



Minnesota Hands & Voices FOCUS

—supporting families with kids who have hearing loss—

SEPTEMBER 2010

Annual Picnic brings families together for fun!



A beautiful August evening and the chance to mingle with other families in our Hands & Voices community brought a total of 215 people — nearly double last year's attendance — to our Annual Picnic Aug. 5 at Como Park in St. Paul. Thanks to our generous sponsors, just about every family left with a prize and smiles on their faces.



Top left: Leroy Lesle creates a balloon animal for the kids. Leroy brought his granddaughter to the picnic, and decided to join in the fun.
Above: Volunteer Alyssa Kruzal helps Blake at the duck pond.
Left: Volunteer Caitlin O'Neil watches Keaton toss a bean bag for a prize.

Here's What's Happening Around Town

- Saturday, Sept. 11** **Sign Language Saturday** means most shows at the Minnesota Renaissance Festival in Shakopee are ASL interpreted between 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. See www.renaissancefest.com for pricing and directions.
- Sunday, Sept. 12** **"A Taste of Asia"** is the ASL-interpreted tour at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts at 1 p.m. For details, call 612-870-3131 (v); 612-870-3132 (tty) or e-mail dhegstro@artsmia.org. "Embarrassment of Riches: Picturing Wealth" is the tour Oct. 3.
- Sunday, Sept. 12** **Naturally Kids**, a free, hands-on nature discovery program for parents and children (5 to 12) with any disability, offers "Birds, Beaks, and Adaptations" from 1 to 3 p.m. at Fort Snelling State Park in St. Paul. See www.naturallykids.org.
- Saturday, Sept. 18** **Join the Walk to End Child Abuse** from 6 a.m. to noon at Midway Stadium in St. Paul. There's a 5K run/walk, a 1.5 mile pledge walk, and fun events like a baseball clinic and chance to meet the Saints' mascots. See www.pcamn.org/temp_01.php?PK=83 for details.
- Sunday, Sept. 19** If you missed getting **tickets to Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Day at Target Field** for the Sept. 30 Twins' game, you have another chance now. The Twins organization offered us an additional 150 tickets for the Sunday, Sept. 19 game at 1 p.m. with the Oakland Athletics. Tickets are \$16. See www.mncdhh.org/news/291/twins-games-to-celebrate-mcdhh-25th-anniversary for an order form. Sponsored by Minnesota Hands & Voices, CSD of Minnesota and MCDHH.
- Saturday, Sept. 25** **Homecoming at Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf (MSAD)** begins at 9 a.m. with junior varsity volleyball, followed by varsity volleyball at 10:30 a.m., and a 2 p.m. football game with coronation of Homecoming King & Queen at halftime. Games are against Iowa School for the Deaf.
- Sunday, Sept. 26** **Rosemary Wells, author/illustrator of the Max and Ruby books**, reads from her new book at 3 p.m. at the St. Paul Central Library. Visit with Max (in costume) and see a short puppet play of Rosemary's beloved story *Bunny Cakes*. ASL interpretation is provided. Advance registration is required for this FREE program. Call Youth Services at 651-266-7034 by Sept. 19.
- Saturday, Oct. 2** **Language Matters, Inc. presents "Educational Interpreting Defined,"** a workshop about how a cued speech transliterator fits into an educational team. The workshop runs from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at Metro ECSU, 3055 Old Highway 8, St. Anthony. Cost is: \$30. CEUs are available. Open to cuers and non-cuers alike, including administrators, teachers, ASL interpreters, cue transliterators, and parents. Register online at www.ecsu.k12.mn.us/registration.
- Saturday, Oct. 9** **The 2010 Minnesota Deafblind Expo** goes from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Minnesota Department of Human Services' Elmer Andersen Building, 10th & Cedar streets in St. Paul. Get FREE information about services, assistive technology and more. For an event flyer, email lee.clark@state.mn.us or call 651-431-2226 (vp) or 1-888-206-6501 (tty).
- Oct. 15-17** **Dreams & Inspirations' Koda Family Retreat** for Kids of Deaf Adults and their families takes place at Confidence Learning Center near Brainerd. Contact Emily Smith-Lundberg at emily@dreamsandinspirations.com or by video phone at 218-297-0159.



