

Talking with their hands

Interpreters link deaf clients with speaking world

■ Deaf & Hearing Impaired Services in Farmington Hills helps clients "hear" their way through all kinds of life situations.

BY JOANNE PORRETTA
SPECIAL WRITER

Imagine being served legal papers, tests that show you have cancer or a statement showing a problem with your bank account. Of course, you

would need to act decisively - hire a lawyer or consult with a medical specialist - yet these professionals do not speak your language, and you cannot hear theirs. You are deaf.

Whether a dire situation or an everyday need, the deaf consumer cannot simply make a phone call for a doctor's appointment or drive up to the bank to speak to the manager. A deaf child cannot hear the instructions of an ice skating teacher. A deaf woman in labor can't hear the words "push" or "it's a

boy."

It is for these situations, the large or small moments of day-to-day life, that the deaf and hearing impaired rely on interpreters of American Sign Language to provide the link of clear communication between the two worlds. A team of such interpreters is available for Farmington and Farmington Hills residents and neighboring cities through Deaf & Hearing Impaired Services Inc., located in the William Costick Activities Center.

Led by director Linda Booth, the interpreters are prepared to join the deaf consumer in almost any situation.

"Our interpreters are a caring group of people. We have clients walk in, and we have emergencies. We do a lot of medical situations with cataract surgery or angioplasty. We needed an interpreter for a deaf child who wanted to take ice skating lessons. We do childbirth, we do weddings, we do funerals. Anyplace there's communication."

This past fall, Deaf and Hearing Impaired Services was contacted to assist a deaf Russian woman who needed spinal surgery at nearby Beaumont Hospital. As with any patient undergoing surgery, the pros, cons and risks of surgery needed to be translated and understood by the patient in order to provide informed consent.

This deaf patient, however, knew only Russian sign language. A three-way translation took place - the doctor spoke in English to a deaf interpreter, who signed the terms to the patient's daughter in American Sign Language. The daughter, who knew some ASL, then translated and signed the information to her mother in Russian Sign Language.

This individual service of interpreting is the most crucial area of aid given through her agency, according to Booth, along with social work and the resultant "red tape" of case work monitoring.

Assistance for mixed families

In addition, intergenerational programs have been developed and fine-tuned by the agency, in order to provide support for the "mixed" families with hearing and non-hearing members.

"With deaf children being born more to hearing families, they don't have a deaf role model. So we've wanted deaf children to meet deaf adults - many of them have not met a deaf adult," Booth said. "And by the end of the group meeting, you can't pull the children away. One of the little boys signed to me, 'Oh, I never met a deaf adult. I thought when I grew up, I would become hearing or I would die.' We

Please See HEARING IMPAIRED, B2



Radio shows stimulated the imagination

Do you remember sitting with your ear glued to the radio listening to stories? Saturday mornings and dark winter nights, I sat in stony silence, spellbound by fascinating programs. My demonstrative imagination vividly created characters and stage settings as I heard voices, sound effects and illustrative descriptions.

With the onset of turbulent weather, static dominated the airways, making it nearly impossible to hear anything on our 1934 Philco cathedral radio. If our folks caught us listening to the radio during a lightning storm, they quickly shut it off, pulled the plug and told us a lightning bolt would burst through the radio striking us dead. Can that really happen? I do remember the final seconds of our round screened television - the antenna got zapped and the gaping mouth of the screen regurgitated its contents all over the living room, instantaneously belching smoke and emitting that uniquely repulsive odor of incinerating wire.

So much variety

Sprawled on the floor in front of the radio, my brothers and I listened to "Let's Pretend." Often, I sang along with the Andrews Sisters as they crooned their jumpy songs like "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree," "Shoo-Shoo Baby," and "Hum & Coca Cola." "The Shadow" had my hair springing from its follicles and "The Green Hornet" shivered my spine. "Amos N' Andy" always evoked an eruption of laughter. Nobody could tell deadpan jokes like Jack Benny and who could forget Edgar Bergen and his comical wooden sidekick, Charlie McCarthy? The much-adored George Burns & Gracie Allen were amusing guests in homes all across America. Many of you remember "Baby Snooks & Daddy" and "The Grand Ole Opry" with Minnie Pearl and Montana Slim.

Unlike television, radio was a phenomenal stimulant for the imagination. Because I had never seen the actors, I was greatly disappointed when I first viewed them on the television screen. They looked nothing like the images I had contrived. Furthermore, being mesmerized by the visuals of clothing and scenery, I was drawn away from dialogue and story line. Shows that originated on TV were not a problem since nothing preceded them for comparison.

