



MINNESOTA
HANDS &
VOICES™

FOCUS

supporting families with children who are deaf and hard of hearing

Positive Impact of Hands & Voices Headquarters to Our MNH&V Chapter

Minnesota Hands & Voices (MNH&V) is just one Chapter of a larger organization Hands & Voices. H&V Headquarters (H&V HQ), first founded in Colorado, has 42 authorized and 3 provisional Chapters throughout the US and Canada, also a Chapter in Kenya and a provisional Chapter in Italy. This provides H&V a wide reaching network of families, professionals, state and federal technical support resources, institutions of higher education, service providers, and adult members who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH). Each Chapter helps each other by sharing ideas and advice, collaborating on projects, and passing on information of interest all with a single focus. An excerpt from the H&V HQ website words it this way: *From the bottom up and the top down, H&V is working on a local and national level to achieve one goal: to improve educational and social outcomes for children who are DHH.*

“As the Executive Director of H&V HQ, I have the honor and privilege of participating in a movement that has gone beyond the wildest dreams of those of us parents and professionals that have been here to see the explosion of this organization beyond Colorado to the rest of the US, Canada, and beyond,” said Janet DesGeorges, Executive Director, H&V HQ.

MNH&V Parent Guides receive specialized training directly from H&V HQ. They developed a leveled Guide Recognition program for Parent Guides to progress

through their learning. H&V HQ organizes quarterly chapter meetings, Guide by Your Side (GBYS) meetings, along with an annual Leadership Conference. Also, H&V HQ has available online accessible webinars of basic courses for board and chapter development. In this way H&V HQ elevates the level of professionalism, service, and resources for all the H&V chapters including our MNH&V staff.

In the H&V organizational manual it states, “To advance our mission and vision, we believe that it is vital that we provide exceptional program and organizational resources at the community level. To achieve this, H&V HQ helps establish programs that become deeply rooted where Chapters exist. H&V supports these Chapters and holds them accountable as representatives of the H&V name, mission, and vision. Likewise, the Chapters support and hold H&V HQ accountable as it builds support for a committed movement of families, professionals, and adults who are DHH engaged in the improvement of supports and services for children who are DHH, their families, and the professionals who serve them.”

Families with children who are DHH can subscribe to publications generated by H&V HQ such as the H&V Communicator newsletter, distributed quarterly and the H&V eNews, published six times a year. *The Book of Choice*, made possible by H&V HQ is given to Minnesota families with a newly identified child who is DHH. This

book is an inspiring compilation of stories written by parents to parents. The ASTra guidebook, *The Educational Advocacy For Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing*, created by H&V HQ, is an essential reference for families, advocates, and professionals. H&V HQ website has an excellent search function for articles on education, legal rights, parenting, basically any topic relevant to parents with children who are DHH. For up to the minute news H&V HQ blog, Facebook, and Twitter accounts cover issues or events of interest to parents.

H&V HQ is involved in initiatives such as newborn hearing screening and the O.U.R. (Observing, Understanding, and Responding) Project, to prevent child abuse and neglect of children who are DHH. They have created safety checklists, developed and posted YouTube videos, added safety statements to education documents, and they are developing maltreatment prevention webinars for CEC & ASHA all to better protect all children who are DHH.

Lisa Kovacs, H&V Director of Programs adds, “At H&V HQ, we keep the Chapters as a priority when developing our strategic plan to ensure that the priorities we have are in line with what the Chapters need from us. We want to ensure that the work we do at H&V HQ either directly or indirectly through our Chapter’s improves outcomes of children who are DHH and their families.”

Find H&V HQ at www.handsandvoices.org



MNH&V High Five Award is an opportunity to publicly thank a teacher or professional or someone who does good work on behalf of children who are DHH. Nominate a parent, teacher, interpreter, provider, advocate, role model who is DHH, child who is DHH —anyone who inspires you!

Now through July 1st MNH&V is accepting nominations. To make a nomination simple reply to the questions below in 200 words or less:

- 1) What has the nominee done above and beyond what is typical for their role or profession?
- 2) How has this individual made an impact on a child and/or the community? Please include at least one specific example of their service.

Email your response and the nominee's name to mnhv@lifetrack-mn.org. Please include "High Five Award" in the subject line. One nomination per family and/or individual per year.

