

Project Scrapbook:
Establishing a Support Group for
Children with Hearing Impairment

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

By

Alison M. Bruns

Thesis Advisor
Mary Jo Germani, Ph.D, CCC-SLP

Mary Jo Germani

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

May 2003

May 2003

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments:	iii
Abstract:	iv
Project Scrapbook:	
Establishing a Support Group for Children With Hearing Impairment	1
Goals and Projected Outcomes:	2
Methods and Process	3
Establishing the Group	10
Obstacles Encountered	12
Future Endeavors	14
References	15
Appendixes: Materials for Future Use	16
Appendix A: Scrapbook Outline	17
Appendix B: Application Packet	19
Appendix C: Letters to professionals	23
Appendix D: Flyers	27
Appendix E: Announcement	30
Appendix F: Press Release	32
Appendix G: Agendas	34
Appendix H: Regret Letter	37

Acknowledgements

There are a great number of people who have helped me throughout my endeavor to begin this support group for children who are hearing impaired. I especially owe a great deal of thanks to the following individuals:

- Dr. Victoria Keetay for her advising throughout the beginning stages of this project, especially with all of her work to help me get letters out to various individuals to gain exposure for the group. Thank you for support and guidance, especially through the tough times.

-Ceil Hosfeld, my audiologist back home as she encouraged me to form this support group. Her help with finding members and locating contacts throughout the county was tremendous. I express gratitude for the support and guidance you offered to me throughout this project.

- Dr. Mary Jo Germani for her willingness to take on the role as my advisor at the end of the project. Thank you for your encouragement and supervision as the finishing touches were put on this project.

Abstract

Developing a support group for children who are hearing impaired was a very long and rigorous process that allowed me to achieve many personal goals. This paper is a reflection of the process that I went through in order to establish this group and discusses my reasons for wanting to undertake this project and the goals and projected outcomes that were founded. The method and process that I used to undertake this long and difficult process, along with obstacles that were encountered are also discussed. Finally, a reflection on the importance of this project to future endeavors is talked about in relation to my future career opportunities.

Project Scrapbook:

*Establishing a Support Group for
Children with Hearing Impairment*

As a person proceeds through life, he may encounter a number of obstacles that need to be overcome for him to grow and develop into a mature adult. One of the easiest ways to overcome these complications in life is to obtain support from the family and friends that surround you. Although friends and family offer a lot of encouragement, one of the most powerful means of getting through the tough times is to seek the backing and assistance from other people who have gone through similar hardships. One of the biggest obstacles I had to overcome in my life was the diagnosis of a hearing impairment at the age of five. Throughout most of my childhood I longed for a friend who understood what I was going through, a person who had a hearing impairment just like me. I wanted a network of friends who understood what it was like to not hear everything around you, to be made fun of, and to have to overcome the stereotypes associated with hearing impairments. As I began to mature, I developed a passion for helping people with a hearing loss overcome the stereotypes that are associated with it. One of my favorite groups of people to help are those children with a hearing impairment who feel isolated and alone, and like me, long for that someone who understands what they are going through. I wanted to have a place for children in my county to be able to turn to when they needed someone for support. So, I decided to form a support group for school aged children who are hearing impaired and their families in Darke County, Ohio.

Goals and Projected Outcomes

The objective of this project was to form a support group for school aged children who are hearing impaired, with the purpose of providing an atmosphere for the children to bond with others like themselves and not feel isolated in the midst of a hearing world. Opportunities would also be given to the family members to network with each other. There are very few hearing impaired children, so it is very difficult for the families to find others that are going through similar experiences.

There were two main goals of this project. The first goal was to achieve a personal goal of helping children who are hearing impaired view their hearing loss in a more positive way and to help them feel less isolated among the world of normal hearing children. I had hoped to give these children a positive attitude about their hearing loss, the knowledge to succeed in life, and a network of friends they would carry throughout their lifetime. The second goal of this project was to acquire a knowledge base of the organization and methods that are used to form and run support groups.

