

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/
DEAFNESS .

Winter 2019

FAMILY FEATURE

The Kuzminski's Immerse Themselves in the Deaf Community



Kurt, Lydia and Sage Kuzminski say hello at the Walkathon

Our daughter Lydia was born profoundly deaf. She is our first born, and having a deaf child was not on our radar. When she deferred her newborn hearing screening, we were told it was likely due to fluid in her ears. My husband Kurt took this at face value and wasn't concerned. I'm more of a worrier, and felt certain that she was deaf. I called my mom from the hospital and had a little cry. I felt scared for the tiny little person in my arms and overwhelmed with what it meant for the future. Thank goodness for my mom. Her response was direct and confident: "This family, we can handle this." Of course, she was completely right.

Continued on page 2

Join us at the Surrey Centre for:
Foundations for Professionals-March 28
Foundations for Families-March 29-30
Save the Date:
Walkathon May 26th- Aldergrove

The Kuzminski family have been avid participants in every aspect of our programs starting with outreach services and now in the lower mainland. Read on as Sage articulates her family's journey.

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FAMILY FEATURE

The Kuzminski Family *continued*

Lydia was not the first deaf person I'd met. When I was completing my English degree at the University of Alberta, I was required to complete six credits in a second language. Since I was never very good at French in high school, I enrolled in the newly offered American Sign Language course. It was incredible. The two instructors were Deaf and taught without interpreters. I remember much laughter, great stories, and a thoroughly enjoyable experience. A close friend of mine was also in the class and went on to become an interpreter.

My worry for Lydia wasn't necessarily that she was deaf, it was that I didn't know what that would look like for our family. I'm a primary teacher and an intense planner. I like to know what's going on, and if at all possible, be in total control-not super realistic, I know.

The first three months of Lydia's life were fairly emotional. My husband and I jumped right in and were met with the most incredible supports. From our initial contact at the BC Early Hearing Program, an incredibly calming conversation with Cathy Luther at BC Family Hearing Resource, connections with Guide By Your Side and Hands and Voices, it felt more like we had been welcomed into a very supportive and exclusive club.

Lydia was fitted with hearing aids, our family was gifted the incredible Dyan Spear as our outreach consultant, a fantastic SLP was found in our community on Vancouver Island, and at three months old, Lydia met her first Deaf Role Model. We met Suzie (Fairweather) one evening at a small ASL class on the island. Lydia slept through the whole thing, but Kurt, my Mom and I were so excited to be practicing sign language. That little taste of community inspired us to seek out more opportunities. We attended our first Mingle and Play at BC Family Hearing Resource Centre when Lydia was 5 months old.

Our experience at Mingle and Play was exactly what I'd craved. It was so encouraging and calming to be among deaf and hard-of-hearing children and their families. For the first time since Lydia was born I felt completely at ease. I wasn't answering absurd questions about her hearing aids, I wasn't reassuring strangers that we were in fact, quite okay. We were among peers in our new community and it was wonderful.

We continued to connect with other families as often as possible. This was a bit challenging as we were living in a small community on the island without any other deaf or hard-of-hearing kids. Thankfully, soon after Mingle and Play, BC Family opened an office in Victoria, and with that came new families, new kids, and new programs. We were also

incredibly lucky to have mini-vacations with other families raising Deaf children. Bonding with these families provided an invaluable opportunity to practice sign and feel welcomed in the community.

Lila and Pip, a program run by two amazing Deaf women, Erin and Alayna, provided such valuable direction in our journey. In the Lila and Pip playgroup we were able to immerse ourselves in Lydia's first language. Though we tried our best at home, and definitely signed with Lydia, we were never able to

recreate the feeling of Lila and Pip. It was so natural to be there with other families, learning, practicing and most importantly playing with our children. We have so much gratitude for what Lila and Pip offered to our family. We planned visits with extended family to coincide with when Erin and Alayna would be in Victoria. We wanted our family to experience what we were experiencing. Everyone loved it, and left talking about just how easy it was to communicate. Family members that had been nervous about sign language now found it accessible and fun.

As the months passed, our signing improved and we started to see the payoff for Lydia. I remember Dyan once explaining to us that through our signing, talking, and reading, we would fill Lydia with so much language, that one day, it would spill over and she would start using language with us. Lydia's first sign was "light on" and we couldn't have been prouder. It was so encouraging to see her using her little hands to tell us something. The signing snowballed and we saw her flourish.

