

THE TRIPOD GRAPEVINE

There are an estimated one million hearing-impaired children in America. Over 90% are born to hearing parents who often feel cut off from normal parenting instincts when their child is diagnosed as deaf.

The TRIPOD GRAPEVINE is a national toll-free hotline established to give parents up-to-date information on how to raise and educate a deaf child. Since the GRAPEVINE began almost two years ago, we have helped families from 45 different states.

The GRAPEVINE provides counseling, referrals to other parents and professionals in the caller's local community, and reading materials. The GRAPEVINE is co-ordinated by Megan Hall, a paid staff person. In Los Angeles, volunteers answer the GRAPEVINE phones and complete an initial inquiry form. A nineteen member Advisory Board made up of professionals and parents across the country is available for phone referrals on a volunteer basis.

The GRAPEVINE is publicized in professional journals and through nationally televised Public Service Announcements. Our latest PSA stars Chevy Chase, Jeff Goldblum, Herb Larson, and JoBeth Williams; and was written and directed by Lawrence Kasdan ("The Big Chill").

For information on parenting a deaf child please call our toll free GRAPEVINE 1-800-352-8888 (V/TDD) or in California 1-800-346-8888 (V/TDD).

TRIPOD

TRIPOD was started by Megan Williams and Michael Shamberg in response to the frustration they experienced in obtaining objective information about raising their deaf son. After making innumerable phone calls, Megan and Michael were put in touch with Carl J. Kirchner, an Associate Professor at California State University, Northridge. Mr. Kirchner, the son of deaf parents, has been a deaf educator for 24 years. Kirchner, Shamberg and Williams founded TRIPOD, along with Frederic Bourke, Jr., a venture capitalist; Herb Larson, a deaf adult and host of "Off Hand," a local talk show for the deaf; and Joe Shapiro, partner in the law firm Donovan Leisure Newton and Irvine. TRIPOD was incorporated as a non-profit tax-exempt charitable organization in September, 1982.

In addition to the GRAPEVINE, TRIPOD has established the first private school combining a Total Communication philosophy with a Montessori curriculum. TRIPOD offers many family support programs including sign language classes, monthly parent and professional meetings, tutoring for deaf children who need additional educational support, a newsletter, and a parent lending library. The TRIPOD school also serves as a teacher training site in conjunction with CSU, Northridge.

This year TRIPOD established a Medical Advisory Board. The members are: Seymour Cohen, MD; Margaret Jones, MD; Ronald Reiter, PhD; Madison Richardson, MD; Jeffrey Wasson, MD; and Simon Wile, MD.

DEAFNESS IN AMERICA

Late in her life, Helen Keller said that looking back she should have worked to improve the life of the deaf. Although blindness removes one from things, Keller observed, deafness removes one from people.

There are 14 million hearing-impaired people in America; one million are children. Over 90% of these children are born to hearing parents who have little, if any knowledge about deaf culture or communicating with a deaf person. Yet these parents are expected to become instant experts on the topic. Because deaf children cannot communicate easily through speech and hearing, the handicap can have a devastating effect on their social, emotional and cognitive growth. However, early identification and intervention can foster communication between the child and his family. TRIPOD is committed to providing parents with up-to-date information so that they can make well informed decisions that are appropriate for their deaf child and their family.

SAMPLE "GRAPEVINE" CALLS

Long Beach, California - Parents are Their Children's Best Advocates.

A Long Beach parent was dissatisfied with the options her local school district offered her deaf child. She met some other parents in the area who were also having problems, though not the same ones. They were referred to TRIPOD, hoping to find a parent advocate. We referred them to an organization that helps parents organize and sent them information on PL 94-142 (Federal Law governing the educating of handicapped children), legal rights of the hearing-impaired, procedures for implementing IEP's (Individualized Educational Plan), etc. As a result, the Long Beach parents educated themselves, formed their own advocacy group, and have become very active in trying to get what they want for their children.

SAMPLE "GRAPEVINE" CALLS (cont'd.)

Indiana - A Child is a Child First and Hearing-Impaired Second.

A mother with 17-month-old twin sons, one of whom is deaf, had been correctly advised that her son should wear his hearing-aids all the time. But the son refused to oblige - not an unusual phenomenon. The mother, her hands full with twin toddlers, was overwhelmed and frustrated. She called several times to talk with someone who understood how difficult the situation was for her.

We gave the mother suggestions on how to encourage her child to wear his hearing-aids, and we referred her to other audiologists and hearing-aid dealers in her area who could confirm that there was no physical reason why the child was rejecting the aids. We mailed her information about deafness and different educational programs.

The hearing aid problem was resolved. And the mother, through four calls to the GRAPEVINE, learned to solve a problem in a way appropriate to her two year old.

Los Angeles, California - Families with Deaf Children share National Problems.

A social worker called in search of day care for a deaf five-year old latchkey child. The boy was alone in an apartment from noon to 6pm each day while his mother worked. He joined TRIPOD's daycare program and eventually became a TRIPOD student.

New York City - Can't See the Forest for the Trees.

A nurse called from 3000 miles away for information about good audiological services in her area. We referred her to a department two floors below in her own hospital.

Texas to Massachusetts - Relocating is Doubly Difficult.

A single mother of two adopted multiply handicapped children was planning to move her family from Texas to Massachusetts. She asked for help in locating services such as schools, respite centers, doctors, dentists, financial support, etc. Several days and many long distance calls later, we had managed to track down reliable referrals who were ready to help her when she arrived.

SAMPLE "GRAPEVINE" CALLS (cont'd.)

Los Angeles, California - Pediatricians Take Heed.

Pediatricians frequently ignore parents' suspicions that their child has a problem hearing. After one of his patients was finally diagnosed as deaf, a Los Angeles pediatrician learned to take parents a little more seriously. When a second mother complained that her child's hearing-aid was too strong, the pediatrician wasted no time in referring the mother to TRIPOD. The mother was right, the audiologist had prescribed the wrong hearing-aid.

Southern California - Referrals to Existing Programs Assure that Services are not Duplicated.

The head of a Special Education program in Southern California called. She had been approached by an advocate representing a family who wanted their child moved to a different educational environment. This was not practical for such a small school district. The caller wanted to know her district's legal position. We referred the caller to The National Center for Law and the Deaf.

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