

# hear ME now!

## Thomas!!

Thomas is a happy, bubbly little boy. He lives with his parents, April and Ty, and big sister, Shannon. He will celebrate his third birthday in June and will have a new baby sister in August!

When Thomas was just weeks old, testing with an audiologist confirmed a profound bilateral hearing loss. April remembers driving home that day in the rain and thinking that Thomas would never hear the rain pouring on the windshield. Thomas was fitted with hearing aids and began speech therapy and ASL instruction.

The family began working with the Children's Hospital Boston to see if Thomas was a candidate for cochlear implants. He received his first implant at 14 months and the second at 25 months. The first 18 months after receiving his implant were frustrating and discouraging. Thomas would constantly remove his processors and toss them across the room. Just trying to keep them on his

head for five minutes was a struggle. April and Ty became interested in *hear ME now!* when a Listening & Spoken Language Specialist spoke to the Parent-Infant-Toddler program at the Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. After the presentation, April researched auditory-oral education and realized that auditory oral "was the one option that COMPLETELY made sense for our family". The Morin's visited *hear ME now!*, met with the Listening and Spoken Language Specialist and began learning how to implement the principles of Auditory Verbal Therapy at home. They also continued to attend ASL classes but as time progressed, it became clear that Thomas was not picking up ASL, even though the family had made a strong effort to learn it (2-3 times weekly) and teach it to Thomas. At 24 months, the family decided to stop signing and focus on improving Thomas' auditory skills.

After 22 months in auditory only programming, Thomas is Listening and talking very well. April says, "Can you imagine what I felt the first time he said 'Momma?'" The first time he hummed along to the car stereo? We are feeling so positive about the choices we have made. A recent evaluation showed us that Thomas' comprehensive language tested at 22 months. That tells me that he is not only hearing what we say, but understanding it as well. He is closing the gap between his chronological age (32 months) and his hearing age (18 months). We are extremely encouraged by the results that we're seeing. It is our goal to mainstream Thomas right into kindergarten with peers of his age!"



hear ME now!  
Maine's only auditory oral education center...

PO Box 896  
Portland, ME 04104

# HEAR ME! HEAR ME!

The gazette of *hear ME now!*

Summer 2010

## Madison's Journey!!



This is a story about my daughter Madison's journey to being successfully mainstreamed into third grade at Windham Primary School. Madison was diagnosed with a hearing loss at age 4 months. She is profoundly deaf in both ears.

We were living in Florida when Maddy was born and we began early intervention services right away. They told us to keep talking and talking to our baby. We were lucky that the State early intervention coordinators truly gave us information about all communications options and let us make our own decisions for our family. We decided we wanted Maddy to be oral because that's what our family is. Also, we thought that Maddy could always learn sign language but that we had to get her access to sound as soon as we could because if she didn't use hearing she would lose the ability to learn to listen and talk.

She received her right implant at age 13 months and her left implant at four years of age. We chose Medel cochlear implants – it was hard as a parent to pick which

manufacturer to use. I thought "Should we wait? What if the technology gets better?" The company has been with us every step of the way, their customer service is amazing and we haven't had any problems with the device.

She received speech and auditory therapy twice a week at a private auditory oral school and once a week at our implant center. At first, I felt a little disappointed – I thought when she got her implant she would start talking right away, I didn't realize we still had to teach her to listen. So, at first her progress was slow – but amazing once she began to learn to listen and talk. Her older sisters Anita (13) and Christina (11) helped so much - they are girls that love to talk! When Maddy reached preschool age, she attended an auditory oral preschool and a mainstream daycare, and both provided her with different skills and experiences.

When Maddy was approaching Kindergarten age, we moved to Maine. I was nervous about relocating and leaving the professionals that had helped us, but we contacted *hear ME now!*, and they helped us so much with the transition.

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## Elementary and "Tweens" Summer Program in July



In response to last year's well received summer program for elementary students, we will once again offer one day "camps" that focus on the development of self-advocacy and hearing loss awareness. Through a fun combination of games and activities we will facilitate the children's participation in reading stories about children with hearing loss, writing their own stories, and creating journals to use at home. There will be time for sharing their thoughts/feelings about their hearing loss, and practicing strategies to facilitate their communication within the mainstream setting. Of course, there will also be many

opportunities for playing with and learning from other children just like them.

This group will be led by Carrie Chojnowski, Listening and Spoken Language Specialist and Katelyn Driscoll, Auditory-Oral Teacher of the Deaf.

For more information, please contact Pam Dawson 781-6288

## DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Dear Friends of *hear ME now!*

Our mission statement reads: "*hear ME now!*, Maine's only Auditory Oral Education Center is committed to the families of deaf and hard of hearing children and ensures opportunities to learn to listen and speak through innovative teaching and technology.

During this past year, our organization has needed to respond to a time of great challenge and adversity to continue to fulfill that mission, and to continue to provide the option of auditory oral only education to children with hearing loss in Maine.

Last fall, the Board of Directors, Program Advisory board, staff members, and representatives of families and adult clients worked diligently to define a viable service delivery model for auditory oral education in Maine. Their recommendations resulted in an exciting new program with the potential to partner with the State of Maine and community based programs to help deaf and hard of hearing children become effective oral communicators.

**I am pleased to inform you that, for the very first time, the Department of Education has awarded funding to *hear ME now!***

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# hear ME now!

## Our Sincere THANKS!

The families, staff and supporters of hear ME now! thank Commissioner Susan Gendron, and the co-chairpersons of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, Senator Justin Alfond and Representative Patricia Sutherland.

