

WHAT NOW?

Building Bridges Among Parents of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children



How Do I Raise a Successful Deaf Child?

April 2007

by Melinda Siler

When I first found out my daughter was hard of hearing, I thought that her future was grim. Wow, has she ever proved me wrong! She is the most independent, determined child I have ever seen. She is not afraid to try anything by herself.

Last summer, when Becca was 5, my dad told all of the grandchildren (nine total) that if they could climb the 30 foot flag pole in his yard and touch the ball on top then he would give them \$10.

After many attempts, only one of the older grandkids made it to the top. Then Becca decided to try. I wasn't concerned because I knew with her being so small she wouldn't be able to climb it all the way to the top. She hopped on the pole and began climbing and climbing and climbing.

The higher she got the more worried I became. I was scared to death that she would fall. I wanted to tell her she couldn't do it but I didn't want to discourage her. As she climbed I watched

through tears afraid she might slip. My dad, husband and brother were all circled around the bottom ready to catch her if she did. I continued to watch and when she got about three-quarters of the way up I couldn't take it anymore. I began yelling for her to stop and come down. My dad kept assuring me, "She's OK, just let her go." "But she might fall, Dad, she's getting tired!" I yelled again, "Becca, come down now!" But she couldn't hear me. She kept right on going, determined she was going to climb that blasted pole.

Well, she did climb the pole, touched the ball and triumphantly descended to the bottom with a huge smile on her face. I gave her a hug with my trembling arms and told her how proud I was of her. She was the second grandchild to climb the pole that day, and my dad gave her \$10.

So how do you raise a successful deaf child? I am still in the process of raising one, but after the

flagpole drama, I feel I must be on the right path. I can tell you what I have learned so far. Do not pity, ignore, give special treatment or make excuses for your deaf or hard of hearing child. If you pity her, you will have a child with no self-confidence. (I'm not even going to try to climb that flagpole because I know I can't do it. I'm not like other children.) If you ignore him, you will have a child with low self-esteem. (Even if I climb that pole it won't count because I'm hearing impaired). If you give special treatment, you will have a child that will expect everyone else to treat him/her special. (I don't have to climb the flagpole because I will get the \$10 anyway. My grandpa feels sorry for me because I'm hearing impaired). If you make excuses for your child, you will have a child that makes excuses for him/herself. (I would climb the pole, but I'm deaf and I lose my balance easily).



Inside this issue:

Personal Stories	2
Youth Caucus	3
Summer Program	3
Who Can Help	3
Quotes that Count	4



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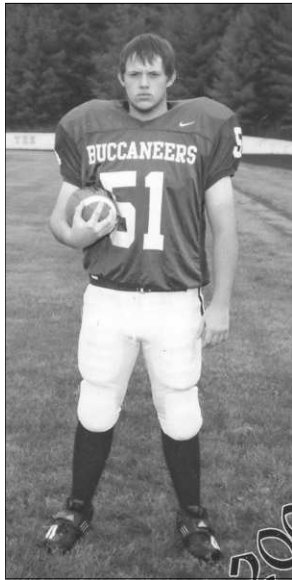
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See Successful-Page 4

Personal Stories: Overcoming Odds to Play Football

[Note: The following are stories of two very successful deaf young men in our state. Their stories made their local newspapers. Thanks to Melissia Lamb (Corey's mom) and the School for the Deaf for allowing us to share their stories. They are an inspiration to us all.]

Riffle a Special Player on B-U Football Squad



Buckhannon-Upshur defensive lineman Corey Riffle enjoyed a solid senior season both defensively and on the Buccaneer special teams this past fall. As a hearing-impaired student athlete, Corey's saga is an amazing story.

Through the cooperative efforts of teammates, coaches and his interpreter, the 6-foot, 204-pound lineman showed steady improvement throughout his high school career. His hard work paid off making him a valuable member of the Buccaneer team.

"Corey has always been a very active child. He loved being outdoors, and since he was an only child, his father and I were playmates," Corey's mom, Melissia Lamb said. "I can remember playing baseball and passing footballs with him for hours when he was younger."

Sarah Hollen, Corey's interpreter, strolled the sidelines with the coaches signing all of the information to Corey. His teammates also played a big role. Several of his teammates learned to sign which helped in Corey's playing. Since Corey couldn't hear whistles or crowd noise, his teammates would let him know what was happening.

Corey has been contacted by Gallaudet University in Washington, DC, an institution for the deaf and hard of hearing that offers intercollegiate athletics. It is an opportunity that he is looking into.

WVSD Lion Turned Trojan Completes Career

The 2006 football season ended with a home game victory on senior night at Hampshire (County) High School and it also included a bit of history. The largest senior with the largest smile stood in front of the home crowd with his parents and his interpreter to conclude four consecutive seasons of football as a Trojan.

Terry Withrow fulfilled a dream by becoming the first West Virginia School for the Deaf (WVSD) student to be a member of the football team for four years.

