



MINNESOTA
HANDS &
VOICES™

FOCUS

supporting families with children who are deaf and hard of hearing

Congratulations to the MNH&V 2015 "High Five" Award Recipients

Congratulations to the 2015 MNH&V "High Five" Award recipients. This year five individuals were selected from the nominations submitted to receive the award. All nominations are reviewed by the MNH&V staff and selected by the MNH&V Advisory Board. Two of the award recipients were announced and presented a certificate at the Metro Family Picnic on August 6th, 2015 (pictured). The other three award recipients will be recognized at upcoming events in their communities. This year's "High Five" Award recipients, listed in alphabetical order, are Katie Barth, Barbara Friedman, Jennie Hasse, Anna Paulson, and Joe Rodekuhr. The MNH&V community appreciates all the award winners for their dedicated service.

The MNH&V "High Five" Award started as a way to publicly recognize individuals who are doing good work on behalf of children who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH). Past recipients represent a diverse group of parents, teachers, interpreters, medical providers, community advocates,



2015 MNH&V "High Five" award recipient Barb Friedman



volunteers, and adult and peer role models who are DHH.

"Ms Katie" has been an instrumental role model, teacher, and friend to the students who are DHH in Rochester MN," writes Emilee and John Scheid about "High Five" award winner, Katie Barth. They go on to describe how Katie, who is hard of hearing, uses her personal experience and wealth of knowledge in all aspects of her work with students and their families. "She has a keen eye for subtle observations in the classroom and can actively manage a large variety of students who are DHH and their needs." In addition Katie promotes and supports parent involvement. Emilee and John Scheid add, "Education to the parents beyond the classroom has been excellent. Parents have often felt that her ideas are innovative, proactive, and incorporate students and parent wishes without any reservation."

For 30 years Barbara Friedman has been

an audiologist and she continues to see over 1000 patients each year at the University of Minnesota Medical Center/ Masonic Children's Hospital. Fellow audiologist, Jessica L. Spratt, who worked with Barbara over the past year wrote, "Even with this large case load, she always manages to make each patient feel like they are her only one." Jessica credits Barbara's perseverance early on for the well-known and respected pediatric cochlear implant program that now exists at the University of Minnesota. Jessica adds, "She has devoted her career to ensuring that patients achieve their full potential with whatever technology or communication method families choose."



2015 MNH&V "High Five" award recipient Anna Paulson

Jennie Hasse, along with her husband Joe, have two children ages 5 & 2 with bilateral, sensorineural hearing loss. Referring to their children's education Joe writes, "Jennie works relentlessly to ensure they receive the educational programming needed to succeed. Working

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"High Five" Award Recipients continued from page 1.

closely with our school district to develop solid IEP's for our kids and makes sure they are challenged so they can reach their full potential." Jennie has reached out to support other families with children who are DHH and networked with professionals in the field to learn more. Joe continues, "Many new friendships have been made and she has fostered good relationships with very knowledgeable professionals outside of our school district. Jennie is just amazing and I could not be more proud of her and all she does for our kids."

Skip and Kathy Valusek nominated Anna Paulson to receive the "High Five" award for her work to add parents as attendees and participants to the annual education conference, which this year was titled, 2015 Collaborative Experience for Professionals and Parents. The conference, April 16th through the 19th, 2015, was divided into three sections. The first part was geared to professionals; the last part was specifically for parents, allowing for an overlap in the middle for both parents and professionals. Anna, Coordinator of The Commission of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans, worked in collaboration with MNH&V and other stakeholders to organize the conference. Skip and Kathy, parents of an older student who is DHH, appreciated the opportunity to communicate with their partners, the professionals, and giving their son a "voice" at the conference. Skip and Kathy wrote, "It was a marvelous experience, because of Anna's efforts. Following the conference, we are working with our son to promote his self-advocacy at school and in extra-curricular activities."

Joe Rodekuhr was hired at Willow Creek Middle School, Rochester, MN, as a teacher for students who are DHH when Kay Wiegert's son was just starting 7th grade. Before meeting Joe, Kay was skeptical,

because as far as she knew Joe had no formal training in DHH education. It did not take long for Kay to have a change of heart. "I could see Joe's enthusiasm when talking about my son's progress and how eager he was to learn all he could about this very specialized area," wrote Kay. At one point Kay's son had major technical issues with his hearing aids. She was frustrated trying to explain the issues to the sales representative. Kay adds, "Joe began documenting everything he observed as well as what my son told him. In the end, Joe's documentation helped convince the hearing aid sales rep that there was in fact major issues with his aids and gave my son brand new hearing aids!" Joe is currently studying DHH Education at the University of Minnesota, commuting from Rochester to the Twin Cities to attend night classes after his day of teaching at the middle school.

