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VOICES™

FOCUS

Supporting families with children who are deaf & hard of hearing

A Parent's Journey, to Raise a Happy Healthy Adult, Begins with the End in Mind

"We begin with the end in mind," commented Anne Barlow, Minnesota Hands & Voices (MNH&V) Metro Parent Guide, about raising children who are deaf or hard of hearing (dhh). The quote is the overarching theme in the Hands and Voices book, *The Book of Choice*. Anne is reminded of the quote during home visits as she listens to parents with a child who has been recently identified as dhh.

Most parents begin with wanting nothing more than to have raised a happy, healthy adult. Having a child who is identified as dhh does not change that end goal, but it can change the path in some ways. For example the topic of "transition to adulthood" for a child who is dhh is relevant early on and throughout the parenting journey. They say, "It takes a village to raise a child." For a child who is dhh, it takes a village *and* a team of professionals.

Parents of infants and toddlers who are dhh meet with professionals from their local school district to develop an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). The IFSP is a family based approach to services, with the idea that supporting a child's family will best support the child. Educators may schedule a series of home visits to get to know the child and meet the family. The whole family contributes information to develop the IFSP along with educators, professionals, or specialists depending on the child's specific needs.

"At each home visit, I want the families to feel like their child is my only student," said a veteran early childhood DHH teacher about her warm-blanket approach to developing an IFSP with families of new students in her district.

When the child transitions to preschool at age 3 the IFSP becomes an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Then, at least once a year (and more often if any member of the team, including parents, feels that it is necessary) parents, educators, and professionals work as a team to evaluate and develop an IEP that best suits the child's current needs. The IEP describes each goal set for the child and any special supports needed to help achieve those goals. When children are 14 years old, or younger if appropriate, transition to adulthood skills are important additions to their IEP.

Every IEP team member plays an important role in the process. It is important for the child who is dhh to be involved in their IEP as much as possible when they reach the age when transitioning skills are added. The main reason for this is that IEP meetings are a good time to practice self-advocacy, which is a key skill for transitioning to adulthood. As it states in the Minnesota Transition Guide for Teachers of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing (edition July 25, 2013), "The self advocacy skills of students with hearing loss is a fundamental factor in

Transition

determining success or failure across all educational, community, social, and work settings. Development of these skills should begin early so that students are able to start taking responsibility for their own communication accommodations and assume control over choices that affect their lives."

Of course parents need to continue to be involved in their child's IEP as they know their child best and keep their best interests at heart. Professionals from other disciplines help to educate the IEP team about their area of expertise, which adds a greater insight into the child's unique experiences. Other members include a representative from the school district who can commit resources and a general education teacher who can give a general picture of the student's environment and social interactions. Because of their expertise and training DHH Teachers are essential to the IFSP and IEP process throughout a child's education, but even more so during the child's transition years.

DHH Teachers have the important job of illuminating the nuances of every day life as an individual who is dhh. Most parents who are hearing do not have the education or first-hand experience in dhh related issues and the child who is dhh

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I am MNH&V

Introducing Nicki Sandmann, MNH&V's newest Parent Guide for families with a child who is deaf or hard of hearing (dhh) and living in southwest Minnesota.

"I remember our parent guide coming to my house and being a great listening ear and actually hearing my concerns," commented Nicki when asked about what MNH&V has meant to her. "She also let me know that everything was going to be ok and that we could handle anything that was going to be thrown our way."

Nicki and her husband, Justin, have been married 15 years and together have two children ages 9 and 6. Their daughter was identified with a unilateral hearing loss at birth.

"Meeting other families early on helped my husband and I see that our daughter could grow up to be a happy, healthy and productive member of society," Nicki added.

As a MNH&V Parent Guide Nicki plans

to bring families together to build a network of support for them. In addition to her work with MNH&V Nicki is raising her two children full-time. She also has earned a Bachelor of Science in Finance degree from Minnesota State University.

As a family the Sandmann's enjoy playing games, watching football, traveling, spending time at the lake, and just spending time together.

"If you take a deep breath and one appointment at a time, you will find what works best for you and your family," said Nicki about her message to parents who have a child newly identified as dhh. "There are so many people who are willing to help you, and I cannot wait to be one of those people who will be there to help you," she added.

