

25 years of making futures bright



BC Family Hearing Resource Society

# Reaching Out

A Newsletter from the BC FAMILY HEARING RESOURCE CENTRE for families with deaf and hard of hearing children throughout BRITISH COLUMBIA.



Spring/Summer 2009

## Family Feature

### A Year of Hearing the World Differently



*The Philp Family, Mom Jennifer, Dad Lucas and children Nolan & Clara of Mill Bay, has been receiving services through our Outreach Program. Nicola Swain is the Consultant for their region of Vancouver Island. The Philp family has been connected to other families through our Parent to Parent Support Network by Cathy Luther, our Family Support Parent. Cathy has also supported the family through the Kindergarten transition process by partaking in a parent group in their community and by facilitating the parent portion of our recently held PEER group.*

*Jennifer shares her family's journey over the past year since Nolan was diagnosed with a hearing loss.*

#### We Know A Little Boy Who...

used to wake up in the middle of the night to sing his favourite songs,  
spoke his first words when he was ten months old,  
walked on his own when he knew he would not fall,  
has a smile as bright as the sun,  
is determinedly patient because he wants to do things for and by himself,  
knows how to interpret and speak to the world with his eyes,  
sees how a person is feeling without having to ask,  
dreams of trains, trucks, and trailers,  
is enchanted by the forest,  
loves to explore along the ocean side,  
digs for worms and fishes for trout in the backyard with his Dad,  
thinks that he should eat macaroni and cheese every day,  
will tell you that the sunlight shining through the dew drops on the trees are Christmas lights,  
and wants others to be part of his life.



This little boy's name is Nolan.

#### *February 2007 to September 2007: Not So Typical Changes*

Shortly after Nolan's second birthday and upon the arrival of his younger sister Clara, Lucas and I began to notice changes in Nolan's personality. For example, he constantly demanded that we pick him up and interactions with Nolan often resulted in him (and us) feeling completely frustrated that we did

BC Family Hearing Resource Centre 15220 – 92<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Surrey, BC V3R 2T8  
Voice: (604) 584-2827; TTY: (604) 584-9108, FAX: (604) 584-2800 Toll Free: 1-877-584-2827  
website: [www.bcfamilyhearing.com](http://www.bcfamilyhearing.com) e-mail: [info@bcfamilyhearing.com](mailto:info@bcfamilyhearing.com)

not know what he needed which in turn, left him crying and struggling to be understood. When we talked about this with friends, family, and health workers, they told us not to worry; that these were typical challenges that two year olds face and that Nolan was also adjusting to having a new baby sister.

When we voiced concerns about the clarity of his speech and getting speech and hearing assessments done, we were told on several occasions that it was not necessary because Nolan was continuing to meet the expected milestones for his age and the sounds that he had difficulty producing were all common ones that young children struggle with. Reluctantly, we accepted this advice.

But as the months passed, there were other instances that concerned us. Nolan did not hear us when we whispered to him. He startled even when we had not snuck up on him. He looked lost and searched with his eyes to figure out what seemed to be obvious situations. He studied our lips when we spoke to him and especially when he was learning something new. He was nervous about attending preschool and did not want to take part in new social settings— which was completely unlike the outgoing and confident boy that we knew at home.

As well, for the amount of reading and interaction that Nolan experienced in his daily life, we felt that speaking clearly should not have been so effortful for him. Lucas and I became convinced that there was a serious issue with Nolan's speech and possibly, his hearing. We called the local health centre stating that we had significant concerns about Nolan's speech and requested that testing be done as soon as possible.

### ***December 2007: Relief, Worry, and Shock***

Some months later, Nolan finally went for his speech assessment. Upon returning home after his visit with the SLP, Nolan came up to me, looked into my eyes, and smiled. Words cannot describe what that moment was like when he and I for the first time connected with the understanding that his mommy and daddy finally knew that he had difficulty with his hearing.



Two days later Nolan went to the audiology clinic for his first hearing test. The audiogram showed that he had moderate to severe sensorineural hearing loss in both ears— which upon further genetic testing, suggested that Nolan was born with this condition. In the days that followed, it seemed like our initial feelings of relief that quickly turned into worry and shock would never end.

For Lucas and me, there was definitely a sense of relief in knowing that our hunch was not imagined but very real. That said, we were upset and that we did not act on our concerns when they had first arisen. These feelings were short lived once we recognized what we needed to do was to get on with helping Nolan. Immediately, we read everything we could find to learn about Nolan's hearing condition and the potential implications that a delayed diagnosis posed.

We also scheduled an ABR exam, selected an ENT, talked with other parents of children with hearing loss, contacted the BC Family Hearing Resource Centre, sought out what local resources were available, arranged for a classroom assistant for Nolan at preschool, searched for a speech-language pathologist, and made things more accessible for Nolan while he waited to receive his hearing aids. Nolan appreciated the small changes that we made in our daily routines such as addressing him by name and getting eye contact before we said something to him, facing him when we read stories, and talking slower and louder.

The news of Nolan's diagnosis raised many questions. "Would Nolan maintain his current level of hearing? Were there other associated health issues that we were not aware of? Was the cause hereditary or environmental? How much could we expect Nolan to benefit from his hearing aids and FM equipment? What were the ways in which Nolan was making and not making sense of the world? What assumptions had we made about Nolan prior to his assessment and what shifts in thinking did we now need to make?"

