

PARTNERS FOR A GREATER VOICE

A 501(C)3 ORGANIZATION

Update
2007

Creating Vision through Opportunity and Experience:

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

Board of Directors:

Jane Driscoll, MED
Michael Moon, MEd.
James Slater, CPA
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Make the world a bigger place for a child living with hearing loss



L to R: Iruida Williams, Jane Driscoll, Kelly Kelleber, Laura Petersen, Joanne Travers, Michael Moon, in Santo Domingo - February team, 2007.



13 year old, Tori Travers working with Ariel at CASSA during a mission in June, 2007.

Onelia Aybar, Director of Instituto de Ayuda al Sordo, and Yadixa Messina, from Santo Domingo, arrived in Boston mid November for four days of site visits and meetings. It was the first time Onelia participated in a Greater Voice US visitor program, since she had previously allowed other teachers to take advantage of these special training opportunities. Onelia and Yadixa participated in learning experiences at Clarke School for the Deaf, The Federation for Children with Special Needs, and HEAR in New Hampshire. Michael Moon, who joined the Board of Directors this year, hosted these women, and facilitated group discussion and conversation on mainstream education, fund development, advocacy, and program ideas for educating oral-deaf children. Onelia and Yadixa also attended the Gala to celebrate five years of missions and to honor Jane Driscoll. Upon returning to their country, the women shared their learning experience with others, and expressed their sincere gratitude for the experience given to them.

Lions Club Advances Centro de Asistencia para Sordo San Andres (CASSA)

In 1925, Lions accepted the challenge urged by Helen Keller to help the hearing impaired. Last year, Lions averaged \$1.8 million in donations and 91,200 volunteer hours to hearing impaired service related projects. At the Gala on November 17, several Loins members attended and joined current President Jane Malloy to support the cause. Jane delivered a fascinating speech about Lions' devotion to help the deaf. The Ipswich club awarded US\$10,000 to the organization. The money will be used to support teachers and children at CASSA, a school for the deaf established in 2003. Additional hearing aids, acoustic modifications to classrooms, training to teachers and support for parents is planned for 2008. With continued contributions from our donors, CASSA is on its way to becoming a sustainable school. Greater Voice applauds Lions for enabling Helen Keller's vision and request. *If you are interested in becoming involved, please contact Joanne.*

Helping CASSA

If thirteen year olds Tori Travers and Olivia Williams can do it, so can you! Tori and Olivia helped on a mission to CASSA last June. The girls supported teachers in the classroom, played games with students, and helped children draw and learn their colors. Training Facilitator and Teacher of the Deaf Diane Sanchez, educated teachers and parents during the week-long training visit. Her workshops included Natural Communication, How to Play with your child, and Lesson Plan Development. Her tremendous work proved invaluable to the parents and teachers of



Parent activity during an afternoon workshop

CASSA. Diana demonstrated strategies for developing listening and speaking, while also teaching parents and teachers through hands on learning experiences. Continued training and education initiatives are being planned for

2008. To learn how you can help, contact us by email or phone.

Welcome Seimens to Corporate Sponsorship for 2008!

A donation of \$3,000 was made to support El Oído, a free publication in Spanish that is distributed to over 2,500 people in the Dominican Republic. This educational tool is rich in parent and professional information, and advances knowledge in the field. Sponsorship and contributions are needed to continue its publication. Greater Voice accepts short articles for publication, and encourages submission of original written work for review. English text may be sent via email...please keep to under 250 words.



