

# Sights & Sounds

The mission of the Sight & Hearing Association is to enable lifetime learning by identifying preventable loss of vision and hearing in children.



**FREE HEARING SCREENINGS!**  
Get your hearing checked for free on Noise Awareness Day, April 28. Call 651.645.2546 or visit [www.sightandhearing.org](http://www.sightandhearing.org) for locations.

## Special edition: 2009 Annual Report

### SHA screening detects hearing loss previous pediatric visits missed

**D**rew Elo has a special ear, he boasts. But it wasn't until the Sight & Hearing Association screened his hearing that anyone knew about it.

In March 2009, Drew was referred by SHA for a potential

it was probably a cold. Nichola persevered, taking him to see Laura Pett, an audiologist with Children's Hospitals & Clinics in Minnetonka. A full hearing evaluation concluded that Drew had a unilateral hearing loss — an

85 percent high-frequency loss in his left ear.

"Looking back, the signs were all there, we just didn't take them seriously," Nichola admits. "We lost him so many times in Target or Macy's, where he would just drift off and not hear us calling him. I'd ask him to get dressed, and he wouldn't do it.



*Drew Elo speaks proudly of his special ear, the one Sight & Hearing Association found to have a hearing loss.*

hearing concern after a screening at his nursery school, Mt. Olivet. Ironically, he had just been to his four-year well-check visit at his pediatrician's office a couple months before and passed the hearing test. His mom, Nichola, took him back to his pediatrician, who said it was probably a blockage due to a cold. A month later, they retested him and again said

We just thought he was being stubborn and didn't want to listen. We had to repeat things all the time."

There is no way to know for sure how long Drew has had a hearing loss. He had his hearing screened as a newborn at the hospital and has been to all of his pediatric well-check visits — but it was never caught.

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DREW CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

His audiologist recommended a hearing aid for Drew's left ear, suggesting a six-month trial to see how it would work for him.

Drew's parents were unsure how a hearing aid would affect Drew, both socially and with his physical activities, such as soccer. A turning point in their decision occurred after a friend offered some advice. Turning to Drew's dad, Brad, who has worn glasses since he was a child, she asked: "What if your parents would have told you that you could see just fine and they weren't going to buy you the glasses you needed?"

Convinced, Drew's parents took him in for a fitting, where he chose some flashy ear molds — swirly red, white and blue — for his new hearing aid.

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*"Without the screening, I think we would have always thought he was stubborn and didn't want to listen to us. Obviously, the pediatrician wasn't catching it, so the screening was definitely worth it — 100 percent!"*  
**—Nichola Elo**

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"We had that moment at the doctor's office when he first put it in and turned it on," Nichola said. "His eyes lit up and he said, 'Wow!'"

Drew's parents have noticed differences, too. His speech is clearer, he hasn't gotten lost when shopping, and when it's time to go to school he gets ready when his moms asks.

"Without the screening," Nichola said, "I think we would have always thought he was

stubborn and didn't want to listen to us. Obviously, the pediatrician wasn't catching it, so the screening was definitely worth it — 100 percent!"

Drew will start kindergarten next fall, better prepared to listen, learn and communicate.

And he understands his hearing too. When kids ask him about his hearing aid, Drew responds: "It's my special ear and it helps me hear."

#### SCREENING

Stories like these illustrate just how critical vision and hearing screening is to those we help.

During the 2008-09 screening year, SHA screened 12,775 children in the 11-county metro area. Of these, 9,002 were preschool-age children (Head Start, preschools and daycare centers), 3,593 were school-age children, and 180 were infants/toddlers screened with our newborn hearing screening equipment. Here are some interesting

facts:

- One in three infants screened were referred for further medical evaluations for hearing issues.
- 2,160 preschoolers were referred for further medical attention for vision and hearing issues — three fewer children than last year, when we had the highest overall referral rate in more than 10 years.
- 970 school-age children were referred for further medical atten-

tion due to vision and/or hearing issues. SHA screened more children at schools we hadn't screened before.

- 11,114 (87 percent) children screened live in low-income households — the second year of record high numbers in our program of children living at or below poverty level.

- 1,315 vision vouchers for free eye exams and eyeglasses were issued to uninsured children living at or below poverty level. This is a 25 percent increase over vouchers issued in 2008 — a testament to how the economy is affecting the needs in the community and our program.

In addition to children, SHA provided health screenings and educational materials to thousands of adults at corporate and community health fairs throughout Minnesota. Some of the locations we screened included Arizant Healthcare, cities of Eden Prairie and Roseville, Dakota Electric, Folwell Neighborhood Association, Green Tree, Jewish Family & Children's Services, Osseo Area Schools, Parents in Community Action, Public Housing Agency of St. Paul, Roseville Area Seniors, Smiths Medical and TCF. Most notable was the increase of adults who were "at risk" for vision health issues — many of whom had several years between vision exams, high blood pressure, and/or a family history of glaucoma.

#### EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

- Since 1998, the Sight & Hearing Association has partnered with the University of Minnesota to study the noise levels of toys in

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## SHA begins development of hearing aid program

Approximately 360,000 Minnesotans — young and old — have a hearing loss significant enough to warrant hearing aids. Hearing aids cost anywhere from \$1,000 to \$6,000 — and like a vehicle, price depends on the model you choose. Even though hearing loss is considered a disability, most health insurance companies don't pay for hearing aids.

Last year, the Sight & Hearing Association decided to do something about that by developing a new program called the Hearing Aid Bank of Minnesota.

The goal of the program is to ensure no one in Minnesota is denied the ability to hear because of financial limitations. The Hearing Aid Bank is the brainchild of SHA board member Dr. John Coverstone, an audiologist and owner of Innsbruck Hearing & Balance Center in New Brighton who also serves as the audiologist at the Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf in Faribault. Dr. Coverstone ran a similar program in Oregon in the mid-90s.

SHA will collaborate with audiologists, the Minnesota Academy of Audiology, service clubs, and county offices across the state to identify, diagnose, and offer assistance to individuals who need hearing help. In addition, several hearing instrument manufacturers — including GN Resound and Phonak — have expressed support of the program through donations of new hearing aids.

Judy Kunz of Woodbury is the first person to receive hearing aids through the Hearing Aid Bank. Now in her 60s, Kunz started noticing her hearing loss about 18 years ago. It is a disability all too familiar in her family.

Kunz grew up in a home where both her parents



*Judy Kunz received free testing, consultation and hearing aids, thanks to SHA's new Hearing Aid Bank.*

were Deaf. Her family was active in the Deaf community — starting a church for the Deaf, participating in a Deaf club and socializing with other Deaf families. Being immersed in that culture, she says, made her much more sensitive and aware of other people's needs and led her to choose a nursing career.

"I think because of what I was exposed to at such a young age gave me much more compassion for my patients," she said.

Kunz was a rehab nurse for several years at Bethesda /HealthEast until they closed the unit in 2007. She took a job as a hospice nurse at St. Joseph's Hospital and immediately knew that her hearing was a problem. During training, she says, she missed 90 percent of the information because she couldn't hear.

"It made me so anxious," Kunz said, "I ended up quitting before I got fired."

Kunz knew she needed help, but she didn't have the money for hearing aids. That's when she met Barb Painter, program developer for Sight & Hearing Association.

"Barb is my yoga instructor, and over time she noticed I was having trouble," she said. "I had no idea what she was saying and I would just watch

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We are extremely grateful to the following individuals, businesses, foundations and associations who gave during the past year, from Oct. 1, 2008, to Sept. 30, 2009.

*All steps were taken to ensure accuracy of this list. We apologize for any inadvertent errors or omissions.*

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Virgil Adkins Trust  
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Gifts were received by SHA in memory or in honor of the following individuals.

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Irene Cornish  
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 Vi, My Sister  
 Doris Danielson

#### IN HONOR OF:

Gail Amundson, Dear Friend  
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 Marissa Braymen, Dear Godchild  
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 Ryan Dupree  
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 Terry and Ken Graner, Dear Friends  
 Kathy Ohmann

Whitney Horton  
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 Mianna Ingold's 18th Birthday  
 Alice Meppen,  
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 Karen Lloyd and John Schnibben, Dear Friends  
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Bonnie Ohmann, Dear Sister-in-law  
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 Darrell Ohmann, My Loved One  
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 Peter Poullada  
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 Maureen Reed, Dear Friend  
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 Erinn Riley's Academic Achievement  
 Alvina and Bill, Mom and Dad  
 Jeff Sweitzer  
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 Jeff Sweitzer

Sue Veys  
 Elaine Canton  
 Doug Webb  
 Kathy Webb

Mary Ann Webber  
 Fred Webber

#### SPECIAL THANKS

SHA thanks the following for their gifts in-kind:

- Karen Arnold
- John A. Coverstone, AuD
- GN Resound
- Innsbruck Hearing & Balance Center, New Brighton
- Jeff Gerow-Ellis, Jeff the Computer Guy & Assoc
- Phonak
- TwinVision Studios

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*Dear Friends of Sight & Hearing Association,*

The word for the year was challenging. No matter what newspaper, blog or twitter you happened upon, there it would be! All predictions were pointing to 2009 being a challenging year. We were asked, are you up for the challenge? What challenges do you face? How are you going to meet the challenge? We were warned: If you thought 2008 was challenging wait until 2009. Sight & Hearing Association wasn't going into battle. We're a transparent nonprofit organization, so our integrity wasn't being challenged. Just what was the challenge? I have had the privilege to lead this incredible nonprofit organization for 10 years and there isn't a day we don't see an opportunity – some would say that is challenge in disguise. Perhaps, but we're a tenacious group of people. We don't give up. We can't because there are too many people who need and depend on us. And for those who don't realize they need us, we remind them. We don't give up asking if we can become part of a school's programming. If a school says "no", we look for different ways to ask – to some a challenge, to us a potential opportunity. It can take years for a daycare to agree to our vision and hearing screening services, but what a difference we make when we get in the door. We see the opportunity among a group of 100 preschoolers; we know that over 20 kids will be entering kindergarten seeing and hearing better because our staff was there to catch a vision or hearing issue early. Many schools have limited health staff to care for their kids, so if we can jump in and screen students their academic opportunities are heightened. We realize our challenges are nothing like the challenges these children face each day – our opportunity to screen them is their opportunity to succeed in school and beyond. In 2009, our momentum was strong and will continue in 2010. Thank you for supporting us and believing in us during these challenging times! Best of health in 2010!

