

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

May 2021

FAMILY FEATURE

A World of Difference for the Moran Family



Clark, Kim and Ayo Moran

The Moran family works with Early Interventionist, Rina Dulku, RSLP and Karen Jackson, ECE/Sign Language Consultant.

Kim shares her family's unique story of adoption and discovering a new perspective on communication.

People often ask us, "Did you know Ayo had hearing loss before you adopted him?" The quick answer to that? We had no idea!

Early on in the adoption process we had to sit down with our social worker and review a list of special needs we were comfortable with in our adoptive child. It seems like a strange process, but the goal is to make sure that children aren't placed with families who are unprepared to care for their unique needs.

Continued on page 2

UPCOMING ONLINE EVENTS

- [MONTHLY ASL SESSIONS](#)
- **PEER 4 DAY WORKSHOP APRIL 22-25**
- [SPRING ASL CLASSES](#)

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FAMILY FEATURE

The Morans *continued*

I remember going over the list and easily checking yes to some boxes and no to others. For us, there were some needs that we felt we could support our child in, and others that felt too scary and unfamiliar. We checked no to the Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH) box. It felt so intimidating and we honestly didn't think we were capable of supporting a DHH child.

When our son, Ayo, first came into our care he was two years old and hardly spoke at all. We weren't initially concerned because he was learning a new language, attaching to new caregivers and healing from early trauma, but when he was still hardly speaking after a few months with us, we started to wonder if there was more going on.

There were a few indicators in those early months that he may not be able to hear, but we had no way of knowing for sure. Had we been in Canada, we would have easily had a hearing test, but we were stuck in Africa for almost a year awaiting approval from Canadian immigration to be able to bring him home. The longer we were overseas the more concerned we were getting about his ability to speak and hear, but there was virtually nothing we could do.

When we finally got home to Canada, Ayo was three years old and the handful of words he used to communicate were barely understood. We were finally able to

have his hearing tested and it was quickly confirmed that he had moderate to severe hearing loss in both ears due to perforated ear drums from chronic, untreated infections.

He was first fitted for a BAHA softband, which this DHH rookie quickly learned was a soft headband with a bone anchored hearing aid attached that sat against the bone behind his ear. The reason he was given a BAHA (bone anchored hearing aid) instead of the more common BTE (behind the ear) hearing aids was because he had what the ENT described as drainage, and what I described as "goopy discharge seeping from his ears." We didn't want to put a hearing aid inside his ear because plugging the canal would create a dark, moist environment for the infection to thrive.



After he received his BAHA it was very clear that he could hear much better. He started noticing birds making noises and sirens passing by the house, and most exciting to us, he was far more attentive and engaged with what was going on around him. However, even though his access to sound improved with the hearing aid, his speech still didn't improve much. He was still very hard to understand and we decided that even with speech-language therapy, it would be best for the whole family to also learn ASL, even if it was just to give Ayo another tool to communicate.

After about 10 months with his BAHA we were able to get his ear infections under control and he received approval to switch to

FAMILY FEATURE

The Morans *continued*

BTE hearing aids. At first I was a little concerned that he wouldn't have the same access to sound because of his ear drum perforations, but the BTE hearing aids have been working just as well, if not better.

It's been a really easy switch and he has loved being able to choose a new mold colour every few months as his ears grow!

Over the past year we've been attending weekly speech-language therapy over zoom, practicing our speech homework and learning ASL online. It's become our new normal, but it can also feel like a lot. Ayo also has some medical needs aside from his hearing loss, and sometimes balancing all the appointments (speech-language therapy, doctors visits, ASL lessons, audiology appointments, assessments, PEER classes) feels overwhelming.



There are seasons we get tired of having to be at everything, but we keep showing up because we want to set Ayo up for success the best we can. We want to learn, we want him to be confident in his communication, and we want to know that we did everything we could, even when it's hard.

