

Hearing Screenings at Schools!

HEAR Wisconsin is partnering with a network of schools to provide hearing screenings for students. Read more on page 3.

Save the date for Corks & Kegs 2020!

Eat, Drink and Give at HEAR Wisconsin's annual fundraiser at the stunning Grain Exchange on September 24th. See back page for details.

Play is Children's Work!

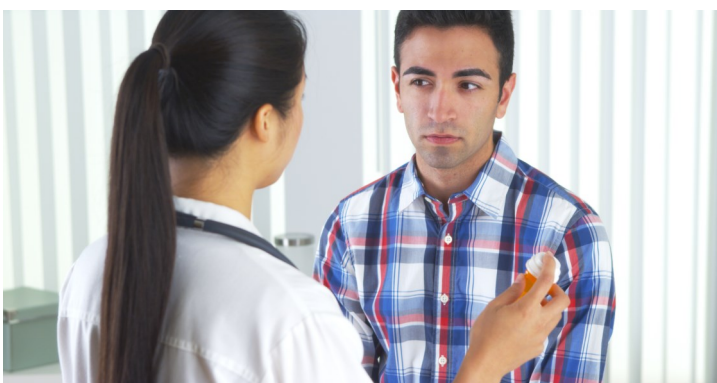
Thanks to generous funders, HEAR Wisconsin is providing TeleIntervention and Language Learning Play Kits to client families. Read more on page 5.

The Conduit

HEAR Wisconsin's newsletter about clients, donors, and events
In-print and online



Meeting a Community Need Now Offering Spanish Interpreting!



Who enjoys being sick and seeing a doctor? Nobody.

Now imagine not being able to explain your symptoms, ask a question or understand the doctor?

This can be the unfortunate reality for Spanish-speaking individuals with limited English language proficiency. In response to this, HEAR Wisconsin has partnered with Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) to provide a solution.

In January, Commlink, HEAR Wisconsin's professional interpreting division, launched a new Spanish interpreting service with six part-time, highly trained Spanish interpreters.

"We know there is a great need in our community for accurate interpreting," said Jim Hagen, Director of Interpreting Services. "With no legal licensing requirements to oversee Spanish interpreting, medical terminology and accuracy can be lost."

"Too often we see people bring a family member such as a child to a medical or legal appointment to interpret," Hagen said. "Sometimes information must be exchanged that is neither appropriate, nor comprehensible. Therefore, providing a trained professional through Commlink is the better option." Commlink has been Southeastern Wisconsin's resource for professional
(Spanish—continue next page)

Volunteers Make Special Masks Creating Solutions During COVID-19

Maintaining social distance, wearing face masks, and staying in touch via online meetings have become the new norms in the COVID-19 era, and have made life challenging for many. But for people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, they bring up many new and/or increased challenges.

The most notable challenge is the face mask. For people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, they may rely on reading lips and facial expressions, so communication is impossible with these face-obscuring masks. HEAR Wisconsin staff, clients, and board members who rely on lip reading have run into this issue during essential runs to the grocery stores, drive-through restaurants, and other places currently open.

Although we heard stories of store employees or others kindly willing to pull down their masks so their lips could be read, we have also heard stories of people with hearing loss being "shrugged off" after informing someone they need to read lips to understand.

One of HEAR Wisconsin's employees, Lizabeth Baish, mentioned the mask issue to her neighbor, Vicki Spiering, who had been making masks for weeks. She asked one small request of her neighbor, "can you make a see-through mask for me?" Vicki enthusiastically stepped up to help. The see-through masks are made of cotton fabric with a clear vinyl "window" insert. It can take Vicki approximately 30 minutes to make one mask. Although Vicki is continuing to make these masks, she sought help from a local quilting guild and now several quilters are helping to make more of them. HEAR Wisconsin is sharing these
(Masks—continue on page 4)



A see-through mask allows a person who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing to read lips.

