



**Supporting families  
with children who are  
deaf & hard of hearing**



# FOCUS

## COVID Response: MNH&V Service Adaptations & H&V HQ Resource Links

Minnesota Hands & Voices (MNH&V) is ready to support families with a child who is deaf or hard of hearing (dhh), ready to support you! MNH&V metro staff are currently working remotely, just like our greater Minnesota staff who have always worked from home. MNH&V has a long history of working remotely so it was no problem to make the switch and continue to serve families without too much interruption. Except for the occasional barking and family noises heard in the background, calls to offer support to families have continued as scheduled.

Especially now with added challenges placed on families, feel free to reach out by phone, email, or even send a text message, to your area Parent Guide or any DHH Guide for support and resources or to ask one of our ASTra Guides (**A**dvocacy, **S**upport, and **T**raining) your educational advocacy questions. Wherever you are, we have been there too.

Adaptations to MNH&V's services have been made due to the pandemic.

- In-Person visits have been replaced with video conferences
- MNH&V Events through June have been postponed
- MNH&V will continue to follow state recommendations for safety during the COVID pandemic, please check our website and emails for updates to annual and scheduled events

MNH&V staff are uniquely qualified to understand what it's like to parent a child who is dhh and find ourselves in the same challenging situations with distant learning, comforting when you yourself are unsure, and finding enough meaningful activities to fill our days. Find names, short biography, and contact information for MNH&V staff at <https://www.mnhandsandvoices.org/about-us/guide-regions-and-bios>

### Hands & Voices Head Quarters

**We are Community.  
We are Family.  
We are Strong.**

Hands & Voices Headquarters (H&V HQ) has dedicated a web page in response to the COVID pandemic with helpful links for families who are doing their best to facilitate their child's online learning and follow local safety guidelines. Families are encouraged to share their ideas, resources, and links they have found helpful during this turbulent time, please send email to [parentadvocate@handsandvoices.org](mailto:parentadvocate@handsandvoices.org)

Every Tuesday H&V HQ updates the web page to add more content and keep the information as current as possible. Many resources & links are available in Spanish. <https://handsandvoices.org/covid-19.html>

## All Families can Nominate an Exceptional Individual for a High Five Award

The High Five Award is an opportunity for parents to publicly thank those who do more than expected on behalf of children who are dhh. Parents are invited to nominate another parent, teacher, interpreter, medical provider, community advocate, role model, or anyone who inspires your family!

**Now through July 1st, MNH&V is accepting one nomination per family from parents.**

Email your nomination, subject line "High Five Award", to [mnhv@lifetrack-mn.org](mailto:mnhv@lifetrack-mn.org)

Winners will be announced at the MNH&V Metro Family Picnic on Thursday, August 1st. Recognition for winners will also take place at the picnic or, for greater Minnesota recipients, in a community convenient for them and the nominating family.



# MNH&V EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

## MNH&V Parent Guide for Southeast Asian Communities

The MNH&V Southeast Asian Communities Parent Guide position offers 10 hours a week, some evenings and weekends, and a family-friendly work environment.

MNH&V Parent Guides receive specific training and team support. Parent Guides are responsible for the initial and follow-up connections critical to families who have a newly identified child who is dhh. They work closely with the MNH&V team and learn the best way to support our MNH&V families. They organize and lead family events, represent MNH&V in the community, and participate in family support activities. Your personal experience of the challenges and joys of parenting a child who is deaf or hard of hearing (dhh) helps support other parents who are just starting their journey.

To find out more or to apply and send a resume, please visit Lifetrack at <https://recruiting.paylocity.com/Recruiting/Jobs/Details/83733>

## Ever-Changing Comprehensive List of Books for Children with Hearing Differences

Families can access a comprehensive list of books that are written for, by, or about children and/or individuals who have a hearing difference. This list was developed and is regularly updated thanks to the collaboration of two dedicated DHH Teachers, Emily Manson and Taylor Thomas. Even though they work for different school districts, this book list represents one of their many collaborations in support of students who are dhh.

“Google Sheets was used so the list could be live and ever-changing,” said Taylor Thomas. “We update this list periodically so be sure to check the far right column, ‘Date added to this list’, to see if your list is up-to-date.”

