



**HANDS &
VOICES™
MINNESOTA**

**Supporting families with
children who are deaf &
hard of hearing**

FOCUS

The Fostering Joy Project: Celebrating your child who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Raising children is an experience like no other: feelings of profound connection, pride and love entwined with periods of being overwhelmed or worried, right? Add to that the identification of your child being deaf and hard of hearing or deaf and hard of hearing plus other health challenges, and that experience can intensify those highs and lows. With added responsibilities such as developing effective communication, the pressure of becoming your child's teacher and maximizing their learning environment, advocating for your child's needs, and now with the added stress of COVID and online learning, parents understandably can at times become bogged down in their role. While many of these additional responsibilities are clearly necessary and vital to your child's success, it is also critical to focus on your own emotional well-being, to bond with your child, and to encourage your child's healthy social-emotional development.

With an interest to help parents focus attention to this area, several professionals and parents in the field of deafness came together and created what is now called the "Fostering Joy" Project. Fostering Joy is the intentional practice of looking for and encouraging joyful moments

between caregivers and their child who is deaf or hard of hearing. But how does this work exactly? Well, think of this example: breathing and meditation/mindfulness are two very different things. Everyone breathes. Yet not everyone meditates or practices mindfulness. However, meditation or mindfulness adds intention and purpose when done with purposeful breathing and this practice has been proven to be helpful for psychological well-being.

Here are some ideas to consider;

- Schedule time with your child. Just like you put a reminder for a doctor's visit, make an appointment with your child and do something that brings them joy.
- Connect joyful activity to an existing routine. Combining a trip to the audiologist with a stop for ice cream can make it joyful!
- Get outside! Nature is proven to be therapeutic!
- Take "respite" time for just you
- Find a "joy buddy" or someone to commit to your "joy habit."
- Journal frequently— expressing gratitude rewires your brain to be more positive.

The Fostering Joy Core Team hopes families who engage in Fostering Joy will experience the same benefits. The team created resources to help parents celebrate their child's strengths and accomplishments. The team is also developing resources to serve as tools for professionals who work with families.

Some Fostering Joy resources are;

- Fostering Joy Family Tip Sheet (English) and Las Alegrías de Criar a Niños Sordos o Hipoacusicos (the Spanish version), which are lists of suggestions for how to create joyful moments and expand on the tips shared above. More translations are underway!
- Fostering Joy Professional Tip Sheet includes suggestions for how professionals can help families develop the habit of positive, practical, and loving social emotional bonding experiences.
- Fostering Joy Facebook Group, must be a parent/family member of a DHH child.
- Fostering Joy Instagram, open to parents and professionals.
- Fostering Joy Journal, a book for parents/caregivers to capture joyful moments on their parenting experience.

The Fostering Joy Project, continued on page 2

Fostering Joy, continued from page 1

Throughout the journal is art by a talented young artist who is DHH and who is the daughter of MN Hands & Voices Parent Guide, Leslie Carnegie -Hilde.

Founded in the belief that Fostering Joy is larger than just the core group of people creating resources, we would like to think Fostering Joy has become a movement. Parents, parent leaders and professionals are strongly encouraged to join in and spread the idea by becoming "Joy Ambassadors." What does a "Joy Ambassador" do?

Here are some ideas:

- **Share:** Commit to ensuring your parent story incorporates the joys of raising a child(ren) who are deaf and hard of hearing. Practice introducing yourself and your child highlighting a strength of your child that brings you joy.
- **Inspire:** Write and/or share articles that focus on positive and joyful experiences. Consider submitting your story for an article in this publication.
- **Spread:** Share the posts on the Fostering Joy Instagram and Facebook group account on your social media platforms.



- **Demonstrate:** Share the Fostering Joy videos with people you know. Make your own "joy" video with your child.
- **Infuse:** Incorporate a focus on joy in parent-to-parent support activities and events, advisory groups, work plans, educational advocacy, etc.
- **Get creative:** Take these ideas and run with them in your own way! We'd just love to hear about how you have used Fostering Joy!