Diana Sanchez with student at CASSA

Missionary Helps Young Girl in Honduras

Tegucigalpa is the capitol of Honduras and is the largest city in the country. The city's name is derived from the Nahuatl word *teguz-galpa*, which means "silver hills". Founded by Spanish settlers, the region abounds with business, yet somewhere amidst the glimmering hills, families strive to understand deafness and how to help their child. A remarkable thing happened in October. Partners for A Greater Voice received a call from Carol Serna, a bright young woman who was born in Saudi Arabia, schooled in Texas and educated at Cornell University. Carol presently lives in Honduras and works for an NGO called Agua Para el Pueblo. She works on a team that does research and design of sustainable potable water treatment plants. Her living situation lead her to a little girl named Angie, a beautiful seven year old living in Ojojona who appeared to have a hearing impairment. Joanne Travers, President of Greater Voice, began counseling Carol on deafness and every step needed to help Angie and her family, giving hope for a better chance at life. Greater Voice has since donated a hearing aid, batteries, and educational materials through their Give the Gift of Hearing program. Joanne has established a relationship with Carol, who is on the ground helping Angie and her family, and has counseled and taught Carol about audiological evaluations, custom CFA ear molds, how to work with Angie's family, aid Angie and develop her listening skills. Though the Honduran government has



Angie, in the arms of her mother

proclaimed sign language as the mode of communication for the deaf living Honduras, Partners for A Greater Voice and Carol are working against the grain to foster an understanding of auditory development for Angie, who is talking to herself and exploring her voice. She gets help from Carol and her family to put meaning to the sounds around her. Carol has been a strong advocate, and Greater Voice wants to help Angie by sponsoring her in a good school, where she will receive speech and language services. It costs US\$150 per month. With your financial support and sponsorship, Greater Voice can help Angie get the education and family support she needs. Please make a donation to support Angie. Tax deductible contributions can be made by visiting our website www.greatervoice.com or by mailing a check to our post office box in Ipswich. Please indicate your donation is for Angie, and care to make the bigger place!

Literacy, Language and Parent Workshops Continue

In February, a team of six volunteers arrived on the ground in Santo Domingo, prepared for a week-long training program to help parents and teachers vested in helping the deaf foster literacy and auditory learning experiences. Nothing prepares most for the poverty of families, the lack of educational materials and supplies, and poor hearing technology. While the stigma of deaf-mute still prevails in the country, many institutions and professionals in Santo Domingo work vigilantly and proudly to educate their compatriots about oral education. Onelia Aybar, Director of Instituto de Ayuda al Sordo a Santa Rosa, always welcomes us warmly, opening her school of 280 students to us. As we approach the building, we notice how well dressed the children are in their uniforms. They line up to pledge their allegiance to their country, sing their anthem, and then filter off to their respective classes. Teachers smile

and staff go about their business. The young children smile at our cameras, while older children glance with a bit of skepticism. Under this initial impression, we know there is a strain on resources. Children wear only one hearing aid, acoustics are horrible in the classrooms, buildings are need of repair and materials are slim. One reason the team looked forward to this mission experience was knowing that their presence was an impossible dream made real...that their support gives hope, technology, and support that constructively helps teachers, families and children affected with hearing impairment. Iraida Williams welcomed groups of parents to share and exchange social, emotional and education concerns, while fostering and inspiring parent knowledge and support to help children learn to listen and speak with hearing aids and cochlear implants. Michael Moon and Jane Driscoll, both teachers of the deaf

GALA 2007 a success!

On November 17, 2007, nearly 90 people joined together to celebrate five years of Greater Voice missions and to honor Jane Driscoll, Teacher of the Hearing Impaired and a founding board member of Partners for A Greater Voice. Jane has serviced deaf and hard of hearing children for over 30 years, and is also involved in educating professionals in the Dominican Republic. Having been on several missions, Jane has inspired a vision of possibility for teachers who have had very little training in Auditory Development, or 'listening therapy'. The fund raiser welcomed visitors from the Dominican Republic, friends and volunteers, as well as parents and students serviced by Jane. The event included slide show presentations by Joanne Travers, founder of the organization, and Lions President Jane Malloy. Everyone enjoyed the 'open mike night' about Jane, dinner and live auction. While the night offered many good laughs and cheer, it also brought tears to many faces of those learning about and supporting the cause. The evening raised nearly US\$19,000, which included a generous donation from the Lions Club of Ipswich.