The 17-year-old lineman from Charleston was honored during the football banquet with a framed and signed certificate from Hampshire High School signifying his accomplishments.

Terry is also a member of the basketball team at WVSD as well as the school's top scoring archery team member. He is involved in Future Farmers of America, Future Business Leaders of America, Tapestry and Skills USA.

Hopefully, Terry has set a standard for other hard-of-hearing and deaf athletes to follow. He has given up summer vacations, homegoings, recreational time and trips with classmates to be a proud member of the HHS football squad for the past four seasons.



Terry Withrow is joined by other WVSD students who played on the 2006 Hampshire Trojans team. Standing, left to right: Roderick Stickley (freshman), Justin Rhodes (senior), Terry Withrow (senior) and Justin Gregory (trainer/WVSD manager). Kneeling, left to right: interpreters Barry Nealis, Tim Slocum and David Nestor.

West Virginia Youth Disability Caucus

The West Virginia Statewide Independent Living Council (WVSILC) will host the WV Youth Disability Caucus June 15-18 at the Charleston Marriott Hotel. All youth, ages 16-21, with a disability, are invited to submit an application to be selected as a delegate to the Caucus.

This is the second WV Youth Disability Caucus and it is designed to expose youth with disabilities to the concept of disability pride, expand knowledge of what a disability is, help delegates set goals, teach them about organizations and systems that exist to support them as people with disabilities, and provide an opportunity to connect with mentors and community leaders. The participants will also learn the legislative process and get hands on experience in a mock legislative session at the State Capitol.

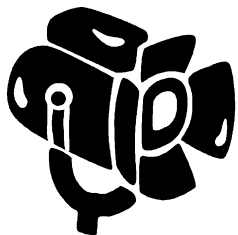
The skills and information Caucus delegates gain will be used to set goals and make decisions about their futures. Delegates to the first Caucus, held in 2005, used the skills and knowledge they gained to write, work, and secure passage of legislation to establish the third week of October as "Disability History Week." This effort resulted in the first such legislation and designation in the country.

For more information, please call the West Virginia Statewide Independent Living Council at 1-800-642-8207, ext. 4624.

School for the Deaf Summer Enrichment Program

The West Virginia School for the Deaf will sponsor a Summer Enrichment Program July 15-20, 2007, on the campus in Romney. The free program is open to all students with hearing impairments entering grades 5-12 in the fall of 2007. (Students in grades 3-4 may be accepted on a limited basis. Call for information.)

This year's theme is Super Safari. Students will have opportunities to research jungle creatures, visit a zoo or game park, make Safari-themed arts and crafts and learn about other cultures. Housing will be in the school's dorms under the supervision of residential living counselors. The deadline for enrollment is May 18. Contact Dr. Patsy Shank at the School for the Deaf, (304) 822-4840, for an application and for more information.



**WHO
CAN
HELP?**

Children's Literature on DVD in Sign

Remember how Captain Kangaroo used to read books to the audience? The camera came in over his shoulder, focused on the book, lingering lovingly on the details of each page. Then we'd see the Captain turn the page and invite the camera in once again. Now there's a company that has taken that idea and created DVDs for children.

Once Upon a Sign has taken several children's classics and put them on DVD. The goal is to help young readers easily make the print-to-sign connection and to stimulate an early love of literature, while building vocabulary and teaching sign to those watching the DVDs. Each book is signed and includes a separate vocabulary enhancement section to reinforce the use of sign.

To see what books are available, visit the website at www.onceuponasign.org or by mail, Once Upon a Sign, P.O. Box 121, Marcos, CO 81328, phone (970) 533-7484.



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SUCCESSFUL-Continued from Page 1

A lot of parents feel they do not know how to raise a deaf child, let alone a successful one. I feel that the most important thing you can do at this point is treat your deaf child like you would any other child. Deaf or hard of hearing children need your love, encouragement and support. They need to be disciplined and have responsibilities. They need to feel pride in themselves. They need to have a sense of accomplishment just like any other hearing child. If you can do this, then you are laying a good foundation for a successful deaf child.

As for Becca, I am thankful that on the day she climbed the flag pole she did not hear me trying to discourage her. She did not hear me telling her to quit. I learned an important lesson that day. Even if I am scared or worried, I must let go and be the first one to cheer her on in whatever things she wants to try. If she fails I need to be the first one to encourage her to try again. I have noticed one major thing whenever I see or hear about a successful deaf or hard of hearing child.....there is always a dedicated parent backing them up, willing to go that one extra mile.

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN (IEP)

According to policy 2419, a parent has the right to request an independent evaluation of their child at the cost of the school, however the school must approve of the person doing the evaluation. So if you and your school are in disagreement as to what type of services your child may need and no common ground can be found, go ahead and request an independent evaluation be done on your child.

**“QUOTES”
THAT
COUNT**

"Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all."

- Dale Carnegie