

Family First: Finding Common Ground in the Debate over Communication Choices

What is the best way to teach children with hearing loss how to communicate? Is it better to teach them to speak and use any residual hearing they might have, since we live in a predominantly hearing world? Or, should sign language be the primary language taught, as visual communication is more natural for a child who can't hear? What about Total Communication, which tries to strike a balance between speaking and signing to help the child get information in as many ways as possible? This debate has long raged between the Deaf and Hearing communities, and even in the field of Deaf education, popular opinion has continued to change and evolve over the years.

One of the Center's core beliefs is that parents know their child best, and should be given an opportunity to learn about all of the different modes of communication and therapies available to children with hearing loss so they can decide what's right for them. This philosophy has not always been popular, but is a fundamental part of what makes CDHH such a unique and important resource in Wisconsin.

Jill O'Leske, Jodi Glennon and John Baumgartner are three of four siblings who know first hand about the differences in raising children with hearing loss, and who have each chosen a different path when it comes to communication modes. Jill and Jodi were both diagnosed with hearing loss as toddlers and have spent their entire lives dealing with the challenges of hearing loss. Although their parents chose an oral approach to communication for them as



children, to help them "fit in" better with a predominantly hearing community, both now use sign language regularly as adults, although to different degrees. Jill's husband and children are all hearing, so she primarily uses her voice to communicate, but also uses some sign. Jodi's husband and children are all Deaf, and she has a more severe hearing loss herself, so their family primarily uses sign language. John on the other hand, has been hearing all his life, but has a son who is severely hard of hearing and is currently receiving Auditory-Verbal therapy services to build his auditory and language skills without the assistance of speechreading or sign language, so he can be mainstreamed in a neighborhood preschool.

As a family that can truly understand the pros and cons of different communication approaches and that has had to learn how to find common ground related to raising deaf and hard of hearing children, we invited them to tell us more about their experiences and what they've learned over the years. *(Continued on pg. 2)*

(Above) Gathered together for a rare dinner date are (pictured left to right, front to back) Karla Baumgartner, Jay Baumgartner, Sara Baumgartner, Jodi Glennon, Mark Glennon, Ted O'Leske, Jill O'Leske and John Baumgartner.

Did you know...

- Research shows that deaf children exposed to a first language by six months of age can and do develop written language skills that are comparable to their hearing peers.
- Noise levels at sporting events has been found to range from 94dB to 108dB. The level at which hearing damage can begin is only 85dB.
- In Baby Boomers, hearing loss is 26% more common than in previous generations.

(Continued from pg. 1) When asked about how they chose which mode of communication was right for them and their families, the answer was two-fold. First, as John explained, “we have each chosen the communication option that best fits our individual family situation because we all have such different family dynamics. We also have different strengths and weaknesses, life experiences, and goals for our children and families.” Adds Jill, “I am very fortunate to have a supportive husband who knows sign, and although I’m comfortable using my speaking voice, I encourage my family to use sign language when speaking to me. For my sister Jodi and her family, communicating in ASL is the most natural fit. Speech is not an easy task for Jodi and her husband, so it would be more difficult for them to use an oral approach to communication with their children.” Jodi further explains, “In my opinion, what’s most important is that the child can communicate with and learn from their parents without frustration.”

Ultimately, they say, the decision of which communication mode is “best,” if there is such a thing, comes down to what works best for your child and what you are willing to commit to as a parent. Every communication option has its advantages and drawbacks, and they all take a certain amount of work and commitment on the part of the family. Says Jill, “I truly believe that any child is capable of learning both speech and sign language and that teaching a child to become diverse in language and communication skills from an early age can only become an advantage rather than hinder the child’s ability to communicate.” At the same time, Jill understands her mother’s viewpoint when she said that part of her reasoning for focusing on oral education and speech training for her daughters was that this was the harder approach and that sign language would “easily” be learned later if needed.

