

BC HANDS & VOICES

October 2012 - Issue No. 11

bchandsandvoices.com



BC Hands & Voices is a parent-driven, non-profit organization dedicated to supporting families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

We are a parent/professional collaborative group that is unbiased towards communication modes and methods, believing that families will make the best choices for their child if they have access to good information and support.

Our goal is to support families in achieving successful outcomes for their children.

A Babe in the Woods

Confirming My Belief in the H&V Motto

By Gina Cooper Watt, Campbell River



Shortly after my daughter received a cochlear implant, I felt a need to reach out to others in the Deaf/CI community. I was new to the small town where we had recently moved, new to being a stay-at-home mom, and certainly new to being a mom to with a toddler who needed help learning to use her CI. I was also dealing with insecurities about taking Sara out into the 'mainstream' world. This was in the early stages of dealing with her deafness and the very visible technology and I wasn't really sure how to talk to people about it or answer the questions I was sure would come out in public.

Through our local and outreach support and service organizations, I met a few parents of other cochlear-implanted children who had a lot of experience to draw upon and share. These empathetic parents gave me some very helpful advice, offered an ear when I needed to vent, a shoulder to cry on

when I was feeling down, and helped steer me in an unbiased way toward other support services and resources.

These first positive experiences made me realize how valuable good mentors and friendships are to me, and how important a sense of belonging is for our family. I decided to try and connect with others through the internet.

On the internet, I found a few interesting websites and support groups and joined up! I was hoping to be welcomed with open, loving arms into a close-knit, helpful and vibrant community FULL of happy people.

What an innocent! I blogged about everything I was going through, and really wore my heart on my sleeve. I talked about depression, anger, feeling alone, and wondered if what I was doing was working with my child. I asked question after question. Then I started talking about SIGN LANGUAGE. I got shot. I got wounded. I was stunned.

I hadn't realized that one of the support circles I had joined promoted Auditory Verbal Therapy. At this early stage, I didn't fully understand how it differed from Total Communication, nor did I realize that some people are very passionate about and will defend their chosen therapy method with great conviction.

I responded to a question about toilet training by explaining how teaching my daughter, Sara, basic baby sign language at eight months of age had proved to be very effective for cutting down both of our frustration levels and for teaching about toileting. I said that during the initial stages before and after cochlear-implantation surgery, the brain and the auditory nerve are receiving a lot of input but not much output yet, and, therefore, the child needs a way to communicate his/her needs when he/she is not yet able to fully speak.

To say that expressing my opinions opened a can of worms is an understatement!

I was told that if I used Total Communication, I would be sending Sara straight down the road to Gallaudet University for the Deaf (implying that sign language would crowd out speech development and she would never learn to talk).

Someone decided to preach to me that AVT is the only proper education for deaf children. To add insult to injury, a deaf person who doesn't wear or believe in cochlear implants, expressed an opinion that to perform unnecessary surgery on a perfectly healthy child is abusive. I was then promptly 'unfriended' on Facebook!

Okay, now I was completely disillusioned. Deaf vs CI; TC vs AVT. Where is the love? Is this really a tight-knit community/culture at all? What have I walked into?

Naturally, I became defensive and started rambling on about Total Communication, not really knowing if it was working for Sara at the time, yet feeling this need to defend my choice. Next, I took a step back and furthered my research into the various therapy methods, the history of the CI and how it has affected the Deaf Culture, why sign language seems to be 'off limits' in many hearing people's minds, and why this "community" seems to be so splintered.

Could it be fear? Fear of a once small yet close culture dying off due to the invention of the cochlear implant? Fear of cochlear-implanted children not learning to speak intelligibly and keep pace with their hearing peers if given sign language instruction? Fear of not being a fully-functioning or accepted person in the 'mainstream' world?

I could find no evidence in the real world or any articles stating that children unequivocally have better results with one method of therapy over another. I firmly believe that each child and family's needs are different.

(continued on page 4)



BC HANDS & VOICES and GUIDE BY YOUR SIDE present: **Fourth Annual Fall Parent Workshop**



KEEPING YOUR EYE ON THE PRIZE: INSPIRING STORIES FROM YOUNG D/HH ADULTS

Fast forward 20 years—your child will grow up! Ever wondered how your child's hearing will affect his or her school experiences, making friends, ability to play sports, enjoy music, or dance? Will our children encounter barriers? Will they find their passion in life? Will they grow up to be happy, confident, successful adults? Don't miss this great opportunity to meet and learn from young adults who have grown up deaf or hard of hearing!

