

# 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.

April 2020

## FAMILY FEATURE

### The Smiths Embrace Life on a Roller Coaster!



#### Meet the Smiths!

**The Smith family have been clients of the BC Family Hearing Resource Centre since November 2018. Courtney Lawrence, Speech-Language Pathologist, is their primary service provider. Read on as mom, Sara, shares her family's story.**

When you become a parent, you quickly realize it is the greatest blessing in your life and also your greatest challenge – it's a whole new chapter and life will never be the same!

My name is Sara, and my husband Calvin and I have been married for 9 years this summer. We have two sweet boys Wyatt (6) and Emmett (3½), who definitely make sure there is never a dull moment in our house! Our boys are loving, wacky, LOUD and energetic, we wouldn't have it any other way!

Our journey has been a bit of a roller coaster over the last 1½ years, as both kids were identified with bilateral sensorineural hearing loss.

Both Wyatt and Emmett passed their newborn hearing screenings on the second try, and we were told in both scenarios that it was just due to fluid in their ears from the birthing experience. I was assured that they had passed the screening in infancy and we carried on with our lives. Newborn stages, toddler activities, potty training, moving cities, preschool, and adjusting to life with two children - I have to say there were no real "red flags" that either of my children were struggling to hear.

Then in the summer of 2018, my youngest (Emmett, then nearing two years old) became ill with a viral infection and was hospitalized for a week. We were aware that he did not have a lot of speech yet for a 22 month old, only a few words and something we were discussing of how long we wait to see if he was just a "late talker". During this hospitalization we were fortunate enough to be assessed by one physician that took an interest in Emmett's development. He recommended that we start investigating his possible speech delay further. Once we left the hospital, the first thing on my to-do list was to connect with our local development centre, where they suggested we start with a hearing test. *continued on page 2*

**Please note that the following events have been  
CANCELLED, POSTPONED or MODIFIED due to  
COVID - 19:**

**Deaf Mentor Training (POSTPONED)**

**PEER 3 Day (MODIFIED)**

**Education Fair (CANCELLED)**

**Check our [Website](#) for the latest updates**

#### Vancouver Satellite Centre

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PH: 604-428-7949 FAX: 604-428-7950

EMAIL: [info@bcfamilyhearing.com](mailto:info@bcfamilyhearing.com)

#### Main Surrey Centre

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Toll Free: 1-877-584-2827

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#### Victoria Satellite Centre

#320-702 Fort Street, Victoria, BC, V8W 1H2

PH: 778-265-8909 FAX: 778-265-8908

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## FAMILY FEATURE

### The Smiths continued

This was the very first time the thought even crossed my mind - what if my son did have difficulty hearing? Was I missing some obvious signs? It is amazing how quickly we doubt ourselves and try to find clues that may have been overlooked so things start to make sense. To be quite honest I knew nothing about hearing loss at this point and was just anxious about the possibility that hearing could be the link to why my two year old was not talking a whole lot.

As soon as we could, we took Emmett for his first hearing test. And then another, and finally decided we were not getting conclusive results on the audiogram (Mr. stubborn two year old was difficult to get to concentrate in the sound booth) and we were sent for a sedated ABR. It was a nerve-racking day, getting my rambunctious boy to take the medication and settle down for a long nap while they hooked him up to the tests. But what came out of that meeting afterward, changed everything!

We found out that day in August of 2018 that Emmett has a mild high-frequency hearing loss in both ears, that it was permanent and it could explain some of why he had limited speech. They discussed our options, that his audiogram results were right on the line of where they may or may not recommend hearing aids, and at that time we decided to wait until he was a little bit more ready (work on some of his sensory difficulties he was also experiencing, maybe then he would be able to keep the them in his ears). We did decide to fit Emmett with hearing aids eight months later, which he has flourished with and we see how much his vocabulary/speech and social interactions have improved in such a short time!

In that initial meeting the audiologist recommended that we test any siblings, as there could likely be a genetic component. They recommended researching any family history to trace back early childhood hearing loss, and gave us some resources of organizations we could reach out to.

My older son Wyatt was 4½ years old and in his second year of part time preschool. He was always a very chatty guy, had a lot of vocabulary and could follow many directions - in other words did not show indicators that he struggled to hear. Sure, he did have difficulty pronouncing many of his words but we were able to mostly understand him, and his preschool teachers did report he was very quiet and reserved there unlike his personality at home. But none of these facts seemed to register with me as difficulty hearing - more just typical things that come with being four years old, ie: shy in group settings.

Less than two months after Emmett was identified as being hard-of-hearing, we confirmed that Wyatt also had permanent mild-moderate hearing loss

bilaterally. We found out that he was having a much harder time hearing than his brother, and were recommended to immediately fit him with hearing aids - as in that very same day that we had the hearing test! To say it was a lot of information to process would be an understatement, I came home that day to share the news with my husband - "Wyatt has permanent hearing loss also and his hearing aids are coming in two weeks", was a lot to take in one conversation!

