

REACHING OUT

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE
BC FAMILY HEARING RESOURCE CENTRE
FOR FAMILIES WITH DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING CHILDREN,
SERVICE PROVIDERS, AND OTHERS INVOLVED WITH HEARING LOSS .

Winter 2017

FAMILY FEATURE

The O'Connells find Strength and Hope through others at BCFHRS



The O'Connell Family: from left, Liam, Michelle, Hope, Dan and Bella!

Meet the O'Connells!
Michelle shares her family's story
from Liam's early diagnosis to a
preschooler heading off to
Kindergarten!

Hi! We are Dan & Michelle O'Connell. Proud parents of 4 ½ year old Liam and 1 year old Hope.

After struggling with infertility for years and going through many unsuccessful rounds of IVF, we were finally blessed with our beautiful baby boy Liam, on June 22, 2012 (also Dad's birthday!). He was healthy and perfect and life felt so complete for Dan and I.

Liam failed the initial newborn hearing screening, but we were told it was likely the result of fluid in his ears and "not to worry." So we didn't. A few days later he was re-tested and again, he failed. This time we were given more false hope – told he was restless – and again, "not to worry." Again, we didn't. Hearing loss was not something that even crossed our minds as a possibility. There was no history of hearing loss on either side of our families. *continued on page 2*

Walkathon
Sunday, May 28th!

FAMILY FEATURE continued

The O'Connell Family

So when we went to the North Delta Public Health Unit a few weeks later (on my birthday) in our minds, it was merely an inconvenient appointment we had to get through before we could enjoy the rest of our day. We were completely unprepared for what would be revealed. That day Liam was diagnosed with profound bilateral sensorineural hearing loss. We were in complete shock. I could hear what the audiologist was saying as she told us the diagnosis, but nothing felt real. I heard, I listened, but it wouldn't sink in. It felt like a joke, a bad dream, a mistake. I was numb and confused. The tears wouldn't come.

Dan and I drove home in near silence. Both of us too overwhelmed to know what to say or how to react. At home, we didn't know what to do with ourselves. How to process this surreal diagnosis. We paced. Then we remembered that the audiologist (the amazing Michelle Smits, who became an incredible source of knowledge, support and love over the next year) had told us where we could get a copy of *"My Turn to Learn,"* a book filled with information for parents of children with hearing loss.

We drove to BC Family Hearing Centre. There, we were greeted by Carolyn. She was kind and helpful but I felt like I didn't belong there. Boy would that feeling change in the coming years!

The next few weeks were a blur of denial, anger, blame, prayers and tears. Many, many tears. Not just ours, but also our extended family and close friends who also grieved alongside us. Our minds began to race with thoughts and visions for Liam's future. It wasn't okay. It was not going to be okay. This was uncharted territory for both Dan and I. Neither of us knew anything about hearing loss or knew anyone who had hearing loss. His future seemed so uncertain. All I wanted

to do was hold my precious baby boy and make it all ok. We were heartbroken and terrified for his future and felt very, very alone.

But we were not alone! We joined the Baby Group at BC Families and were blessed by the amazing support and guidance of the staff and other parents there. It didn't take long to feel like family and like we weren't alone in this journey through Liam's hearing loss.

We also quickly connected with Liam's therapist, Catherine Albert-Moore, who made (and still makes!) regular home visits to work with us and with Liam. Suzie Fairweather also made visits to our home to teach us sign language. They, and many other staff at BC Family were there to help us through the challenges as Liam got his hearing aids at 2 months and then shortly before his first birthday, bilateral cochlear implants. It was then that we saw remarkable progress in Liam's spoken language skills. Because we had been working with the staff at BC Family since Day 1 of Liam's diagnosis, we were prepared to help Liam explore and learn in his new world of sound.

And boy did he flourish!! Today we are proud to say Liam's speech is excellent and age-appropriate. He hears things we don't! If you didn't see his CI's, you wouldn't even notice he has a hearing loss!

