



From the President



It never ceases to amaze me how quickly time flies by! We have enjoyed a spectacular autumn in Michigan and now look forward to the holiday season. This time of year finds us all searching for the perfect gift. You can find plush hearing aids for teddy bears at the Build-A-Bear website. How about a portable battery tester that also holds extra hearing aid batteries and is small enough to fit on your keychain or in your purse? Or a Dry & Store Conditioning System? Ear Gear, Tube Riders, Critter Clips, Huggie Aids, Sweat Bands, or Super Seals for kids? AGX MediaLink or SonicBLU might be great for older kids or adults. There are many assistive listening devices and accessories that make life with hearing loss easier. I've named a few but check out what's available at places such as www.harcmercantile.com, www.harriscomm.com, www.adcohearing.com, www.batteryjunction.com, or www.hearingusa.com.

At our last board meeting on November 13th, Ashley Garber announced her retirement from the board but will remain as chair of the Fall Conference committee. This bi-annual event is scheduled for November 4, 2011 at the Okemos Conference Center. Please save the date – more information will follow! We welcome our newest board member, Yaju Loomis. She is a parent member from West Bloomfield. Yaju and her husband have a daughter with hearing loss who is mainstreamed. We look forward to working with Yaju over the next several years! Michigan AG Bell always welcomes suggestions for future board members – to submit a name, please contact me at ShonHal2@comcast.net – thank you!

Please join us for "A Chili Saturday with AG Bell Michigan" on Saturday, January 22, from 10:00 am - 1:00 pm. This will be the first of our traveling board meetings and will be at the Macomb Intermediate School District offices. The meeting will include an overview of the Macomb County program for d/hh, a short board meeting open to Macomb staff and parents, followed by a pot luck chili lunch provided by members of the AG Bell board. Save the date and please RSVP to me at the above e-mail so we are certain to have enough chili. I hope you can join us!

Happy Holidays to all!

Shon Halacka

The Administration of Developmental Disabilities: Envisioning the Future Summit

Five "Regional Listening Sessions" were held in Philadelphia, Orlando, Denver, Dallas and Detroit. In each of these five sessions, there were four categories of speakers (Childhood, Adulthood, Aging, and Supports) and within each category ten speakers were selected for a total of 600 speakers across the nation. I testified in the December 2nd Detroit session in the Childhood category and was the only one speaking about young children, and the only one aimed at hearing loss. A total of about 35 people actually spoke during the day. The speakers came from Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota. Our comments were delivered from a podium to a panel of six "Listeners" including Sharon Lewis, Commissioner, Administration on Developmental Disabilities. The other "Listeners" were people representing a broad cross-section of disability issues - one had cerebral palsy, one was a parent, one was a program administrator, etc. - and they came from all over the United States. There was one panel in the morning and a different panel in the afternoon. A court reporter provided CART and a written record of all that was said. If you care to glance at it, I believe a transcript will be available at <http://www.envision2010.net/> within a week or so.

I was the second speaker and stayed for the entire morning, so I heard all of the speakers from the first two categories. Three panel members approached me later in the morning asking me to expand on my testimony in written form and submit it. They commented they appreciated my input on children and hearing loss because it is a topic they don't hear about often enough. One recurring theme from the childhood session was the failure of the transition process from high school to college or career. One young man remarked that his transition "failed to provide a path to either college or career". Another speaker, a mother, remarked that the process (physician's bedside manner) for "delivering the diagnosis of a disability needs to be addressed: there has been no progress in over 25 years." She suggested using the "Changing Lives" program (aimed at Down's Syndrome) as a good role model or benchmark for physicians to use when delivering a diagnosis, and said this training needs to become part of medical school re-

career. One young man remarked that his transition "failed to provide a path to either college or career". Another speaker, a mother, remarked that the process (physician's bedside manner) for "delivering the diagnosis of a disability needs to be addressed: there has been no progress in over 25 years." She suggested using the "Changing Lives" program (aimed at Down's Syndrome) as a good role model or benchmark for physicians to use when delivering a diagnosis, and said this training needs to become part of medical school requirements. At the completion of each individual's testimony, the panel asked one or two questions - usually focusing on what the speaker recommended as a solution to the problem - or what agency the speaker felt needed to be part of the solution.

On the day following the "Listening Session", small groups of invited key community stakeholders reviewed and discussed all the testimony. They prioritized the information they received from the "Listening Session". Nationally, after all 600 speakers from the five regions have provided their testimony, and all written submissions have been reviewed, discussed and prioritized by local, regional and national stakeholders, a strategic plan will be created which will be available at <http://www.envision2010.net/> for the public to view.

Anyone can submit written testimony at the same website. As the "Listeners" told me, they don't get a lot of information about hearing loss. Our membership represent the professionals, parents and deaf and hard of hearing people of the State of Michigan - let's demonstrate the importance of this subject! This is a great opportunity to impact the future direction of services for people with developmental disabilities of all types.

Shon Halacka

!!! JULY 9, 2011 - SAVE THE DATE - JULY 9, 2011 !!!

The Michigan Chapter will be hosting a Picnic on July 9, 2011. It will be held at Kensington Metropark in Milford, MI. We have reserved the North Martindale picnic shelter - 150 yards from Martindale Beach and the Splash 'N' Blast Water Park. More details will follow - this promises to be an outstanding event! Please visit Kensington Metroparks website to learn more about this incredible area! http://www.metroparks.com/parks/index_all.aspx?ID=6

Words of Wisdom: Take Advantage of the Language Opportunities of the Holidays



With all the hustle and bustle of the Holidays, don't forget to take some time with loved ones. This is a great time for cuddling up with a Holiday book (The Night Before Christmas, Can You See What I See Christmas, I SPY and other "find it" books, Little Critter's the Night Before Christmas, Huggly's Snow Day). The Holidays also offer up some unique and novel language terms that we don't "hear" at other times of the year. (Think: tinsel, menorah, wassail, reindeer, tree skirt, "trimming" the tree, etc...) There are some great children's board books that depict many of these unique and festive terms! These would be great gift ideas for loved ones as well! Just "google" Holiday Books, or check on Amazon.com

Have your child help you write gift lists, shopping lists, thank-you notes, and the ever-important letter to Santa!

Be aware that the Holiday's may impose some difficult listening situations on your loved one (large family get-togethers, shopping malls, restaurants, etc...) Be aware of their need to find a quiet spot, encourage turn taking instead of everyone talking at once, and be ready to repeat and rephrase!

Listening can be exhausting-especially when someone has to work twice as hard to hear half as much. You child or loved one may need some rest time to re-fresh!

Take advantage of this unique opportunity to expand language and promote learning, and above all else, ENJOY THE SEASON!

Dee Riggs!

*Did you receive your last print newsletter? If not your membership may not be up to date!
Go to: www.agbell.org and re-new today!*

Questions or Comments? Contact us at: shonHal@comcast.net