For each book there is helpful information beginning with a cover image in column one, then from left to right: Title, Author, Short Description, D/HH Character, Age Range, Lexile Level, Date Added to This

List, and Comments. If you don’t have Google Sheets the cover images may be omitted, but the content of the list is still accessible. **Disclaimer: they did not read every book on the list and the books do not necessarily reflect their views. This list covers books about every communication mode, perspective, and hearing difference.**

Please email either of them if you would like to add a book or report an error. Emily Manson, DHH Teacher with St. Paul Public Schools, [Emily.Manson@spps.org](mailto:Emily.Manson@spps.org) Taylor Thomas, Lead DHH Teacher with ISD 917, [Taylor.Thomas@isd917.org](mailto:Taylor.Thomas@isd917.org)

List of Books for Children with Hearing Differences Google sheets link: [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1tC\\_NgRT3eIkotBrq9qCRXDhDjSYmQg09056jScGdVfs/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1tC_NgRT3eIkotBrq9qCRXDhDjSYmQg09056jScGdVfs/edit?usp=sharing)



February 24, 2020, Shelby, DHH Guide, met with a family at a coffee shop in Duluth. She gave an El Deafo book as a gift during the visit.

DHH Guides are available to visit with families, share their experiences, answer questions, and brighten spirits through video conferencing. To set up a visit please email Heidy Nazario, DHH Guide Supervisor, at [HeidyN@lifetrack-mn.org](mailto:HeidyN@lifetrack-mn.org)

**Thanks for your contribution!**

**We rely on your generous support to build better lives for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.**

**Make a tax-deductible donation today.**

**DONATE**

## Transition Resources & Information for Individuals who are DHH Plus

This article will respectfully use the term “dhh plus” to refer to the nearly 40% of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing (dhh) and managing a co-occurring disability.

Parents raising a child who is identified as dhh plus understands that some day their child will transition to adulthood. That journey to adulthood can take many unique and diverse paths depending on the situation. Some children become a full-grown adult right before our eyes with just a faint memory of parental effort, while for other children the road to independent living can require more than what their parents alone can provide.

Finding the right combination of community support, services, post secondary education options, and employment opportunities for your transitioning child who is dhh plus is key to their ability to someday live independently. Whether you live in the metro area or in greater Minnesota

# Transition

your child’s options or the availability of services to meet specific needs can be difficult to find.

“In rural Minnesota a lack of transportation and workers for support services is a challenge,” said a greater Minnesota mother of a daughter who is just turning 21 this month.

PACER Center provides individual assistance, workshops, publications, and a wealth of online resources and information for families raising a child with disabilities. They have extensive information to help families to start thinking about “transition”. PACER covers a wide range of topics such as, when to add transition skills to the

child’s IEP, person-centered planning, self determination, employment, and help understanding the rights of individuals with disabilities. <https://www.pacer.org>

The *Minnesota Transition Guide for Teachers of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing* is another great source of information for families. The guide is not an exhaustive list, but it is a useful tool to start transition conversations. The Guild recommends students in 9th grade or earlier should attend their IEP meetings to help their parents and the rest of the IEP team set transition goals that work best for them. In the last chapter, *Additional Considerations*, the Guide lists general information and resources that could be relevant to families with a child who is dhh plus like Social Security Administration Benefits, Housing Assistance, Guardianship, etc. Download *The Minnesota Transition Guide for Teachers of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing* at [www.cehd.umn.edu/dhh-resources/Transition-Guide/default.html](http://www.cehd.umn.edu/dhh-resources/Transition-Guide/default.html)

## MNH&V Introduces Sharice McMorris, New Metro Parent Guide

“This has been one heck of a journey and we are still in motion,” said Sharice McMorris, the new Metro Parent Guide. “Everyday is a new day and we make the best of each moment regardless of the situation.”