John and his wife seem to reflect this opinion, explaining that “we felt it was important for our son to gain a strong foundation in spoken language first. But, we plan on our whole family learning more sign language as the years progress.”

Considering the high level of emotion that can go into these difficult parenting decisions, it’s no wonder that there have occasionally been some healthy debates within the family. But, “first and foremost we are family and all love each other very much,” says John. “Regardless of each others’ choices, we all respect one another’s decisions and feel strongly that parents should always do what they truly believe is best for their child(ren) and their family. I don’t believe that there is one universal answer that is right for everyone. That’s why it’s so important to educate yourself as a parent about all of the options available.”

Jill agrees, adding the importance of “looking at things from the other person’s perspective and really trying to understand how and why they have come to their decisions.”

For more on this story, including personal experiences from Jill, Jodi and John, visit the CDHH blog at www.cdhh.wordpress.com.



CDHH Receives Grant from Greater Milwaukee Foundation

CDHH is pleased to announce that it recently received a \$25,000 grant from the Greater Milwaukee Foundation to support the Kellogg Child and Family Program. This grant funding was greatly needed, as the number of children entering the Kellogg Child and Family Program has risen by nearly 60% in the past two years, with no increase in county funding. Also, the number of Spanish speaking families served at CDHH has risen dramatically, prompting CDHH to hire a bilingual Speech-Language Pathologist and to utilize translators to ensure that these families have equal access to the parent education and support that CDHH provides.

The Greater Milwaukee Foundation is a family of over 1,000 charitable funds, each created by donors to serve the charitable causes of their choice. Grants from these funds serve people throughout Milwaukee, Waukesha, Ozaukee and Washington counties and beyond. Started in 1915, the Foundation is one of the oldest and largest community foundations in the world.

CDHH is proud to have the support of the Greater Milwaukee Foundation and is grateful for its commitment to ensuring that children affected by hearing loss receive the specialized services that they deserve to build a strong foundation of language and communication so they can grow up to be successful, contributing members of our community.

Thank You
for your generous support.



Did you know?



CDHH Recognized by UW-Milwaukee

CDHH Executive Director Dorothy Kerr recently accepted the UW-Milwaukee College of Health Sciences Partnership Award, in recognition of CDHH's longstanding collaboration with UWM to provide state-of-the-art audiological services to the community. Congratulations!

CDHH Takes on Social Media

To help you stay better informed about what's going on at CDHH, as well as events, news and stories related to hearing loss issues, the Center can now be found on Facebook, YouTube, and has also launched a new CDHH Blog at www.cdhh.wordpress.com. These online venues are a great way for CDHH to connect and interact with people from Wisconsin and throughout the country and share valuable information and resources with those affected by hearing loss. So, be sure to find us the next time you're online!

HLAA Walk 4 Hearing

On May 16, 2010, the Wisconsin Chapter of the Hearing Loss Association will be hosting a Walk 4 Hearing at Veteran's Park by Milwaukee's lakefront. Since 2006, state chapters of the Hearing Loss Association of America have organized walks throughout the country to raise awareness of hearing loss and raise money to provide support and resources for hearing loss prevention and education programs. Planning for the Wisconsin Walk 4 Hearing is now underway, and the event committee, which includes the Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, needs your help! If you are interested in helping with the Walk, as a sponsor, volunteer or team captain, please contact the event co-chair, Jean Szabo at szaboshhh@yahoo.com.

Rayovac Batteries Go Mercury Free

Rayovac recently introduced a new line of mercury-free hearing aid batteries for the environmentally conscious consumer. While they are slightly more expensive than the traditional zinc air batteries, Rayovac® ProLine Mercury-Free Batteries are better for the environment while still providing consistent power and quality. UniversaLink now carries Rayovac mercury-free hearing aid batteries, in addition to the traditional zinc air products. For more information, stop by the UniversaLink showroom during business hours or call 414-541-5465. And remember, at UniversaLink, we can ship batteries too! Whenever you purchase 4 packages of batteries, you'll receive the 5th pack free and there is no shipping charge for up to five packages of batteries.