At ten months old Lydia had an MRI to see whether or not she would be a candidate for cochlear implant surgery. It was difficult-making such a critical decision is not something I would wish upon anyone. Families are different, children are different, and stories are different. Everyone has an opinion, but not everyone knows your child, your family and your situation. Something that makes Deaf and hard-of-hearing children so incredibly wonderful is their uniqueness. But wouldn't you love a handbook that tells you what steps to follow next? We were looking for which direction to take, and in the end it was Lydia's weaker right eye that tipped the scale for cochlear implants. At her young age they weren't able to tell us what use she was getting from her weak eye and that was very scary to hear.

Her surgery was scheduled for March 8, 2017, International Women's day. What a day. If anyone would ever like to talk about it, I would be more than happy to. It is very difficult to put into words. Jen Gow from BC Family came and was such a welcomed support. A month after surgery, two weeks after her



FAMILY FEATURE

The Kuzminski Family *continued*

first birthday, Lydia's implants were activated. I wish I remembered more from the first six months after activation. Looking back at videos we see Lydia signing and starting to make initial sounds. Lots of farm animal noises and babbling. We inundated her with language. Kurt was especially good at talking his way through every... single... thing. They would make coffee together, every morning, and Kurt would explain in great detail what they were doing. "Okay, first, we're going to take the lid off the canister, grab the scoop and put two heaping scoops of beans into the grinder. Pop! There's the lid. Ooo... smell the beans. Mmm... smells good!" We played the same children's CDs and cassettes over and over. We read the same books that we had signed to her as a baby, connecting words to signs she already knew. With each positive response from Lydia, we were encouraged to continue on this path.

There was a turning point when English became Lydia's stronger language. I don't remember exactly when it happened, but we noticed that new words would be expressed in English first and not sign. Lydia learning to speak so clearly, so quickly, came with a different set of social challenges. People would comment on what a miracle cochlear implants were as if they'd saved her from a terrible quality of life. We've been able to share that having access to Deaf culture, learning and embracing sign, is actually just as much of a miracle.

Last June our family found itself in a bit of a transition. I was pregnant with our second child and Kurt was job hunting after graduating from nursing. We took the plunge and moved to Vancouver. We wanted to immerse ourselves once again into the Deaf community. Lydia is now almost three and speaking



*Lydia with her baby sister,
Fiona*

beautifully. Her signing all but stopped this summer. After our daughter Fiona was born, Lydia was enrolled in Deaf Children Society's (DCS) preschool. We wanted Lydia to have the same opportunity that we gave her when her cochlear implants were first activated. An immersive environment where sign language was all around her. She had a rough couple of months being separated at drop off. She's doing better now and talks about all the great things they do at preschool.

Lydia, Fiona and I also attend Levi's ASL Tots group at BC Family weekly and use that time to sign together with Lydia's processors off. She's happy having them off and it encourages me to use all the sign I can muster to keep up with my very busy three year old. I have weekly sign language lessons with other parents at DCS and Kurt has lessons with Levi. We are so thoroughly enjoying our time practicing sign language, and using it at different community events and with our daughters. Lyddie is independent and has every right to not want her processors on at different times of the day.

I still like to plan and know exactly what the future holds, but understand that maybe I need to just relax a bit and take it day by day. For example, what if Lydia marries a Deaf person and my sign language isn't good enough?! One day at a time, Sage.

We are so thankful that Lydia was born in BC where the programs are plentiful and the support is outstanding. We are grateful to the staff at BC Family, DCS, Hands and Voices, Guide By Your Side, the Cochlear Implant team at BC Children's Hospital and every other program made available to us. We are lucky to be part of such a wonderful community with such neat kids and to have met so many inspiring families. If you are new to this community, "Welcome! We are so happy you're here."

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

New Drop-In Group for Parents and Tots

by Cathy Luther, Family Support Parent

Hello families! We've recently started a new 'Parent & Tot Drop-In' for families of little ones 16 – 24mths. I am excited that this group started at the request of parents! We currently are not holding our Rhythm & Moves group, therefore leaving some families waiting to attend our Partners & Playmates group for families and children 24 – 36 months. I am so proud of these parents for advocating for this group and for understanding the benefit of coming together, for themselves and for their children.