ASL-Interpreted Performances

Request the VSA discount.

Steel Magnolias

Sunday, Oct. 3, 2 p.m.
Bloomington Center for the Arts; 952-563-8575; www.bloomingtoncivictheatre.org

Don't Drink the Water

Sunday, Oct. 3, 2 p.m.
Lakeshore Players Theatre, White Bear Lake; 651-429-5674; www.lakeshoreplayers.com

The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins

Friday, Oct. 8, 7:30 p.m.
Children's Theatre, Mpls.; 612-874-0400; www.childrentheatre.org

Charlotte's Web

Sunday, Oct. 10, 2 p.m. & Thursday, Oct. 14, 10 a.m.

The Frog Prince

Sat., Oct. 30, 1 p.m. & Thursday, Nov. 4, 10 a.m.
Hopkins Center for the Arts; 952-979-1111; www.stagetheatre.org

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

Friday, Oct. 15, 7:30 p.m.
Normandale College, Bloomington; 952-487-7462; www.normandaletheatre.org

Evita

Thursday, Oct. 21, 7:30 p.m.
Ordway Center, Sr. Paul; 651-224-4222; www.ordway.org/accessibility

Afternoon of the Elves

Sunday, Oct. 24, 2 p.m.
Howard Conn Fine Arts Center, Minneapolis; 612-623-9080; www.youthperformanceco.com

Stone Soup Feeds the World

Sunday, October 24, 3 p.m.
SteppingStone Theatre, St. Paul; 651-225-9265; www.steppingstonetheatre.org

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Our mission is to build better lives for children who are deaf or hard of hearing by providing parent-to-parent support.

Newsletter Editor: Audrey Alwell

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In Your Corner

By Candace Lindow-Davies, Minnesota Hands & Voices Coordinator

By the time you read this newsletter, the school year will have started. For families with school-aged children, this can be a good thing, but also very stressful. I'm thinking of those early mornings, processing kids through the bathroom, packing lunches, getting the kids out the door with all the right gear—it can be a challenge. Even when they get older, such as my two who are starting at new schools (middle school and high school), this can take some mental gymnastics and heavy negotiating at a time of day when I'd much rather sit and savor a cup of tea!

Some of the parents in our Hands & Voices community have just sent their children with hearing loss off to college—a transition I am so not ready for. I hope I'll have their courage when it's time to leave my son at the college of his choice. In the meantime, I'm taking to heart the advice in this month's Transition column on Page 5.

Jay Fehrman contributed the Transition column this month. Jay currently manages deaf/hard of hearing services for Northeast Metro Intermediate District #916. He is a native Minnesotan who has a bilateral hearing loss and was educated in a mainstream public school in rural southwestern Minnesota. He has a bachelor's degree in Deaf Education and Elementary Education from Augustana College in Sioux Falls, SD, a master's in Education from St. Mary's University in Winona, and completed programs at St. Mary's University in Minneapolis to be a Special Education Director and a K-12 Principal. He has worked as a DHH teacher and an administrator for the past 16 years. He knows what he's talking about!

On another note, I want to share that MN Hands & Voices is making progress with the federal appropriation request to develop a one-year pilot program of outreach to cultural minority and non-English-speaking families with children who are deaf/hard of hearing. MN Representative Betty McCollum, who is requesting this appropriation on behalf of Lifetrack Resources/MN Hands & Voices, has successfully passed this through subcommittee. Although we may not hear the final word until after the fall elections, we are very hopeful and ever so grateful to Congresswoman McCollum for her support. Stay tuned for more updates and details.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank all who attended the Metro MN Hands & Voices Annual Picnic Aug. 5. The record turnout was fantastic, the volunteers were amazing, the catering was such a huge help to our staff, and the sponsors were so appreciated. Thank you to all who donated time, money, talents, and energy to bring smiles to the faces of our kids. I'm already looking forward to next year's picnic!