New Public Access Videophone

The next time you happen to be at CDHH, be sure to stop in the UniversaLink showroom to see the new Public Access Videophone (PAV). The PAV is a multi-purpose, internet-based communications device that provides standard payphone, TTY and videophone all in one. With just one device, individuals who are hearing, Deaf or speech-disabled can make phone calls using the method of their choice. The installation of the PAV will also free up the Center's private videophone, which is used by staff to communicate with clients and customers who use sign language. Calls made through the Video Relay Service or text relay are free of charge; however, a credit card must be used to make other types of calls.

To learn more about the PAV, visit www.csdpav.com or stop in to UniversaLink during showroom hours, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday through Friday and 9:00 AM to 7:00 PM on Wednesdays. Also as a reminder, if you would like to contact UniversaLink by videophone, you can reach us at 866-954-9435.

Here's how to reach us . . . 10243 W. National Avenue, West Allis, WI 53227 (between US45/1894 and Highway 100)

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Thanks to our donors who help make it possible to continue the work of the Center.

We gratefully acknowledge contributions recorded between February 16, 2009 and June 15, 2009. Every effort has been made to ensure that all donors are listed. If there are inadvertent errors or omissions, please call 414-604-2200.

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Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart.
— Elizabeth Andrews

Volunteer Corner

Thanks to all of the volunteers who make time in their busy schedules to help CDHH and make a difference in the lives of others. Recent volunteers include:

Darcy Baier
Phyllis Ballas
Sam Ballas
Donnette Beaudoin
Autumn Brower
Caryl Ehlert
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If you would like more information about how to volunteer at the Center, contact Ruta Murphy at 414-604-7211 or email rmurphy@cdhh.org. You can also visit www.cdhh.org to download a volunteer application online.

CDHH Welcomes New Board Members

CDHH recently welcomed two new additions to its Board of Directors, Jim Milner and Kamilah Williams-Kemp.

Since 2004, Jim Milner has been the President and CEO of Urban Strategies, LLC, a Milwaukee-based consulting firm. At Urban Strategies, Mr. Milner consults with public and private workforce development efforts and has created a network of consultants who serve as coaches and technical assistance providers to for-profit and nonprofit corporations and government agencies. Mr. Milner said that he is eager to “have the opportunity to share ideas and thoughts that will positively impact the lives of those challenged by hearing loss.” He also hopes to strengthen the Center’s message to the community that “CDHH is committed to supporting the diverse needs of d/Deaf and hard of hearing individuals of all ages and backgrounds, and that commitment will never change.”



Kamilah Williams-Kemp is the Assistant Director of Field Recruitment at Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company, where she has worked for the past ten years. With an undergraduate degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders, she has always had a deep interest in working with individuals facing communication barriers, including hearing loss. Ultimately though, Ms. Kemp decided to join the CDHH Board of Directors because “the enthusiasm and dedication of the Executive Director, staff, and Board were clear signs that this was the ideal organization for me to join. Given the country’s current economic climate, it is more important than ever that we focus on strategies that will ensure the delivery of high-quality services now and into the future. I am confident that together we will accomplish this goal.” As a leader who focuses on collaboration and innovation, Ms. Kemp also believes in creating an environment of constant learning and growth. “I will bring these same principles to my work with the Center, along with being a strong ambassador for CDHH in our community.”



The business and community leaders who make up the CDHH Board are all dedicated volunteers, responsible for fiscal oversight of the agency and helping to guide its vision for the future. The staff at CDHH are grateful to these individuals for their ongoing leadership and commitment to the mission of the Center. It is our pleasure to welcome Jim Milner and Kamilah Williams-Kemp to the CDHH family.