So, today I'll sit next to him for speech-language therapy, tomorrow we'll keep practicing his tongue placement so he can get that "g" sound, and the next day we'll watch our ASL videos, because that's a big part of life with a child who is DHH; And even though it's "not what I signed up for," I wouldn't trade it for the world. With Ayo in our lives we've learned more than speech-language therapy strategies and ASL. We have literally learned how to experience the world differently as we've opened our lives to different ways of communication, and I can't thank him enough for that.

***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!**



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YOU AND YOUR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING CHILD

Mom's Creativity Keeps Housebound Hands Happy

This little 2½ year old client who has bilateral microtia/atresia lives in the Northern Interior and loves to keep busy. Although the outdoors is his favourite play space, it is hard to do in sub-zero temperatures! Since the pandemic, his family has been searching for things to do to keep him (and his little sister) active and engaged, as they are unable to take part in community-based play groups during this time. As such, his mother has resorted to some home-made sensory activities to help capture his interest and attention. Sensory activities are those that encourage children to learn while engaging their senses; these ones focus on touch and tactile input through different textures.

If you'd like to try this at home, here are the ingredients you'll need.

Coloured dry pasta

- Divide pasta into zip lock bags
- Add different food colouring to each bag
- Shake and lay them out to dry over night



Confetti moon sand

- 4 cups flour; 1 cup baby oil - mix
- Add food colouring
- Hide little plastic 'doodads' in it to dig out

Moon dough

- 1 cup cornstarch
- ½ cup conditioner – mix together
- Add food colouring - knead in



If you're interested in learning more about sensory play activities, ask your Early Interventionist.

GREAT GRADS ...WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Scott Mallinson is Going to Change the World

This is what Scott said in his first blog post, and he's already started to change the world! Scott is a high school student with Deafblindness, which makes him keenly aware of many things that others may take for granted. Because of this, Scott took it upon himself to let the world know what it's like from his perspective.

Scott is now 17 years old, and in addition to his informative [blog](#), he published a book last year! *A Bee's Journey* is a children's book specifically designed in [hyperlegible font](#) with large type against a white background. The sturdy cover and pages make for easy manageability and the illustrations are bright and simple. Rachel Gsoponer, Scott's friend since childhood, provided the illustrations.



Scott and his family attended the BCFHRC during his preschool years. Many of our team members had the pleasure of working with his family and partnered with his community service providers. One of our specialized staff members whom worked with Scott was Dyan Spear, an Early Interventionist/TDHH. Dyan's background also includes training as an Intervener for individuals who are deafblind. Dyan was fortunate to recently reconnect with Scott and his family and get caught up on life through his school years. Scott and his mother, Shelley, were invited to share their individual stories with a group of our parents during an evening Kindergarten transition workshop in November on *Considerations for D/HH Children with Disabilities*. Scott is a strong advocate for human rights and disability activists. Note: Scott has advised on the renaming of this workshop to including the term "Disability" instead of "Special Needs".

Scott is the epitome of a Great Grad, keeping in touch and sharing his story with families who can benefit from his experience. We love to learn what our former preschoolers are up to in their adult lives. Maintaining a connection with past families is important to us! If you'd like to be our next Great Grad, please contact our Centre.



Dyan Spear, left, with Scott and his parents, Chris and Shelley at the BC Family Hearing Resource Centre

BCFHRC is proud of our partnership with the staff from the [Canadian Deafblind Association of BC](#)

A Letter from our Executive Director

Dear BCFHRS families and community partners,

It is surreal that we're in the third wave of the COVID pandemic. Coping, adapting and implementing new ways seems to be the norm for most individuals and families. Our focus will be to continue to prioritize safety of our staff and the children and families we serve.

As we begin to plan for the rest of this year, we will continue with the following services:

- On-line sessions, services and meetings for families and community partners will be a priority.
- On-line group services, classes and workshops will continue.
- Outreach travel to communities will be suspended until May 31st, 2021.
- Opportunities to provide in-person sessions will be considered, where it is safe to do so and by following all BCFHRS safety protocols.