MNH&V forwards submissions to the Advisory Board to select one or more winners to be announced at the metro MNH&V Annual Family Picnic on August 6th, 2015. Separate arrangements will be made for greater Minnesota High Five Award recipients.

MNH&V EVENTS

July 15th, Wednesday
1:00 to 2:30 pm
SW Playgroup (Literacy)
Sibley Park, Mankato

July 15th Wednesday
5:00 to 7:00 pm
Popsicles in the Park
Lewis Park, Sauk Center

July 25th, Saturday
11:00 am to 3:00 pm
Grill N' Chill
Thief River Falls

July 29th, Wednesday
3:00 to 5:00 pm
MNH&V Ice Cream Social
Gooseberry Park, Moorhead

August 4th, Tuesday
5:00 to 8:00 pm
Family Picnic
Sibley Park, Mankato

August 6th, Thursday
5:00 to 8:30 pm
2015 Annual Metro Family Picnic
Como Park Pavillion

August 11th, Tuesday
5:00 to 7:00 pm
Popsicles in the Park
Riverside Park, St. Cloud

August 13th, Thursday
1:00 to 2:30 pm
SW Playgroup (Literacy)
Sibley Park, Mankato

September 27th, Sunday, 3:00 to 4:30 pm
Speaker, Audiologist Kristin Gravel and DHHS, technology information available.
Battle Creek Recreation Center, St. Paul

For the most up to date list of MNH&V events throughout Minnesota and in the metro area visit our website at: <https://www.mnhandsandvoices.org/news-events/current-news-events.aspx>

JOB OPENINGS

Cultural Parent Guides

MNH&V is looking for candidates for two Parent Guide positions. Parent Guides provide emotional support, unbiased information, and referral resources to families with children who are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing. They connect parents to other parents and to local community resources. Also, they plan and implement family support activities. Eager to support other parents like themselves with a child who is deaf or hard of hearing and represent MNH&V in the community.

Hours are flexible,
10 hours a week.

NE African Communities and Spanish-Speaking Communities

Candidates should be fluent in both, English and the language/s used in the cultural community. Responsible for developing culturally specific programs, investigating, securing, sustaining, and reporting happenings related to these activities. The position is based in St. Paul, but serves families throughout all of Minnesota.

For more information or to apply online go to www.lifetrack-mn.org/about/careers or email resume to HR@lifetrack-mn.org

In Your Corner



Guided By China

by Candace Lindow-Davies

As Board President of Hands & Voices (H&V) Headquarters, I was honored to represent H&V in China through a Hear the World Foundation Grant. Traveling with me were U.S. educators and audiologists who have the common goal of sharing strategies on how to foster language development in children who are deaf and hard of hearing. Dr. Christine Yoshinaga-Itano, Audiologist, Teacher, and Researcher, periodically leads a group in conjunction with Soaring Hope Mission. This year, our team of US, Chinese and Taiwanese professionals traveled to Nanjing for a conference with China's Newborn Screening Committee and then on to Yinchuan to directly work with 150 children, parents and staff in a regional Rehab Center. There, our team was able to teach and provide audiological assessment; hearing aid fittings and cochlear implant re-mappings, and many received hearing aids, graciously donated by Phonak.

Meanwhile, I presented to a hundred parents and educators about the importance of parent-to-parent support and contact with adult role models who are deaf and hard of hearing. I also conducted 5 smaller parent groups, fielding an incredible array of questions, for requests for improved communication to better parenting strategies. The parents poured out their hopes and fears about their children, and I found myself immediately connected to them, and quite often, emotional.

As a parent of a young adult who is deaf, my role on this trip was intended to be that of mentor and counsel, based on my personal and work experiences. At H&V, we use the term "Guide By Your Side" to



Guided By China, continued on page 4

Candace Lindow-Davies, representing H&V Headquarters in China, find more at <http://guidedbychina.tumblr.com/>.

Guided By China, continued from page 3

refer to our trained Parent Guides who help families navigate next steps. In China, however, I learned far more than I could ever impart. In the end, it was I who was “Guided By China.”

It was hard to leave that beautiful country. I already miss the hugs and kisses from the children, hoping they are all right, wishing them language, learning, and a deeper understanding of the world. I miss the parents... their devotion to their children, their need for better communication, their worries about their future. I miss the wonderful teachers and professionals and how committed they are to their field. I miss my team members, who are some of the most giving and dedicated individuals I have ever worked with.

