

Hear to Learn



Family Weekend 2007
for families with hard of hearing children

Friday, October 12 – 5:30pm to 9pm

Saturday, October 13 – 9:30am to 3:30pm

Kidz Konnection 2007

Burnaby South Secondary School

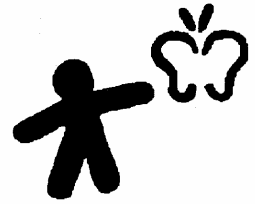
5455 Rumble Street; Burnaby, BC

Information and registration Brochure enclosed

ALSO on web-site... www.chhaparents.bc.ca

Early registration appreciated!

September 2007



Canadian

Hard of

Hearing

Association

B.C.

**Parents'
Branch**

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Membership: \$30 annual
includes subscription to
Listen/Écouté magazine
and *The Loop* newsletter

A.G.M. Announcement:

The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association - BC Parents' Branch **10th Annual General Meeting** will be held Saturday, October 13, 2007 - 1:30 pm at Burnaby South Secondary School, Burnaby, BC.

Call for nominations:

If you would like to let your name stand for a position on the Board, or would like to nominate someone, please call President Leila Lolua at 604-433-2702 or Email: leilalolua@telus.net

Upcoming: (read on for additional information...)

September - Parents' Branch planning meeting at BCFHRC...

All welcome, call Janet for date and details

October 12, 13 – Family Weekend at Burnaby South Sec. School

October 19 – CAEDHH conference - Richmond

October 20 – CHHA-BC AGM in Surrey

May – Spring Workshop – date and location TBA

July – Family camp – Monck Park at Nicola lake

August – Annual picnic hosted by Lonni family

President's Message ...

by Leila Lolua

If you are reading this, the CHHA-BC Parents' Branch has connected with you in some way. Most of you are probably like me – a busy parent, with family (both young and old sandwiching you), work, sports and community keeping you too busy. Most of you are connected to the community of people involved with children who have a hearing loss. Never did I think that I would develop such a valued network in those early days and years of parenting a child with a hearing loss. What a gift this has been.

We know that the Parents Branch fills a gap for parents; and children, too. Parents with determination founded our Branch because of this need to connect. Many parents have nurtured the growth of our group, and we are becoming increasingly organized. Lisa Woogman is assuming more general administrative duties and represents the Parents' Branch at various meetings. Willetta Les has taken over the bookkeeping duties, which will considerably relieve the duties of the Treasurer. These two contract positions assure me that routine work to keep this branch viable is assured.

Board members contribute vitality to our branch. We are recruiting a president, and one or two new board members. This truly is not a huge commitment of time. Our meetings are based on our yearly cycle of events: The Family Weekend in the Fall, a Spring workshop and three newsletters per year. We've organized camping weekends and picnics. We share attending meetings where our input from a parent's perspective is sought. Meetings – about 4 or 5 each year - are informative and fun. Janet Les, the engine behind much of what we do, has generously agreed to stay on for one more year as Treasurer and Editor. We do need a parent (preferably in the Fraser Valley) to take over as Treasurer during the next year. With an able bookkeeper, this job is not onerous. Please contact Janet for information. With increased funding and part-time staff we are in a position to do more - get involved please! New parents, willing to become involved, will help ensure the survival of this branch.

The Family Weekend brochure – Hear to Learn - was mailed out in August. Visit www.chhaparents.bc.ca if you need a copy. New this year is a catered dinner on Friday night. We hope this will make it easier for families to attend, and relax, on Friday night. We have contracted a dynamo named Wendi Graves to coordinate the activities for the kids and teens. I am looking forward to learning from Dr. Janet Jamieson and her research on the social and emotional development of children with hearing loss, as well as Idelle Beauchesne and Melanie Thomas, teachers who grew

*Let's not let this be the story of
CHHA-BC Parents' Branch...*

This is a story about four people named
Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody.

There was an important job to be done and
Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it.

Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it.
Somebody got angry because it was Everybody's job.

Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but
Nobody realized that Somebody wouldn't do it.

