



# Family Connections

## St. Mary's School for the Deaf ~ Parent Education Department

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[www.smsdk12.org](http://www.smsdk12.org)



Meet Jaclin Phillips and her son, Tyler, another one of our many families that make SMSD who we truly are.

At 24 weeks a miracle was given to our family. Tyler Phillips was born at 24 weeks. During his 4-month stay in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Tyler encountered many obstacles. Such obstacles included: bowel perforation, lung collapses, infections, unstable blood pressures and much more. Each day we were told that life would be a roller coaster with 3 steps forward and 2 steps back. We worried about Tyler making it though the night that day, rather than when he would walk or talk.

Some of the medications that Tyler needed to sustain life were ototoxic. When the medications were explained to us and its side effects the hearing loss was at the bottom of our list.

Prior to discharge each child must take a newborn screen. The newborn includes a hearing test. Tyler did not pass his hearing exam and was immediately referred to the hearing clinic at the local hospital. Again, with all that was going on in Tyler's life medically, hearing test was at the bottom of the worry list. We were told that even if the baby moved during the screen test that it would be a failed test.

Tyler had therapy every day for both physical and occupational therapy at our house. Tyler was very busy. One of the many visits to the hospital was a retest at the hearing clinic. Tyler took another ABR hearing test. They sat you down in a rocking chair holding your sleeping baby with the monitors and leads hooked up to Tyler. Through my mind I kept saying "please God, let my baby go through this test and let him have one less obstacle in life." The test was finished without Tyler moving or waking up. The person who gave the test stated that Tyler had severe hearing loss. I just remember when they wanted to schedule another appointment I just stated, "I will call at a different time." I put Tyler in his stroller, made sure his apnea monitor and oxygen tubing were all in place, and walked out of the building. I made it to the parking lot and cried hysterically. What went through my brain as I cried was that this is something as a mother I could not fix or make better for my son. I stood in the parking lot, as I stopped crying I just listened. I listened to all the sounds I heard all around me in the winter weather. The simple sounds that people hear yet we take for granted every day like: icicles dripping as they melt, the birds chirping, cars passing by and other people talking as they walked by, and so much more.

We made Tyler an appointment for Buffalo Hearing and Speech for a second opinion.

The second opinion came and went with the same answer. Tyler was fitted for his first pair of hearing aids. Tyler began speech therapy at home at 4 months of age. Tyler used to cry and scream when we put in his hearing aids. We would fight every day to keep them in and get as much exposure to sound as possible.

Time passed and we moved to North Carolina for a year and Tyler's speech therapy continued at the house. Tyler responded to some sounds but not everything. Tyler continued to fight with his hearing aids. At 3 years old Tyler still had no form of communication. Tyler was having severe temper tantrums due to zero form of communication between Tyler and the world. The year passed and we moved back to Buffalo.

When we came back to Buffalo we met with Tim Kelly from SMSD. We walked into the building and a feeling of relief came over me. For a first time I felt we were able to help our child out for the rest of his life. Tim was so calm and understanding with us and Tyler. Tim explained Total Communication to us. We also found out that Tyler can receive physical and occupational therapy at the school as part of his school day. He also took us for a walk around the school and we watched the elementary students do a short play. I can remember thinking how I can't wait for Tyler to be a part of all of this and actually being able to play with children that would understand him. Within a few days Tyler started the summer program at SMSD. Within a week Tyler was picking up small simple signs. We were so excited because Tyler and the world can communicate. Tyler's needs were finally met with less stress on Tyler. Slowly the tantrums went away and the communication came. Within months Tyler began to be known as the mayor around school. Tyler's personality was starting to show. It was amazing!

Tyler is now an active 7 year old boy with a great sense of humor and full of life. He has overcome more things in his life than I have as an adult parent ever overcome in my life time. To me that makes him my miracle and my hero. Sometimes when he sits reading, talks about his play dates with friends from school or dancing playing the Wii I think to myself how blessed I truly am to have SMSD in Tyler's and our life.

*We at Family Connections would love to hear your story...what is your story? Contact: [enid@smsdk12.org](mailto:enid@smsdk12.org)*

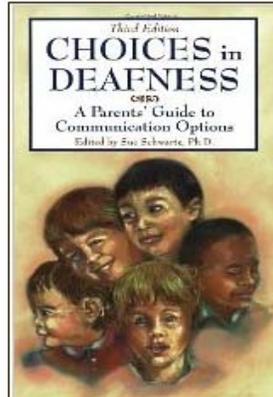


### *From the Parent Center:*

The PTO, together with the Parent Center, would like to thank all those who purchased items from our most recent Niagara Candy Sales. We met our goal and were able to raise a little over \$1000.00 for our students with your help. So thank you for making the extra effort which made a huge difference in our earnings.

We also want to remind you of our many hidden nuggets in the treasured room called the Parent Center. We carry an array of resources. For instance, do you know what Total

Communication is? Yes, it encompasses everything and anything to communicate and it is the philosophy that we at SMSD believe and follow. But how is it defined according to the book Choices In Deafness ~ A Parents' Guide to Communication Options *Third Edition*, edited by Sue Schwartz, Ph.D.?



### **What Is Total Communication?**

The concept behind the Total Communication (TC) philosophy is that any or all approaches that deaf people use to communicate can be used in an educational program in order to help a child develop language and build cognitive skills. Total Communication capitalizes on the idea that having both a visual and an auditory input can tap into the strengths and abilities of a deaf child, and enable him to access the visual, oral, and auditory elements of language.