We hope parents and professionals will join the movement and help spread the joy. We believe by publicly sharing how our children who are DHH are not just capable, but powerful and inspirational, we can build better understanding of their value in the community, the workplace, and beyond. Please visit www.handsandvoices.org/resources/fostering-joy.htm

Candace Lindow-Davis is the mother of two amazing young adults, one of whom is Deaf Plus other health challenges. Candace is the Director of Outreach at Hands & Voices Headquarters. Prior to coming on staff with Hands & Voices HQ 4 years ago, Candace was the Director of MN Hands & Voices for 16 years. She is so proud to see the work of the MN Chapter continue and is especially honored and grateful to Shawnae Hilde for contribution of artistic talent to the Fostering Joy Journal.



My name is Hannah Harriman, and I am DeafBlind. There are three holidays in particular that I love spending with my family: Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Eve. One reason I love these holidays is because of the way my family incorporates accessibility into everything we do. When we open gifts, everyone describes what they received so that I feel included. My family loves playing games together. If we are playing a visual game, such as Chronology which we play on New Year's Eve, I ask someone to read my cards to me. However, if we are playing a game which involves a standard deck of cards or dice, I use my Braille deck of cards or Braille dice so that I can participate independently. One side of my family loves playing video games. My uncles try diligently to find an accessible way for me to participate in these games. It is important for me in these situations to be able to hear who is giving me instructions and to make sure that people aren't talking over that person.

Pertaining to my hearing loss, I position myself at the dinner table so that as many people as possible are on my right side. I know that background noise is inevitable, and I don't want to detract from others' enjoyment of the holidays.

Deep Dive with a DHH Guide, continued on page 3

My solution to this dilemma is that I stay as far away from background noise as possible, the TV, for example. We attend a Christmas Eve Service every year. I ensure someone is sitting on my right side who is comfortable telling me when we are lighting candles and can safely assist me with that process.

Another activity my family enjoys is watching movies together, whether that be in my grandpa's theater room or at an actual movie theater. If we're watching a movie at my grandparents' house, I ask someone to sit on my right side and describe to me. My grandpa's sound system has surround sound, which quite easily overwhelms me from a hearing perspective, so we don't have the volume extremely loud. On the other hand, if we go to a movie theater, I request an audio description device, which describes visual scenes to me through a pair of headphones. Occasionally, I am given the closed-captioning or amplification device, and I have to explain that I am blind and don't require the use of these other devices. If the theater doesn't have an audio description device, I ask someone in my family to describe the movie. This person usually ends up being either my mom or one of my sisters, as my dad and grandpa's voices carry and we don't want to be yelled at by other patrons for talking.

I thoroughly enjoy the holidays for many reasons. I consider myself extremely blessed to have a loving and caring family who ensures that I have equal access to every experience, both old and new, that we share together.

I am MNH&V

Callie and Randy Holmes have four children; Dixie, Ben, Brantley and Brody.

Dixie, 9 years old was born with CMV (Congenital Cytomegalovirus). Callie says that CMV was suspected during pregnancy so they were prepared by Medical Professionals of possible outcomes.

When Dixie was born, she was diagnosed with CP; (Cerebral Palsy) and bilateral deafness. "It was so scary, because I wasn't prepared for that. I was prepared for all of these horrible, terrible things and she was just deaf," says Callie. Being young parents and not knowing how to cope with the hearing difference they followed the lead of their audiologist. Dixie had her first pair of hearing aids at 5 weeks old.

Being a perfect candidate for CI's (cochlear implants) Dixie was implanted at 10 months old but soon after got an infection and it had to be removed. "It was a scary experience and I never wanted to put her through that again," says Callie.

Pressure from family and professionals lead Callie and Randy to try again with the CI Surgery when Dixie was 2 years old. At this time Dixie was bilaterally implanted, but soon one failed and had to be removed. Dixie refused to wear the other CI even after much encouragement.



