and insurance coverage
- interactions with the hearing world
- the meaning of the word "deaf"

The site was created by Senthil Srinivasan in August 2009. Srinivasan is a web designer who has had mild to moderate hearing loss. He also has created a website, www.DeafandHoH.com, which he describes as "a place for the deaf and hard of hearing to communicate." The site has links to Open Chat Night, his blog, and information about hearing loss, research, and technology.

NTID chooses alumnus as new president

The National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology has named Gerard Buckley as its president effective Jan. 1. Buckley is the first NTID alumnus to lead the college.

Buckley, 54, has more than 30 years of experience in higher education, including more than 20 at NTID as chairman of the Department of Educational Outreach, Associate Dean for Student Services and currently Assistant Vice President for College Advancement. A native of St. Louis, Buckley came to RIT/NTID in 1974 and graduated in 1978 with a bachelor's degree in social work. He also holds a master's degree in social work from the University of Missouri and a doctorate in special education from the University of Kansas.

NTID was established by Congress in 1965 to provide technical college opportunities for deaf and hard-of-hearing students who were underemployed in those fields. Today, a record 1,521 students attend NTID; more than 1,300 of them are deaf or hard-of-hearing, the rest are hearing students in interpreting or deaf education programs.