

## **President's Address**

By Mary Ruth Leen

Dear Members,

Hi! I'm Mary Ruth Leen. I have been involved in deaf education as a teacher and administrator for over 20 years. I have had the pleasure of hearing words come from the lips of children who were deaf and have seen the tears fall from the eyes of their parents. Like all of you I love what I do and want to see others understand that deaf children can learn to listen and talk.

As the new President of CA AG Bell I want to say what a privilege it is to serve this organization. As one of the largest chapters in the U.S., the CA Chapter has a long history and a record of dedication and service provided by the Board members who have guided the organization.

At the beginning of any new venture it's important to define a few goals and work toward those for the time allowed. I hope to bring, with the Board's help, a greater sense of connection between the various groups within our Chapter: parents, professionals, and deaf and hard of hearing adults. We all have a great deal to learn from one another about deafness and the opportunity to share our various perspectives and experiences with all the members of A.G. Bell. Our first events, the Northern California Spring Picnic on May 15<sup>th</sup> and the Southern California Picnic on June 18<sup>th</sup>, will provide two opportunities for all members to gather and share some good food, lots of fun and personal stories. The Conference on February 25<sup>th</sup> of 2006 will advance us towards the goal of connecting members by providing opportunities for each section of the Chapter to learn something new and share perspectives on the experiences of living with deafness on a daily basis. Save these dates now and put them on your calendars!

Growing the membership is another important goal for all of us so the Chapter remains strong and able to help new families, professionals and adults to utilize the information and support we can give. Please bring any family, friend or professional you may know who has an interest in deafness to either picnic or the Conference. Tell them about the Chapter Website

[www.agbell-ca.org](http://www.agbell-ca.org) and encourage them to join up!

I look forward to meeting many of you at these events and learning more about the ways CA AG Bell can meet your needs!



# **$E=mc^2$**

## **(English equals milk and cookies too!)**

By Sylvia Rotfliesch

Over the years, one of the most gratifying and challenging aspects of providing therapy for families has been in teaching and empowering the parent to be their child's primary teacher. Facilitating the development of skills, expertise and confidence in becoming their child's primary facilitator for auditory, speech and language skills is a critical component of our work. Teaching children with hearing impairment to listen and to speak may initially seem as complicated as the theory of relativity to parents as they embark on auditory-verbal therapy.

Parents frequently have the impression that the professionals know what to do and will "fix" everything. Parents learn how to maximize the potential within activities of daily life and normal developmental play to facilitate their child's potential. Parents develop the understanding that no one is able to "zap" a child in one, two or even more therapy sessions per week. The  $E=mc^2$  "theory" (English equals milk and cookies too!) explores the wealth of everyday life for the benefit of children who are hearing-impaired and are developing the skills of listening and talking. It really is as basic as milk and cookies – chocolate chip cookies.

