

RECENT EVENTS



*Valentine's Day
Dance 2016 -
Cosponsored by
DSAF and O.N.E.
Coalition*



DSAF Annual Trip to the Children's Museum

CONGRATULATIONS, JODI!

Congratulations to Jodi White, DSAF Program Coordinator, on her one-year anniversary with DSAF! Jodi comments, "I feel very fortunate to be associated with Down Syndrome Association for Families of Nebraska. The challenges of transition this past year were far-outbalanced by the fulfillment I enjoyed by being a part of this organization and community. I am proud to serve DSAF and hope its Board and membership feel similarly toward my service. I look forward to the years to come and feel strongly that with each day, event and new endeavor, we will continue to grow and serve its mission in increasingly positive ways!"

HEARING YOU CLEARLY

Language barriers in children are correlated with higher rates of aggression, lower self-esteem, and decreased ability to develop bonds with peers and adults. Detecting hearing loss in babies and young children can be very difficult and may be overlooked, particularly in children with Down syndrome. A failure to communicate in a typical manner can easily be blamed solely on Down syndrome—and the hearing loss is missed. Additionally, young children do not cooperate or communicate in a manner that makes behavioral tests (push the button when you hear the beep) effective. An automated brainstem response analysis (ABR) (which typically requires anesthesia and uses instruments placed on the skin to measure brain activity in response to noise) may sometimes be the only way to diagnose hearing loss at an early age.

The below articles are re-printed with the gracious permission of Southeast Nebraska Regional Program (SNRP). The first article stresses the significance that even mild hearing loss can have on a child's speech and other development. The second article highlights basic technical points that should be considered when accommodating hearing loss or difficulty.

Hearing Loss Impacts Children Differently Than Adults

Kristin Jolkowski, LPS/SNRP Educational Audiologist

The impact of a hearing loss is different for children, especially the younger the child is at the onset of the hearing loss. In order to understand why this is, we need to think about how children develop speech and language. When we are born, we are ready to take our world in through all our senses. Babies see things, hear things, touch and taste things all to learn about the world around them. When one of these senses is impacted in a way that limits access, it then changes how the child can learn about their world.

Children gain a lot of speech and language skills during the first three years of life. If a hearing loss begins during this time period (even if it is just a slight hearing loss) it can have a huge impact on how that child will develop speech, reading, and writing skills as they grow. Children's language continues to build and become more complex up through high school and possibly even into the college years. Intervening at the onset of the hearing loss can help to set the child up for success in a lot of aspects of speech, language, reading, writing, and social skills.

This same idea holds true for even the slightest hearing loss, including unilateral hearing loss that may begin during a child's school years. I think at times we forget how different children's language systems are compared to our own as adults. If we are unable to hear parts of a conversation as adults, we have 30+ years of experience to pull from to fill in the gaps of what we do not hear. Our children that have hearing loss are not able to do this.

Continued on Page 3

Utilizing amplification, FM systems, and teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, can help to ensure these children can be setup for success as they build their language systems throughout their schooling.

The Challenge of Classroom Acoustics

Cara Frost, LPS/SNRP Educational Audiologist

Students spend a majority of the day at school listening. Listening is one of the most important strategies students need to master for success in school and in life. There are many challenges that listening can present for students with hearing loss, regardless of severity and/or the configuration of their loss and if it is permanent or temporary in nature. Hearing devices need to be appropriately amplifying the loss, this is something that should be monitored by the community-based audiologist on a regular basis. It's also vital that the hearing devices are maintained and kept in good working order.

Once all of these factors are accounted for we can be assured that students with hearing loss are hearing the best they can in their classrooms! Multiple studies have suggested that students are unable to understand up to 25% of instruction because of poor classroom acoustics. There are three main concepts to consider when it comes to understanding classroom acoustics:

1. Ambient noise
2. Reverberation time
3. Signal-to-Noise Ratio (SNR)

Ambient noise or background noise can be a source that is either internal, inside of the school (ventilation systems, hallway noise, student within the classroom, fans, computers and lighting) or external, noises outside of the school like (traffic, mowers and construction work).

Reverberation time is the second component to classroom acoustics. Another word for reverberation is echo. When looking at reverberation we looking at how much echo is absorbed within the classroom. Hard surfaces and tall ceilings increase reverberation time. The longer the reverberation time the harder it is to understand speech.

