



**HANDS &
VOICES™
MINNESOTA**

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

FOCUS

Finding My Whole Identity by Krista Blood

While I currently live in southern Minnesota, I did not grow up here. I did not even know about this whole other amazing culture/community until I was older. I lost my hearing due to spinal meningitis when I was two-years-old. My parents did the best they could for me; attending events, trying to connect with other families, and learning American Sign Language (ASL). Growing up as the only deaf child in a small town in MN I rejected ASL. I would get angry and upset when they signed to me. I just wanted to be “normal.” I took speech classes and worked very hard on my speech. I was fit with hearing aids and loved them so much I refused to take them off. I did have an interpreter while attending a mainstream school, but I refused to acknowledge her. I worked so hard to hear; to recognize sounds and voices. Although I did like connecting with other people who were deaf/hard of hearing, I was a bit hesitant. I was stubbornly sure of my path in the hearing world.

Summer Camp: A Game Changer

When I was 14, my parents sent me to Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf (MSAD) summer school program. The program was two

weeks long. I expected to go the first week, dislike it, and NOT return for the second week. I came home that first weekend using ASL the entire time. I told my parents I wanted to go to school there. They didn't expect this reaction. It finally clicked for me; I was no longer struggling and working so hard to catch all the conversations. I was no longer watching everyone's lips so I could lipread. I finally felt I belonged. By that fall, my family made the hard decision to relocate to Faribault so I could live at home while attending MSAD. Unfortunately, I had always refused to let my family sign, so they struggled to keep up with understanding me and my friends. I went from trying so hard to be hearing and fit in to the sudden shift of realizing who I truly was. I was Deaf, and I had to accept and acknowledge that. I no longer felt embarrassed or left out. I finally found where I fit in.



A Big, Blended, Bilingual Household

I married, Cory, a Deaf man I had met at MSAD. He has children from a first marriage who are hearing. I have a daughter, Kylah who is also hearing and we have three children together and each have a different type of hearing loss. Zander, 11 is profoundly deaf. Zylar, 8, who was diagnosed with Auditory Neuropathy Spectrum Disorder (ANSO) at the age of 3. Bianca, age 7 has unilateral hearing loss. All three have attended MSAD since birth.



My Deafness is not a barrier. I am blessed that my parents introduced me to all options and let me explore and lead (once I was ready) in the direction I wanted to go. Each person is different. Presenting all options along the way is the best thing you can do as a parent after learning and accepting your child has hearing loss.

Krista Blood, a Parent Guide and ASL Guide for Minnesota H&V and lives in Faribault. The entire article is in the H&V Communicator Spring 2021 Edition. Visit www.handsandvoices.org to subscribe.

My Experience at Camp Sertoma

by Judy Nelson/Mercedes Nelson

Camp Sertoma was one of the best experiences my daughter Mercedes had growing up being a hard of hearing child. It took her a few days every year to get used to being away from home but the counselors are wonderful and helped her through it.

There were so many things to do there from shooting bow and arrows, slide, fishing and tubing on the lake and the confidence climb. Late night bonfires and stories to cabin challenges. The animal habitat in the center was amazing.

Some kids used sign language and the ones who didn't knew many words by the end of the week. So many new friends were made every year. It's a great place to go and I'm so glad Mercedes had the chance to experience the fun for many years.

Mercedes Nelson is a young adult who is hard of hearing. She is from rural Minnesota and is currently enrolled in a Transition Program.



"Deep Dive" with DHH Guide Janie Barlow

My experiences at summer camps have been few but rich. My first summer camp experience was at Courage North at Lake George MN in the Deaf Youth summer program when I was in elementary. I remember most going with my best friend and feeling amazed when I saw many other children like me. I remember enjoying my time there and meeting new people that I would often meet again through life. It was also here that I met my husband for the first time, although that was unknown to us! My next experience was a YMCA hearing day camp. I only remember the first day. I was in middle school and I went with some hearing friends who were not fluent in ASL. It was an overwhelming experience for me, mostly for not understanding what was happening around me. I went along with it all but I didn't really enjoy myself except for when we got together at the end of the day to do the bo bo de watten tatten circle song. I think this stuck with me for several reasons; the funny sounds, this was visual, I felt included, and it was fun to see who would get clapped on the number 10 and be outed! My next two summer camp experiences were, again, at Courage North but in the Deaf Teen program. This is where I immensely enjoyed myself and found happiness and courage with my identity as a DHH person. I attended these two sessions in the summers after my sophomore



