

Hand Talk

MISSION STATEMENT

The **FAMILY CENTER on DEAFNESS** empowers Pinellas County families with deaf or hard of hearing members by providing programs and services to promote communication and independence.

FREE AMPLIFIED PHONES



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CONTACT US:

12445 62nd St. N #303
Largo, FL 33773
727-501-2323 voice
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FCD Students React to *The Silent Child*

By: Beth Engelman

"This isn't my experience," signed Emily, one of FCD's middle school students, after watching a screening of the Oscar-winning movie *The Silent Child* starring six-year-old Maisie Sly, a profoundly deaf actress from Swindon, England.

Like Maisie, Emily is profoundly deaf and attends FCD's after school tutoring program, where deaf and hard of hearing students have an opportunity to receive help with homework. The FCD tutoring program also gives D/HH students an opportunity to socialize with peers and work with Deaf mentors. In March, Emily and her friends watched and discussed the film *The Silent Child*.

The movie depicts a hearing family with a deaf child, who do not make efforts to communicate with her in sign language, nor do they equip her with appropriate amplification or introduce her to other deaf people. As a result, she suffers from isolation and loneliness.

Jill Radford, a deaf adult and former principal of Jean Massieu

School of the Deaf in Millcreek, UTAH, volunteers weekly with FCD's middle school program. Jill is a professional educator and mother of five, who has earned the respect and adoration of students, and FCD is extremely fortunate to have her as a mentor and advocate.

After the film, Jill led a discussion to help students process what they saw in the movie. She explained how she grew up oral in mainstream school programs and had not met another deaf peer until she had attended a deaf camp at age 14. She learned ASL later in life and entered the Deaf community in college. Today, Jill is a strong advocate for ASL, which she believes is a deaf child's "natural language."



Jill could relate to the feelings of isolation portrayed in *The Silent Child*; and like Jill, all of the deaf adults who work at FCD and were mainstreamed as children, also related to the film's depiction of loneliness and communication barriers.



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Upon receiving the Oscar for short film, *The Silent Child*'s writer and star Rachel Shenton said, "millions of deaf children all over the world live in silence and face communication barriers, and particularly access to education." They made the film to bring awareness to the language barriers deaf children face daily.

I've watched the film several times now, lump in throat, tears blurring my vision, marveling at the many beautiful and painful details the film portrays accurately about the deaf experience.

The heartbreaking scenes of Libby (Maisie) at the dinner table, but isolated from her own family, is sadly the reality for millions of children. Early in the film, Libby's stoic expression due to lack of language, is one I remember far too well in my own son. Without a shared language, we couldn't draw him out, and for many years he lived in frustration and isolation. That all changed

when our family learned ASL.

Just as the film illustrates, sign language is essential for many deaf children's early cognitive, emotional and social development. In the film, Libby is transformed by simply having access to a visual language. It is an awakening.

Unlike Jill and FCD's deaf staff, the FCD middle school D/HH students had a markedly different reaction to the film.

Emily, who is in seventh grade, explained that she utilizes cochlear implants as a tool, but that her mother fully supported her using American Sign Language at school and around deaf friends. "This isn't my experience," she signed, "because I have a deaf teacher at school, interpreters in my mainstream class rooms, and deaf friends."

Other students expressed similar sentiments about the value of good deaf services in Pinellas County. Although not all of their parents know ASL fluently, FCD provides the foundation for a healthy social and emotional Deaf identity. At FCD, students are fortunate, because they have opportunities to learn from Deaf-adult mentors; they meet with deaf peers during tutoring and social events, and they attend deaf summer camp programs, which exposes them to a wide-variety of shared experiences.

The Silent Child is a beautiful film worth watching; however, my heart is full of gratitude that the middle school students at FCD could not relate to its vital message of isolation due to lack of ASL education and exposure to the deaf community.



In March, Ceira Cartony, came to FCD and practiced yoga with the girls. She explained the benefits of breathing, relaxing, and being mindful. Ceira explained how Yoga is a journey, not something you can perfect overnight, and she expressed that Yoga helps you find your inner self.