MNH&V Families living in SW Minnesota can reach Nicki by phone at 888-214-0660 or email at NickiS@lifetrack-mn.org

Find out more about Nicki Sandmann at the MNH&V website <https://www.mnhandsandvoices.org/about-us/guide-regions-and-bios>

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only knows what they have learned from their own experience. In the Division for Communicative Disabilities and Deafness (DCDD) mission statement article, *Teachers of Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing: A Critical Resource Needed for Legal Compliance*, by Becca Jackson, Ph.D., Anna Paulson, M. Ed., Suzanne Raschke, M.A., May 2017, they write, "Because many parts of the IEP are related to communication, DHH Teachers can best ensure that the child's language, communication, and educational needs are addressed thoroughly. Therefore, DHH Teachers must have a fundamental role in developing IEP or IFSP goals specific to the needs of students who are DHH, in both academic and nonacademic areas (e.g., social-emotional skills, self-advocacy, transition, functional listening, access to instruction)."

New parents of a child who is dhh can confidently begin their parenting journey with support from the professionals on their child's IFSP and IEP teams. In the end the leadership and knowledge shared by their child's DHH Teacher will help parents raise their child who is dhh into a happy, healthy adult.

The H&V book, *The Book of Choice*, can be found online at <http://www.handsandvoices.org/resources/products.htm>

Download the Minnesota Transition Guide for Teachers of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing at the Minnesota Department of Education website <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/sped/cat/dhh/>

DCDD article, *Teachers of Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing: A Critical Resource Needed for Legal Compliance* can be found at <https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/SPED/>

Meet Lifetrack's DHH Role Model Eric Nooker



Lifetrack's DHH Role Model Eric Nooker. Photo used with permission, credit to Darlene Zangara.

"I was looking for a way to give back to the community for all of the support I've received," said Eric Nooker about his decision to become an Adult Role Model for Lifetrack's Deaf & Hard of Hearing Role Model Program. "As well as to continue the work of the trailblazers who have preceded me to advocate on behalf of the Deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing community."

At the age of 2 years Eric Nooker was first identified as deaf or hard of hearing (dhh). His family learned sign language to better communicate with him. He grew up using hearing aids until 2014-2015 when he received cochlear implants. Throughout his K-12 education he used an FM system and other assisted listening devices, as well as an American Sign Language (ASL)

interpreter for language access.

"I code switch between deaf and hearing worlds," Eric said about his communication preference. He is comfortable communicating in either ASL or listening and spoken English.

Born in Green Bay, Wisconsin, Eric now calls Minnesota his home. He has a career as a scientist currently working with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture on implementing the Nitrogen Fertilizer Rule in Dakota County, Goodhue County, and Rice County, with an initial emphasis on Dakota County. The purpose of the Rule is to minimize sources of nitrate pollution in our groundwater resources and to protect the drinking water quality in our state.

Eric is the acting treasurer for the Minnesota Association of Deaf Citizens (MADC). MADC is a non-profit organization that promotes a better quality of life and overall wellness for individuals who are dhh through membership, activities and advocacy.

"Communicate with your child," is Eric's advice to parents who are raising a child who is dhh. "Foster a support network of friends who also are dhh."

Like any true Minnesotan Eric enjoys reading, cooking, gardening, fishing, biking, and skiing in his free time. Interestingly Eric also shared he has an insect collection.

"It is wonderful to be able to share my experiences and strategies with youth helping them on their journeys," added Eric. "I am always pleasantly surprised to learn something new from the families I work with in return."

Read more role model biographies and find information about Lifetrack's DHH Role Model Program at www.lifetrack-mn.org/rolemodel

VSA Minnesota for Accessible Movies, Arts, & Performances

The VSA Minnesota has helped to make the arts accessible to individuals with disabilities for over three decades. Originally Very Special Arts Minnesota, then VSA Arts of Minnesota, and now VSA Minnesota have had a reputation for their quality programs and services. Browse the VSA Minnesota website to learn how they create communities where people with disabilities can learn through, participate in, and access the arts in our community <http://vsamn.org>.

Parents can sign-up for a monthly VSA Minnesota email calendar of accessible art experiences at <http://vsamn.org/about/vsa-minnesota-events/>

DCMP Membership for Accessible Videos

Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP) provides equal access through described and captioned educational media. They support and improve the academic achievement of students who are blind, visually impaired, deaf, hard of hearing, or DeafBlind.

Free membership to DCMP is offered to parents, teachers and other professionals who work with students who are dhh, blind, visually impaired and DeafBlind. There are no costs associated with any DCMP services.

DCMP makes streaming a wide variety of accessible videos at home or at school convenient. Not all YouTube videos are accessible, for this reason DCMP members can use their DCMP YouTube channel for accessible videos or for a 4-minute preview when available. Full accessible videos are available at the DCMP website.