The audiologist and other professionals that have dealt with Wyatt have been surprised at the level of his hearing loss in comparison to his ability to manage so well - he can comprehend language beyond his years and although he struggles with expressing clearly what he is trying to say, Wyatt was coping amazingly with his moderate hearing loss for 4½ years undetected. I tell him all the time how smart he is, and it truly showcases how resilient children are! Things were definitely moving along quickly, and I

started to notice certain scenarios made more sense - why he was turning the music up louder, kept turning the TV volume up, and became real quiet in group activities/at preschool but was loud and chatty at home. Once he got those hearing aids in, he never wanted to take them out and his personality really opened up at preschool since he was not having to try so hard to listen!

As I look back I remember feeling both overwhelmed, but also grateful that we found out. Grateful that my children were still young, not in the school system yet and struggling with their studies, and also took the opportunity to make a plan for what steps came next - which is where

BC Family Hearing came in.

Finding out we qualified for services here at BC Family hearing for both boys, has been such a blessing to our family. The support of the entire team, especially from Courtney, our Early Interventionist, has been beyond wonderful!

We also have been receiving sign language instruction with Karen, which is something so valuable to our toolkit for those times that the boys still struggle to hear or are not wearing their hearing aids. Even though we live in Chilliwack, we have been so fortunate to be able to participate in special events such as Mingle and Play this past summer, some parent workshops and what really stood out was the PEER program.

Finding out during Wyatt's last year before Kindergarten that we needed to think about what kinds of adaptations he may need in school, actually made me quite anxious and stressed. We were new to our community and were not yet familiar with the school or the team there and I felt like we were just



## FAMILY FEATURE

### The Smiths continued

jumping in head first - so I mean it when I say thank goodness for the PEER program. I felt so relieved each month after sitting in the webinar listening to each topic that we would encounter with the school system, and then hearing other families share their experiences (success stories and struggles were both so important!).

Also, spending that quality time at 3-day PEER was essential to my feeling of preparedness for the start of Kindergarten this past September, as well as getting to meet other families in person that were going through the same journey as us! Listening to my son say "Look Mom! He has super ears just like me! But his are blue, mine are green!" with the biggest smile on his face was truly priceless.

We were also able to join in the Walk for Bright Futures last year for the first time, and I know it won't be our last! We loved the whole experience and fundraising was a great opportunity to raise awareness in our own community about childhood hearing needs. I have found more parents at our school and other groups we are in will ask questions about my boys, their hearing aids and just our story in general - sincerely people are curious and really want to learn! I can totally understand as I had not met anyone that was deaf or hard-of-hearing before my children, so we are all learning every single day!

These last few months I do feel our roller coaster year has settled somewhat. Wyatt has adjusted amazingly to Kindergarten, our TDHH and support team with the school has been phenomenal and the use of the FM system and sound tower in the classroom has been so helpful for his learning experience. Even though Wyatt transitioned out of services with BC family hearing, he still loves being able to participate in special events and see familiar faces when he can. His speech has become amazingly more clear and even though he still has sounds he is working on, Wyatt is such a hard worker and loves learning!!

Emmett is in daycare part time, and soon to start preschool this September. He has historically had more difficulty than his brother with being in social group settings, some sensory issues, and with his minimal speech it was hard for him to communicate his needs which would cause a lot of frustration. He has come such a long way with all of

these areas, his hearing aids have helped enormously and he is now able to join in extra-curricular activities as well. I think the best thing for him was having his older brother wearing the hearing aids before him - getting to look up to his big brother and the encouragement he received, really did help him with adjusting to his own hearing aids!!

These boys are in it together and I love that they share this experience and have each other to lean on for support - I have observed Wyatt at the playground helping Emmett explain to another child what hearing aids are and why they wear "ear helpers" or "super ears", it actually melts my heart.

I guess the take-away here is I hope other families out there find encouragement from hearing others' stories - just as I have. Discovering that we are not alone in this, that there are other families with multiple hard-of-hearing children and seeing their successes is inspiring.

Any parent when it comes down to it, wants the best for their children. We are no different; my husband and I want the best for our boys. Our hope is that they will have the same access as their peers and never feel that their hearing loss hinders them from pursuing their dreams.

I know confidently that although our journey is still in the early stages, we are learning together as a family how to navigate our new normal.

Has my calendar ever been this full of appointments, in addition to the regular amount of busy that comes from being a working parent with multiple kiddos? Of course not! Do I sometimes feel like I'm just barely treading water and this wild ride we are on is overwhelming? Absolutely! And I know we are not the only family in this boat, I know that this season of life will change and flow into the next chapters and we will look back and remember those early days when we were still trying to keep it all together.