Streamline with Smart Assistive Technology Devices

Can't hear your phone? Trouble hearing the TV? Check out HEAR Wisconsin's online store at hearwi.org/our-store to browse the wide variety of equipment including iPads, amplified phones, Pocketalkers and more!

Ask about the Telecommunication Equipment Purchase Program (TEPP) program! It provides vouchers for Wisconsin residents to purchase equipment needed to use basic phone services at low or no cost.

Funding is available for anyone Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or having a speech, mobility or motion disability.

For appointments with one of our technology consultants, call 414-604-2200 or if using a video phone, call 414-395-2117. You may also send inquiries to info@hearwi.org.

Product Spotlight:

The Medallion Series products offer broad coverage without interference from other systems—making them ideal for use in apartments, condominiums, hotels and dormitories as well as homes.

Wireless Doorbell

The Wireless Doorbell is for doors that do not already have a doorbell system. It easily mounts outside any door. When a visitor presses the button, a signal is sent to the receiver which will alert you by flashing light or vibration.



Mini Receiver

The Mini Receiver alerts to any Medallion Series transmitter with LED icons and a bright flashing strobe.



MEETING A COMMUNITY NEED

(Spanish—continued from page 1)

American Sign Language interpreters for 20 years. Last year, Commlink's interpreters provided services to more than 200 local businesses. As a mission-based organization, the addition of Spanish speaking interpreters to the HEAR Wisconsin staff made sense. Jill Van Calster, President and CEO, says "Our team strives to be responsive to the needs of Spanish-speaking clients and their families being served in HEAR Wisconsin's multiple programs."

Far-Reaching Benefits

MATC offers a program which covers Bilingual Medical Terminology, Ethics and Standards for Medical Interpreters, Spanish Regionalisms and English Variants, Cultural Awareness, and more. Learning the medical and business terminology is critical, but students also graduate knowing about the linguistic differences between regions. "As you can imagine, just like in the English language, there are nuances," Hagen said. "MATC does a nice job addressing all the potential possibilities and ensures students learn how to navigate them."

All of the Spanish interpreters hired by HEAR Wisconsin graduated from this program. Hagen said, "All our interpreters have strong ethics, along with exceptional skills. Each one has come highly recommended from MATC."

Top Quality Interpreters for Competitive Not-for-Profit Rates

Anyone looking for a Spanish interpreter will quickly discover another important Commlink difference.

The interpreting services' industry standard fee rates start with a two-hour minimum, plus travel. In alignment with HEAR Wisconsin's nonprofit mission, Commlink strives to minimize costs to companies and individuals so that more people have access to interpreting services. Hagen says "Commlink only charges a one-hour minimum, plus travel. HEAR Wisconsin is now poised to serve even more people who turn to us for services. ■

commlink
Connecting People Through Communication

Ways to Request for an Interpreter Today!



Call: 414-604-7231



Fillable Form Request:
www.commlinkasl.com/schedule-interpreter



Email: info@commlinkasl.com

Sound Check

HEAR Wisconsin Audiologist Visits Elementary Schools for Hearing Screenings

If a child can't hear, learning can often become more challenging. It doesn't take long for a young one to get left behind academically, socially and even emotionally.

Hearing Screenings for Schools

Gina Cifaldi, Director of Operations at Seton Catholic Schools, was concerned that some of her first, second and third grade students were struggling. She contacted HEAR Wisconsin to ask about possible hearing screenings.

"Communication is the key to learning and development. We acted quickly to partner with Seton to make sure their students remain on track," said Jill Van Calster, President and CEO. Seton Catholic Schools is a network of eleven schools, all part of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.



Dr. Bayer offers free hearing screenings throughout the year. Photo taken during Fall Fest in 2019.

In January, Dr. Kristine Bayer, HEAR Wisconsin's Audiologist, began conducting monthly hearing screenings at the schools, using a portable audiometer. Between January and March, she screened nearly 75 elementary students, and of those, three children failed the test. Parents were alerted, and further testing was recommended.