Our first session was Friday, February 8th. We had much to discuss in terms of what this group might look like and I am happy to help the parents set it up so it reflects their ideas. In my role as Family Support Parent, I will attend the group to offer my support when needed. I am thrilled to join the families to be able to share from my experience, to have time with the little ones and to stay connected with the families! We established that this group would meet up once a month on Fridays, from 9:30 – 11:30. Our next drop-in is happening on March 15th. After that, the group is every 2nd Friday of the month will and end in June. Parents will provide snacks for their children. Muffins or cookies & tea/coffee will be provided for the parents. All families of little ones of this age group are welcome to drop-in so, if you wish to join us or have questions about the group, please contact me at:

cluther@bcfamilyhearing.com

YOU AND YOUR DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING CHILD

Winter Party



Check out a video clip of the Winter Party [here](#) !



YOU AND YOUR DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING CHILD

Indoor Beach Day



OVER 35 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.



- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angela Lay • Anita Park • BC Provincial Employees Community Service Fund • Beebe Cline • Bill Weeds • Bowen Island Book Club • Cache Creek Royal Purple • Cheryl Humphries • Cochlear Canada Inc. • D. McConnel • Dogwood Place Child & Youth Development Centre • Emma Liffen • Eva Kwan • Fern Dunlop • George Dewitt • Glen Whitehead • H. Wiltse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hear the Wild Foundation • Henry Pierce • Ho Family • Jen/Zheng Family • Karen Armitage • Kelly Lipke • Keremeos Royal Purple • Jim & Sally Hurst • Lexie's Child Care • Marvel & Ron Hicks • McKitrick Family • Mindy Dhillon • Monique Preer • Nicole Del Bel • Nim's Pharmacy • Obviar Family • Paul & Susan McFadyen • Phonak Canada | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Port Coquitlam Royal Purple • Properties Plus Limited • Ron Laufer • Ron & Lisa Moody • Russell & Nina Wong • Save On Foods Fleetwood • SmartSort Services • Smithers Royal Purple • Sobeng Family • Starbright Children's Development Centre • Surrey Firefighters Charitable Society • Susan Lane • Val Matthews, in memory of her sister, Pamela Robinson • YVR Fall Giving Campaign |
|--|---|--|



We operate in partnership with:

Ministry of Children and Family Development, Government of BC

BC Early Hearing Program – Provincial Health Services Authority

We acknowledge the financial assistance of the Province of British Columbia

Thank you to our founders and long-time supporters:

Elks & Royal Purple lodges, both in British Columbia and across Canada

OVER 35 YEARS OF MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Elks and Royal Purple Walkathon 2019

The Elks and Canadian Royal Purple Association Walkathon will take place on **Sunday, May 26, 2019**. The location is the same as last year, **Aldergrove Regional Park at 272nd Street and 8th Avenue**. Proceeds from the Walkathon support the programs and services of the BC Family Hearing Resource Society. This includes services for young children who are deaf and hard-of-hearing, as well children with speech and language difficulties, served through the Surrey Early Speech and Language Program. Join us for a fun for all-ages day in the park. A free barbecue lunch, beverages, activities, and prize draws will be provided!



Families Helping Families – Equipment Retention

We know keeping hearing equipment on your child can sometimes be a challenge. Did you find any strategies or accessories that helped you through this tricky time? We are hoping to create a box of resources to show and share with families. Please help us by donating retention accessories that you are no longer using, or photos of your child wearing them. Any of the following items would be really helpful:

- Hearing aid caps
- Headbands
- Retention clips
- Any home-made or adapted hats/headbands/clips
- Any other accessories

Please contact info@bcfamilyhearing.com or your interventionist if you have anything to pass along. Anything would be greatly appreciated!

Also, please remember, when you get a new accessory for your child's equipment, it is important to check with your audiologist to ensure it does not adversely affect your child's access to sound.

New – Wish List!

Often, individuals and agencies prefer to gift items instead of monetary donations. For this reason, we have created a "Wish List" of items that are needed at this time. If you wish to make a non-monetary donation, please consider gifting our Centres an item from our wish list:

- Camera – Digital, easy to use
- Tablecloths, rectangular & washable
- Clear plastic containers for toy storage, 6 litres and 80 litres
- Toy music set
- Baby doll(s) and accessories

Please contact info@bcfamilyhearing.com or your interventionist if you would like to provide a wish list item.

Thank You.

