

Wavelengths



IDAHO HANDS & VOICES

November 2014

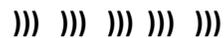
www.idhandsandvoices.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/idhandsandvoices

PO Box 9617, Boise ID 83707

Email: idahohandsandvoices@gmail.com

Here's a big "Thank You" to everyone who helped support our annual golf scramble fundraiser. Major sponsors were the Idaho Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Eden Bellanger, Sandy Pichette and Maynard Davis, Injury Care EMS, MicroClean Inc., Valley Pediatric Feeding, the Frahm Family, Ada Vision Center, Precise Bookkeeping, Jim and Lorna Irwin, and Intermountain Legal Group. Many more contributed awesome raffle prizes, formed teams and played, provided coffee and items for the goody bags. We're looking forward to 2015!



Lots of "housekeeping" items follow...

We've made a couple of recent upgrades to our ability to keep you "in the loop" with updates and information. A couple of years ago we started to use Mail Chimp as our platform for newsletters. It's free for small nonprofits, and allows us to keep up a mailing list. However, to send out a mailing takes time, as it needs to be formatted. From time to time we get emails from Hands & Voices headquarters, IESDB and others that we should send on, but don't always manage to do. The not-too-tech-savvy editor of this newsletter finally figured out how to shift the Mail Chimp list to our Gmail account, edit it, and set up a distribution list to forward information. Look for a few more alerts coming from the address at the head of this newsletter. If you don't want these emails, you will need to reply to one of them in order to opt out; opting out of the newsletter is a separate process that happens through Mail Chimp.

Our web lackey has updated the web page by posting the past several years of "Wavelengths" on the site. These are not the pretty formatted ones from Mail Chimp, but pdf files of the "snail mail" version we send out to families who request it. Still, you can go check out back issues for articles of interest (more about that later) and see where we've been as an organization.

Our web site has a calendar, but it's so much easier to post things on our Facebook page than it is to enter them in the calendar that the calendar is languishing. To really stay current, you'll just need to "follow" us on Facebook or at least tell your email filter that idahohandsandvoices@gmail.com is "not junk."

This is also a good time to remind you that your membership may be running out. Check the mailing label on your "Communicator" (the large newsletter from Hands & Voices headquarters that arrives four times a year) for a date. Your membership expires at the end of the year shown. You can renew at our web page. Still not sure? We'll send ONE reminder letter out near the beginning of 2015. Whether or not your membership is current, we will continue to keep you on the list to receive "Wavelengths" and other information via email, unless you opt out.

The Hands & Voices Board held its annual meeting in October and slightly shuffled the officers. Diana Collins and Tara Pichette traded places, Tara becoming our new President and Diana taking over the responsibilities of Treasurer. By the way, our board meetings are open to all interested members. The next one will be January 6 at 6:30 pm at the IESDB offices in Meridian. Let us know if you plan to attend so we can give you more information and avoid locking the front door before you get there.

Here are two EASY ways to help support Hands & Voices!

If you shop at Fred Meyer, sign up for their rewards card; go to www.fredmeyer.com/communityrewards. Look for Idaho Hands & Voices or our number (92266) and you will be able to link your card to our organization. You still get all the perks you already get, but we get a little bit, too, and based on our first few months' experience, it adds up! If you are an Amazon on-line shopper, do your shopping at www.smile.amazon to support the national H&V organization--go to this site, sign in with your usual password, and search for "Hands & Voices." The "Smile" site is supposed to be identical to the regular site, except that 0.5% of your purchase goes to whatever organization you specify.

Upcoming Events

For fast-breaking news, "follow" our Facebook page.

Holiday Party at the Idaho Elks Hearing & Balance Center, at the Elks Rehab Hospital, 600 Robbins Road (Sawtooth Room, 4th floor) Tuesday, December 9, 5:30 – 7:30 pm. For children with hearing loss ages birth through 8 and their families; join us for a holiday celebration and opportunity to connect with other families. Pizza, crafts, caroling and a visit from Santa! (A flyer is going out soon.)

Boise Valley Association of the Deaf Holiday Potluck Saturday, December 6, noon to 4:00 pm at Sawtooth Middle School, 3730 N Linder Rd, Meridian. BVAD will provide turkey and ham. Members, \$5 per adult or free with a dish; non-members, \$10 per adult or \$5 with a dish. One dish per family; last name A-F bring a dessert, G-L hot dish, M-Q cold dish/salad, R-Z beverages. Meeting to follow potluck; admission free after 1:30.

