

THE WISCONSIN COMMUNICATOR



CI/HA Legislation

We are currently putting together our lists of individuals that want to be actively involved in working on the hearing aid/cochlear implant legislation to be introduced in the next legislative session.

If you would be interested in helping make sure that the CI/HA legislation passes in the next session please contact us at handsandvoiceswi@yahoo.com.

Elections Held

At the April 12th meeting elections were held for new officers. The new officers are: President, Michelle Kihntopf; Vice-President, Laurie Nelson; Secretary, Alicia Boehme; Treasurer, Molly Martzke. The officers were elected to two year terms.

PARENT TO PARENT MATCH

As you know, parents of children with hearing loss provide invaluable support to each other by sharing experiences, frustration, knowledge, and joys. There is a common bond between parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Yet, many times parents are not able to discover this bond as they don't know where to turn to find other parents facing similar situations.

As a Wisconsin Families for Hands & Voices member you are invited to participate in our Parent-to-

Parent matching program. We will start by collecting information.

Depending upon your choice; we will then send you information from another family that matches your request, send your information to another family, or do both. This sharing of information will allow families to contact one another on their own. The information collected will only be released to other parents in the program.

If you are interested in being part of this exciting



project, please, fill out the required form at www.handsandvoiceswi.org/activities.html

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact us.

A IS FOR ACCESS PRESENTATION

Hands & Voices will be presenting "A is for Access" at St John School in Green Bay on May 19th at 6:00 pm.



"A is for Access" is a presentation designed to generate greater awareness of communication access issues for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. It is targeted to professionals as well as parents.

The presentation is being done in partnership with Hand-N-Hand of Green Bay, an organization that offers weekly playgroups and parent education.

If you would like more information about this event please contact us at handsandvoiceswi@yahoo.com or 920-609-7815.

WI Families for Hands & Voices

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We are on the web!
www.handsandvoices.org

Board Members

Michelle Kihntopf
President

Laurie Nelson
Vice President

Molly Martzke
Treasurer

Alicia Boehme
Secretary

Holly Bauer

Connie Breaker

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THE HANDS & VOICES STORY

In the early-1990s, the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C., was preparing an exhibit called "Silent America." It was intended to raise positive awareness of the Deaf Community, highlighting cultural and linguistic (American Sign Language) aspects of the Deaf experience. Meanwhile, a number of people who were deaf or hard of hearing, but who were not living with those aspects of the Deaf experience, had a problem with the exhibit. From their perspective, it did not represent who they were—specifically, listening/oral communicators. They resented what they perceived to be the exclusionary nature of Silent America's point of view. Controversy roiled across the land. Both camps fired off angry letters towards each other, and at the Smithsonian exhibit planners. In the end, the Smithsonian scrapped the whole project.

Regardless of what side any one was on, we all lost that battle.

We Are Hands & Voices

As individuals who are in so many ways connected to each other through deafness or hearing loss - professionally, parentally, or otherwise—we'd had an opportunity to rally around the things that unite us and really show the whole world, but instead we burned ourselves out in the same old heated arguments over communication methodology. Those events were the coming of age for Hands & Voices. Twelve years ago, we were just a fledgling Colorado parent support group (who would become Hands & Voices) watching the whole Silent America debacle take flame. It was incredible, as in 'not believable'. Why didn't they just ask us how to do this? Perhaps through natural selection or just by serendipity, our group was increasingly comprised of diversely communicating parents, professionals, and deaf and hard of hearing adults fully united by our cause. As we grew, we became galvanized by the need to create strength and unity in our community. Certainly, we're not the first or only who have ever wanted to accomplish that, but in many ways, joining all camps together towards a common goal continues to be the unique selling point of Hands & Voices.

Hands & Voices Goes National

At national conferences, through word of mouth referrals, and via our website, Colorado Families for Hands & Voices, our first and flagship chapter, got a lot of press. Here was a successful family support effort with a parent-driven agenda modeling true parent/professional collaboration—plus an unbiased approach to communication. Wow! Could this be replicated elsewhere?

In the beginning, we expanded our Colorado membership to anyone who wanted to join individually from other states. As people signed on, the next challenge was responding to the demand to start a "chapter" where they lived. Hands & Voices started growing so quickly that we were still developing a plan for 'How to Start a Chapter in Your State' after several "chapters" were already up and running!

As a national presence, Hands & Voices has been able to build a strong network of families, professionals in all related fields, state/federal tech support resources, modality-based groups, institutions of higher education, service providers, and consumers who are deaf or hard of hearing. We help each other by sharing ideas and advice, collaborating on projects, and passing on information of interest to each other. As our identity has grown, we've been able to leverage greater exposure and opportunity for new Hands & Voices chapters. Our efforts are as "grassroots" as they are "snowcap." From the bottom up and the top down, we are working on the issues at the local and national level towards achievement of our goal: improved educational and social outcomes for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Today, our membership continues to grow individually, and collectively with new chapters emerging not only across the U.S., but in other countries across the world.

NOTE: The Wisconsin Chapter was one of the original chapters and founded in 2003.