Despite the fact that we thought Nolan's speech difficulties could be related to his hearing, it never occurred to us just how severe his hearing condition

might be. When we found out how hard of hearing Nolan was, we were completely shocked. The impact of this news was difficult to comprehend and when we listened to an audiotape of what it was like to be moderately and severely hard of hearing, we were totally taken aback again. We wondered how was it that Nolan developed as much language as he had and learned to speak at all and, how was he able to sing in perfect tune without hearing the higher notes of a song?

As shocking as this news was for us, we realized two important lessons. First, that in spite of how hard it was for Nolan to hear, he had developed many strategies using what hearing he did have and all of his other senses to figure out and relate to the world around him; and second, that Nolan's hearing condition did not make him a different person. He was the same person he had always been but it was that *we* knew something different about him. So in actual fact, it was those of us around Nolan that had been changed by what we now knew about him.

### ***February 2008: Hearing the World Differently***

Spring arrived early. We headed outside for our usual morning walk but this time Nolan heard the birds for himself. With a sense of urgency, he ran to the creek that borders two sides of our yard. When he reached the bank, he stood there for quite some time, all the while looking at the water and moving his head back and forth as he watched the current. Every now and then he looked up at me— excited and beaming with the brightest smile— as if to say, “Everyday I saw the creek, but now I can actually hear it.”



The chirping of birds and the rush of the creek were just two of the countless new sounds that Nolan heard during the first day of wearing his hearing aids. And when he received his FM system in April, it was like another world opened up for him— and Nolan enthusiastically jumped in with his whole being. Each morning, he looked forward to wearing his hearing aids and using the FM and greeting me with, “Good morning, Mommy. I can hear you!”

Nolan's anxiety at preschool pretty much disappeared. He was now able to hear more through

amplification and with ongoing consultation of his resource team with his preschool teachers and classroom assistant many physical and instructional adaptations were implemented in the classroom. In the morning as soon as the classroom door opened, Nolan happily said goodbye to us in the hallway and ran inside. After months of frustration and withdrawing from interacting with others, we saw the real Nolan again; laughing, excited about life, and making new friends.

### ***Summer 2008: Nolan's Language Development***

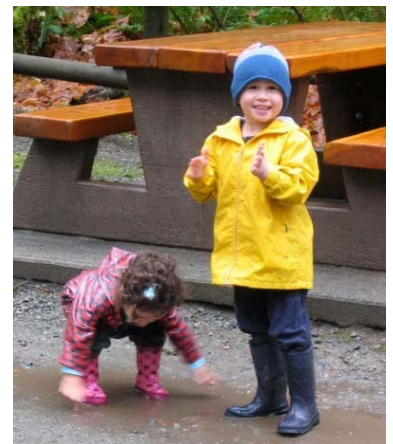
“I didn't hear the water before. Now I can hear the water. I love my hearing aids, Mommy.” (Sitting by the creek)

Lucas and I definitely noticed steady growth in Nolan's language development on daily and weekly bases. But after six months of using his hearing equipment and receiving support in his preschool, through speech-language classes and at home, the gains that Nolan had made were so evident. The time it took for him to hear what was said and then answer back was disappearing. He asked for visuals and written text to support his learning and to communicate with others. We labeled the house on demand and at school, similar cues were provided for him. Nolan now used words to describe how he felt and what he was thinking about. With this growth in his ability to communicate and think with language, Nolan not only began sharing his current thoughts but also reflections on past events, even ones from when he was just two years old.

### ***Fall 2008: Finding a Way***

“Daddy, can you hear the leaves crunch?”

Nolan continued to make steady gains in all areas of his development. As an infant, he loved being in the water and now as he has progressed to the next level of swim lessons. It was expected that the children attend the lessons without



their parents. This was a source of anxiety for Nolan as he had to rely completely on what his instructor was telling him without use of his hearing equipment. During one of Nolan's resource team meetings, it was suggested that visuals be used to support Nolan in his swim lessons. So after locating and creating diagrams on the computer, I printed them off and got them laminated. Then before we went to his swim lesson, Nolan and I would talk about the different pictures and role-played what each of them meant. This was a great way for Nolan to anticipate what might happen in the lesson and when we got to the pool, we used the visual cues as well as sign language so that Nolan knew exactly what to do.

### ***Winter 2009: Steady Growth and Another Dilemma***

"Listen to the snow under my feet. It's squeaky, isn't it?"



One of the most obvious changes in Nolan's language development during the winter months was how Nolan was using language to think, communicate his thinking, and to interact with others. He was asking questions, responding to questions, stating ideas and elaborating on them as well as relating to someone

else's. We see our daughter, Clara, as playing an especially important role in Nolan's growth in this area-- both in the progression of his language skills and in his confidence in being able to communicate with others. Clara prompts Nolan to connect and expand on what she says in simple sentences.