It is important not to confuse Total Communication with Simultaneous Communication or “SimCom”—an approach in which communication is through signs and speech together, at all times. Although TC may include simultaneous use of signs and speech, it does not call exclusively for this practice. In any given situation, ASL may be used to communicate a particular concept or idea, just as speech alone may be used to help the child develop a pattern or rhythm of spoken language.

### **Approaches Used with Total Communication**

The major benefit of Total Communication is that it includes a full “bag of tricks” to help the child maximize communication, while not frustrating the child—or the parent. Included in the Total Communication philosophy are many methods and approaches to presenting language.

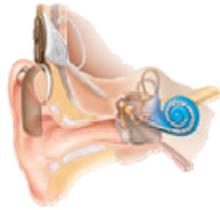
Your child may use different combinations of these approaches at different stages of education, or in different instructional activities. Additionally, your child may be more successful with different components of these approaches at different times in the educational process. For example, for a very young child with a profound hearing loss, signs alone may be the primary avenue for developing expressive language skills in vocabulary and concepts. For a child with more residual hearing, the auditory/oral avenues may be emphasized, with signs as a support to speech and listening.

As a child begins to develop reading readiness, approaches such as speech, speechreading, and Cued Speech may be used to present and reinforce phonemic awareness and skills (letter-sound relationships.) An older student may begin to make choices about using American Sign Language (ASL) in certain classes or content areas or an FM system in other classes such as foreign languages (if he is able to learn that spoken language through listening.) Developing a variety of communication channels to the extent possible addresses a child’s potential, a parent’s choices, and academic demands.

### **What Does My Child Hear?**

Have you asked yourself, what does my child actually hear? Also, in this newest addition (Third Edition) there is a section entitled *A Listener’s Guide to the Hearing Loss Simulation with CD*. The CD is designed to give hearing listeners an idea of what speech sounds like to children who have either auditory neuropathy or hearing losses for specific frequencies. You can listen to a simulation of your child’s profile by looking at your child’s audiogram to determine which sound most replicates your child’s hearing profile. All these questions and more can be answered in the book entitled *Third Edition, Choices In Deafness ~ A Parents’ Guide to Communication Options*.

*The PTO is excited to offer a presentation on:*  
**Cochlear Implants**



**When: Wednesday, April 10, 2013**

**Time: 6:00-7:30 PM.**

**Where: at SMSD**

*This presentation will be presented by representatives of SMSD's Cochlear Implant Resource Team. They will provide an explanation of their services, discuss the basics of cochlear implantation, and most importantly be available to answer any questions you may have. We look forward to seeing you there!*

Light dinners are offered. Child care will be available.

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**SPOOKY HALLOWEEN BASH**  
**Annual Dance & Auction**  
**To Benefit St. Mary's School for the Deaf**

**WHERE: American Legion Post 264**  
**60 Main St., Tonawanda, NY 14150**

**WHEN: Saturday, March 9, 2013 ~ 7:00 PM.-12:00 AM.**

Cost: \$15.00 presale / \$20.00 at the door  
Includes: pizza, snacks, pop/beer, door prizes

Please contact: Kris Salasavage at 716-834-7200; Ext. 124

**\*\* Over 100 basket raffles and a 50/50 Split Drawing \*\***  
Must be 21 & over to attend.



ST. MARY'S SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF  
DRAMA 2013

Proudly Presents:

# The King and I



Performance at:

2253 Main Street, Buffalo, NY  
in the SMSD Gallagher Gym

Wednesday, May 1, 2013 at 9:30 AM. & 7:00 PM.

and

Thursday, May 2, 2013 at 7:00 PM.

~ All performances will be voice interpreted ~

St. Mary's School for the Deaf  
Parent Education Department  
presents: ASL Story Time

at: Barnes & Noble Booksellers  
1565 Niagara Falls Blvd., Amherst, NY

WHEN: Saturday, March 16, 2013

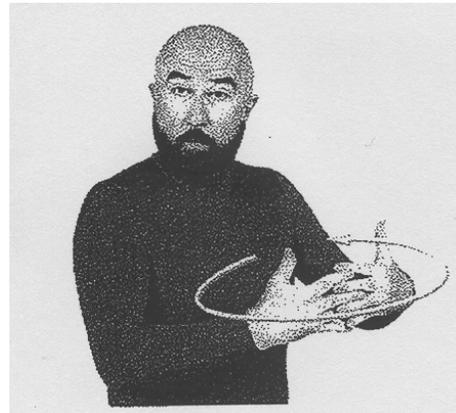
TIME: 11:00 am.



Please join us as a student from St. Mary's School for the Deaf reads a story in American Sign Language while SMSD teacher, Mrs. Kirsten Helm, voice interprets.

A special activity will follow!

Guess what sign this is:



HANDSHAPE: Right and left curved hands

POSITION: In front of the chest

MOVEMENT: Lock the fingers of the right and left curved hands together with the palms facing in and move the hands in a counterclockwise circle while mouthing the word "America." To sign *American*, add the *person* ending.

VISUALIZE: A country made up of people from around the world all working together.

Source: "Talking With Your Hands, Listening With Your Eyes"  
Written by Gabriel Grayson

Answer: America, American