It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when
Nobody did what Anybody could have done.

up with a hearing loss. Bring your questions, and any technology that you and your child use to overcome hearing challenges to our 'Show and Tell', facilitated by Dan Pacioretti, an audiologist skilled at explaining technology.

I was fortunate to attend the CHHA National conference this past May, in Edmonton. A CHHA network of young adults who have a hearing loss is steadily growing, and it was satisfying to see some of our BC teens and young adults at the conference. Developing independence and thriving as adults is something all of us seek for our children. I was absolutely delighted to be 'dropped' by my teen so that she could hang out with her peers. We need to continue to provide opportunities for our children to help them find their place. This is the reason that I have been involved with CHHA. I urge and welcome you to join us.

I am looking forward to seeing many of you in Burnaby at the Family Weekend, and to working with the new president of our branch. My heartfelt thanks to all the dear and special friends that I have made in the Parents' Branch core group.

**Board members
contribute vitality
to our branch.**

Family Weekend 2007

NEW this year: A travel grant of \$100 is available for families outside the Lower Mainland. Receipts required. Also, for families where registration fee is a hardship, the fee will be waived... Email to apply: janetles@canada.com

Free accommodation is available near the event - see brochure. First come, first served...

If you wish to bring a **child under age 5** to Family Weekend PLEASE CONTACT US IMMEDIATELY. We will provide a program if enough interest.

FAMILY WEEKEND INCLUDES SESSIONS FOR PARENTS, TEENS AND CHILDREN...

TEEN KONNECTION

Friday night, October 12

Supper and entertainment by deaf entertainer Max-i-mime. Hang out with other HoH teens...

Saturday morning, October 13

9:30 Meet and Greet

10:00 Speech Reading workshop

Audiologist Beth Brooks will show what your brain is doing to "hear better" when you see the speaker's face. Practice and get helpful tips on using your vision to help you understand what is being said... Beth teaches speech reading at Vancouver Community College and also works at BC Children's Hospital.

11:30 Drumming Workshop
Group activity

12:30 Lunch and free time...

2:00 Technology Show and Tell

Bring your listening equipment and share with peers and parents... Audiologist Dan Paccioretti will be on hand to facilitate discussion on assistive devices, phones, music listening, etc...

WHERE: Burnaby South Secondary School

WHEN: October 12,13

COST: \$20 - includes meals and snacks

WHO: Hard of hearing teens and teens who have siblings or parents with hearing loss

PRE-REGISTER please!

Form enclosed or at www.chhaparents.bc.ca

Loop Systems Enhance Listening

Using the T-switch setting on their hearing aids, children can experience enhanced listening in many situations. See:

Loop Systems - The Best Kept Secret in Town

by Neil Bauman

<http://www.hearinglosshelp.com/articles/loopsystems.htm>

So you want to Loop your Home

by Steve Kazemir

<http://www.chhaparents.bc.ca/Loop.pdf>

Kidz Konnection 2007

Give your hard of hearing child the gift of an event just for him/her. Each year parents share how Kidz Konnection makes a positive impact on their child's acceptance of hearing loss. Siblings benefit too, from experiencing "Hey, there are other families just like us!"

This year, Kidz Konnection is being supervised by Wendi Graves, a young lady with great experience and energy working with kids of all ages and abilities in North Vancouver.

The program will include:

Hula Hoop event by Public Dreams Society
Drumming Workshop
Spin Art, Magic Model Clay
Construction Zone, Action Games
Friday evening show with Max-i-mime...

For Parents, the workshops address our three main concerns: **Education, Socialization, Amplification...**

AND best of all, lots of time to discuss issues with each other... to connect with other families and professionals. Hope to see you there!

Parents Speak Out

"Men, including myself, have a hard time facing things they can't fix. We can't simply work harder to fix it... we must deal with our powerlessness."

Dr. Robert A. Naseef in *Special Children, Challenged Parents: The Struggles and Rewards of Raising a Child with a Disability*.

As any parent of a child born with a facial difference knows, life can be a challenge. Socially, financially, and emotionally. There are turns and twists in the road that none of us expected to encounter when we dreamed of becoming parents. But somehow, through it all, we survive... We adapt and we become the parents our children need. And through the process, most of us become more complete and more compassionate human beings."