Their belief that families should have a true continuum of communication choices and educational services for their children with hearing loss has led to State funding for an exciting new service delivery model in Maine.

We look forward to collaborating with the Department of Education and local early

education providers to establish a network of qualified programs with access to training and expertise in auditory oral education. Together, we can work towards every parents dream: for their child with hearing loss to become a fully participating members of their local community.

Thank you for your belief in choice for Maine families, and for your belief in us.

## DIRECTOR'S UPDATE... *Cont from page 1*

This breakthrough occasion was made possible through the advocacy of our families and supporters, the persistent efforts of Senator Justin Alfond and Representative Patricia Sutherland, and the support of Commissioner Susan Gendron.

We are excited to begin a partnership with the State to establish a network of community based, inclusive preschools serving children who are deaf or hard of hearing and who communicate using spoken language. The initial pilot will reach three counties and will provide comprehensive, ongoing training to early childhood center professionals to optimize the listening and language skills of these children. Onsite needs assessment, professional skill development, training and coaching will be provided based upon the individual needs of students and the

staff working with them.

The long term goal of the program is to establish a quality, community based education system, with access to appropriate resources and expertise in auditory oral education, for those families who have chosen a listening and spoken language option.

Quality auditory oral education, by definition, must take place in an auditory environment. I am so grateful for the advocacy and support of everyone associated with *hear ME now!*, who believe that children with hearing loss should have the OPTION of learning to listen and speak through quality auditory oral education. THANK YOU! We look forward to this exciting new partnership!

### Board of Directors

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**hear ME now!**

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*"Where children with hearing loss learn to listen and speak."*

## Madison's Journey ...*Cont from page 1*

We still needed speech/audition therapy and they provided that, plus they helped us talk to the Windham school system about having her attend Kindergarten for a full day, instead of the usual half day. This gave her all the repetition she needed and by the time she was ready for 1st Grade, she was able to be fully mainstreamed. The Windham School Department has been so responsive and wonderful about working with us – they realized that a few extra supports early in Maddy's education would get



her where she needed to be, and lessen the need for services as she got older.

They've worked as a team with us and with hear ME now. The consultation hear ME now provides continues to be so helpful to the classroom staff. We could never have gotten Maddy where she is today without the support and knowledge of the listening and spoken language professionals at hear ME now!

# hear ME now!

## Music for Little Ears: our commitment to music continues.....

This winter and spring, hear ME now! has had the opportunity to participate in a unique collaboration with the Friends School of Portland and MECDHH. Each week, children and their caregivers have been gathering with Cathy Janelle, hear ME now! speech pathologist and Kathie McCatherin, a music educator to have fun making music. The program encourages spontaneous musical activity within daily life to help caregivers discover the joys of family music. Improvisation, humor, playfulness, and fun are built right into the non performance based activities. Children with hearing loss have enjoyed this time right along side their hearing friends.

In fact, a recent study at the University of Haifa found that music can aid speech development in hearing-impaired toddlers. The study included toddlers who received 8 music sessions after receiving cochlear implants. Each session included music-related activities such as games with percussion, vocal games and listening to simple songs. The children also took part in 8 play sessions without musical sounds. During the music sessions, spontaneous communication was more frequent and prolonged in the children. "Music comprises various elements that are also components of spoken language." study author Dr. Dikla Kerem said. "Communicative interactions, especially those initiated by the toddlers, are critical in the development of normal communication, as they are prerequisites for developing and acquiring language." Kerem noted that music therapy "is gradually penetrating the field of rehabilitation, but there is still a lot of work to be done in improving awareness of this important area." Read about the study: <http://www.businessweek.com/lifestyle/content/healthday/634746.html>



We are pleased to be able to offer music to children with hearing loss in Maine!

## hear ME now! is sharing it's expertise...

**April 16, 2010:**

**Facilitating Spoken Language Development for Young Children with Hearing Loss:** A one-day introductory seminar for early intervention and education professionals

This collaboration between Cochlear America, Maxwell Kluger and Makaretz, and hear ME now! stressed the importance of early intervention for children with hearing loss. The keynote speaker was Donald Goldberg, PhD, he is the co-author of "Educational Audiology for the Limited Hearing Infant and Preschooler: An Auditory-Verbal Program" Dr. Goldberg is President of the AG Bell Academy for Listening and Spoken Language.

**June 18, 2010:**

Maine Newborn Hearing Program Educational Conference for Maine Audiologists

An opportunity for dialogue on the important role of the audiologist in Listening and Spoken Language Development

## SKI RACE UPDATE!

Thanks to our generous sponsors and skiers, the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual "Break the Sound Barrier" Ski Race at Shawnee Peak was a great success! We raised over \$28,000 to help children who are deaf or hard of hearing in the state of Maine.

### Winning Teams:

**Fastest Team Gross:** The Cable Guys

**Fastest Team Net:** MPX Team

**Fastest Male Skier:** Mike Traister

**Fastest Female Skier:** Julie Gardner

**Fastest Under 14:** Dennis Donoghue

**Top Fundraising Team:** Blue Mooners

**Best Wipeout:** Jay Beaudremin

**Best Costume:** David Rossignal

**Most Leisurely Pace:** Kate Rogers

**Best Dressed:** Britney Landry

**Best Cheerer:** Will Feagans

**Raffle Winner:** Donna Ayers

Thanks to all who turned out for this great event!



*Team: The Cable Guys, L-R: David Rossignal, Jared Levesque, Jeff Willis & Phil Ripa*