



**WHAT DOES
THE FUTURE HOLD?**

NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL HEARING PROGRAM/CENTER ANNUAL FAMILY PICNIC



Dr. D. Richard Kang with his bright and shining stars.



WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

“DON'T DEFINE YOUR CHILD BY THEIR HEARING LOSS. YES, IT IS HARD IN THE BEGINNING, THE UNKNOWN IS SCARY, BUT IT WILL GET BETTER. IT WILL ALL BE WORTH IT THE 1ST TIME YOUR CHILD SAYS 'I LOVE YOU.'”

“WE EXPECT THAT OUR CHILD WILL CONTINUE TO BE AN ADVOCATE FOR HIMSELF, BECAUSE HE IS SUCCESSFUL AND SHOULD BE VERY PROUD OF ALL THAT HE HAS ACCOMPLISHED. OUR CHILD IS AN INSPIRATION TO OUR FAMILY EVERYDAY.”

Anything is possible!

Children with hearing loss now have opportunities to hear well enough to have full access to sounds and develop spoken language. With tremendous advancements in medical treatment options, including recent improvements in amplification technologies and cochlear implants, children can fully communicate in the hearing and speaking world.

As research has shown, early detection and early intervention will have a better outcome for your child. The time and effort that you as parents invest into your child's early intervention will benefit them for life.

As your child matures, be prepared for challenges along the way. Be positive, be supportive, and listen to your child's insights and concerns. You are your child's primary role model and they will learn from your example. You will always be an advocate for your child, but as they mature they will learn to advocate for themselves.

As they transition through the teen years, talk with them about their interests and guide them toward future options. Continue to focus on your child's abilities rather than their hearing loss. Inspire your child toward their educational or career options by assessing their strengths and interests. Opportunities are abundant, and your child has many options and choices to consider.

Their future is bright! Help them reach their full potential.

A Parent's Personal Story

Your Future Can Be Full of Promise!

When our daughter, Annie, was born, we were thrilled! She was perfect! And then, gradually, we began to think she wasn't hearing us. Our pediatrician thought we were overstating our concern, but we finally persuaded him to arrange a hearing examination that took place when she was 15 months old. The diagnosis of a severe-to-profound hearing loss was a real blow. As first-time parents, we barely knew what to do with a baby, much less what to do with a baby with hearing loss who was turning quickly into a toddler. My main concern as a teacher of English and reading was that she wouldn't develop enough spoken language to learn how to read. I thought maybe I could live without my child being able to talk to me, but was horrified that she might not be able to read and write capably. So, now I'm writing this to tell you about our experience—our baby is now thirty-two years old, and she's still perfect!

The news of Annie's hearing loss was accompanied by all kinds of advice: don't expect that she'll go to "regular" school; put her in a school for the deaf; keep your expectations low, as it will be hard to communicate with her; prepare her to do simple work as an adult; and beware that your marriage could fall apart. We spent a short time being very unhappy. Luckily, we didn't really know what to expect, so we put those ideas aside and got busy with hearing aids, "auditory therapy" appointments in which we banged on pots and pans, and weekly meetings with an itinerant teacher of the deaf. We went on that way for a while and about a year into this, the itinerant teacher told us about a clinic in Pennsylvania another family she worked with had just discovered: The Helen Beebe Speech and Hearing Center.

We had to wait a few months for our appointment, and Annie was 2½ at our first visit. As we waited in Beebe's waiting room, we passed the time with a delightful high school student who told us all about his recent trip to Italy with his Latin class. He was perfectly understandable, he responded easily to our questions, and he spoke with a slight accent. We thought perhaps he was British. Beebe came in and introduced herself and then turned to her student and welcomed him back from his trip. I suspect she planted David in her waiting room to give us the hope we needed, for he was a "rubella baby" who had become profoundly deaf as a toddler! He had learned from Beebe how to listen, and his proficiency with language was astonishing.

From that moment, we dedicated ourselves to talk, talk, talking with Annie and to making sure she always had the best listening equipment possible. We formed good relationships with her Auditory-Verbal speech and language therapists, driving countless miles to make sure we were all receiving the best therapy and acting on the best advice available. We learned to play word games with strategic purpose. We read with Annie daily and made experience books with her. We talked with her about everything we did with her and took the time to wait for and encourage her answers. As she gained more language skill, we helped her with articulation, vocabulary, and word order. When she appeared not to listen, we directed her attention to what was being said. We repeated ourselves, even when we were tired of doing so. We deferred vacations and incurred debt to pay for the equipment and its daily upkeep. This was the hardest work we had ever done, because success required that we do it all, all day, every day. This may sound too hard, but I can assure you it is not. It became our way of life that enriched our family immeasurably. We have a younger child, a son with typical hearing, and the four of us are very close and highly open and communicative with each other, even though, now that our children are adults, we now live in three different states. We speak with each other using cell phones on a regular basis. At the beginning I could only imagine a good outcome, but now we have come to understand our daughter's hearing loss as making our lives better.

The Auditory-Verbal approach has meant that Annie has gone to preschool, elementary school, middle school, high school, college, and two graduate schools, all with her peers with typical hearing. About ten years ago, she lost what little hearing she had, and we got her into surgery for a cochlear implant as soon as possible. Since then, she has worked as an admission counselor for Kalamazoo College and as a rehabilitation counselor for the University of Wisconsin at Madison, her alma maters. In June, she is marrying a wonderful young man who is a doctor and a cochlear implant user, and at the end of August, she'll be Dr. Robertson, a clinical psychologist with a Psy.D. degree who will spend her career listening to others.

We're proud and happy for her because she is a whole and healthy human being who lives easily with all kinds of people with whom she communicates effectively. As you think about your own child, I hope that is your goal for him or her.

By Lyn Robertson



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