

# WHAT NOW?

## Building Bridges Among Parents of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children



WVCDHH IS AN OFFICE WITHIN THE WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES

### ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF

What now? Well, first let me introduce myself. My name is Melinda Siler. I am 30 years old and married to a wonderful, supportive husband, Brad. I have three beautiful little girls: Miranda (8), Emily (7), and Becca (4). My youngest daughter, Becca, is hard of hearing. She has a moderate-severe loss. She is the reason I have decided to write, "WHAT NOW?"

You may ask why I titled this newsletter, "WHAT NOW?" Well, the reason is because I always seem to find myself asking this question where Becca is concerned. When we found out she had a hearing loss I asked myself, "what now?" When I found out how expensive hearing aids were and we didn't have enough money to purchase them I asked, "what now?" When early intervention services stopped at age 3 and she still needed speech therapy I asked, "what now?" The list goes on and on.

I found that everything is a guessing game when you are raising a deaf child. There are no set rules to follow. There are no right or wrong answers. There are just a lot of people with a lot of opinions. And somehow we as parents must sift through this information to do what's best for our child. Which can be quite overwhelming.

The purpose of "WHAT NOW?" is to better inform parents so they can make educated decisions regarding their deaf or hard of hearing child's future. I'm not saying this newsletter will provide answers, but I feel a great deal can be learned from other families with deaf or hard of hearing children by sharing stories and their personal experiences. Families reading "WHAT NOW?" will gain knowledge and understanding. They will learn to be good advocates for their deaf or hard of hearing child.

This newsletter will arrive four times a year. The WV Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing will print and mail this newsletter. Each issue will feature similar information: General Information, Personal Stories, Quotes that Count, Who Can Help?, Question/ Answer Session, Tip Corner, and Organizations.

To make this newsletter a success, I need your stories, personal experiences, questions, or just your thoughts. Please call or write me. My contact information can be found to the right of this column. I am eager to hear from you. Until then, I hope you enjoy this first issue.

January 2006

#### Inside this issue:

Personal Stories....	2
Quotes that.....	2
Who Can Help?.....	2
Question/ Answer.	3
Tip Corner.....	3
MUGC.....	3
Organizations.....	4



West Virginia  
Commission for the Deaf  
and Hard of Hearing

#### Newsletter Coordinator:

Melinda Siler  
Rt. 3 Box 17-1  
Parsons, West Virginia  
26287  
(304) 478-3814  
[whatnowmelinda@yahoo.com](mailto:whatnowmelinda@yahoo.com)  
Board Member, WVCDHH

## PERSONAL STORIES: "What do you say to that?"

All of us have stories and situations that we have had to deal with. Maybe your story will help someone else in a similar situation. Send me your personal story at the address on page one of this newsletter.

I have so many stories to tell that it is hard to pick just one. But there is one story that sticks in my mind that infuriates me every time I think about it.

One particular day, a few months after we found out Becca had a hearing loss, we went to the grocery store. (Now mind you, I live in a small town where everybody knows you and word gets around.) Becca and I were minding our own business when an older lady approached us looking

rather somber. She gave us a little smile and said, "Hi, how are you?" and we exchanged greetings. When finished, she glanced at Becca then back at me. Then looking sad again she said, "I heard about your daughter. I am soooo sorry." NOW WHAT DO YOU SAY TO THAT?!

I know the lady was trying to be nice and sympathetic, but there are better ways to approach the subject. Why is she sorry? Is sympathy really what people feel when they find out someone is deaf or hard of hearing? That life is over. That he or she should be pitied?

Her comment opened my eyes. Before that moment I did feel sorry for Becca. I was treating her differ-

ently than my other two girls. And I always justified it by thinking, "My poor Becca has a hearing loss, she doesn't understand."

Whatever you do, do not fall into this way of thinking. It is one of the worst mistakes you could make for your deaf child's future. Your child does not need your pity, nor is her life over. In fact, the contrary is true. A wonderful new world is awaiting, not only for your deaf child but for the whole family.