Attendees Dr. Bernie Creeden, Paul Travers, Paul & Sue Carr, and honored guest Jane Driscoll

Give the Gift of Hearing in honor of Jane Driscoll, Teacher of the Deaf and Founding Director. \$150 helps a child with hearing loss!

from New England, presented a workshop on several topics including distance, noise, reverberation, and a review of the listening hierarchy. Scientist Kelly Kelleher met with many students to discuss her personal experience growing up deaf, while also working with Michael on FM system troubleshooting and fitting of systems on young students in several classrooms. The week focused on literacy development, offered individual therapy demonstrations, and included two afternoon workshops presented by Dr. Laura Petersen, AVT from Rhode Island. A two hour panel discussion of the Greater Voice team was well received by an audience of over 150 at the end of the week.. Continued training on literacy with Dr. Petersen is schedule in June of 2008.

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Our June Mission was one of the most productive weeks of the year. Dr. Laura Petersen from Rhode Island, Janet Lane from Texas, and Joanne Travers teamed together to provide a series of workshops and sessions that ranged from intense literacy training, access and cochlear implantation to individual therapy. During afternoons, Dr. Laura Peterson gave 12 hours of instruction on early literacy development to 35 teachers, including teachers from Moca, CASSA and Instituto de Ayuda al Sordo. Janet Lane, a PhD candidate at University of Texas in

Dallas, presented to more than 60 people one evening on cochlear implantation and brain plasticity. She also participated with Joanne in a full morning workshop for 25 new teachers, and two other evening workshops, including Access and Transitioning to the Mainstream.

One other goal for the week including morning therapy sessions at Instituto de Ayuda al Sordo, where Greater Voice completed the construction of a brand new acoustically modified therapy room!! The room was

made possible by donations and the help of architect, Leandro Bello, a well known artist in the Dominican Republic. Joanne and he sourced materials earlier in the year to prepare for the June training mission.

Before a child's individual session, consultation was provided to parents in the observation area, where viewing of a therapy session could also be discussed. Teachers of the Deaf provided literacy based language therapy involving, of course, the child's teacher and parent! ♦



Janet Lane and Laura Peterson



Teachers in training at Instituto de Ayuda al Sordo a Santa Rosa, Santo Domingo

Lions Club Advances Centro de Asistencia para Sordos San Andres

In 2008, Partners for A Greater Voice visited CASSA five times, providing training, education and donations to parents and teachers at the school. With support from the Lions Club of Ipswich Massachusetts, Greater Voice was able to donate hearing aids and school supplies, as well as acoustic panels, rugs and floor pillows that aid in reducing reverberation and noise in the classroom. "Learning to listen and talk requires a good acoustic environment, but also good instruction", states Joanne Travers. Partners for A Greater

Voice continues to advance an understanding of auditory oral education through strategically planned training initiatives. "Our goal is to empower the staff at CASSA and to develop the school's teaching abilities one step at a time. We have transferred an abundance of educational information, but the school still has a way to go to reach standards we see here in the United States." Joanne has paved the way for developing the school, building sustainability, empowering the staff and continuing initiatives that support progress in education programs for young students. "We want to partner with people who share our vision, and who are interested in working collaboratively. We know and understand the capacity of teaching at the school and have to be sensitive to the culture and how we transfer information." Joanne thanks the Lions Club of Ipswich for their collaboration and support, as well as the many volunteers that helped throughout the year. Education and training initiatives will continue throughout 2009, with support from The International Foundation. ♦



Joanne stands beside Neal Reimer, a Peace Corp volunteer, who worked with University of Utah and their audiology mission to the Dominican Republic. Greater Voice had received a call from Joe Danse, an AUD student at Utah State, who asked for help in making connections. Joanne facilitated communications and advised on locations for their audiology mission. Neal worked on the ground with Utah State, coordinating community efforts for evaluations and hearing aid donations. Hearing aids were donated in Moca, Cotui, Pimental and Boca Chica. ♦