Parents or care providers consider nominating someone for a MNH&V "High Five" Award in 2016. Nominations will be accepted from May 1st to July 1st, 2016. To nominate someone, we ask for a 200 word or less explanation of 1) what the nominee has done above and beyond what is typical for their role and 2) how this individual has made an impact on a child and/or the community. At least one specific example is very helpful. To assist our Advisory Board we ask for only one nomination per family per year. Email your nomination to mnhv@lifetrack-mn.org and include in the subject line "High Five Award". MNH&V staff will compile and forward the submissions to our Advisory Board who will select the winners. Metro area winners will be announced at our next Annual Metro Family Picnic. Winners from outside the metro area, therefore not attending the metro picnic, a special recognition will take place in their community.



Give a hand to Unitron, a Minnesota-based hearing aid manufacturer, for contributing to the success of our 2015 Metro Family Picnic by funding both the interpreters and the entertainment. Thank you for supporting our mission at Minnesota Hands & Voices.



If I Need Help

If your child is unable to communicate or has a medical condition *If I Need Help* service can give you peace of mind. *If I Need Help* is a customizable database accessible through a QR code printed on wearable products such as patches, pins, clips, cards, shoe tags, t-shirts, and more.

The QR code can be scanned with any smart phone or logged in to the *If I Need Help* website to access the child's public contact information.

Parents can add information in real time and have information password protected. In an emergency situation information can be emailed directly to first responders.

How *If I Need Help* works:

- Register for a free membership
- Create a public profile
- Have special person wear products with an imprinted of their code

For more information about *If I Need Help* <https://ifineedhelp.org>

2015 MNH&V Metro Family Picnic Photo Highlights



In Your Corner



Light intermittent rain did not stop MNH&V's families from coming to the annual Metro Family Picnic on August 6th, 2015, a total of 404 people attended! Many picnic attendees donned superhero costumes or at the very least a superhero t-shirt. Children had the opportunity to create superhero capes, play games for prizes, have caricature drawings of themselves, have their faces painted, apply temporary tattoos, and many other picnic favorites.

New this year was the theme of finding Superpowers Within and the amazing formation of the Hands & Voices' League of Heroes. The REAL LIFE SUPERHEROES, our adult role models, helped our kids recognize their own innate superpowers within and gave us living examples of what is possible for them. The adult role models passed out trading cards as a reminder of the superpowers within us all. Collect all ten trading cards at future MNH&V's events: Advocacy, Resiliency, Spirit, Adaptable, Resourceful, Empathy, Respect, Courage, Spark, and Creativity.

2015 MNH&V Metro Family Picnic Highlights

MNH&V is excited to start adding superhero adult role models to events throughout the state; bringing greater awareness to the impact adults who are DHH themselves can have on our children's lives. These adults have experiences that are powerful for our children to learn about, raising their self-esteem, and expanding our community of support. MNH&V is honored to incorporate staff from Lifetrack's Deaf Mentor Family Program and others so children can "see themselves" reflected back at them. I can just see their confidence grow by these interactions.

Another highlight of the evening was the arrival of Captain America, the Falcon, the Black Widow, Robin, Hawkeye, and Lifetrack's own, Supergirl, Lifetrack CEO, Trixie Golberg, and Superman, Doug Ruiz. These gracious volunteers from Minnesota Superheroes United were available for photo ops and our families were not shy.

A big thank you goes to our donors and sponsors, in particular, Unitron, for

funding both, the interpreters and the entertainment. Thank you to Dairy Queen for donating the delicious Dilly Bar deserts. Thank you to Children's Hospitals and Clinics of MN for donating prizes and for their group of volunteers. Thank you to the volunteers from Minnesota Lions Children's Hearing and ENT Clinic at University of Minnesota Masonic Children's Hospital. Also, thank you to all our other dedicated and recurring volunteers, ASL interpreting students, the staff at MNH&V, and MN Department of Health for their support of MNH&V and for coming to chronicle the magic of the event.

Mark your calendar for the 2016 MNH&V Metro Family Picnic on August 4th, 2016. Look for more updates about next year's picnic in future newsletters and sign up for our weekly emails, like us on Facebook, and follow us on Twitter.

www.mnhandsandvoices.org/news-events/newsletter-signup.aspx

www.facebook.com/MNHandsandVoices
 MNH&V Twitter, twitter.com/MNHandV

MDE Legislative Report of Students who are DHH MCA Test Scores

Fiscal Year 2015 report from the Minnesota Resource Center: Deaf/Hard of Hearing Advisory Committee summarizes the performance of students who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) and the Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS) as required by Minnesota Statutes section 125A.63. Every year the report outlines statistical data of all students

who are identified as DHH in the state. The report can be downloaded at the Minnesota Department of Education website at <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/EdExc/SpecEdClass/DisabCateg/HardHear/index.html>

The 2015 report provides a breakdown of the educational settings available to Minnesota students who are DHH and how many students are in each setting.