"A whole lot of patience, fear and tears," Callie says, along with creative minds, people that care about Dixie, and finding the people that encourage and supported them to get them where they are today.

Dixie uses ASL (American Sign Language) to communicate. Callie, Randy and the boys are learning ASL together and worked with Lifetrack's Deaf Mentor Program. They have gotten involved in the Deaf Community and Callie says they have met many other incredible people along the way.

Along with the Deaf Mentor Program the Holmes Family have used MN Hands & Voices Parent Guides as well as an Educational Advocacy Parent Guide.

"I am not alone anymore, I feel connected with other parents," Callie says when she talks about MN Hands & Voices. MNHV Parent Guides were the first parent of deaf hard of hearing kids that Callie had met and that was the first time she said she felt like "somebody gets it!" Through MN Hands & Voices Callie learned how to advocate for her daughter.

MNH&V Transition Talk with Nicholas Hohrman

MNH&V asked Nicholas, age 20, and his mother Shannon a series of questions about Nicholas' experience transitioning to adulthood. Nicholas lives independently in a dorm on the campus of Gallaudet University in Washington D.C. Nicholas has many interests including art, photography, swimming, travel, hiking and camping. He particularly enjoys listening and then interpreting music into American Sign Language.

Nicholas was identified with a bilateral profound deafness when he was young. He describes himself as profoundly deaf and wears bilateral cochlear implants with his primary language being American Sign Language. Nicholas does not view himself as disabled as he stated, "I can do everything others can do!"

In Nicholas' family he said, "we have our own language," This is something Nicholas likes best about being deaf.

Throughout school Nicholas stated, "I wish my high school would have provided me with what I needed for a good education." In one case, instead of being provided a substitute interpreter when his regular interpreter was absent, Nicholas and his mom, Shannon, had to advocate for that communication access. While in high school, Nicholas encountered many issues where he was not being provided adequate accommodations; because of this it has made Nicholas a stronger self-advocate. Shannon stated she is "proud that Nicholas advocates for himself and that he is confident of himself."



Nicholas Hohrman

Nicholas' advice to parents raising kids with a hearing difference is to "teach your kids to advocate for themselves, show by example." His advice to those in education is to listen. "Listen to the parents and those that have someone that is deaf or hard of hearing."

Goals that Nicholas is working towards are finishing college and earning his master's degree. This summer he will start an internship at Juno Beach Florida where he will be working at the Loggerhead Marinelife Center. He will be doing a special focus on the threatened and endangered sea turtles. Loggerhead Marinelife Center is a world-class sea turtle rehabilitation hospital and education center. Nicholas will be taking part in helping teaching people about sea turtles and working on the sea turtles nest, making sure they are protected and ready for them to hatch and enter into the ocean.

Transition

Transition MNH&V Transition Talk

This timeline is intended as guide for students and their IEP teams as they develop transition goals. Its not an exhaustive list, nor will all items apply to all students.

4-5 years before leaving school:

- Identify personal learning styles and the necessary accommodations.
- Identify career interests and skills.
- Explore options for postsecondary education.
- Identify interest and options for future living arrangements, including support services.
- Learn to communicate effectively your interests, preferences, and needs.
- Be able to explain your disability and the accommodations you need.
- Learn and practice informed decision making skills.
- Investigate assistive technology tools.
- Broaden your experience with community activities and expand your friendships.
- Pursue and use local transportation options outside of family.
- Investigate money management.
- Acquire identification card and ability to communicate personal information.

