



A PUBLICATION OF NATIONAL DEAF ACADEMY

SPRING 2005

NDA UPDATE

ALAN M. COHEN, M.D.

National Deaf Academy News

Dear Families and Friends:

As the rest of the country welcomes the warmth and re-birth that comes with the Spring and Summer seasons, Florida is ready for the end of crisp evenings and warm days with low humidity. In the coming months we will be in the midst of our rainy season and will reflect upon winter with fond remembrance. Looking back, the past quarter has been a time of ongoing growth and evolution for the staff and residents of National Deaf Academy.



NDA's New Grossman Memorial Activity Center

Since the end of the Fall season, NDA has been surveyed by two outside states (New Jersey and California), The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), The Florida Department of Children and Families (twice) and The Agency for Health Care Administration. Although each individual survey suggested ways to improve specific policies, all were unusually positive and complimentary of our staff, physical plant, and the obvious commitment NDA demonstrates in providing the highest level of clinical care at all times. I was

especially pleased with the collegial attitude shown by the Florida State agencies and their desire to utilize us as their "experts" in the field of Deafness. We look forward to ongoing and mutually beneficial relationships with each of these organizations.

As mentioned in the last edition of *The Source*, our state-of-the-art activity center, named for my mother, opened for use on May 1st. It will be formally dedicated within the next few weeks. The new gym allows for eight separate therapeutic activities to occur simultaneously in one building. It contains a captioned theatre, custom rock

climbing wall, aerobic circuit training room, two basketball courts, volleyball, recreation room, arts and crafts room, and two unique therapeutic playrooms. You can expect more pictures and an in-depth story in the next edition of "The Source."

Also in this edition you will find information about NDA's 2005 Conference. Held in March, this year's event was titled: BEYOND THE BANDAGE: Practical Approaches to Addressing Mental Health & Behavioral Issues in the

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2005 ANNUAL CONFERENCE SUMMATION



Dear Readers:

It is my pleasure to report that the 2005 NDA Conference, held on March 16th – 18th of this year, was a huge success across the board! This year we decided to hold a conference that would focus specifically on mental health issues as they relate to Deaf and Hard of Hearing students in grades K thru 12. Therefore the conference theme was: BEYOND THE BANDAGE: Practical Approaches to Addressing Mental Health & Behavioral Issues in the Deaf & Hard of Hearing Classroom.

Nearly 125 attendees traveled from over 25 states and Canada to attend the event. Many of these individuals had attended previous NDA conferences. The participants hailed the conference as a highly specialized educational opportunity with information specifically tailored to their particular discipline or profession. I was repeatedly told that the information provided at this conference is unavailable elsewhere. In attendance at the event were: teachers, advocates, parents, therapists, social workers, interpreters, psychologists and other professionals. CEUs were provided for various disciplines.

Well regarded presenters, from a variety of agencies and locales, traveled to Orlando, Florida to present at the Hilton at the WALT DISNEY WORLD RESORT®. These presenters

brought with them a wealth of knowledge and expertise to share with their audiences. Please reference the enclosed chart on page 4 for a full list of featured presenters and topics.



Diane Morton, Ph.D., from Gallaudet University, opened the event with a keynote speech that reflected upon the evolution of the field of mental health and Deafness over the last 30 years, and where it might be going in the future. Steve Glenn, MA/LPC came to us from South Carolina to present about Positive Behavior Support. This summer Mr. Glenn will come to NDA for one week to certify key members of our staff as Positive Behavior Support instructors. He will provide us with other consultation services as well.

Based on feedback from our attendees, next year's conference will most likely be held in the greater Orlando area once again. This location allows conference participants to enjoy the multitude of local attractions, an escape from cold Northern weather, as well as an opportunity to take a tour of the NDA physical property and program. This year approximately 40 people opted to board a shuttle bus and take a tour of NDA.

At this time I am starting the preliminary planning of the 2006 Conference. If you have ideas for next year's conference theme, suggested topics to be covered or can recommend qualified presenters, I invite you to contact me at: emoore@nda.com. Of course, all themes and presentation topics need to relate to mental health and Deafness.

Please keep your eye on subsequent editions of *The Source* for 2006 Conference details.