and junior years. At these sessions, I was able to spend two weeks in a bubble of a world where we all used ASL, and I spent time with friends, old and new. We learned outdoor skills, how to do water activities, we hiked and camped near Duluth (even in the pouring rain!), and many more. It was then that I also met camp staff that were Deaf adults and this was an experience that shaped me. I would say that those two years of Courage North was a highlight of my lifetime for many reasons. Having that experience and empowerment has been, in part, what has led me to where I am today with my self identity and how I am involved with the Deaf community. At MNHV, being a DHH Guide provides me the opportunity to be a cheerleader for other DHH children. I had wonderful teachers and parents that supported me but having someone like me, all grown up, really opened my eyes.

"Janie Barlow is a DHH Guide with MNHV and lives in the metro area. She is a mother of two young hearing children and married to her Deaf husband which results in her home to be a bilingual and bi-cultural environment.

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. Candidate 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>

In Your Corner

with Brenda Hommerding

Minnesota's state Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EDHI) program recognizes the importance of Parent-to-Parent connection and Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH) role models as critical parts of the Early Intervention process for a child who has been identified with non-typical hearing. The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) has contracted with Minnesota Hands & Voices (MNHV) to be that parent-to-parent support and role model contact organization. All MNHV's staff either have children who are deaf/hard of hearing or are deaf/hard of hearing themselves. A requirement of the contract with MDH is that that all the MNHV staff are required to follow all HIPPA guidelines and completes annual training to keep up on those guidelines.

Where did you get our information?

This is the most common question that families ask when a Parent Guide reaches out to them. When a child is identified with non-typical hearing, that information is reported to MDH, who then mails out a letter with a resource binder to the family indicating that a parent guide from MNHV will be contacting them. As a Guide by Your Side Manager, it is my duty to check for referrals within MDH's system daily and create family profiles in our database. Once a family is entered in our database, they are assigned to a parent guide based on their zip code (region). Our database helps each guide stay on track with calls and connections to the family.

Why is it important for families who have children who are deaf or hard of hearing to connect with MNHV? Children with non-typical levels of hearing can experience delayed

development in language and learning. As trained Parent Guides and Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH) Guides, we strive to help achieve the national recommendation of 1-3-6 guidelines: babies screened by 1 month of age, identified with level of hearing by 3 months of age, and enrollment in early invention services before 6 months of age. In addition, we strive to connect with the family within one month of when we receive the referral. Connecting families with Parent Guides as early as possible can help reduce the delayed development as well as giving them a sense of connection knowing they are not alone in their journey. Connecting the families with DHH Guides allows the family and the child(ren) to have a sense of what it may be like growing up deaf/hard of hearing. MNHV has also added trained ASTra (Advocacy, Support and Training) Guides to help the families with any Educational Advocacy needs.

Families can be directly referred or self-refer to MNHV on our secure online referral form listed on our website: <https://www.mnhandsandvoices.org/refer-family>. It takes a village to raise a Deaf/Hard of Hearing child and MNHV is passionate to help families by being a part of that village. Please reach out to us at: [mnhandsandvoices.org](https://www.mnhandsandvoices.org)

Brenda Hommerding has been with MNHV over 14 years, starting as the Central MN Parent Guide, then Lead Outstate Parent Guide, and now her current position of Guide By Your Side Manager. She is hard of hearing herself, mom of twin adult girls both hard of hearing and has a grandson who is deaf. Having experienced a variety of hearing levels, communication modes, and technology through her grandparents, herself, her girls, and now her grandson, she knows that journeys are all different. She truly values the additional information she has learned from being involved with MNHV. She feels it's like having an extended family of support!

MNH&V Transition Talk with Shelby Geldon

MNHV DHH Guide Shelby (age 20) and her mother Beth discussed her experiences transitioning to adulthood. Shelby is currently living between her moms' home and a subleased room closer to college. Swing dance in one of Shelby's many interests along with reading, playing sports and being outside to hike and ride bike. She also enjoys simply hanging out with friends and playing cards.

Shelby was identified at the age of 13, with unilateral hearing as she has a moderate to severe hearing loss in her left ear and is profoundly deaf in her right ear. Shelby also has vision loss due to a rare syndrome.

