

REACHING OUT

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE
BC FAMILY HEARING RESOURCE SOCIETY
FOR FAMILIES WITH DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING CHILDREN,
SERVICE PROVIDERS, AND OTHERS INVOLVED WITH
DEAFNESS/HARD OF HEARING ISSUES

January 2021

FAMILY FEATURE

The Hohnadels Just Say Yes



Meet the Hohnadels!
Parents Genevieve and Franck
and their children Everly (right) and Luca.
Stefanie Macaro, SLP has been the
family's primary interventionist
since they started with BCFRHC.
The Hohnadels have always been eager
participants of all opportunities available to
them through our programs and services.
As Everly will begin Kindergarten in
September 2021, Genevieve reflects on the
family's experiences from
the last four years.

Everly was identified through the newborn hearing screening at the hospital. She was born with moderate to severe to severe sensorineural hearing loss. Once it was confirmed, we were contacted promptly by the BC Hearing Program and given access to all the supports. From phone calls to Facebook, I absorbed all the information I could. When we received that big binder of pamphlets, my first thought was, "I'm not organized enough for this." So, I went out and got one of those big Mom calendars for my fridge and a journal, and braced myself.

We, like many others, were told that it was likely just fluid in her ears and that it was nothing, so when her first ABR results were read, my family and I were quite shocked. With no family history, no genetic markers or indication of a syndrome, we still have no answer as to why our child is deaf.

continued on page 2

UPCOMING ONLINE EVENTS

- MONTHLY ASL SESSIONS FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS
- **FOUNDATIONS FOR PROFESSIONALS**
FEBRUARY 26th
- **FOUNDATIONS FOR FAMILIES**
FEBRUARY 27th & MARCH 6th

Vancouver Satellite Centre

#262- 3665 Kingsway, Vancouver, BC, V5R 5W2
PH: 604-428-7949 FAX: 604-428-7950
EMAIL: info@bcfamilyhearing.com

Main Surrey Centre

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PH: 604-584-2827 FAX: 604-584-2800
Toll Free: 1-877-584-2827
EMAIL: info@bcfamilyhearing.com
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Victoria Satellite Centre

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EMAIL: vicinfo@bcfamilyhearing.com



FAMILY FEATURE

The Hohnadels continued

By age of three months, Everly had her hearing aids. It took a while for us as parents to adjust, but Everly did really well. It was challenging keeping them on at first, but eventually we all got the hang of it.

We met with all three agencies, and decided that BC Family Hearing Resource Centre was the best fit for our family. We were welcomed with arms wide open, and began attending the Bouncy Babies group. It was such a relief to find so many other parents on a similar path. We went to our first Mingle & Play event, I remember feeling so nervous, but it was impossible to feel that way for long. I made so many connections during that time, and many of these relationships I still have today.

It was also at this time that I first met Deaf adults. We had decided that giving Everly the option to use sign language was integral for her development and we started to use it daily to support speech.

We were lucky enough to have Sharon as our first Deaf Mentor as we started our sign language instruction. Everly joined the Butterfly Hands group that introduced her to sign language as well.

Everly's acquisition of language began to grow with the help of Stefanie, our early interventionist, and we settled into our routine. Our audiologist's office was becoming our second home, and BC Family our third.

We also tried to continue with the typical activities that I had done with Luca, our firstborn. Everly and I took part in music classes and events with my closest parent friends. I took both my kids to the Mother Goose programs at our local library. I got used to answering questions and dodging well-meaning comments when someone noticed Everly's hearing aids.

We went to Hornby Island Family Deaf Camp, an opportunity to be part of the Deaf community, in



an outdoor adventure environment. There are interpreters to help take some of the pressure off, and some of the meals are provided. The first time, we were just as apprehensive about being immersed in sign language as camping for the first time as a family. It ended up being an absolute blast! We hope to continue to go every year. It's a great way to build relationships within the community, and it's an opportunity for all of us to interact with people using sign language.

At some point when Everly was two, her hearing decreased to profound levels and we found ourselves on the path to a Cochlear Implant (CI). We realized her speech had plateaued, and was relying more on her limited sign.