Finally, as your children head off to school this year, please know that "us parents" at MN Hands & Voices are sharing this experience right along with you. We wish you and your child the best start to a wonderful school year. As always, if you need our support, just call or send us an email.

Mainstreamed children who are deaf or hard of hearing also can attend our safety workshop "Be Safe, Be Cool!" Friday, Oct. 8, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Minneapolis Police Special Operations Center. See the attached flyer for details.

Grants ensure recording of deaf history

The Commission of Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans (MCDHH) has received two grants to preserve the rich history of deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing Minnesotans.

The Legacy Grant from the Minnesota Historical Society will be used to make video interviews to document the work of citizens who are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing in civil rights and education reform. Through this project, MCDHH hopes to increase awareness about the historical contributions of this community.

MCDHH, in partnership with the Minnesota Association of Deaf Citizen and the Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf Alumni Association, also has a grant to work with the Minnesota Digital Library Reflections Project to scan, digitize and post selected historical photographs and documents on the Minnesota Reflections website (<http://reflections.mndigital.org/index.php>).

Online group supports families

National Hands & Voices has a new Yahoo online support group for families with children who have unilateral hearing loss (loss in only one ear). The group was set up to address the specific questions and challenges that are unique to this type of hearing loss. The Yahoo group offers an opportunity for real-time parent to parent support, as well as a safe, comfortable environment for sharing information. To sign up, go to http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/HandsandVoices_UnilateralHearingLoss.

Letter announces end of GMAS at Lifetrack

Sept. 3, 2010

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that the contract between Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) and Greater Minnesota Assessment Service (GMAS) program coordinated by Lifetrack Resources was not renewed due to insufficient funds on the part of the State. DHS has been the sole funder of GMAS since the beginning of the program. No further psychological and psychosocial assessments will be available through GMAS effective July 1, 2010.

For information on other resources and mental health professionals serving children who are deaf or hard of hearing, check the state website at www.dhs.state.mn.us/dhhsd-mh Please note that the psychologists listed on the website are in the private sector and reimbursement for assessment services are negotiated independently between the requestor and the psychologist.

If you have questions related to GMAS, Kim Opat, GMAS Program Director, will be available until Sept. 15. Her contact information is 1-866-840-0749 KimO@lifetrackresources.org.

After Sept. 15, contact John Gournaris, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, Mental Health Director at john.gournaris@state.mn.us for further information or additional resources.

We thank you for your support over the past 12 years. We believe that GMAS provided a valuable service to children in greater Minnesota. We are sad to see the program end.

It has been a pleasure to partner with you in this effort.

*Cindy Toppin, Vice President, Programs, Lifetrack Resources
Kim Opat, Program Director, GMAS, Lifetrack Resources*



The View from Here

Southeast

By Mary Ellen Bondhus, Southeast Parent Guide

Families with deaf or hard of hearing children gathered at Cooke Park in Rochester for the MN Hands & Voices and Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Region 10 Family Picnic on Aug. 11. There was a sandwich bar, face painting, a chalk contest, playground and lawn games. The families very willingly introduced themselves and their kids to the group, and shared ideas for future events. Ideas included an outing to an apple orchard, sledding, bowling, safety fair, tech fair and educational events.

If you have an idea for a family event, please contact me at maryellenB@lifetrackresources.org.



Happy "picnickers" show off their face paint.

Central

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

Online tool finds local captioned movies

An online search engine, Captionfish, finds open-captioned, Rear Window[®] captioned, subtitled, and descriptively narrated movies showing in theaters across the United States. The site, launched last year, is fast becoming the way people find accessible movies in their city. Go to www.captionfish.com, and it opens with easy-to-read listings for the nearest theaters. Listings are available for cities throughout the country, so you can use it when traveling. The site also has captioned and voiced trailers for select movies.

