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Special programs offer alternatives for parents, teachers of deaf children

By DEBBIE PARSONS
Battalion Staff
Try sitting in a room full of deaf people talking in sign language sometime and you may get an idea of what it is like for them to live in this world. There would probably be a definite communications gap. They wouldn't hear you and you wouldn't understand them.

Parents of deaf children make several decisions on how they are going to teach their children to prevent such a communications gap. The class for the deaf at Sul Ross Elementary School and the homebound program are options for parents offered by the Bryan Independent School District. Another option is the Texas State School for the Deaf in Austin.

Sarah Pack, an inquisitive 2½-year-old, was left severely deaf after she caught spinal meningitis at 20 months of age.

Sarah has two hearing aids, sometimes mistaken in stores for cigarettes or transistor radios, which she carries in her vest pockets.

After having tests run to make sure the cause of her hearing loss wasn't psychological, Frank and Robbie Pack decided how to teach their daughter.

There are three methods for teaching the deaf: the total communication method, the oral method and the aural method.

The total communication method uses sign language, hearing aids, lip reading and whatever residual hearing the child has.

The oral method uses lip reading and residual hearing. The aural method works only with residual hearing.

The Packs chose the total communication method. "We feel that Sarah should take advantage of any form of communication open to her," Frank Pack said.

The Packs have taken courses and learned as much as possible to teach Sarah themselves.

They took a one-week course last summer at the Callier Center for Communication Disorders in Dallas. The center counsels parents on techniques for working with deaf children, and helps them deal with their emotions. The center also offers audiologic testing and information on new research activities.

The Packs also learned the basics of auditory teaching from Carolyn Brown in Conroe.

Some basics include teaching Sarah to listen, to watch lips, to make everyday experiences into a lesson and to take sound walks.

Sound walks teach a child to understand what it is that makes a specific sound which is "half the battle," Robbie Pack said.

Sarah is able to hear pure tones, which are high pitches and vowel sounds, through her hearing aid.

"We wanted Sarah to get used to her hearing aid and lip reading before teaching her sign language so she would get used to being deaf," Frank Pack said.

The Packs including their 4-year-old son, Chris, are learning sign language.

"Chris has fun learning sign language and makes games out of it," Robbie Pack said. "He's super in helping other people understand Sarah. He's her interpreter."

The Packs take pictures of things they do, such as taking trips to the zoo, to show Sarah what they are teaching her.

"The picture album is very useful for explaining the past tense," Robbie Pack said. "Past and future tenses are difficult for the deaf to understand and having pictures to explain helps a great deal."

Sarah's other senses have become stronger. For example, she is very perceptive about moods and can tell when someone is not comfortable around her.

"You have to be more honest with yourself and with Sarah," Robbie Pack said.

Melody Hall, from the homebound program, teaches Sarah for one hour three days a week.

Because Sarah was 20 months old when she lost her hearing, she already knew a lot of words. So she is basically relearning how to express herself, Hall said.

It is very common that a child who is lacking in one skill will compensate for it in another, she said.

Sarah is at about a four-year level in motor skills, so she basically works with verbal and perceptual skills, Hall said.

Sarah and Hall have recently been working on learning about animals. They took a field trip to see barnyard animals so the concepts she learns are based on reality.

Teaching deaf children isn't easy, Hall said. The teacher always has to think about what he is saying.

"With regular kids you can be talking while thinking about something else, but with a deaf child you have to really concentrate on what you are teaching, or he will be confused," she said.

Hall uses the total communication method to teach Sarah. She gives the Packs ideas on how to teach Sarah.

Next year Sarah will probably go part time to a class for the deaf.

"It is important for Sarah to be around other deaf children for her self-concept," Hall said. "She needs to know that she's not weird; that she's not the only deaf child."

It will depend on Sarah when she will be ready to attend full time.

It is easy to try to be "super parents" by pushing Sarah to learn all the time, the Packs said.

"I want Sarah to be a normal little child and play with her toys or in

her sandbox, just like any other child her age," Robbie Pack said.

When Sarah is ready, she will go to the class for the deaf taught by Jayne Davenport.

There are three full-time and two part-time students in the class.