We were encouraged to try the preschool program at Deaf Children's Society (DCS), where Everly could be with her peers in an ASL environment. This was not an easy time for our family. We had to process the feelings for a second time, and it hit just as hard.

Making difficult decisions is not my strength, and suddenly I had to make a lot of them. Choosing which technology we wanted to use, or if we wanted it at all. The plans that I had laid out, which included going back to work full time, had to be reconsidered and we had to readjust our goals.

Eventually, after a few months at DCS, we made a choice we hoped would be the most beneficial, not just for Everly, but for our whole family. I was burnt out from juggling too many schedules and it was taking its toll.

We sent her to the local daycare with amazing support from our Childhood Development program. With Stefanie's encouragement, the staff at the preschool went out of their way to educate themselves on how to provide an ideal learning environment, and even learned some signs. Everly loved it and they loved her. It was so incredible seeing so many people come together to focus on our child's needs. Everly's



Everly with Stefanie Macaro, SLP

FAMILY FEATURE

The Hohnadels continued

CI had been activated and we were excited to see how her spoken language would develop.

At the same time, we maintained groups at BC Family that focused on ASL instruction and I kept receiving regular lessons from Levi, our Deaf Mentor.

Everly turned four just after the COVID season struck, and having her home with us made it apparent that her communication abilities were lagging. We realized that her potential to communicate in spoken language may come eventually, but she needed a better language base to grow from. We decided that, even with the incredible support at the local daycare, the best place for Everly was to be back with her peers at DCS.

Now, she is proud to show us new signs, and she gets so excited to see her friends and teachers. We started the school year comfortable that we have given her an opportunity to build her confidence and strengthen her social relationships as well.



Learning to adapt and changing our plans has been challenging at times. I do have moments of guilt and sadness occasionally, but I have learned to give space to those emotions. I also make sure to acknowledge all the wonderful aspects of this new world that make our life so much fuller now.

I am beyond grateful to the many professionals and peers that have become our coaches and cheerleaders, offering pep talks and different perspectives. I am always saying how lucky we are to have had so much help so early in our parenting journey. So much of what we have learned for Everly has helped with Luca as well.

We may not know what the future holds, or what mode of communication Everly will prefer to use, but I do know that we will be fine with whatever she decides.

The foundation we are able to provide our daughter will impact the rest of her life. I will look back at this time as some of the most precious and life changing. We have all become stronger and more resilient. We have come closer as a family.

If I have one piece of advice for families just starting out on this journey, it would be to say 'yes' to everything. Learn as much as you can, and do what works for you. They say it takes a village, and this is a really good one.

***Would you like to share your family's story?
Please advise your interventionist or contact our Centre.***

**Follow our social media channels
([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) & [Instagram](#))
or check the [calendar](#) on our website
for the most up-to-date information
on what's happening!**

YOU AND YOUR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING CHILD

Virtual Hallowe'en Party

At BCFHRC, we have a tradition of celebrating Hallowe'en by dressing up and visiting our local businesses in addition to the offices in our own building. Of course, this past Hallowe'en, we had to break that tradition in favour of a COVID-friendly version. However, staff and families rose to the occasion, utilizing technology to their advantage. Bravo everyone for making the most of our online Hallowe'en party!



YOU AND YOUR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING CHILD

Keeping ears warm while maintaining access to sound

by Kathy Holtman, AuD., CID pediatric audiology coordinator

Printed with permission from CID – Central Institute for the Deaf in St. Louis, Missouri, USA.

With colder temperatures moving in and the possibility of inclement weather increasing, parents may be wondering how to protect their children's faces and heads from the cold while still providing them with optimal access to sound. Sound travels through the air and past any barriers before reaching the ear. Therefore, the clothing parents use to keep their children warm could change the sound quality or sound volume they receive through their devices. Here are some quick tips to circumvent this issue for children who use hearing aids and/or cochlear implants:



Photograph by Kelly Wood at CID – Central Institute for the Deaf

Tips for choosing head coverings:

- Looser fitting head coverings won't generally activate hearing aid feedback as quickly as tighter fitting head coverings.
- Coat hoods can be used as they tend to be looser than other types of hats.
- If parents prefer using a standard hat, consider buying one size larger.
- Earmuffs, if sized well, may protect ears without obstructing the device microphones.
- Crocheted or knit beanies allow sound in with more transparency than some of the heavier fleece varieties.
- Consider a "Newsboy" hat which tends to be looser near the ear and may cover more of the top of the head than the ears themselves.
- Some headbands may cover ears without impeding the device microphones.
- If the weather requires a warm, heavy hat, children can utilize remote mic technology and stay toasty-warm while the remote microphones deliver sounds directly to the device instead of going through the hat.
- Administer the [Ling sound check](#) while the child is wearing different hats to check for best access to sound.

Other considerations:

- Be aware that devices can potentially come loose when a hat or a hood is taken off. Check for devices after removing the hat or hood and re-secure them if needed. A tether can also be used to connect the devices to the child's coat so that if the devices do fall off, they will stay attached to the clothing.
- Humidity/condensation can be a factor in the winter, especially while using head coverings.
- Inspect the earmold tubing for water droplets and/or the microphone areas for condensation.
- Use [tools](#) to dry the devices such as a dehumidifier or earmold tubing blower.
- Condensation can become trapped in the battery compartments and shorten the battery life or cause rust to appear. Batteries may need to be swapped sooner than expected.
- Try a moisture guard sleeve (made for different hearing devices) that reduces exposure to moisture and is acoustically transparent.
- Use static remover spray on the head covering if static cling, flyaway hair or evidence of static charge is building up to reduce damage to the hearing devices.

Options for winter wear that keep children warm while also maintaining access to sound will vary, depending on children's ages and devices. Parents should contact their child's audiologist to address their child's specific needs.

A Letter from our Executive Director

Dear BCFHRS families and community partners,

This past year was extraordinary and unlike any other and all of us adapted to new ways of providing services. Thank you all for being patient and working together with us in these unique circumstances that we've encountered in the last 10 months.

As we begin to plan for the rest of this year, I would like to provide an update on our plans for the next 4 months.

- On-line sessions, services and meetings for families and community partners will continue.
- On-line group services, classes and workshops will continue.
- Outreach travel to communities will be suspended until April, 30th, 2021.
- Opportunities to expand in-person sessions will be considered, where it is safe to do so.

The health, safety and wellbeing of our staff, children and families and community service providers remains our priority. We will follow the ongoing guidance and direction of the Provincial Health Officer and the Public Health Authorities with respect to protecting public safety.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions or concerns,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Noreen R. Simmons". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined.

Dr. Noreen R. Simmons
Executive Director

OVER 35 YEARS OF MAKING A DIFFERENCE

In Appreciation of our Supporters

Since November 1st, 2020 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.



Gold Star Donors (\$25,000+)

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Silver Star Donors (\$10,000-\$24, 999)



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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 in British Columbia and across Canada

OVER 35 YEARS OF MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Annual General Meeting

Like most everything in 2020 our Annual General Meeting (AGM) was different than usual. On November 25th we hosted our first ever, fully virtual, online AGM. Hosted by our Executive Director, Dr. Noreen Simmons, and our Society President, Dr. Charles Laszlo, the AGM provided attendees with an opportunity to learn about how the organization had managed to operate during a global pandemic and what our plans are for the coming year.



While we were not able to be together in person, it was a wonderful chance to gather online and share with friends, new and old. We encourage you to take a minute to read our digital annual report: [BC Family Hearing | Annual Report](#)

Giving Tuesday



Our organization once again participated in Giving Tuesday on December 1st, 2020. This event “is a global movement for giving and volunteering, taking place each year after Black Friday...it’s a time when charities, companies and individuals join together and rally for favourite causes.” Thank you to everyone who gave to our Giving Tuesday campaign, helping us to raise \$3,500 for our organization!

Wish List

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

- Dollhouse and accessories
- Switch adaptors (to make our iPad(s) accessible for our children with additional physical challenges)
- Video-conferencing camera

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



REACHING OUT TO COMMUNITY

BC Family Hearing Resource Society facilitates the first Deaf Mentor Program in Canada in over 10 years!



