

# Michigan



## HANDS & VOICES™

# MI Communicator

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## Spring Advocacy Workshop a Success! By Rebecca Calaman, Co-Director

Each spring, Michigan Hands & Voices (H&V) sponsors an advocacy workshop to help parents of deaf and hard of hearing children, family supporters, and professionals working with our children throughout the State of Michigan learn more about their rights and better understand the special education system. This year's workshop was held in Pontiac, Michigan. Thirty people were in attendance. Sandee Koski, Training Coordinator, Michigan Alliance for Families, was our presenter. Ms. Koski discussed: Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) statements, tips to a better Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and answers to common questions related to IEPs. In addition to several handouts useful in preparing for an IEP, attendees also received a copy of "*Special Education: An Advocate's Manual*," a comprehensive

resource by Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service, Inc. ([www.mpas.org](http://www.mpas.org)). Learn more about Michigan Alliance for Families at [www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org](http://www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org).

Several people were involved in making our spring advocacy workshop a success. Many thanks to Marcy Colton, Doug Calaman, Keri Weiss, Matthew Scott, Halley Hutchins, and Maria Bryant. A special thanks to workshop co-sponsors: Michigan Alliance for Families, Deaf Community Advocacy Network (DEAF C.A.N.!), Michigan School for the Deaf and St. Joseph Mercy Oakland Hospital.

## Hearing Loss Awareness Day at the State Capitol

The fifth annual Hearing Loss Awareness Day at the State Capitol will be held on **Wednesday, May 12, 2010**, from 8:00 am - 2:45 pm. This event will focus on the needs of Michigan citizens with hearing loss. It is aimed at raising awareness of important issues that concern our community (such as insurance coverage and tax credit for hearing aids!). The 2010 event will be held in conjunction with the Michigan Legislative Disability Caucus monthly meeting. May will be pro-

claimed Hearing Loss Awareness month in Michigan with resolutions being offered in the Senate & House on the day of the event.

For additional information contact: Hearing Loss Association of Michigan at [info@hearinglossmi.org](mailto:info@hearinglossmi.org) or DEAF C.A.N.! at [deafcan@deafcan.org](mailto:deafcan@deafcan.org).

## A Parent's Story: The Joy of Raising Children with Hearing Loss —By Kimberly Gleason

This world can be crazy sometimes. Needless to say, I should know, I have five children, three of them with hearing loss. My four and six-year olds wear cochlear implants, and my seven-year-old wears hearing aids. And I admit that it's been quite chaotic in our household. Well, quite frankly, having five kids in the house is chaotic—period! But yes, adding hearing loss to the mix, that and my children's educational, language, and speech goals, really does cause me to grumble at times. After all, I'm up to my eyeballs in my children's needs. They need more--more of everything: my time, my attention, my concern, my energy, my effort. "Why me?" has been a common refrain. And I have found that this one question drains me from so much joy—the joy of living and being.

However, I can either choose to live in a cloud of negativity, torturing myself (and others), or choose to live a life of abundant joy, despite my challenges. This is not to say that sorrow and frustration won't invade my life, and that there is not a time and place for it. However, there are simple things I have learned to do in order to increase my joy and to live more powerfully and positively. Perhaps these three strategies will benefit you as well!

The first strategy that has helped to increase my joy and outlook on life is to live out my life purpose. I know I am here for a reason! I have come to conclude that if I actively live out the reason for my existence, I usually have harmony and inner peace. In fact, conflict and tragedy, including those difficult trials that have been caused by my children's hearing loss, are often seen through a different light. I see these challenges with a different perspective,

because conflict and tragedy seem to somehow align with and illuminate my life purpose. And ultimately, I have come to learn that serving others, especially my children, has honored my purpose.

I have also discovered that joyful living often accompanies living out my purpose. While it's true that I bless others by helping or encouraging them, it's equally true that I am, in turn, blessed. In serving others, I recognize not only their worth but also my own intrinsic value as a human being. I am needed. I am significant, to my children and to those I have the privilege of being around. And thus, I am filled with joy because I am simply doing what I was designed to do: give my life away. And I have been so blessed to give my life away to my children. They have been worth every tear I've shed.

This brings me to gratitude, another strategy for increasing my joy. It's so powerful, this ritual of gratitude, that my very own body is healthier for it, not to mention my mind. Choosing to see the cup as half full (because it is a choice I make) brightens my mood, changes my thinking patterns, and positively affects those around me. My children can attest to that fact. Mommy is happier when she is thankful about her life, when she is thankful for her gift of these little ones. Many blessings have been discovered, strangely enough, due to my children's hearing loss. And this is a common thread I've found when talking to many parents of children with special needs. There's something about the way blessings pour forth out of pain.

