

BC Hands & Voices Newsletter

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



Spring Events!!!

We are planning two different family events for this Spring. One will be small and casual, the other will be jointly hosted by BC Hands & Voices, Family Network for Deaf Children, and Canadian Hard of Hearing Association of B.C. Parents' Branch.

More details to be posted soon on our website:

www.bchandsandvoices.com

It's Raining Hands & Voices

By Sydelle Murphy

One would expect only beautiful sunny weather at the end of August. Unfortunately we live in British Columbia and that means buckets of rain, any time of year. So when we planned our First Annual Hands & Voices Picnic for August 24th, we thought the weather would cooperate. No such luck. Although it rained, and I mean a true B.C. downpour, fun was still had by all! The kids enjoyed eating hotdogs and cupcakes, participating in arts and crafts projects, blowing bubbles and knocking down a colourful piñata. The parents had a chance to socialize under tarps and tents. We also had professionals from the area come out to support our new organization and see what we're all about. All in all it



BC Hands & Voices is a parent-driven, non-profit organization dedicated to supporting families with children who are D/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.

www.bchandsandvoices.com
www.handsandvoices.org

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HANDS & VOICES



From Families to Families...

How the Cochlear Implant Has Helped Me

Hello, good afternoon,

My name is Rosalind Ho. Today I'm going to talk about how the cochlear implant helps me, its limitations, and the best way to communicate with a cochlear implant user.

Without the cochlear implant, I wouldn't be able to hear at all. With the implant, as well as years of practice, I can now distinguish human speech. I can hear people as separate voices and not just sounds. Also, I can usually tell one person's voice from another. Unless the background is very noisy, I can usually carry a conversation with a hearing person.

However, the implant does have some limitations. I can hear music and the radio, and sometimes it sounds all right, and sometimes it's just noisy. On the radio or TV, I can tell the difference between music and human speech, but I usually cannot understand all the words. Without background music, I can understand songs. Background noise can interfere with my hearing, and when it's too noisy, it's hard to follow a conversation. On the phone, voices aren't always clear. When I listen to an ESL dialogue program on the internet, I can usually understand most of it. The fact that there is always a brief introduction before the dialogue is also quite helpful.

Perhaps you might want to know how I manage in the classroom. If the class is quiet and I'm sitting at the front, I can usually understand the teacher without looking at the interpreter. Of course, it requires a lot of concentration, and more so if the teacher walks around or turns his back to me.

I am now in Grade 8 in high school. The classes aren't always quiet, so I'm glad that the school provides me with an interpreter so that I don't miss anything important in class. Otherwise, I'd have a lot of problems.

When you speak face to face with a cochlear implant user, it is best to face him or her and speak naturally and clearly, but not too slowly. Gestures or sign language, if the cochlear implant user does sign, can help too. It is best to begin with something simple and not content-loaded. It's basically the same thing when you speak to a cochlear implant user over the phone. Speak slowly, but not too slowly, and speak in a clear voice.

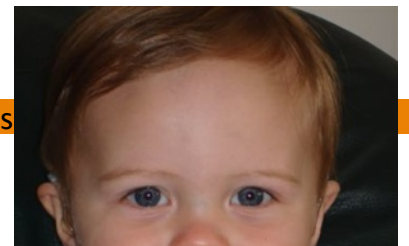
The cochlear implant offers many benefits. Without it, I would be completely deaf. With it, I can understand people's voices and participate in a conversation. But the implant does have its limitations, such as when there is too much background noise or the sound is not clear. When you speak with a cochlear implant user, you should speak slowly and clearly.

With the implant, I am able to hear when I otherwise wouldn't be able to. I also had to practice a lot and work hard at learning how to hear and then how to speak. My ability to hear as well as I do today is due to a lot of hard work as well as the support of all the doctors, audiologists, speech therapists, and teachers that have worked with me over the years. If you have a friend or a relative of yours who has a cochlear implant, there are many challenges and obstacles to overcome. However, if you persevere, keep an open mind, and work hard, the rewards that you reap will be great.

Thank you for listening to me.

First presented at "Sharing Our Stories" workshop at A Cochlear Implant Conference for Parents And Interested Professionals run by BC Family Hearing Resource Centre in June 2002. Rosalind had been using the cochlear implant for almost 10 years back in 2002. She is now third year at the University of British Columbia, majoring in English Literature.

From Families to Families...



One of our favourite hearing aid stories is when we discovered that our son Connor had a knack for taking things apart. As Connor was diagnosed at birth he's been wearing his little blue aids since he was 3 months. He's generally pretty good about keeping them in! However one day I came into our living room to discover that not only had he taken them out, but he had completely dismantled both of his hearing aids. He had removed the ear moulds from the aids as well as the batteries and removed the tubes from the moulds. Needless to say that I could not put them back together again and we had to make an appointment to get them fixed. So we figure Connor will likely be an engineer or something because he was only 13 months at this time!

