

WI Families for Hands & Voices

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"What works for your child is what makes the choice right"



HANDS & VOICES

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2013 Family Conference Recap

The Annual Statewide Professional / Family Conferences were held March 7-10, 2013 at the Radisson Paper Valley Hotel in Appleton. The Conference theme this year was "iSuperhero: Real Superheroes are not Superhuman!" Dr. Joseph M. Valente was our keynote presenter. There were nearly 100 families that attended the Family Conference and about 150 professionals who attended the Professional Conference this year!! As individuals and families came together from all over the state, we had a diverse group. All of the conference workshops, were offered in four languages: English; American Sign Language; Hmong; and Spanish. Interpreting and captioning made the Conference accessible to everyone.

Networking is one of the key goals at the Conference. There were "getting to know you discussion groups" so professionals, parents, grandparents and extended family members could

"It was wonderful seeing so many parents of deaf/hard of hearing children gathered together for the purpose of learning about what options there are out there for their deaf/hard of hearing child. Even though my husband and I are deaf and have a deaf daughter, we still learn so much from the Family Conference about all options that is available for our child. There are many right choices, but it is up to us as parents to decide on which right choice is the best for our child."

Jennifer Koehn

network with one another. Old friendships were renewed, and new friendships were made. This was also a great way to start the conference - new and old friends could connect throughout the weekend over shared experiences.

Dr. Valente is an Assistant Professor of Education at Pennsylvania State University and the Co-Director of the Center for Disability Studies and faculty in the Comparative and International Education Program. Dr. Valente is also the author of the research novel "d/Deaf and d/Dumb: A Portrait of a Deaf Kid as a Young Superhero." One of the key goals of Dr. Valente's session was to use the theme of "real superheroes are not superhuman" as a way to show children and adults how common comic narratives often have two kinds of superheroes - those with typical or superhuman alter egos. Dr. Valente explained how those comic book myths connect to his own story growing up Deaf and becoming a superhero storyteller. Dr. Valente used the superhero theme to illustrate that while we may accomplish superhero feats, we are still human; to expect perfection is not only unrealistic but also unhealthy and even harmful. Both children and their parents need to know that real superheroes are not superhuman, **real superheroes are human!** We are all superheroes, every day, doing our best in whatever ways we can!

Some of the workshops that were offered were: Early Relationships Matter: What Does this Mean for Learning to Communicate?; Discovering Schemata: Powerful Potential for Child, Parent, Professional; IFSP/IEP Personalities Toolbox; Bullying in the Halls of Academia; What Every Employer Wants: Soft Skills; Intervener Workshop-What Does this Mean for Your Deaf-Blind Child; Yes, Your Child CAN!; WSD: Q&A; Good G.R.I.E.F.; Your Child's Access: Extra-Curricular/Sporting/Public Events; iAccommodate; Uncommon Beauty: Crisis Parenting From Day One; My Child Has a Cochlear Implant(s) ... Let's Chat; Go Both Ways: Exploring Options to Empower Children; and Interpreting, C-Print, CART and TypeWell - What Works Best for You?" The presenters came from all over the nation and their dedication to our youth was inspiring to all attendees.

At the conference, there were volunteers from the Deaf community, the Deaf Mentor Program and students from interpreting training, deaf education, special education, and early childhood education university programs who assisted with the kids and other aspects of the programming. Mentoring opportunities for all kids were abundant, with role models who were deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind involved in every aspect of the Conference.

To Mainstream or Not to Mainstream?

I would like to share a personal story about my experience deciding to mainstream or not to mainstream our deaf daughter Emily. My husband, Mark, and I are both Deaf and were mainstreamed with sign language interpreters throughout our education. We were both mainstreamed during our college years as well. In spite of these similarities, our experiences were different. Mark's parents are deaf, which gave him lot of exposure to the Deaf culture and successful Deaf role models. He grew up going to the Wisconsin Lions Camp and had many opportunities to develop friends his age who were also deaf. Mark was the only deaf student in his high school. In spite of his success as a student, joining football, baseball and wrestling, Mark felt he was not able to be completely himself as a deaf person. On the other hand, I had minimal exposure to the Deaf culture and had no contact with any successful Deaf role models while growing up. Most of my friends at the time were hearing and not all of them knew sign language. Because of this, I chose not to attend the Wisconsin Lions Camp, unaware of the loneliness I felt was not something I had to live with every day. It wasn't until I graduated high school that I became aware that there was a rich and vibrant "Deaf world" and culture out there.