Chris Fradking, father of a child with hemifacial microsomia. "Let's Face It 2005/2006 Resource List"

I have finally realized that parenting a child with special needs is not about the readjustment of my dreams but about the journey and joy in discovering his."

Rachel Lustiger, mother of son with Asperger Syndrome
"Let's Face It 2005/2006 Resource List"

ATTENTION PARENTS! Please encourage your teen or young adult son/daughter with hearing loss to attend the CHHA-BC Annual General Meeting... Parents welcome too!

CHHA - BC: A community at work

Community participation... is critical to community success. How can we, as citizens with hearing loss, influence our communities towards hearing accessibility? How can we inspire each other? What can CHHA do for you? What can you do for CHHA?

Panel members and moderator Karen Taylor will address the dynamics of a community at work towards making a difference. Karen Taylor has worked with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community in B.C. for many years and is well acquainted with the challenges of hearing loss in the community. She is currently Provincial Outreach Consultant with the B.C. School for the Deaf. Karen has a severe hearing loss, and is a humorous and knowledgeable presenter.

Panel members will include representation from CHHA National, active B.C. Branches, and the Young Adults Network... Join us for an interactive discussion on the future of CHHA-BC!

Saturday, October 20, 2007

10:30 Coffee
11:00 Annual General Meeting
12:00 Lunch
1:00 Panel with Karen Taylor
3:00 Adjournment

Location: BC Family Hearing Resource Centre
15220 - 92nd Avenue; Surrey, BC

Please register by October 12...

Email chha-bc@telus.net or call 1-866-888-2442

Space is limited - register ASAP so we can plan lunch and hearing accessibility.

MoPix - Motion Picture Access

Rear Window Captioning enables movie fans with hearing loss to enjoy a film via reflected captions that appear on a plexiglas panel at the seat. Patrons sitting in the surrounding seats cannot see the captions. There is no additional charge to use the system.

Film and show time information can be obtained directly from theaters equipped with MoPix technology. In B.C., these are:

- Colossus Langley - Langley - Auditorium 5 or 11
- Paramount Vancouver - Vancouver - Auditorium 1
- SilverCity Coquitlam - Coquitlam - Auditorium 8 or 9
- SilverCity Metropolis - Burnaby - Auditorium 2 or 10
- SilverCity Riverport - Richmond - Auditorium 1 or 3
- SilverCity Victoria - Victoria - Auditorium 3 or 5

For more information about access efforts, as well as a list of films scheduled to be released in the coming weeks and months with closed captioning and description, please visit <http://ncam.wgbh.org/mopix/>

THEATER TECHNOLOGY

For the hearing impaired

Closed-captioning system lets hearing-impaired patrons view dialogue. A device at the back of the theater projects captions onto a hockey-puck-size screen that is attached to an adjustable arm anchored to the cup holder.

ENLARGED CAPTIONING SCREEN

For the visually impaired

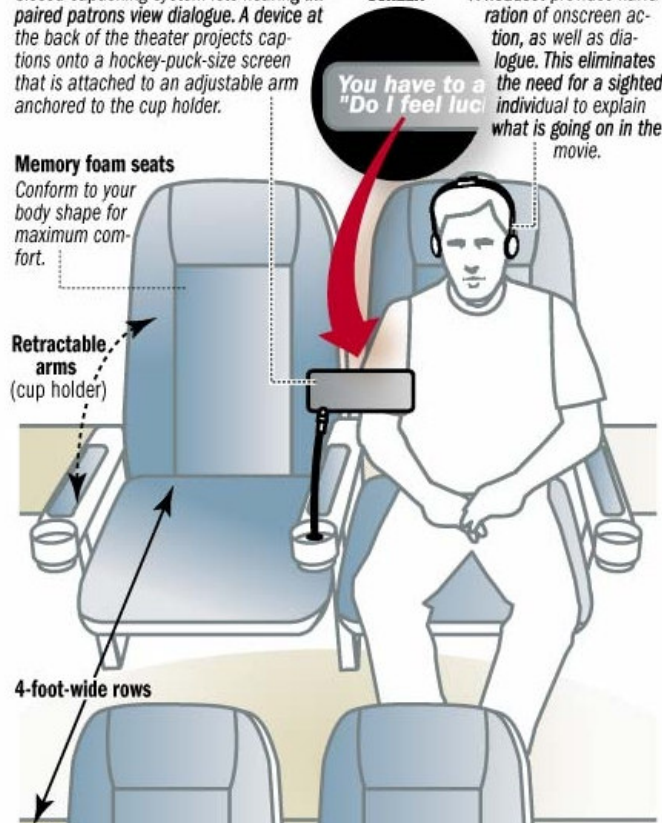
A headset provides narration of onscreen action, as well as dialogue. This eliminates the need for a sighted individual to explain what is going on in the movie.

