

# Shoreline Area NEWS

News, events and information about Shoreline and Lake Forest Park.

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## ABOUT SHORELINE AREA NEWS

We are Shoreline residents who strive to provide you with news and information about the area in which we live and work. We cover Shoreline, Lake Forest Park, and some events and destinations in surrounding areas.

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## School in Shoreline devoted to deaf children prepares students for success

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2013



To encourage students to speak in grammatically correct sentences, all communication from teachers to children at NWSFHIC is spoken and signed concurrently.

*100 percent graduate high school; 67 percent graduate college; 85 percent have jobs*

*By Laura Follis*

Every day, four-year-old Kaden follows the same routine upon arrival at Northwest School for Hearing-Impaired Children (NWSFHIC) located near Seattle in the city of Shoreline. "Knock on the door Kaden," says Linda the receptionist, as she simultaneously signs the words. "Knock on the door Kaden," she repeats with her hands and voice. As Kaden moves toward the

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Third Place

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classroom door, his bus driver smiles at Linda and reports, “He kept his (cochlear) implant on for the entire ride today.” District personnel, school staff and the bus driver are all part of Kaden’s team.

*“Listen now,” Linda says and signs to Kaden. He stands by the closed door and waits for his teacher’s voice to welcome him from the other side. “Hi, Kaden,” comes the sound of Ms. Fuson, his teacher of the deaf. Hearing it, Kaden opens the door with a grin. “Nice to see you Kaden,” Ms. Fuson says and signs with a return smile.*

This mindful repetition nourishes the emerging listening, speech and English language development of Kaden, one of 40 students in preschool through eighth grade at Northwest School for Hearing-Impaired Children. The only school of its kind in the country, NWSFHIC contracts with 22 school districts throughout the Puget Sound – from Hood Canal to the Cascades; from Auburn/Kent Valley to Skagit Valley – to provide free education and transportation to qualifying students.

Years from now, Kaden will join the 100 percent of NWSFHIC grads who complete high school. He also is likely to join the more than two-thirds of NWSFHIC alumni who graduate from college, and the 85 percent who are employed and live independently of their parents. These statistics well exceed national averages. A 2001 study conducted by researchers in the field found only 30 percent of all young adults who were deaf or hard of hearing received college degrees, 63 percent were employed, and 42 percent lived on their own.

Why do students at NWSFHIC overachieve? From its beginning in 1982, the school’s curriculum has been based on the textbook Teaching the Hearing-Impaired Through Total Communication, authored by the school’s co-founders Karen Appelman and Judy Callahan, teachers of the deaf who met while working in the public school system. The program focuses on spoken communication paired with simultaneous Signing Exact English (S.E.E.), in which the speaker signs every important part of each word (known as the morphemes), using grammatically correct English. To encourage students to speak in complete sentences, all communication from teachers to children at NWSFHIC is spoken and signed concurrently. Today, NWSFHIC is recognized as a national leader in S.E.E. education and is known for continually refining its curriculum as assistive listening

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 Comments



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technology improves.

*“S.E.E. helps children make sense of the auditory input provided by their cochlear implants or hearing aids. If they can’t hear certain words or parts of words, we supply them with S.E.E. signs so that grammatically correct English is developed for academics and social communication,” explains Dr. Barbara Luetke, the school’s outreach and literacy coordinator and mother of two grown deaf daughters who were raised on the S.E.E. method. (One daughter is a senior at the University of North Texas; the other holds a master’s degree and recently started her first job.)*

Hearing children understand and use some 50 prefixes and suffixes (such as pre- and -ly) by the time they are six years old. With S.E.E., students with hearing loss can also learn these important parts of words needed for independent reading. Studies conducted by Dr. Luetke and others show most NWSFHIC students read on or above grade level and avoid a fourth grade plateau—a common experience among deaf and hard of hearing learners not exposed to S.E.E. These results have been published in national academic journals and are highlighted in Dr. Luetke’s book, Deaf Students Can Be Great Readers. “There is simply no reason why a child with hearing loss cannot read on grade level,” she says, “and our track record at NWSFHIC proves that.”

To address the varied diverse needs of students with hearing loss, NWSFHIC offers many unique programs. One bi-lingual teacher of the deaf visits the homes of Spanish-speaking parents to teach S.E.E. and the communication strategies used at school. Six children at NWSFHIC were adopted from China and staff has worked to bring these parents together to share their stories and find resources.

*“Our ultimate goal, says Head of School Dr. Peggy Mayer, “is to create self-confident, articulate, academically competitive learners and community members who demonstrate that hearing loss is a difference, not a disability.”*

Thankful parents say their children are proof that goal is being

met. "NWSFHIC has been a literal 'GOD-send'," effuses Shoreline resident Loke Asing. "My daughter is finally in a school environment with other students just like her, and is working with professionals who understand that communication needs to be the number one priority. Zoelei loves NWSFHIC and has already built an astounding level of confidence since being there."

Glen and Lori Cook say their eight-year-old daughter Norah "loves her school because it is where her teachers and friends speak her language. The amazing educators at NWSFHIC are turning a once frustrated little girl with no language into a very smart, spirited, talkative/signing and opinionated young lady."

Northwest School for Hearing-Impaired Children is the only preschool through eighth grade school for deaf and hard of hearing children in the State of Washington. The staff works with parents and school district teams to create Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) and monitors each student to determine when he/she no longer requires the school's intensive specially designed instruction and is prepared to return to their home school general education program.