Speakers • Panel • Discussion



Saturday, October 27, 2012
10:00 am – 3:00 pm
Children's Hearing and Speech Centre of BC
3575 Kaslo Street, Vancouver
\$10 per adult • kids free • lunch included



Please REGISTER by Wednesday, October 17, 2012:

Online at www.bchandsandvoices.com or email info@bchandsandvoices.com

- Childcare will be provided at no cost, but children must be pre-registered
- ASL interpreting will be provided
- Our unique Hands & Voices necklaces and t-shirts will be available for purchase that day

Call BC Hands & Voices at 604-552-2254 with any questions



We have a travel grant from BCCH to cover **some travel expenses** for families who live outside the Lower Mainland. Please **contact us** for details.



What works for your child is what makes the choice right.

I learned a very hard lesson very quickly through this experience. I learned that, for me, as a parent, I need to take my ego out of the equation when determining the best course for my child and to find the method that will work best for MY CHILD. I also learned that it is not helpful to become self-righteous and proclaim to others that your method is the only way. Furthermore, it's not only okay but necessary to change direction at any given time if that is what is required for your child's wellbeing and progress.

The biggest lesson that I carry with me today from all this however, is that now I have learned to be grateful. I am grateful for all of the people and opinions within our community. Even the 'difficult' people I meet now serve to remind me of what sort of community mentor I would like to be.

I think that what our Deaf/CI community/culture needs in order to thrive is for its peoples to be open-minded and supportive, especially to those just beginning their journeys, and to embrace the future and what it holds for technology, new therapy methods, and ideas.

Today, I believe that the objective of this amazing journey is to facilitate the capacity of a child to communicate effectively; to pass along the ability to understand and be understood; to enable a child to express her/his innermost thoughts, feelings, and dreams.

This is also a journey of awareness. Most of us with so called "normal" hearing learned to hear and speak at a young age and took it for granted from then on. Without a deaf or hard of hearing loved one in our lives, many of us would never have had the opportunity to fully understand and realize the enormous importance of communication in becoming a whole; mentally and emotionally secure; and fully functioning member of our society.

I feel very strongly that a human being not only needs, but deserves the ability and right to communicate effectively within their family, their community, and the world at large. As parents and citizens of the world we have a responsibility to do the very best we can to ensure that our children are given the tools to carry this out. They are not just our children and gifts to us: they are our children and gifts to the world!

Family Stories on BC Hands & Voices Website! Now available in Punjabi, Simplified Chinese, and Traditional Chinese!

Do you know any Chinese-speaking or Punjabi-speaking families?

Please pass on this breaking news! BC Hands & Voices is pleased to announce that 4 previously published family stories have been translated into Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, and Punjabi. Those heartwarming stories can be found on the BC Hands & Voices website at bchandsandvoices.com

Many thanks to the Gwyn Morgan & Patricia Trottier Foundation for their generous support of this translation project!

Parent Coffee Nights Are Back!

- Get to know other parents of kids with hearing loss.
- Share ideas that support your deaf or hard of hearing child... or just come to listen
- Have a night off with warm drinks, yummy treats and good conversation.

WHEN: 7-9 pm, one Monday a month from September to June

WHERE: Victory Hill Site - House #3

ADDRESS: 4334 Victory St, Burnaby (Look for the blue & orange balloons)

Thank you to Provincial Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services allowing us to use this space.

Mark your calendar with these dates and we'll save you a spot on the couch.

Oct 15 2012

Nov 19 2012

Dec 17 2012

Jan 21 2013

Feb 18 2013

Mar 18 2013

Apr 15 2013

May 27 2013

Jun 17 2013



CONTACT Jennifer Towers at jtowers900@gmail.com
to RSVP or with any questions.

Annual Spring Picnic at Queens Park

By Gina Cooper Watt, Campbell River

The fourth annual BC Hands & Voices Spring Picnic was everything a picnic should be... and much, much more!

Over 100 individuals from all over the Lower Mainland, Vancouver Island, and even Fort St. John met at gorgeous Queen's Park in New Westminster on May 5. Folks contributed to a potluck lunch with a variety of healthy foods and super yummy snacks. There certainly was something for every taste bud and craving.

With the support of deaf and hard-of-hearing childcare volunteers and ASL interpreters, our children frolicked in the grass and monkeyed around on the playground equipment, while we parents networked and chatted.

Creativity was at its peak after lunch as facepainting was in full swing! Tu Anh from **A-Star Art Parlour** worked her magic on over 30 children's faces with cute colourful designs and had everyone giggling and smiling. Moreover, in support of our event, A-Star generously supplied balloon animals, flowers and swords for the kids to take home. A big thank-you to A-Star! www.astarartparlour.com

The fun continued on into the afternoon with kite flying, spoon and egg games, piñata smashing, parachute play and ball throwing! Hands & Voices necklaces and t-shirts were also available for sale at the picnic, helping to spread awareness and raise funds for our chapter.