Their ages range from 5 to 12 years. Each student has a specific curriculum depending on his hearing loss and capabilities.

Each curriculum is based on language development. Quarterly goals are made for each student and are later evaluated.

For example, Chris, a 5-year-old deaf and blind boy, recently achieved his quarterly goal by walking with correct balance.

Davenport and her teacher aide, Nancy Harris, teach in two basic areas: developmental and content.

Developmental works with the child's self-concept and content teaches language, math, English, social studies, science and reading.

There are very few textbooks for the deaf, so they make their own.

"Everything has to be visual since a major concept to get across is that words stand for things," Davenport said.

Harris is an interpreter for Robin, a 12-year-old who attends fifth grade classes at Lamar School for gym, lunch and social studies.

"Other children look at Robin differently, but they try to help her by learning signs to communicate with

her," Harris said. "Her teachers learn signs that are necessary to learn sign language."

Davenport uses a phonetic while teaching the children. It is a microphone that picks up her hearing aids the students wear at a certain frequency to block static background noises.

Two students attend Davenport's class during semester breaks at the Texas State School for the Deaf in Austin.

Donna and Herbert Richards recently decided to enroll their 6-year-old daughter, Holly, in state school.

Holly has attended the deaf school at Sul Ross since she was 15 months old. The Richards feel she will more by being with children her own age with similar hearing losses.

"There is only one teacher in the class with an age range 3-12 years, with various hearing losses," Donna Richards said. "Holly was caught in the middle wasn't learning as much as we can."

Nancy Harris's 9-year-old daughter attends the school in Austin goes there mainly to be with deaf students his age, Harris said.

"Right now it is hard to just the state or special program department creating another class for the deaf with so few students in class as it is," Davenport said. "I hope that eventually we will have more than one class."

Children to get math, reading aid

By REGINA MOEHLMAN
Battalion Reporter

Many Bryan elementary children who are behind in math or reading can get some special help this summer and have fun, too.

For the 15th year, Bryan Independent School District is offering summer school at Lamar Elementary to second through sixth graders who are below grade level in reading or math.

Summer school runs from June 18 to July 27 and a child may attend any of three sections: 8-10 a.m., 10 a.m. to noon or 1-3 p.m.

In addition to spending time in the classroom, students will work with computers to develop reading and math skills. They will also participate in field trips, math contests and reading clubs, and will get a chance to cook snacks in the school cafeteria.

Sammie Hollis, director of remedial programs for BISD, estimates

that 900 children will be in the federally-funded program.

To participate in the program, children must be recommended by a teacher or parent.

Recommendations are based on test given at the end of each year. Though parents may not know that their child is in the program, it is not intended to do the children beyond their grade-level, Hollis said.

Parents of eligible children receive letters and registration forms in the mail.

Free meals will not be provided during summer school as during the regular school year. Free bus transportation will be available.

Hollis said the program has been a success, as many students advanced in their reading and math levels and been promoted out of the program. She said many teachers have seen improvements in children returning to their classrooms.

INTERNATIONAL WEEK '79

APRIL 1st-6th

Sunday, April 1
MOVIE: 'STAVINSKY'
time: 4:00 p.m.
place: rudder theatre
admission: 50c

Monday, April 2
CULTURAL DISPLAY
time: 9:00-5:00 pm
place: 1st floor msc

Tuesday, April 3
MOVIE: 'STATE OF SIEGE'
time: 8:00 pm
place: msc 201
admission: 50c

Wednesday, April 4
'ENERGY, OPEC & the U.S.'
SPEAKER: SHEIKH

ABDULLAH TARIKI
(former Saudi Arabia representative to OPEC)
time: 8:00 pm
place: msc 206

