



NEWSLETTER
SPRING/SUMMER 2003

INDEPENDENTLY MERGING
PARENT ASSOCIATIONS
OF CALIFORNIA

Together for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Kids

1-877-322-7299

WWW.DEAFKIDS.ORG

'OHANA: THE SPIRIT OF FAMILY CONFERENCE 2003

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IMPACT Newsletter
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organization.



*IMPACT Teachers of the Year Paula Fabila (left) and
Linda Ross (center)*

San Diego, CA – Anything compelling enough to keep hundreds of conference attendees away from the beach must have been something special, indeed. That's not to say that there weren't a few walking around the conference with sand crusted between their toes – how could one resist, given the gorgeous weather? – but the real attraction was the 2003 Cal-Ed / Impact Conference: Our Children, Our Community, Our Future.

The word 'Ohana – "family", in Hawaiian – was chosen as a sort of mantra for this year's conference. The idea is that it takes participation from each of our member communities – families, professionals, and the Deaf community – to raise a deaf or hard of hearing child. All elements of the conference were connected to the idea of 'Ohana as a kind of central hub: each spoke, each community, is critical if the wheel is to rotate properly.

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WWW.DEAFKIDS.ORG

What is IMPACT?

IMPACT is an organization of parents, teachers and professionals serving deaf and hard of hearing children. Our organization was established in 1986 with 12 parents and has a current membership of over 400. We are supported and encouraged by a host of organizations serving the deaf community. IMPACT's purpose is to meet the needs of the parents we serve.

IMPACT Mission Statement

We as parents, members and professionals of the deaf and hard of hearing community are rising up as a single voice. Regardless of communication modalities, we stand united in the task of getting the very best for our children. We will take no less than quality education for our children, support and early intervention for our families, information and education for our parents.

Support IMPACT

IMPACT needs your support to continue advocating on behalf of you and your deaf or hard of hearing child. We currently offer four levels of membership. For as little as \$30 a year, you can support our efforts and qualify for a registration discount at our annual Cal-Ed/IMPACT conference. All members of IMPACT also receive a copy of the IMPACT newsletter mailed directly to their homes.

If you would like to learn more about IMPACT or need this organization's assistance in any matter related to your child's education, please feel free to contact us at 1-877-322-7299 or visit www.deafkids.org.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

AB 1017

This bill, commencing with the 2004-05 school year, would set forth hiring criteria for purposes of hiring an individual as a certificated employee to instruct deaf pupils at public schools or at the California School for the Deaf. It would establish a hiring preference for certificated individuals who achieve a minimum score of 4 on the American Sign Language Proficiency Index (ASLPI) or an equivalent score on the Sign Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI) or on an alternate test, as specified.

The bill would also prohibit an individual from being hired as a certificated employee to instruct deaf pupils, unless the individual achieves a specified minimum score on one of those assessments. The bill would also establish hiring preferences, based on scores received on those assessments, for substitute teachers who are hired to instruct deaf pupils.

Finally, the bill would require a certificated employee who instructs deaf pupils and who has not achieved a minimum score of 4 on the ASLPI or an equivalent score on the SCPI or the alternate test to retake the assessments every three years as specified. The bill would require the employer to reimburse a certificated employee for the assessment fee if the employee receives a minimum score of 4 on the ASLPI or an equivalent score on the SCPI or the alternate test. By imposing new duties on school districts, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

AB 640

This bill would provide that state special schools are eligible to apply for and receive categorical funds in the same manner as school districts and county offices of education.



Clockwise from top left: Parent Links consultants Irene Tecson, Virginia Foletta, Wendy Keedy, Bonnie Burlison, and Sandra Parks

The feeling of being connected or linked may be one of life's sweetest moments – when someone understands you, really understands you, because they have “been there”.

If you would like to be a volunteer Link (resource, friend, seasoned parent) for a family just finding out that their baby is deaf or hard of hearing, please fill out the attached form and return it to :

PARENTLINKS
4708 Roseville Rd. Suite 112
North Highlands, CA 95660

Additional information about Key Parent Links will be sent to you.

Name:

Address:

Phone:

E-Mail:

Age of your deaf/hard of hearing child:

School/Program your child attends:

Program funded by The California Endowment



A program of the California Coalition of
Agencies Serving the
Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc.

MY BABY IS DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING... NOW WHAT?

by Sandy Harvey
Parent Links Coordinator

In the days, weeks and even months following the identification of your baby's hearing loss, you may feel like you are on a roller-coaster. Your feelings may fluctuate from despair to hope, from sadness to anger, from feeling incompetent to feeling confident. Some families tell us that when their child's hearing loss was first identified, one parent was immobilized while the other parent was able to act. Later these roles were reversed. As you go about your daily life, cleaning the house, cooking dinner, driving to your doctor's appointments, you may realize that your mind was somewhere else! You were thinking about your child, his/her deafness and what you should do.