After Baby Group, Liam attended Partners 'n Playmates for toddlers, then PALS for preschool aged children. He had an opportunity to see and meet other children with hearing loss and to improve his spoken language and ASL skills.

As parents, Dan and I were able to hear other parents' stories of their children's hearing loss and chat with them and with staff about everything from equipment



Liam after surgery

FAMILY FEATURE continued

The O’Connell Family

challenges to school choices. I can say for certain we have made lifelong friends at BC Family.

We are gearing up for kindergarten in the fall. Dan and I recently attended Surrey school district’s meeting for parents and were astounded at the abundance of resources available in the public system! We are excited about this next chapter in Liam’s life. Dan and I are currently attending PEER at BC Family – a program designed to help parents with the transition to kindergarten, and it is because of this and all the other



amazing programs, services and people at BC Family that we don’t feel afraid for Liam starting school – we feel excited because we are armed with the knowledge to be strong advocates for him and to help him be a strong advocate for himself!

I won’t lie and say it has been an easy journey and it still continues to have its challenges, but since the day we connected with BC Family, we have never felt alone and have seen such remarkable progress in our happy, energetic son’s language, confidence and abilities. Instead of being heartbroken and terrified, we are now excited and optimistic for our beautiful Liam’s future!

***Would you like to share your family’s story? We would love to hear from you!
Please advise your interventionist or contact our Centre.***

Check out our new Feature - What’s “DEAF” Around Here?

CO-ED Volleyball Games with deaf athletes!! Friday **February 24** 6pm to 10pm and Saturday **February 25** 8am to 5pm at Byrne Creek Secondary School, 7777 18th St. Burnaby. (admission by donation!)

ASL Family Story Time at Tommy Douglas Library, 7311 Kingsway, Burnaby.
February 25, March 25, April 25 2:00 to 3:00. WATCH ASL stories come alive!!

SAVE THE DATES – SAVE THE DATES – SAVE THE DATES

FAMILY DEAF CAMP Hornby Island – **July 6th to 9th**. An annual family favourite pastime!
Watch for more info at <http://fndc.ca/fndc.ca>

DEAF DEAF WORLD at Vancouver Community College Saturday, **June 3rd**.
Great for the whole family to have fun and meet other deaf people and community providers.

CHECK OUT THIS INFO!!

Sign language being considered as third official language: If enacted, legislation would require federal information and services to be provided in English, French and sign language. More info on this link. <http://www.macleans.ca/politics/sign-language-being-considered-as-third-official-language-documents>

6 Things I Didn’t Know About Captioning. More info on this link: <http://www.ai-media.tv/6-things-i-didnt-know-about-captioning/>

7 Unexpected Beneficiaries of Captioning. More Info on this link: <http://www.ai-media.tv/7-unexpected-beneficiaries-of-captioning/>

Great link for what’s happening around in BC with Deaf communities: www.DeafBC.ca