Memory foam seats

Conform to your body shape for maximum comfort.

Retractable arms (cup holder)

4-foot-wide rows



Ten Things People with Normal Hearing Don't Do

by Cindy Gustin, MSc Aud (C).

I have normal hearing. Recently a hearing impaired colleague and I visited a school to talk about noise and hearing protection to 80 Grade Six students. After the presentation my colleague commented that she was encouraged to see that I also had difficulty hearing the students. This caught me by surprise. In my opinion, the presentation had gone well and I hadn't felt that I'd had any trouble hearing. True, at times, I'd needed to have a student repeat a question or comment or to ask some students to be quiet so I could hear others. And with one little girl who was particularly shy and who's first language was not English, I had to have my ear right at her mouth while she first repeated and then finally spelled her name for me. Until my colleague made her observation, I wasn't even conscious of doing those things. As far as I was concerned this was not "having trouble hearing"; it was what I had to do to hear normally.

The first thing we tell someone, after we confirm that they are a cochlear implant candidate, is that a cochlear implant does not give/give back normal hearing. But sometimes we forget what normal hearing is. When this happens for people with cochlear implants, they end up in the clinic because they (or worse their friends or family) feel that they are not hearing the way they are "supposed to."

With that in mind here are a few things that people with normal hearing do and don't do:

1. **People with normal hearing do not understand every single word that is said to them....** particularly teenagers. In a recent conversation with my fifteen-year-old son, 19 of the 47 words that comprised his side of the conversation were either "What?" or "Huh?". ...and this did not include the long periods of silence where he may, or may not, have been processing what was said to him. This is not a hearing loss. This is teenage brain.
2. **People with normal hearing do not hear through walls, from other rooms or when the speaker has his head inside an appliance.** If someone asks a question when their head is in the refrigerator, the only response they should expect to get is from last night's leftover pizza or perhaps some very attentive broccoli.
3. **People with normal hearing do not listen intently to every word in a conversation.** If you are boring, we tune you out. This is not hearing loss. This is self-defense.
4. **People with normal hearing do not always answer you when they are doing something else.** If my son doesn't answer me when he's watching TV, I don't assume that he has suddenly been struck deaf. (Usually I assume that watching multiple episodes of The Simpsons and Family Guy has lowered his IQ to the point that he no longer understands English.)
5. **People with normal hearing do not remember everything they hear.** If you are married, I need say no more.

6. **People with normal hearing do have trouble understanding people who talk very fast.** Normal rates of speech can be up to 226 words per minute. When people speak very quickly all the words run together making it very difficult to tell where one word ends and the next word begins. Research has shown that when people use Clear Speech (speaking distinctly and at a slightly slower rate... with pauses between phrases), intelligibility increases approximately 20%.... even for individuals with normal hearing.
7. **People with normal hearing do not understand all the lyrics to every song they hear.** Go ahead.... test them. Granted they may do better with Frank Sinatra than with Three Dead Trolls in a Baggie (and yes, that is a real group.)
8. **People with normal hearing do have trouble understanding garbled or distorted speech or a language they never learned.** One mother who rented a video for her little girl who had a cochlear implant became very concerned when her daughter said she really liked the movie but sometimes it sounded like the actors were speaking Japanese. On her way to the phone to book a mapping appointment with the Cochlear Implant clinic, she remembered that the movie they'd rented was Madeleine...the actors weren't speaking Japanese but at times they were speaking French. Note: The Cochlear Implant is not a Universal Translator.
9. **People with normal hearing do not hear only what they want to hear.** Even though it may seem like it sometimes.... see number 5.
10. **People with normal hearing do not hear and understand conversations between two other people at a nearby table in a noisy restaurant.** This is called spying. The technology for this exists. You may have seen it in a James Bond movie. If you need to hear under these circumstances you do not need an audiologist. You need Q.