Stay safe and healthy. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions or concerns,

Sincerely,

Dr. Noreen R. Simmons
Executive Director

OVER 35 YEARS OF MAKING A DIFFERENCE

In Appreciation of our Supporters

Since February 1st, 2021 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.



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

- Rotary Club of Vancouver Hearing Foundation



Bronze Star Donors (\$500 - \$9,999)

- Elks & Royal Purple Fund for Children
- Properties Plus Limited
- Provincial Employees Community Fund



Thank you to the following donors who have chosen to support us through regular, ongoing gifts:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
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Bright Star Donors (\$1 - \$499)

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|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Black, Emily | • Lee, Crystal | • Penticton Royal Purple |
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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

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

BCFHRS Outreach Services: Who? What? Where?



The BC Family Hearing Resource Society provides services to families throughout the province of British Columbia and the Yukon Territory.

For many years, Dyan Spear, Early Interventionist & Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, has been the consultant for the Okanagan region of BC. Recently, Carolyn Hawrish, Early Interventionist & Listening and Spoken Language Specialist, has taken over this region in addition to the Thompson region and the Yukon Territory.

If you're wondering who provides outreach services in a specific region of the province, see below for information of our staff and their regions and the services offered.

Early Interventionists

- Dyan Spear: Vancouver Island South, Central, North, & Sunshine Coast
- Teresa Kazemir: Vancouver Island North - Port Hardy and nearby areas
- Stephanie Macaro: Vancouver Island West - Port Alberni and nearby areas and East Kootenay
- Valerie Marshall: West Kootenay
- Carolyn Hawrish: Thompson and Okanagan & Yukon Territory
- Alex Lay: North - Prince George and nearby areas
- Charmaine Francis: North - Williams Lake and nearby areas
- Emily Black: North Coast

Throughout British Columbia and the Yukon

Deaf Support Staff

- Karen Jackson
- Suzie Fairweather
- Levi Traxler

Family Support Parents

- Cathy Luther
- Jen Gow

With COVID restrictions pushing all of our services online, we are pleased to see families across BC have participated in our programs including:

- Bouncy Babies Group (weekly)
- ASL weekly instruction with one of our three Deaf Support Staff
- ASL monthly events with Karen and Levi, Deaf Early Childhood Educators
- Foundations for Families in Nov 2020 and Feb 2021
- PEER Kindergarten Transition sessions

REACHING OUT TO COMMUNITY

Foundations Workshops



The Foundations for Families and Professionals workshop series has wrapped up for this school year. Workshops were provided in Fall 2020 and February/March 2021.

We are so pleased that attendance has remained strong despite the continued restrictions of online-only presentations.

If you would like more information on Foundations Workshops, please visit our [website](#).

Valerie Marshall, SLP, presents the Foundations Workshop from the Boardroom at the main Surrey Centre.

University Partnerships

by Charmaine Francis, SLP

As you may know, BC Family Hearing has developed strong relationships with our University partners over the years. The Society often hosts student practicum placements, and in the past have supported students in Deaf Education, Speech-Language Pathology, Audiology and Social Work from both the University of BC (UBC) and the University of Alberta. We also regularly invite representatives from the UBC Faculty of Education to participate in our annual 4-day PEER panel for parents. What you may not know is that our staff are often invited as guest speakers in these programs.

In November 2020, Cathy Luther and Jen Gow (Family Support Parents) took part in a Parent Panel for UBC Audiology students and in December, Carolyn Hawrish and Charmaine Francis (Early Interventionists) took part in a Pediatric Panel with this same group of students. In February 2021, Levi Traxler (Sign Language Consultant) presented to the UBC Audiology class as well, sharing his experience growing up Deaf, and teaching some introductory ASL to the class. In recent years, Zara Gauthier and Charmaine Francis (Early Interventionists) have been guest lecturers in UBC Speech-Language Pathology courses.