In April, Girl Squad will be having a "healthy body and mind" discussion. They will talk about health eating and proper hygiene. They will also address issues including emotional and mental health, and the importance of reaching out for help.



Congratulations Lexi Banks!



Lexi received the "Yes I Can" award recently from the Suncoast Chapter of the Council for Exceptional Children for overcoming her challenges and being a role model to others. We are proud of you!



Teen Scene celebrated St. Patrick's Day on March 17th with a lesson in self-defense and a holiday party. Thanks to C.O.B.R.A. Self Defense Systems trainers, students learned personal defense, some

martial arts techniques, and how to protect themselves in real world situations.

On April 7th from 2-6 p.m., teens are invited to the FCD Spring Family Picnic at Walsingham Park in Largo, Shelter #3. FCD will host an egg hunt, serve hamburgers and hot dogs, provide crafts, games and ASL stories.



FCDs Academic Bowl Team will travel to Washington DC April 14th for the National ABT



competition hosted at Gallaudet University, where they will compete against twenty teams.

On April 21st, teens have an opportunity to volunteer at Pinellas Park High School from 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m. for the Deaf/HH Rights conference hosted by the Deaf Literacy Center. Contact franklin@fcdpinellas.org for details.

On April 25th, FCD is celebrating the vital work of our volunteers with a volunteer appreciation dinner. Several of our teens also serve as volunteers, which is a terrific opportunity to learn the value of giving back to the community. It's also a great way for teens to earn Bright Futures volunteer hours.

REACH

**Raising
Expectations &
Achievement of
Children with
Hearing Loss**

Spring is here at REACH! March saw the wrap up of the Iditarod race where REACH kids learned mushing terms, did science experiments related to snow and the freezing of water. REACH followed the race and Ayden Craven and his musher

Joar Leifseth Ulsom won the race in 9 days and 12 hours. Students also learned about the Iditarod character traits.

On March 13th and 15th the children discovered that the St. Patrick's Day leprechaun had visited REACH. The younger students arrived at the portable to find mischief had been created everywhere. After cleaning up the mess left by the leprechaun, the group enjoyed special treats, tried to outsmart the leprechaun trap, and hunted for gold.

March 14th all of the students enjoyed a field trip to Great Explorations downtown St. Petersburg. The REACH kids climbed on the tree house and the indoor climbing course as well as visiting recreations of community service providers and businesses. Huge thanks to Marthanne at Great



Explorations and Ally Ray, a Reach volunteer who set up the free admissions for the kids and staff.

On March 21st the kids at REACH enjoyed a spring party complete with a food craft to make bird's nest treats. The group also made paper strip eggs and had

Easter Egg hunts outside.

April 18th the REACH kids will be visiting the Clearwater Coast Guard Airfield to see the helicopter and the jumbo jet. Students will meet some rescue swimmers and learn about their jobs.



April 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19, 24, 25, 26,



Middle School: Mon & Wed 4pm-6pm

April 2, 4, 9, 11, 18, 23, 30

High School: Tues & Thurs 2pm-4pm

April 3, 5, 10, 12, 19, 24, 26

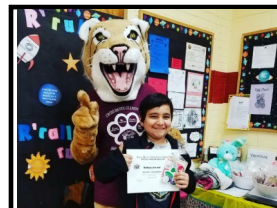


April 13 NO TEEN SOCIAL

April 20 Teen Social @ FCD 2-6 p.m.

April 26 Girl Squad 4-6 p.m.

April 27 Teen Social @ FCD 2-6 p.m.



Congratulations
Spyridon
Alexandratos for
winning Bob Cat of
the Month in Art!



Look who's in the TBT!

Sally Shortz is not only a dedicated staff member at FCD, but she is also a talented self-taught animal photographer. Her growing library of

wildlife images and portraits beautifully captures her love for the natural world.

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FREE of CHARGE

THE ASL NOOK

Literacy workshop with
Sheena and Story Telling
with Shaylee

Saturday, April 21st * 1:00 PM

Location:
Pinellas Park High SCHOOL AUDITORIUM
6305 118th Ave N Largo, FL 33773

ASL NOOK Books available for SALE

For more info contact ROSA at rrodriguez@ppic.us

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