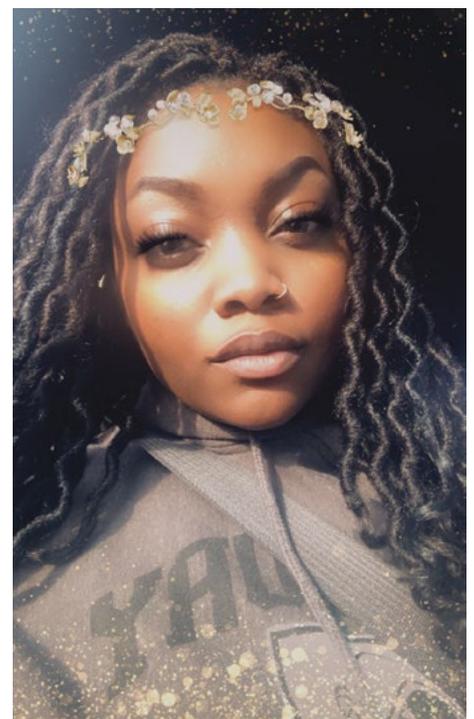
Sharice is a proud mother of three children. Her oldest two children have typical hearing and her youngest child, age 5 years old, is deaf, bilateral severely profound. As a family they enjoy spending time together, outside when they can. When Sharice has free time she enjoys listening to music, reading, and writing.

Often Sharice feels grateful to MNH&V for being a major help to her family, providing

support, and offering ideas to explore different pathways to help her son reach his full potential. She is looking forward to providing emotional support and resources to families raising a child who is deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing.

“We face so many challenges every day,” said Sharice when asked what words of wisdom she would like to share with families. “The obstacles that are put before us are in place to help build character and strengthen our abilities. Be open to try new things, and stand firm behind what you believe in.”

Contact Sharice by phone at 651-265-2357 or email at [ShariceM@lifetrack-mn.org](mailto:ShariceM@lifetrack-mn.org).



Sharice McMorris, Metro Parent Guide

# Transition

## MNH&V Transition Talk

The MNH&V Transition Talk column is a new series to celebrate diversity within our community of transitioning young adults. It will feature comments from a diverse group of young adults who are dhh, DeafBlind, and dhh plus, along with comments from some of their parents.

The idea of this column series is to prompt family conversations and to gain perspective from the experiences of this diverse population of individuals who are or have transitioned to adulthood and the families that have and/or continue to support them.

“It is never too early to have conversations with your child about their future plans and really listen to their thoughts and ideas,” said one mother with a son who is dhh attending college. “Some of my son’s ideas were very insightful and others were just plain hilarious, and always always different every time.”

According to Federal law transition planning is required to start by the time your child turns age 16, but in school districts across Minnesota IEP teams are starting earlier by including students in transition conversations. Families can also take an active role in teaching life skills to their children along the way.

We are asking more people to share their stories for this series, MNH&V Transition Talk. If you are a young adult who is dhh, DeafBlind, or dhh plus and in the process checking off transition skills or have a few years of adulthood under your belt or a parent of a recent adult, we would love to hear from you. Please email MNH&V, subject line “Transition Talks” to at [mnhv@lifetrack-mn.org](mailto:mnhv@lifetrack-mn.org)

## MNH&V Transition Talk with Shawnae

MNH&V asked Shawnae, age 21, and her mother, Leslie, a series of questions about Shawnae’s experiences transitioning to adulthood. Shawnae lives with her family in rural Minnesota. A lack of public transportation and staff working in the service areas she needs present a few barriers for her. At times she feels isolated and wishes there were more social activities for her and her peers. However, Shawnae has developed skills, goals, and is working towards reaching her full potential as an adult.

Shawnae was born with Microtia Atresia right-sided grade 3, meaning there was no external ear canal and an underdeveloped inner ear. As an infant she was not a candidate for reconstruction surgery. When she was 5 years old, Bone Anchored Hearing Aid (BAHA) a relatively new technology, was available and she was surgically implanted with the device. She used the BAHA along with an FM system throughout elementary school. Later in 9th grade, she developed health problems with the BAHA and over the years has tried other technologies, but now prefers to not use hearing equipment. Shawnae is dhh plus, unilaterally deaf with other issues involving mental health, attention deficit disorder, and intellectual. To best support Shawnae, Leslie has been appointed her legal guardian. This allows Shawnae an opportunity to accomplish what she can independently and Leslie to assist as needed.