Additionally, our team is involved in University research collaborations. Our research team (Dr. Jen Gow, Carolyn Hawrish, Teresa Kazemir, Valerie Marshall and Dr. Noreen Simmons) is currently collaborating with Dr. Susan Small (UBC Audiology program) on a research project entitled, "Early information and clear recommendations to parent's influence BAHS use for young children with microtia/atresia."

Thank you to our University partners for your ongoing collaboration with our Society!

REACHING OUT TO COMMUNITY

Deaf Mentor Program Training



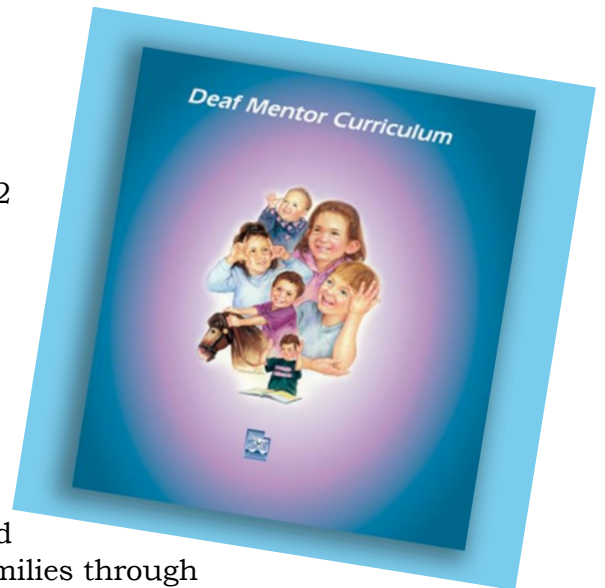
After ten years since the last training, and two postponements due to COVID 19, we were starting to wonder if this training would ever happen! Thankfully, Zoom made it possible.

BCFHRS successfully hosted the Deaf Mentor training. It was well attended by 10 Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HH) staff; 5 from the Island Deaf and Hard of Hearing Centre, 2 from Deaf Children's Society of BC and three from BCFHRC.

A team of Deaf/HH presenters from Ski-Hi included Dr. Paula Pittman, Jodee Crace, Stacy Abrams and Danelle Gournaris. This team has over 60 years of combined experience in Early Intervention.

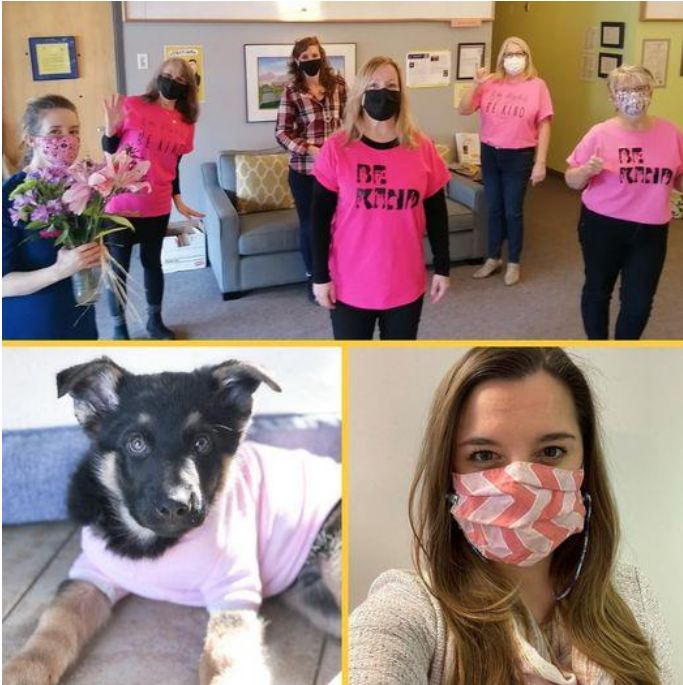
The Deaf Mentor Program is an evidence-based, family-centered and proven educational program that was created and provided by the team. Deaf Mentors can work with families through Early Visual Communication and ASL instruction. With strong and well-trained language models, families can communicate with their deaf child throughout daily routines and activities that are provided by the Deaf Mentor. Families will learn about Deaf Culture, local Deaf community and the experiences of the Deaf Mentor.