So, what do you say to that? How about, "Don't be sorry for her. She is happy, healthy, and loved just like every other child I know."

By: Melinda Siler

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## "QUOTES" THAT COUNT!

"A hearing-impaired child is a person first - with all the physical, emotional, and intellectual needs of a hearing child. Do not let the hearing impaired condition be the focus of your child's personality." -*You and Your Hearing-Impaired Child*, by John W. Adams, Clerc Books, Gallaudet University, 1995.

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## WHO CAN HELP? SPOTLIGHT ON WVCDHH

The mission of the West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (WVCDHH) is to advocate for, develop, and coordinate public policies, regulations, and programs to assure full and equal opportunity for persons who are deaf and hard of hearing in West Virginia. The WVCDHH is a wonderful statewide resource. We sponsor a Deaf Tech Fair each May, host a variety of workshops for interpreters and educators, teach signing, provide TTYs and amplified phones to qualified individuals, and work together with other organizations and agencies to reach out to West Virginia residents who are deaf or hard of hearing, their families, service providers, and friends.

As another way to reach families, the WVCDHH is proud to sponsor the quarterly publication of *What Now?* Melinda Siler's concept for *What Now?* is to create bridges for parents of these children, linking parents with resources that can be beneficial to families, schools, and communities. Because she is the parent of a hard of hearing child, Melinda has first-hand experience at building those bridges and finding the connections that can make navigating unfamiliar territory easier. Developing and coordinating this publication is a heart-felt venture for Melinda, a board member of the WVCDHH, because she believes that sharing experiences and resources will ultimately benefit everyone participating in the opportunity of raising a child who is deaf or hard of hearing.

I hope that you will find *What Now?* informative and encouraging. If you are interested in receiving *What Now?* or *Signing Times*, the quarterly newsletter of the WVCDHH, by mail, please contact the WVCDHH at 866.461.3578 (v/tty), 304.558.2923 (videophone), or email [karipreslar@wvdhhr.org](mailto:karipreslar@wvdhhr.org). The newsletter will also be posted on the WVCDHH website at [www.wvdhhr.org/wvcdhh](http://www.wvdhhr.org/wvcdhh). Questions and comments are welcome. We hope to hear from you soon!

Happy Holidays! Deanna Stone, Executive Director

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# QUESTION/ANSWER SESSION

## Questions Anyone?

Do you have a question you cannot find the answer to or maybe you are just curious about something?

Please send your questions to:

Melinda Siler

Rt. 3, Box 17-1

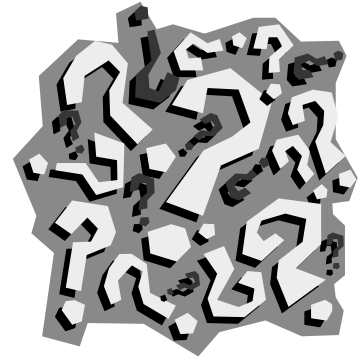
Parsons, WV 26287

Send e-mails to:

[WhatnowMelinda@yahoo.com](mailto:WhatnowMelinda@yahoo.com)

I will find an expert to answer your questions.

All names will remain anonymous.



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## TIP CORNER: The Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

### Tips for your next IEP meeting

1. Always be prepared!
2. Research your child's disability.
3. Learn what the experts say about educating a child who is deaf or hard of hearing.
4. Speak up!
5. Ask questions if you don't understand.
6. If your child is old enough, let him/her attend the meeting.
7. Get to know your child's teacher, speech/language pathologist, interpreter—this will build positive relationships.

Follow these simple steps and you will be better able to make decisions regarding your child's education at your next IEP meeting.

A wise person once told me, "Knowledge is POWER!"

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!    KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!    KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!    KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!