Speech to text is just one of the accommodations Shelby uses. She also uses speech, American Sign Language, FM system and captioning service. Shelby says, "with the captioning service a person comes in and captions my lectures live so I see the captions in real time." Shelby does not view herself as disabled as she told MNHV, "Sure sometimes I am unable to hear but there are so many things I can do to communicate like using a speech to text app or using sign language."

Connections are what Shelby most enjoys about being deaf hard of hearing. Shelby says, "I have met so many amazing deaf hard of hearing people that I would not have otherwise connected with."

During Shelby's first year of college she's had to advocate for a better FM system. The FM system they had didn't connect to her hearing aid, so the school asked her to wear headphones which didn't work for two reasons. The first was, the ear bud headphones had to be held up to her ears and she was unable to hear enough without her hearing aid in. Secondly, if she used a head set it caused too much feedback. After working with her Audiologist and the disability office on campus she was finally set up with a neck loop.



Beth stated she's is "proud of how Shelby lets people help her and how she makes the best out of the situation." When Shelby first became deaf hard of hearing she refused any help but she's proud of her resilience.

Shelby's advice to parents on raising kids with a hearing difference is let them be as independent as possible. She said, "I think one thing I really appreciate was my mom giving me space and time to figure stuff out and yet pushing me to have to do things on my own. I was upset and angry for a long time. I started to become hard of hearing when I was 13 and life is terrible enough at 13. I wasn't mad at my mom; I was mad at the situation and I took it out on her. I didn't want to talk about my hearing difference, I just wanted things to go back to how they were. One thing that helped was meeting other people who were hard of hearing. I didn't know anyone else and it was so hard because I felt like no one understood." Her advice to those in education is to repeat. Repeat spoken questions and answers or write it on the board. Written instructions are very helpful!

While Shelby wishes her schooling to become a deaf hard of hearing teacher didn't take another 4 years to earn her master's degree, she is still building those advocating skills! Shelby says, "One goal I am working on is speaking up during class when I miss information and asking the teacher to repeat a direction I missed."

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.

2-3 years before leaving school:

- Identify community support services and programs
- Invite adult service providers, peers and others to the IEP transition meeting.
- Match career interests and skills with vocational course work and community work experiences.
- Gather more information on post secondary programs and the support services offered.
- Make arrangements for accommodations to take college entrance exams.
- Learn more about the differences between accommodations in college and high school.
- Identify health care providers and become informed about individual health issues.
- Begin a resume and update as needed
- Determine the need for financial support (SSI, Medicare)
- Continue attending IEP meetings and become more involved in the decision making.
- Practice independent living skills.

Adapted from the National Transition Network's Transition Checklist

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MNHV Online Family Events are Like Distant Learning, But Way More Fun!

Online Family Event: Snow Much Fun!

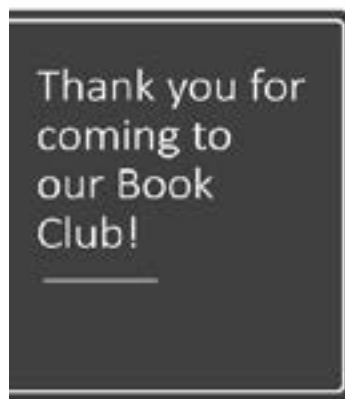
Central Parent Guide Suzanne Iwainat along with Upper NW Parent Guide Leslie Carnegie-Hilde, Metro Parent Guide Sharice McMorris, DHH Guide Hannah Harriman and Deaf Mentor Sharon Rosen presented “Snow Much Fun.” We put on our favorite winter hats and scarves for fun in the “snow!” We played snowball games, read about a sneezy snowman, and made a snow globe!



Thanks for your contribution!

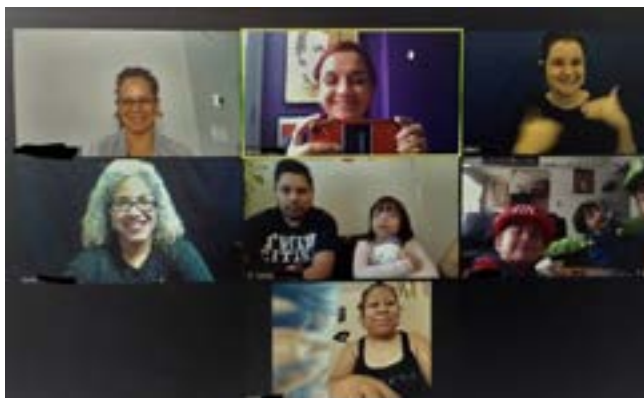
We rely on your generous support to build better lives for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Make a tax-deductible donation today.