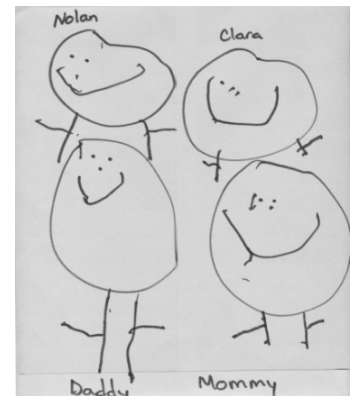
Since his first assessment, Nolan learned that he was being observed by others and did not like being 'on show'. Consequently, he often got noticeably upset and completely withdrew from the situation. This posed a challenge for us when working with Nolan's team to plan future goals, strategies and ways of supporting him since it was not unusual to

attend a meeting and find that there were contrasting accounts of him. To solve this dilemma, Lucas and I videotaped his speech-language sessions and gave Nolan's classroom assistant the video camera to capture what Nolan was like at preschool. The use of video proved to be an effective and unobtrusive way to observe him as well as a means by which the team could collectively view and discuss Nolan's progress and then work out areas for further development.

### ***One Year Later: Sign Language and Kindergarten***

"How do you say "boat" with your hands, Mommy?"

Like other families, we find sign language to be an important mode of communication in our lives. It is essential during times when Nolan cannot wear his hearing aids, in places where it is too noisy for Nolan to hear, or we are not within earshot of each other.



When Nolan is tired or learning something new, sign language is an efficient way to communicate information to him. Up until now, we have used sign language mainly to communicate information to Nolan. However, now Nolan and Clara want to learn it and use it to communicate with us and other people outside of our home. So in our attempt to become more fluent, we have a Deaf sign language instructor come to our home and teach us as we engage in our daily routines to make the learning as relevant as possible.

As we look forward to Nolan's entry to Kindergarten, there is much to think about and prepare to ensure a smooth and happy transition from preschool. Before we registered Nolan at a particular school, we visited the schools in our area and met with the staff as well as district personnel to find out what environment would be best for his social and academic needs and what kind of accommodations could be made. We also visited each of the schools on separate occasions with Nolan to see his reaction to the different places before we decided which school he would attend.

We have now chosen a school and Nolan goes to weekly preschool sessions there as a way to get used to his new surroundings. We have also met some of the parents and children that will be part of the school community.

Through all of these events and efforts made by our family, our extended family, friends, a talented and caring team of professionals and most importantly, Nolan, we see him becoming more confident in his abilities and taking risks as he learns.



### Looking Ahead

“There is no use trying,” said Alice; “one can’t believe impossible things.”

“I dare say you haven’t had much practice,” said the Queen. “When I was your age, I always did it for half an hour a day. Why, sometimes I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.”-Lewis Carroll

It has been just over a year since Nolan’s hearing diagnosis was identified. Watching him and reflecting on this period of time since his first assessment, Lucas and I are constantly reminded that there is no use in giving up. Even though he did not have hearing aids for the first three years of his life, these circumstances did not stop him from learning and making valuable contributions to our family and to those around him. Nolan has taught us that a hope-filled life is not just about imagining and believing in perceived impossibilities but making these a reality by living them every day.

*We’d like to take this opportunity to wish Nolan and his family farewell as they enter Kindergarten in the Fall. Please keep in touch. It is always a pleasure to hear from families once they’ve left our program.*

## On the Fly...Hints for Home

### 5 Minute Literacy Learning Activity

by Kristyn Payne  
Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

### Clap it Out



Children love clapping and children love to hear their names! You can help your child learn syllable awareness by clapping the syllables of their name with them. Begin by clapping your own name “Mom-my” (2 claps) and then clapping your child’s name “E-liz-a-beth” (4 claps), Chris-to-pher (3 claps). Have fun trying all the names of the people (and pets) in your family©. Figure out how many claps are in your name! Who has the most claps? the least claps? the longest name? the shortest name? As your little one begins to understand the concept better they will learn to break other words into syllables as well.



YOUR



NAME

## 25 Years of Making A Difference

### In Appreciation of our Supporters

Since our last issue, the following individuals and organizations have continued to make a difference in the lives of our children and their families by generously donating to our centre either monetarily or through goods and services.



# Elks & Royal Purple Fund for Children \$120,000 annually!



#### Elks

- Fort Nelson
- Revelstoke
- Smithers
- Prince Rupert

#### Royal Purple

- Aldergrove
- Campbell River
- Courtenay
- Lillooet
- Port Coquitlam
- Prince Rupert
- Terrace
- Vernon



**Thank You!**

#### Individuals & Organizations

- Margie Colclough
- Art Currie & Gladys Pelkey-Currie
- Hugh Curtis
- Dr. Joan Ford
- John Hardie Mitchell Family Foundation
- Cheryl Hill
- Sally & James Hurst
- Marquita Lester
- Ann & Mark Moes
- Peterson Family
- Mark Rosal – Ear Gear
- Sunbury Cedar
- United Commercial Travelers of America
- United Way – Vancouver Airport Authority



### Playground Dedication



On May 25<sup>th</sup> Ronald McDonald and representatives from McDonald's visited our Centre. We invited them to thank them for their contribution to the rejuvenation of our backyard playground. With their help, we were able to add a bike path and art arbour as well as more landscaping and child-size picnic tables for the enjoyment of children and families for years to come. Thank You McDonald's – We're Lovin' it!



# 25 Years of Making A Difference

## 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

June 7<sup>th</sup> is fast approaching. Join us in celebrating 25 years of serving families, research and training.



**Date: June 7 2009**  
**Time: 1:00 – 4:00 pm**  
**Place: BC Family Hearing Resource Centre**

Please be sure to contact our centre to RSVP by May 31<sup>st</sup>. We are looking forward to seeing you!