Your audiologist will make recommendations: get a hearing aid earmold made, get referred to an Early Intervention Specialist, have more testing done. As you follow these recommendations, you will meet professionals who can help answer some of your questions. The information they give you and opinions they express may also create more questions and perhaps some confusion for you! Now that your child's hearing loss has been identified, knowing that you may not have all the answers — and dealing with the conflicting opinions that different people may provide — can be tremendously challenging.

There is no one course of action that is right for every family. Only you can define what is right for you and your baby. And what is right today may not feel right in six months. Keep in mind that almost every decision you make can be changed down the road. Knowing that most of the decisions you make today do not have to last forever can help relieve the pressure you are feeling. Research has shown that identification of hearing loss, followed by early intervention services is the most effective strategy for language development regardless of:

- Degree of hearing loss
- Gender
- Presence of secondary disability
- Socioeconomic status or
- Mode of communication

Families want to gather information that will help them make good decisions. Other parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing are always happy to share their experiences, and can tell you who and what has been most helpful to them. Parent Links Consultants can help you too. They are aware of most services and programs in California. Since the Consultants are all parents of deaf or hard of hearing children themselves they may have experienced some of the same feelings that you are experiencing and are ready to listen!

Making decisions is always more difficult when emotions are involved. STOP... Take a deep breath, touch and smell that baby of yours. For a few minutes just enjoy that little bundle of joy! Look into your baby's eyes and appreciate the fact that this little miracle is so precious. Then ask yourself these questions:

- Do you understand what services and programs are being recommended, or do you need further information?
- Do you know what the positives and the negatives are for each recommendation?
- Does it sound like something that will work for you and your family?
- What have you done today that will help your baby develop language?

The Parent Links program is generously funded by The California Endowment. The program provides links to services, programs, information and parent-to-parent support for families with infants and toddlers, birth to age three throughout the state. For further information, call toll-free at (877) 322-7299 and press option #4.

'OHANA - 2003 CONFERENCE

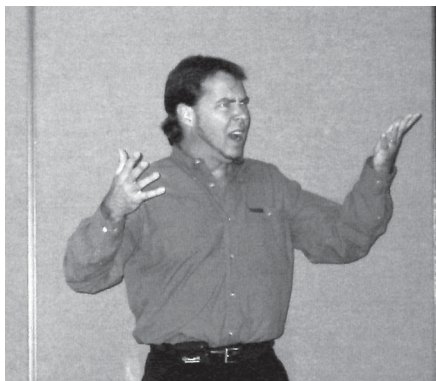
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For the first time in several years, I attended the conference as a teacher – not as a board member or volunteer, as with recent conferences. I arrived in San Diego on Friday afternoon, just in time for the Early Intervention SIG (Special Interest Group). The opportunity to share experiences and ideas with other teachers from around the state was exhilarating. In a way, it was a microcosm of the many issues facing deaf education in the state right now – educational interpreters, A/V therapists, “special needs” deaf and hard-of-hearing children. As with so many complex issues, solutions are elusive...but open discussion is always a good place to start. I have to say it was encouraging to see the level of expertise and caring going into the education of our little ones, and the level of involvement, resiliency and dedication demonstrated by so many of the families we work with.

The keynote presentation by Dr. Judith Coryell and Dr. Thomas Holcomb, using 'Ohana as a centerpiece, was light-hearted and enjoyable – the spirit of cooperation between the different partners in a child's education was just the right note to hit, in my opinion.



I was particularly fascinated by Dr. Sam Supalla's keynote address on Saturday morning. Just over a year ago, I had attended a workshop in Fresno given by Dr. Supalla and his associates; they claimed to have developed a totally new way of teaching deaf children to read. While skeptical, I was very curious to learn more; really, truly new ideas are rare animals in deaf education. After sitting through his workshop, I was convinced he was on to something. I could see some of the creases and kinks in his plan, and there was obviously still some detail to be worked out, but it was clear that Dr. Supalla was really thinking outside the box. To learn that Dr. Supalla's school in Arizona had recently been shut down as a result of budget cuts was stunning: an incredible blow to innovation in the field, and (I believe) a great loss for many parents and children. I felt great relief to learn that, after a protracted court battle, his ideas and methodology live on -- by being written into kids' IEPs!. I think that the widespread failure of the educational system to teach our deaf students to read, and read well, means that we should be embracing original thinkers and their ideas, in the hopes of finding real solutions for the kids we work with.

