

Wavelengths



IDAHO HANDS & VOICES

November 2009

www.idhandsandvoices.org

Yes, this is the November issue of Wavelengths, and yes, it's December already. This issue has battled its way through multiple bouts of various strains of flu and colds in two different households and a production of "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever" which kept the editor completely tied up for weeks in order to make it to your mailbox.

Idaho Hands & Voices is undergoing some changes as we re-group and try out some ideas we collected at the leadership conference last summer. A couple of our long-time leaders are looking to spend less time with us in the future, so we are searching for members who wish to become more actively involved. Here's a word from our new President, Renee Higbee:

Dear Idaho Hands and Voices Members and Supporters,

Greetings to all!! Wishing all of you a wonderful holiday season filled with hope and anticipation for the upcoming year.

As we move forward into 2010, we are establishing short term and long term goals for our organization. Our first priority is to invigorate, diversify, and redefine our volunteer based membership. We are looking for parents/professionals/community members who would like to participate in a variety of ways. Individuals can participate through involvement with activities, mentorship, and fund raising on a single time or on-going basis. You might be surprised at the wealth of talent our organization has! Are you a painter, love arts-n-crafts, coupon clipper, handy-man, or just like to meet new people? Idaho Hands and Voices can utilize your talents!

As the newly elected President for Idaho H&V, I am optimistic that we can make a difference for our children and families through our State. I am continuing to search for funding that will fully establish our Guide By Your Side program which supports families who have children who are newly identified with hearing loss. Currently, our parent representatives are volunteers; however, we are searching for ways to provide funding to increase our effectiveness through workshops and training.

I'm looking forward to meeting each and every one of you in the coming year. Please contact me if you would be interested in serving on our board or if you have suggestions and ideas that would enhance our organization. Together we can make a difference in the lives of Idaho's children!

Sincerely,

Renee Higbee
President, Idaho Hands and Voices

higbren2@isu.edu
208-850-5348

And another word (or two) from Lorna:

As newsletter editor, I'd like to add another way in which you can help Idaho Hands & Voices. I've been putting together "Wavelengths" for more than five years now (I didn't believe it myself until I checked my files) and it's getting harder to find new ideas to write about! Yet, with a population as sparse and spread-out as Idaho has, a newsletter is one way in which we can all communicate with each other. I know there are neat stories out there that I haven't heard, and I'd welcome any story ideas you have. You don't need to actually write a story, but just give me a call (324-7544) or email (niwri2@msn.com) and I'll interview you, write it up, send it to you for checking before putting it in the newsletter. What could be easier? Or if there's something you want to know about, give me a nudge and I'll do my best to research the subject.

While we're on the subject of easy ways to help Idaho Hands & Voices, it's my duty to remind you that it is once again membership renewal time. Memberships are either \$15 per year for families, or \$25 per year for

professionals (suggested rates from H & V National are \$25 and \$40, so that's a bargain.) We also offer a scholarship membership for families. It's helpful if you send in a membership form whether or not you send in dues, and insures that we don't lose track of you if you move or get a new email address. Dues money is used only for paying for and distributing the national and state newsletters and for other support for families; we use other sources of funding to get members to conferences. We need whatever support you can give us, so please renew your membership today! While you're at it, send in an update for the family directory. One or two new families have filled out the form, so we'll be getting an update out (and directories for families that have not yet received one) after the first of the year. The membership/family directory form is either attached to this email or at the end of the newsletter.

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IS YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATIONAL INTERPRETER QUALIFIED?

In previous issues of this newsletter we've described the Idaho Educational Interpreter Act and what it means for any child using a sign language interpreter, Cued Speech transliterator, or oral transliterator to make classroom communication accessible. Briefly, starting in July of 2009, all interpreters and transliterators were required to meet minimal standards, depending on the type of service they provide. Sign language interpreters must hold RID or NAD (level 3 or higher) certification or have achieved a score of 3.5 or higher on the EIPA (Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment.) Oral transliterators must also be RID certified, and Cued Speech transliterators must have passed the TECUnit (testing, evaluation and certification unit.) Certain waivers may be given for interpreters new to the profession and those who have not worked in the schools before.

Another thing to be aware of is that the EIPA is a performance assessment which measures an interpreter's ability to translate back and forth. There is also a written portion, not required by the state of Idaho, which covers practices and ethics of interpreting. Ideally your child's interpreter should be knowledgeable about these dimensions of the profession as well as being a competent translator or transliterator.