Become Part of the CDHH Legacy Society



CENTER for the DEAF
and HARD
OF HEARING

LEGACY SOCIETY

In 2004, CDHH founded the Legacy Society, to recognize those who have included the Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in their estate plans. These special donors have ensured that their lifetime of generosity will carry on and that CDHH will receive the financial support it needs to continue impacting the lives of children and adults affected by hearing loss.

As the Legacy Society grows, members will be recognized and invited to a special event each year. Of course, we will respect the wishes of those who prefer to remain anonymous as well. If you have already included CDHH in your estate plans, please let us know so that you can be invited to join the Legacy Society.

Please call Dorothy Kerr at 414-604-2200 for complete details on the Legacy Society or for additional information on planned giving options that may benefit you as well as those served by the Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

CDHH had a busy first half of 2009, hosting two major fundraising events before the middle of June. As a private non-profit agency, these events, combined with individual contributions, make up a significant portion of the Center's operating revenue. Thanks to all who attended these events and contributed financially or in-kind to ensure their success!

Annual Gardens Luncheon

Nearly 200 guests filled the Woman's Club of Wisconsin on Thursday, April 23 for the Annual CDHH Gardens Luncheon. This year's event featured Betty Adelman, owner of Heritage Flower Farm, who spoke about Native American plants and their histories and traditional uses. The event was a great success, with all the proceeds helping to support CDHH programs and services.

Special thanks to event chair Joanie Achs and emcee Joyce Garbaciak of WISN-TV, as well as other key contributors: Dan Michaels, Jean Wilson, and Lynn Lucius, as well as event sponsors R.W. Baird, Northwestern Mutual Foundation and the Suzanne and Richard Pieper Family Foundation.

Thanks also to Audio-Visual of Milwaukee, The Potter's Shop, the Milwaukee School of Flower Design and Erin M. Schroeder for their generous contributions, as well as to the businesses and donors who contributed to the gift bags including: Close to My Heart, Cookie Lady, Cookie Lee, Inc., FragranceNet.com, J.W. Jung Seed, Kemp Clinic of Chiropractic, Lia Sophia, M Magazine, Mary Kay, Park Seed Co., Shaklee, Siemens, Soaps & Scents, and Uppercase Living.

CDHH is also grateful to those who contributed items to the silent auction including: Joanie Achs, American Girl, Bel Canto Chorus, Bijoux, blush (a beauty boutique), Brookfield Fred Astaire Dance Studio, Crawford Tree & Landscape Services, Elements East, Elite Fitness and Racquet Clubs, Enhancing Light Cosmetic Laser Centers, French Poodle Floral, Robert Frisch, Gini Bunnell, Judy Scott, Jan Harland, Hudson Sprayers, Indulgence Chocolatiers, Infinite Gymnastics, IPic Entertainment, Monica Jaekels, Landmark Landscape Design, LyLy Nails & Spa, Madra Professional Pet Styling, Peter Marshall, Milwaukee Athletic Club, Milwaukee Ballet, Monches Farm, Past Basket, Prairie Jewelers, Rishi Tea, Mary Lou Santovec, Schwanke Kasten Co., Inc., Skin Tight LLC Medi-Spa & Salon, Morgyn Stranahan, The Bartolotta Charitable Fund Care-a-lotta's, The Boulders Resort and Golden Door Spa, The Good Life Catering, Time Warner Cable, Too Cute!, Venetian Foundation, Wild Birds Unlimited, Wisconsin Athletic Club and Merrill York.



(left) Nearly 200 guests filled the Woman's Club of Wisconsin for the annual Gardens Luncheon.

(right) Left to right -- Joanie Achs, Betty Adelman, CDHH Executive Director Dorothy Kerr, and CDHH Board President Lynn Lucius.

