

PARTNERS FOR A GREATER VOICE

a 501(C)3 organization

Creating Opportunities through Educational Experiences:

- Give the Gift of Hearing
- In-country Home Visits
- In-country Workshops and Training projects
- Parent Workshops
- US Training Programs
- US Visitor Programs
- Technology Donations
- Consultation

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Help the Process for a Lifetime of Listening and Learning...



Make the world a bigger place for a child living with hearing loss.

Children living in low resource communities in developing countries need you to support them. By giving to Partners for A Greater Voice you are contributing directly to education, training and technology initiatives that help hundreds of children and their families. Since 2002 we have provided training workshops to more than 75 teachers and 600 families. We have donated more 200 hearing aids, dozens of FM systems, and audio-

metric equipment. From basic awareness programs on deafness, oral deaf education and audiology to countless professional development initiatives in auditory-verbal education, early identification, social emotional growth and development, literacy and parent support, Greater Voice has inspired parents, parent groups, teachers and schools. Most of our work is in the Dominican Republic, with programs in Honduras and past support in India.

We rely on contributions like yours to sustain our international activities. Make a difference for a child living with hearing loss! Please contribute today.

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Greater Voice Visits Mumbai and Pune, India

Our first visit to India occurred in March this year. We explored ten programs for the deaf and hard of hearing, from audiology clinics and early intervention centers to mainstream programs and schools for the deaf. Joanne was invited to speak to parents in both Mumbai and Pune, holding three meetings with over 80 parents of children with severe and profound hearing losses. Traveling with Joanne was native speaker Uma Gokhale-Soman, MED, a teacher of the deaf who works at the Vanderbilt Bill Wilkerson Center in Nashville. In India, there is no sign language, and the preferred mode of communication is the spoken word. Remarkably some of the children they met were learning 2 or more languages. Parent meetings incorporated discussion on the following topics: social emotional growth, transitioning, assistive technology and general information on hearing loss. Joanne is continuing to consult parents at AURED on how to start parent networks. She hopes to return in 2007 and to offer more professional training.



Social Emotional Workshop and Skills Development Training with Eleanor Jones



Eleanor, a teacher of the deaf at Clarke School for the Deaf in Northampton, Mass. has been teaching children to listen and speak for over 40 years. A Greater Voice mission in July called Eleanor to the job. She was a great spirit to have on this training mission. Eleanor and Greater Voice director, Joanne Travers, spent five days at Instituto de Ayuda al Sordo in Santo Domingo and also vis-

ited Boca Chica for one day.

Eleanor provided individual therapy to over 25 children and Joanne continued her work with parent counseling. Not only did Eleanor have fun (that sparkle in her eye is a true gift) but we all enjoyed her enthusiasm, insight, and experience as a teacher and parent. Onelia Aybar, the Director at Instituto de Ayuda al Sordo, remarked, "Thank you Eleanor for your inspiration. You have given us renewed energy and spark". One mother expressed how she tried for nearly a year to get her child to blow bubbles. Eleanor demonstrated that blowing bubbles for the first time can take less than 10 minutes! She took a class outdoors and explored nature - talking-talking-talking! She played with the children and provided individual and group therapy with fun. In the poor community of Boca Chica, Eleanor gave therapy to chil-

dren who recently received hearing aids. (Yes, we made her ride a *Guagua!*) Joanne continued her work with parents and talked with locals about the schools needs.

The mission wasn't complete without an official workshop. Eleanor and Joanne teamed up to provide a full day presentation on social and emotional growth of children with hearing loss. Psychologists, teachers and parents gathered in one room. The audience of 100 stood up on their feet singing children's songs during the presentation to add cheer and leg stretch, thanks to the spirit of Eleanor.

Photographer Cindy Minter stayed behind the scenes, but provided great support and humor. She captured many great shots that will be pictured on line soon! If you know Eleanor, ask to see the wonderful picture book Cindy made for her!

CASSA, Rotary and Give the Gift!

Financial support was made by the Topsfield Rotary Club to help CASSA start a battery project in Boca Chica. Since batteries are expensive in the Dominican Republic, costing over \$1 per battery, TBM Rotary discretionary funds were made available to help support children who wear hearing aids. Parents do not need to travel to the city for batteries now,

and they can use that travel expense for batteries now available locally.

Additionally, Greater Voice continues to help support the school. Several more Give the Gift of Hearing contributions were made to 3 children enrolled in the school this year, and teachers will receive more training next February.