Adapted from the National Transition Network's Transition Checklist

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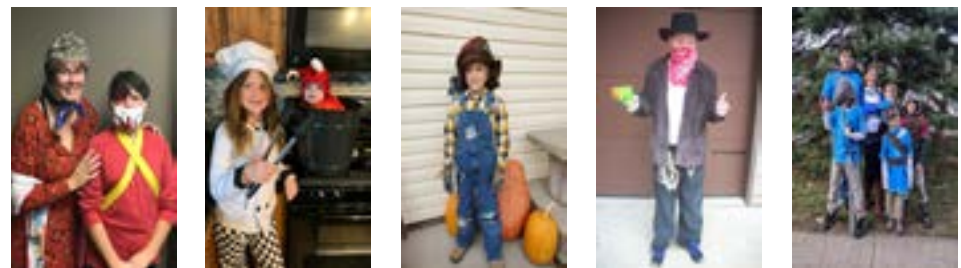
MNH&V Online Family Events are Like Distant Learning, But Way More Fun!

MNH&V Online Family Event: Holiday Fun and Crafts

In December, SE/SW Parent Guide Krista Blood along with DHH Guide Kelsey Woodward gave tips on how to make holiday gatherings more inclusive and accessible for our kids! The kids then made a reindeer craft and played a game!



We saw some fun and creative costumes in the Costume Spooktacular!



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 at;

lifetrack-mn.org

MNH&V Online Family Event: You've Been "Boo'd."

In October, NW Parent Guide Shannon Hohrman and Upper NW Parent Guide Leslie Carngie-Hilde along with DHH Guides Shelby Geldon and Kobe Schroeder held the "You've Been Boo'd" event." We learned trick or treat safety and then our Mad Scientist taught us how to make slime! Thank you to all who were able to attend - we had a Blast!



Find a current list of MNH&V Online Family Events go online for more information and registration at <https://www.eventbrite.com/o/minnesota-hands-amp-voices-at-lifetrack-9882223703>

MNH&V EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

MNH&V Parent Guide for the Northeast African Communities

The MNH&V NE African Communities Parent Guide position offers 10 flexible hours a week, some evenings and weekends, and a family-friendly work environment.

MNH&V Parent Guides receive specific training and team support. Parent Guides are responsible for the initial and follow-up connections critical to families who have a newly identified child who is deaf or hard of hearing (dhh). They work closely with the MNH&V team and learn the best way to support our MNH&V families. They organize and lead family events, represent MNH&V in the community, and participate in family support activities. Your personal experience of the challenges and joys of parenting a child who is dhh helps support other parents who are just starting their journey. Candidates for this position must be fluent in Somali.

To find out more or to apply and send a resume, please visit Lifetrack at <https://recruiting.paylocity.com/Recruiting/Jobs/Details/117452>

Fortitude In Diverse Unity

Latino Cultures

Elena Miranda has been with Minnesota Hands & Voices since August 2017 serving culturally diverse families, finding resources, providing support and family connections. She is passionate about social interaction with new families. She is a single mom of the 3 kids, her oldest is bilaterally profoundly deaf. His primary communication mode is ASL but also speaks Spanish and English.

Elena is an active woman who cares about others, finding the way to support them with her Latinas Group.

She really enjoys time spent with her kids cooking, organizing things, playing, paddleboarding, fishing just for fun, playing in the snow, biking and decorating. One of the things she loves to do is read books for her kids' classmates at elementary age in ASL, Spanish and English.

She truly believes that the less isolated they are, the more success they will have in everything they do.

Elena's Contact Information:

(651) 265- 2383

Elena.Miranda@Lifetrackmn.org



Asian Cultures



Brenda Yang is the newest member of the Minnesota Hands & Voices team! She is committed and excited to step into her role as a cultural parent guide.

Brenda lives in the Twin Cities with her fiancé and two children. Her son Santoy was identified with a hearing difference at birth. Santoy has Microtia/Atresia in his right ear. Brenda's experience raising Santoy is the main reason she is so passionate about helping other families.

Brenda loves spending time with her family. She enjoys cooking delicious meals, watching comedies and listening to music. Brenda also loves to express herself through singing and painting.

Brenda's Contact information:

Phone: (651) 983-4058

Brenda.Yang@lifetrackmn.org

"Ntau txhais tes ua hauj-lwm sib; Ntau lub tswv-yim ua tau txoj kev qhib."