But for all that I feel I’m missing or without, I have gained so much more. Knowledge, experience, perspective, understanding, and I hope, life-long friends. I’ve already connected with several parents, teachers and colleagues on WeChat, a “Facebook” equivalent in Asia. I’m receiving photos, thank you’s and updates. They have touched my heart, and a part of me will always be with them.

So when I started out, I expected this to be a journey on many levels. And it most certainly has been. But the journey of self-discovery will be the most lasting. I have brought back new skills and new experiences that I will infuse into my work in the states. I have always been proud of the pioneering work of H&V. But I have never been so proud as I am now. Our work is deep and powerful... and reaches across the globe, pulling parents together and raising the bar for all children. What an honor to be in this field. And for me, it all started with the birth of my beautiful son and learning that he is deaf. What an incredible journey.

See more photos on Tumblr at:
<http://guidedbychina.tumblr.com/>

H&V ASTra Project

Per aspera ad astra is a Latin phrase meaning “through hardships to the stars”. This phrase is at the heart of the Hands & Voices Advocacy and Support Training (ASTra) Project.

The guidebook, *Educational Advocacy For Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing*, written by Cheryl DeConde Johnson, EdD, Leanne Seaver, MA, and Janet DesGeorges, is an essential tool for families, advocates, and professionals who support the education of children who are DHH. The Hands & Voices (H&V) website conveniently includes links to articles, checklists, and forms that are referenced in the guidebook, as well as, how to order the guidebook for yourself to own.

Last year MNH&V hosted the first-ever H&V ASTra event specifically addressing the educational concerns parents with children who are DHH have. National experts from H&V headquarters helped parents develop their advocacy skills and increased their confidence.

To gain access to the online videos of the H&V ASTra event or to request an ASTra guidebook (available free only to parents of a child who is DHH, while supplies last) please contact the MNH&V Parent Guide in your area or call 866-346-4543 or email MNHV@lifetrack-mn.org.

To order the ASTra guidebook, *Educational Advocacy For Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing*, and find links to articles, checklists, and forms go to www.handsandvoices.org/astra/index.html

I am MNH&V



Meet MNH&V Adult Role Model, Marisa Bocanegra

Marisa Bocanegra grew up in Minnesota, but was born in Cundinamarca Bogota Colombia, South America. She was first identified with a mild hearing loss. Over the course of four years her hearing rapidly declined. In 2001, she was re-identified with a profound bilateral sensorineural hearing loss.

Marisa describes herself as a proud Deaf woman, mom, friend, community leader, and advocate. She has five children, a fiancée, and after recently finding her birth mother, 97 new relatives. Marisa communicates using American Sign Language, as well as spoken and written English, plus basic-level Spanish.

For 9 years, Marisa has been a riding instructor for RideAbility & Horses for Heroes, a nonprofit organization for children and adults with disabilities and their families. She serves on the board of directors and the past 3 years as vice president. She sponsors two horses, plus four cats, a dog, and a bearded dragon.

Professionally Marisa is a freelance Deaf/Blind Interpreter subcontracted with Middle English Interpreting Services. Also, a Deaf Mentor for Lifetrack’s Deaf Mentor Family Program and she teaches ASL for Chisago Community Education.

Thanks for your contribution!

We rely on your generous support to build better lives for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Make a tax-deductible donation today.

DONATE



The View from Greater Minnesota



Popsicles in the Park in Buffalo, MN, Freddy pointed to the sky at the sound of birds and said, "Peep, peep!"



Enjoying his MNH&V welcome blanket and his toy car.

Grill N' Chill Upper North West MNH&V

Saturday, July 25, 11:00 am to 3:00 pm
Hartz Park, Thief River Falls
Hwy 32S & Oakland Park Road

Schedule Of Events

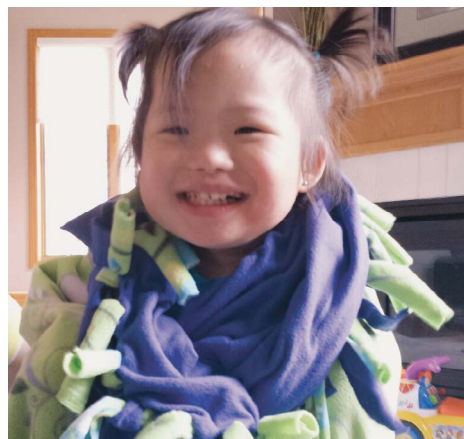
11:00 to 11:30 Registration
11:30 to 12:30 Potluck Lunch
(meat for grilling & beverages provided)
12:30 to 1:30 DHH Talk/Activity
1:30 to 2:45 Visit Englestad Pioneer Village
2:45 to 3:00 Farewell

Enter to Win!

