

# Michigan Speaks!

## Michigan Chapter

Alexander Graham Bell

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL

ASSOCIATION FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

Fall, 2010

## From the President:

This past May saw the “changing of the guard” on the Michigan AG Bell board. I want to thank Ashley Garber for her fine service as President, Mary Anne Santoro who was a remarkable treasurer, Sarah Yu who co-chaired our last fall conference and Hyatt Biermann who helped wherever she was needed. They each brought their expertise and left an indelible mark on the history of MI AG Bell. Thank you!

Your AG Bell Michigan Chapter and the Hearing Loss Association of America - Michigan Chapter (HLAA-MI) co-hosted a Hearing Aid Tax Credit event. The supper was sponsored by the Hearing Industries Association with support from the International Hearing Society. We were fortunate to have MI Senator John Gleason attend to welcome our featured speaker, U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow. Both Senators strongly support this legislation, S.1019. The Hearing Aid Tax Credit, if enacted, would provide a \$500 tax credit per hearing aid purchased, once every five years. The Senate bill would allow this tax credit to everyone regardless of age. The event was held on Friday, September 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center in East Lansing. Amazingly, considering it was Labor Day weekend, we had 170 guests attend! Speakers at the event included 9-year-old Conor Waterman who described how his hearing aids enabled him to be fully mainstreamed by the third grade and that he “has a fantastic life.” Jordan Crawford, age 11, described how his parents learned of his hearing loss at age 3, and how hearing aids have enabled him to excel in school and as a musician playing both the piano and the trumpet. A delicious supper followed the speakers and concluded with good old American apple pie!

After working so well together planning the Hearing Aid Tax Credit event, Ann Liming and Audrey Pleasant of the HLAA-MI and Nan Asher of the MADHH and I all agree we must collaborate on other projects in the near future! This is one of my visions for MI AG Bell: to reach out to other organizations and work together for the benefit of people, especially children, with hearing loss. I hope you all agree! Another goal is to have our board meetings travel so members throughout the state have an opportunity to participate in person. I look forward to meeting you when we are in your area!

*Shon Halacka*

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## **What does National AG Bell do for the Michigan Chapter?? !Scholarships for Children in Michigan!**

**Arts & Sciences** – There was one applicant from Michigan and one award.

Arts & Science awards, on average, cover half the cost of the program.

**School-Age** - There was one applicant from Michigan and one award.

This year awards ranged from \$500 to \$1,500 with the average award being just under \$1000.

**College** – There were no applicants from Michigan, thus no awards given in Michigan

**Preschool**– Not yet awarded for 2010.

**Parent-Infant**– Not yet awarded for 2010

***A free six-month parent membership is now available on the AG Bell website***

Don't miss your opportunity to qualify for an AG Bell scholarship in 2010!

The Michigan Chapter would love to welcome you into our membership

For more information visit [www.agbell.org](http://www.agbell.org) and sign up online today!!

## **AG Bell 2010 National Convention:**

By Julie Steele

The AGBell 2010 Biennial Convention was held in Orlando, Florida from June 25<sup>th</sup> to June 28<sup>th</sup> at the Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek Resort. Over 1,200 attendees from around the world came to hear experts speak on topics for families, professionals and deaf or hard of hearing adults. The child and teen program, various social events for adults and families, beautiful location and opportunities to visit the Disney parks made for a very busy and exciting weekend. Lee Woodruff, the keynote speaker, shared family stories involving their experience raising a daughter with hearing loss as well as the challenges they faced as a family after her husband's traumatic brain injury overseas. To top it all off, over 60 exhibitors provided conference attendees with information on state of the art technology, educational and personal resources, and unique merchandise.

On Sunday, June 27<sup>th</sup>, 14 members of the Michigan AGBell Chapter met together to have lunch, take a break with friends, make new connections and share information about chapter activities. In the true spirit of the "Meet and Greet", a past Michigan member now living in another state, came back to touch base with old friends. The Biennial Conference gave Michigan members a renewed energy to tackle state projects and increase networking throughout the state. Watch for information on future state and national conference opportunities and social events – we would love to see everyone become involved with the Michigan AGBell Chapter.



## 2010 Summer Camp Wrap-up:

By Heather VanDeSteene



Summer camp 2010 was by far one of the most successful we have had in years! Several staff members returned this year, Co-Directors Kyle King and Heather Van De Steene; Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Elizabeth McCourt; SLP and Angela Lawfield; AUD. We were very lucky this year to have built a highly successful partnership with the WMU and U of Toledo Speech and Language Departments and we had three wonderful volunteers assist with consultant services and daily language instruction: Meredith Rizor; SLP WMU Graduate Student, Casey Molloy; U of Toledo SLP Undergraduate and Rebecca Reynolds; U of Toledo SLP Undergraduate.