With these goals in mind, there were several outcomes that I had envisioned for this group. The first outcome involved a monthly social gathering of the members of the support group doing various activities such as bowling, a cookout in the park, movies, swimming, game day, a day camp, and a holiday party. I would also plan discussions and meetings involving the family members and older hearing impaired children talking to the younger hearing impaired children. These activities would give the children a chance to get to know each other and to ask questions about difficulties and challenges they face with their hearing loss. Various speakers would also be invited to speak to the parents on topics ranging from liabilities of schools related to hearing loss, FM systems, and

psychological implications of a hearing loss. The second outcome that I anticipated with this support group was a scrapbook at the end of the year illustrating the members, families, and activities from the support group. Each child would be given a copy of the scrapbook to treasure for years to come.

Methods & Process

With my goals and projected outcomes set, there was a process with many stages that I followed in order to form this support group. The first main task I had to complete was gathering research on how to form, organize, and run a support group for children who are hearing impaired. I began at the library by gathering resources that have to do with support groups in general. Most of the books that I found dealt with groups that were more for information and education for the members, rather than groups that provided social support. Most of the groups were also geared towards adults rather than the children.

I also searched the Internet for a variety of information. I was informed of some good sites that were related to support groups from various people. The first site was the site for the national chapter of the Alexander Graham Bell Association.. On this site there were links for the different state chapters, along with e-mail addresses for the directors of the various state programs. Indiana was the only state that had a website, however, it really did not have any good information on how to start a support group. I did get some good information about what information to ask for on the membership applications. I e-mailed all of the state directors that surround Ohio. However, the response from this was very poor. I did receive responses from the director of the Indiana and Pennsylvania state

chapters. Their main suggestion was to spread the news of the formation of the group by word of mouth. They said most of their members were recruited in this way.

I also did an Internet search on the Yahoo search engine by typing in “how to start a support group.” There were several good sites that resulted from this search. The first site was from an Ohio State website, which had information on how to start a support group, specifically how to get started, what should happen at the first meeting, and what should all be discussed. A second website that was very helpful was one that was a support group for spinal cord injuries. This site suggested that you break the process into five parts of people, planning, place, publicity, and programming. The people step involves finding other people to help support you in forming the group, finding out how many people want a support group, along with deciding who can join the group. The second step involves planning how often the group will meet, how to spread the word about the group, and what type of support group it will be. The third stage of the process involves deciding on a central location to hold the meetings. The next stage involves publicizing the support group through all the outlets of media, such as TV, radio, newspapers, and flyers. The final stage of the process involves deciding what will occur during the meetings and learning how to run a meeting. These two websites gave me an abundance of information on how to begin my support group.

Although these sites were very helpful, one of the best websites I found was one that Parent to Parent of Pennsylvania hosted. This group is actually designed to help set up support groups for children of divorced parents. It had a lot of different links designed specifically to beginning a support group, such as what support groups can and cannot do, asking questions about whether or not one is ready to start a support group, and where to

begin when deciding to form a support group. It also gave information about establishing the staff that is needed, determining the format, frequency and location of the group, promoting the support group, and gave examples of meeting announcements and press releases. Other information that was provided included giving a checklist for group management, establishing ground rules, planning the meeting, facilitating the support group, and giving some listening skills that are essential for running a group.

According to Parent to Parent of PA, when beginning a support group, one must keep in mind that support groups can only do so much. First, support groups can offer a safe, non-judgmental outlet to disclose to others who have gone through similar experiences. They can also provide a feeling of not being alone, reassurance about dealing with disabilities, a positive attitude, and the opportunity for members to help each other through knowledge and experiences. Support groups can also offer resources, speakers, information, and literature about the disabilities. However, support group cannot cure people, attempt therapeutic interventions, make a diagnosis, or attempt to resolve ambivalent emotions.

Developing a support group is a very rigorous and difficult process, and often, a group will disband prematurely because the founder is not ready to undertake the commitment that is required to continue the group. According to Parent to Parent of PA support groups may fail if the founder has not successfully overcome his own personal issues, cannot devote a significant amount of time to the group and its administration, does not have the understanding from family and friends, and cannot share authority and responsibility. However, if the founder has a genuine care for people, is prepared for a long term commitment, can put his religious and personal beliefs on hold, does not need

beliefs on hold, does not need personal recognition for his efforts and whose personal reward is seeing other people grow, the group has a very good potential for success.