Approximately 15 percent of U.S. children six to 19 years of age have hearing loss of at least 16 decibels in one or both ears according to a 1998 study published in Journal of the American Medical Association.

Dr. Barbara Luetke of Northwest School for Hearing-Impaired Children says a tour of the school is the first step in determining if NWSFHIC is appropriate for a child. Call the school at 206-364-4605 to schedule a personal tour and receive an information packet available in English or Spanish. A fun way for parents with infants, toddlers or preschoolers with hearing loss to meet each other and school staff is at the monthly Friday night movie/game nights and Saturday playgroups. To sign up for these events, [contact Barbara Luetke](#) at 206-364-4605. More information about NWSFHIC is available on the [school website](#).

Contact NWSFHIC if you have any of the following concerns about a child who is deaf or hard of hearing:

- Without a teacher of the deaf on the educational team
- Listening and speech not developing as would be expected of hearing peers
- Not reading on grade-level
- Difficulty following directions

- Disorganized and confused
- Falling behind academically
- Unintelligible speech
- Trouble making friends

Posted by DKH at 10:29 PM 

Tags: schools

**5 COMMENTS:**

Jesse, September 3, 2013 at 4:18 PM

It sounds like great work is being done here. I'm very impressed!

Jesse Salomon  
Shoreline City Councilmember

Anonymous, September 3, 2013 at 5:28 PM

My 2 hearing-impaired children attended NWSFHIC -- the school was truly a life-changer for both of them (and thus for our family). I cannot speak highly enough of the school, its dedicated founders and directors, and its talented teachers. My kids, now in college, are both happy to be able to visit as 'alums.' THANK YOU Judy, Karen, and Peggy, for your amazing work!

Tom Jamieson, September 3, 2013 at 8:11 PM

Yes, the School is doing great work, thanks to an excellent board and staff. But the City of Shoreline has put that great work at risk by forcing the School's inclusion against their will in its Community Renewal Area (CRA) at Aurora Square.

In public comment, Dr. Mayer, told the City Council at its September 4, 2012 meeting that the School did not want to be part of the CRA. "We can't do that (great) work in a noisy environment." She said that they try to teach the kids to use their residual hearing, and that would be hard to do with construction noise in the area.

For his part, Councilmember Salomon tried (along with Deputy Mayor Chris Eggen) to exclude the School from the CRA, to no avail.

The others on the Council, and the staff are convinced they, not the School, know what's best for the School.

Councilmember Doris McConnell opposed the exclusion, saying, "I personally believe it is a mistake that you want to be exempted because I think it is a little short-sighted...You might have cut yourself at the ankles for possible improvements and or ability to make a great profit for when

you want to move on or whatever "

Despite the management decision by the School's board to opt out, Mayor Keith McGlashan felt the School is more a part of Aurora Square than it is of the surrounding neighborhood, and so should be "at the table".

What does this say? The Council and staff's interpretation of the state's Community Renewal Law is abominable. The law exists for the public good, not for the benefit of the property owners. The audacity to publicly question the prudence of a private enterprise's own business decision with absolutely no knowledge themselves of the business factors influencing the School.

Councilmember Shari Winstead opposed the School's exemption for a different reason. "Your heart's in the right place," she said. "I certainly don't want to go against your wishes either, but at the same time, I look at my fellow councilmembers, and I remind all of us that we were elected to do the work of the City as a whole, not for one person, not for one business, but for the entire community, and so we really need...to look at the big picture, and I'll leave it at that."

The good of the entire community? Not if that community include NW School. And so what is the big picture? Taxable revenue, according to Economic Development Program Manager Dan Eernisse. Since at least 2003 (the Buxton Study), the City of Shoreline has been trying to figure out how to cash in on Aurora Square. The fact that the area brings in a fraction of the sales tax per acre of an Aurora Village led to the Council's stigmatizing Aurora Square as "economically blighted." On that argument, anything that benefits the City's bottom line could be used to trump individual property rights. You won't find NW School ahead of the national average for long with that kind of overreach by our local government.

The NW School for Hearing Impaired Children has an impeccable reputation for doing a great job for 3 decades. The City of Shoreline can take no credit for that. But should the School falter in the wake of being forced into the CRA gamble, you can be sure the City will get blame all for themselves. No consolation for the kids who will suffer.

Leave the School alone. As Dr. Mayer rightly observed, it is "a gem" in Shoreline.

Peggy Mayer, September 6, 2013 at 5:32 PM

Thanks Mr. Jamieson for your kind comments about NW School for Hearing-Impaired Children. I want to clarify that while the school would still like an exemption from participation in the CRA, we will continue to do the Shoreline community proud by being the gem of deaf education in the region with or without it. As I have noted in my comments to the City Council, the interests of commercial property owners are clearly different from those of a school. But make no mistake, whether or not we are members of the Shoreline Area CRA, Northwest School for Hearing-Impaired Children will continue to do great work that benefits children with

hearing loss throughout the King-Snohomish county area for generations to come.

--Peggy Mayer, Ed.D., Head of School,  
NW School for Hearing-Impaired Children

Tom Jamieson, September 6, 2013 at 11:48 PM

I am sure you will, Dr. Mayer. Keep up the great work!

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