### What are your interests?

Shawnae replied, “Art.”

“Shawnae is very creative. She loves art, anime, and animals,” said Leslie. “She loves going on trips and history! Abraham Lincoln is her favorite President!”

### Do you work or volunteer?

“I work at a Thrift Shop,” said Shawnae. “My free time I volunteer for MNH&V or



Shawnae

other things that interest me.”

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) has been a steady support for Shawnae explained Leslie. A VR counselor first joined Shawnae’s Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings in the 10th grade throughout high school and continues today. Working at the Thrift Shop Shawnae has a VR job coach to help develop her soft skills for customer service, using the register, and restocking merchandise.

### What do you wish was different in your situation?

“Driving on my own to be more independent and have more of a social life,” said Shawnae. Leslie agrees having a driver’s license would give her daughter more independence.

### What are you most proud of?

Shawnae is most proud of overcoming some of her anxiety issues.

Leslie is so proud of Shawnae’s strength of character, for never giving up. Leslie can see that strength continue to grow as she transitions into an adult. Leslie went on to say that she has always been a strong advocate for Shawnae, even pushing her, and she admits to having struggles to this day, but she can see Shawnae really beginning to advocate well for herself as a young adult.

# MNH&V EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

## MNH&V Parent Guide for the Northeast African Communities

The MNH&V NE African Communities Parent Guide position offers 10 flexible hours a week, some evenings and weekends, and a family-friendly work environment.

MNH&V Parent Guides receive specific training and team support. Parent Guides are responsible for the initial and follow-up connections critical to families who have a newly identified child who is deaf or hard of hearing (dhh). They work closely with the MNH&V team and learn the best way to support our MNH&V families. They organize and lead family events, represent MNH&V in the community, and participate in family support activities. Your personal experience of the challenges and joys of parenting a child who is dhh helps support other parents who are just starting their journey. Candidate for this position must be fluent in Somali.

To find out more or to apply and send a resume, please visit Lifetrack at <https://recruiting.paylocity.com/Recruiting/Jobs/Details/117452>

## Hands & Voices, Visually Maximize Communication & Safety in Home Environments

Hands & Voices Family Leadership in Language and Learning (FL3) publication titled, *Maximizing Your Child's Visual Access, Tips to Create a Visually Rich World for Your Child who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing* offers many ideas and helpful tips for improving your child's over all understanding of their world. This 4-page publication is an easy-to-read bullet-point list of ideas for families with children ages birth to young adult, using any communication modality, and includes parent support ideas and resources.



Some of the ideas found in the publication are somewhat easy to implement and just make sense; you'll wonder why you hadn't considered doing it sooner.

Example: Turn on the lights in your child's bedroom at night when you comfort them so facial expressions and communication are visible to them. Some children who are dhh feel more secure having a nightlight or a flashlight handy in their bedroom.

Other ideas could be a real game-changer for your child who is dhh and build on their overall feelings of belonging; well worth the extra effort and time it could take to do. Plus, it could make for a fun group project for the whole extended family to do during the COVID pandemic, of course working digitally from home.

Example: Create photo flashcards of relatives to review before family gatherings or holidays and arrange them to create a simple family tree. Start

by gathering clear photos of faces for each extended family member, as well as photos of special family friends you consider to be "family". Then label each photo with the person's name and/or a graphic to use as a memory clue for younger children if possible.

FL3 H&V *Maximizing Your Child's Visual Access, Tips to Create a Visually Rich World for Your Child who is Deaf or Hard*

*of Hearing* has many other ideas and tips you'll find helpful, plus it includes a list of additional resources to check out online.

Find both English or Spanish versions of the FL3 H&V *Maximizing Your Child's Visual Access, Tips to Create a Visually Rich World for Your Child who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing* at [handsandvoices.org/fl3/resources/toolbox.html](https://handsandvoices.org/fl3/resources/toolbox.html)

## Minnesota Department of Health Hearing Loss Home Modification Checklist

This checklist provides ways to assess access problems in home environments for individuals who are dhh and lists solutions. The checklist starts with a series of yes/no questions to use as a guide from accessible safety alerts such as fire or carbon monoxide detectors to improving room acoustics and adding closed captioning on screened devices. Also included are lists of vendors, service providers, and regional Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS) office locations.