Many hands make work lightweight; Many ideas open paths."

In Your Corner

with Anne Barlow

"Connection is the energy that is created between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued."

~ Brené Brown, PhD, MNSW

We are hardwired for human connection.

Often, our child who is deaf or hard of hearing is the first person with a hearing difference that we have ever met! And if that child is our first born, it can be challenging to decipher how to raise this child.

Finding those with whom we have a common bond can make all the difference in our journeys as individuals and as parents. Knowing that there are those who have shared at least a part of our experience and who can lend an empathetic mindset can help us, too. If you are familiar with MN Hands & Voices, you know that each Parent Guide is the Parent of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing. While our journeys have each been unique, we can support each other with a special level of understanding. If you are new to MNHV, we are so glad that you are getting acquainted now!

MNHV is a place where you can be seen, be heard, and are valued by those who have walked a similar path. As parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing, we consider it an honor to be able to connect with and support families wherever they are on their own unique path.

Some families are eager for connection while others don't feel a pressing need. There is no right or wrong way to do this thing, and we are here in whatever way feels meaningful to you, the parents.

We have many ways that we connect with parents – from a one time "hello" to an ongoing and ever deepening relationship. If you enjoy a "once in a while" connection with both staff and with other families, participate in one or more of our virtual events. It's an excellent way to share some time with other families as well as with your own kids. While each of our events is different, most have a social component where kids and parents can chat with each other, do an activity together, socialize a bit, and meet some wonderful adult role models who are deaf and hard of hearing. Some recent virtual events include a virtual slumber party (some even had a blanket fort made and showed up in their jammies!) and learning about trick or treat safety and then making slime with a "mad scientist". No matter what the topic is, one of the biggest benefits is building connections and helping you know that you are part of a bigger community where you are seen, heard and valued.

"Anne Barlow has been with MNH&V for 7 years, starting out as a Parent Guide and now serving as the Outreach Manager. She is a mom of 2 wonderful adult children, the older of whom is Deaf. Not having had the same kind of parent to parent support in those earliest years, Anne knows firsthand how valuable it is to be able to connect with other parents for support and understanding."



The Kiwanis Club of North Suburban Saint Paul is a service organization comprised of caring men and women from all walks of life. Our objective is to bring aid to children in need. The majority of our efforts have benefited children in our community since 1958. A portion of the funds we raise go to help meet Kiwanis International objectives which focus on the special needs of young children from prenatal development to age five. We serve by sponsoring fund raising activities, which provide monetary support for children's programs and through personal involvement in the giving of our time and skills.





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NEWSLETTER

7 Part In-Depth Educational Advocacy Training for Parents & Professionals

Over the course of 7 sessions MNHV ASTra Guides, Shannon Hohrman and Robin Coninx, will walk participants through select chapters in the Hands & Voices Educational Advocacy Guidebook. These sessions are specifically designed in an order that will best illuminate the ins and outs of educational advocacy unique to students who are dhh.

Registration: www.eventbrite.com/o/minnesota-hands-amp-voices-atlifetrack-9882223703

January 28	7:30 - 9 pm	Chapters 1 & 4	Introduction to Special Education ABC's of FAPE & LRE
February 4	7:30 - 9pm	Chapter 2	Special Considerations for Students who are dhh
February 11	7:30 - 9pm	Chapter 3	Question of Eligibility
February 18	7:30 - 9pm	Chapter 7	Procedural Safeguards
February 25	7:30 - 9pm	Chapter 5	Assessments & Evaluations
March 4	7:30 - 9pm	Chapter 6	IEP's
March 11	7:30 - 9pm		Conclusion



All attendees should have the Hands & Voices Educational Advocacy Guidebook. If you are a parent of a child who is dhh and do not have the guidebook, email shannon.hohrman@lifetrack.org to receive one FREE. If you are a professional working students who are dhh and need to order a guidebook (\$40.00 includes shipping and handling) email Robin.Coninx@lifetrackmn.org