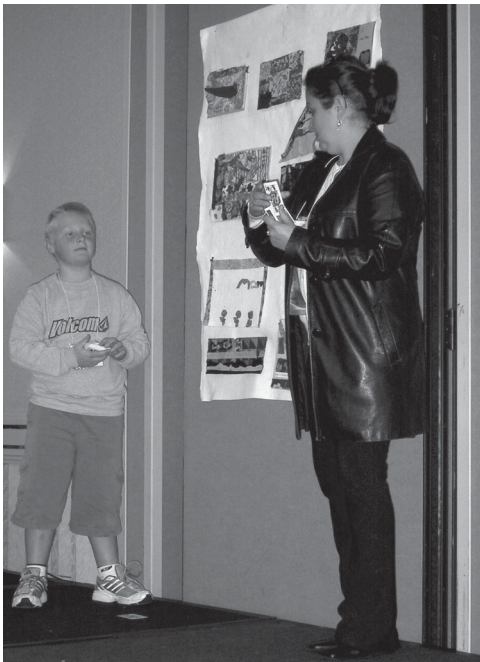


I spent the next two days attending a variety of workshops and visiting the exhibition hall to browse the wares of the many vendors there. I really enjoyed the workshops, although I do recall feeling at some point that workshop choices for parents and families were somewhat limited this time around. I know that the conference committee worked hard to present a range of workshops – something for everyone – and I suspect that there just weren't as many proposals from parents as in the past. So, as a teacher writing an article for a parent newsletter, I strongly encourage parents to step up and share what they know at future conferences! In the past, the parent-presented workshops have always been my favorites to attend. They give me the opportunity to look at things from another perspective and I always come away with new ideas and information. Parent experiences should be shaping these conferences as much as the latest trends in educational methodology.

I think my favorite workshop this year focused on keeping the IEP process a congenial and cooperative effort; not always the easiest thing in the world to do! But there was a lot of interesting back-and-forth between teachers and

parents, with each side eventually coming to understand some of the challenges that the other faces. The moderator, a self-proclaimed “problem parent”, kept the discussion lively – always interesting and with a bit of edge, but never degenerating into a free-for-all. It was a lot of fun.

The “family entertainment” on Saturday night was quite enjoyable, with some really moving moments. I always love watching people with a real mastery of ASL strut their stuff, and these people were an eyeful. From deaf poetry to wax sculpture, there was a lot to take in. I don’t think there was a dry eye in the house when a young deaf storyteller took the stage with his story of social isolation. He told the tale of a family who loved him dearly, but with whom communication was all but impossible. As the dad is reunited with his son at the end of the story and announces that he is learning ASL, I completely lost it. It was a bitter reminder of the “deaf experience” for many children, and I think that it struck a chord with many families attending the conference.



I’ll close this editorial on that note – social isolation – and something that perplexed me at the conference this year. Twice, I overheard (oversaw?) deaf adults talking or signing with hearing parents at the conference about the inevitability of social isolation for deaf children. The idea they were trying to convey was that no matter how much sign the parents learned, no matter what course of action they took, their child was still going to suffer this fundamental reality of the deaf experience. I’d like to leave you with this idea: I think the parents who attend these conferences are setting about the business of altering this fundamental reality. I just purchased a set of fantastic “Signing Time” videos, produced by a mother of a deaf child who created the videos...for hearing children! Her idea is that teaching hearing children a little bit of sign language, just as many kids may know a little Spanish, will be a significant step forward in opening up the world for deaf and hard of hearing kids. And she’s right to seize this opportunity. More and more hearing parents are starting to use sign language as a sort of “first language” with their babies. I also watched many hearing fathers signing fluently with their deaf children over the two days of the conference. Parents are making the way for their children. Parents are changing the fundamental realities of the deaf experience. And as time goes on, I think parents will bring about revolutionary changes for the institution of deaf education and the children living and learning within.



SUMMER CAMPS FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING KIDS 2003

Camp Grizzly NorCal Center on Deafness (near Nevada City, CA)

August 17-23, 2003
\$175 by July 18, 2003
Register early!

Contact: Dawn Ovesen
4708 Roseville Rd., Suite 112
North Highlands, CA 95660
(916) 349-7500 TTY/Voice
campgrizzly@norcalcenter.org
www.norcalcenter.org

Camp Pacifica California Lions Camp (near Yosemite)

Session 1: July 28-August 3
Session 2: August 4-11
\$300; scholarships available.
Register early!

Contact: California Lions Camp
Holly Lewis-Douglas
California Lions Camp
PO Box 577663
Modesto, CA 95357
hollyld@iwon.com
www.californialionscamp.org

Camp Sylvester (Pinecrest, CA)

Camp Teresita Pines (Wrightwood, CA)

**July 20-26 (Camp Sylvester)
August 3-9 (Camp Teresita Pines)**
Lions Wilderness Camp for Deaf
Children
P.O. Box 61
Mt. Eden, CA 94557
(877) 896-1598 voice/TTY
info@lionswildcamp.org
www.lionswildcamp.org

Other Camps:

Deaf Kid's Kamp (sic)

Sproul Ranch, Inc.
45446 7th Street East
Lancaster, CA 93535
(702) 247-6905
www.deafkidskamp.com

Girl Scouts of America Camps

7700 Edgewater Dr.
Suite 340
Oakland, CA 94621
(800) 447-4475
www.sfbgirlscouts.org
joan@girlscoutsbayarea.org

*This is only a partial listing! A
complete and up-to-date camp
listing is maintained at
www.deafkids.org.*

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