YOU AND YOUR DEAF OR HARD-OF-HEARING CHILD

Winter at BCFHRC



YOU AND YOUR DEAF OR HARD-OF-HEARING CHILD

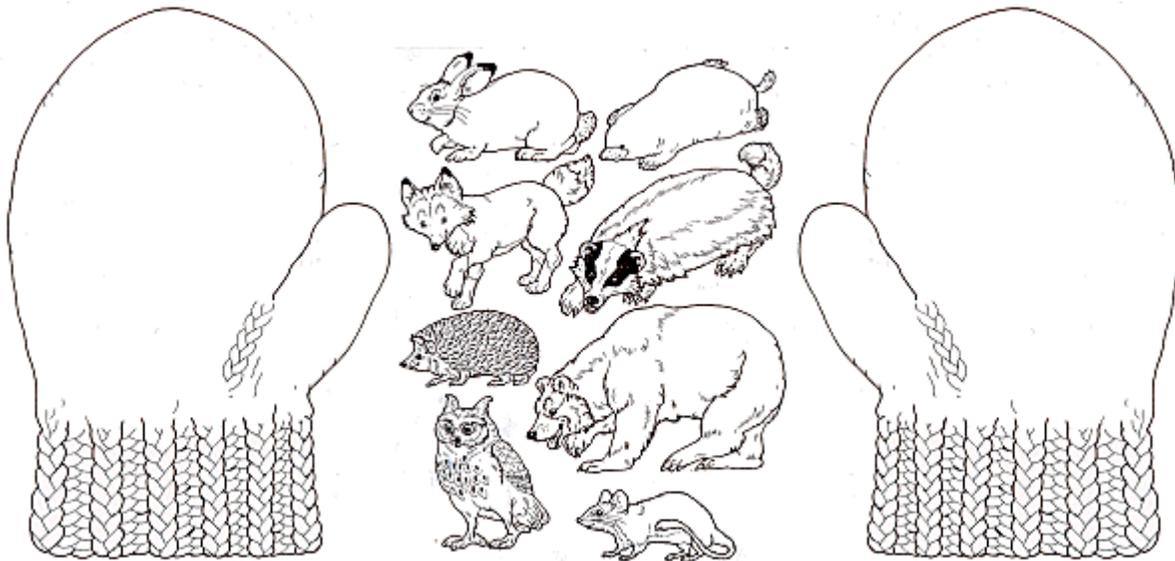
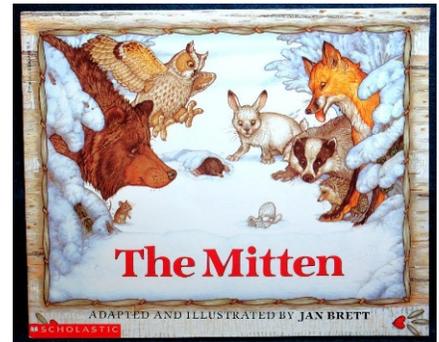
Winter at BCFHRC

The Mitten

The cooler weather provides kids yet another thing to pull off their bodies...mittens!! Teach your child to love his/her mittens by engaging them in a classic mitten book.

This book is easy to find at both bookstores and libraries. The author's website includes a printable craft for story retelling:

http://www.janbrett.com/put_the_animals_in_the_mitten.htm



The mitten is simple, has repetitive language, and uses clear illustrations that show what is happening – a recipe for a great book!

Remember these strategies to make the most out of reading with your child:

- Get face-to-face
- Observe, Wait, Listen – give lots of time for your child to take a turn
- Change the words/signs to match your child's language level
- Make the story come alive – use actions/sound effects
- Read the book again, and again, and again!

OVER 30 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 \$50, 000 annually



Elks & Royal Purple Lodges - Campbell's Labels for Education Program

Elks, Royal Purple Lodges and Individuals & Organizations

Burnaby Elks	Connie Kusch	J. McKittrick
Kamloops Elks	Lisa Moody	M. Chamberlain
Revelstoke Elks	Joan Ford	Nicole Del Bel
Westside Elks	Anita Park	R. Moore
Aldergrove Royal Purple	Amanda Lemay	Sally & James Hurst
Cache Creek Royal Purple	Atkins Family	Obviar Family
Keremeos Royal Purple	Fern Dunlop	Belinda MacNeil
Port Coquitlam Royal Purple	Kusch family	P. Jeffcoat
Williams Lake Royal Purple	R. Hicks	Benevity One
Anglican Church Women of Canada	Val Matthews	Envision Financial United Way

We acknowledge the financial support provided by:

The Ministry of Children and Development – Provincial Deaf & Hard of Hearing Services

The BC Early Hearing Program – Provincial Health Services Authority

The Province of British Columbia

Annual General Meeting 2016

On November 16th, the BC Family Hearing Resource Society held its Annual General Meeting. Past and current families, as well as staff, Board members and supporters of the Society joined us to hear about the past year's accomplishments. The highlight is always the presentation by our Executive Director, Dr. Noreen Simmons, which highlights groups, programs and activities that happen throughout the year at our Centre. Last year was a busy year of activity and growth and we look forward to the same over the next 12 months.