Greater Voice Needs Sponsors for El Oído, a new publication in the DR

Over 2500 copies of *El Oído*, the first ever publication offering tailored information to Dominicans and for Dominicans, were delivered to the doorsteps of schools, clinics, hospitals and centers for disabilities in July. The publication needs sponsors to support its efforts. Widex Dominicana is presently the sole sponsor. Other Corporate Sponsors are

greatly needed in an effort to continue to offer the publication at no charge. There is a tremendous need for information disbursement, and so many professionals are excited to be able to offer this publication for free to parents, hospitals and schools. Professionals are encouraged to submit articles to Greater Voice for print. Joanne appeared on *Gente Im-*

portante, a half hour, local DR television program, to promote the needs of deaf and hard of hearing children and to announce *El Oído*. Topics in the publication are relevant to parents and teachers, with the intent to build awareness of deafness and needs of children with hearing loss in the DR. Causes of deafness in the DR are wide spread, and partly due

to insufficient distribution and availability of vaccines, noise pollution, chronic and untreated ear disease, poor pre-natal care and genetics. Efforts for prevention and awareness are greatly needed. *El Oído* is a vehicle for help and education!

If you can sponsor us, or if you know of sponsors and want to help, please contact Partners for A Greater Voice at 978-312-1200.

CASSA is Formed in the Community of Boca Chica, DR

Centro de Asistencia para Sordos San Andrés-CASSA did not exist three years ago, nor did it exist in early 2004. Children with hearing loss were ignored, and they were not allowed in public schools. In 2002, Greater Voice visited homes in Boca Chica and identified lost and forgotten children who had hearing loss.

With the commitment of local people, CASSA was formed in 2005. Today, 22 students are enrolled. The school has three teachers under the direction of Diorka Nolesce, a parent of a young girl with hearing loss and a social worker who has developed skills in auditory development and hearing health. In 2003, Diorka attended a Partners for A

Greater Voice 3-week intensive training program in Massachusetts. She continued her training in teaching the deaf while also gaining valuable skills in audiology. Over the years, Diorka has participated in all training Greater Voice has offered in her country, as well as any other training provided by her employer: Instituto de Ayuda al Sordo, a school for the deaf in Santo Domingo that Greater Voice has provided training and technology support.

Diorka is not alone in managing day-to-day activities of CASSA and its families. Estebania Concepcion, a local resident of Boca Chica who began with Greater Voice as an interpreter, devoted herself to see that this school was formed. She presently sup-



Parents, teachers and Greater Voice participants gather for a group photo at CASSA during a recent Audiology and Education Training Mission, October, 2005.

ports the business affairs of the school. Jackie, a devoted mother of a teenager with profound hearing loss, volunteers her time to help as well, along several others.

A Greater Voice mission in October 2005 evaluated and aided over 25 students, thanks to Lisa Walker, Audiologist from Children's Hospital in Boston. The mission also embraced the Top Ten Strategies for Listening and Learning, presented by Teacher of the Deaf and Auditory Verbal Specialist Lindsay Rodriguez of Sunshine Cottage, Texas. As a result, all children at the school have hearing aids, can begin to develop their listening and speaking skills, and receive support from their parents and teachers.

The Rotary Foundation Supports Greater Voice Projects

Who would ever think in one week a group of 6 people could accomplish teaching 9 staff and teachers about auditory development, and evaluate and aid 40 children in conditions with no electricity and running water? Through a Rotary Foundation matching grant, The Rotary Club of San Pedro de Macoris and The Rotary Club of Topsfield, Boxford, Middleton worked together to deliver a

container filled with school supplies, materials, books, audiometric equipment, sound proofing and office supplies! Coordinated by Rotarian Joanne Travers, President of Partners for A Greater Voice, the project embraced ways to develop auditory learning at CAES, a school for the deaf which enrolls over 60 students in the province of San Pedro de Macoris. Volunteers with spe-

cialization in the fields of Audiology, parenting, teaching the deaf, and nursing participated in this mission in May of 2005 to embrace learning to listen and speak. Teachers Elizabeth Trasz and Julie Neumann from Massachusetts focused on developing skills of the teachers while Audiologist Daniel Hendrix and Sue Woolard, RN join forces to evaluate and aid over 40 children. Additionally, meetings



with parents about hearing aid care and use occurred throughout the week. Regardless of down-pours, power outages, and the use of a generator, the team accomplished what they set out to do!

Programs for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Give to Greater Voice

Sheila Moore-Neff, Educational Audiologist employed by the Fairfax County Public Schools in Dunn Loring, Virginia recently packed up over 100 retired, but working, Phonic Ear FM systems and donated them to Partners for A Greater Voice. The school had upgraded to advanced technology and had no use for these systems. A New York school system also contributed many

Phonic Ear FM systems, thanks to Justin Kocher, Northeast Representative. Technology specialist Frank Lepine, of Clarke School for the Deaf in Northampton, originally introduced Greater Voice to this possibility. "These systems have been hanging around for years, and due to current digital technology and more advanced FM systems, our students have no use for them",

he said. Frank got permission from school officials to donate over 20 systems to Greater Voice in 2005, which are successfully being used by students at a school in Santo Domingo.

FM Technology is far too expensive for Dominican schools or parents to afford. In the Dominican Republic, acoustics in a classroom are not optimal for listening, and personal FM

systems improve the signal to noise ratio required for students, who gain access to better speech signals with these systems. Thus, the teacher can do language lessons more effectively.

Greater Voice seeks large contributions to cover costs associated with shipping these systems and getting them into the hands of schools that need this equipment.