Federal Instructional Settings

Data collection is based on the percentage of time students who are DHH spend in the special education instructional setting. The settings are defined as follows:

Setting 1: Student is served in general education classes at least 80 percent of the day.

Setting 2: Student is served in general education classes at least 40-70 percent of the day.

Setting 3: Student is served in general education classes less than 40 percent of the day.

Settings 4-8: Student is served in a separate facility.

2013-2014 Special Education Federal Instructional Settings for DHH by Grade

Year	Grade	Setting 1	Setting 2	Setting 3	Setting 4-8	Total
13-14	K-2	81.2%	8.9%	4.0%	5.9%	100%
13-14	3-5	77.1%	13.0%	3.4%	6.6%	100%
13-14	6-8	70.8%	18.8%	3.0%	7.3%	100%
13-14	9-12	62.1%	17.4%	4.9%	15.7%	100%



Give a hand to **Minnesota Superheroes United**, a community organization, for bringing magic to our 2015 Metro Family Picnic. A special thank you to Captain America, the Falcon, the Black Widow, Robin, Hawkeye, and Lifetrack's own, Supergirl, Lifetrack CEO, Trixie Golberg, and Superman, Doug Ruiz.

Find **Minnesota Superheroes United** at www.facebook.com/mnsuperheroesunited

MNH&V EVENT

FREE Indoor Playdate and Discussion
Sunday, September 27, 3:00 to 4:30 pm
Battle Creek Recreation Center
75 South Winthrop Street, St. Paul

Would you like to know how to get the most from your child's clinical and educational audiologist? Audiologist Kristi Gravel, AuD.CCC-A, PASC, from Minnesota Lions Children's Hearing and ENT Clinic at University of Minnesota Masonic Children's Hospital, will share tips and ideas about how to maximize your child's use of technology and answer questions more in-depth than can be done in a regular office visit.

Please RSVP to Robin Coninx by email at RobinC@lifetrack-mn.org or call at 651-265-2334 or at our website: www.mnhandsandvoices.org.

Click on "Current News & Events" and let us know, 1. Your name, 2. Phone and email, 3. How many are coming, 4. If an Interpreter/Transliterator is needed

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 OPENING

Cultural Parent Guide

MNH&V is looking for candidates for a Parent Guide position. 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.

Spanish-Speaking Community

Candidates should be fluent in both, English and Spanish. 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

2015 Online Workshops

Teach children who are DHH to listen and talk with these live and interactive Smart Ears Online Workshops.

The BASICS

Learn the basic principles, concepts, and techniques to get you going right away!
Wednesday, October 7, 2015
 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, Reg Fee: \$79

GETTING STARTED

So the child's got his hearing aids/Cochlear Implant and is ready to go! Now what?
Tuesday, October 27, 2015
 11:00 am to 3:30 pm, Reg Fee: \$89

AUDITORY ACTIVITIES

How to plan a session, translating your goals into fun, auditory activities; see them in action!
Thursday, October 29, 2015
 11:00 am to 3:30 pm, Reg Fee: \$89

Developing SPEECH through AUDITION

Using listening and speech hierarchy, help achieve intelligible spoken language.
Tuesday, November 3, 2015
 11:00 am to 3:30 pm, Reg Fee: \$89

COCHLEAR IMPLANTS

How do you work with a child with cochlear implants? What's different?
Thursday, November 5, 2015
 11:00 am to 3:30 pm, Reg Fee: \$89

INTEGRATING ACADEMICS

A cross-curricular approach to ensure audition, language, and academics develop hand-in-hand
Tuesday, November 10, 2015
 11:00 am to 3:30 pm, Reg Fee: \$89

WORKING WITH BABIES

Working with Infants and toddlers (0-3) with hearing loss and their parents; a hard-to-find workshop!
Wednesday, November 18, 2015
 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, Reg Fee: \$129

For more information go to <http://smart-ears.com/workshops.html>

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



MNH&V Popsicles in the Park event in Sauk Centre, MN on July 8, 2015

VSA Minnesota presents the 2015 Arts Access Chautauqua

In honor of the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) VSA Minnesota is bringing the arts community together to celebrate artists with disabilities. Friday and Saturday, September 25 and 26, at the Cowles Center for Dance & Performing Arts, 528 Hennepin Avenue, Minneapolis, MN. This is a unique opportunity to reflect on how access to the arts has changed over the last 25 years.

Goals for the two-day event:

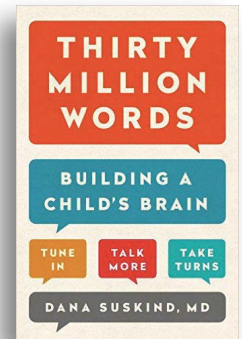
- Acknowledge the many successes in the Minnesota arts community
- Recognize people with disabilities in the Minnesota arts community
- Identify barriers for people with disabilities in the state arts community
- Clarify best practices for arts organizations to effectively serve people with disabilities
- Explore new opportunities to engage people with disabilities in the arts

For more information go to:
<http://vsamn.org/join-us-for-the-minnesota-arts-access-chautauqua/>.