SAVE-THE-DATE for MINGLE & PLAY

August 10, 11 & 12, 2017

Join us for our annual summer event!

Three days of fun with deaf and hard-of-hearing children (birth to five years) and their families. You are welcome to join us for one, two or three of the days. Information about registration will be coming soon!

- ❖ **VISIT** our state of the art facility and meet the staff
- ❖ **MEET** with other parents and introduce your child to peers
- ❖ **ENJOY** crafts, games and entertainment in the sunshine



Accommodations for BCFHRC clients travelling from out of town are available.
Email cluther@bcfamilyhearing.com for info.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO US!

August 12th (Day 3 of Mingle & Play) will be a very special celebration of our **35th Anniversary!** Bring your family and friends and join us for a wonderful event for all ages.



For the kids - entertainment, face painting, bouncy castle, playtime in our outside yard, crafts & games and a bbq lunch.

For the adults - bbq lunch, a chance to meet old & new friends, tour the Centre and learn about our history, (maybe even some face painting too!)

Saturday, August 12th from 10am – 2pm
at BC Family Hearing Resource Centre

REACHING OUT TO FAMILIES & COMMUNITY SERVICE PROVIDERS

From Here to There...

by Carolyn Hawrish,
Listening & Spoken Language Specialist

This Winter I travelled throughout several regions of this beautiful province. It was a pleasure to meet with families and their local community service providers. While in Williams Lake, I was honoured by a visit with team members of the Cariboo-Chilcotin Child Development Centre and members of the Royal Purple Lodge 126. Thank you all for the lovely meal and opportunity to connect. Thank you also to the Ladies for their generous donation to the Society.



Erik off to Preschool in Cranbrook

While in the East Kootenays visiting with families and professionals there, I was able to connect via Telehealth out of the Creston Hospital to a family north of Kamloops, BC for our weekly parent coaching session.

Travelling North to Fort St. John and Dawson Creek in the Peace, I made my first visit to the homes of two families who are new to BCFHRC and met with early interventionists at both the Fort St. John Child Development Centre and at the South Peace Child Development Centre.



Carolyn Hawrish, of BCFHRC, second from left, with Royal Purple ladies, Gloria Limb, left, and Sharleen McMurchy, second from right, are all smiles as Julia Hodder, SLP in Williams Lake, snaps a "selfie".



Morgan and Cashe in Dawson Creek



Melana and her big sister, Veronika in Fort St. John

One of the many bonuses with being an Outreach Consultant is being able to explore new places and learn about how we can continue to work together with families to support their unique needs. With such vast diversity in both geography and the cultural make-up of this province, it seems there is a constant and vibrant exchange of information, ideas and experiences while building collaborative relationships that can support positive development in our young children. Thank you to everyone for warmly welcoming me into your homes, workplaces and beautiful communities.

REACHING OUT TO FAMILIES & COMMUNITY SERVICE PROVIDERS

On the Move on Vancouver Island

by Dyan Spear, TDHH, Senior Outreach Consultant

We have travelled to Victoria, Parksville, Duncan, Comox, Campbell River, Nanaimo, and Hornby Island this Winter! These communities are so welcoming. Our Outreach team on Vancouver Island includes myself and SLP, Amanda Lemay; Family Support Parents, Cathy Luther and Jen Gow; and Deaf Role Models, Suzie Fairweather and Sharon Neufeld.

Thank you to Dogwood Place in Campbell River and the Child Development Centre in Courtenay for hosting Family Fun Days. This was a fabulous opportunity for families and community service providers to meet and socialize!