Healthy Hearing for Full Potential

Reaching children in school or sooner matters greatly. At birth and each moment after, a child is learning. Early detection of hearing loss is crucial. Without early detection and treatment, developmental delays can dramatically affect a child's future. "We will continue to seek community partnerships to offer hearing screenings for little ones," Van Calster said. "HEAR Wisconsin's mission is about helping people reach their full potential. We are dedicated to ensuring this happens." ■

SAVE THE DATE!

3rd Annual Fall Fest at HEAR Wisconsin

Saturday, October 10th from 11-2 pm

This community event will include free hearing screenings, food, face painting, bouncy house and a petting zoo! Register for the event at hearwi.org/events. The 50/50 Raffle begins now with the drawing to be held at the event.

50/50 RAFFLE!

**Raffle Drawing
Saturday, October 10**

**at HEAR Wisconsin
10243 W National Ave**



(Masks—continued from page 1)

masks with staff, clients, and anyone else who needs them. HEAR Wisconsin's own audiologist, Dr. Kristine Bayer, was thrilled when she received the mask. She stated it will not only help to keep her and her clients safe, but also ease the anxiety clients may have during appointments.

Community Requests

After posting on social media and interviews with TMJ4 Milwaukee News Station, Fox6 News, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, and 620WTMJ Radio Station, requests poured in from the community and beyond, as far away as California, asking for the see-through masks.

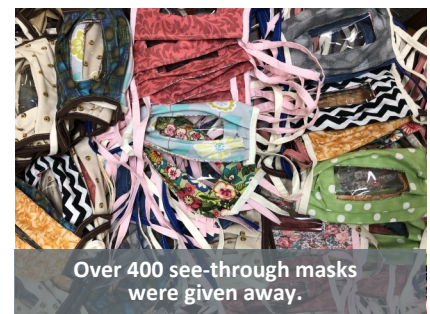
As of mid-May, we had over 165 requests for 1,049 masks for personal and professional uses. To date, over 400 masks were made by volunteers, including The Masked Sewists of SE Wisconsin, and given away to individuals, families and organizations, like MyChoice Family Care, Rogers Memorial Hospital, and the City of Milwaukee Fire Department. HEAR Wisconsin has purchased materials for staff and volunteers to make 300 more masks. HEAR Wisconsin is still accepting requests at hearwi.org, and masks will be distributed to the community based on need and a first-come first served basis. However, in order to continue doing so, HEAR Wisconsin is seeking volunteers to sew the masks and donations for fabric. The following testimonials show the need people have for these see-through masks:

- *Three of us are deaf and my daughter is hearing. We communicate a lot while we go out in public such as grocery food stores. Andrea, Scottsville, NY*
- *Thank you for your generosity in donating 24 see-through masks to the men and women of our department for use in communication with hard-of-hearing patients during this pandemic. Mark Rohlfing, Chief, City of Milwaukee Fire Department*
- *I have social anxiety, and smiling/receiving smiles and expression helps me from having anxiety attacks. A regular mask creates a major emotional reaction. Having a clear mask will help me feel less trapped so more communicating through expression can occur. Karen, Jefferson, OH*
- *I picked up the mask today and I was blown away by how amazing it was.... The quality- the cuteness- all of it. As I mentioned, I am a special education teacher that works with students who have/had hearing and communication needs. I am always looking at ways for all of my students to be included and what your organization has done for people through the making and distributing of these masks is really inspiring. Thank you so much for giving one to me. Nikki, Greendale, WI*

While a see-through mask isn't a perfect solution (not all can read lips and/or their first language is American Sign Language), but it's a step in the right direction to break down barriers, and it is wonderful to see people's smiles again. ■



Vicki Spiering volunteered to make these masks for HEAR Wisconsin.



Over 400 see-through masks were given away.



Dr. Bayer, wearing her see-through mask, is able to talk to patients who may need to read lips.

