



OUR MISSION:

We are an organization dedicated to non-biased support to families who have children who are deaf or hard of hearing. We will provide activities and information statewide to parents and professionals that may include outreach events, educational seminars, advocacy, parent-to-parent networking, and newsletters. We believe that families will make the best choices for their child if they have access to good information and support. Our organization represents people who use varying approaches to communication and assistive technology—from American Sign Language to cochlear implants.

A Parent's Perspective

By Deborah Love-Peel

I have a child with a profound hearing loss, Eboni. Eboni was born in 1991 at a time when infant hearing testing was not available. As a parent that did not know where to go for answers, the medical maze was exhausting and frustrating to say the least. Now 16 years later, after much frustration, our child decided to go to MSSD (Model Secondary School for the Deaf) for high school. A move, as her parents, we fully supported. To have our child so far away at such a crucial time in her development is more than hard. It is hard because I want her main influences to come from her family. It is equally important for her to have a good education in a system that has high expectations. Eboni lives in Washington DC and her family lives in Detroit, Michigan. We are fortunate that her aunt, lives in nearby Maryland and is an instructor of Taekwondo in an after school program at MSSD once a week. Eboni also goes home with her aunt during short breaks from school.

We had a chance to spend the holidays with Eboni. After we spent Thanksgiving in Maryland and Christmas in Columbus, Georgia, Eboni was able to spend some time with friends she grew up with here in Detroit. During my time with Eboni, I confirmed my belief in the importance of communication with our deaf and hard of hearing children. We made every attempt to include her in the family conversations, but one incident stuck with me

during the holiday.

Eboni had just finished talking to a friend in Virginia Beach on her Video Phone. I came into the room to say good night and saw tears in her eyes. I thought she might be upset that I asked her to hang up the phone because it was almost midnight. I asked her what was the problem. She said "I am just thinking". I asked what she was thinking about that was making her cry. She said she was thinking about family members that had died. She was thinking of her father's cousin, whom she was close to, but was in her 70's and died about 2 years ago. Eboni said that she was afraid of getting older, because she did not want to die. Usually I can think of many wise things to say. I found myself speechless, not because I did not know what to say, but I realized I needed to say this in her language. I wanted to explain it to her in ASL, so she would understand, but I did not think my ASL skills were that great. I stepped up to the plate and using the signs I knew, I was able to get the information to her and I knew she truly understood. We hugged each other and cried together. The rest of the holiday was great. She even told me "Mom, you sign better". I say to all parents, guardians, and family members; please find a way to communicate with your deaf or hard of hearing child. The mode of communication should not be the focal point, the fact that you are communicating, is what is important.

I find it very frustrating when one form of communication is pitted against another. What is right for the family is what is right for the child. The family has a stake in supporting whatever form of communication is selected. Our family made choices based on information we were given over the years and on our child's needs both educationally and socially. Each and every family has the right to make that same decision for their child. In the end the child makes the choice of how to communicate with the world!

I am finding that many parents of deaf and hard of hearing children need support, no matter which mode of communication they use within their family. They need to talk to other parents and ask how they got through some of the rough times. There are support meetings for many things, but none for parent of deaf and hard of hearing children, specifically in the Detroit area. Keeping with the Michigan Hands & Voices mission/motto and working with the Detroit Parent Network (DPN), we will hold the first Michigan Hands & Voices Detroit Area parent support meeting we are calling "Silent Support" on April 2, 2007 from 6 - 8pm. The meeting is open to all parents with children who are deaf or hard of hearing, no matter which mode of communication is used within the family. The meeting will take place at Detroit Parent Network 7375 Woodward, Suite 1100 (in the Youthville Building in the New Center area). Future meetings will be held the 1st and 3rd Mondays of each month from 6 - 8pm. If child care is needed, please let us know in advance of the meeting. Contact Deborah at 313-279-1494 or Detroit Parent Network (DPN) offices 313-309-1450.

Michigan Hands and Voices Motto

"What works for your Child is what makes the choice right"

Michigan H&V List-Serve



Do you want to meet local families and learn about upcoming events? Join the Michigan Hands & Voices Yahoo List-Serve. It is a wonderful way to get connected directly to other Michigan H&V members. You can send and receive emails that provide you with a wonderful opportunity to give or receive direct and quick support. Sign up today, it's quick, free and easy - <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/handsandvoices-mi>

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2007 Michigan EHDI Conference Free Web Broadcasting Available

The opening plenary "Early Literacy" presented by Dr. Katherine Jankowski, Dean of Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center, Gallaudet University along with the presentation "Strategies for Success: Fitting Hearing Instruments for the Pediatric Population" by Dr. Marlene Baggatto, Au.D., University of Western Ontario are being offered online. No registration is required. Please use the following link to access the Web Broadcasting. www.michigan.gov/ehdi [Then click on News and Events.](#)



Miss Deaf Michigan & Junior Miss Deaf Michigan will sign the National Anthem at the Pistons game. The game is Tuesday, April 17th at 7:30pm. Pistons take on Toronto for the last game of the season. Tickets for the game are on sale now. Hurry they are selling out fast! For more information contact: Michelle Peterson - michelley@tmail.com

MICHIGAN HANDS & VOICES VALUES



**HANDS &
VOICES**

* Non-Biased Communication Philosophy

* Parent-to-Parent Support

* Meaningful Participation

* Effective Collaboration

* Setting High Standards in Education

* Accountability and Responsibility



**HANDS &
VOICES**

Michigan Hands & Voices

presents

Family Fun—Social Hour and Movie Event

When: Sunday, April 15, 2007

Time: 11:00am-Social Hour, 12:00pm-Movie

Where: Celebration Cinemas 200 East Edgewood Blvd Lansing, MI 48911

See enclosed flyer for more information



JOIN MICHIGAN HANDS & VOICES TODAY!

We invite you to become a member of Michigan Hands & Voices. Your membership benefits include: quarterly publications (Michigan H&V Newsletter and the National Hands & Voices Newspaper), information on valuable resources and events- including networking opportunities, local and national workshops, web sites, professional contacts, a resource library and more. For more information on membership, please email Michigan Hands & Voices at:

info@mihandsandvoices.org or by calling Kylie Sharp at: 517-335-8273

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