Best Wishes,

Elena L. Moore, BA, NAD III
Director of Community Relations



Keynote Speaker Diane Morton and NDA Therapist Lisa Montolvo at the 2005 NDA Conference Reception.

2005 Annual Conference Summation, continued on page 4

YOUR KIDS & MINE



BY: ALAN M. COHEN, M.D.
NDA Medical Director



Dear Dr. Cohen:

I am Hard of Hearing and have two Deaf children, ages 12 and 13. Both of my children attend a mainstreamed educational program. Throughout their early childhood education, I have repeatedly been told that Deaf kids "think differently" than Hearing children, and often times, are not as academically successful regardless of how smart they are. Is any of this true? My kids have always used American Sign Language to communicate and seem pretty bright to me.

Mrs. D.M., Los Angeles, CA

Dear Mrs. D.M.:

Of all the questions that come to us, the ones that concern me the most relate to whether or not Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals are, by definition, less intelligent than Hearing people in the general population. In fairness to those raising the issue, the concern is often borne of ignorance and the (mistaken) assumption that auditory learning is the only way for children to develop cognition and psychological sophistication.

I'm going to turn to an article written by my friend and mentor, Dr. McCay Vernon. The work, "Language Developments Relationship to Cognition, Affectivity and Intelligence" originally appeared in *The Canadian Psychologist* in 1972. It addresses whether verbal language is necessary for thought; if the spoken word is the only way in which human beings can convey emotional material; and just how much IQ development is dependent upon linguistic and environmental stimulation.

The first question to be addressed has to do with whether or not verbal language is, by definition, necessary for an individual to think. Here the evidence clearly indicates that when the language variable is successfully eliminated from a task, that Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals are able to solve problems with equal

efficiency. Further, when statisticians look at traditional IQ testing, which is made up of both Verbal and Performance subtests, they have always found that the elimination of the Verbal subtests results in the Hearing and Deaf groups looking essentially the same from a statistical perspective. In short, the overwhelming evidence clearly shows what professionals working with Deaf students and patients already know. That is, verbal language is not necessary to be bright and to be able to solve problems.

The article goes on to look at how the absence of verbal language affects the ability of an individual to express their feelings in an understandable and appropriate fashion to the world around them. Dr. Vernon makes the point that available research indicates that there is no difference in the incidence of mental illness among Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals when compared to the Hearing population. One could surmise that, somehow, Deaf infants must be able to develop a rapport with their parents or we would expect to see a ridiculously high level of the psychopathology associated with emotional deprivation, i.e., attachment disorders and psychosis. In short, if Deaf kids cannot communicate because they lack language, how come they are not more screwed up? The answer, according to Dr. Vernon, is that they do, indeed, communicate

in a wide range of creative ways. Including the use of tactile, spatial, vocal and olfactory communication techniques. Again, verbal language is not the only game in town.

Finally, Dr. Vernon shows that the genetically Deaf and Hard of Hearing population tests at a consistently higher IQ level than people who are Deaf for other reasons. Thus suggesting, ultimately, that to a great extent, how someone functions is determined primarily by genetic factors rather than communication style.

So, what have we learned? To put it as simply as I possibly can, we know that Deafness doesn't limit one's intellectual potential, nor does it intrude on one's ability to emotionally bond with loved ones and the world around them. When Dr. Vernon wrote this article in 1972 the world had not yet embraced the idea that sign language could effectively replace many (but not all) aspects of verbal communication, so I suspect that the results of the studies would be even more impressive if done in a current, pro-ASL environment. But regardless, it's important for all Deaf and Hard of Hearing people to understand that their potential is not limited by the absence of verbal language, but rather, by the same mundane events that impact everyone else in the human race.

NDA UPDATE



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Deaf & Hard of Hearing Classroom. Elena L. Moore, our Director of Community Relations and Marketing, weighs in on the unique offerings from some of the most well respected experts in Deafness from throughout the country.

Included in this edition of *The Source* you will also find my regular column, "Your Kids and Mine." Also enclosed is an introduction to two of The Charter School at National Deaf Academy's (CSNDA) teachers: Angela Saunders and Paula Gold.

As always, we wish each of you a safe and healthy Summer season and look forward to catching up in early Fall.

Sincerely,

Alan Cohen, M.D.

Need to Contact a NDA Staff Member?