Cochlear Implant Audiologists' Warning: (should be included on all CI packaging)

We advise/warn/explain/reiterate/repeat/emphasize that a cochlear implant does not give back normal hearing...and we certainly do not promise that it will provide better than normal hearing.

So the next time you think you or your spouse, child, friend or student with a cochlear implant isn't hearing the way you think they should, ask yourself: "Is it the cochlear implant or is it normal?"

Cindy Gustin is an audiologist on St. Paul's Hospital Cochlear Implant Team. This article was originally printed in the BC Cochlear Implant Newsletter and is reprinted with permission.



CHHA-BC Parents' Branch acknowledges the financial assistance of the Province of British Columbia

The following information, promoted in two press releases by CHHA-National received considerable media attention this summer...

WIDESPREAD ADDICTION TO PORTABLE MUSIC PLAYERS INCREASING POTENTIAL FOR PREMATURE HEARING LOSS

With increased playing time, easy portability, higher peak decibel levels, and rapid growth in popularity, the portable personal music player has become a ticking time bomb for potential premature hearing loss. While precautions can be taken to handle the risk of damage, those unaware of how damaging their listening habits are may be less likely to change their behavior.

Experts argue that we are not stumbling on some new phenomena that is going to create pandemonium. What we are seeing is a resurfacing of the concerns raised in the 1980's when Sony put out the "Walkman". The '90's brought us the "Discman" and now, the millennium has graced us with the "iPod" and many other MP3 players available on the consumer market. The changes in technology have allowed consumers to listen to their devices anywhere, for longer amounts of time, at increased volumes.

Even though information has surfaced regarding the potential harm of personal devices, studies have shown that both adults and youth are not likely to change their listening habits. According to one study conducted by Zogby International for the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), half of all youth and adults polled said they are not concerned with potential hearing loss, and approximately the same amount indicated they had no intention of taking preventative measures.

Dr. Marshall Chasin, an Audiologist and Director of Auditory Research at the Musicians' Clinics of Canada, indicates that the average decibel (dB) level of these portable devices is approximately 136dB. However, depending on the style of headphones used in conjunction with the device, maximum output can reach anywhere from 50-140dB. To put that in perspective, 140dB is equivalent to a gunshot or firecracker. Listening to 80-85 dB (equivalent to an alarm clock, or telephone dial tone) for approximately 40 hours per week is safe without the worry of inflicting damage.

However, for every 3 dB increase in the volume, the safe exposure time is cut in half. That's a lot of damage potential in a very short period of time...

With increased usage of portable music devices, both adults and youth alike are becoming more susceptible to potential premature hearing loss. The following outlines possible risks and preventative measures that can be taken to help prevent hearing loss, or permanent damage when listening to a portable music player.

1. **Turn it down.** Most people attempt to block out the surrounding noise by turning up the volume. A general rule of thumb is when you can't hear that noise anymore, it's too loud.
2. **Reevaluate your headphones.** Ear bud headphones are more damaging to your ears than an over-the-ear style headphone. The proximity of the noise to the inner ear canal with ear buds creates a higher intensity. Ear buds often require louder volumes to block out that ambient noise as well. Over-the-ear style headphones come in a variety of styles, and are also available in what is called isolation, or noise cancellation headphones. These headphones are designed to filter background noise, allowing the listener to enjoy his or her music at a safer level.
3. **Limit exposure time.** If you are going to listen to loud volumes, keep in mind that for every volume increase of 3 dB, listening time should be cut in half. If you just can't turn it down, turn it off for awhile. Avoid exposure to other loud noises such as the lawnmower or hairdryer, and enjoy some peace and quiet.
4. **Examine other options.** For iPod listeners specifically, is the limiter software that can be downloaded from Apple's website. The limiter on your device restricts the volume to a maximum of 115 dB at its peak. As Dr.