Once the founder has established that he has what it takes to begin the support group, there are a number of steps that he can take. One of the most helpful things to do is to contact and seek the advice of others who are in the support group field. He should seek out professionals who deal with the disability and ask them if they know of anyone who may be interested in joining the group, find a national organization in the field of interest which will often supply startup guidelines and supplementary material, or contact a group leader of another support group to see how he runs his organization. It may also be helpful to check out library books on the subject, subscribe to newsletters offered by organizations in the field, and contact the local psychological association, which may have counselors specializing in the area who may be willing to work with the group.

According to the Parent to Parent of PA website, when establishing a support group there are different tasks that must be completed by different task members. One person cannot complete all of the tasks that are necessary success of a group. These positions can be broken up into the administrator, the facilitator and the manager. Each position has various assigned tasks, along with requiring people with certain traits to hold the positions.

The administrator holds all nonmember related contacts, keeps the support group's books and records, contacts speakers and arranges schedules for future meetings, prepares news releases and announcements, and keeps track of the money. The administrator position requires someone who can work by himself, is well organized and can attend to detail, has a good sense of time management, not afraid to call people he

does not know to promote the group, and often, the founder has the best personality characteristics and motivation to handle these tasks.

The facilitator's responsibilities include greeting members as they arrive and introducing them to other members, being a role model of acceptable group behavior, having the ability to make sensitive remarks to draw members out, being alert to each members involvement or lack thereof in the club. A facilitator must possess the personality characteristics of being a people person and having experience dealing with the disability.

The manger is responsible for keeping records of the date, time, and attendance of each meeting, keeping profile cards on each member, telephoning new and prospective members when appropriate, setting up the meeting room and refreshments, and attending each meeting to aid in group networking. The traits that a manager must possess are much the same as the facilitator, however, the also can be a member of the group who wants to be more involved and has learned to cope with his disability, and must be able to take a secondary role to the other members and the facilitator.

Once the staff of the support group has been established, the format, frequency, and location of the group need to be decided on. The two primary formats a group can run as are time limited and ongoing groups. Time limited groups often meet within a certain timeframe, have a definite agenda, and are closed to new members after the initial meeting. Some advantages of a time limited support group include an increase in therapeutic value, sense of urgency and commitment about group tasks, quicker establishment of trust among the group members, easier to staff and find professional members, easy to establish specific goals, and there is very little burnout for the

facilitators. Some disadvantages to time limited groups are the need for more organization, well defined goals, require timing on press releases and announcements, require more printed materials, and have no veteran members to serve as role models.

Unlike time limited group, ongoing groups meet throughout the year, have no set agenda, and accept new members at any time. Some advantages offered by ongoing groups include the flexibility offered to meeting the needs of individual members, takes less organization time per meeting, veteran members welcome new members and serve as role models, members have more say over the meeting topics, and is less threatening to new members because there are no expectations to participate. Although ongoing support groups offer many advantages, some disadvantages are prevalent, including a decrease in commitment from members, less urgency in making progress, less structure, a difficulty in establishing goals, and an increase risk of burnout in the facilitators.

After the format of the group is established it is important to decide on the frequency the group will meet. Time limited groups schedule six twelve-week sessions. Day and night times should be made available, and the schedule should consistent so that the group will attract more participants, will be more prepared and organized, the members will be able to plan and work it into their schedules, and referral agencies are more likely to refer people to the group. On the other hand, ongoing support groups usually meet weekly, biweekly, or monthly, and it should be taken into account when other similar groups in the community meet.

After instituting the format and frequency of the group, a location for the group should be picked. Things that should be kept in mind when deciding a location include the population of the members and the size of the group. While deciding on a location,

try to get a long term commitment from the facility so that you have consistency, along with finding a place with comfortable, movable seating, warm lighting, enough space for reading materials and refreshments, and a blackboard.

Once the format, frequency, and location of the group have been established, the next step in establishing a support group is the promotion of the group. One first needs to define the market that needs to know about the group, and then list the names, phone numbers, and addresses of the individuals to contact. Some possibilities to contact include doctors, schools, mental health associations, newspapers, community websites, public libraries, community organizations, and social workers. One should contact these organizations with announcements, which should be delivered in person; otherwise, a follow-up phone call should be made. The founder should also notify all newspapers, television, and radio stations with a press release. A press release should accomplish two goals, which are a listing of the group in a calendar and a feature article about the group.