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## MARSHALL UNIVERSITY GRADUATE COLLEGE (MUGC)

### SIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES

The Marshall University Graduate Program doesn't only certify teachers in the field of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education, but also offers sign language classes for parents, interpreters, speech/language pathologists, para-professionals and others working with children who are deaf or hard of hearing. These classes are offered for a two-week period every summer. You can find additional information online:

<http://www.marshall.edu/gsepd/asl.asp>

MUGC is also beginning a course titled, "Sign Language for Educators" on the Marshall University Graduate College's South Charleston Campus this spring. This course will be for regular education teachers, special education, and other teachers wanting to learn sign! This class will meet once a week.



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT  
Molly R. Simonton  
Director, Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
Teacher Certification Program  
Marshall University Graduate Program  
Phone: V (304) 746-1957  
Phone: TTY (304) 746-8980  
E-mail: [stedman@marshall.edu](mailto:stedman@marshall.edu)



**West Virginia Commission  
for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing**  
Capitol Complex, Bldg. 6, Room 836  
Charleston, West Virginia 25305  
(304) 558-1675 v/tty  
Toll Free (866) 461-3578 v/tty



West Virginia Commission  
for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
An office within the West Virginia  
Department of Health and Human Resources

Joe Manchin III, Governor  
Martha Yeager Walker, Secretary

## ORGANIZATIONS WITH INFORMATION AVAILABLE ONLINE:

### WV Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR)

[www.wvdhhr.org](http://www.wvdhhr.org)

#### **Bureau of Children and Families**

*Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies*

Telephone: (304) 558-0628

[www.wvdhhr.org/bcf](http://www.wvdhhr.org/bcf)

#### **Children with Special Health Care Needs**

Telephone: (304) 558-5388

Toll Free: (800) 642-9704

[www.wvdhhr.org/cshcn](http://www.wvdhhr.org/cshcn)

#### **Family Support Services**

Telephone: (304) 558-0627

[www.wvdhhr.org/bhhf/famsup1.asp](http://www.wvdhhr.org/bhhf/famsup1.asp)

#### **Medicaid**

[www.wvdhhr.org/bms](http://www.wvdhhr.org/bms)

#### **WV Birth to Three**

Telephone: (304) 558-5388

Toll Free In State: V/TDD (800) 642-8522

[www.wvdhhr.org/birth23](http://www.wvdhhr.org/birth23)

### WV Department of Education (DOE)

<http://wvde.state.wv.us>

#### **Office of Special Education Services**

Telephone: (304) 558-2696

Toll Free: (800) 642-8541

<http://wvde.state.wv.us/ose>

#### **Parent Educator Resource Centers (PERC)**

Telephone: (304) 558-2696

Toll Free: (800) 642-8541

<http://wvde.state.wv.us/ose/percs>

#### **West Virginia School for the Deaf**

(304) 822-4800

<http://wvsdb.state.k12.wv.us>

### US Department of Education

[www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov)

#### **Office of Special Education Programs**

[www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep)

#### **Office of Special Education and Rehabili- tative Services (OSERS)**

[www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers)

### *Other Important Organizations*

#### **Preschool SKI\*HI Program**

Telephone: (304) 822-4843

<http://wvsdb.state.k12.wv.us>

#### **WV Division of Rehabilitation Services**

Telephone: (304) 766-4965

[www.wvdrs.org](http://www.wvdrs.org)

#### **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)**

[www.social-security-disability-benefits.com](http://www.social-security-disability-benefits.com)

#### **Women Infants and Children (WIC)**

[www.wvdhhr.org/ons/wic.asp](http://www.wvdhhr.org/ons/wic.asp)

#### **WV Advocates Inc**

Telephone: v/TDD (304) 346-0847

Toll Free: (800) 950-5250

[www.wvadvocates.org](http://www.wvadvocates.org)

#### **WV Children's Health Insurance Program**

Telephone: v/TDD (877) WV-CHIP

[www.wvchip.org](http://www.wvchip.org)

#### **WV Head Start Association**

Telephone: (304) 233-4450

[www.wvhsa.org](http://www.wvhsa.org)