Continuing Training at CASSA

In November, Teachers of the Deaf, Marianne Watson, MED and Suzanne Aaberg from San Diego, California, volunteered their time to prepare and demonstrate a lesson plan using baseball as a theme. The six day trip fostered an understanding of how to deliver dynamic and interactive instruction. The duo from California prepared a daily agenda, and used a variety of self-made baseball games, including card games like "Go Fish" and books like "Where's the Baseball". Marianne and Suzy spent a day in each classroom working alongside the teachers and students to demonstrate and assist in language expansion using a variety of activities and experiences. Afternoon staff meetings enriched the teachers understanding of thematic instruction. Marianne and Suzy also gathered donations from their community that included Spanish books, school supplies, as well as baseball gear and t-shirts from the San Diego Padres! The trip to CASSA was a second for Marianne, who completed her 3 week Smith College Externship in June. ◇

Let's Play Baseball!



Marianne and Suzy engage students in baseball fun!

Parent Collaboration...

Iraida Williams, parent of a teenage daughter born with a profound hearing loss, partnered with Greater Voice for her first mission in 2007. In January 2008, Iraida returned with Joanne to visit schools and meet with parents. "Every time I visit, parents continually need that encouragement and emotional support. They yearn for advise on hearing loss and how they can become more involved with the process of raising their children," says Iraida. As a fluent Spanish speaker, she advised parents during group discussions and interpreted at several business meetings. Iraida was also instrumental in acquiring donations of more than 30 Mr. Potato Heads from Hasbro. The toys were delivered to CASSA, along with a demonstration on how to use the toys as a fun way to build language. Her Dominican connections also support CASSA in efforts to receive government support for salaries at CASSA. ◇



Katelyn Driscoll, MED stands with teachers, Moca

In April Katelyn Driscoll, Teacher of the Deaf, ventured with Joanne over 2 hours via guagua to Moca and Cotui to meet with teachers and families in remote areas of Dominican Republic. In Moca, fourteen eager and motivated teachers engaged in a 6 hour workshop on hearing loss and auditory oral education. The session paved the way for students to receive hearing aids and to begin their journey toward listening and speaking. Another half day workshop in Cotui provided information for the first time to several families of young children with hearing loss. Down a small alley in back of a church, a tiny one room school provided space for one teacher and 10 children. The families had never learned about hearing loss or an audiogram. Katelyn demonstrated language therapy and educated the group on the possibilities for deaf children and speech development. Katelyn also visited families at CASSA and Instituto de Ayuda al Sordo Santa Rosa, supporting Greater Voice with parent meetings. ◇

Parent Workshops Continue:

Our commitment to parents on every visit over the past 5 years has been so important for us in making progress. More than 30 parent workshops have been given to embrace parent needs and interests since 2004. New information is offered at parent meetings, but often times topics are revisited to reinforce concepts. Sessions last year included discussion on cochlear implants, acoustics, literacy and natural language.

Last November, Founder/Director Joanne Travers delivered a workshop on Building Self Esteem; the Road to Self Advocacy. This 2.5 hour presentation was held at Instituto de Ayuda al Sordo a Santa Rosa in Santo Domingo. A crowd of over 100 gathered, including parents, teachers, and psychologists. The topic was also discussed with more than 50 parents at CASSA, Boca Chica.

"A goal for every parent should be to help their deaf or heard of hearing child build skills needed to be socially and emotionally confident. It begins with the need for parents to develop competency and knowledge about deafness, and it evolves into a more broad understanding of a child's growth and development." says Joanne.

"Emotions often are the underlying issue when working with families", states Joanne. "If we are going to be successful in any community, then we need parent commitment and support on every level." Poco a poco parents are becoming more engaged in their child's education. ◇



Joanne and Iraida stand with the Director of CASSA, teachers and a few students.

Transitioning to the Mainstream?

In June 2008, Partners for A Greater Voice met with parents whose children would soon enroll in mainstream schools for the first time. The goal for this workshop was to have parents participate in determining the accommodations necessary for their children going into a new school. Rather than lecture participants, parents were encouraged to problem solve, building their sense of responsibility and fostering an understanding of accommodations and mainstream support. Parents became very engaged during the session, and more than 30 accommodations were developed and written on the blackboard. Well done! ◇