Phone (local): 604-584-2827  
Toll Free: 1-877-584-2827  
TTY: 604-584-9108  
Email: [info@bcfamilyhearing.com](mailto:info@bcfamilyhearing.com)

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## Walk-a-thon 2009

The Elks and Royal Purple annual Walk-a-thon has just completed another successful ‘fun’draising effort. **Over \$10,000 was raised!** Many thanks to everyone who collected pledges and donated; proceeds support the programs and services of the BC Family Hearing Resource Society.



More than 100 participants attended this non-competitive event in the beautiful environment of Campbell Valley Park in South Langley. Members of the Elks and Royal Purple, Staff from the BC Family Hearing Resource Society and the Surrey YMCA, as well as volunteers and many past and present families from our programs at BCFHRC and Surrey Early Speech & Language joined us.

After walking/running/rolling the trail, activities included face painting, an art station, cookie decorating, hula hoops, soccer balls and the extremely popular YMCA ‘Bouncy Castle/Slide’. Delicious nourishment was provided by the Elks & Royal Purple with barbequed hot dogs and hamburgers, juice, chips and cake! Tim Horton’s Community Cruiser was there earlier in the day to provide coffee and timbits.

*Thank you everyone for helping us build bright futures together.*

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## Thanks to our own ‘Art’-isan

Pictured to the right are Gladys Pelkey-Currie and Art Currie with BCFHRC staff member Ellen Peterson. Both Gladys and Art are long time members of Vancouver Elks & Royal Purple.

They are standing behind a podium that Art handmade and donated to our centre. Thank you Art for your wonderful woodworking talent; the podium is beautiful. Thank you both for your continued support of our centre and to Vancouver Elks & Royal Purple Lodge #1 for donation of the materials.



## Reaching Out to Community Service Providers (CSPs)

### The Power of Empowerment

BCFHRC staff members Judy Chrastina, Kristyn Payne and Tamara Pelletier attended the Itinerant Conference for Teachers of the Deaf in North Vancouver on April 3rd. Our staff attended to learn more about how Early Interventionists can help our families gain the most from their experiences with both their child's audiologist and their child's school. Our role as services providers is to support families in being advocates for their children. 38 children attending BCFHRC this year will be transitioning to Kindergarten in the fall.

Aptly addressing our need to focus on self-advocacy, the theme of the conference was "Empowerment". Guest Speakers included Dave Gordey, M.Sc., Aud (C) and Donna Sorkin, M.A. Vice President of Cochlear Corporation's Consumer Affairs.

Welcoming remarks by Julie Parker, Program Director of Student Services in North Vancouver, defined empowerment as "*change in children's lives, change in the lives of those in contact with the children.*"

Dave Gordey referred to his study, "Conversations with my Audiologist, Childhood Reflections from Adults with Hearing Loss". He interviewed adults asking them about their relationships with their audiologists as children. One didn't learn to put her aids on until she was 6 years old, another referred to himself as a patient (the old medical model) while another said she had no idea what her hearing loss was until her SLP discussed this with her when she was in grade 6 or 7. Others remembered being empowered by family members and their audiologist.

Dave suggested a useful question for audiologists to ask clients is, "How are you doing on a scale of 1-10?" By recording and comparing these numbers at subsequent visits, the audiologist can glean a better sense of how the child is functioning with their hearing at that particular time. More importantly, the client can be more involved in their own hearing assessment.

Dave also reminds us that, "*It is part of our job to assist children to grow up ready to succeed as competent, autonomous, adults who know we're there when they need us. The goal is to see the child as a skill builder.*"



Donna Sorkin reminded us even though we are mainly focusing on the child in the classroom we also need to educate and involve the parent in the child's education because parents are the child's first teachers. Donna's jam-packed sessions included information on mainstreaming children with hearing loss, classroom acoustics, team members and their respective roles, involving and educating classmates, setting the child up for success; pre-teaching, building confidence and self-esteem, preventative maintenance, trouble-shooting, helping children enjoy music, and available resources for parents and professionals.

Both Donna and Dave stressed that our role is to empower the child so they learn to empower themselves and to empower parents to empower their children.

*"As young children make choices, indicate their preferences, problem solve, plan, initiate and succeed, they are making sense of the world around them in a way that can ultimately produce feelings of competence, confidence and empowerment" (Erwin & Brown, 2003)*

#### **Cochlear Corporation has created numerous resources for parents in order to:**

- mentor them on how to incorporate language development and speech into their child's life
- help them know how to incorporate language without setting aside therapy time
- carry over what educational professionals begin at school

#### **Useful HOPE online resources to support professionals and parents: [www.cochlear.com/HOPE](http://www.cochlear.com/HOPE)** **On this website you will find:**

- Speech Sounds
- Start Listening – A Guide To Pediatric Habilitation
- Hope Tips
- Ideas For Experience Books
- EPPAL – Spanish Resources
- Seminars For Credits Live And Archived
- An Educators Guide To The Nucleus Cochlear Implant
- Hope Notes For Professionals

Links to:

- Sound and WAY Beyond for adults and teens
- Phone with Confidence, free service to help recipients develop listening skills and confidence in ability to make phone calls
- Hear We Go for therapists working with teens

Resources for classroom acoustics:

<http://www.quietclassrooms.org/ada/ada/htm>  
[www.access-board.gov/acoustic/index.htm](http://www.access-board.gov/acoustic/index.htm)  
[www.classroomacoustics.com](http://www.classroomacoustics.com)  
[www.hearingloss.org/html/nixonmj02.htm](http://www.hearingloss.org/html/nixonmj02.htm)  
<http://asa.alp.org/classroombooklet.html>  
[www.cochlearamericas.com/PDFs/FAQAcoustic.pdf](http://www.cochlearamericas.com/PDFs/FAQAcoustic.pdf)  
[www.caslpa.ca](http://www.caslpa.ca)

## You and Your Deaf or Hard of Hearing Child

### Summer Activities

by Carolyn Trengrove,  
Auditory-Verbal Therapy Intern

Summer is just around the corner and many organized programs are taking holidays for the summer. What to do with the kids on those loooong hot and sticky summer days? Here are some ideas taken from our “Summer Ideas” booklet. Ask your therapist for a copy!

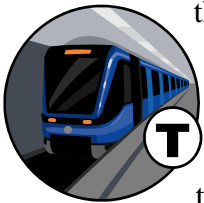
**AT THE BEACH**-build sandcastles, draw shapes and pictures in the sand, go tide-pooling and find crabs and other ocean creatures. Expand on vocabulary like shell, crab, fish, sand, ocean, dirty, sandy, rocks, seaweed, fill, empty, pour, build etc; Listen to sounds at the beach like the waves crashing and birds squawking.



**CAMPING**-go for a nature walk and collect things along the way, roast marshmallows, talk and draw about the event before it happens... Expand on vocabulary like lake, tent, barbecue, sticks, trees, brambles, canoe, swimming etc; Listen to sounds like the crackling of the campfire, sizzling of the barbeque, birds in the trees.



**IN TOWN**-go for a ride on the Skytrain, go to Barnston Island or Bowen Island on the ferry, visit the airport and watch the planes land and take off, make a trip to your local library, visit the Vancouver Aquarium or Science World, leave the car at home—take the bus for fun!



Whatever you do, remember, you are your child’s best therapist—you know him or her better than anyone! Sing songs, read books, explore, play and have fun!



**And don’t forget the Mingle & Play Program at our Centre!  
See page 15 for more information**

## You and Your Deaf or Hard of Hearing Child

### A Message from the BCFHRC Family Support Parent

Hello Families!

As a parent who has raised three children with hearing loss, I have to tell you, I am not sure that how it all turned out for me would have been the same had it not been for the wonderful and amazing supports that I've had throughout my career as a mother of deaf/hard of hearing children. I feel very blessed to have had such supports from so many caring people.



Our family received incredible supports from BCFHRC's (then called, "the Elks") staff and services in the areas of education, guidance, training, staff knowledge, professionalism and caring. There were rough roads but they were balanced well with warmth and fun times. We received one-on-one therapy, attended a parent support group and a sign language class and we were involved in group programs. Meeting & networking with other parents, while at BCFHRC, was absolutely both a highlight and a lifesaver for me and many of the parents I met, are still my closest and dearest friends and are still a huge part of my "support world" even though my children are now grown up. Through these supports and services, I was given the foundation to be able to give my children the language and skills they would need in order to be happy and have successes in their lives.

I also benefited immensely from the supports I received from the parent organizations that our family was involved with. CHHA-BC Parent's Branch and Family Network for Deaf Children have provided us with more education, social interaction & networking with other families, programs for my children, workshops for parents, day & weekend events and more of an understanding of what the issues for deaf/hard of hearing people are. BC now has a new parent driven organization called "BC Hands & Voices" supporting families with young deaf & hard of hearing children. I encourage you to check out the supports of these organizations and I have listed their websites & contact information below so that you can do that easily. There are always newsletters from these organizations available in our foyer and they all can be viewed or downloaded from the organizations websites. There are some exciting upcoming events being put on by these organizations that I know you would find helpful (if you were to attend), so please have a look.

All of this support and the experience I've had has had a huge impact on who I am as a person. It has empowered me and enabled me to continue to move forward, all these years. This is what I wish for every parent of a deaf or hard of hearing child.

I will always be grateful to everyone who has been there to support and educate me and my family and for all the friendships we have made. I could never have done it alone.

Cathy Luther  
Family Support Parent

website: [www.bchandsandvoices.com](http://www.bchandsandvoices.com)

email: [info@bchandsandvoice.com](mailto:info@bchandsandvoice.com)

website: [www.CHHAparents.bc.ca](http://www.CHHAparents.bc.ca)

email: [info@CHHAparents.bc.ca](mailto:info@CHHAparents.bc.ca)

website: [www.fndc.ca](http://www.fndc.ca)