<https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-7905-ENG>



Kelsey Woodward

## MNH&V Welcomes, Kelsey Woodward, DHH Guide

“What working at MNH&V means to me, is that we are unbiased,” said Kelsey Woodward, MNH&V DHH Guide. “We help support and guide families with a child who is dhh.”

Kelsey Woodward joined the MNH&V team as a DHH Guide in the summer of 2019. Kelsey is a native Minnesotan and currently lives with her daughter in Forest Lake, MN. Her daughter who has typical hearing is lovingly referred to as a CODA, which stands for a Child Of Deaf Adults.

According to the National Institute of Health, about 90% of infants who are dhh are born to parents with typical hearing. On the flip side, CODA International reports that 85% to 90% of adults who are dhh statistically have children with typical hearing. It is a unique experience to grow up as an individual who is dhh;

so, too, is the experience of growing up with parents who are dhh.

Kelsey identifies as deaf and is fluent in American Sign Language (ASL). In her spare time Kelsey enjoys spending quality time with her daughter, going to fun new places, and exploring in the community.

“Sharing my personal stories with the parents,” Kelsey responded when asked what opportunities she liked best about being a DHH Guide. She continued, “Helping to find resources they would find useful for their child.”

You can contact Kelsey directly by email at [KelseyW@lifetrack-mn.org](mailto:KelseyW@lifetrack-mn.org).

To set up a video visit with Kelsey or any other DHH Guide please email Heidi Nazario, DHH Guide Supervisor, at [HeidyN@lifetrack-mn.org](mailto:HeidyN@lifetrack-mn.org)



## Masonic Motorcycle Club International #24 and the Farmington Freemasons Corinthian Lodge #67

Thank you to the Minnesota Masonic Motorcycle Club International #24 (MMCI#24) for their generous donation and for requesting a matching grant, which MNH&V also received, from the Farmington Freemasons Corinthian Lodge #67. Their continued support over the years has been instrumental in funding MNH&V's events that specifically support the social emotional needs of children who are dhh and their families.



Robin Coninx, Metro Parent Guide Supervisor, pictured with some of the Masonic Motorcycle Club International members at their annual potluck gathering.

Founded over 20 years ago, MMCI#24 researches organizations to donate to every year that is locally funded and exclusively serves Minnesota residents. At their 17th Annual Social/Potluck held on February 22, 2020, Robin Coninx, Metro Parent Guide Supervisor, shared MNH&V's mission, answered a few questions from

the audience, and then was honored to be presented the MMCI#24 donation check from Gordie Aune, Jr.

MNH&V thanks the Masonic Motorcycle Club International #24 & Farmington Freemasons Corinthian Lodge #67 for their continued support and generosity.

## Jorden Curran, Owner of J.C. Office Support

Jorden Curran is a Minnesota business owner of J.C. Office Support. J.C. Office Support offers a variety of products and services for home or business use such as address label printing, data entry, and mail assembly to name a few. J.C. Office Support can also convert hand-written address books to a digital spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel. Additional services include fundraising opportunities for various organizations.

Jorden was born deaf although there was no family history of deafness. At 10 years old he was identified with Usher Syndrome, a condition that affects both hearing and vision. His vision loss, Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP), causes light-sensitivity and progressive degeneration of vision. Jorden, his parents, and a sister lived in Brookings, SD, where he attended South Dakota School for the Deaf (SDSD). In high school he transferred to Minnesota State Academy for Deaf (MSAD) where he graduated. Now, Jorden lives in an apartment in Apple Valley, MN.