*Kathy Webb, executive director*

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an effort to help prevent hearing loss in children. Each November, we release our annual Noisy Toys List to the media and the public.

- For the past 14 years, SHA has partnered with Minnesota audiologists to offer free hearing screenings for International Noise Awareness Day in April. Last year, more than 600 people had their hearing checked on this day.

- SHA receives hundreds of requests for information and products each year. SHA offers educational fact sheets on topics such as glaucoma, macular degeneration, women's eye health, tinnitus and noise-induced hearing loss, and products such as our popular Noise Thermometer™, Ear Infection Tracking Card, and Know Noise® hearing conservation curriculum. In addition, our Web site at [www.sightandhearing.org](http://www.sightandhearing.org) continues to generate requests for information from people all over the world. According to our statistical log, more than three million people have visited our site. □

STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION  
(September 30, 2009)

STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES  
(For the Year Ended September 30, 2009)

<u>ASSETS</u>			
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash	\$ 43,169		
Accounts and pledges receivable	1,316		
Investments	52,176		
Prepaid expenses	2,113		
Inventory	<u>4,233</u>		
Total current assets	<u>103,007</u>		
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT			
Furniture, fixtures and equipment	106,172		
Accumulated depreciation	<u>(76,560)</u>		
Net property and equipment	<u>29,612</u>		
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>\$132,619</u>		
<u>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</u>			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Accounts payable	\$ 947		
Accrued expenses	<u>4,747</u>		
Total current liabilities	<u>5,694</u>		
NET ASSETS			
Unrestricted			
Designated for property and equipment	29,612		
Other unrestricted	<u>97,313</u>		
Total unrestricted net assets	<u>126,925</u>		
Total net assets	<u>126,925</u>		
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	<u>\$132,619</u>		
		UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS	
		Support	
		Contributions	\$ 251,806
		Planned gifts	5,000
		Indirect public support	2,831
		Books, brochures and pamphlets	3,932
		Other program service fees	63,179
		Investment income	34
		Gifts in kind	3,418
		Other revenue	<u>645</u>
		TOTAL UNRESTRICTED SUPPORT	<u>330,845</u>
		Expenses	
		Program services	
		Community health services	221,790
		Professional education and research	5,232
		Public health information	29,064
		Supporting services	
		Fundraising	27,720
		Management and general	<u>9,612</u>
		TOTAL EXPENSES	<u>293,418</u>
		Change in unrestricted net assets	<u>37,427</u>
		Change in net assets	37,427
		Net Assets at beginning of year	<u>89,498</u>
		Net Assets at end of year	\$ <u>126,925</u>

Notes are an integral part of these financial statements. For a complete, audited financial statement, contact Sight & Hearing Association at 651-645-2546, ext. 11 or visit GuideStar's Web site at [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org).



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#### HEARING AID BANK CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

everyone else to see what they were doing. She told me there was someone who could help me.”

Kunz met the qualifications for the Hearing Aid Bank, where she was introduced to Dr. Coverstone. He volunteered his service to test, counsel and fit Kunz, who received a pair of digital hearing aids donated by GN Resound.

“It truly is a blessing,” she grins. “I’m very grateful to have this chance to get hearing aids, and John was so patient with me. It has made such a big difference for me. I think you really become unaware of how much you’re missing.”

Kunz admits it took her awhile to find another job, mainly because she was nervous about how her hearing loss affected her ability to communicate. Now, she works as a nurse in a transitional care unit at a nursing home, doing massage and healing touch on the side.

From a young age, Kunz remembers her mom (who worked for the Minnesota Society for the Blind) repeating a phrase made famous by Helen Keller: “Vision loss isolates you from things; hearing loss isolates you from people.”

“It’s so true,” she said. “It makes such a difference with my interactions with people,” said Kunz. “I don’t think I would have been able to continue in the work world without them.” □



*Judy meets with audiologist Dr. John Coverstone for her consultation and fitting.*

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*“It truly is a blessing. I’m very grateful to have this chance to get hearing aids, and John was so patient with me. It has made such a big difference for me. I think you really become unaware of how much you’re missing.”*

**–Judy Kunz**

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SHA hopes to raise enough funds in 2010 to help over 100 people with hearing loss.