Signing Santa will be making his rounds in Meridian on Wednesday, December 17, appearing at the River Valley Elementary School (2900 E River Valley St) IESDB preschool in Room 5 from 10:00 to 11:30 am, and the Ponderosa Elementary School (2950 N Naomi Ave) cafeteria from 1:30 to 3:00 pm. Contact Jill Muir (jill.muir@iesdb.org or 914-3728) for more information.

North Idaho Deaf Club has issued a "save the date" for a December 13 party, more details to follow. Contact Darcy Sinsley at nidcplanner@gmail.com in order to make sure you are "in the loop" for notifications about NIDC activities.

More holiday events may well pop up between now and the end of the year! We'll try to keep you posted.

Idaho Hands & Voices Board Meeting January 6 at 6:30 pm, IESDB offices, 3071 E. Franklin Rd, Suite 212, Meridian. Subject to change if too many board members have conflicts! Please let us know if you want to attend.

Idaho Parents Unlimited Webinars are offered the 4th Tuesday of each month, at different times of the day. You can just listen in, or join the discussion and ask questions, all from your home computer. The November 25 topic is "Literacy is for All." New thinking about literacy for children with severe disabilities, and ways parents can help develop it. Times are MDT:

10:00 - 11:00 am <https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/184378350>

1:00 - 2:00 pm <https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/469644038>

The December 30 webinar topic is "Skills for Effective Advocacy"--what "advocacy" means, skills necessary to be an effective advocate, additional resources, and where to go to look for more information.

10:00 - 11:00 am <https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/529331918>

1:00 - 2:00 pm <https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/144390814>

6:00 - 7:00 pm <https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/176446774>

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Adding Cued Speech to the Toolbox

by Valorie Ruth

On October 24 & 25 there was a Cued Speech Workshop in Meridian with seven in attendance. We learned the history of Cued Speech, how it is used to aid the person who is hard of hearing and/or deaf with lipreading. We learned how beneficial it is for people who have received a cochlear implant as they are beginning to associate speech and the written word with actually hearing sound. During the training we learned everything necessary to begin cueing immediately (just practice is needed). Having two children with hearing loss, and choosing the path of Total Communication it is exciting to learn of all the different ways communication is being taught. I would encourage everyone to continue to seek "whatever works for your child and family" and to be open for every mode of communication. There will be one (or many) which you will be able to use at one time or another. If you are new to Cued Speech and are interested in it please feel free to contact us and we will be able to put you in touch with someone to answer your questions.

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The holiday season is an exciting one for kids, but in some ways can be overwhelming for a kid with a hearing loss. Even a small hearing loss can make it difficult to hear over background noise, and easy to miss overhearing plans being made. Several years ago we collected ideas and strategies used by families to reduce the confusion and meaningfully including their kids with hearing loss in the festivities. We're adding a reprint to the "snail mail" version of our newsletter, for all you "new" parents out there. For those receiving this newsletter by email, we're taking this opportunity to introduce you to the Wavelengths archive on our web site. Here's the link to the November 2010 newsletter:
http://www.idhandsandvoices.org/uploads/2010-11_wavelengths.pdf

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Statewide Needs Assessment Survey

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare is doing a needs assessment to identify gaps in services and the needs of women, pregnant women, infants, children and youth with special health needs, to determine how to use Title V Maternal and Child Health federal Block Grant funds to best meet the needs of Idaho residents. They have an anonymous on-line survey at www.bit.ly/mchsurvey14. This assessment is done every five years, and they wish to get input from families, among others.

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ASL Signed Story Apps

ITV Signed Stories in England has produced a series of stories signed in ASL. These are animated, with ASL performances by Peter Cook, Keith Wann and Pinky Aiello. There is a free starter package at <http://t.co/9MvWHhXwXH>, where you can find links to other packages by this company. If you'd like to give it a try, please do so and send us a review for our next newsletter--the editor has neither a child of the appropriate age to do a test flight nor an iPhone, iPad, etc.

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Report from Family Camp, Part 2

by Lorna Irwin

We were thrilled to have two Deaf professionals, Steven Snow and Steven Birkby, come to camp this year. Both shared their personal stories of growing up and how they and their parents met the challenges. They also spoke about their roles as professionals and gave parents new avenues for addressing problems. In the September issue we included a summary of Steven Snow's talk, and now it's Steven Birkby's turn:

Steven Birkby was born a little too early, weighing 4 pounds, 13 ounces, with the cord wrapped around his neck. Whether his hearing loss was due to prematurity or happened later his parents don't know; he was about two years old before they confirmed that he had a hearing loss. His loss is severe to profound, ranging from 60 dB in the lower frequencies to 80-90 dB in the higher frequencies. His father's attitude was "this is what we have, what do we do?" and

a willingness to pursue any and all avenues to communicate with his son. The family lived in Kimberly, a small town near Twin Falls. Steven began by commuting to ISDB as a day student, and his parents worked with him at home.