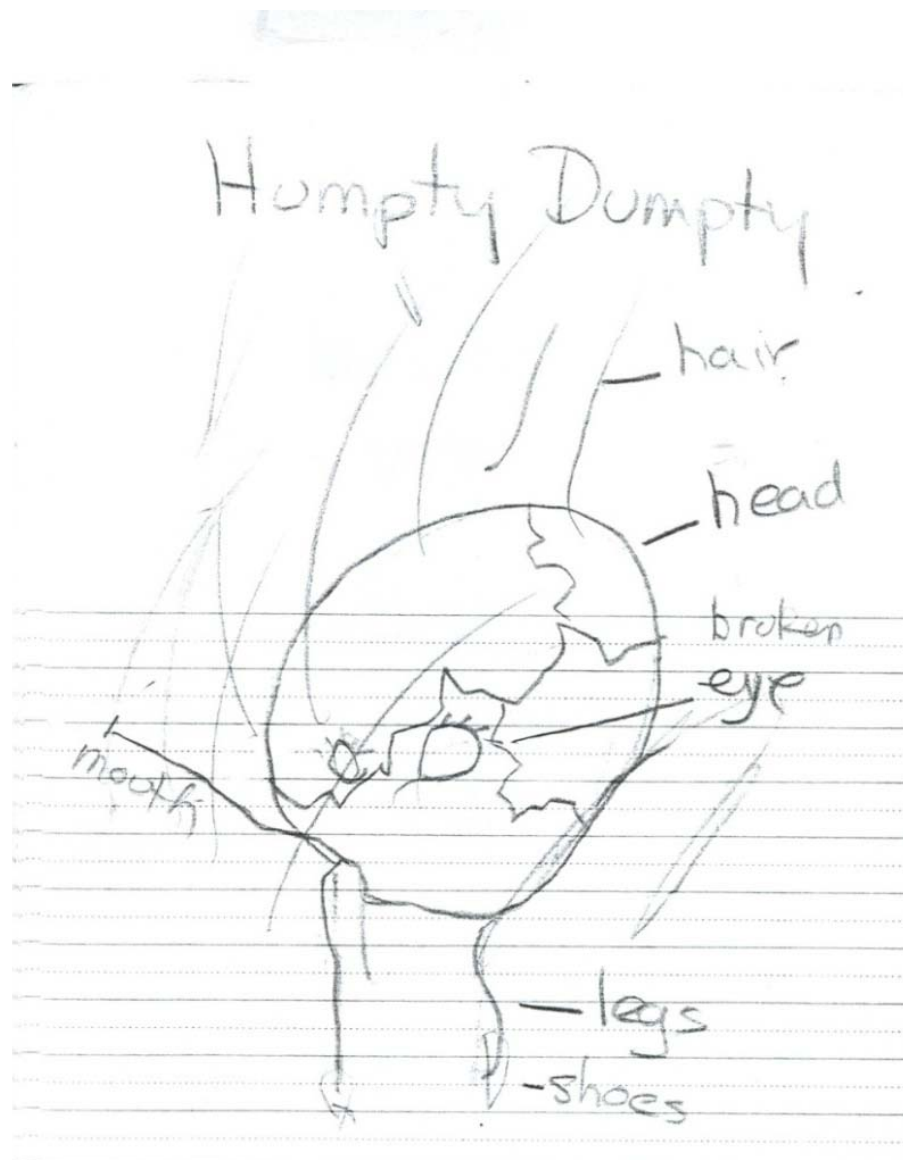
email: [fndc@shaw.ca](mailto:fndc@shaw.ca)

And...if you are interested in connecting with other families, please don't forget our **Parent to Parent Support Network**. I am definitely an advocate of parents networking with one another and know first hand how much of a benefit this can be as I can't begin to tell you how much I've learned from other parents. Please call me at the centre or email me at [cluther@bcfamilyhearing.com](mailto:cluther@bcfamilyhearing.com) if you would like to be connected with other parents.

## You and Your Deaf or Hard of Hearing Child

### Creativity in the Classroom

The drawing below is by Tyler Milne. Tyler drew this picture after reading the story of Humpty Dumpty during a session in the PALS group. They even had a demonstration with raw eggs! Judy Chrastina, Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, helped Tyler by labeling what he told her about his drawing.



Tyler Milne

## You and Your Deaf or Hard of Hearing Child

### Too Much TV?

#### Did you know?

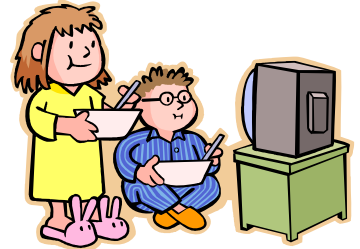
- The average American child watches **over 5 hours** of TV per day (that's nearly 40 hours per week- that's like a full time job!)
- 58% of families watch TV during supper time
- Children spend more time watching television than any other activity except sleeping.
- Children between the ages of 3 and 5 are at a critical stage in brain development for the development of language and other cognitive skills. Heavy television viewing can influence the development of the brain's interconnections, and take away from time the child would spend in other activities and verbal interactions.

Children watching television is a hot topic! Some television may be okay for your child but how much is too much? While too much television may inhibit a child's ability to develop higher brain functions, **there is no question that talking, reading and singing with your child will support development of language and thinking skills.**

TV is intriguing for most children and they enjoy watching it. Cutting out TV completely is not an option for many families, so consider trying to cut back. Think of television viewing as a supplement to your daily routine, rather than to REPLACE involving your child in daily activities for hours each day. For example, by making a conscious decision to turn the TV off for suppertime, you can add a whole hour to a child's day where they can interact with their family without distraction- this adds up to 7 hours per week!

by Tamara Pelletier, Speech Language Pathologist

If your child has a hearing loss or a language learning difficulty, ask yourself these questions:



**Is the TV competing with my voice?** Having the TV on in the background while you talk makes it harder for your child to hear and understand what you are saying to them. Turn the TV off unless someone is actually watching a program; or have the other person use personal headphones.