So, I have learned that joy is mostly a choice and that there are lots of ways of giving myself a dose of it when I'm

feeling frustrated, troubled, or even saddened. Defining and living out my life purpose, serving others, being grateful, and discerning how all those relate to my parenting children with hearing loss have cost me little but have blessed me—and my children—immensely.

*In addition to being the mother of children with hearing loss, Kimberly Gleason is a professional life coach and owner of "Coaching for Life Purpose." For more information, visit her website:*

[www.coachingforlifepurpose.com](http://www.coachingforlifepurpose.com)

## Meet the “Guide” by Your Side



Hi, I am Rima Mackoul, and I have two children. My son Andrew was born in 2000, and my daughter

Mary Ann was born in 2002. I am fluent in English and Arabic.

My son was born with a severe to profound hearing loss. He was identified by the newborn hearing screening and was fitted with hearing aids at three months of age. I worked with the Early On™ program when he was 4 months old and found it to be very supportive. At 3 years of age he attended a special education pre-school at Spartan Village.

My son received a cochlear implant when he was four years old. He is now 7 years old and doing

well both in cognitive development and educational performance. He is attending Red Cedar Elementary School in East Lansing. He is mainstreamed in a second grade class.

Working with my son through different supportive organizations I developed experience and learned a lot about deafness. I made a strong effort to advocate for my son's rights and empower my family to overcome the hard periods.

I believe that through the Guide By Your Side program, I can help other families to overcome some of the challenges they may face and help them to believe that everything will be okay.

It is a blessing to have my son Andrew in our lives. Our family has adapted well, and we continue to learn through this process. I hope

to be of additional support to Arabic speaking families and support them while understanding their cultural and linguistic differences.

—Rima is a Parent Guide in the MI Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side Program.

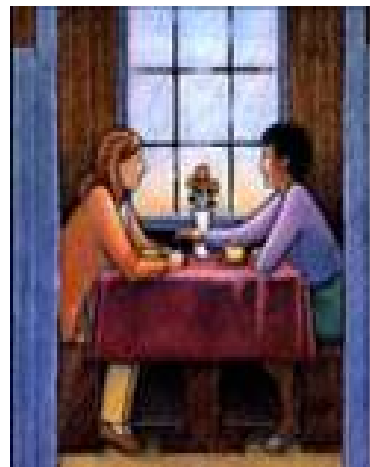


**GUIDE BY  
YOUR SIDE™**

### Would You Like to be a Parent Guide? Apply today!

EHDI is seeking Michigan parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing to serve as Parent Guides in the GBYS program. Parent Guides are paid a stipend for home visits and are reimbursed for mileage. Specifically, EHDI is looking for Guides in the thumb area (Saginaw), northern lower peninsula around Traverse City and Petoskey, central and southwest Michigan.

Spanish speakers, signers, fathers, and parents of children with additional disabilities are especially needed. For more information, contact Laura Scott at (517) 335-8273 or [scottL5@michigan.gov](mailto:scottL5@michigan.gov).



## Remembering Dr. Jill Elfenbein

—by Rebecca Calaman



Dr. Jill Elfenbein, a long-time member of the Michigan Hands & Voices Advisory Board, lost her battle with cancer on May 6, 2010. Dr Elfenbein will be remembered for her courage and dignity as well as her unflagging dedication to families with Deaf and Hard of Hearing children. Michigan Hands & Voices joins the many others who mourn her passing. The Lansing State Journal has a link to a guest book where you can send a message to her family.

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/ljsj/obituary.aspx?n=jill-l-elfenbein&pid=142543618>

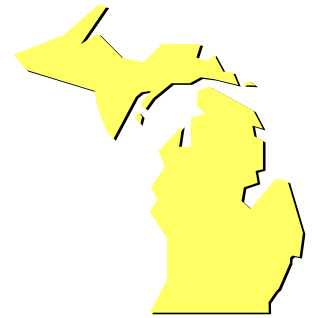
## New Washtenaw/Livingston Regional Group

—by Karen Wisinski

The Parent Support/Playgroup meet-ups have been fun! The first meeting at the Dexter Library was held in a large, quiet conference room, overlooking the beautiful riverside. Because it has a stage, it was the perfect venue for the kids to practice their shows, songs, and dances! As a former teacher, Karen Eisel brought her educational projects and toys to share. Another time we met at Croumaine Library, in Hartland and enjoyed learning a few signs from the wonderful interpreter who also signed alongside the reading of picture books. We even created incredible magazine collage art projects! There was something for everyone, from toddler to 8 year olds.

We know there are many who would like to join us and haven't been able to yet. We would like to make sure we are holding our gatherings in convenient places and on convenient days. Please send us an email with your preferred day of the week and suggested locations, and we'll do our best to include it in the schedule. Stay tuned to the Michigan Hands & Voices listserv for schedule updates!