REACHING OUT TO COMMUNITY

It's A Family Affair: Parent Workshop On Sibling Relationships In A Family With A Child Who Is Deaf Or Hard-Of-Hearing

By Jen Gow, Family Support Parent



At BC Family Hearing Resource Society, we believe in family-centered services. It's important for us to consider the needs and strengths of the entire family, not just your child who is deaf or hard-of-hearing.

In the business of raising a family, one aspect of family dynamics important to keep in mind is the relationships between our children. This can be especially important for families raising children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. In the time following our child's hearing level identification, we as parents can find ourselves with a full schedule centered around that child's appointments. Much of our time may focus on fostering our child's communication and language. How can we do all this yet still meet the needs of our other children, and foster healthy relationships between them?

To help us explore these questions and much more, Kristen Pranzl, Program Coordinator at the Deaf, Hard of Hearing & Deaf-Blind Well-Being Program, presented an evening workshop for parents on "Sibling relationships in a family with a child who is deaf or hard-of-hearing". It was held at our Vancouver Centre on February 27th, 2019. As well as families local to the area who came in person, we had a strong attendance online of families currently being served by early intervention services, as well as past BCFHRC alumni parents.

Kristen took the time to explain the sibling experience within the context of the uniqueness of every family. She discussed potential advantages to having a brother or sister who is deaf or hard-of-hearing; typically hearing siblings can be empathetic, responsible and resilient, and often have very close bonds with their sibling who is deaf or hard-of-hearing.

She also explained the importance of acknowledging possible struggles so that we can understand how to best support all our children. Common experiences can include feeling the need to be perfect and not being able to express their feelings, and feeling that their problems are minimized while also being asked to help too much. To address these, Kristin shared a range of strategies and tips to consider bringing into our families, such as being intentional about spending special time with each child, and celebrating their unique skills and needs.

The experience of growing up with a sibling who is deaf or hard-of-hearing is an important topic but one that is not often, or always easily, discussed. We're grateful to Kristen for this opportunity to explore this topic in a supportive way. If you would like to find out more about the Deaf, Hard of Hearing & Deaf-Blind Well-Being Program and the services they provide to families, you can explore their website at <http://deafwellbeing.vch.ca/>.



REACHING OUT TO COMMUNITY

Out and About in the Kootenays

Our license plates read “Beautiful British Columbia” and we agree! In our efforts to provide equitable services to all families in BC, our staff travel to regions throughout the province when there is a need for services. The fact that one of those regions happens to be the stunning Kootenays in the south east, is a bonus!

Carolyn Hawrish, Listening and Spoken Language Specialist, recently spent time in the communities of Cranbrook, Kimberley, Rossland and Nelson. BC Family Hearing Resource Centre has a long-standing connection to community service providers in the Kootenays, which also encompasses the communities of Castlegar, Trail, Grand Forks, Salmo, Golden, Creston, and other small towns.



Brianne, Everleigh and Daniel Kaufmann of Kimberley

While in Kimberley, Carolyn met the Kaufmanns, who recently began receiving services from BCFHRC and are connected locally to Speech and Language Pathologist Kayle Towsley and audiologist, Joanne Flett. Everleigh had recently received her new BAHA softband and Brianne reports that she’s already seeing differences in Everleigh’s responses to her environment! Brianne had the opportunity to listen to our demo BAHA 5 and was amazed to hear the difference in access to sound with it. Please let your early interventionist know if you would like to demo the BAHA 5!



Alaina Greenwood, with her mom Taylor, from Nelson

In Nelson, she visited with Alaina Greenwood and her parents Taylor and Jarrett who are supported locally by SLP Rosie Eberle and audiologist Darlene Jamin. While in the home, Taylor listened to the hearing aid through the listening tube and was amazed to hear how it worked and amplified all the sounds in their home.

While in Trail, Carolyn met with the Hickey family and their Speech Language Pathologist, Jennifer Moll to discuss progress with communication development and chat about their journey with hearing aids. Carolyn also observed Ember at her daycare in Rossland and consulted with Director Ketna Makwana and Early Childhood Educator, Danielle Lamoureux around equipment, acoustics and effective communication strategies. To the right you can see Ember sporting her cute bonnet which helps deter her from removing her hearing aids. She is having a lot of fun waiting to slide; 1-2-3.....Go!