Chasin of the Musicians' Clinic of Canada indicates, this is a very good strategy and smart move in order to protect listeners.

It is important to understand that these steps do not eliminate the risk completely and that prolonged exposure to any loud volumes does carry the risk of potential hearing loss. Like any preventative measures, some work better for certain individuals than others, and as such it is important to find the method that works best for you.

The goal at CHHA is to raise awareness of the hard of hearing community and educate individuals about hearing loss. To learn more about the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, and issues such as personal portable music devices, visit their website at <http://www.chha.ca>

International Hard of Hearing People's Congress in Vancouver

The 8th annual International Federation of Hard of Hearing People's Congress will be held in Vancouver from July 2-8, 2008. This is a unique opportunity for parents and others touched by hearing loss to learn from each other.

A special feature of the Congress will be the meeting of young adults from all across the globe to discuss various pertinent issues about hearing loss. Through an exchange of ideas, we hope to find out what issues young adults in other countries deal with, what has been implemented in other countries and what we can work on together as a global community.

For further information, please visit the web-site at:
www.chha-ifhohcongress2008.com

Facts and Myths about Hearing Loss

(Reprinted from Starting Point: A Resource for Parents of Deaf or Hard of Hearing Children – The Canadian Hearing Society)

False: My child will be limited because of his/her deafness.

Fact:

Do not consider your child sick. He/she is as normal as any other child; the only difference is that he/she cannot hear or is hard of hearing.

False: All hearing losses are the same.

Fact:

The single term deafness covers a wide range of hearing losses that have very different effects on a person's ability to process sound and thus, to understand speech.

False: Speech and Language are the same thing.

Fact:

Although speech and spoken language are related, speech and language are very different. Speech is one way of expressing language. Language can also be expressed in written form, visual/manual form, as American Sign Language (ASL) and Lague des Signes Quebecois (LSQ), and through touch, such as communication with Deaf/Blind people. (Tactile)

False: If a deaf child learns to sign first, he/she will not learn to use his/her voice.

Fact:

It must be remembered that each child is unique, with his/her own set of skills. Studies have shown that sign language does not have a negative impact on the ability to speak. The ability to communicate successfully at an early age, in any mode, increases the child's capacity to acquire other languages. Children will learn the advantages of speech, if they receive positive feedback when using their voice. Clarity of speech is influenced by how well a child can use their residual hearing.

False: All deaf people use sign language.

Fact:

Culturally deaf people use sign language. Many people with a hearing loss do not know or use sign language.

False: All deaf and hard of hearing people are good speech readers.

Fact:

Many factors are involved in the success of speech reading. People with hearing loss are not inherently better speech readers. The best lip readers can understand only 26 per cent of what is said! They guess at the rest.

False: If my child has a hearing loss, he/she will never go to college/university, or get a well paying job.

Fact:

Many adults with hearing loss, regardless of the communication option they have chosen, do lead successful and fulfilling lives. Opportunities for children and adults who have a hearing loss are endless. It is important to remember that they are children/people first. They can do anything anyone else can do; some only need assistance with communication.

False: People with hearing loss are deaf and dumb.

Fact:

The inability to hear affects neither intelligence, nor the physical ability to produce sounds. Deafness does not make people dumb in the sense of being either stupid or mute. The child's intelligence will not be affected, since deafness is a hearing loss, not a cerebral or psychological incapacity. Deaf people, understandably, find this stereotype and archaic phrase particularly offensive.

False: Hearing aids or cochlear implants completely correct hearing loss.

Fact:

Hearing aids and cochlear implants are assistive devices which improve hearing loss for some individuals. Unlike glasses that can restore 20/20 vision, hearing aids and cochlear implants do not restore or correct hearing. Hearing aids and cochlear implants amplify sound. A hearing aid or cochlear implant may enable a person to hear someone's voice, even though he/she may not be able to understand distinct words. Just because someone wears a hearing aid, or has a cochlear implant does not mean the person hears normally.