Special Appeal and How You Can Help



None of us could have predicted where we are now. Several weeks ago, we did not know that masks would become an essential part of our daily life as a safety measure, that we would rely on technology so heavily for TeleIntervention and telehealth sessions, and that this would lead to a heightened concern for our operational expenses in the next few months (due to cancelled/postponed appointments, no group meetings, and more). The extra expenses and loss of sustainability are not ones we could have budgeted for in 2020. Yet, HEAR Wisconsin will continue to serve everyone regardless of their ability to pay – we are not turning anyone away.

If you are financially able to, a gift may be made with the enclosed donation envelope or online at hearwi.org. Thank you for supporting our mission!

“Let’s Do Show and Tell!”

TeleGroup for Toddler Communication Groups

The team has launched an exciting new adventure for our Toddler Communication Group (TCG) families! Due to the suspension of in-person programming, we are offering current TCG families the opportunity to join the Tele-Toddler Communication Group (TeleGroup).

TeleGroup follows the same structure as our in-person TCG with:

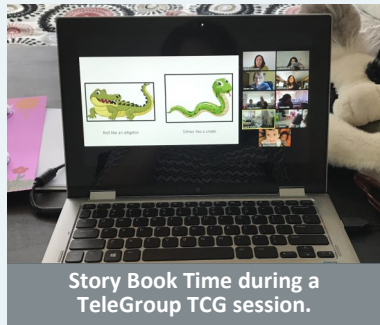
- Opening
- Show and Tell
- Book/Movement Activity
- Music
- Closing

A different theme and fun activities are planned for each week. Prior to a session, parents receive a

schedule, art materials and may be asked to gather items easily found within a home. Parent participation is required and crucial for a positive, engaging learning experience especially using this service delivery method. We know young children do not effectively learn by watching a screen but rather by actively communicating and playing with caring adults. Beforehand and during the live TeleGroup, HEAR Wisconsin therapists coach and guide parents to actively participate, and engage their toddler in-person. By connecting online, toddlers and parents have the opportunity for exposure to activities focused on increasing communication, language, vocabulary, music and fun!

Together, HEAR Wisconsin therapists and parents/caregivers are partnering to facilitate play and continue their children’s learning!

The TeleGroup program is offered twice a week to the TCG families as it’s critical that these children stay on track with their language development. ■



Story Book Time during a TeleGroup TCG session.



Show and Tell Activity during a recent TeleGroup TCG session.

“Mooooo! Boom-Boom! S-s-s-s-s!”

Language Learning Play Kits for Therapy Sessions



The kits are used with young children to encourage language development during online therapy sessions.

HEAR Wisconsin’s therapists use fun sounds and toys to teach language to the little ones with hearing differences.

Play is children’s work

Children learn language most easily when having fun with the loving adults in their world. A big challenge is not all families have the toys and books that are especially suited for helping young children with hearing differences learn language. HEAR Wisconsin therapists recommend play activities with specific toys and books to help individual children learn to communicate and develop thinking, early literacy and language skills.

Grants for ConnectHEAR Program and Kits

HEAR Wisconsin is very grateful to the *Obkorkotter Foundation* for its grant to support HEAR Wisconsin’s ConnectHEAR Program, a 13 year-old nationally-recognized program that pioneered TeleIntervention. Families can receive TeleIntervention services no matter where they live by using a laptop or tablet and internet access (normally used for families living in rural areas with no access to specialized speech pathologists). Thanks also goes to *Variety, The Children’s Charity of Wisconsin*, for a grant to purchase 50 sets of toys and books to be given to families for use in therapy sessions. This was a timely gift! Now, during online sessions, the therapists and families have the same set of toys, so the therapists can demonstrate how to use the toys and the parents can practice effective strategies to engage and help their children learn and grow.