Steven's father was a coach in Kimberly, and Steven began participating in sports at age four. His father, while not a skilled signer, would incorporate some sign into his coaching, and Steven had a small group of friends also playing sports; between themselves they worked out systems for communication. Kimberly being a very small town, this group was still together when he transferred to Kimberly Middle School for seventh grade, largely in order to play sports in his home community. He had no interpreter that first year; he worked hard, did well, and was exhausted. For the next two years he had a good, professional interpreter and things went well. His sophomore year was when things fell apart. His new interpreter was neither trained nor certified as an interpreter and tried to be his mother as well; his close group of friends had found new groups to hang out with, sports made it harder to do the extra work after school to keep up with academics (and school "wasn't my thing" in any case.) He was losing confidence, having social difficulties, and starting to hang out with the "wrong" group of peers. His father wanted to keep him in Kimberly for sports, but he wanted to go back to ISDB... there was a compromise. Now that he could drive himself to and from Gooding, he could actually get home in time to do sports as well!

He graduated from ISDB, attended Gallaudet University for a few years, then completed his BA in physical education and MA in deaf education at ISU. After experience working and coaching at deaf schools in Arizona and Montana, he now works for IESDB as an Educational Specialist, making public school work better for today's young people.

The discussion that followed Steven's introduction of himself and his experiences brought up one interesting theme. Like Steven, many of our kids really want to fit in, to the point that they will not bring up their hearing loss or ask for help or even minor accommodations, preferring to fly "under the radar" even if they are missing out on important information. Steven felt that meeting other kids and adults with hearing loss can help a lot--they learn coping strategies from others, and gain in self-esteem, allowing them to be more open about their hearing loss.

Steven wound up his visit with us by saying that participation in sports was of huge importance in his life; it kept him involved in the hearing world, and taught him both leadership and teamwork. He urged parents to get their kids involved in sports and other activities, to learn all kinds of skills, and above all, independence. Buy that bed-shaking alarm clock before they head off to college!

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Do you have a story to share? Please send newsletter submissions (we welcome book and product reviews, helpful hints, personal stories, amusing anecdotes, links to resources, etc., even recipes!) to Lorna Irwin at niwri2@msn.com. If writing is not your thing, she will be happy to interview you, write an article, and let you review it before we use it.



And whatever you call the holidays at your house, may they be happy ones!

HO HO HUH? IDEAS FOR SURVIVING THE HOLIDAYS AND OTHER OCCASIONS

You've done whatever you need to do to give your deaf or hard of hearing child access to communication at home through amplification, creating a good listening environment and/or employing some form of visual communication. Suddenly the holidays arrive; the extended family gathers, the noise level goes up, and it's enough to confuse any child, let alone one who can't hear everything that's going on. How can you reduce the stress of family events, and even turn them into something meaningful and memorable? We've gathered the following tips from Idaho Hands & Voices families and other sources.

It helps to lay the groundwork. Talk to your child ahead of time; use books, family pictures and other visual aids to help explain what will happen. Involve your child in planning the event, if possible—let him help decorate, bake, and shop, plan the menu and guest list as age and ability allow. Not only will he better understand what is going on, he will be an important part of it. One family reports that this year, they've been making Christmas ornaments to give to teachers and other important adults in their children's lives since this summer. Christmas will be a much-anticipated event at their house, and the spirit of giving will not be forgotten in the holiday rush.

Make sure that your child is aware of what is planned each day, and keep them updated when plans change. One mother finds posting a written schedule to be beneficial, and not only during the holidays. *~And it doesn't hurt to take some time each morning or the night before to make one-on-one contact and confirm that my girls understand what is on the agenda; sometimes we assume that they heard something when they didn't.* This strategy has even wider applications: *~We knew that our deaf child would not be aware of what was happening unless we signed our conversations or took time to fill her in, so we were careful to make sure she got the information one way or another. To our surprise, we later realized that our hearing children, even when sitting right beside us as we discussed plans, weren't always paying attention and could benefit from the same kind of consideration!*