Tasting Tuesday

On June 9, CDHH hosted the fourth annual Tasting Tuesday, a beer and wine tasting fundraiser at the Milwaukee Ale House. In addition to sampling Milwaukee Ale House beers and a wide variety of wines from around the world, guests enjoyed food, music from the Dan Dance Trio, and a silent auction featuring sports memorabilia, travel packages, restaurant certificates and much more. Guests even had the opportunity to try special samples of a beer called Samichlaus, which is one of the strongest lager beers in the world and only produced for one day each year. The evening proved to be a fun and casual way to celebrate the arrival of summer with good friends, and to show support for the work that CDHH does in the community. The evening was capped off by drawing the winner of a special raffle to win a 46" Sony Bravia LCD HDTV - Mickey Kelchen of Iowa.

Special thanks to the Tasting Tuesday committee including co-chairs John Gehlhaart and Nancy Maas, along with Michael Pryor and Patti Stevens. Thanks also to the event sponsor Ritz Holman CPA's and media sponsor M Magazine. Other major



contributors to the event include Kelly Rawson Jacobs of PRP Wine International, Milwaukee Ale House, Boelter Restaurant Supply, Whole Foods Market and McCoy and Hofbauer, S.C.

CDHH is grateful to ticket captains Karla Baumgartner, Nick Papachristou and Sandeep Mirani and the volunteers who helped at the event for their roles in making this event such a success. And, many thanks to the individuals and businesses who contributed to the silent auction including: AirTran Airways, Alioto's Restaurant, Arlington Park, Bel Canto Chorus, Betty Brinn Children's Museum, Bob Holmes, Brynwood Country Club, CDHH Board Members, Charles Allis and Villa Terrace Arts Museums, Connections Tickets, Craig Berns Salon Spa, Cream City Music, Designs by Ruta, Elkhart Lake's Road America, Inc., Festa Italiana, First Stage Children's Theater, Fun World, Garland Alliance/Gardens By Garland, Germanfest Milwaukee Inc., Green Bay Packers, Indian Summer Festivals, Inc., Klement Sausage Co., Inc., Lakefront Brewery, Lucille's Rockin' Pianos, Madison Magazine, Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, Mayor Tom Barrett, Jim and Jeanene Meisser, Milwaukee Irish Fest, Milwaukee Admirals, Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee Brewers Baseball Club, Milwaukee Bucks, Milwaukee County Zoo, Milwaukee Public Museum, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Milwaukee Wave, Morningstar, Next Act Theatre, P.F. Chang's China Bistro, Patti Stevens, Paul & Deb Ostrenga, Potawatomi Bingo Casino, PRP Wine International, Quality Candy and Buddy Squirrel, Rockwell Automation, Rocky Rococo Pizza and Pasta, Shedd Aquarium, Sprecher Brewing Co., Inc., Stone Creek Coffee, Suite Milwaukee, Sunset Playhouse, The Capital Grille, Third Ward Caffe, tosa yoga, Vitality Personal Training and YogAsylum.



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Upcoming events . . . Mark your calendar now!

Learn How to Build a Happy Habitat this August

Join us August 14-16 for Family Learning Vacation, a unique opportunity for families from throughout Wisconsin to come together for a weekend of educational workshops, family activities, and lots of fun. This year's FLV, themed "Building a Happy Habitat," is sure to be memorable, as featured guests include Matt Rider, Training Specialist at the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center at Gallaudet University, and David Stokes, award winning environmental educator. For details, visit www.cdhh.org or call 414-604-2200.

New Speechreading Classes Starting in Fall

Join us for an upcoming Speechreading and Communication Strategies class series to find out how you can improve your listening and communication skills and start enjoying social activities and relationships again! Led by Pam Bergum, speech-language pathologist at CDHH, this 8-week class series has been highly praised by past attendees, for helping them learn to cope more successfully with hearing loss and live a better quality of life.

If you're interested in joining an upcoming class at CDHH, contact Pam at 414-604-7209 or email pbergum@cdhh.org for details.

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Questions? Contact Aimee at 414-604-7210 or email akelchen@cdhh.org.



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