After two postponements due to COVID 19, we are pleased to partner with the SKI-HI Institute to present the Deaf Mentor Training Workshop via Zoom!

BC Family Hearing is hosting a five-day Deaf Mentor Training Workshop provided by Dr. Paula Pittman and Jodee Crace from the SKI-HI Institute. Staff from BC Family Hearing, Deaf Children's Society and Island Deaf and Hard of Hearing will be in attendance, and all participants will learn how to support families with deaf and hard of hearing children with visual communication, ASL instruction, language models, and to learn about Deaf Community and Deaf Culture. This training will take place over Zoom March 13, 14 and March 26, 27 and 28, 2021.

Meet the Deaf Mentor Program Trainers

Dr. Paula Pittman



Dr. Pittman has worked in the field of early childhood deaf education for 36 years as an early intervention provider working with deaf, blind and deafblind infants and toddlers and their families. She is the director of SKI-HI and Deaf Mentor Outreach services at the SKI-HI Institute at Utah State University and is a consultant supporting early intervention programs in the US and internationally.

Jodee Crace



Jodee Crace has worked in the field of Early Deaf Education for 18 years as an early intervention provider working with deaf, and deaf blind babies and their families. She is currently the Deaf Mentor (DM) in Indiana as well as providing National DM Trainings (for the SKI-HI Institute). She coordinates a variety of projects for ASL Connect at Gallaudet University as a consultant. Also, she has served on the Joint Committee on Infant Hearing since 2013 and is the past president of the American Society for Deaf Children.

BITS & PIECES

Baby News!

Meet the newest members of our BC Family ‘family’!



Levi Traxler, Early Childhood Educator/Deaf Role Model, and his wife, Julia, grew from a family of two to a family of three on May 30th, 2020 with the birth of their son, Chandler!



Courtney Lawrence, Speech Language Pathologist, and husband Kyle, also expanded their family to three when they welcomed their daughter Olive on October 15th, 2020!

Congratulations to all!
Welcome to our world Chandler and Olive!

Annual Satisfaction Surveys – Prize Winners

Thank you to everyone who provided feedback for our Annual Satisfaction Surveys. Your opinion is important, and guides us in our future planning.

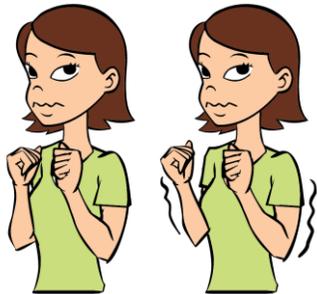
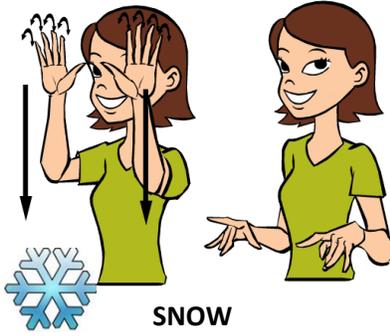
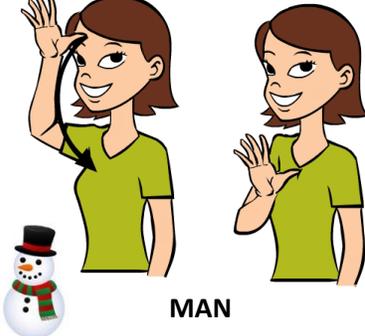
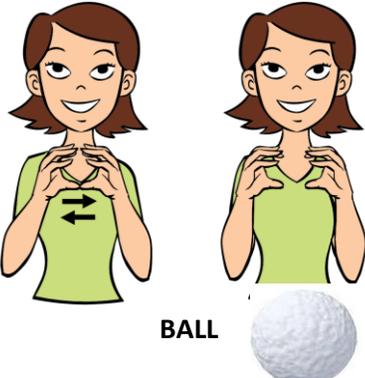
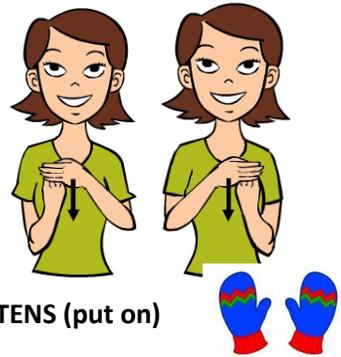
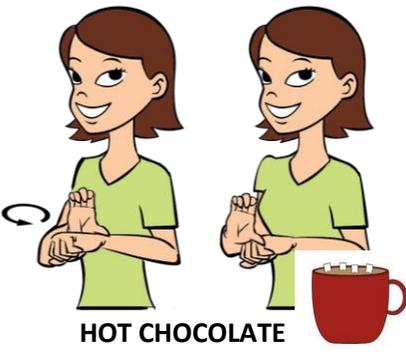
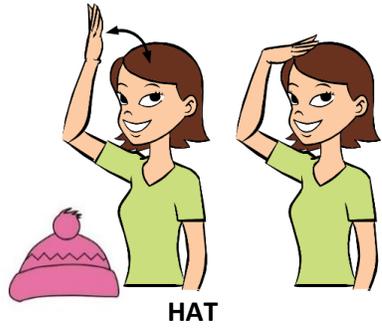
Chapters