*For more information about this regional group, contact Regional Outreach Coordinators Karen Wisinski at*



[mzwizland@gmail.com](mailto:mzwizland@gmail.com) or Karen Eisel at [kareneisel@att.net](mailto:kareneisel@att.net).

**Museums**

**Plan an event in your area!**

**Play Groups**

Regional groups are a great way to connect with other families of children with hearing loss who live near you. For more information on how you can get a group started in your area, contact Laura Scott at (517) 335-8273 or [scottL5@michigan.gov](mailto:scottL5@michigan.gov).

**Movies**

**Networking**

## Maximizing Success for Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing —Conference Report by Karen Wisinski, Parent

Recently, I attended a workshop about effective methods for a child's educational team to work together. The workshop was entitled: "We're All in This Together: Maximizing Success for Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing," and was sponsored by AG Bell. The workshop featured speakers from the Mainstream Center at Clarke, a School for the Deaf and Oral Education Center based in Massachusetts.

My child is a preschooler, and we are having our first experiences working with his team, so I found the topic timely and relevant.

The presenters started the morning with a demonstration of how people with hearing loss might experience a spelling test. The "Unfair Spelling Test" left probably the majority of us surprised at how tough it was to decipher the words. The "Unfair Spelling Test" is a test that was developed to help those who are hearing to better understand how their students with hearing loss could be disadvantaged during a simple spelling test without appropriate accommodations. The test simulates what you would hear with various types of hearing loss.\* I got 2 words correct out of 10 possible. This led naturally into a discussion of how members of a child's team can maximize his or her success.

A child's team may include the gen-

eral education teacher, special education teacher, paraprofessional, speech therapist, audiologist, counselor, teacher consultant, tutor, interpreter, parent, and more.

Here are some tips:

- Communicate with the general education teacher prior to the start of the school year and again a month or so after school starts once the teacher has gotten to know your child.
- Have a plan for who will help with regular equipment checks at school. It could be anybody, a teacher, assistant, nurse, speech therapist, whomever. The important thing is that the child feels comfortable with that person.
- As some team members may not have worked with a student with hearing loss in the past, consider "out of the box" ways to help them understand your child's hearing loss. For example, give the teacher the opportunity to listen to the hearing aids/cochlear implants and personal FM system. Online video examples of hearing loss might also be useful.
- While a general education teacher has a lot of work on her plate, do not assume he or she is too busy to read information about hearing loss. A teacher in

the audience explained that for her personally, "the more information the better."

At the end of the day, I left feeling optimistic about my child's academic future, keeping in mind the importance of building awareness and clear communication.

—You can learn more at Clark's website: [www.clarkschool.org](http://www.clarkschool.org), click on "Mainstream Services."

\*If you would like to take to the test, there is a link to the test on:

<http://www.wondercafe.ca/discussion/social/unfair-spelling-test-aka-what-its-be-me>.

## Summer Camps

*The next pages contain information about local summer camps and programs for children who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families. Michigan Hands & Voices (MI H&V) provides this list as information only, for the benefit of our members. MI H&V does not endorse or financially support these events. If you are aware of camps that are not listed below, please contact us at [info@mihandsandvoice.org](mailto:info@mihandsandvoice.org).*



### **Camp Chris Williams**

**Who:** D/HH children, siblings and children of deaf adults, ages 8-14 years old

**Where:** Lions Bear Lake Camp: 3409 N. Five Lakes Road, Lapeer, MI 48446

**When:** August 8-14

### **Ralph Lynman Leadership Institute**

**Who:** D/HH students ages 16-19 (10th grade and up). This is a great camp to learn about transitioning skills to prepare students for college as well as the "real world"

**Where:** Lions Bear Lake Camp: 3409 N. Five Lakes Road, Lapeer, MI 48446

**When:** August 7-14

**Contact:** Michigan Association for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MADHH) (for both camps)

Voice/TTY: (517) 487-0066

Video Phone: (517) 507-5353

Email: [info@madhh.org](mailto:info@madhh.org)

Web: [www.MADHH.org](http://www.MADHH.org)

*Scholarships are available!*

### **Michigan AG Bell Camp**

**Who:** Oral D/HH children entering grades 3-12 will be accepted into the program at YMCA Storer Camps. A counselor in training program is available for campers entering grades 11 & 12.