### **The Chocolate Chip Cookie Theory**

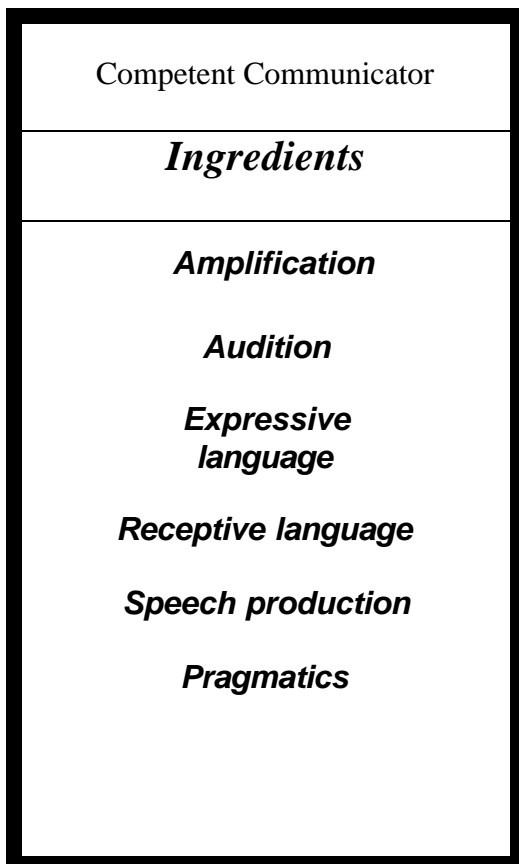
The Chocolate Chip Cookie Theory is an analogy where we compare "ingredients" in the recipes for baking cookies to developing a competent communicator through the Auditory-Verbal Approach. Through ongoing sessions, guidance and counseling, or through formal presentations of this material, the parents learn the theory. After all, chocolate chip cookies are anything but intimidating! Variations in the recipes for chocolate chip cookies emerge - from both the ingredients such as including nuts, using semi-sweet or milk chocolate chips, choosing butter, shortening or margarine and even the equipment that the different "bakers" might use. The resulting cookies are different, but they are still chocolate chip cookies. However, we can tell from the end results if the cookie has too much baking soda, not enough sugar or an inadequate amount of chocolate chips. Once a cookie is baked, it is not possible to separate the sugar from the flour from the eggs. We might be able to separate out a chocolate chip, but by the time we pry it loose with our fingernail, it would hardly resemble the initial chocolate chip.

When looking at the components of developing the required skills for a child with a hearing impairment, parents have different components, typically the obvious "ingredients" amplification, audition, expressive language, receptive language, speech production, pragmatics and some other ones, which are a reflection of their unique experiences: such as behavior management, preschool, or sibling interactions. Just like the variability in cookie recipes, it doesn't matter how clear the articulation is if you don't have the language and pragmatic skills for communication. It doesn't matter how good the language is, if the child doesn't listen to participate in a conversation, respond appropriately and use language for "real" communication. It matters little how age appropriate the language is if the articulation and speech is so poor that people are unable to

understand the message. It is like trying to extract the chocolate chip from the already baked cookie. By the time we have pulled out the chocolate chip – is it still a chocolate chip?

Just as with chocolate chip cookies, it is not clear where the butter ends and the sugar begins, we aren't separating audition from speech or the expressive or receptive language when we are interacting with the child. All these components are in play in successful communicative interaction and need to be integrated. This is particularly critical when interacting with the child in a typical everyday situation.

Ways to incorporate this theory into everyday life will be in our next issue. If you would like a sneak preview of daily activities, go to the author's presentation at the Auditory Verbal International in Toronto, Canada in July.



# **10 Cool Things About Being Deaf by the Students of Jackson Hearing Center**

**Your hearing aids can make you look like a robot.**

**In a hotel room, you can't hear your dad snore.**

**When I want to read, I can have quiet time.**

**Your eyes will work even better!**

**Planes and trains won't hurt your ears.**

**When my mom is nagging I can turn my implant off.**

**Other kids think I'm interesting.**

**Your FM system can be used to hear teachers in the other room.**

**Your earmolds can match your outfit.**

**I get to go to school at Jackson Hearing Center!**

# News from SoCal DHHS Local Reps

By Jane C Croft & Michelle Nemetz

On Saturday, Feb 26<sup>th</sup> after the annual business meeting at Echo Horizon School in the Los Angeles area, DHHS members met for lunch at “Versailles” a Cuban restaurant nearby. The food was great and tasted delicious along with the feisty Sangrias. Local DHHS members agreed to plan future events 3 or 4 times per year. Let’s get together to enjoy our fellowship and support in between conventions and form friendships as well. These events will be planned and held throughout Southern California at a volunteered DHHS member’s home or restaurant as an attempt to accommodate the diverse regions where our members reside in Southern California, if possible. If you are a Southern California DHHS member and would like to volunteer your home for future DHHS events, contact Michelle Nemetz at [michnem@yahoo.com](mailto:michnem@yahoo.com) or if you wish to join the distribution list for future event announcements, send your name and current email address to Michelle or Jane C Croft at [JaneCCroft@yahoo.com](mailto:JaneCCroft@yahoo.com) . DHHS is invited to join California AGBell Chapter BBQ Picnic here in the Los Angeles area in July. So bring your hearty appetite and look for the dates in this newsletter!