In Campbell River



Family Fun Days

In Courtenay



In Nanaimo

VALS in Nanaimo! VALS stands for Visual Acquisition of Language Stimulation. Sharon Neufeld, one of our Deaf Support Staff with an Early Childhood Education background, met with the Nanaimo team and families from Parksville and Duncan. Parents are attending monthly sessions with Sharon.



Families whose children will start Kindergarten in the Fall had the opportunity to learn about the transition process from Terry Maloney and Tamara Lister with the Provincial Outreach Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students. We are excited for these opportunities to partner with the Nanaimo Child Development Centre and to provide supports to children and their parents in the area.



BITS & PIECES

New Faces



Please join us in welcoming the youngest member to our team! **Kosta** was born January 15 to proud parents, Suna, SLP with the Surrey Early Speech and Language Program, and husband Jason. Congratulations- We can't wait to meet you, Kosta!



Please join us in welcoming **Sarah Lau**, Speech Language Pathologist, to the BC Family Hearing Resource Society. Sarah is covering a maternity leave for Suna Karamani, SLP for the Surrey Early Speech and Language Program.

Save the Date!

The Elks & Royal Purple Bright Futures Walkathon 2017

Save-the-Date for our Annual Elks & Royal Purple Walkathon in support of BC Family Hearing Resource Centre! This fun annual event is a chance for families, staff, past families and supporters of BCFHRC to come together. The morning starts with a walk through the beautiful park and finishes with a BBQ lunch, prizes, and games for the kids. Join us this year and help to raise funds for our beloved Centre.



Sunday, May 28, 2017

Campbell Valley Park

Langley

SIGN LANGUAGE



airplane



ambulance



car



dentist



doctor



nurse



teach(er)



person(er)



police



train



helicopter



truck

Check out this website to see signs 'in person' <http://www.handspeak.com>

Calendar



January

- 1 New Year's Day
- 2 Centre closed in lieu of New Year's Day
- 11 PEER Session #4
- 20-21 Foundations Workshop- BCFHRC- Surrey
- 28 Gung Hay Fat Choy – Happy Chinese New Year!

February

- 7 Family Fun Day at BCFHRC! (cancelled due to weather)
- 8 PEER Session #5
- 13 Family Day Holiday – Centre closed
- 14 **Happy Valentine's Day ♥**
- 15 Family Fun Day in Comox
- 16 Family Fun Day in Campbell River

March

- 7 Family Fun Day – New Date!
- 8 PEER Session #6
- 17 **Happy St. Patrick's Day ♣**

April

- 10 Farm Field Trip
- 14 Good Friday Holiday
- 17 Easter Monday Holiday
- 27-29 PEER 3 Day



May

- 9-10 Foundations Workshop –Kelowna
- 11 Adapted PEER Program @ BCFHRC
- 12-13 Foundations Workshop – Kamloops
- 14 **Mother's Day ☺**
- 22 Victoria Day Holiday
- 28 Elks & Royal Purple Walkathon

Staff Visits to Communities in BC

January

Carolyn Hawrish - Cranbrook, Williams Lake
 Dyan Spear – Victoria, Nanaimo, Campbell River, Comox, Parksville
 Sharon Neufeld – Nanaimo

February

Carolyn Hawrish – Fort St. John, Dawson Creek
 Dyan Spear – Victoria, Nanaimo, Campbell River, Courtenay, Duncan, Kelowna, Summerland, Hornby Island
 Jen Gow – Victoria, Courtenay, Campbell River
 Cathy Luther – Victoria, Courtenay, Campbell River
 Suzie Fairweather – Victoria, Courtenay, Campbell River

March

Dyan Spear – Chemainus, Prince George, Quesnel
 Suzie Fairweather – Prince George, Quesnel
 Carolyn Hawrish – Grand Forks, Nelson



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Reaching Out

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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.

Reference to any specific commercial products, process, or service by trade name, trademark, manufacturer, or otherwise, does not necessarily constitute or imply its endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by the BC Family Hearing Resource Society.

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.

Newsletter – Mail, Online or Email?

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