MNHV Online Family Event: “El Deafo Book Club!”

Another great success with the El Deafo Book Club!



Online Family Event: “Spanish Bingo!”

Thank you Cultural Guide Elena Miranda, DHH Guide Program Heidi L. Nazario, Deaf Mentor Family Program (DMFP) Jackie Correa-Alley, and the families for making this a successful Bingo Event with speaking Spanish



Online Family Event: “Sprinkle with Kindness!”

The “Sprinkle with Kindness” event was a success! Thanks to Parent Guide Krista Blood, DHH Guide Kelsey Woodward, and lead Deaf Mentor Jessi Aguilar for this successful event. The families sure had a blast!

Find a current list of MNHV Online Family Events online, for more information and registration visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/o/minnesota-hands-and-voices-at-lifetrack-9882223703>

Positive Parenting

By Elena Miranda

Being the parent of a child with a hearing difference is by far the most challenging task parents have on this journey; it tests us in many ways. The knowledge, decisions, and way of educating our children depends only on us. There's no magic formula that helps us perform our role as parents in a perfect way, but there are tools that help us in the education and upbringing of our children. Positive Parenting is one of them. Positive Parenting is a way of raising our children that is centered on positive behavior rather than problem behaviors.

- **Unconditional love** separates the person from the behavior; it means loving someone for who they are.
- **Understanding** the misbehaved child; misbehavior occurs when needs are not met. Provide your child with full access to communication to let you know their needs.
- **Be firm**, this lets your child know what to expect.
- **Giving your child a choice** between two possibilities.
- **Rewarding good behavior** increases the chances that such behavior will be repeated.
- **Choose your battles** to work on one thing at a time.
- **Be patient**. Allow your child time to process information.

Words and actions have great power in our children. Use them to inspire, support and drive them to be the adult you want them to become in the future.

Fortitude In Diverse Unity

Latio Cultures with Elena Miranda - Asian Cultures with Brenda Yang

Paternidad Positiva

By Elena Miranda

Ser padre de un niño con diferencias auditivas es por mucho la tarea más retadora que tenemos los padres en este camino, nos pone a prueba en muchos sentidos. Los conocimientos, decisiones, y manera de educar a nuestros hijos depende solo de nosotros los padres. No hay una fórmula mágica que nos ayude a desempeñar nuestro rol de padres de manera perfecta, pero si hay herramientas que nos ayudan en la educación y crianza de nuestros hijos, la Paternidad Positiva es una de ellas. La Paternidad Positiva es una manera de criar a nuestros hijos centrada en la conducta positiva más que en sus comportamientos problemáticos.

- **Amor Incondicional** separa a la persona del comportamiento, significa amar a alguien por quien es, los niños con diferencias de audición no son nada diferentes de los niños con audición típica, ellos necesitan igualmente del contacto físico, contacto visual, atención individual, empatía y amor incondicional.
- **Comprendiendo** al niño mal portado, el mal comportamiento en los niños ocurre cuando las necesidades del niño no son satisfechas. Un niño que busca atención generalmente necesita cubrir su necesidad de ser amado, un niño rebelde típicamente esta aburrido, un niño que lucha por el poder es porque tiene la necesidad de ser mas independiente. Provea a su niño acceso total a la

comunicación para que le deje saber a usted sus necesidades, sea empático en aprender el modo de comunicación de su niño con diferencias de audición. Así es que cuando nuestro niño se porte mal hay que preguntarnos ¿Cuál es su necesidad no cubierta?

