

# WaveLengths



IDAHO HANDS & VOICES

March 2012

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## A Quick Chapter Update

The one and only major snowstorm of the entire winter chose the date of our scheduled board meeting to hit, leading to its cancellation (our President couldn't even get out of her driveway.) Thank you, Andrea, for "subbing" at the Legislative Breakfast the following morning. We managed to get together several days later to set a budget and make other plans for 2013.

We have money for family activities in every region of the state--what we need now are people willing to help set those up, especially in northern Idaho and the Idaho Falls area. Please contact us if you'd like to help.

The three big events of the year will be the Hands & Voices National Leadership Conference in Hood River, Oregon, the MAD marathon in Idaho Falls, and our second annual golf scramble fundraiser in Boise. See more details below!

## UPCOMING AND ONGOING EVENTS

*(detailed information about many of these events can be found on the calendar on our webpage; also check the calendar for events that may not be publicized yet.)*

**National Hands & Voices Leadership Conference** June 22-24, Hood River, Oregon. We plan to carpool to this very valuable conference. We have funds to support attendance for a couple of parents and are searching for other support. Details are available at [www.handsandvoices.org](http://www.handsandvoices.org); if you want to come, let us know.

**M. A. D. (Making A Difference) Marathon** July 28 in Idaho Falls, to benefit the Olive Osmond Perpetual Hearing Fund (OOPHF) and the Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind. There are races of several different lengths, and fun runs for kids. Go to [www.madrunderscore.com/idahofalls](http://www.madrunderscore.com/idahofalls) to sign up to run (a couple of our board members already have!), to volunteer, or just send in a donation, and to learn more about the OOPHF.

**Idaho Hands & Voices Second Annual Golf Scramble** October 6 in Boise. More information will be forthcoming on our web site soon. Don't play golf? We can use your help anyway! We're hoping for a repeat of our very successful 2011 Scramble, in order to fund still more programs of interest to our membership.

**IPUL** monthly Parent Support Group meets March 14 from 6:00 to 9:00 pm at their Boise office, 500 South 8th Street. For more information, check [www.ipulidaho.org](http://www.ipulidaho.org) or call (208) 342-5884 or (800) 242-4785.

**Elks Hearing & Balance Center Parent Education Series** Panel discussion with cochlear implant and hearing aid users--"How hearing loss affects me" March 20, 6:00 - 7:30 pm, 4th Floor - Sawtooth Room - Elks Rehabilitation Hospital, 600 N. Robbins Rd, Boise. Do you have questions about the future for your child with hearing loss? What challenges might they encounter in school? What sports can they play? How do they manage in noisy restaurants or at sporting events? Will they ever go to the prom? Bring all of your questions for a candid discussion with our panel of adolescent and adult cochlear implant and hearing aid users. RSVP - 489-4999

**Beginner Cued Speech Workshop** in La Grande, Oregon (not impossibly far from western Idaho) March 9 and 10. Fee of \$25 includes two meals, advance registration required. Contact Shannon Garlitz at (208) 869-9363 or go to [www.themarianacademy.com/register\\_cs](http://www.themarianacademy.com/register_cs); more information is also available at our web site.

**Second Saturday Series** at the Foothills Learning Center, 3188 Sunset Peak Rd, Boise. These are hands-on learning sessions for families, no admission charge, all ages welcome, Saturday from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. Hands & Voices will meet at the big dandelion sculpture out front at 9:50, so as to start at the beginning; then each family can stay as long or short a time as they like.

March 10: "It's the End of the World as We Know It!" The causes and effects of geologic hazards such as earthquakes, landslides, tsunamis and more. It will be fun for all ages to explore the tremendous power of earth's unstoppable forces.

**Easter Egg Hunt** sponsored by the Deaf Center of Idaho Saturday, April 7th, 10:00 am to noon, at Storey Park, 215 E Franklin Rd, Meridian. The egg hunt begins at 10:30, and a signing Easter Bunny will be there. All ages welcome! To donate candy or prizes, or help with preparations, contact Tara Adams at tarainboise@yahoo.com.

### ))) ))) ))) **The Book Nook** ))) ))) )))

A second installment of a new feature for "Wavelengths"--send us short descriptions of good kids' books for signing, read-aloud, acting out, etc. Which books do your kids like? More selections from Andrea Amestoy:

*The Three Questions* by Jon J. Muth (based on a story by Leo Tolstoy): Have you or your children ever asked the following questions? What is the best time to do things? Who is the most important? What is the right thing to do? If so, then this book is for you (and your children). With eloquent prose and poignant illustrations, this book gracefully delivers the answers to these fundamentally important questions.