Thirty Million Words: Building a Child's Brain

Dr. Dana Suskind, founder and director of the Thirty Million Words Initiative, explains the most important thing a parent can do for their children is have conversations with them.

In 1995, researchers Betty Hart and Todd Risley, found children who heard 30 million words were better prepared for school than those children who heard less. By third grade these children had better vocabularies, reading skills, and test scores.



In the book *THIRTY MILLION WORDS*, Dr. Suskind reviews three core strategies—TUNE IN to what your child is doing, TALK MORE to your child using lots of descriptive words, and TAKE TURNS with your child as you engage in conversation.

THIRTY MILLION WORDS: Building A Child's Brain, will be available September 8, 2015, or at Amazon.com.

Welcome Blanket Recipients from greater Minnesota



Three of the latest little ones to receive welcome blankets delivered by MNH&V Parent Guides in greater Minnesota. The blankets were hand-made with material generously donated by Unitron.

Girl Scouts Must Abide by Federal Disability Discrimination Law

Friday, May 8, 2015, the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana are subject to federal disability discrimination law under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. August 2, 2012, Megan Runnion, a 12 year old who is deaf, filed a federal lawsuit against the Girl Scouts organization for denying her an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter for her Girl Scout troop meetings.

For the first six years of Girl Scouts Megan was provided an ASL interpreter for troop meetings and outings. Then in 2011 Megan's mother's request for an ASL interpreter for her was denied. Rather than provide the requested interpreter services, Megan's troop was disbanded.

Originally the lawsuit was dismissed when the Girl Scouts organization argued it should not be included under the Rehabilitation Act. However, in May 2015 after three years, the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals reversed their decision. They found that private membership organizations receiving federal funds are responsible for the federal disability discrimination law, regardless of whether professionals or volunteers are involved.

"Megan was heartbroken that she could no longer participate in Girl Scouts," said Megan's mother. "We are thrilled that Megan's case can finally go forward and set a precedent for other children who have disabilities and want to stay active in scouting and other similar organizations."

For more information: <http://www.equipforequality.org/news-item/appeals-court-rules-girl-scouts-is-covered-by-federal-disability-discrimination-law/>

I am MNH&V

Ahavah Cook is the owner and creator of Ear Suspenders available online at Etsy. Her shop carries unique handcrafted accessories for children's hearing aids. Over 230 attachable charms of popular characters, hearing aid shaped duct tape stickers, and uniquely designed hearing aid retainers she calls Ear Suspenders. Ahavah has first-hand experience with baby size hearing aids.

"Once my son received his hearing aids at 9 weeks old, I felt like I had a huge responsibility to secure these very expensive devices," commented Ahavah, "I looked on eBay and Etsy for retainer clips and I couldn't find any that would work well for a growing baby."

Ahavah found most hearing aid retainers used a thin cord with excess slack that is too easy for little hands to reach up and yank. She started experimenting with fabric cords and large buttons and the idea of Ear Suspenders was born.

"The button was adjustable and could hug the back of my son's neck leaving no cord slack," added Ahavah.

Ahavah and her husband, Jason, have two children, a daughter who is 8 years old and a son who is 8 months old. Their son was identified with a severe to profound bilateral hearing loss. Ahavah and Jason were both brought up by parents who are DHH and Jason himself has a unilateral hearing loss. When they first came in contact with MNH&V they felt they had



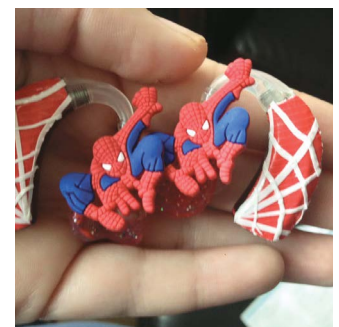
Ahavah Cook and family, photo used with the permission of Tres Belle Studio.

greater access to resources for their son.

"Even though we have a history of deafness in our family, we still took the news about our son's hearing pretty hard. My parents who are deaf raised me but it still didn't prepare me to raise a child of my own who is deaf," Ahavah commented, "Having all the resource information handed to me really helped reduce a lot of the worry I had."

Last April Ahavah made the decision to leave her job at the Minnesota Employment Center for DHH to spend more time to with her children and to ensure her son's language needs are met. She is also working towards getting a BA in psychology.

Find Ear Suspenders at www.etsy.com/shop/EarSuspenders?section_id=17470731&ref=shopsection_leftnav_3



Pictured are a few examples of products available at Ear Suspenders at Etsy

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



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