Signal-to-Noise Ratio (SNR) is the difference in loudness between the sound source (teacher's voice) and the ambient noise. For children, regardless of the child's hearing, the SNR should be 15 dB louder than the ambient noise for ideal listening conditions.

It's also important to mention how vital classroom acoustics are for children with other concerns like learning disabilities, ELL, behavior/attention concerns as well as speech/language impairments.

Continued on Page 4

HEARING YOU CLEARLY, cont'd

Here are a few suggestions on how to decrease the noise in classrooms:

- Place area rugs on floors that aren't carpeted
- Put bulletin boards/fabric on large wall spaces and large windows
- Close doors/windows if possible
- Turn off noisy fans or equipment
- Discuss the acoustics with students and ask for their help
- Use ear-level FM if at all possible with students who have hearing loss

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After reading these articles, do you want to learn more? Check out these resources:

- Southeast Nebraska Regional Program (SNRP), 402-436-1897
- Lincoln Public Schools Audiologist, 402-436-1534
- Nebraska Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, <http://www.ncdhh.ne.gov/>
- RiteCare of Nebraska, <http://www.ritecarene.org/>

CONGRATULATIONS, ALICIA!

Here is some wonderful news about one of DSAF's own: UNL Nebraska Student Speech Language Hearing Association (NSSLHA) has chosen DSAF Board member and Medical Outreach Chair, Alicia Bruning, to receive an INSPIRATION AWARD for being "a member of the professional community" whom NSSLHA reveres and whose work [NSSLHA] "is inspired by." This recognition is such positive recognition of Alicia's dedication to sharing her passion as a leader and affirmation of the role model she is to these students and the Ds community as a whole. NSSLHA will present Alicia with a plaque and will display a poster recognizing Alicia in the UNL Barkley Memorial Center.

NEBRASKA DOWN SYNDROME DIAGNOSIS INFORMATION

The Down Syndrome Information and Support Act (DSISA) was recently signed into Nebraska law and becomes effective July 21, 2016. It is the first of its kind in Nebraska and requires medical professionals giving a Down syndrome diagnosis to provide balanced information to the family receiving the diagnosis. Under the DSISA, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services is responsible for supporting professionals in accomplishing the information requirements of the Act. The Nebraska legislature voted in favor of the DSISA without opposition, which reflects the strong appreciation Nebraskan's have for the contributions individuals with Down syndrome make in our communities. Thank you Senator Lydia Brasch and the forty-three senators who co-introduced this legislation, and to everyone who advocated in favor of the DSISA, for making the future brighter for individuals with Down syndrome.

UPCOMING DSAF EVENTS

May/June, date TBD - DSAF Chairs Event

May 21 - Coed Texas One Pitch Softball Tourney, Claytonia. All proceeds to benefit DSAF Step Up for Down Syndrome walk. Contact Rachel at 402-821-7645 or Sam at 402-366-2717.

May 26 - GIVE TO LINCOLN DAY. When the Lincoln community will come together for 24 hours of giving from 12:00am to 11:59pm. Watch for details.

June, date TBD (tentative) - Henry Doorly Zoo, Omaha

June, date TBD - Lil' Stars Meet Me at the Park

June 3 - Teen/Young Adult Stars Miniature Golf, Adventure Golf Center, Lincoln

June 24th - Super Stars go to the movies: Finding Dory, Edgewood Cinema, Lincoln

July/August - DSAF Member Picnic and Swim Party

July 29 - Teen/Young Adult Stars go to the movies: Ice Age, Edgewood Cinema, Lincoln

October 1 - DSAF 15th Annual Capital City Step Up for Down Syndrome Walk, Antelope Park, Lincoln

November 5 - DSAF 2016 Educational Conference, Country Inn and Suites, Lincoln North Hotel and Conference Center, Lincoln. Featuring keynote by Kathleen Whitbread, Ph.D. Dr. Whitbread's research interests include early literacy instruction for children with intellectual disabilities and educating children with significant disabilities in general education settings. She maintains a blog, Open Books Open Doors, which features current research and practice in reading instruction for children with Down syndrome.

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for Families (DSAF)**

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Return Service Requested

Mission Statement: The Down Syndrome Association for Families is a Lincoln based non-profit organization that provides support for individuals with Down syndrome, their families, friends, educators and professionals who share in their lives.

Every person with Down syndrome is an individual who has a unique purpose and abilities. DSAF provides networking and a positive vision for the future.

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