*The Lion and the Mouse* by Jerry Pinkney: Based on the famous Aesop fable, this nearly wordless book transports you to the African wilderness. A fun book to act out with your children or with a lion and mouse toy, this book reiterates Aesop's eternal truth that no amount of kindness is ever in vain.

*A Sick Day for Amos McGee* by Philip C. Stead: This is a charming book about a zookeeper who lovingly cares for the animals under his auspices. When Amos gets sick, the animals return the favor and keep him company. Winner of the Caldecott medal in 2011, this one shouldn't be missed.

*Einstein's Science Parties* by Shar Levine and Allison Grafton: Whether you're looking for some fun ideas for a birthday party or want to cook up some fun on a blustery day, this book has ideas for the kitchen chemist. My kids and I made the cornstarch concoction goop and had much fun exploring the different properties it held.

*When It Starts to Snow* by Phillis Gershator: Should we be so fortunate to receive more snow before spring marches in, this is a fun book to read. If the flakes start flying, hunker down underneath a cozy blanket and grab some warm cocoa. See where the animals go and if you decide to frolic outside like the boy in the story.

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#### **Book Review**

#### ***The Unheard: A Memoir of Deafness and Africa* by Josh Swiller**

After years of speech therapy and auditory training backed up by dedicated parents, Josh Swiller had nearly perfect speech and enough understanding between his hearing aids and lipreading that "like the high school sophomore at the college bar with a great fake ID, I could fool everyone into believing I was who I pretended to be." This disconnect between the appearance of being hearing and the realities of being deaf is what prompted him to join the Peace Corps, "looking for a place past deafness." Placed in Mununga, a village/town/refugee camp in the far north of Zambia, in some ways he found it.

Mununga was distant from the noise of urban civilization; English was not the native language of most of the inhabitants, so conversations were simple, spoken slowly, repeated as needed, and custom called for focusing one's attention on the person being addressed, so lip-reading was relatively easy. Being the only white person in the village meant that his deafness didn't even register. On the other hand, conditions in Mununga were terrible, and his ability to make any difference in the lives of the people there was stymied on

every front. The government of Zambia did its best to ignore the area; the vacuum thus created was filled by a combination of ineffective hereditary chiefs, a corrupt strongman and mob violence. The Peace Corps administration hadn't done its homework when choosing it as a site for a volunteer, and eventually things reached a crisis point.

Books written by deaf adults open windows for hearing parents; no two windows show the exact same view of the world, but each adds to understanding our children's world. Swiller has a wonderful way with words, and not only describes but clearly shows what it means to navigate through many different situations with a hearing loss. The second chapter, in which he tells his own story of growing up, ought to be required reading for parents. The frustrations of deafness and the tragedies of Mununga are offset by his ability to laugh at himself and the world in which he finds himself, and notice the beauty around him.

review by Lorna Irwin, IDHV Secretary

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### **Fun Stuff to do with Your Kids: Turning worry into wonder...**

by Andrea Amestoy

With the advent of spring upon us, my mind turns to being outside. As cabin fever culminates, I'm continually thinking of ways to burn off my kids' energy. Biking is always a sure fire win.

My two youngest children have a hearing loss. Ryder, who just turned five, learned to ride a bike without training wheels last summer in the small town of Augusta, Montana where his grandparents live. When in Augusta, I feel like Scout in To Kill a Mockingbird. Endless open wild landscapes to explore, friendly town folk who know that you're an out of town guest and a lone pickup or wind driven tumbleweed rumbling down the mainly empty streets. A few stop signs for good measure. In other words, this was the ideal place to learn to ride a bike.

Back in Boise, we are flanked by harrowing, busy streets replete with fast driving cars and inattentive drivers' texting ridiculous messages back and forth. The once peaceful and quiet streets I knew as a child had given way to the bustle and growth of progress. With the endless stream of vehicles, there never seemed to be an ideal time to take a stab at maneuvering our way to the sanctuary of the Boise greenbelt. However, Ryder had other plans. With his new found freedom, he was begging me to take him on a bike ride sans training wheels. My mind filled up with worrisome questions...would he be able to hear me and respond quickly enough in an emergency situation? Will he fall over into traffic? Will his bike helmet cause feedback? Will someone be texting and run up on the sidewalk and hit us? I could feel the paranoia genetically inherited from my mother invading me on a cellular level.