Find membership registration at dcmp.org DCMP Youtube Channel www.youtube.com/user/dcmpnad

New MNH&V Deaf Awareness Activity Program

MNH&V offers a first of its kind Deaf Awareness Activity Patch Program for youth groups in Minnesota. Marie Pank, MNH&V NE Regional Parent Guide, developed this program for Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, or other youth groups to help raise awareness and understanding of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing (dhh).

The program has five sections with a list of activities in each section. The amount of activities required to complete from each section is based on the age of participants. Grades k-3 complete one activity, grades 4-8 complete two activities, and grades 9-12 complete three from each of the five sections.

Listed here are the five sections covering a variety of topics and a few examples of the activities found in each section.

1. Assistive Technology

What technology is currently available to individuals who are dhh? What resources are available to find technology? Test the accuracy of the captioning service on TV. What cell phone apps would be helpful to individuals who are dhh?



MNH&V Deaf Awareness Activity Patch

2. Famous People or History

Name famous or historical people who are dhh and read a biography about them. Attend a class, meeting, play, or performance with an ASL interpreter. Invite a guest who is dhh to visit with your troop and share about their life.

3. Communication Options

Learn the difference between the most common communication options for people who are dhh; American Sign Language (ASL), Cued English, and lip reading. Learn how people who are DeafBlind communicate and what a DeafBlind intervener does. Learn how to finger spell your name in ASL and phonemically represent your name in Cued English.

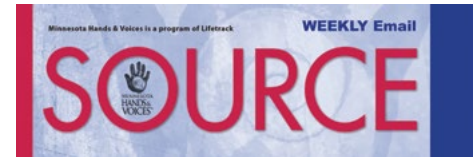
4. Diagnosis and Professionals

Learn about the population statistics of individuals who are dhh in your city, state, and country. Get a hearing test from a professional. Learn about the anatomy of the ear, how it works, and what can cause hearing loss. Learn how and when to protect your hearing. List three agencies or professionals who work with people who are dhh in your community.

5. Social and Educational

Adapt an existing game to use visual signals instead of using your voice. List what you would do differently in your daily life if you woke up dhh tomorrow. Explore what is meant by "Deaf Culture". What are polite and acceptable ways to get the attention of a person who is dhh?

Leaders can request a complete list of activities for each section as well as order patches for each group member who completes the required activities by email at mnhv@lifetrack-mn.org with the subject line: Deaf Awareness Activity Patch.



Sign Up for the SOURCE MNH&V Weekly Email

MNH&V SOURCE Weekly Email offers the latest news and events in the MNH&V community and other community organizations of importance to families who have a child who is dhh. To receive the MNH&V SOURCE weekly email, request to be signed up by email at www.mnhandsandvoices.org



Elena Miranda

Elena Miranda, MNH&V Parent Guide for the Spanish Speaking Community, knitted beautiful cozy hats to give to little ones during family visits.

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.

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3rd Annual 2017 Collaborative Experience Conference for Professionals & Parents



MNH&V staff and parents who attended the 2017 Collaborative Experience Conference last November.

The Commission of Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans and other Collaborative Plan Stakeholders hosted the third annual Collaborative Experience Conference, November 2-4, 2017. More than 360 professionals and parents of children who are dhh or DeafBlind attended more than 30 workshops about the latest research and best practices.

The Commission of Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans is a governor-appointed commission advocating for communication access and equal opportunity for the 20 percent of Minnesotans who are deaf, DeafBlind and hard of hearing.

Cued Speech Association of Minnesota Board Member Opportunities

Cued Speech Association of Minnesota (CSAM) is looking for individuals or parents of children who are dhh who support and use Cued English to consider becoming CSAM board members

CSAM is a non-profit organization entirely run by volunteers who support the awareness and use of Cued English through educational and social events. Our membership is made up of professionals, educators, and families with a child who is deaf or hard of hearing (dhh).

Volunteer CSAM Board Member positions available are:

- Presidential nominee
- Member at Large—Activity planning
- Member at Large—Parent liaison

For more information go to CSAM at www.cuedspeechminnesota.org or find CSAM on Facebook at www.facebook.com/cuedspeechminnesota/

For questions about CSAM email at info@cuedspeechminnesota.org



Good Shepherd Lutheran

A ministry at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Plainview, MN, is to make welcome blankets for MNH&V families.