Before having the first meeting, there are many tasks that need to be completed. The founder needs to remember to have the refreshments, nametags, paper, pens, and printed information on the subject for the first meeting. There should be plenty of seating available and the chairs should be arranged in a circle to promote interactions among the members. Before each meeting after the first, the topic and speakers need to be confirmed, and a resume needs to be received from the speaker, along with any a list of the speakers needs. One also needs to have a list of announcements, arranged the refreshments, seating, and have enough printed materials.

Before the first meeting, a list of ground rules needs to be drawn up, but they need to be discussed and agreed upon by the participants in the groups. Some suggested

ground rules include the right of everyone to be able to speak without an obligation to, to show all expressions of emotions except physical violence, and disclose with information staying within the group. The group should be responsible for make known its suggestions and criticisms to the staff.

Each meeting should consist of a topic of discussion and story telling. The meeting should begin with announcements and a meeting agenda, and then an introduction of the topic should be made with encouragement to the members to share their feelings on the topic. A break should be taken when members begin to get restless, and the atmosphere should be lighthearted. A meeting should always be adjourned on an upbeat note.

Establishing the Group

The second main task of forming the support group was to find the people to form the club. Before finding members for the group, I first wrote a cover letter explaining my reasons for beginning the support group and an application for the members to fill out with demographic information and some questions pertaining to the child's background.

I began my search for members by first contacting Ceil Hosfeld, a local audiologist. With her assistance I sent out a letter and an application to the parents of her patients who were eligible to join. Ceil also gave me names of people in the county school systems that would be able to help me. Lisa Combs is the director of education services of Darke County, and she said she would pass out the information to all of the local principals. I typed up a letter for the principals and sent this letter, along with the information packet for the children, to Lisa to distribute. I also contacted Toni Custer,

who is the director of Special Education Services of Greenville City Schools. I sent the information packets to her to distribute among the Greenville School System. Letters were also sent out to the school speech language pathologists, along with the county doctors asking for their assistance to recruit members.

Through this process, I was able to recruit five members ranging from ages seven to seventeen. Reasons that were stated for joining the group included to make new friends, to have fun, to gain support from other families, and to find more ways of helping each other. The children were very active with some of their favorite activities being softball, music, volleyball, and bowling. I kept in close contact with the families as more planning and preparation went into the group by sending e-mails and cards, along with giving them my contact information in case they needed anything.

The next phase of forming the support group involved planning the meetings. I decided that I wanted to hold one meeting a month, with the main emphasis of the group being social activities. I decided that the group would begin in the summer with an opening day of activities at the park. From there a more permanent time and place would be established. The first meeting would involve a series of icebreaker activities, along with different games. The first meeting would involve the families, and the group would decide on who could come after that. Some ideas for future meeting places included the audiologist's office, the Brethren Home, and a gathering area of a local business. I made plans to contact the local newspapers and to make flyers announcing the first meeting. There is also a county publication that comes out every three months that publishes various meetings in it. I planned to announce the formation of the new group in that publication. However, right before the first meeting time was established, I ran into some

problems with liability issues and was no longer able to actually hold the meetings for the support group.

Obstacles Encountered

Throughout this project there were many obstacles that I had to triumph over. The first hurdle I had to overcome was finding the research I needed in order to start a support group. Starting out I had very little knowledge about how to start a group. I had a little bit of experience with running groups since I had been on several executive boards of clubs, along with being president of one club. There were very few books on the subject of forming support groups, and even less information on forming a group for children who are hearing impaired. Most of the information I found was on the starting of other types of disability related groups, which I then I had to apply and fine tune to fit children with hearing impairments. All of my information was taken from various websites wince there were no published sources with good information on how to being support groups, especially for those with a hearing loss.

The second major complication I encountered was publicizing and recruiting members for this support group. Although I knew that if people heard about the group they would want to join, it was very hard for me to know that everyone who was eligible to join the group had gotten the information about the group. From various sources, I had heard that the school officials had not passed out the materials to the appropriate students. My best response came from the letters that were mailed out by the local audiologists. I often wondered if more people knew about the group, if there would have been a better turnout. It was very frustrating to me to know that there was this great opportunity out there that children would be missing out on because there were people who were not

willing to distribute the necessary information. It also made me wonder how many other wonderful opportunities the children in the school systems may have been missing out on because the school administrators simply overlooked the material.