Ten campers and one counselor-in-training attended the two-week long camp this year covered by full-ride scholarships. These life-changing scholarships are made possible by the generosity of private donors, Michigan Elks Club, and several other organizations. AG Bell Michigan provides additional funding for staffing, materials and supplies.

Children attending the YMCA Storer camp located in the beautiful Irish Hills near Jackson, Michigan participated in some wonderful activities including archery, sailing classes, boating safety, swimming, paddleboats, fishing, rifle targets, rock climbing, ropes courses, kayaking, canoeing, hiking, camp outs, fire safety, survival techniques, organized games and sports, arts and crafts, and many team building activities. The students who attended under AG Bell camp scholarships took part in a one-hour daily language enrichment session taught by certified staff members and university volunteers.

These summer camp experiences would not be possible if not for the wonderful donations from our own AG Bell membership and organizations dedicated to the success of students with hearing loss.



### **Dates of Interest**

**Oct 8.....HI Teacher Consultants Meeting, Winding Brook Conference Center**  
**Nov 4-5.....H.I. Academy Conference, Lansing, MI**  
**Oct 28-30.....Michigan Audiology Coalition MAC on M.A.C. Conference**  
**Feb 21-22, 2011.....Nat'I EHDI Conference, Atlanta, GA**  
**Feb 25, 2011.....Michigan EHDI Conference, Kellogg Ctr, Ea. Lansing, MI**  
**May 2011.....Better Speech & Hearing Month**  
**July 19-23, 2011.....AG Bell Nat'I Conference, Washington, DC**

## I'm A Member: Amber Corning

By: Ashley Garber

Recently, we have begun turning the spotlight on our MI Chapter members to highlight their accomplishments and their perspectives. In this issue, we have the opportunity to introduce you to one of our future leaders, Amber Corning.

Amber is an 18 year from Grand Haven, MI who was born with bilateral mixed hearing loss. She is currently a senior at Grand Haven High School. She uses bilateral hearing aids and uses a personal FM in the classroom. In addition to her hearing loss, Amber has faced additional challenges with partial blindness and a heart condition requiring multiple surgeries. When asked about her family and their support, Amber described them as "wonderful!" and noted that they help her with understanding at home by putting closed captioning on the television, etc.. She has a twin brother who started college this fall to work towards a degree in teaching children with special needs and a younger brother, 16, who has autism. Amber is the only family member who has a hearing loss.

At the suggestion of her teacher consultant, Amber recently joined AGBell and applied for and was accepted into the LOFT (Leadership Opportunities for Teens) Program. This four-day program is described by AGBell as being "designed for participants to develop skill in individual leadership, teamwork, understanding group dynamics and communication, public speaking and self advocacy." It was held in July in Orlando at the 2010 Convention

Amber noted that she and her family did not know much about AGBell prior to the recommendation of her teacher consultant, but that they wanted to be a part of this community. She said "It feels so great ... because it tells me that I'm not alone." She said of the LOFT Program, "I made new friends. We learned many things like leadership, teamwork, and self esteem. We supported each other and shared our experiences of [what] life with hearing loss is like...We went to offsite activities like Skyventure, Wonderworks and a magic show. That was so much fun." She hopes to keep in touch via Facebook with all of the new friends that she met and noted that she hopes to be able to come to the next convention to meet them again. She has big plans for her own future as well – she will be attending Careerline Tech Center during her senior year studying therapy services. This program will allow for a transfer of some credit toward college where she hopes to study to become an occupational or physical therapist assistant. Good Luck Amber!

## Meet your MIAGBell Board:



The MI AG Bell board of directors is made up of 9 to 11 individuals who are interested in furthering the goals of the AG Bell Association at the state level. The individuals are parents of children with hearing loss, professionals in the field of oral deafness and individuals with hearing loss. The following members currently sit on the state board: Shon Halacka (President), Dan Seraphinoff (Vice-President and Website Administrator), Stacy Haag (Treasurer), Julie Steele (Secretary), Teresa Sundberg, Becky Selenko, Huma Soofi, Ashley Garber (Past-president), and Heather Van De Steene (Summer Camp Director). Additionally, Sid Kraizman and Mark Reeve are tireless supporters of the board of directors and serve as Co-chairs of the AG Bell summer camp program at YMCA Storer Camp. Dee Rigg volunteers as our newsletter editor. Thank you to each of them - without their individual commitments, MI AG Bell would cease to exist.

Currently, the board is taking nominations to fill two board positions. Any member who is interested in serving or who would like to make a nomination is encourage to contact Shon Halacka at [ShonHal2@comcast.net](mailto:ShonHal2@comcast.net). Thank you.