Hotel room & water park wrist bands for a party of 6 from Seven Clans in Thief River, drawing to be held at the event.

RSVP and/or request accommodations

before noon on Monday, July 18th by calling Leslie Carnegie-Hilde at 866-587-4189.

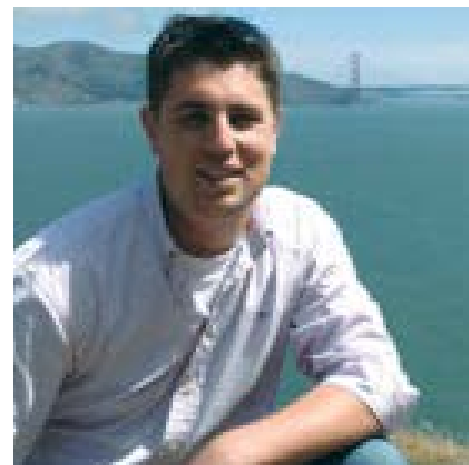


Emi wrapped in her welcome blanket, adopted from China just 8 months ago.



Mankato area MNH&V parent group made welcome blankets with love for newly identified children who are DHH.

I am MNH&V



Meet MNH&V Adult Role Model, Jonathon Hatch

Jonathon was born, raised, and now lives in Minneapolis, MN. At the age of 22 months old he was identified as hard of hearing. He uses a hearing aid, a cochlear implant, and occasionally attends speech therapy just to work on his English speaking skills.

Jonathon attended a mainstream high school accessing classroom instruction through an ASL Interpreter and the support of a teacher for students who are DHH. He was active in sports, clubs, and band. Later, he attended college in Colorado to pursue a degree in Communications/Marketing and indulge his love of downhill skiing.

Currently, Jonathon serves on the Board of Directors at Lifetrack, which supports MNH&V. He is a passionate volunteer at an oral school for students who are DHH. He is gainfully employed with Agency of Guardian Life Insurance.

Jonathon writes, "I am excited to be a MNH&V Adult Role Model and share my story. Seeing miracles happen before my own two eyes is truly a rewarding experience. The people that I have met on my life journey have inspired me in different ways and I look forward to meeting you!"

Back-to-School Checklist Starter for Parents with Children who are DHH

Parents with a child who is deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) have additional considerations before their child heads back to school in the fall. The more parents can get done this summer to prepare their child for the school year the better they can focus on learning.

Health and Wellness

Schedule annual appointments far in advanced during summer break or for after-school to minimize disruptions in your child's learning.

Well-care Visit

A well-care visit establishes a baseline of your child's general health with a doctor you can trust. Many children who are DHH have ongoing health issues that can be noted as part of the child's baseline health. Should your child become ill, the well-care notes along with a doctor who is familiar with your child can streamline a diagnosis for any new concerns.

Update Immunizations

Remember to ask for a copy of your child's immunization records. This saves time filling out health forms for fieldtrips, activities, emergency health cards, etc.

Medication Check

If your child is on medications have a doctor double-check the dose for their age, weight, effectiveness, etc. Extra time for your child to adjust to changes in medications would be helpful before school starts. Make sure your child's current prescription is filled and ready before school starts.

Physical Paperwork

Sports, camps, summer school, etc. often require health forms signed by a doctor. Bringing the forms to their appointment will save time. Doctors can sign forms any time, but it can take extra time to process.

Visit the Dentist and/or Orthodontist

Schedule appointments sooner than later, because the best times fill up fast.

Vision Check

Children who are DHH need to have optimal vision. An annual eye exam is recommended whether your child wears corrective eyewear or not. If your child has glasses, in addition to checking the lens prescription, check for stretches that can obscure their vision. Make sure their frames are the right size with no pressure points and adjusted to fit properly.

Audiologist Visit

Before school starts have your audiologist check the working order your child's equipment, make sure the program is set for optimal sound and amplification. If possible create a separate program for any auxiliary equipment used at school. Your audiologist can answer any questions and make sure you and your child understand how to change programs, batteries and general care of the equipment. Remember to have for your child's old CI processors and hearing aids programmed as up-to-date as possible. Old equipment is a viable back-up plan should something happen to their newer equipment.