BCFHRC staff members, Karen Jackson, ECE, Levi Traxler, ECE and Suzie Fairweather, SLC said, "We had an amazing five days of getting to know each other, learn among us about being a Deaf Mentor and we can't wait to share this with our BCF Families for days to come!"



BITS & PIECES

Pink Shirt Day



Pink Shirt Day, also known as anti-Bullying Day, is a day when people wear a pink shirt to stand against bullying. It is a reminder for all of us to be kind, and to end social injustice.

It originated in Canada, and is now celebrated on various dates around the world. In Canada, it is celebrated on the last Wednesday of February.

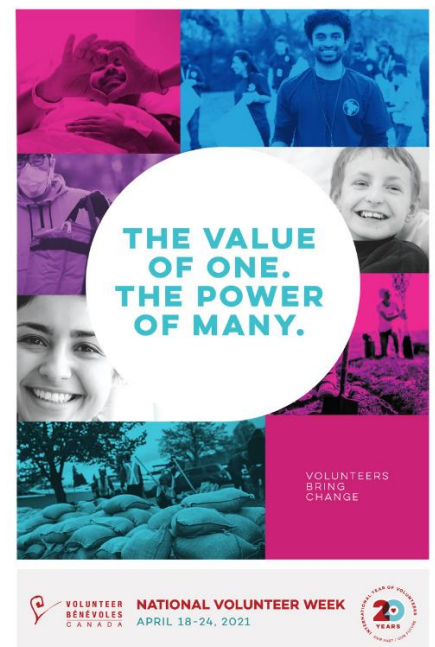
International Day of Pink is also celebrated on a different day.

Staff members, and a very cute pup wear pink in support of anti-bullying

National Volunteer Week April 18 – 24, 2021

The theme for National Volunteer Week 2021, *The Value of One. The Power of Many.* celebrates 20 years since [The International Year of Volunteers](#) in 2001.



With kindness and commitment, volunteers make the world a better place. We recognize the value of caring and compassion that volunteers give of themselves and salute them now and always. Thank you!



SIGN LANGUAGE

Signs for Shopping

featuring Levi Traxler

		
<p>Shopping Cart</p>	<p>List</p>	<p>Buy</p>
		
<p>Pay</p>	<p>Search</p>	<p>Bag</p>
		
<p>Price</p>	<p>Help</p>	<p>Cashier</p>
		
<p>Plan/Organize</p>	<p>Aisle</p>	<p>Go</p>

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

Calendar

2021

April

- 2 **Good Friday – All Centres Closed**
- 5 **Easter Monday – All Centres Closed**
- 6 PEER Session #7 7pm (online)
- 12 Bouncy Babies 10am (online)
- 19 Bouncy Babies 10am (online)
- 22 – 25 PEER 4-Day Workshop (online)
- 29 Monthly ASL Session #4 (online) 7:30

May

- 3 Bouncy Babies 10am (online)
- 10 Bouncy Babies 10am (online)
- 10 to July 5 Online ASL Classes (Beginner)
- 12 to June 30 Online ASL Classes (Intermediate)
- 12-13 ASL EST Training
- 17 Bouncy Babies 10am (online)
- 24 **Victoria Day – All Centres Closed**
- 27 Monthly ASL Session #5 (online) 7:30
- 31 Bouncy Babies 10am (online)

June

- 7 Bouncy Babies 10am (online)
- 14 Bouncy Babies 10am (online)
- 21 Bouncy Babies 10am (online)
- 24 Monthly ASL Session #6 (online) 7:30

July

- 1 **Happy Canada Day 🇨🇦 All Centres Closed**
- 5 Bouncy Babies 10am (online)
- 19 Bouncy Babies 10am (online)

August

- 1 **BC Day 🇨🇦 All Centres Closed**

Staff Visits to Communities in BC and Yukon!

Due to COVID – 19, travel to various communities across BC has been temporarily suspended until May 31, 2021. 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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