The third obstacle I encountered was finding a day and time that worked out for everyone. When I sent out the applications I asked for the best days and times that would work out. Every application had a different preference. I did not want to pick a day that favored any one person. Once I scheduled the first meeting, I called everyone to see if they would be able to make it, and none of them were available. This group of children was a very active bunch, and most of them had some sort of prior engagement almost everyday of the week. Although I do believe that once there was a schedule established, it would have been easier to get the members together. I also assume that once the summer was over the children would have been less busy.

Although these three complications were very challenging to rise above, the most difficult hardship with this project was when I was told I could no longer hold the meetings for the support group because of liability reasons. It was very upsetting to me that I had to tell these children that I could no longer provide them with the social atmosphere to make new friends with others who have a hearing impairment. Children are resilient, and I know that while they may have been upset initially, they would be back to their life before the group. Because I could no longer hold the meetings for this group, I had to make some modifications to the final outcome of my project. I could no longer make a scrapbook of the group, so instead I chose to make an outline of what the scrapbook would include. I also included several sample flyers announcing events, a sample press release and announcement, and some agendas for potential meetings in the

future. I decided to view this project as a layout for a future group that I will put together once I am finished with my college education.

Future Endeavors

This project is a very important foundation for my future undertakings as an audiologist. One of my most important goals of my life is to help other people who have a hearing loss acquire a more positive outlook about it because with a less negative view will come a greater acceptance of the hearing impairment. With the greater acceptance of a hearing loss will slowly come the diminishing of the stereotypes that go with any disability. While growing up I always wanted to have that friend who was just like me and understood what it was like to wear hearing aids. I think it is very important that children now have that opportunity that I was not given.

Although I could not achieve this goal with this creative project, it allowed me to lay the foundation for a future support group. I have done the research and have written several sample agenda, flyers, cover letters, and applications that I can use for reference in the future. This project has allowed me to grasp the knowledge of how to form and organize a group, which will not only be beneficial to me when starting another support group, but will be valuable to me in future employment positions.

References

www.agbell.org

www.HEARindiana.org

www.ohionline.osu.edu/ss-fact/0182.html

www.parenttoparent.org/Sup-run.htm

www.spinalcord.org

APPENDIXES

Materials for Future Use

- Appendix A: Scrapbook Outline
- Appendix B: Application Packet
- Appendix C: Letters to professionals
- Appendix D: Flyers
- Appendix E: Announcement
- Appendix F: Press Release
- Appendix G: Agendas
- Appendix H: Regret Letter

APPENDIX A:

SCRAPBOOK OUTLINE

Scrapbook

The scrapbook would be a gift from me to the children who have participated in the support group, which would have been given to them at the holiday party in December. This scrapbook would be a reminder to them of the fun times that they had shared with their newfound friends over the year of the support group. I would want the input from the different members of the club, along with their help in designing several of the pages in the scrapbook. The scrapbook would include the following items:

- I. Personal letter to each member from me describing their most positive traits, so that during the difficult times in life, they could turn back to my letter and receive some inspiration to continue ahead.
- II. Picture and personal description of each child in the group. The children would help write their own personal page. I also want some positive traits listed from the other group members.
- III. Pictures and descriptions of the monthly events that are held, which will remind them of all of the fun times during the social interactions with other hearing impaired people.
- IV. Newspaper clippings-My goal was to get the local papers to do a feature article on the group and the members of the group. The exposure would also help to erase some of those stereotypes associated with children and hearing loss.

APPENDIX B:

APPLICATION PACKET

February 5, 2002

Dear prospective support group members,

I am a junior at Ball State University majoring in pre-audiology and will graduate in May 2003. I am also a part of the Honors College and working on my senior honors thesis which involves starting a support group for children who are hearing impaired. After finishing my undergraduate degree, I plan to attend graduate school to obtain my Doctor of Audiology (Au.D.) degree and then practice as a clinical audiologist in a private practice.

My reasons for starting the support group are personal. I graduated from Versailles High School in Versailles, Ohio, in 1999. While growing up, I dealt with an event that most other children did not: at the age of five I was diagnosed with a moderate to moderately severe bilateral hearing loss. Hearing loss is a trait that is passed through my family; my grandmother, mother, sister, six aunts and uncles, and nine cousins are all hard of hearing. Despite the tremendous amount of family support I had, there were still many times I felt alone. A hearing loss is very difficult to adjust to, especially for children since it is relatively uncommon. I desperately wanted to be friends with someone who was my age who had a hearing loss.