**Where:** Irish Hills, Michigan

**When:** July 18—30

**Contact:** Mark Reeve: (313) 331-2378 or

<http://www.agbell.org/MI>

### **Holley Family Village/DeSales Center**

**Who:** D/HH children and adults who want to learn sign



### **Great Lakes Deaf Leadership Camp**

**Who:** Deaf Youth

**When:** July 24-30

**Where:** Tamarack Camp: Perryville Road, Ortonville, MI 48462

**Contact:** Michigan Deaf Association; Sheri Ann Garnand at [java72gecko@yahoo.com](mailto:java72gecko@yahoo.com) or (248) 627-2821

### **Sign Language Classes for Kids & Adults**

**Who:** Children and adults (deaf, hard of hearing, & hearing)

**When:** Multiple 4-day sessions in June & July

**Where:** Oakland Schools, 2111 Pontiac Lake Rd, Waterford, MI 48328

**Contact:** [www.oakland.k12.mi.us](http://www.oakland.k12.mi.us) or Michelle Evert at (248) 209-2000

# CAMP CAMP CAMP

## Lions Bear Lake Camp

**Who:** D/HH children and their families. Camps are for those who use spoken language as their primary mode of communication

**Where:** 3409 N. Five Lakes Rd, Lapeer, MI 48446

**When:** Family session: **July 2-4**; Youth session: **July 11-17**; free open house on **July 10**

**Contact:** Ph: (810) 245-0726 or [www.bearlakecamp.org/services/HI.htm](http://www.bearlakecamp.org/services/HI.htm)

## Kids Kamp

Children will learn about deaf culture, do arts and crafts, play games and have special themes.

**Who:** Children ages 3 – 10 (Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Special Needs)

**When:** July 26 – August 6 on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday mornings from 9 a.m. - noon

**Where:** Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, 4328 Kalamazoo Ave S.E., Grand Rapids, MI.

**Contact:** 616-732-7358 or [info@deafhhs.org](mailto:info@deafhhs.org) or [www.deafhhs.org](http://www.deafhhs.org)



## Wild Swan's Camp DoYaWanna

**Who:** Children with disabilities

**Where:** 410 S. Maple Rd., Ann Arbor, MI

**When:** **June 21 - July 30** (multiple sessions)

**Contact:** <http://www.wildswantheater.org>



language.

**Where:** 1124 Ventura Dr, Brooklyn, MI, 49230

**When:** **June, July, and August**

**Contact:** 517.592.6283 (V);

517.592.2289 (VP)

\*The center offers multiple summer programs and art/drama workshops taught by deaf adults. \*For a complete listing of all summer programs go to: [www.desales.org](http://www.desales.org)

# Volunteer TODAY!

## Regional Outreach

Several persons are needed throughout the state to plan and host *at least one* local networking/social event per year in your area (examples include: movies, play dates, museum trips, scrapbooking events, etc. . .)

## Special Event Committees

Advocacy Training

Summer Picnic

EHDI Pre-Conference Parent Dinner

Mom's Night Inn *New*

(Hotel stay, spa treatment, and workshops for Moms)

Dad's Outing *New*

(Men, we need you to plan an outing just for Dads!)

Holiday Party *New*



*Just 1 hour of your time can make a difference !*

## Ongoing Committees

Newsletter (soliciting articles and article ideas)

Website (current events & information)



Have an idea or an article for the newsletter?  
Is there something you would like to see H&V offer?  
We would LOVE to hear from you!!!

Contact Laura Scott at (517) 335-8273 or [scottL5@michigan.gov](mailto:scottL5@michigan.gov).

## WHO WE ARE

Michigan Hands & Voices is a chapter of the nationwide non-profit organization dedicated to supporting families of children who are deaf or hard of hearing, as well as the professionals who serve them. We are a parent-driven, parent/professional collaborative group that is unbiased towards communication modes and methods.

We are parents, teachers, audiologists, and interpreters — just to name a few! Our diverse membership includes those who communicate orally, with signs, with cued speech, and/or combined methods.



## OUR MISSION

Michigan Hands & Voices is dedicated to unbiased support of families who have children who are deaf or hard of hearing. We believe that families will make the best choices for their child if they have access to good information and support. Whether we're at work locally or nationally, Hands & Voices continues to be driven by the need to improve educational outcomes and the quality of life for children with hearing loss. We exist to help our children reach their highest potential!

### Board Members

Director — Laura Scott  
Co-Director — Rebecca Calaman  
Treasurer — VACANT  
Secretary — Deborah Love-Peel

### Advisory Board Members

Melissa Alford      Linda Wright  
Vicky Hovinen      Ellen Milne

### Newsletter Editor

Laura Scott

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VP: 517-335-8273

**We're on the WEB!**



### Website:

[www.mihandsandvoices.org](http://www.mihandsandvoices.org)

### Yahoo Listserv:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/handsandvoices-mi>

### Facebook:

[www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)

(Search "Michigan Hands & Voices" under Groups)

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