2017 MNH&V Winter Wonderland Event, Central Minnesota

Signing Santa and his signing Elf passed out gifts and greeted children who are dhh and their families at the December 2017 MNH&V Winter Wonderland Event in Central Minnesota. This event was in collaboration with Lifetrack's Deaf Mentor Family Program, Lifetrack's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Adult Role Model Program, area DHH Teachers, and other area professionals who work with individuals who are dhh.

The educational topic for the Winter Wonderland Event was all about a variety of free iPhone and iPad apps that can be helpful in assisting families interested in learning American Sign Language (ASL). Also, featured was an app called *Signed Stories*, which is an award-winning app of favorite animated children's stories performed in ASL along with sound effects, voice over and closed-captioning. Suzanne Iwainat, MNH&V Parent Guide, demonstrated each of the apps to families and provided a handout for them to reference at home.

Free pizza and cookies were munched down while the children developed friendships and visited with Deaf Mentors and DHH Adult Role Models, and parents had a chance to network with other families and ask questions of the DHH professionals who attended.



Fun Photos from the December 2017 MNH&V Winter Wonderland Event in Central Minnesota.



Parent to Parent POINTERS

Remembering to take time to honor and support each other can seem almost impossible for parents with a child who is dhh. In any given day much of parent's time is spent advocating for their child, corresponding with teachers, reading through IEP paperwork, in meetings, dealing with insurance issues, commuting to and from appointments, and learning how to best communicate with their child. The extra activities required can put a strain on available time for each other. Time together is precious to couples that have less time to start with and remembering to take time for your relationship is important.

Partners first then parents.

Helpful to keep in mind is that the relationship you share started before your child was born. If the only time you have together is spent talking about your child then the relationship is not balanced. Of course it is important to update one another on your child's welfare, but in a healthy relationship there should be more. A Washington Post article on parenting, *How to Take Care of Your Marriage when*

How Parents Can Honor and Support Each Other

you have a Child with Special Needs, February 18, 2014, encourages couples to spend 20 to 30 minutes each day connecting to each other, with no talk of the children allowed.

Embrace each other's point of view.

Parents can often have different expectations for their child and react differently to situations. Understanding and respecting that your partner does not think or behave like you can go a long way to strengthening the relationship.

Ask for help sooner rather than later.

You are not the only one who can do a task and it is perfectly ok if your partner does a task differently than you. Be flexible, proactive and communicate early and often so resentment does not build.

Be creative.

Going on a date just the two of you is a great idea, but how often do planets really align for that to happen? In between dates try to do small acts of kindness for your partner, something just for them. For example maybe fill their gas tank without being asked or bring home their favorite

fruit from the grocery store or tell them how nice they look out of the blue. Include the kids and let them see how important your relationship is to each other.

Appreciate each other's strengths.

Parents tend to fall into different roles depending on their availability and their personal skills or strengths. Take a minute to acknowledge your partner's strengths or their extra effort. Giving credit can make you feel more like a team.

Relationships have ups and downs, but there was a reason you chose each other. The family dynamics will change over time and your child will become an adult. Hopefully what is left is a supportive and loving relationship for the two of you.

Link to the article in the Washington Post, February 18, 2014, *How to Take Care of Your Marriage when you have a Child with Special Needs* https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/parenting/wp/2014/02/18/how-to-take-care-of-your-marriage-when-you-have-a-child-with-special-needs/?utm_term=.7c9d691fde2b



Deaf Quilters of MN

Representatives from Deaf Quilters of Minnesota delivered over 200 handmade Christmas stockings to support Lifetrack's preschool program. This same group donated handmade quilts to help replenish our welcome blanket supply. The Deaf Quilter Club of Minnesota meet monthly at Thompson Hall.



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Minnesota Hands & Voices FOCUS Newsletter

November-December 2017

FAMILY PICNIC

2018 Annual ★ Minnesota Hands & Voices ★ Metro

Date: Thursday, August 2nd

Time: 5:00-8:30 pm (rain or shine)

Where: Como Park Midway Pavilion
1199 Midway Pkwy, St Paul, MN

Free for Families:

- ★ Dinner
- ★ Fun Games
- ★ Entertainment
- ★ Face Painting
- ★ Door Prizes!

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HANDS & VOICES
LEAGUE OF HEROES
SUPERPOWERS WITHIN™



Calling all the Superheroes in the MNH&V Community!
Dust off your superhero costume or come as you are to join our Hands & Voices' League of Heroes!

Find more details online at www.mnhandsandvoices.org/news-events/current-news-events.aspx