**Can my child hear what is being said on TV?** Try using your child's FM system with the TV by placing the transmitter close to the speaker (ask your audiologist or early interventionist about this).

**How fast are the characters talking?** They often speak really quickly, making them very hard to understand. There is also little facial expression or gesture with cartoon characters which will make it more difficult for your child to understand what is going on. Consider sitting with your child while they are watching a program and ensure they are following the story by reinforcing the key concepts.

**Are the characters using language my child can understand?** A lot of cartoon characters use big words, complicated sentences and subtle jokes are more suitable for older children in grade school. Cartoons are meant to have wide appeal. Even though your child may not understand everything that is being said, they may learn quite a lot by watching the events unfold on screen. It is a great idea to re-enact events or activities that have taken place on your child's favourite show so that you can ensure your child is learning from the experience.

## You and Your Deaf or Hard of Hearing Child

(Continued from previous page)

### How can I use my child's interest in the TV as a communication activity?

You could:

- Turn the sound off the TV and talk about what is happening on the screen with your child, in language they can understand
- Draw a picture about what you are watching and re-tell the story later.
- Find a book that has similar theme vocabulary in it and relate it back to the show your child was enjoying
- Act out the themes of the program
- Go on the internet and see if your child's favourite show has printable educational materials
- Take a trip to the library and see if there are books that involve your child's favourite television characters
- Learn the theme song to your child's program and practice singing it with him/her
- Find out if the program produces any sing-along CDs
- Talk to your child about why they enjoy a particular show

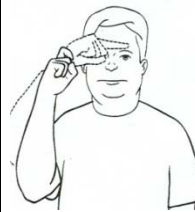
The bottom line is that any time a child spends watching TV is time **not** spent on other activities! Face-to-face interaction with other people will always be a far more dynamic learning environment for a child.

References:

[http://www.mediafamily.org/facts/facts\\_tveffect.shtml](http://www.mediafamily.org/facts/facts_tveffect.shtml)

Gentile, D.A. & Walsh, D.A. (2002) A normative study of family media habits. *Applied Developmental Psychology*, 23, 157-178.

### Signs of Summer



summer



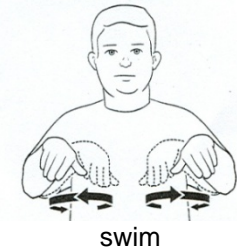
sunny



hat



walk



swim



camp



fire



canoe

## Bits & Pieces

### Relative's Night

On April 22<sup>nd</sup> we hosted a relative's night at



our centre. We were delighted to have 10 attendees; aunts, uncles, grandmothers and grandfathers!

The evening started with introductions and

it was excellent to hear that people had attended to learn more and to help the parents of the children with hearing loss in their lives, as well as the children themselves.

Judy Chrastina and Carolyn Trengrove, two of our Early Interventionists described types and degrees of hearing loss and participants experienced a hearing loss simulation which they all agreed was more challenging than expected.

Perhaps the most impactful part of the evening was when two of our staff with hearing loss shared their own stories.

Suzie Fairweather, Sign Language Instructor, described how she felt growing up hard of hearing, and how challenging it was. She described how she hated wearing her cumbersome body worn hearing aid and how delighted she is with her Cochlear Implant which she received only 3½ years ago.

Karen Jackson, Early Childhood Educator, eagerly praised her mother's efforts in instructing her to speech read and use her voice. Karen shared that she was a very busy child and was involved in as many sports as she could find.

We had fabulous discussions and participants listened to hearing aids through a hearing aid stethoscope. We urged relatives to become as involved as they could in helping the children in their lives and encouraged them not to fear hearing aids but rather, to help keep them on whenever possible.

We look forward to future events such as this one. Please contact the centre if you have interest in another workshop like this one or if you are interested in participating in a relative's group.

### PEER Group

On April 29<sup>th</sup> through May 1<sup>st</sup> this year



BCFHRC held its annual PEER event for families whose hard of hearing children are transitioning to Kindergarten.

PEER provides parents access to the information they need to be the best advocates for their child throughout their school years.

At the same time, the children attend a fun group program facilitating independence with hearing equipment, self-advocacy, self-confidence, positive self-esteem and a sense of belonging to prepare them for their Kindergarten placement. This year seven families attended. Here are some of their comments:

- *A very powerful few days—so educational!*
- *It is wonderful for our children to meet other children like themselves (with hearing loss) and for parents to network*
- *[We are]aware of what is needed and what helps and generally more cognizant of her experience*
- *THANK YOU! for all that you gave to our family and all that it will result in down the line.*



## Bits & Pieces

### Hear, There and Everywhere

On May 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> BCFHRC was host to 20 Community Service Providers (CSPs) for a two day intensive workshop on auditory development skills entitled Hear, There and Everywhere.

Recently, a survey was sent to our CSPs asking what types of workshops they would find useful. The overwhelming response was for more hands-on instruction regarding “Auditory Skills Development and Activities”, and “Working with Babies” was a close second. In light of these results, it was determined that a 2-day workshop targeting 20 CSPs would be held in lieu of our two-week Advanced Professional Training session. This way we zoned in on the material that CSPs really wanted to know more about and we provided service to more communities province-wide!