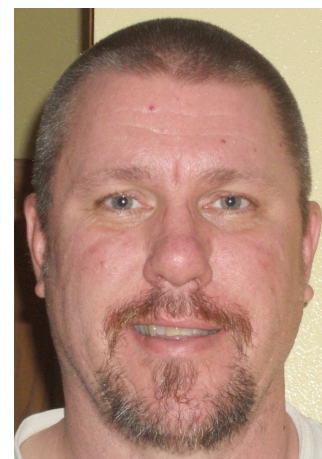
Just like every other parent, we want what is best for our child, Emily. Like everyone else, we took into account our personal experiences in determining to mainstream Emily or not. We want Emily to have the best education possible, to have all doors open to her, able to explore all of life's possibilities and above all be confident in her identity. In 2011, we decided to move from Milwaukee to Delavan in order to place Emily in the preschool at the Wisconsin School for the Deaf (WSD). We chose this course of action because we wanted her to be able to express herself in her primary language without communication barriers and to be exposed to the Deaf culture. Emily is now almost five years old and her language and self-confidence is flourishing. Because of this, we know we made the right decision.

Board Member Spotlight: Rob Gretzlock

I have been so blessed to be a part of something as wonderful as WI Families for Hands & Voices. The remarkable families that I have had the pleasure of meeting over the years and learning of their struggles, joys, tears and frustrations with the growth and development of their children has been very humbling to me as well as a wonderful learning experience.

My path in life has been altered greatly since the birth of my youngest, Samantha. Since her birth and diagnosis in April 2004, my life has been forever and blissfully changed. Sammy is hard of hearing and wears bilateral aids. She has a mild to moderate hearing loss. I have been married to my wife, Marcy, for ten years this fall and we reside in Verona, WI. I am also the father of Megan, Jordan, and Jacob.

Since 2005 I have been attending the Statewide Family Conference. For several years was involved with the parent planning committee of the conference. Through my involvement and active participation I was invited and accepted a position in the summer of 2010 to be on the Board of Directors for WI Families for Hands & Voices. I currently sit as the Vice President in charge of marketing, web site supervisor and sponsorship.



"Signs at the Zoo"

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2013

10:00AM – 2:00PM

HENRY VILAS ZOO

702 SOUTH RANDALL AVENUE

MADISON WI 53715

(Free admission)

Do you know the sign "Lion" or "Giraffe"? How about for "eat" or "sleep"? Spend the day with your family learning a few signs while looking at the animals at the zoo!

Partners: Office for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing, Access to Independence, Deaf Mentor Project, WAD, WESP-DHH Outreach, WisRID, UWM ITP.

-Volunteers will use the animal displays and concession stands to teach some signs.

-Entertainment throughout the day at the Education Pavilion!

-See children's books and music signed in ASL

-Watch the zoo's educational program with an interpreter

-Games/activities

-Scavenger hunt

-Facepainting

Please come and join us!!!!!!

Walk4Hearing

Please go to Milwaukee Walk4Hearing website online and read our stories and join or donate for WI Hands & Voices – Team Liam Anderson, Team Emily Koehn or Team Sammy Gretzlock!! Go to Walk4Hearing and click on Milwaukee, WI. Click on Find a walker or team. Click on Find a Walker and type in Liam Anderson or Emily Koehn or Sammy Gretzlock for First Name and Last name to join or donate for WI Hands & Voices.

WALK DETAILS

Date: Saturday, June 8, 2013

Location: Veterans Park

1010 N. Lincoln Memorial Dr.

Milwaukee, WI

Schedule:

9am – Registration/Check-in

10am – Walk begins

Distance: 5K (3.1 miles)



Renew Your Membership or become a member today!

2013

Hands & Voices WI Membership

Please circle one of the following

Parent of a deaf/HH child	\$25.00
Deaf /HH Adult	\$25.00
Student	\$25.00
Professional	\$40.00
Organization/agency	\$75.00
Additional Donation	\$_____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Method of Payment

Check _____ Scholarship _____

Become a Member/Renew Online!