The site's creators are deaf. Chris Sano is a software engineer at Microsoft, and Brendan Gramer is a user-experience designer at Amazon.com. They work on Captionfish in their spare time. They hope that if people know where the accessible movies are, attendance will increase so theaters will add even more captioned offerings. The site is attracting about 1,000 unique visitors per day.

Accessible movie offerings also are available on the go with the newly launched, free Captionfish iPhone or iPod Touch application. See www.captionfish.com/iphone. In the future, Captionfish will have listings for live theaters with captioned performances.



Tyler Menne & Carolyn Anderson, High Five Awardees

Tyler Menne is hard of hearing, and has overcome many challenges during his 12 short years. He was born with CHARGE syndrome, and has had more than thirteen operations, including the reconstruction of his windpipe when he was 2, and open heart surgery at age 8.

Despite his own challenges in life, Tyler chose to spend his last year in elementary school helping other children, earning him the Helper of the Year Award at his school and our High Five Award, which we presented at our Annual Picnic Aug. 5. Congratulations!



Carolyn Anderson has been a tireless advocate for children who are deaf or hard of hearing for more than 30 years. Many of us have heard Carolyn's story of how she was a shy woman until she adopted



a child who turned out to be deaf. After learning of her son's hearing loss, she became a fierce and effective advocate for him. She turned her advocacy into a career, joining the staff at PACER Center in 1995. She not only has advocated for countless deaf children and their families, but also has trained advocates all over the state to stand up and ask for measurable progress for children in special education. High Five Carolyn!

ASL classes at St. Paul school open to public

Metro Deaf School-Minnesota North Star Academy (MDS-MNSA) in St. Paul is offering 8-week ASL classes that begin this month. You don't need to have a child enrolled at MDS-MNSA to join a class.

ASL Level 1 runs from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Wednesdays from Sept. 22 to Nov. 17 (no class Oct. 20). The class is taught by Jennifer Gough. ASL Level 6 runs from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Mondays from Sept. 20 to Nov. 8. It is taught by Ronda Jo Miller.

Class fee is \$50 (ages 10 - adults). Register by Sept. 13 at 651-224-3995 or email kmcdonald@mds-mnsa.org.

TV show films at deaf school

"Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" is working on the Oregon School for the Deaf for a show that airs on Halloween. The school holds an annual haunted house fundraiser in the basement of its boys' dormitory, but the space has a dirt floor and needs renovation. The Makeover crew is rebuilding that space and plans to bring some Hollywood effects to the haunted house.

While the renovation takes place, students ages 11 and older are visiting the Starkey Hearing Foundation in Minnesota to receive donated hearing aids.

ASL show announced

An ASL Comedy Talk Show takes place 7 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 20 at the Little Canada Event Hall on Rice Street. The show is a fundraiser for the Minnesota chapter of the Deaf Bilingual Coalition, which supports the right of deaf babies to have access to language and cognitive development through American Sign Language.

The show features Billy Yount, Andrew Oehrlein, Barry Siebert and others. Tickets are \$10. Cash bar and Food will be sold. For more information, email dbcminn@gmail.com.

Transition

Spotlight on Post-Secondary Transition: What's the Big Picture?

By Jay Fehrman, Northeast Metro Intermediate District 916 Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services

As a Deaf educator and administrator with bilateral hearing losses, I am often asked by parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing "What will my child's future be like?" If I had a crystal ball, I would be able to tell them. Imagining your child's future can be exciting and nerve-wracking at the same time. Fortunately, you can do something about that future now by ensuring that your child is learning the skills he or she will need to function independently when the time comes.

In Minnesota, when your child who is receiving special education services reaches age 14—or enters Grade 9—your child's IEP team will be focusing on the five areas of transition: Home Living, Post-Secondary Education, Recreation and Leisure, Community Participation and Jobs/Job Training. But, that doesn't mean you have to wait until your child reaches that milestone to begin reinforcing life skills.

I have learned throughout my experiences that many of the skills that I felt should have been addressed much earlier are not being addressed until age 14 or Grade 9. Some of the skills I am referring to are: use of a vibrating alarm clock, using a phone (whether if it is a TTY or videophone), advocating for interpreting services, being able to explain their own hearing loss and need for accommodations to others.