What is BC Hands & Voices??

Why do we have this new group in B.C.? What is it all about? Who is it for?

Hands & Voices started as a parent support group in Colorado in the mid-1990's. This group was

Registered Disability Savings Plans (RDSPs)

For the first \$500 you contribute to your child's RDSP, the government will contribute \$1,500 to the plan. For the next \$1,000 you contribute, the government will match it by another \$2,000. Sounds too good to be true? Well, it's true! Read on.

If your child is eligible for the Disability Tax Credit, you can set up an RDSP for him/her. Contributions to an RDSP may be supplemented by payments from the Canada Disability Savings Grant Program. Lower-income families may be eligible for assistance from the Canada Disability Savings Bond Program without having to make a contribution to an RDSP.

Both the Canada Disability Savings Grant (CDSG) Program and Canada Disability Savings Bond (CDSB) Program are administered by Human Resources and Social Development Canada.

Deadline for receiving the CDSG or CDSB for the year 2008: Set up an RDSP, and make the Grant or Bond application on or before March 2, 2009.

As of now, RDSPs seem to be available only at Bank of Montreal. You can call the BMO Investment Centre at 1-800-665-7700 to set up an RDSP.

For details, visit www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability_issues/disability_savings/index.shtml
www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/rgstrd/rdsp/fq-eng.html
www.rdsp.com (A very helpful website set up by Planned Lifetime Advocacy

Network, a non-profit enterprise that has led the advocacy work to make this disability savings plan happen.)

different from other groups at the time, as it embraced the idea that families of children who are deaf or hard of hearing have more in common than they have differences. They believed that there was no one "right" way to teach deaf and hard of hearing

children – they wanted to get away from the historical divide between the "signing camp" and the "oral camp," and bring everyone together. This original group, Colorado Families for Hands & Voices, received a lot of attention, and grew very quickly. Soon new chapters of Hands & Voices began popping up across the country, and there are now more than 30 chapters.

BC Hands & Voices is the first international chapter of Hands & Voices. Our group came into being in January of 2008. Twelve people came together for our first meeting, and we've been meeting monthly ever since. We are a mixed group, including parents of kids who are deaf or hard of hearing, professionals working with kids who are deaf or hard of hearing, and deaf & hard of hearing adults. We are from various backgrounds and cultures – our common goal is to support families in achieving successful outcomes for their children.

BC Hands & Voices started up in order to address a specific need for families in B.C. With the recent implementation of newborn hearing screening (part of the BC Early Hearing Program), there is a need for support and social networking for these newly diagnosed families across the province. That is the focus of B.C. Hands & Voices. B.C. Hands & Voices is not the only parent-run group in B.C. that offers support to families of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Family Network for Deaf Children and Canadian Hard of Hearing Association of B.C. Parents' Branch are wonderful groups that have been providing information, support, advocacy, social opportunities, programs, and parent networking for many years. However, neither of these groups focuses on families of young, newly diagnosed children.

It has been a busy year for B.C. Hands and Voices – we are now registered as a non-profit society, and the next step is to complete the application for charitable status. We have a bank account, membership forms, a website, and now our first newsletter. We are busy planning our second family event, and have lots of ideas for the future. If you are interested in joining us and helping out, please contact us – the more the merrier! 😊

BC Hands & Voices Board of Directors

One of the huge benefits of starting Hands & Voices in B.C. was that it allowed for the implementation of the **Guide By Your Side** Program, which started in March of 2008. Guide By Your Side is a program developed by Hands & Voices, but we were very fortunate that the government was willing to fully fund it as part of the B.C. Early Hearing Program. Guide By Your Side is a program which provides parent to parent support for families of children newly identified with hearing loss. Parent Guides are there to support families by listening, sharing stories about their own experiences raising a child who is deaf or hard of hearing, and sharing some of the bits of practical advice a parent learns over the years (e.g. how did we keep those hearing aids on our baby's ears and out of his mouth??!!). Parent Guides are trained to support families **without bias** towards modes or methods of communication (e.g. oral, sign, cued speech, combined methods, etc.). They reinforce the Hands & Voices slogan, "What Works for your Child is what makes the Choice right." Guide By Your Side provides a wonderful start for families, and B.C. Hands & Voices hopes to build on that by providing further social networking opportunities and other supports for new families.

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors. They do not necessarily represent the viewpoints of the BC Hands & Voices.

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