And so, for my senior honors project, I am starting a support group for children who are hard of hearing and their families in the Darke County, Ohio, area. My hopes are that this support group will allow the children to make friends with other children like themselves and find a role model, have a positive impact on their ability to cope with hearing loss and, hopefully, give them a greater ability to succeed later in life. I intend to plan different events throughout the year to allow the kids to get to know each other such as: bowling, a cookout, swimming, games day, day camp, movies, and a holiday party. (If you have any other ideas, please let me know!) I also want to include the families because I feel that sometimes families can feel isolated. There will be some sessions where the families can ask each other questions or just talk.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this support group. It is my hope that this support group will have a positive impact on everyone. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me anytime at (765) 214-9909

Sincerely,

Alison Bruns

Alison Bruns
25 Klipple Hall
Muncie, IN 47306
(765) 214-9909
ambruns@bsu.edu

Mary Jo Germani, Ph.D., CCC-SLP
Department Chairperson
& Senior Honors Thesis Advisor
(765) 285-8162; (765) 285-5623 (fax)
mgermani@bsu.edu

Darke County Support Group for Children with Hearing Impairment

The purpose of this support group is to give children with hearing impairment in Darke County, Ohio, the opportunity to form a network of friends who are also hearing impaired by involving them in different social activities throughout the school year. It will also serve to give the families a place to find support among other families who have a child who is hard of hearing. To help me make the support group as beneficial and fun as possible, please fill out the following information:

Child's Name _____ Age: _____ Gender: M or F

Parents' Names: _____

Other family members involved: _____

Address: _____

Phone (_____) _____ E-mail: _____

School Attending: _____ Current Grade: _____

1. What are some of your child's favorites activities?

2. What are some of your child's least favorite activities?

3. What would your family and your child like to get out of this support group?

4. Does your family have a lot of contact with other children who are hearing impaired and their families?

5. Does the whole family want to get involved or just your child? If more than just the child, please list who else will be involved and his/her relationship to the child?

6. What are the best days and times for this support group to meet for you and your family?

Please return this form as soon as it is convenient to:

Alison Bruns
c/o Beltone Hearing and Audiology Service
303 S. Broadway
Greenville, OH 45331
Fax: (937) 548-4562

If you have any questions, you can contact Beltone Hearing and Audiology Service at (937) 548-4242 or you can reach me at Ball State University at (765) 214-9909 and ambruns@bsu.edu.

Thank You!

APPENDIX C:

LETTERS TO PROFESSIONALS

February 7, 2002

Dear professional,

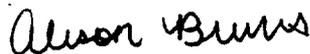
I am a junior at Ball State University majoring in pre-audiology and will graduate in May 2003. I am also a part of the Honors College and working on my senior honors thesis which involves starting a support group for children who are hearing impaired. After finishing my undergraduate degree, I plan to attend graduate school to obtain my Doctor of Audiology (Au.D.) degree and then practice as a clinical audiologist in a private practice.

My reasons for starting the support group are personal. I graduated from Versailles High School in Versailles, Ohio, in 1999. While growing up, I dealt with an event that most other children did not: at the age of five I was diagnosed with a moderate to moderately severe bilateral hearing loss. Hearing loss is a trait that is passed through my family; my grandmother, mother, sister, six aunts and uncles, and nine cousins are all hard of hearing. Despite the tremendous amount of family support I had, there were still many times I felt alone. A hearing loss is very difficult to adjust to, especially for children since it is relatively uncommon. I desperately wanted to be friends with someone who was my age who had a hearing loss.

And so, for my senior honors project, I am starting a support group for children who are hard of hearing and their families in the Darke County, Ohio, area. My hopes are that this support group will allow the children to make friends with other children like themselves and find a role model, have a positive impact on their ability to cope with hearing loss and, hopefully, give them a greater ability to succeed later in life. I intend to plan different events throughout the year to allow the kids to get to know each other such as: bowling, a cookout, swimming, games day, day camp, movies, and a holiday party. (If you have any other ideas, please let me know!) I also want to include the families because I feel that sometimes families can feel isolated. There will be some sessions where the families can ask each other questions or just talk.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation in helping me locate members for this support group. It is my hope that this support group will have a positive impact on everyone. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me anytime at (765) 214-9909.