Credit Card Payment NOW Accepted!

Please Visit:

<http://www.handsandvoiceswi.org/>

Or clip and mail to:

WI Families for Hands & Voices

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Our Mission:

Wisconsin Families for Hands & Voices is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting families statewide who have children who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind without bias around communication modes or methodology. We are a parent-driven organization providing families with the resources, networking and information they need to improve communication access and educational outcomes for their children. Our outreach activities, parent/professional collaboration and advocacy efforts are focused on enabling Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind children to reach their highest potential.

HELP OTHERS BY DONATING USED HEARING AIDS!

WI Families for Hands & Voices is now accepting hearing aids donations as part of a partnership with Starkey. If you have old hearing aids that are not being used and would like to make a charitable donation to help WI Hands & Voices....



Recycle now!

Call Michelle Kihntopf at 920-609-7815 for a self-addressed, stamped envelope to send to Starkey.



Recycle Old Hearing Aids Now!



Wow what a great adult panel. Very encouraging for parents with young children!

Marla Duncan

In addition, there was an exhibitor hall with organizations for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind, community and advocacy agencies, technology-related businesses, etc. The diversity in our exhibitors was great to see... Hands AND Voices!!

The entertainment this year was awesome!! On Friday night, we honored OUR KIDS and the outstanding professionals who serve them! We honored the kids who sent in their drawings for the "iSuperhero! Comic Book Challenge and we also honored the kids who participated in the Distant Pals Program. We also honored the professionals nominated for the "iSuperhero Professional Awards." On Saturday night, a Party Photo Booth (DreaminDJ Greg Navin) was set up so that everyone could take home a strip of photos for a Conference keepsake, and Jake Ciesielczyk DJ entertained all the kids with Fun with the DJ (ages 10 and below) and a Tween/Teen Dance (ages 11 and up). There were smiles all around!

Sunday concluded with an amazing panel discussion with six deaf/hard of hearing/deaf-blind individuals, Bryen Yunashko, Katie Voss, Ernest Garrett, III, Karen Dishno, Dr. Stephen Tang, and Jose Castillo. We had a diverse group of panelists, who shared their experiences and super-powers growing up. The deaf/hard of hearing/deaf-blind children, ages 9 and up, attended the panel discussion with their parents. We had a portable loop system available which provided access for the kids for perhaps the first time through a loop system which is activated in the t-coil switches in their hearing aids/cochlear implants.

The past State Family Conference was such a great experience for our family. Friday I had a terrific opportunity to meet with Linda Alsop, one of the presenters on deaf-blindness and also the instructor of the online class I am taking on interveners. She came in an hour early before her presentation on Saturday to work one-on-one with my son. She gave us helpful tips and suggestions but most importantly corrected how I was tactilely signing with my son. This change has made a big improvement on my son's ability to process and understand our communication. We are very grateful for the support and help we receive from the conference.

Jodi Anderson

We concluded with a performance by the kids from the Sign Song Dance Troupe (SSD) from WSD (Wisconsin School for the Deaf). Kids and parents alike enjoyed this amazing dance performance. What tremendous role models for our youth! It truly accompanied our theme "iSuperhero! Real Superheroes are not Superhuman."

WI Families for Hands & Voices appreciates the collaborative efforts with the WESP-DHH Outreach team. This year, WI Families for Hands & Voices provided:

- Coordination of the book sales (great thanks to members Marv & Nancy Meinholz & Sherry Kimball).
 - Scholarship coordination so all families could attend the Family Conference (thanks to Michelle Kihntopf).
 - Monetary donations recruitment – to all our members, especially Sam & Beth Hall and Marcy Dicker.
 - Silent auction donations – thanks to all our members! We raised nearly \$4,000!!
 - Silent auctions at both the Professional and Family Conferences (thanks to Michelle Kihntopf, Coordinator and Carol Petrina for helping on-site).
- All proceeds from the above sales went directly to the 2014 Scholarship Fund.

Thank you to all our members and individuals/businesses/organizations who donated to the auction/ raffle/ scholarship fund.

TOGETHER, we CAN make a difference!
Laurie Nelson, Family Conference Coordinator

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