!ndigo

In appreciation for taking the time to complete the survey, two lucky families, one local and one from outside the lower mainland each won a **\$50 Chapters Indigo Gift Card!**

SIGN LANGUAGE

Signs of the Season

 <p>WINTER (COLD)</p>	 <p>SNOW</p>	 <p>MAN</p>
 <p>BALL</p>	 <p>SLED</p>	 <p>MITTENS (put on)</p>
 <p>COAT</p>	 <p>HOT CHOCOLATE</p>	 <p>HAT</p>
 <p>SCARF</p>		

www.babysigns.com
www.lifeprint.com
By Karen Jackson 2020

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

Calendar

2021

January

- 1 **Happy New Year! All Centres Closed**
- 5 PEER Session #4 7pm (online)
- 11 to March 8 ASL Basic (online)
- 13 to March 3 ASL Intermediate (online)
- 28 Monthly ASL Session #1 (online) 7:30
- 28 Indoor Beach Day (postponed due to COVID restrictions)

February

- 2 PEER Session #5 7pm (online)
- 14 Happy Valentine's Day ♥
- 15 **Family Day – All Centres Closed**
- 25 Monthly ASL Session #2 (online) 7:30
- 26 Foundations for Professionals (online)
- 27 Foundations for Families Day 1 (and March 6) (online)

March

- 2 PEER Session #6 7pm (online)
- 6 Foundations for Families Day 2 (online) continuation of Feb 27th
- 13, 14, 26, 27, 28 Deaf Mentor Training Workshop
- 24 Family Fun Day (to be determined pending COVID restrictions)
- 25 Monthly ASL Session #3 (online) 7:30

April

- 2 **Good Friday – All Centres Closed**
- 5 **Easter Monday – All Centres Closed**
- 6 PEER Session #7 7pm (online)
- 22 – 24 PEER 3-Day Workshop
- 29 Monthly ASL Session #4 (online) 7:30

May

- 12-13 ASL EST Training
- 24 **Victoria Day – All Centres Closed**
- 27 Monthly ASL Session #5 (online) 7:30
- 30 Walkathon

June

- 24 Monthly ASL Session #6 (online) 7:30
- Victoria Farm Trip (to be determined pending COVID restrictions)

July

- 1 **Happy Canada Day 🇨🇦 – All Centres Closed**

August

- 3 **BC Day 🇨🇦 – All Centres Closed**
- 5-7 Mingle & Play (to be determined pending COVID restrictions)

Staff Visits to Communities in BC and Yukon!

Due to COVID – 19, travel to various communities across BC has been temporarily suspended. Online services will be provided to ensure continuity of services.



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Follow us on Twitter: @bcfamilyhearing



Follow us on Instagram: @bcfamilyhearing

Newsletter via Email - In our efforts to "Go Green" we now **only offer an electronic distribution** option. If you would like to be added to our emailing list, simply message info@bcfamilyhearing.com with the email address you would like the newsletter sent to. Newsletters are also available on our [website](#).

Reaching Out

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Executive Director:
Dr. Noreen Simmons
Editor: Cindy Adams

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.