Noise, multiple simultaneous conversations, relatives who don't know sign language or don't understand your child's hearing loss all conspire to make communication difficult. The deaf mother of a deaf child reports that in both the past and the present, she has hated large gatherings. *~I speak well, but one-way communication doesn't sit well with me. My son seems to be blamed for anything that goes wrong when other kids are at fault as well, because of communication issues. I cling to my mother and chase after my kid to keep me away from chatting with others.*

It helps to explain your child's specific needs to the rest of the extended family; still, it's not unusual for a parent to end up facilitating communication. *~The most important thing for us is making sure they're not left out of dinner table conversation, which means being patient about repeating things and explaining jokes, even though the point of the conversation or the humor of the punch line may be lost on the third or fourth re-telling. ~We can't interpret everything that is said, but we try to hit the high points and recap what is going on. ~When talking to someone else, I try to at least sign for myself; my daughter regards half a conversation to be better than none, and I pass on interesting stories and other information.*

Remember, though, that this is also your chance to visit with friends and family; arrange times when you can enjoy the company of other adults on your own. Even professional interpreters take breaks! *~As my daughter grew older, she came to understand that we needed "just talking" time, and developed coping strategies. She'd play with the younger children, who found her quite amusing, or disappear with a book or other project. We'd have a break and be better able to interpret for everyone when she returned.*

For the child who depends at least in part on his hearing, do what you can to minimize background noise. Turn down the Christmas carols! (Bah, humbug.) If your child uses an FM unit at school and you have access to it during vacation, pass the microphone around or set it in the middle of the table—hide it inside the

centerpiece, if your child is self-conscious about it. The mother of a child with a cochlear implant says that hearing with only one ear makes it difficult for her son to localize sound; group conversations are difficult for him to follow. *~Be sure to point out the speaker; we often name the person who is speaking and point.*

There are a couple of ways to encourage people to take turns speaking. One is to pass or toss around some kind of token, which will also make it obvious who is talking: "It's your turn to talk if you're holding the reindeer." A big communication challenge faced by one family is the annual summer family reunion bonfire-big crowd, bad lighting. One year a young couple used the occasion to announce their engagement, and on the spur of the moment everyone was asked to get up in turn to make their own "announcement." This tradition has continued, and gives the family's now adult deaf son a chance to learn a bit about extended family members' news, as one person at a time speaks, and in a predictable order. Turn-taking also makes it easier for a parent to facilitate communication if needed.

Sometimes it may be possible to make holiday plans which reduce communication problems and stress. The deaf mother who has a horror of large get-togethers reports that she's chosen to have a small Thanksgiving dinner with a few family members rather than attend the big gathering. She suggests staying on the home turf as another option: *~I'm trying out something different for Christmas this year, a family gathering in my home. My son will feel more comfortable in his own environment; he can boss the other kids around, more empowerment to him. It's my home and a more deaf-friendly environment for both of us.*

Another idea is to employ strategic seating at the table, making sure that your child has visual and/or auditory access to people who communicate well with him and are willing to take the time to repeat or interpret what is being said, or just carry on a conversation with your child—and they don't always have to be his parents.

We may get so focused on the sound environment during the holidays that we neglect the visual environment. It's worth noting that many Deaf adults rely on visual alerting devices such as flashing alarm clocks and doorbells, and decorative lights that wink off and on can be annoying--sort of like having the stove timer "ding" incessantly. Ask your child about this.

Merely surviving the holidays is hardly enough; it's a special time of year, when we want to honor family traditions and build relationships. We've also garnered a couple of tips on how to make this time of year meaningful. A fun one: one mother reports that she's saved all her son's hearing aid molds, from the time he was a baby! They've strung the multi-colored ear molds on a string, like popcorn, and each year he takes pride in draping it onto their Christmas tree, a little longer than it was the year before.

The holidays may be the one chance for children to get to know relatives who live at a distance. No matter what form of communication they use, one-on-one conversations are easier; do what you can to encourage these. *One Christmas, my father had purchased a small wooden model for my daughter, intending to help her put it together. He thought he'd need my help as an interpreter, but I suggested that he try writing. Simple vocabulary coupled with a 'hands-on' type of activity resulted in smooth, independent communication for both grandfather and granddaughter; he was thrilled. It's one of the last memories my daughter has of him, and doubly precious for that reason.*

Adapt family traditions to fit the needs of your children: *In my family and my husband's, the father of the family always read the Christmas story from the Bible before presents could be opened. Instead of doing this, we enact the story using a sturdy Nativity set and sing "Happy Birthday" to Baby Jesus when we place Him in the manger. Our children understand the meaning of the holiday without fidgeting through something they find difficult to understand.*