If you are new to this community or to BC Family Hearing, my message to you is it gets easier, and we are so happy you are here! I remind myself constantly that it is an amazing blessing to live here in BC with resources readily available, and I couldn't imagine being on this journey without the supports we have been given.

Thank you for listening to our story!



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



# YOU AND YOUR DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING CHILD

## Pictures from Winter Celebrations



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**YOU AND YOUR DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING CHILD**

**Pictures from Winter Celebrations**





## 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"> <li>• Accurate Real Time Reporting Inc.</li> <li>• Alisa Bridger</li> <li>• Angela Lay</li> <li>• Anita Park</li> <li>• Arceli Javison</li> <li>• Ashcroft Royal Purple</li> <li>• Barry de Marco</li> <li>• Beebe Cline</li> <li>• Brenda Moore</li> <li>• Monique Preer</li> <li>• Cheryl Lynn Salivio-Donate-a-Car Program</li> <li>• Cheryl &amp; Peter Humphries</li> <li>• Coco Publishing Co. Ltd.</li> <li>• Darren Bellamy</li> <li>• Elks &amp; Royal Purple Fund for Children</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emma Liffen</li> <li>• Evelyn Moi</li> <li>• Fortis BC Energy Inc.</li> <li>• GM Marshall</li> <li>• Heather Wiltse</li> <li>• Isabel Moore</li> <li>• Jim &amp; Sally Hurst</li> <li>• John McKitrick</li> <li>• Joseph Laleggia</li> <li>• Karen Armitage</li> <li>• Kelowna Royal Purple</li> <li>• Lisa Cable</li> <li>• Lisa Moody</li> <li>• Lisa Shearer</li> <li>• Mark Gunther</li> <li>• Marvel &amp; Ron Hicks</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meera Baines</li> <li>• Nikki Toews</li> <li>• Obviar Family</li> <li>• Paul McKay</li> <li>• Properties Plus</li> <li>• Provincial Employees Community Services Fund</li> <li>• RW Reddecliffe</li> <li>• Reach Child &amp; Youth Development Society</li> <li>• Robert &amp; Fern Dunlop</li> <li>• Rosalind Ho</li> <li>• Stefanie Macaro</li> <li>• Susan Lane</li> <li>• Valerie Matthews</li> <li>• Westside Elks</li> <li>• Yvonne Marshall</li> </ul> |
|--|---|--|



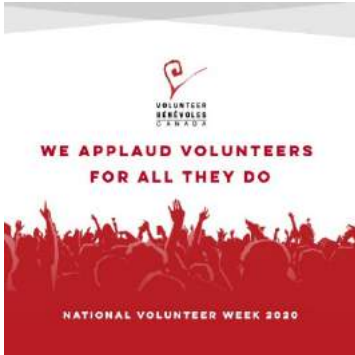
**We operate in partnership with:**

**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

### National Volunteer Week April 19 - 25, 2020



We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge some **Very Incredible People**, our Volunteers!

These individuals give of their time and expertise including helping out in group programs and administration, as well as events such as the Annual General Meeting, Mingle and Play and the Walkathon. Our dedicated Board of Directors are all volunteers!



#### **Our Sincere Thanks and Appreciation to our Volunteers!**

You truly make a difference in the lives of deaf and hard-of-hearing children and their families.

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### **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:

- **Coloured pinnies for outside playtime**
- **Switch adaptor for iPad(s) to make them accessible for our children with additional physical challenges**
- **Dollhouse**
- **Videoconference Camera**
- **Michael’s gift cards to purchase arts and crafts for Victoria Centre**

Please contact [info@bcfamilyhearing.com](mailto:info@bcfamilyhearing.com) if you would like to provide a wish list item.

## REACHING OUT TO COMMUNITY

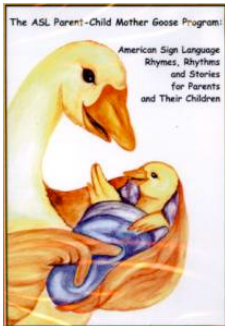
### Childhood Anxiety Workshop

We recently held a workshop for parents on “Childhood Anxiety.” The presenter was Katie Jones, Mental Health Clinician, from the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind Well-Being Program. Parents joined us in person and online for this informative and helpful workshop held at our Surrey Centre.

Anyone wanting to know more about mental health services for the deaf and hard-of-hearing community are encouraged to contact the **Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind Well-Being Program** directly ([www.deafwellbeing.vch.ca](http://www.deafwellbeing.vch.ca)).