False: Deaf people are not sensitive to noise.

Fact:

Some types of hearing loss actually accentuate sensitivity to noise. Loud sounds become garbled and uncomfortable. Hearing aid and cochlear implant users often find loud sounds, which are greatly magnified by their aids very unpleasant.

Registered Disability Savings Plan

Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network (PLAN) is a non-profit organization, established in 1989 by and for families committed to future planning and securing a good life for their relative with a disability.

PLAN has been lobbying the Federal government for some time to set up a Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) similar to an RRSP to allow families to save for the future of a family member with disabilities.

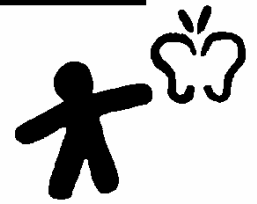
This year the idea become a reality when the federal budget included provision for RDSP under which families can save up to \$200,000 tax-free to guarantee their offspring future financial security.

For more information on RDSP's, please visit the PLAN web-site at www.plan.ca and see Public Policy Updates.



CHHA - B.C. Parents' Branch

Canadian Hard of Hearing Association



Membership is open to any individual or organization that supports our objectives. Annual membership fee is \$30. Donations are welcome and needed by CHHA - BC Parents' Branch.

Membership in the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association entitles you to vote on any CHHA matter, and to receive a subscription to LISTEN magazine, CHHA-BC's newsletter *The Loop* and the Parents' Branch newsletter.

NAME _____

Parent(s) Professional Other

MAILING ADDRESS _____

H of H Child(ren) _____

PHONE _____ FAX - if applicable

New Membership Renewal

Name Birth date
Donation \$ _____

Thank you! Your support benefits deaf and hard-of-hearing children in BC...

Payable to: CHHA - B.C. Parents' Branch - c/o 10150 Gillanders Road; Chilliwack, BC V2P 6H4 - Phone: 604-794-3772

2007 CAEDHH CONFERENCE



BC Chapter of the
Canadian Association of Educators for the Deaf and
Hard of Hearing

“Perspectives in Education: Supporting our Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students”

Friday, October 19, 2007

Quilchena Golf & Country Club - Richmond

Presenters:

Ellen A. Rhoades, Ed.S., CED, Cert. AVT

Neurological Readiness and Body Based Auditory Learning.
When the Home Language is not Spoken English

Marc Marschark, PhD

Deaf Children's Literacy and Academic Achievement
Learning in the Mainstream Classroom: Lies my mother told me

For registration form and schedule, email
janetles@canada.com

Cost for Parents is \$75 or \$95 after October 1
Includes buffet lunch and breaks

To Which World Do You Belong?

By Michael Gergley

To which world do you belong, the hearing or the deaf? When asked this question I would have to say, "Neither. I'm between two worlds. I'm hard of hearing." And although my primary means of communication is oral, I don't identify with the hearing world. Alternately, although I have a severe hearing loss and use assistive listening devices such as a hearing aid, my residual hearing leaves me feeling I don't belong in the deaf community, either. So I'm left as the lyrics to a favorite song of mine say to ponder, "Where do I belong?"

Ironically enough, I have 'heard' the answer, not in some lecture or after reading some book on hearing loss. Nor was it a one-time happening where a tiny light bulb went on in my head, revealing in full color and sound where indeed I DID and DO belong. It HAS and WILL continue to be a process of self-discovery for me.

So what does all this mean for my everyday challenges to find answers and have my unique needs met? Perhaps the best personal experience I can share was during a discussion on hearing loss during my graduate degree studies working towards my Masters Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. Many hearing loss related issues were spoken about, but some, like being deaf and being hard of hearing, were grouped together as if their needs were the same. I took advantage of this opportunity to educate others about my unique world. And though I still sometimes feel between two worlds and I seem to always have to educate somebody else, in my world is where I belong.

<http://www.hearinglossweb.com/Issues/Identity/identity.htm#geoff>

