

# WHAT NOW?

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



### Accepting Your Child's Disability

APRIL 2006

You just found out your child is deaf or hard of hearing, so what now? Well first and possibly the most important thing you can do is accept your child's hearing loss.

No parent wants to believe something is wrong with their child. It is the worst feeling in the world when the audiologist verifies what you may have been suspecting all along, that your child is not "perfect." All of your hopes and dreams you had for your child are dashed. You feel a horrible sense of loss that you can't seem to shake. Every time you look at your child you have to hold back tears because all you can think about are the things they will never hear, or the things they will never do. When you have a few minutes to yourself all you can do is cry, cry, and cry some more.

When you finally pass the crying stage then come the feelings of inadequacy as a parent, despair and loneliness. How do I help my child? What am I going to do? I don't have time to deal with learning a new language, etc. I don't know any other families who have a child with a hearing loss. I don't know who to talk to or where to find answers. Then come the feelings of being overwhelmed, and this is when your whole

world may begin to crumble.

At this point, you can do one of two things:

1. You can either fall into denial, or
2. You can accept your child's deafness and move on.

If you chose denial then you might reason: "If I pretend the deafness does not exist, then it will go away." Or you might think, "My child's hearing loss isn't that bad, my child doesn't need help, he/she will be fine." Or maybe you just still refuse to believe your child is not "perfect." In the case of denial, your child loses. Your child may struggle with education, loneliness, and inadequacy for the rest of his/her life because your child will not receive the help he/she needs.

However, if you chose to accept your child's deafness then the road to healing can begin. You are ready to do whatever it takes to help your child. When you chose to accept the deafness not only your child benefits, but so does the entire family. Not until you accept your child's deafness can you see that your child IS "perfect" after all. When you accept your child's deafness, everybody wins.



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# PERSONAL STORIES: "Little one v/s little worm!?"



My daughter Becca and I were waiting in a checkout line one day when a woman behind us began to make small talk. She chatted with Becca for a little bit and of course Becca was smiling and shaking her head up and down like she understood every word being said. I was in a hurry that day and didn't take the time to tell the woman that Becca was hard of hearing, nor did I take the time to sign what the woman was saying to her. As I checked out and was leaving the store the woman called out after us, "Bye little one." Becca didn't respond, so I turned and waved at the woman and walked out the door. When I looked down at Becca to take her hand, I noticed she

had a very serious look on her face. She looked very upset and I couldn't figure out why. I didn't take the time to ask her what was wrong. (Remember, I was in a hurry). A few seconds later Becca looked up at me and angrily said, "Mommy, why dah woman call me widdle wo(r)m?" I felt horrible! I said and signed to Becca, "no, no, the woman did not say little worm, she said little one. The woman said little ONE."

Wow. What a difference one little word can make. My daughter almost went through life thinking she was a "little worm." I'm thankful she spoke up so I could clear up the confusion, but at the same time I think if I wouldn't have been in such a

hurry and would have signed the words for her, she wouldn't have misunderstood in the first place.

Oh well, I can beat myself up about it, or I can learn from it. In the future, if I'm in a hurry, I need to take the time to interpret for my child. It can be the difference between being a LITTLE ONE, or a LITTLE WORM!

*{All of us have stories and situations that we have had to deal with. Your stories may be funny, sad, inspirational or informative. What ever your story may be, it could help another parent in a similar situation. Please send me your personal stories at the address on the front page of this newsletter.}*

## "QUOTES" that Count

"Deafness is an integral part of your child. It is imperative that you accept the deafness and come to see the beauty of it. Your child's self esteem is a reflection of the image you hold of him or her."

*-from Keys to Raising a Deaf Child, by Virginia Frazier-Maiwald and Lenore M. Williams, M.A.*

## WHO CAN HELP?



## SPOTLIGHT ON WV 211

### WV 2-1-1

Do you know about WV 211? 2-1-1 is an easy to remember telephone number that connects people with important community services. One call gives you access to resources across your community. This service is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

How can this service help you? Let's say you just found out your child is deaf or hard of hearing and you are not sure what to do or where to go for help. Or maybe your child needs hearing aides and you can't afford them and you do not know where to turn for help. All you have to do is dial 2-1-1. A friendly operator will answer your call and ask a few brief questions, such as, what county do you live in? He or she will then transfer your call to an operator who has all the information available of the services and organizations in your area that can help.