It was a great day! We look forward to seeing you all again at next year's picnic.



It's a Big World Out There

Looking Ahead at the Post-Five World

By Alayna Finley, Langley

This issue features three resource programs available to families with children who are leaving early intervention and entering or already experiencing the K-12 world:

- **Canada Deafblind Association – BC Chapter**
- **Canada Hard of Hearing Association – BC Parents' Branch**
- **Family Network for Deaf Children**

We hope to share more information about other resources in future newsletters.

CANADIAN DEAFBLIND ASSOCIATION BC Chapter (CDBA-BC)

Interview with Theresa Tancock, Family Services Coordinator

Who does your organization serve?

Families living in BC who have children with deafblindness from birth to 19 years of age. Please note some of our services are offered to CDBA-BC members of all ages.

What resources and supports are available from your organization for families with children turning age 5?

- **Early Intervention Program**
- **Summer Programs**
 - **Intervention Program** provides funds allowing families to hire summer Intervenors.
 - **Recreation Program** offers peer and social opportunities in new activities.
 - **Summer Family Retreat** with recreation activities, support sessions, networking.
- **Intervention Services**
 - **Hospital Intervention Services** in challenging medical situations, allowing family members to meet with medical personnel without having to intervene at the same time.
 - **Relief Intervention Services** for crisis or emergency situations, allowing the individual with deafblindness to facilitate communication and access information.
- **Other Supports**
 - **Equipment Fund** assists with the purchase of specialized items.
 - **Resource Library:** toys, audio, digital/videotapes, books and information resources.

- **Parent Group:** social support, information and advocacy via email network and workshops.

Contact CDBA-BC at
www.cdbabc.ca
theresa@cdbabc.ca
 604 528-6170

CHHA* - BC PARENTS BRANCH

(*Canadian Hard of Hearing Association)

Interview with Teresa Lonn, President

Who does your organization serve?

Parents of school-aged hard of hearing children.

What resources and supports are available from your organization for families with children turning age 5?

- **Information Sharing** – newsletters and emails
- **Spring Workshop** – parent education day
- **Fall Family Weekend** – family networking and support
- **Special Events** – games night, walkathon, picnics
- **Planning Meetings** – both parents and board members

Contact CHHA-BC Parents Branch at
www.CHHAparents.bc.ca
info@CHHAparents.bc.ca
 604 819-5312

FAMILY NETWORK FOR DEAF CHILDREN (FNDC)

Interview with Cecelia Klassen, Executive Director

Who does your organization serve?

Parents with (generally) school-aged deaf and hard of hearing children/youth throughout British Columbia.

What resources and supports are available from your organization for families with children turning age 5?

Deaf Youth Today Summer Program: DYT aims for 2 program weeks for deaf and hard of hearing children (D/HH) ages 5 to 9 each summer. We are open to including D/HH children who are 4, but will be starting kindergarten in the fall.

Family Deaf Camp at Hornby Island: A great family camp for D/HH children of all ages and their families.

Website (www.fndc.ca): We gather information from all over BC and have the information in one place on our website for easy access for families.

Workshops: We are always open and ready to set up a workshop that meets the educational or social needs of D/HH children and their families.

Advocacy/Advice: We are always open to assisting families with information and suggestions. FNDC strives to educate government agencies on the needs of D/HH children and their families. Examples: qualified interpreters in the school system, better captioning access on television, video relay services, and improved literacy levels.

Contact FNDC at

www.fndc.com

info@fndc.ca

604 684-1860 voice/text

Please look for interviews with Family and Community Services (FCS) and Provincial Outreach Program (POP) in our next newsletter.

Sign Language Classes

Family and Community Services (Burnaby, Surrey, Langley, and Kelowna)

FCS under PDHHS is offering sign language classes and workshops for families who have deaf and hard of hearing children between ages 0-19. Extended family members and friends are invited to register; however priority registration will be given to immediate families or caregivers. Classes are offered at the following locations: Burnaby, Surrey, Langley, and Kelowna.

For more information, please contact Roger Chan at Roger.Chan@gov.bc.ca or 604 660-1800.

Northern BC Children and Families Hearing Society (Prince George)

Northern BC Children and Families is offering sign language classes in Prince George for families with a deaf or hard of hearing member. Also open to friends and family members, and others who interact with a deaf or hard of hearing person. For more information please contact 250-563-2425 or pgdeaf@telus.net.

