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Deaf-Blind in Columbus

Helen Keller Deaf-Blind Awareness Week

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Columbus, OH - We acquire language by hearing speech from birth or seeing others sign to us, but some people do not have these senses to help them learn. June 21 - 27, 2009 is Helen Keller Deaf-Blind Awareness Week. Although Helen's accomplishments are legendary, she is not the only accomplished deaf-blind person. The National Association of Regulatory Utility Commission (NARUC) estimates that 70,000 - 100,000 people living in the United States are deaf-blind.

Columbus Speech & Hearing Center has openings and is currently accepting new clients. The Center can provide interactive metronome and summer OT services for kids who are getting OT through their school systems, so that they can keep working on skills over the summer. Year-round openings are also available. Some insurance is accepted.

Below are story ideas to coincide with OT Month. For more ideas or to learn more, please call Susan Slater at 614-261-5417 or e-mail sslater@columbusspeech.org.

STORY IDEAS

1 - What does an Occupational Therapist do?

Occupational Therapy (OT) provides a child with the opportunity to master age-appropriate developmental skills, sensory processing abilities, visual perception, self-care, social/emotional skills as well as supporting speech and language goals. Improvement in all of these areas promotes the development of self-confidence, self-esteem and independence with day-to-day activities.

At the Columbus Speech & Hearing Center, Occupational Therapists work closely with Speech-Language Pathologists and/or Child Development Specialists as needed. Occupational Therapy services may include comprehensive assessment and recommendations; ongoing individual therapy and/or co-treatment with speech therapy; consultation with a Speech-Language Pathologist and Child Development Specialist; home programs, early intervention assessment and recommendations and consultation with school systems.

For more information about Occupational Therapy services at the Center, please call Ann Ramsey at 614.263.5483.

2 - The role of an Occupational Therapist in Sensory Awareness

Most of us don't give sensory awareness a second thought. Our ability to integrate our senses into everyday activities developed with us as children. We easily adapt incoming sensations of touch, movement, sound, and vision without thought. For some, however, this natural ability does not develop as efficiently as it should. These individuals have what is known as Dysfunction of Sensory Integration (DSI) sometimes called Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD). The Occupational Therapists at Columbus Speech & Hearing Center are well-acquainted with this complex disorder of the brain.

Common signs and symptoms of DSI/SPD are varied and different for each individual, but may include under- or over-responsiveness to sensory input and difficulty with motor coordination. Young children that are "over-responders" may be so sensitive to touch, light, sounds or movements that they avoid or they may experience "melt-down" with typical kid activities such as having their hair cut, finger painting, or being on a swing. For those that under-respond, they may appear to be in constant motion and not seem to notice when you call their name or if they have messy hands. Children with poor sensory processing may also have delayed speech and language, trouble learning new motor skills, and difficulty accepting changes in their daily routines.

For those school-age children, more common signs and symptoms include difficulty with handwriting, using scissors, learning to tie shoes, or they may be easily distracted and have a poor attention span. Many children with diagnosed ADHD and Autism Spectrum Disorders also have DSI/SPD, while many individuals with this disorder may have no diagnosis at all. SPD can persist into adolescence and adulthood.

According to Ann Ramsey, B.S. OTR/L, Occupational Therapy Program Coordinator of Columbus Speech & Hearing Center, "DSI/SPD is not well known, but is more common than people think. There are many families that are not aware of how they and their child can be helped. As many as five to 15 percent of children suffer from the disorder. Many times," Ramsey adds, "sensory processing disorder is at the root of a child's developmental or behavior issues. It is not only frustrating for the child, but for parents who are trying to help them as well."

Ramsey says Columbus Speech & Hearing Center is equipped to help children and adults alike through comprehensive evaluation and weekly treatment sessions which include helping the individual to improve their ability to process sensory input as well as helping the family to cope. To learn more about these programs or to speak with a professional about DSI/SPD, call the Center at 614-263-5151.

Columbus Speech & Hearing Center, founded in 1923, is a non-profit United Way organization serving more than 10,000 people annually. Services include hearing evaluations, hearing aids, speech therapy for children and adults, occupational therapy and treatment, and vocational

services for people who are Hard-of-Hearing, Deaf and Deaf-Blind through the Comprehensive Program for the Deaf and Ohio Deaf-Blind Outreach Program. Generous charitable giving from the community help offset the cost of the Center's valued services for low-income families.