Shaking my mind of these "worried what if" thoughts, I formulated a plan. Never liking the "what ifs" in life stifling freedom and fun, I morphed the worry into wonder. I wondered how I could teach him bike safety. I told him it was a big responsibility. That he must listen. We practiced and rehearsed what to do in the safety of our driveway. I yelled out stop and watched what he did. I had him repeat the mantra "look left, look right, no cars in sight" before crossing a street. He knew that if he failed to pay attention that he would lose the privilege of biking as a consequence. He agreed. He stated the expectations back to me. He was chomping at the bit. He was ready.

Not wanting to be on my bike while he was on his, I opted to run next to him while he biked. This way I had more leverage should he need my assistance. We were able to cross Boise Avenue and Parkcenter Boulevard unscathed. Ryder stopped on a dime when I barked out my directives. He never argued about having to get off the bike and walk across the street. He learned how to make eye contact with the driver to make sure he was seen. He waved and waited for them to acknowledge him before he walked with his bike in front of a car. He learned the difference between the walk and stop signal on the cross lights. While on the Greenbelt, he learned to not be British biking on the left side of the path but to stay on the right side of the line. He enjoyed calling out "hello" and "on your left" to fellow passersby as we inhaled the freshness of the river air.

Praising him lavishly for his listening so attentively and thoroughly, the next ride I pulled him and his bike to the Greenbelt in my bike trailer. We unloaded Ryder and his bike and I biked next to him. This gave him an opportunity to go faster and to make some choices in which he received some logical consequences such as attempting to veer off the Greenbelt, bike over a tree root and falling over.

As March ebbs into lamblike weather, we will review bike rules and expectations. A new helmet will be purchased. We will practice once more in the driveway. I will bike to the Greenbelt with him. Whether you live in a big city or small town, by simply turning worry into wonder, your child can gain the confidence and the incredible freedom riding a bike instills. Happy trails!

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A bit more, from the mother of an adult deaf cycling fanatic: We were fortunate to live in a smaller community than Boise, though not so small as Augusta. I took preparations one step further; because we relied on visual communication, and I realized I might not be able to acquire eye contact in order to give directions once out on the road, I got a large piece of poster board and drew a diagram of an intersection on it. With little cut-outs of a bicycle, a couple of cars, and stop and yield signs (there was only one stoplight in town at the time) we rehearsed all possible scenarios at the dining room table.

I remember reading that children who are deaf or hard of hearing are less likely to be struck by a vehicle than hearing children--probably because we take time to make sure they really understand the rules, and coach them in the skills they need to be safe. I hope it's not because we just don't let them out on their own--riding a bicycle is a ticket to self-reliance, and two wheels are good preparation for four.

A couple of points my daughter would want me to share (she sometimes stops other cyclists to lecture them): Don't be tempted to teach your child to ride on the left side of the road, facing traffic. Not only is this illegal, it's far more dangerous than not hearing cars approaching from behind. Motorists are not expecting or looking for a vehicle at the left side of the road. Think about this next time you are making a right turn. Number two, always wear a helmet yourself as well as insisting that your child wear one. As soon as my daughter mastered a little sidewalk bicycle at age four, she tried to emulate the "big boys" by popping wheelies. One day I watched her fly off the bicycle, do a 180 degree flip, and land straight on her... helmet.

--Lorna Irwin

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Special to Magic Valley residents: Have you noticed the "palace" going up on the south side of the mall? Cinema West is building a new, state-of-the-art multiplex movie theater. Let them know that a truly modern theater is fully accessible, with closed captions and descriptive video provided on request. The technology is available, especially with the new digital format, and probably costs less than the carpeting. Their corporate office address is PO Box 750595, Petaluma CA 94975; if you go to their website at [www.cinemawest.com](http://www.cinemawest.com), there are multiple other ways to contact them, including a Facebook link.

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The next issue of *Wavelengths* will appear in early May. Please send in stories, book reviews, helpful hints, whatever you have to share. To contact Lorna Irwin (editor) for any reason: [niwri2@msn.com](mailto:niwri2@msn.com) or (208) 324-7544. Ideas: "Fun Stuff to Do with Your Kids;" more kids' book reviews like the ones Andrea submitted to this issue; tales of challenges met and triumphs experienced; humorous anecdotes.

**THANK YOU** if you recently renewed your membership! The spring issue of the National Hands & Voices "Communicator" will be arriving soon, unless we've had to drop your name from the mailing list because it's been too long since your last renewal. We will continue to send "Wavelengths" to you via email only, unless you tell us to stop. If you are currently getting it via snail mail and would like to continue to receive it without updating your membership, please email us and provide an email address to which to send it.