Thursday, April 5
FOOD FAIR
time: 6:30-8:00 pm
place: msc 228
By Invitation Only

TALENT SHOW
time: 8:00-10:00 pm
place: msc 201

Friday, April 6
DANCING PARTY
time: 8:00 pm-1:00 am
place: quonset hut b

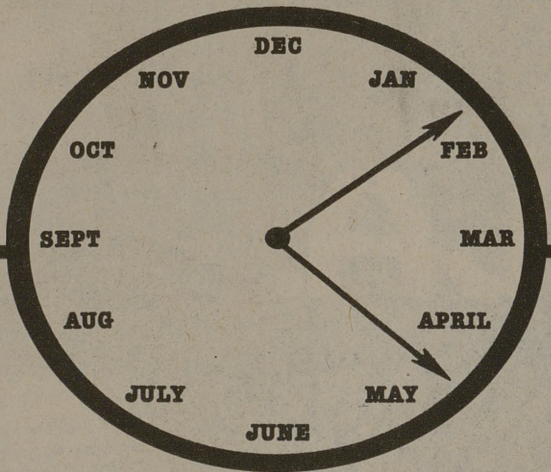


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A new feature of the law this year permits workers to exercise their option to create an IRA for 1978 income any time before they file their 1978 income tax return (normally prior to April 15, 1979). So you still have time to take advantage of this tax savings.

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RETIREMENT ACCOUNT GROWTH TABLE

BALANCE AT END OF:	\$25	\$50	\$100	\$185
1st Year	\$ 311.29	\$ 622.58	\$ 1,245.16	\$ 1,556.43
2nd Year	648.50	1,297.00	2,594.00	3,242.50
3rd Year	1,013.80	2,027.60	4,055.20	5,068.99
4th Year	1,409.52	2,819.04	5,638.08	7,047.60
5th Year	1,838.20	3,676.40	7,352.80	9,191.01
6th Year	2,302.59	4,605.18	9,210.36	11,512.93
7th Year	2,805.65	5,611.30	11,222.80	14,028.24
8th Year	3,350.61	6,701.22	13,402.44	16,753.05
9th Year	3,940.68	7,881.92	15,763.24	19,704.79
10th Year	4,580.48	9,160.96	18,321.92	22,902.38
15th Year	8,671.47	17,342.94	34,685.88	43,357.36
20th Year	14,774.51	29,549.02	59,098.04	73,872.57
25th Year	23,879.19	47,758.38	95,516.74	119,395.93
30th Year	37,461.76	74,923.52	149,847.04	187,308.80
35th Year	57,724.58	115,449.16	230,898.32	288,622.91
40th Year	\$87,963.16	\$175,906.32	\$351,812.63	\$439,765.79

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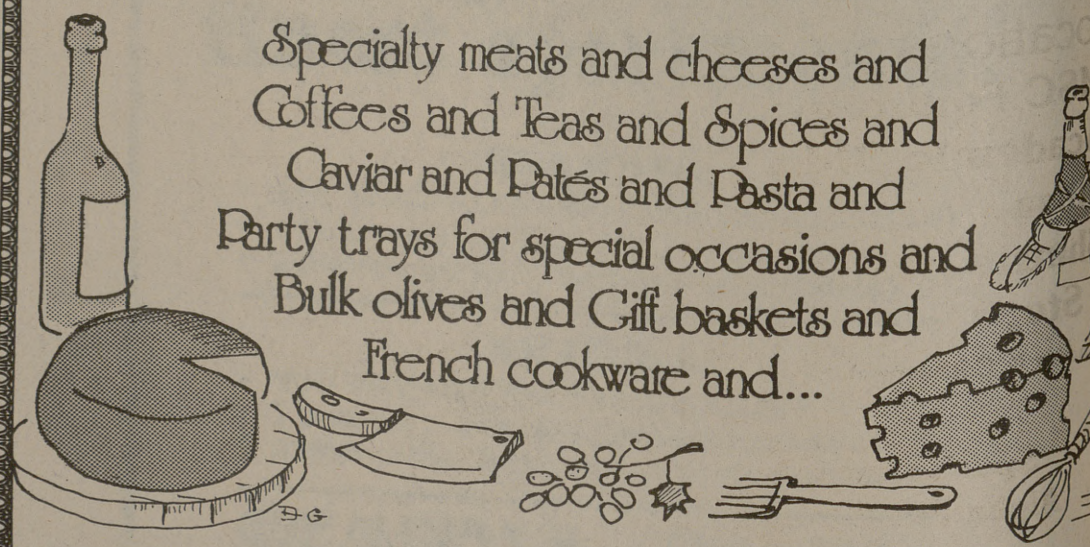
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