Jane C Croft & Michelle Nemetz

## **Leaving California, Keeping the Faith**

by Amy Milani, Ph.D.

We're leaving California after three years of riding the emotional roller coaster called Early Intervention, that responsibility of parents with early diagnosed hearing impaired children. We chose to move West, far from the Europe we called home for eight years and seek help for our two children who have cochlear implants and lots of potential. We knew they needed to be a part of a community that offered technology, therapy and good old fashioned nurturing. Uprooted from the glamour, the fast-track career (our family and friends worried), to a place where we would face the unimaginable. A world where no one made any promises or could forecast exactly how our children would progress. We remained ultimately alone in our faith that we were making the right decisions for our family. We continue to believe that we know what's best for our children and it is in this faith that we find the strength to push through the dark moments of uncertainty.

What are we leaving behind in the Golden State? Mainly, the support of an outstanding auditory/oral school where families can feel a calming sense of security during a time of stress and transformation. At its best, a trust is built among families at the school and professionals who help advise and reassure as problems arise, who create a positive aura around a child with high expectations for parents as well. A place where one can find hope by watching other children progress and by talking to parents who have been there before. Even when communication breaks down between the team there is a feeling of a "village raising your child". Most importantly, every activity at school is designed to draw language out of children, to encourage them to express their thoughts and emotions- something hard to find in mainstream preschool. Compared to an auditory/oral preschool, Montessori programs may limit teacher interaction as children are expected to teach themselves and play-based preschools allow for freedom but don't necessarily support the structure needed for language modeling. This is not to say that these philosophies don't help hearing impaired children develop other needed skills. However, its clear that during the immensely important preschool years, a hearing impaired child has the opportunity to gain valuable ground when language development is the educational priority.

We have prepared for mainstreaming since the moment we decided our children would learn to speak. Mainstream represented not only a school experience to us but the entire complex, flawed, beautiful society that we wanted them to experience. We realized that the security we found at the school was the most appealing type of illusion, one which couldn't last. There are no guarantees our children will succeed. Eventually they will have to prove themselves. As for our upcoming preparation for mainstream school, we still have faith in our instincts. We believe that the most acoustically friendly classrooms with the smallest class size would help our children, all the while knowing the teacher will ultimately inspire their learning. We will continue to review their progress and try to help them any way we can, but we know as each year passes we will move from advocates to

not-so-highly regarded advisors. Yet, we will always take with us the lessons we learned in California-know your child, know your school and have faith in your parenting skills.

## California Picnics

This year, we are fortunate to be having two picnics: one in the North and one in the South.

**Northern** California will be having their picnic on **Sunday May 15th from 12noon to 3pm** at Newark

Community Park, 35501 Cedar Blvd, Newark, CA 94560. Please RSVP to Mary Ruth Leen at 650-780-1824. We will provide hot dogs, hamburgers and drinks. Please bring a dish to share.

**Southern** California will be having their picnic on **Saturday, June 18, 2005 from 12:00pm to 3:00pm** at Kronenthal Picnic : 3459 McManus Ave., Culver City (Next to Echo Horizon School). Please RSVP to Christa Lopez Tamarong at 626-536-2688 or smilepurple@hotmail.com

These are perfect opportunities for families, professionals and people with hearing loss to come together.

We hope you will be able to come to either event.

### **Ken Levinson Award Winner -2005**

I would like to thank the California Chapter of Alexander Graham Bell Association for recognizing me as the 2005 Ken Levinson Grant Scholar. I am very fortunate to be so successful in life so far. I would give the credit to the Stanislaus County Office of Education, Hearing-Impaired Division for directing my parents towards early intervention. This led to my being enrolled at John Tracy Clinic for a summer session. I believe that early intervention can make a major difference in a person with a disability. I know from experience since I learned to cope with my disability of hearing loss at a young age and it has helped me succeed in our oral world. Again I am thankful for the honor of representing the California Chapter. I look forward to meeting you at next year's conference.

Sincerely,

Alan Feucht