# INTERVIEW WITH A MOTHER

by Melinda Siler

The following is an interview I had with a mother from Huttonsville, WV. She has a son with a severe/profound hearing loss.

## How did you feel when you first found out your son was deaf?

*"All of our expectations for him were gone. I thought what is going to happen next. And to make matters worse, the Audiologist who did the ABR told us we needed to move away from WV, because there was nothing for him here, and then we were told not to even try hearing aides."*



## What did you do next?

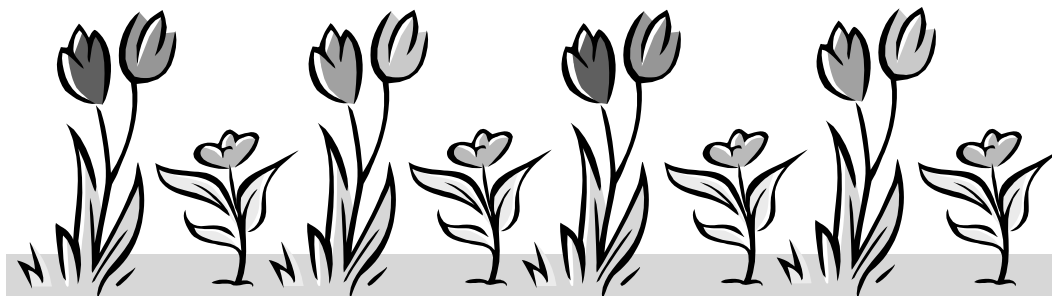
*"I basically fell apart. I kept thinking he would never be able to hear the things we take for granted. I thought what are we going to do?"*

## What finally helped you to accept your son's hearing loss?

*"I realized he needs me now more than ever. He needs help now. I found out how important early intervention is from a teacher of the deaf in our area. I also found books about grieving and they stressed the importance of moving on."*

## What would you say to other parents who are having problems accepting their child's deafness?

*"You have to be the ears for your child. If you are not, then they are lost. It's as if they are locked away and you are throwing away the key."*



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

Did you know you only have to wait 10 days to call another IEP meeting? If you are not happy with the results of your child's IEP meeting, take time to cool down, research, gather information, then call a new meeting. It doesn't do anybody any good to enter into a heated debate that ends in bitterness and frustration. It just makes your next meeting that much more uncomfortable. Remember, you can catch more bees with honey than you can with vinegar.

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



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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

## STATEWIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUPPORT AND LEARNING

### COCHLEAR CLUB

The Cochlear Club is for parents of deaf children. Monthly meetings include children and other family members to provide an opportunity for informal discussions about deafness and cochlear implants. The club sometimes invites guest speakers. They are located in Harrison County. All are welcome to attend. Contact Janean Oliverio at (304) 842-7370 or Allison Cunningham at (304) 783-4916.

### FREE SIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES

Do you want to learn sign language or brush up on your skills? The Division of Rehabilitation Services in Institute offers free classes. If interested call (304) 766-4809 or (304) 766-4884. Or visit the website at:

[http://www.wvdhhr.org/wvcdhh/  
Sign%20Language%20classes/  
wv\\_rehab\\_classes.htm](http://www.wvdhhr.org/wvcdhh/Sign%20Language%20classes/wv_rehab_classes.htm)



### MARSHALL UNIVERSITY

Marshall University is offering graduate or undergraduate ASL I, ASL II, and ASL III courses for parents, teachers, and other professionals this summer. These courses will be offered on the campus of the West Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind in Romney for a two-week time period in June. Free room and board is offered by Superintendent Jane McBride to all those in need for both weeks of the course. For more information, contact Molly Simonton at (304) 746-1957 or by email [stedman@marshall.edu](mailto:stedman@marshall.edu).