Amazon Wish List for Language Learning Play Kits

Overall, 61 families are enrolled, so these kits are going fast! If you wish to support by purchasing items for the kits to give to families, go to hearwi.org/our-mission to view and purchase the toys on HEAR Wisconsin’s Amazon wish list. ■

**Look who
has joined the
HEAR Wisconsin
team!**



Caty Bulgrin
Director of Operations

Caty is responsible for operations, communications and marketing, fund development, supervising the Community Access for the Deaf Program, website design/development, and financial oversight.



Karen Lien
Speech-Language Pathologist

Karen provides speech therapy services for young children. Before joining HEAR Wisconsin, she specialized in pediatric feeding difficulties. Her experience has already helped one mom who was faced with her baby's feeding difficulties.



Mark Stein
Director of Strategic Initiatives

Mark develops, oversees and helps implement programs and projects that support HEAR Wisconsin's vision, mission and short- and long-term goals. He also supports company-wide IT infrastructure and facilities management.



Annie Szymanski
Audiology Administrator

Annie handles all of the audiology patient care coordination including scheduling and insurance billing for the Audiology Department.

COMMUNITY ACCESS FOR THE DEAF PROGRAM UPDATE

Community Access

Offers educational day programs and fun social activities

This program addresses the special needs of adults with developmental disabilities who are also Deaf. The Program Coordinator, Ruth Stuhr, fluent in American Sign Language, works with 17 clients in areas of daily living skills, literacy, communication skills and job coaching. The program, in existence for 14 years, is the only one in the state that specifically works with this population. ■



Top photo: In February, several clients designed their own t-shirts as part of a Valentine's day activity.

Left photo: In November, Chief Dan gave a tour of the Greenfield Fire Department Station 92 and educated the group on what to do if there is a fire in their home. One of the firemen knows sign language and was able to sign with them.

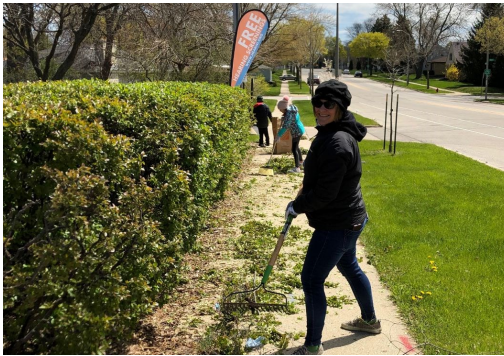
Right photo: A monthly bowling league was started so the group has a place to socialize and have fun bowling!



Spring Cleanup Day!

No Job Too Big or Small, We Do It All!

Staff tackled spring cleaning of the facility's property on May 8th. In the past, we had relied on volunteers and/or paid landscaping companies to help clean and spruce up the place every spring. With no volunteers due to the "Safer at Home" order and to keep costs down, fourteen staff took a few hours out of their work day to rake up dead leaves, pull weeds, trim bushes and more. At the end, we filled up three vehicles with 30 bags of debris!



WAYS TO SUPPORT HEAR WISCONSIN

Want to show your support for HEAR Wisconsin in a tangible way? Here's how!

Individual Giving

Donate online, by mail or over the phone

Workplace Giving / Matching Program

Does your employer have a workplace match giving campaign? Mention HEAR Wisconsin!

Special Event Sponsor

Showcase your business brand! Call 414-604-2200 or email fundraising@hearwi.org

Planned Giving and Endowment Fund

Create your legacy! Name HEAR Wisconsin as a beneficiary in your will, life insurance or IRA account. Call Jill Van Calster at 414-604-7201 or jvancalster@hearwi.org

Volunteer

Assist our staff with administrative, programming and/or special events! Call 414-604-2200 or email volunteers@hearwi.org

THANK YOU!



414-604-2200
info@hearwi.org



NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
MILWAUKEE, WI
PERMIT NO. 0188

CORKS & KEGS

Please note the new date

September 24, 2020, 6 - 9 pm

Come and enjoy great company, a silent auction, wine pull, and delicious Bartolotta-catered food and drinks!

AT THE GRAIN EXCHANGE

225 E Michigan Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