Sincerely,



Alison Bruns
25 Klipple Hall
Muncie, IN 47306
(765) 214-9909
ambruns@bsu.edu

Mary Jo Germani, Ph.D., CCC-SLP
Department Chairperson
& Senior Honors Thesis Advisor
(765) 285-8162; (765) 285-5623 (fax)
mgermani@bsu.edu

February 11, 2002

To Sertoma:

I am a junior at Ball State University majoring in pre-audiology and will graduate in May 2003. I am also a part of the Honors College and working on my senior honors thesis which involves starting a support group for children who are hearing impaired. After finishing my undergraduate degree, I plan to attend graduate school to obtain my Doctor of Audiology (Au.D.) degree and then practice as a clinical audiologist in a private practice.

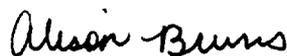
My reasons for starting the support group are personal. I graduated from Versailles High School in Versailles, Ohio, in 1999. While growing up, I dealt with an event that most other children did not: at the age of five I was diagnosed with a moderate to moderately severe bilateral hearing loss. Hearing loss is a trait that is passed through my family; my grandmother, mother, sister, six aunts and uncles, and nine cousins are all hard of hearing. Despite the tremendous amount of family support I had, there were still many times I felt alone. A hearing loss is very difficult to adjust to, especially for children since it is relatively uncommon. I desperately wanted to be friends with someone who was my age who had a hearing loss.

And so, for my senior honors project, I am starting a support group for children who are hard of hearing and their families in the Darke County, Ohio, area. My hopes are that this support group will allow the children to make friends with other children like themselves and find a role model, have a positive impact on their ability to cope with hearing loss and, hopefully, give them a greater ability to succeed later in life. I intend to plan different events throughout the year to allow the kids to get to know each other such as: bowling, a cookout, swimming, games day, day camp, movies, and a holiday party. I also plan to make a scrapbook from the first year of the support group for each child that is involved.

However, I want this support group to be something that everyone can participate in, so I am asking for financial assistance to help provide for the costs of this support group. I do not want anyone to have to pay to participate in this support group. Costs in this support group will include costs of various activities held throughout the year, refreshments for the meetings, and scrapbook supplies for the scrapbooks for each person.

Thank you in advance for your financial assistance in this support group. It is my hope that this support group will have a positive impact on everyone. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me anytime at (765) 214-9909.

Sincerely,



Alison Bruns
25 Klipple Hall
Muncie, IN 47306
(765) 214-9909
ambruns@bsu.edu

Mary Jo Germani, Ph.D., CCC-SLP
Department Chairperson
& Senior Honors Thesis Advisor
(765) 285-8162; (765) 285-5623 (fax)
mgermani@bsu.edu

March 27, 2002

Dear Name of SLP,

I am starting a support group for children who are hearing impaired in Darke County, Ohio, and I am writing to give you some information.

I am a junior at Ball State University majoring in pre-audiology and will graduate in May 2003. I am also a part of the Honors College and working on my senior honors thesis. After finishing my undergraduate degree, I plan to attend graduate school to obtain my Doctor of Audiology (Au.D.) degree and then practice as a clinical audiologist in a private practice.

My senior honors thesis involves starting a support group for children who are hearing impaired in Darke County, Ohio. I would like every child to be given the opportunity to participate in this group, and so, I would like your help in recruiting members for this support group. I would greatly appreciate it if you could distribute the enclosed information to any students who are hearing impaired. As a courtesy, I have also shared this information with the school principals via Lisa Combs, who distributed the information at a recent principals meeting.

Thank you in advance for your help in recruiting members for this group. It is my hope that the support group will have a positive impact on everyone involved. If you have any questions, please contact me anytime at (765) 214-9909.

Sincerely,

Alison Bruns

Alison Bruns
25 Klipple Hall
Muncie, IN 47306
(765) 214-9909
ambruns@bsu.edu

Mary Jo Germani, Ph.D., CCC-SLP
Department Chairperson
& Senior Honors Thesis Advisor
(765) 285-8162; (765) 285-5623 (fax)
mgermani@bsu.edu

APPENDIX D:

FLYERS

it's Time.....