Audrey and Ember Hickey, with Jennifer Moll, SLP (right)



Ember, at Daycare, with Danielle Lamoureux, Early Childhood Educator

If you are wondering about our Outreach Consultants and when they might next be visiting your community, get in touch with your child’s consultant or check out the calendar on our website:

<http://www.bcfamilyhearing.com/events/>

BITS & PIECES

Practicum Students

We are always striving to inspire future generations of service providers who share our passion to help children reach their communication potential. Meet the students who joined us this Winter.



You may have the opportunity to meet **Jasmine Westwood**, or may have already had the chance to meet her through Deaf Youth Today. Jasmine is a 3rd year student at Vancouver Island University and is in the social work program (all online) and this is her first practicum. Jasmine is really involved in the Deaf community and is also a deaf and hard-of-hearing role model. As a child, Jasmine and her family received services from the BCFHRC through our Outreach Program. She will be with us until the end of May.



Julie Jameson is from Fort Worth, Texas. She is currently studying for her Masters' degree in Deaf Education at The University of British Columbia, finishing in the summer of 2019. In Texas, Julie taught elementary school before visiting and falling in love with the Vancouver area. Upon first moving here, Julie began studying in the ASL and Deaf Studies Program at Vancouver Community College. After completing the certification program, she moved on to the master's program at UBC. She is excited to be here for four weeks, and to get to know our children and families. From Julie, *"Thank you for welcoming me as I continue my education and move forward toward my goal of becoming a Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing!"*



Dyan Spear, Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, (second from left) had a pleasant surprise when she met up with this past family while out in the community. Mikyla, (left) is a graduate of BC Family Hearing Resource Centre. She is pictured here with her grandmother, Kathy, and mom, Jennifer.

The Shining Stars of BCFHRC

ATTENTION current and alumni families:
we are looking for your "Shining Stars"!

Tell us why your deaf or hard-of-hearing child is a "Shining Star" and we will share it on our social media channels!

If you wish to participate, contact us by email or on our website.



SIGN LANGUAGE

SPORTS!



SPORT



GOLF



ROLLER BLADING



SWIMMING



BASKETBALL



TENNIS



SOCCER



HIKING



BASEBALL



JOGGING



GOAL!!



POINTS

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

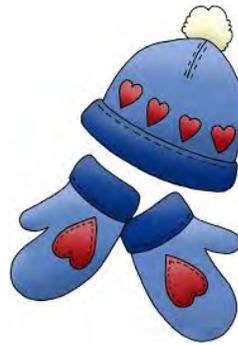
Calendar

January

- 1 Happy New Year 2019!
- 7 Group Programs resume- Be sure to register!
- 9 PEER Session #4 - 7pm

February

- 12 Victoria Office – Valentine’s Day Family Event
- 13 PEER Session #5 - 7pm
- 14 **Happy Valentine’s Day ♥**
- 18 Family Day Holiday – Centre Closed
- 18 FNDC Family Fun Skate – Surrey Sport & Leisure Centre
- 21 Indoor Beach Field Trip in Richmond
- 27 Deaf Well Being Workshop - Sibling Relationships
All parents and alumni parents welcome to attend



March

- 13 PEER Session #6 - 7 pm
- 17 **Happy St. Patrick’s Day ♣**
- 18 Family Fun Day – Main Surrey Centre
- 25 Family Signing Group – Penticton Health Centre
- 26 Baby Group – Starbright Child Development Centre- Kelowna
- 28 Foundations for Professionals – Surrey
- 29 30 Foundations for Families – Surrey

April

- 4 Bloedel Conservatory Field Trip 10am in Vancouver
- 10 PEER Session #7 – 7pm
- 15 Farm Field Trip 9:30am- Eagle Acres
- 19 Good Friday – Centre Closed
- 22 Easter Monday – Centre Closed

May

- 2-4 PEER 3 day Workshop
- 20 Victoria Day – Centre closed
- 26 Elks & Royal Purple Walkathon

June

- 24 Year End Park Trip

July

- 1 Canada Day 🇨🇦 Centre Closed
- 17 New Brighton Park Day in Vancouver

August

- 5 BC Day 🇨🇦 Centre Closed
- 8-10 Mingle & Play
- 12 Centre closed in lieu of Mingle & Play Saturday

Staff Visits to Communities in BC

January to March

- Dyan Spear** – Campbell River, Comox, Courtenay, Duncan, Kelowna, Penticton, Parksville, Nanaimo, Powell River, Victoria
- Carolyn Hawrish** – Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Kamloops, Kimberley, Nelson, Rossland, Trail
- Teresa Kazemir** – Port Hardy



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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.

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