## Advertising Opportunity

MI AG Bell is now offering the opportunity to advertise in our newsletter which is published twice a year in the spring and fall. It is mailed to all members of the AG Bell Association who live in Michigan, as well as to the Intermediate School Districts, and Oral Programs for the Deaf. The following options are available:

**Business card ad** - \$20 per print edition

**One quarter page ad** - \$35 per print edition

**One half page ad** - \$50 per print edition

We also send out **E- Newsletters** 3-4 times per year with the following advertising opportunity: Paragraph length including a link - \$20 per e-news edition

## The Noisy Classroom

By Dan Seraphinoff

Over the years hearing impaired individuals have consistently had difficulties dealing with the background noise in classrooms, work places and their homes. For a child one of the most challenging environments is the classroom and the need to understand speech and language. Sadly, there is a major discrepancy between school districts and individual classrooms, and the quality of sound available to the listeners. In many classrooms the walls are made of hard cement block and tile flooring, allowing sounds to bounce off these hard surfaces. Last night while in my son's 5<sup>th</sup> grade classroom I was seated at his desk, with my back toward the heating and air-conditioning unit. As an adult, it was hard for me to focus because of the fan noise. I can see how it would be difficult for a child to focus on hearing the lesson that is being presented. The keyword here is reverberation. It is the sound as it travels through the air, strikes a solid object and reflects back to the student, delayed by a few milliseconds causing confusion. It is obvious that the reverberation has a negative impact on the learning environment.

A solution for this problem could be to improve the acoustics in the room through the use of carpeting, window coverings, and cork bulletin boards. If the budget doesn't allow for renovation of the room, then another solution might be a technological device called a wireless microphone. In my wife's classroom they installed speakers in the ceiling and she wears a microphone that allows the sound to surround the students with consistent sound levels regardless of where they are in the room. Her classroom has carpeting and blinds that assist in absorbing noise. In the classroom, student success improves with the clarity of the sound. For the hearing impaired child in the class it is beneficial that he or she has a wireless device that either is direct connect or inductive loop. This wireless device can be connected to the hearing aid or processor and allows the student to move from one learning environment to another without the negative impact of the noisy backgrounds. It is important to note that technology is rapidly changing and allowing us to offer the children greater opportunities for learning.

## Caribou Coffee Fundraiser

By Teresa Sundberg

On Saturday, May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010, MIAGBell held our first Coffee Fundraiser at Caribou Coffee in the Midtown Plaza in Troy, Michigan. We were able to reach out to the community by sharing information about the importance of early intervention, amplification, and education of hearing loss. Many people stopped in to support our cause and we were grateful for the opportunity to advocate for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals. A special shout out to the Troy Police Department who came to support a member of their own who is a parent of a child with hearing loss! We were able to raise \$175.00, which was used to help support our summer campers who attended the AGBell camp through the YMCA.

Members of the Michigan Chapter for AGBell are committed to raising awareness and understanding of childhood hearing loss in a variety of ways. We are dedicated to providing engaging and resourceful conferences for professionals and families as well as offering wonderful summer camp experiences to Deaf and Hard of Hearing children. In order to continue to offer these opportunities to our members and families, our organization needs to have the money to support these programs. We look forward to more fundraising opportunities and we look forward to your continued support so that we can realize our mission to advocate independence through listening and talking.

## Dr. James Marsters, Inventor of the TTY, Dies

OAKLAND, Calif., Aug. 23 (UPI) -- Dr. James Marsters, a deaf orthodontist who helped cobble together the first text telephones in his California garage, has died at 85, his son said.

James Marsters Jr. told The New York Times his father died of natural causes on July 28 at his home in Oakland.

Marsters, deaf from scarlet fever, was able to graduate from college and dental school using sign language and lip reading. But his son said he was frustrated by his inability to talk on the telephone

"All of us in the family, whenever a call came for my dad, we picked up this handset attached to the phone so that we could listen in and relay to my father what the caller was saying," the son told the Times on Friday. "He would read our lips and then reply in his own voice."

Marsters, Robert Weitbrecht, a Stanford University physicist, and later Andrew Saks, an electrical engineer from the family that founded Saks Fifth Avenue, succeeded in the 1960s in converting old teletype machines to the first TTY phones.

The three men also lobbied successfully for communications policies allowing relay services for the deaf to connect directly to phone lines.

# Michigan Speaks!

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## *In Appreciation:*



We would like to thank the following for their donations:

### Summer Camp -

Louis Gordon  
Elizabeth McCourt  
Michigan Elks  
Sid Kraizman  
DonneGals, Monaghan Knights of Columbus  
Shon Halacka  
Robert Rissman  
Cynthia Patton  
YMCA Storer Camps

## *Donations*

Your tax-deductible donation will help support all of the programs and activities available through the Michigan Chapter of AG Bell. If you would like to make a donation, please send a check or money order payable to Michigan Chapter of AG Bell to the address below. Be sure to include your contact information, so that we can acknowledge your gift and send you a receipt with our tax-exempt information.

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