- **Sea firme**, esto le permite su hijo saber qué esperar, le permite saber que usted habla en serio cuando dice algo y qué es consistente. A los niños les genera estrés y ansiedad si ellos no saben que sigue después, algunos presentan resistencia en la transición de una actividad a otra pues no saben que sigue, ellos viven en un mundo donde los adultos ponen las reglas.
- **Ofrecerle su hijo opciones** entre dos posibilidades le da una sensación de control, siempre y cuando esto sea posible, ¡hágalo! Tal vez que ropa vestir, elegir entre dos juegos de mesa cuál jugar, nada complicado.
- **Premiar un buen** comportamiento aumenta las posibilidades de que dicho comportamiento se repita, se recomienda que los premios sean simples, tal vez un abrazo, un elogio, un aplauso, etc.
- **Elija sus batallas** para trabajar en una sola cosa a la vez no se enfoque en todo lo que el niño hace mal.
- **Sea paciente** y permítale a su hijo tiempo para procesar la información que usted le da, ya sea una simple

petición o algo más complejo, si su hijo no responde atraiga su atención para que sepa que usted se está comunicando con él, repita el mensaje y después verifique si entendió su mensaje.

Las palabras y acciones tienen un gran poder en nuestros niños, úselos para inspirarlos, apoyarlos e impulsarlos, sea el adulto en el usted sea ellos se conviertan en el futuro.



Fatherhood: My Son's Hearing Difference Changed Me

By Brenda Yang



Santoy Lamar Randle is a father of two children. Santoy Jr. was born with Microtia/Aural Atresia.

As expected, Junior was tested for newborn screening, including auditory testing. Upon the failed results, Randle was overwhelmed and carried some grief until after their first audiology appointment. He realized that feeling sad or sorry for his son would not provide any source

of help. Randle decided to put his focus on his child's needs rather than his own grief. He came to terms with his son's hearing difference and took charge of their situation.

Ever since Junior was a newborn, Randle spent a lot of time excessively speaking and over enunciating words. Randle's goal was to expose a large vocabulary to Junior in his efforts to give him a head start in his education. Today, Junior is four years old and is currently attending school. He is eager to learn ASL every day in class. Randle and Junior enjoy doing projects and homework assignments together.

Randle's family is multi-racial and multi-lingual. He believes their cultural differences are an undeniable part of who they are. They speak English, Hmong, American Sign Language, and utilize speech reading. Randle loves that his children are being raised around a diversity of individuals that speak different languages who coexist and love one another.

"I've waited a long time to be a father and my son couldn't have been a more perfect newborn to allow me to start this journey of fatherhood. It has been a challenge and a joy raising Santoy Jr. It is an empowering feeling to learn and grow with him. Life isn't harder because of his hearing difference, actually it has enriched my life and given me a great sense of purpose." – Santoy Lamar Randle



Give a Hand to

Look what came to the MNHV office! These beautifully handmade blankets done by Mary McMenemy. We are grateful for her generous donation and these gorgeous blankets.

Pictured Left to Right: Robin Coninx, Mary McMenemy, and Sharice McMorris.



- SPOTLIGHT -

"Parenthood is about raising and celebrating the child you have, not the child you thought you'd have. It's about understanding your child is exactly the person they are supposed to be. And, if you're lucky, they might be the teacher who turns you into the person you're supposed to be."

MN Author Beth Leipholtz





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709 University Ave. W.
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NEWSLETTER

Minnesota Hands & Voices FOCUS Newsletter

April 2021



There are online and inperson camps available. Registration links are listed with each camp.

Disclaimer: Communications accommodations are part of the ADA. Camps, if requested to make accommodations, are required to do so by law unless they can prove financial hardship, or if they are a private entity and do not serve the public.

Camp Sertoma - Brainerd
July 11-16th, 2021

greatplainscampsertoma@gmail.com
www.campsertoma.com

**MN Deaf & Hard of Hearing
Children's Family Camp** - Onamia

June 21-25, 2021
mndhffc@gmail.com
<https://camponomia.com/brainregistration>
Text:507-384-7575

MN State Academies - Faribault
June 14-25, 2021 (Online)

pathwaystolife@msa.state.mn.us
"Pathways to Life Summer Transition Program"
www.msa.state.mn.us/1/content2/summer-transition-program

Gallaudet University

Between June 21 - July 9
"2021 Summer Youth Webinars"
www.gallaudet.edu
July 2021

Camp Catch Them Young
Leadership.Pipeline@gallaudet.edu

**Rochester Institute of
Technology**

Check out "Kids on Campus" at
<http://www.rit.edu/k12>

MN Conservation Corp

Hires 15-18 year old deaf hard of hearing youth from all over the United States to do environmental work in state and national parks.
www.conservationcorps.org
(651)209-9900

Camp UBU - Sioux Falls SD

June 27-July 2, 2021
campubu@gmail.com