Our event was met with much enthusiasm and it was a hubbub of activity. The days were divided into lectures, break-out sessions, brainstorms and quizzes. Focus was on the stages of auditory development and the creative use of different items to meet the needs of a variety of children. This inaugural event received positive feedback:

*“What a fabulous balance of review, new info & active learning. You did an exceptional job. Really enjoyed the vast experience of each person. Thanks so much!”*

*“You are a fabulous team – thank you soooo much for imparting your knowledge. “  
“This is the first workshop...where I got practical and useful information for ....a therapy session. The handouts were great ....we can take the information home to make sense of later.”*



### Mingle & Play Summer Program



Spring has sprung and summer is just around the corner! We'd like to remind all families receiving services from the BC Family Hearing Resource Centre about the Mingle & Play Program. The dates and times are **August 4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> 2009 from 9:30am to 1:00pm**. The first session last summer was such a success, we wanted families to have ample time to arrange to attend this year. There is no charge but parent participation is required. Lunches are included. You can attend for one or all 4 days. Each day provides a variety of activities in addition to a chance for parents to meet other families and children with hearing loss. Families requiring accommodations can contact Cathy Luther at our centre 604-584-2827; email: [cluther@bcfamilyhearing.com](mailto:cluther@bcfamilyhearing.com). Services for Family and Community Development at Victory Hill has housing available for families by donation. Watch for more details in the near future.

### Resource Roundup



Our inventory of books, videos and DVDs is getting low. If you have our resources and they are due or overdue, (it doesn't matter how long ☺) please return them at your earliest convenience. If your family requires assistance to return these items, please contact your local community service provider or our office.



### Satisfaction Surveys

Watch your mailbox for our annual Satisfaction Survey. Surveys are sent to families and professionals province-wide. We rely on this information to continually improve our programs & services. You can complete the survey by hard copy or online by accessing our website. We thank you in advance for participating and remind you that **we welcome your feedback at any time**.





## Calendar

<b>May</b>	<b><i>May is National Speech and Hearing Month</i></b>
10	Mother's Day
18	Victoria Day Holiday
24	Elks & Royal Purple Walk-a-thon
30-31	BC Elks & Royal Purple Annual Conference, White Rock
31	Hands & Voices Family Social at BCFHRC
<b>June</b>	
2	Language in the Park - Kamloops
7	25 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration
11	Language in the Park - Prince George
21	Father's Day
<b>July</b>	
1	Canada Day Holiday
2, 9, 16, 23	Field Trips with a Focus- Partners & Playmates Program
<b>August</b>	
3	BC Day Holiday
4-7	Mingle & Play Summer Program

### Our Outreach Consultant's visits to Communities Throughout BC

<b>March</b>	Tamara Pelletier – Campbell River Kristyn Payne- Ft. Nelson; Ft. St. John, Dawson Creek Nicola Swain – Port Alberni, Parksville/Qualicum, Nanaimo Judy Chrastina – Bella Coola Dyan Spear – Kelowna, Vernon Zara Newnham - Kamloops
<b>April</b>	Noreen Simmons & Cathy Luther – Golden Nicola Swain - Nanaimo, Duncan, Courtenay Judy Chrastina – Bella Coola, Williams Lake Zara Newnham – Kamloops, Prince George Dyan Spear – Kelowna, Penticton, Vernon
<b>May</b>	Zara Newnham – Kamloops Tamara Pelletier – Campbell River Dyan Spear – Vernon, Salmon Arm, Enderby, Revelstoke
<b>June</b>	Judy Chrastina – Prince Rupert Nicola Swain – Victoria, Duncan, Nanaimo, Port Alberni Zara Newnham & Suzie Fairweather - Kamloops Zara Newnham & Cathy Luther - Prince George Tamara Pelletier – Campbell River

#### Reaching Out

Newsletter published quarterly by

BC Family Hearing  
Resource Centre  
15220 – 92<sup>nd</sup> Avenue  
Surrey, BC V3R 2T8  
Toll Free: 1-877-584-2827  
Phone (604)584-2827(voice),  
(604)584-9108 (tty), (604)584-2800  
(fax)

Executive Director: Christine  
Mayworm  
Editors: Cindy Adams & Carolyn  
Trengrove

We are a family-centered early intervention Provincial Resource Program committed to individual communication choices. We provide support and resources throughout BC to deaf and hard of hearing children, their families and Community Service Providers.

The purpose of the Reaching Out Newsletter is to provide information and support to our readers.

Articles and ideas are welcome! The opinions expressed therefore are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Board of Directors, or the staff. We reserve the right to edit contributions for brevity and clarity.

There is no fee for the Reaching Out newsletter, however, donations are gratefully accepted.

Sign Language from the Canadian Dictionary of ASL, Carol Sue Bailey & Kathy Dolby, Editors. Used with Permission from the University of Alberta Press.

### Newsletter - Mail, On-Line or Email?

Would you prefer to receive our newsletter emailed to you? Are you aware that our newsletters are posted on our website? In our efforts to "Go Green" we would like to offer the electronic distribution option to those interested.

To receive your newsletter this way, simply email [info@bcfamilyhearing.com](mailto:info@bcfamilyhearing.com) with the email address you would like the newsletter sent to AND the current name and address it is being sent to by mail in order to have your name removed from the list.