### ASL Mother Goose – BC Early Hearing Program Training



Our Sign Language Consultants participated in training provided over two days by the BC Early Hearing Program. They were trained in the Parent-Child Mother Goose program, adapted for ASL by the Deaf Culture Centre (DCC) in Ontario. As stated by the DCC, “The ASL Parent-Child Mother Goose Program focuses on language interaction using ASL handshapes, rhymes and visual poetry. It uses the principles of the Mother Goose Program to foster parent child bonding, eye contact, language interaction and communication.” We are very excited about sharing this program with the families at BC Family Hearing!



## Deaf Mentor Training POSTPONED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE DUE TO COVID - 19



BC Family Hearing is hosting a three-day Deaf Mentor Training 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 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.



## REACHING OUT TO COMMUNITY

### UBC Students Visit BCFHRC

This March marked the 9<sup>th</sup> consecutive year that BCFHRC has hosted Dr. Susan Small's (also a board member) UBC Auditory Rehabilitation Class to tour the Surrey centre and learn about the services offered by our agency. Dr. Small's class of 11 Audiology students pursuing their Master's degrees had the opportunity to observe individual and group sessions, participate in a hearing loss demonstration, discover the many services provided by our team, learn about the different ways of encouraging young children to wear their hearing aids, practice ASL with one of our Sign Language Instructors and learn about ways in which our team collaborates with audiologists around the province. It was a pleasure to meet such fresh faces and welcome them into the field. Many of the students expressed interest in volunteering with us for upcoming events. We look forward to seeing them around the centre and to collaborating with them in their future careers. Please accept a special thanks to the families and intervention staff who agreed to being observed as well as to Levi Traxler for providing the students with some ASL instruction.



### Kamloops Area Meet Up

Families in the Kamloops area came together to meet and get to know other families with children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. This opportunity was provided on short notice, so we were impressed that it was received so well! Special Thanks to Mary-Ellen Milutinovic, Executive Director, Children's Therapy and Family Resource Centre in Kamloops, for hosting this event.

(Photographer: Melanie Thomas, Teacher for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing for Kamloops School District))



## BITS & PIECES

### Accreditation Update



As part of our commitment to excellence in service delivery, BCFHRS seeks accreditation from CARF. CARF stands for the **Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities**.

In November 2019, our four Centres, including with the Surrey Early Speech and Language Program (SESLP), hosted CARF surveyors. The surveyors interviewed staff, families, community service partners and Board members about our services and programs. They also examined our policies and procedures and documentation processes to ensure they met CARF standards.

We are very proud to announce that as a result of that survey, the society has again received the highest possible result, a three year accreditation. The surveyors shared some helpful recommendations to further improve our organization – overall it was a very successful outcome. Thank you to everyone that agreed to participate in the survey, including our staff and Board for their commitment to families receiving the highest quality service possible.

### Great Grad Gives Back



**Janelle Milne** was a featured Great Grad in our [Fall 2017](#) newsletter.

You may have seen Janelle on Sunday, Feb 9 during the Variety Show of Hearts telethon. She was interviewed about her experience growing up, and about how she is completing her Early Childhood Education (ECE) program and hopes to work with deaf/hard-of-hearing children.

### 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

## Spring Break!

featuring Karen Jackson



SPRING



BREAK



FAMILY



TRIP



ACTIVITY



EVENT



PARK



MOVIES



EXPLORATION



PICNIC



FUN



ALLERGY

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



# Calendar

## February

- 12 PEER Session #5
- 14 **Happy Valentine's Day ♥**
- 17 Family Day – All Centres Closed
- 18 Childhood Anxiety Workshop – 6:30pm



## March

- 3 UBC 1<sup>st</sup> year Audiology students Workshop
- 6-7 Mother Goose Training Program
- 11 PEER Session #6 - CANCELLED
- 12 Foundations for Professionals - BCFHRC Surrey
- 13-14 Foundations for Families - BCFHRC Surrey
- 17 **Happy St. Patrick's Day ♣**

## April

- 1 PEER Session #6 (rescheduled from March 11)-Online Only
- 8 PEER Session #7 Online Only
- 10 Good Friday – All Centres Closed
- 12 Happy Easter
- 13 Easter Monday – All Centres Closed
- 16-18 Deaf Mentor Program Training **POSTPONED**
- 30, May 1, 2 PEER 3 Day Workshop **MODIFIED**

## May

- 9 Education Fair – Burnaby Centre for Inclusion 1-3 pm **CANCELLED**
- 18 Victoria Day – All Centres Closed

## Staff Visits to Communities in BC and Yukon! (January to March)

**Carolyn Hawrish**- Kamloops, Whitehorse

**Dyan Spear** – Campbell River, Chemainus, Courtenay, Duncan, Kelowna, Lake Country, Nanaimo, Parksville, Penticton, Sechelt, Summerland, Vernon, Victoria

**Alex Lay** – Prince George

**In light of COVID – 19, travel to various communities across BC have been temporarily suspended. Online services will be provided to ensure continuity of services.**



### Reaching Out

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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.



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