What: The first meeting of the
Darke County Support
Group for Children who
are Hearing Impaired

Where: Greenville City Park

When: Saturday June 1, 2002
1:00 pm

Why: Meet your new friends

Who: Anyone who would like to come

Coming December 1st

What: Holiday Party

Where: YMCA gathering area

When: December 1

Who: Members and Family Members

**Please bring a \$5 White Elephant
Gift for Exchange**

APPENDIX E:

ANNOUNCEMENT

Announcement

A support group for children who are hearing impaired and their families is now being formed in Darke County, Ohio. The format of this group will be a support/social group with educational information and speakers at some meetings. The details of the first meeting are:

Date: Saturday, June 1, 2002
Time: 1:00 p.m.
Place: Greenville City Park
Format: Social gathering
Contact: Alison Bruns at 526-5982

The first meeting will be a social gathering for the children who are hearing impaired and will be a time for them to get to know each other. Dates, times, and location for future meetings will also be discussed.

I would appreciate your referrals to this group. If you or anyone would like more information about the group, please call Alison Bruns at (937) 526-5982.

I would also appreciate you posting this announcement on all appropriate bulletin boards.

Thank you so much for your cooperation. With your help I will be able to reach many more people.h

APPENDIX F:

PRESS RELEASE

Darke County Support Group for Children with Hearing Impairment
8681 Burns Rd
Versailles, OH 45380
(937) 526-5982

Dates: May 1, 2002

For Immediate Release

PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Alison Bruns, Director: (937) 526-5982

NEW SUPPORT GROUP FOR CHILDREN WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT

A new social and support group for children with a hearing impairment and their families is being established for members of Darke County, Ohio.

This group is for school aged children in Darke County, Ohio. There will be social events held monthly, along with guest speakers and educational information for the parents. Topics that will be covered include: liability issues and hearing impairments, FM systems, and psychological implications of a hearing loss.

The children and parents are invited to attend. There is no charge to participate and registration is not required. Darke County Support Group for Children with Hearing Impairment will have its first meeting on Saturday, June 1, 2002 at Greenville City Park at 1:00 p.m. Information on the dates, times, and locations for future meetings will also be discussed at the first meeting.

For additional information, please call Alison Bruns at 526-5982 or e-mail at ambruns@bsu.edu.

APPENDIX G:

AGENDAS

Agenda
Initial Meeting

- I. Introductions:
 - a. Myself
 - i. Background
 - ii. Why formed this group
 - b. Other members
 - i. Age
 - ii. Where from
 - iii. Family
 - iv. Favorite activities
- II. Ground Rules for the group
- III. Volunteers to help run group
- IV. Icebreakers:
 - a. M&M game
 - i. Everyone grabs a handful of M&M's. For every one they have, they must tell something about themselves.
 - b. 2 truths and 1 lie
 - i. Everyone must give 3 things about themselves, however, one of them should not be true
- V. Games
 - a. Read my Lips
 - b. Park games
- VI. Next meeting
 - a. Ceil Hosfeld-guest speaker on how to take care of hearing aids
- VII. Refreshments

Agenda

- I. Introduction of new members
 - a. If there are any
- II. Icebreaker
 - a. Favorite flavor of ice cream
- III. Guest speakers
 - a. Older hearing impaired kids to talk to younger hearing impaired kids about challenges and difficulties they have faced
 - b. Round table discussion
- IV. Trip to Dairy Queen for ice cream

APPENDIX H:

REGRET LETTER

May 30, 2002

Dear (name):

I regret to inform you that because of liability issues, I can no longer start the Darke County Support Group for Children who are Hearing impaired. However, Ceil Hosfeld of Beltone Hearing and Audiology Service in Greenville, Ohio has been generous enough to sponsor one meeting so that the kids can meet each other and exchange contact information. The enclosed flyer has all of the details pertaining to this meeting.

Thank you for all of your support in regards to this support group. If I can ever be of assistance feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Alison Bruns
8681 Burns Rd
Versailles, OH 45380
(937)526-5982
ambruns@bsu.edu

Mary Jo Germani, Ph.D., CCC-SLP
Department Chairperson
& Senior Honors Thesis Advisor
(765) 285-8162; (765) 285-5623 (fax)
mgermani@bsu.edu