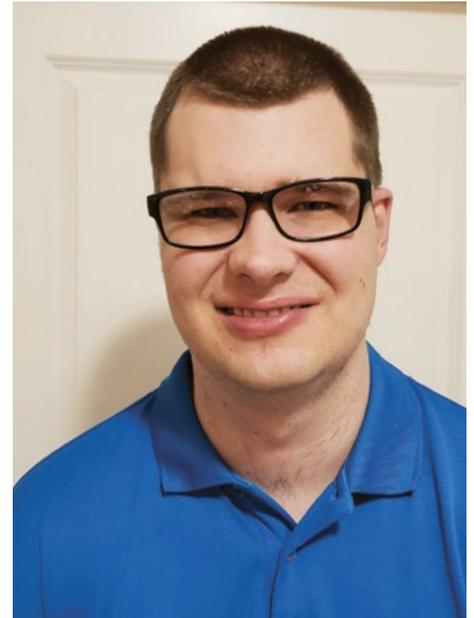
In preschool Jorden started learning American Sign Language (ASL) and used hearing aids. Later when he was 9 years old he received a Cochlear Implant (CI). Over time he found he received very little benefit from his CI, so as a teenager Jorden discontinued using his CI.

“I call Minnesota home, because SDSD closed and I have access to good Deaf and DeafBlind programs and services,” commented Jorden. “I am DeafBlind which is my connection to MNH&V.”

Jorden’s work history includes working for the Library, Ace Hardware, Hyvee, and an Insurance Agency. He enjoys fishing, hunting with his father and grandfather, as well as swimming and bike riding. Other interests include history, maps, all sports, and the Green Bay Packers.

Please contact Jorden at J.C. Office Support by email at [j.c.osmn@gmail.com](mailto:j.c.osmn@gmail.com) or text message at 651-200-8129. Find him on FaceBook or Etsy at [www.facebook.com/JC-Office-Support/](http://www.facebook.com/JC-Office-Support/) [www.etsy.com/shop/JCOfficeSupport](http://www.etsy.com/shop/JCOfficeSupport)

# I am MNH&V



Jorden Curran, Owner & Operator of J.C. Office Support



## Adam Rademacher & Paul Bunyan Land

Thank you to Adam Rademacher, owner of Paul Bunyan Land and who is also an American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter, for hosting MNH&V’s Trunk or Treat Family Event for the past several years at Paul Bunyan Land. By far, northern Minnesota’s most popular and well attended events thanks to Adam’s generosity, the amazing location, and ASL services all provided at no cost to MNH&V.

“It’s a really neat place, one side is Paul Bunyan Land and the other is a village called This Old Farm,” said Leslie Carnegie-Hilde, MNH&V Parent Guide for



Adam Rademacher

the Upper Northwest. “Adam’s grandpa helped at the event last October and, from what I understand, who started it all!”

Paul Bunyan Land is an amusement park boasting a trademark 26-foot-tall animated and talking statue of Paul Bunyan. The park was originally founded in 1950, located in Baxter, MN. In 2003, a local family-owned attraction named This Old Farm, bought the statues, rides, and all, then moved it just east of Brainerd, MN. Now Paul Bunyan Land offers expansive amusement rides and attractions, including This Old Farm and a campground. A perfect location for families to plan a future summer vacation in beautiful greater Minnesota.

More information about Paul Bunyan Land at <https://paulbunyanland.com>



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MINNESOTA

709 University Ave. W.  
St. Paul, MN 55104

FOCUS

NEWSLETTER

Minnesota Hands & Voices FOCUS Newsletter

May 2020

FAMILY PICNIC

2020 Annual ★ Minnesota Hands & Voices ★ Metro

**Date:** Thursday, August 6th

**Time:** 5:00-8:30 pm (rain or shine)

**Where:** Como Park Midway Pavilion  
1199 Midway Pkwy, St Paul, MN

Free for Families:

- ★ Dinner
- ★ Fun Games
- ★ Entertainment
- ★ Face Painting
- ★ Door Prizes!



HANDS & VOICES  
**LEAGUE OF HEROES**  
**SUPERPOWERS WITHIN™**



Calling all the Superheroes in the MNH&V Community!  
Dust off your superhero costume or come as you are to join our Hands & Voices' League of Heroes!

Find more details online at [www.mnhandsandvoices.org/news-events/current-news-events.aspx](http://www.mnhandsandvoices.org/news-events/current-news-events.aspx)