Why wait until your child reaches high school to address these necessary life skills? There are a number of opportunities, if you think about it, that you can use to teach your child essential living skills. A child should be able to wake up on his or her own before entering middle school. He or she should have a share in household chores, and then take responsibility for completing those chores. If a child is to achieve independence, he or she not only must learn certain skills, but also must have time to practice those skills. I strongly believe that educators and parents need to forge a partnership to teach children life skills. A DHH teacher simply won't have enough time with a child to address all the skills that can be addressed by the family.

We must adopt the attitude that transition occurs throughout life—a baby who crawls learns to walk; a child moves from pre-school to Kindergarten; a student moves from one grade level to the next; a student leaves high school for college or work. Transition is a natural part of life. Why must we wait until high school to start the transition process?

Parents have a big role in their child's journey towards adulthood. Encouraging self-advocacy starts much earlier than age 14. It is human nature to want to help and do things for others. Parents need to determine if they are *helping* or *enabling* the child who is deaf or hard of hearing. Developing a sense of responsibility starts at an early age. The sooner your child takes responsibility, the better his or her chances are for successful independence.

I encourage parents to talk to their child's Teacher for Deaf/Hard of Hearing about what life skills they can be teaching their child at home and at school this year. Habits developed in school and at home lay the groundwork for the future.

Scholarship offered to students with disabilities

The American Association on Health and Disability (AAHD) offers scholarships to college students with disabilities, especially those studying public health, health promotion, disability studies.

Application information is online at www.aahd.us (click on Scholarship Program). Deadline is Nov. 15. Winners will be announced in January.

Deaf organizations hold anniversary events

The Deaf community welcomes friends and families to a week-long celebration to mark significant anniversaries for the Minnesota Association of Deaf Citizens (125 years), the state's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services office (30 years), the Commission of Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans (25 years), and the Gallaudet University Alumni Association (115 years). The week-long celebration, Sept. 24-Oct. 2, kicks off with a visit to Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf's homecoming game and tours of the campus. Highlights of the week's events include open houses at most schools and organizations that serve the deaf community, ASL storytelling at libraries around the state, brown bag lunch presentations about Deaf history in Minnesota, an anniversary gala at the Historic Depot in Minneapolis, and an all day picnic and carnival at Wayzata Bay Park.

For a complete listing of events, see www.minndeaf.org/125years. To sponsor an event or volunteer, email history@minndeaf.org.

The national Investing in Family Support Conference for parent leaders, teachers and professionals in early hearing detection and intervention takes place

Oct. 10-12 in Kansas City. For details, see <http://conference.usu.edu/investing>.



Dad's Viewpoint

By Curt Leitz, NE Parent Guide

Ah, the state fair: one last sweaty, dusty, greasy, calorie-laden adventure before summer ends, the kids go back to school, and I grudgingly accept toast instead of a pork chop for breakfast. Like

millions of others, our family makes an annual pilgrimage to St. Paul that has become nearly as routinized as it is fattening. By now we all know the quickest route from the hog barn to the fine arts building, which stand has the best lemonade, and which bathrooms the shortest lines.

It wasn't always so. Seventeen years ago, I began dating my future wife; a few months into our relationship, she informed me that I was fair-worthy. She grew up spending at least one full day each year at the fairgrounds, while I'd never been. No problem, I thought: I can walk and eat at the same time. A couple hours looking around, a meal of junk food, and a quick ride on the Ferris wheel should just about do it.

Had I asked my date why she insisted on being there by 8 a.m., I might have had some inkling of my ignorance. By 8 p.m., I was a wreck. Sunburned. Blistered. Dehydrated. Covered in layers of grime, grease, and ketchup. But I'd survived, as did our relationship, and the next year I was better prepared.