Numb Hands and Other Bits on the Ride to Harrison

By Stewart Whitfield, Richmond

The road stretches ahead of me, the next bend almost out of sight. Poplars wave in the breeze and the sun beats down. This is the worst part. The novelty of the start has long worn off, I haven't seen another rider for the last hour, the varied terrain between Maple Ridge and Mission is behind me and the bald eagle soaring in the sky above me has gone its separate way. I know that I have at least another hour to go and it's getting harder to relieve the numbness that keeps coming back into my hands from being on the drop bars for so long. Now it's just me and the road, as I try to stay focused on keeping the right distance from the road edge. Too far in and I am in the loose gravel at the side of the road, sucking energy and slowing me down, risking a flat, or if I move out too far into the road I risk getting side-swiped by some truck.



I am 3 hours into a 120km bike ride that will take me from Brentwood Mall in Burnaby out to Harrison Hot Springs following the Lougheed Highway. I remind myself why I am on this grueling ride. It is to help the Rotary Club of Vancouver raise money for hearing programs across BC – programs that directly help my son who is profoundly deaf and wears 2 cochlear implants.

This year I am just one of 130 riders participating in Rotary's annual Ride For Hearing, but as a group we managed to raise over \$125,000 in pledges. The Rotary Club of Vancouver has been organizing the Ride for Hearing event for the past 27 years and have raised over \$2.2 million in total. Funds have been used to establish the Rotary Hearing Centre at UBC Hospital and the Rotary Hearing Clinic at St. Paul's Hospital. Organizations such as BC Children's Hospital, Children's Hearing and Speech Centre of BC and the BC Family Resource Centre have also benefited over the years.

Since these organizations have helped my family greatly, I am pleased that I can do a little to give back. And for me, it's as easy as getting on my bike. So I put my head down and keep pedaling, even looking forward to the hills ahead because I know there's a reward at the end.

After 4 hours of non-stop riding, I arrive at the finish line in front of the beautiful Harrison Hot Springs Resort. And there it is – the sight I've been waiting for – my wife and kids cheering and waving me in. The kids are not quite sure how Daddy got there, or why I'm drenched in sweat and having trouble walking, but they're happy to see me.

After a few celebratory photos we head inside for refreshments and spend the rest of the day enjoying the complimentary use of the Harrison Hot Springs Resort pools. Man, did it feel good to slip into that pool! I can't wait for next year.

Where Was the Sun?

Summer Fun at Grimston Park

By Anja Rosenke, Richmond

August 26 – There may have been some skepticism and bated breath about the weather that morning, but over 40 people set out for Grimston Park in New Westminster for our Summer Get-Together nonetheless.

Overcast skies? No matter – the kids rushed the playground and eagerly waited for the pool to fill. A little Vancouver drizzle wasn't going to stop them. Many of those brave little souls donned their bathing suits and took the plunge. Brrr! So we adults gathered under the large oak tree, chatting, eating, learning and laughing, seeing old friends and making new ones. A couple of the older siblings led the younger ones in football and games on the field. The kids snacked on watermelon and freezies provided by BC Hands & Voices – a huge hit, needless to say.

All in all, it was a great turn out and a really fun time! A big thank you to all the families who came out to enjoy the day, the BC Hands & Voices board members who helped to organize it, and Trevor from Still Interpreting for helping to facilitate some great conversations. Oh and yes, predictably, the sun poked through just as the last cars were driving away.

We hope you can join us again next year for a bit of summer fun and hopefully next time... in the sun!



Did You Know?

By Teresa Kazemir, Port Coquitlam

There are currently 35 authorized Hands & Voices chapters (including ours) and 12 provisional chapters (in the process of starting up, working towards full status).

Hands & Voices is growing in Canada! In addition to our BC Chapter, there are provisional chapters in Ontario and Alberta, as well as a start-up chapter in Manitoba.

There are 19 Hands & Voices **Guide By Your Side** programs across North America, including ours (which is part of the BC Early Hearing Program).

The Hands & Voices newspaper (The Communicator) is distributed to over 6000 people.

The Hands & Voices website (www.handsandvoices.org) has over 9000 unique visitors each month.

Donate Now

Your donations will go towards providing more support to families with deaf/hard of hearing children in B.C. To make a donation, please mail a cheque to BC Hands and Voices

BC Hands and Voices
5513 Parker Ave
Victoria, BC V8Y 2N2

A tax deduction receipt will be issued for any donation of \$25 or above. BC Hands and Voices is a registered charity (Charity Registration Number: 83838-4428 RR0001).

bchandsandvoices.com



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