Even though radio shows were sometimes scary, I cannot recall any violence like that which is so graphically portrayed today on television and in theaters. Because we have become familiar with and somewhat desensitized to brutality in movies and media, it is now a sensational form of amusement that we are subjected to on a daily basis. That entertainment leaves a negative impact and clearly evokes bad dreams. One has to wonder if some criminals were influenced by their own hideous nightmares or if they copied ideas from shocking movies, thereby inducing them to commit heinous crimes.

As adults who know right from wrong, we dissect what we observe and try to purge the iniquitous debris from our minds. Innocent children have not evolved enough to do the same. In the early years, they are beginning their cognitive journey into the development of insight, judgment and reason. How confusing it must be for them to be told not to be physically abusive or steal, yet they see this behavior on TV all the time. Parents need to monitor what their children watch and request that baby sitters responsibly comply. We supervise to preclude physical harm - let us also oversee what psychologically affects our children.

I am not advocating the destruction of television. It contains a vast source of educational substance, but sometimes I wish we could regress to the good ole' radio story day. Maybe just on Saturday nights...

Ellen Herscher is a resident of Farmington Hills



Signing: Linda Booth of Deaf & Hearing Impaired Services Inc. of Farmington Hills signed for two speeches given by President Bill Clinton in Michigan early in his presidency.

Thin mint, Samoa, Tagalong, oh my!

BY DIANE GALE ANDREASZI
SPECIAL WRITER

Third graders Ashley Cohagen and Catherine Soltis should consider teaching seminars on how to develop smooth sales techniques.

In her fourth year in Girl Scouts, Cohagen, a Highmeadow Common Campus student, knows exactly what to say when it comes to her cookie pitch. She's as smooth as the frosting on the perennial thin mints and do-si-dos that have been tempting cookie lovers for decades.

When asked what her favorite was, the Farmington Hills resident didn't hesitate.

"All the cookies are delicious, but my favorite are the Samosas," she said sweetly.

There's no shyness from this half-pint pastry peddler.

Successful sales pitch

Her favorite part of selling, Cohagen said, is "asking people if they want to buy the cookies."

"Usually, I get a 'yes,'" she added.

Her tried and proven technique sold 138 boxes of the famous winter annual, not found on grocery store shelves - maybe in grocery store lobbies, but not on their shelves.

Although the talent is obvious, Cohagen said, she didn't plan on making a career in sales. But she doesn't know exactly what she wants to do for a living, yet.

Catherine Soltis, also a third grader at Highmeadow Common Campus, added a little twist to the door-to-door sales method used by a lot of other



Cookie monsters: Girl Scout Troop 2123 from Highmeadow School in Farmington Hills is successful when it comes to selling cookies. The girls also can't resist eating the popular little sweet treats.

Scouts

This elementary school student believes in making sure she gets the word out that she's selling cookies. Her market saturation technique included delivering fliers to everyone in

her subdivision - Springland in Farmington Hills.

And if that wasn't enough, she was bound and determined that everyone who called her number was duly informed about how to buy her cookies.

A message on the family's answering machine, made by Catherine, convincingly solicits callers.

Of course she did the in-person sales, too. And, she said, her trick is simple.

Please See COOKIES, B3

Here's how the Girl Scout cookie crumbles

In the Michigan Metro Girl Scout Council, Girl Scout cookies sell for \$3 per box. Here's how that breaks down and serves over 43,000 girls in most of Wayne and Oakland counties.

A minimum of 15 percent, or 46 cents, goes to troop treasuries. Depending on the number of boxes sold by the troop, the per-box profit may be as high as \$1.35 per box.

■ 25.6 percent covers the direct cost of the cookies.

■ 59.3 percent funds services that the council provides to girls and adult volunteers. These include:

Scholarships - In 1999, the council provided \$33,000 in college scholarships to girls who earned the Gold Award, the highest award for girls in scouting.

Programs - Unique programs for girls such as tutorial, diversity programs and drug abuse prevention programs are highly regarded by educa-

tors and community leaders.

Funding - A Shared Concern is the award-winning teen pregnancy prevention program supported by the council. More than 42,000 girls have completed this program in the metro Detroit area funded by the cookie program.

Outreach services - The council serves nearly 19,000 girls each year who live in areas of extreme poverty. Membership expansion - The council provides scholarships for girls who

come from families unable to afford membership fees and other costs associated with Girl Scouting.

Training for volunteers - Adults and girls can benefit from leadership development, camp skills and diversity training.

Camp development and maintenance - The council operates four camps and an Equestrian Center for use by the girls and volunteers.