Only a Minnesotan would see allegory in a personal history of the state fair, and I hope that at least the native Minnesotans reading this will forgive me for what follows. That first year at the fair, I was about as overwhelmed and unprepared as I was upon finding out that our daughter was hard-of-hearing. Please, bear with me: I understand that the choices we made then are not equivalent to deciding between cheese curds and walleye on a stick. What stands out to me, looking back on our years at the fair and our years learning about deafness and hearing loss, is that what at first seemed overwhelming has become routine. What stands out is that every year there's something new to do and learn; sometimes our routine is disturbed, and often we're the better for it. What stands out is how differently we do things now, compared to that first year, even as our philosophy and approach have remained constant. The differences have arisen from information and experience, both of which have raised our comfort level.

After seventeen years, I can look back and laugh at the wreck I was at the end of my first day at the fair. While I'm not exactly laughing at the stresses we felt after finding out about our daughter's hearing loss—a goat chewing on a ketchup-stained shirt is inherently more funny than an audiogram—I do look back and smile. We couldn't have known then where we'd end up now, and we didn't need to. We made the best decisions we could with the best information we had, and we stuck to our values while remaining open to the unknown.

Improve your ASL skills at aslrose.com through fun activities such as coloring pictures, matching games, and puzzles. The site also has books, DVDs and other resources.

Designer's glasses could caption speech

A newly designed pair of eyeglasses with an imbedded speech-to-text program has the online gadget geeks buzzing. The glasses have been designed to bridge the gap between people with hearing loss and hearing speakers, but uses in the corporate and academic world also have been suggested.

Called "Babel Fisk" (*fisk* is Danish for fish), the glasses were created by Danish designer Mads Hindhede so that people who are deaf can read what people are saying, while they're saying it. Microphones built into the frame pick up the voice of a speaker within the glasses' line of sight. Then the speech-to-text program projects text onto the inside of the lenses, complete with conversation bubbles like in a comic strip. The device also allows users to record text to a flash memory card to upload on a computer—a feature that might appeal to anyone sitting through a mind-numbing presentation.

So far, the Babel Fisk glasses are just a fun concept. But, based on the buzz, the design soon might be picked up and manufactured.

Signing on cell phones possible soon

Developers of software that lets users sign conversations on cell phones equipped with video capabilities are one step closer to getting their work in the hands of potential users. Electrical engineers at Cornell and the University of Washington (UW) have been working on the phone app, MobileASL, for about five years. This summer, they did a field test of the program, giving 11 students in a UW summer program for the deaf and hard-of-hearing smart phones loaded with MobileASL. The results were encouraging, but the software probably won't be widely available for another year or two.

Phones in other countries already can carry signed video calls. But, in the U.S. video calls must fit within the bandwidth restrictions imposed by the Federal Communications Commission. This has made it difficult to create a program that can carry video with enough resolution to show the movements of sign language. To work within the FCC's restrictions, the developers have created a compression program that keeps the hands and face in high resolution while the signer's torso and background are transmitted in low resolution. They've made other adjustments to improve image clarity so that signing appears as natural as possible. One other problem the engineers tackled was preserving a phone's battery life while running the power-draining video compression and decompression necessary for MobileASL. The engineering team accomplished this by innovative programming that recognizes whether the user is actively signing or watching, and increases and decreases the frame compression and transmission rate accordingly.

During this summer's field test, one of the students became lost on a bus in Seattle and used the phone to get real-time directions much more quickly than it would be possible by texting.

Research on MobileASL has been funded primarily by the National Science Foundation along with grants from Sprint Nextel Corporation, Microsoft Corporation, and Sorenson Communications. To learn more about it, see <http://mobileasl.cs.washington.edu>.

Deaf actress cast on 'Lie to Me'

The Fox series *Lie to Me* has added actress Shoshannah Stern, who is deaf, to its cast. Stern will play a deaf grad student hired to assist Dr. Lightman (Tim Roth) in writing a book.

The show is about a team of criminal justice experts with the gift of detecting the slightest twitches and changes in demeanor among people who are telling lies. The new season begins Nov. 10.

Stern previously appeared on *Jericho* on CBS.