TIP: Take notes for your school audiologist or bring their contact information to give to your general audiologist. You'll need to sign a HIPAA form, but then the two can work together on optimizing sound in different learning environments.

Review Insurance and Warranties

Depending on your child's age, maturity, and many other variables it can be unsettling to send them to school with expensive equipment. Reduce anxiety by having a plan should something happen to their equipment. Most homeowner insurance does not cover this equipment. Talk to your audiologist, check product warranties and contact your healthcare customer service to figure out the most economical insurance coverage available.

At Home

Find a safe and accessible place to charge batteries and keep equipment.

- Label everything going to school.
- Set up a distraction-free place to study and keep extra school supplies.
- Have your child memorize their home address and important phone numbers to reach their parents if need be.
- Update your contact list to include the bus service, IEP manager, DHH and general ed teacher/s, school nurse, attendance line, food service, etc.
- Check the school website for important dates: parent/teacher conferences, school events, and a list of days school is not in session.

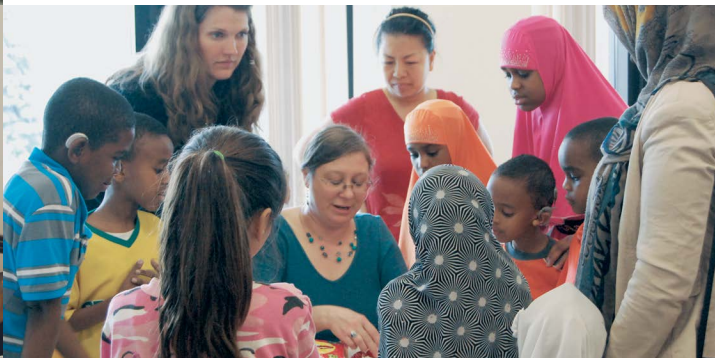
At School

- Check for a VISUAL alert system and review safety plans with your child.
- Check tech devices for captioning capabilities; computers, televisions, etc.
- See the school nurse if your child has severe allergies or takes medications during the school day.
- Visit the school audiologist to touch base about your child's equipment and the auxiliary equipment used at school.
- Send extra CI or hearing aid batteries to use for back-up if needed.
- Check your child's classroom for ways to best accommodate their access to language in each environment.
- Together with your IEP team review your child's accommodation needs with school administrators and, if appropriate, with fellow students.
- If your child's accommodations includes interpreters, transliterators or a captionists make sure there is a back-up plan for unexpected absences.

For parents of a child who is DHH there is no one back-to-school checklist that covers personal choices and their child's unique situation. Develop your own checklist you can add to over time. You'll have peace of mind and more time for summer fun!

MNH&V Raising Readers Event

Families who speak a language other than English at home were invited to a multicultural literacy event on May 16th. Together, families listened to *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* read and cued in English, and translated in ASL, Somali, and Spanish. Then the children made crafts and had nutritious snacks related to the story while parents met with two teachers of the DHH and English Language Learners to learn strategies to increase their child's interest and readiness for reading.



Lifetrack
709 University Ave. W.
St. Paul, MN 55104-4804



MINNESOTA
HANDS &
VOICES™

FOCUS

supporting families
with children
who are deaf and
hard of hearing

Minnesota Hands & Voices is a program of Lifetrack

FOCUS Newsletter • July-August 2015



Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com/MNHandsandVoices>



Twitter
<https://twitter.com/MNHandV>



Sign up for our weekly mass emails
<http://www.mnhandsandvoices.org/news-events/newsletter-signup.aspx>

Calling All You MNH&V Superheroes!
At the 2015 Annual MNH&V Metro Family Picnic let's celebrate all the adults who are DHH advocating for change, the parents who do whatever it takes for their child, and our amazing MNH&V kids! Kids who every day get out there, take chances, dare to be different, and bring us so much joy. Dust off your superhero costumes, don a cape, or just come as you are. Don't miss our celebration in honor of you, H&V's League of Heroes!

**FAMILY
PICNIC**

HANDS & VOICES LEAGUE OF HEROES SUPERPOWERS WITHIN



2015 Annual MNH&V Metro Family Picnic
for families with children who are DHH

Thursday, August 6th

5:00-8:30 pm (rain or shine)
Como Park Midway Pavilion

RSVP: Before Monday, July 27th