

THE WISCONSIN Communicator

Volume 18, Issue 3

Fall 2020

*"What works for your child is what makes the choice right."*TM

Member's Corner /

How are you feeling right now?

After a summer like no other, as we head into fall, we asked members "How are you?" Thank you to those who shared their thoughts and families with us.

"Trying hard to stay positive for my family. This is tough and makes me especially sad for my two younger ones." (A dad)

"The key themes in our household right now are uncertainty and patience. It is hard to navigate life with so much uncertainty (will school close or open, what will we do if we have to quarantine) and I have to remind myself every day to be patient with my kids and with their schools. Every email I get from the school raises my anxiety and I try to remind myself that you can't live email to email or COVID daily case numbers to COVID daily case numbers. This isn't going away any time soon so I need to learn how to cope!" (A mom)

"Ugh! I'm so SICK of all things virtual." (A mom)

"The changes in the schools are overwhelming. From classroom layouts to lunch procedures to how meetings are conducted. I also worry about the access my students have to communication considering face masks. Each student has different needs related to the access of communication and it is frustrating to know that those needs may be compromised in the classroom. Face masks add one more layer to our students' needs. Talk to your children and students about how to communicate while using masks. Give them strategies, rework their IEPs to ensure their access, think outside of the box. We are living in unprecedented times. We need to make sure that communication access is not compromised in the educational setting." (A teacher)



(A mom and speech therapist)

"We're anxious for our son. He lives alone, lost his job due to COVID, and is the most socially isolated person we know since he's not comfortable going out. We worry, knowing that social isolation puts people who are hard of hearing at extra risk." (A mom & dad)

"Our daughter is now 22 so schooling is no longer on the table. Our family is missing in-person theater productions and outdoor music events. Our daughter also misses the library and restaurants. We miss people watching and the spontaneity of just jumping in the car for a ride. We are being very careful about COVID because caring for our daughter and her needs in the hospital if she were sick would be so difficult. We are optimistic that this too shall pass and thankful for our bountiful garden, beautiful location, and our home. We hope families with children are able to manage this situation with grace and love. And if they need help, they know WI Families for Hands & Voices is here." (Mom of a daughter who is deafplus)



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Member's Corner /**Teachers of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing Use WI H&V Micro-Grants for Family Day at Lions Camp**

Contributed by Jelaine Olsen and Jaime Keef

Thanks to our Wisconsin Families for Hands & Voices' generous Micro-Grant, we were able to offer our very first "Family Day at Lions Camp"! This event included 18 students, eight siblings, 20 parents, three DHH teachers, three educational interpreters, five student interpreters from UW-Milwaukee and Northcentral Technical College, two special education teachers, one educational assistant, eight volunteers/panel members who had hearing loss, and 20 additional volunteers who had a connection to someone with hearing loss. Six school districts were represented with students ranging from age 3 through 18. Needless to say, it was a day filled with connecting students, family members, and professionals. It was everything we hoped and planned for, and then some!

Although Lions Camp in Rosholt was a two hour drive for our families, we were determined to make it our location. We have several students who attend Lions Camp every summer, and several more who are reluctant to attend a camp so far from home. By hosting our event at the camp, it allowed families the opportunity to explore the grounds and see what all the buzz is about! Just as we had anticipated, Jaime and I had an additional six students sign up for summer camp following our event!

Family Day at Lions Camp took place on Saturday, March 7, 2020. That was exactly one week before COVID shut down the entire state. Not only did we luck out on timing, we were also blessed with a perfect day in terms of weather. It was sunny and unseasonably warm. At the same time, there was just enough snow on the ground to allow for sledding down the dining hall hill! Thank goodness we had reminded families to bring an extra set of dry clothes!

Our day started at 1:00 pm that afternoon. We introduced each of the students and their families one by one. Andrea Yenter, Lions Camp Director, talked to us about all that Lions Camp has to offer. This was followed by the opportunity to tour the camp and sled down the hill. It also allowed time for our Deaf and hard of hearing adult volunteers to take a stroll down memory lane and reminisce about their years at camp!

Our families returned to the dining hall at 3:30 pm. Our students and siblings went to another building for fun and games, and the parents were introduced to Sheri Cook. Sheri is the Director for the Gallaudet University Regional Center for the Midwest. Sheri traveled from Illinois to speak to our parents about her own experience as a Deaf woman. Her focus was on how to enhance language development in the home and how to advocate for services in school.

While Sheri presented information to our parents, our students and their siblings were treated to a variety of activities designed for fun! Our middle school and high school students went on a scavenger hunt that was an "escape room" theme. (It was too nice of a day to keep them "locked" in a room, so we set up the activities around the camp.) The activities were designed for students with hearing loss. For example, they had to put together a puzzle of the structure of the ear, and, in honor of our students who are deafblind, had to figure out a saying in Braille! (For the record, all our older students marked



Sheri Cook from Gallaudet University teaches children an ASL alphabet story at the Family Day event at Lions Camp.

HOW ARE YOU From page 1

“Making the most of this time together. Struggling with the environmental changes in our school situation. Hoping for the best for our kids and their teachers. Missing our friends and community.” (A dad)



Wisconsin Families for Hands & Voices needs you!

Do you care about Wisconsin children who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deafplus and want to help?

Join the WI H&V Board of Directors

WI H&V is recruiting new Board members — family members, deaf/hard of hearing adults, and professionals in the field. We need *all* of you! We are all-volunteer and meet three times/year via video-conference or in-person. Our non-profit helps families:

- **Obtain funding** through our scholarships and micro-grants – for events for children, sign language/auditory verbal classes, camps, conferences, seed money to develop community programs, and more.
- **Meet** other families raising children who are deaf/hard of hearing/deafplus.
- **Meet** role models who are deaf/hard of hearing/deafplus.
- **Advocate** on behalf of children who are deaf/hard of hearing/deafplus.
- **Collaborate** with state and local partners such as Wisconsin Sound Beginnings, Wisconsin Educational Services Program for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing, and HEAR, WI.

Please consider applying. Share this request with others in your community.

For more information and to request an application: handsandvoiceswi@gmail.com

MICRO-GRANT From page 2

the “Escape Room” as their favorite activity for the day!) Our younger students went through obstacle courses, played with Legos and sidewalk chalk, and competed in a friendly game of charades!

At 5:00 pm, Sheri came over to the students to teach them an ABC story in American Sign Language (ASL). The parents and older students were given the opportunity to ask questions of our Deaf and hard of hearing panel members. Some of our panel members were currently in college while others were established in a variety of careers. They were all very open and willing to share about their own experiences. (This was an activity that most of our parents marked down as their favorite part of the day.)

By 6:00 pm, we were all seated for dinner. Jaime and I were beyond thrilled to watch as our families, students, and former students interacted with an ease and comfort that had grown throughout the day. At 6:30 pm, dessert was served in the form of smores by a campfire. Our first ever “Family Day at Lions Camp” was a HUGE success!



Our goal of connecting families went beyond our one day event. Although COVID has made it more difficult, we have had families ask for contact information so they could reach out to other families as well as our former students. Although we knew that this event would be good for our students, we did not anticipate the amount of excitement on the part of our families as well as former students. It was a reminder on how important it is for us to continue to make these connections. Your generous grant has inspired us to do more for families, and not just for our students. Thank you so much for making this event possible!

Jelaine Olsen and Jaime Keef are Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (TODHH) in and around Evansville, Wisconsin.



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<http://www.handsandvoiceswi.org/>

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WI Families for Hands & Voices
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Green Bay, WI 54308

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