Staff members can be reached via email by using the person's first initial and last name, followed by: @nda.com — Senior staff members can be accessed via our new website at: www.nda.com

2005 Annual Conference Summation, continued from page 2

2005 Annual Conference Speakers and Topics

Alan Cohen, MD

Practical Use of Psychotropic Medications in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Classroom

Steve Glenn, MA/LPC

Positive Behavior Support: A Training Model and a School-Wide Plan for Addressing Student Behavior

Gabriel Lomas, MA

Counseling Programs for Deaf Students in Public Schools: Are We Meeting Their Needs?

Ron Lybarger, Ph.D

To Sign or Not to Sign: Cochlear Implants & Sign Language

Asiah Mason, Ph.D. and Michelle Smith, BA

Developing a Therapeutic Classroom for High Risk Deaf Students

Christine Mayworm, MA, LCPC and James Vanderbosch, Ph.D.

The Impact of Deafness on Child Development

Diane Morton, Ph.D.

Keynote Speaker

Kathleen O'Brien, MS and Irvine Stewart, MSW

Perspectives on Diversity

Silke Parl, Psy.D.

Assessing and Treating ADHD in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Population

Keven Poore, MA, CASAC

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children and Chemical Dependency / Mental Health Issues

Angela Saunders, BA, NBCT

Educational Approaches and Techniques for Autistic Students

Christopher Wagner, BS

Making Bold Moves: Advocacy and Deaf Children

Tammy Weiner, Ph.D.

Perspectives on Bullying: Prevention & Intervention

MEET THE CSNDA STAFF



Angela Saunders, BA, NBCT

CSNDA Special Needs Teacher

Angela Saunders is a National Board Certified Exceptional Needs Specialist with a focus on severe and multiple disabilities. She graduated from Flagler College in 1993 with majors in Deaf Education and Mental Retardation. Angela has been serving this unique population of students for 12 years. She has worked with a wide variety of age ranges and exceptionalities. She has also taught American Sign Language at the University of South Florida. At this time Angela teaches the Special Needs classroom at The Charter School at National Deaf Academy. Her classroom consists of Deaf-Autistic, Deaf-Blind, and Autistic students with intensive communication and behavioral needs.

Paula Gold, M.Ed.

CSNDA Math & Science Teacher

Paula earned her Master's of Education degree in Deaf Education and her Bachelor's of Science degree in Deaf Studies at Boston University. Ms. Gold obtained her first teaching position just after her graduation in the fall of 1999. As the first teacher at The Charter School at National Deaf Academy, Paula has been instrumental in the school's progress. Paula is versatile and has taught a variety of students in different grade levels from kindergarten through the 12th grade. Currently she is teaching math and science to middle and high school students. She states: "I am honored to be working at CSNDA. I was given the incredible opportunity to join the team when NDA was only a concept and have been witness to its growth and evolution."



Main entrance to The Charter School at National Deaf Academy



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National Deaf Academy Program Synopsis

NDA provides residential psychiatric care to Deaf and Hard of Hearing children, adolescents and adults from all 50 states. Our staff, predominately Deaf, are specially trained to provide mental health care to Deaf individuals with severe behavioral, emotional or mental health problems. Children and adolescent programs serve ages 6 to 18 while the adult program serves adults of any age over 18. The Charter School at NDA provides K thru 12 education for NDA residents between the ages of 6 and 22.

Specialized Services For:

- Psychiatric Diagnoses
- Treatment Resistant Behavior Disorders
- Multiple Neurological Disorders
- Deaf Individuals Dually Diagnosed with Psychiatric and Addiction Disorders
- Autistic Children and Adolescents
- Deaf-Blind Children, Adolescents and Adults
- Developmental Disabilities
- Impulse Control Disorders
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Clinical Services Include:

- Daily Group Psychotherapy
- Daily Recreational Therapy (including off-campus outings)
- Daily Community Meetings
- Weekly one-to-one Psychotherapy Session
- Weekly Family Therapy (via telephone or web-cam)
- Weekly Psychiatric Session
- Occupational, Physical and Speech Therapy
- Addictions Services and AA meetings
- Nursing and General Medical Care
- Independent Living Skills Training

For more information about National Deaf Academy please contact Elena L. Moore, Director of Community Relations at: emoore@nda.com or 352-735-9500. You may also wish to visit our website at www.nda.com for further details.