We've recently learned that this is no reason for parents to assume that the interpreter working with their child is qualified. There is (as yet) no tracking system in place to make sure school districts are complying with the new requirements. Here, all the power rests in the parent's hands. ASK about your child's interpreter—did they pass the EIPA, or do they hold the appropriate level of certification? Interpreters may choose to take the EIPA in more than one way—ASL or PSE, and elementary or secondary school level. Make sure your child's interpreter's skills are a good match for the style of communication and the grade level of your child. Remember that you can call an IEP meeting at any time if you have serious concerns.

THE ABLE ACT OF 2009

Just in from Idaho Parents UnLimited: The Achieving a Better Life Experience Act (ABLE) of 2009 (S 493/HR 1205), which is supported by over 40 national disability organizations, has been introduced in both the Senate and House. This legislation will allow individuals with disabilities to create a disability savings accounts or "ABLE Accounts" that would accrue interest tax-free, much like an IRA or 529 college savings plan. (There is a yearly limit on contributions to the account, which are not taxed; the money is taxed as income when it is withdrawn.) The account could fund a variety of essential expenses for the individual, including medical and dental care, education, community based supports, employment training, assistive technology, housing and transportation. Importantly, the legislation prohibits amounts held by, or paid or distributed from, any ABLE accounts from being treated as income or assets when determining eligibility for benefits provide by any federal benefits program. If your child needs SSI or Medicaid, you would be able to start a savings plan without losing eligibility for those benefits. Contact your Senators and U.S. Representative to let them know how this would help your family. There's an easy way to do this at the website for the Autism Society; go to autism-society.org and type "ABLE Act" in the search box, and they have an email form you can fill out.

Many thanks to Idaho Infant-Toddler for a \$350 donation to cover our mailing costs for at least the next year, helping us to conserve our funds for other uses. The Post Office keeps raising their rates, and we're too small to qualify for any of their discount programs.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

Signing Santa at the Magic Valley Mall in Twin Falls Tuesday, December 8. This event is being sponsored by Idaho Educational Services for the Deaf and the Blind, Magic Valley Mall, Alan Davis Photography and Deaf Center of Idaho. It's planned primarily for ISDB preschoolers and children being served by Region 5 Infant-Toddler, but others are welcome; RSVP to Janice Finch at Janice.finch@isdb.idaho.gov. The fun starts at 9:30 am with Santa story-telling time, followed by visits with Santa, photos, treats, and a family get-together time from 10:00 until 11:30. No charge for any of this except the optional photos (ask Janice about a discount coupon if you are interested.)

Possible Idaho Stampede event this spring—stay tuned and watch for the January newsletter, which WILL come out by mid-January.

IDAHO H & V MEMBERSHIP FORM

If you are already a member, your membership will expire at the end of the year in the upper right corner of your mailing label. New memberships are good through the end of the year following the year in which they begin.

_____ I want to become a member! Membership benefits include the Family Directory (see below) and notice of local H&V activities as well as both state and national newsletters:

_____ Family membership \$15 per year

_____ Professional membership \$25 per year

_____ Scholarship membership (families only)

I prefer to receive the state newsletter by
(circle one): mail email
(email is faster if you have a reliable,
frequently checked address)

_____ I want to help more—enclosed is an additional donation of \$_____.

Idaho Hands & Voices is a 501(c)(3) organization, and all donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

_____ I don't want to become a member, but would like to receive the state Hands & Voices newsletter by email (since sending the newsletter in this form costs us nothing, we will continue to provide this service for those who just want to keep up with what's happening at the state level.)

Name(s): _____

Address: _____ **City:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Phone: _____ **email address:** _____

_____ I want to include my family in the Family Directory. A great way for families to connect with families! Use the back of this paper, if needed.

Child's name: _____ Year of birth: _____

Type of hearing loss: _____

Communication modes: _____

Technology used: _____

School(s): _____

Organized youth activities in which child has participated:

Camps/workshops/programs our family has found helpful:

Other areas in which we have special knowledge to share with other parents:

I give permission for Idaho Hands & Voices to include this information about my child plus my contact information in a parent directory to be shared with other Hands & Voices members:

Signature: _____ **Today's date:** _____

Mail this form along with your check or money order to:

Idaho Hands & Voices,
c/o Idaho Sound Beginnings
PO Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0036