

# THE B.I.G. NEWS

## BUFFALO IMPLANT GROUP

COMMUNICATING ▶ SHARING ▶ COUNSELING ▶ SUPPORTING



### UPCOMING EVENTS

B.I.G. Meeting	June 7
B.I.G. Picnic	Aug 4
Walk4Hearing	Oct 8

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### MEETING NOTICE:

Wednesday, June 7  
6:00 – 8:00 pm  
St. Mary's School for the Deaf  
2253 Main St. - Buffalo

## A Cochlear Implant User's Experience

By Sister Dorothy Feltz

In mid-life I began to experience hearing difficulties. An Audiologist gave me a hearing test, which indicated that I had a profound hearing loss. I was fitted with bilateral hearing aids.

I did well with the aids for quite a few years. However, by the time I reached the early weeks of 2005, I began to notice that even my hearing aids were no longer giving me much help. More testing with my Audiologist revealed the fact that my hearing had decreased considerably. He suggested that I think about a cochlear implant (C.I.). "A cochlear implant," I asked. "What's that?" Now that I am an implant user I find that very few people have heard of a cochlear implant.

It was suggested that I go to Buffalo Hearing and Speech Center and that there they would explain the whole cochlear implant process to me. There I encountered a group of wonderful professionals who were ready and willing to help me in every way possible to understand the process. They gave me literature and CD's which I both listened to, and studied and studied.

Three years prior to my C.I., I joined the Buffalo Implant Group (B.I.G.) and attended meeting after meeting where I asked question after question of people in the group who were implant users. What a wonderful experience to meet the many helpful and understanding people! I enjoyed the camaraderie both at the meetings and at our fun-filled late-Summer picnic. I continue to be an active member of the group.



Finally! Finally! After being declared a candidate I decided to be implanted with the Cochlear Freedom in my right ear. I then went through all of the necessary procedures in order to arrange for a cochlear implant in my right ear.

The day of the surgery arrived, November 14, 2008. Dr. Ernesto Diaz-Ordaz, the "miracle worker," was at my bedside before the surgery to be certain that all was well with me. I was pleased to know that I able to go home the same day.

After the surgery I woke up with a big gauze bandage around my head. I don't remember any pain. The next day, I was up and around and the bandage was removed.

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# President's Corner

By Sue Wantuck

Finally the weather here in Buffalo is starting to change with warmer temperatures and sunshine with some occasional rain!

On March 8 we had our first B.I.G. general meeting of the year. Our guest presenter was Jamie Sklarski, Northeast Clinical Specialist for Advanced Bionics. She shared all of the company's newest information, technology and accessories. We had a good turn out with many UB students, current members and area professionals. I would have liked to have seen more parents of children who are users, and we will continue efforts to reach out to area families to offer support and education. Technology is constantly changing and it can certainly be confusing and overwhelming. Please reach out to us if you have questions or concerns. We are here to help!

At the end of April I attended the third World Deaf Hockey Championship, which was held at the Northtown Center in Amherst, NY. It was a wonderful experience. I am really glad that I went! I watched the women's Canadian and USA teams play. There is one Deaf woman on the USA team who is a cochlear implant user from Amherst. You would be surprised to know that the players are not allowed to wear amplification while on the ice, for safety reasons and fairness to all. Also, many of these players are oral, with or without sign language. The Men's teams represented the USA, Canada, Finland, Czech Republic, and Kazakhstan. They stayed all week until the championship was held. The women's hockey teams were new to the competition this year and they hope to gain more players and teams in the future.

I hope to see many of you on June 7 at St. Mary's School for the Deaf from 6 to 8 pm. The presentation will be an update from Lori Davidson of Cochlear Americas. She will tell us about their NU5, NU6 and their newest technology, which is the Kanso.

Please come to learn and socialize with us! Happy Hearing!!



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## From the Editor

By Gail Cronin



I feel very blessed to be a member of the Board of the Buffalo Implant Group. We have such a lovely group of people, all of whom are very dedicated to our goals. They all have been very busy behind the scenes. This issue's cover story was written by our own Sr. Dorothy Feltz. As you may know, Sr. Dorothy is in charge of all of our raffles. She has been busy planning ahead for our summer basket raffle, which we hold each year at our annual picnic. Please start thinking about putting together a basket for the next one, which will take place on Friday, August 4. I recently found some interesting items on clearance, and I now plan to turn those items into three raffle baskets. I know that Sr. Dorothy is already obtaining donations and putting together a lot more than I am. Please get a jump on this project with us by thinking ahead to what you might be able to put

together. Our basket raffle is helping us to raise seed money for our scholarship program. The Board would like to put together a scholarship committee later this year. If you are interested in serving on that committee, see our President, Sue Wantuck.

Speaking of Sue, in addition to all her duties as President, she has been looking into having t-shirts made with our new logo, which hopefully will be available for sale by the summer picnic. The Board has chosen a design layout that will be printed on gray t-shirts. We hope that all our members and their families will support us by buying some, as this will be a fundraiser to help us cover our operating expenses. It will also be great advertising for us. It will be especially nice to have the shirts before the HLAA Walk4Hearing in October.

And on the subject of the Walk4Hearing, Board member Tracy Balon has written an article about that in this issue. She and Sue Wantuck and I all attended the recent information meeting about it in April. My hope is that we will have a large team of walkers this year since

the Walk is being moved from Fairport NY to our own backyard right here in Buffalo. It will be at Delaware Park on Sunday, October 8. Tracy is a Speech-Language Pathologist at Buffalo Hearing and Speech Center and frequently assists me with the newsletter by obtaining articles from parents and colleagues.

Board member Karen Ward also wrote an article for this issue. She and her husband Mike have been very busy developing the WNY Assistive Technology Project and she has written an update for us. Please consider contributing to this project by adding information to their database about the assistive devices you use in public places in WNY.

Vice President Margie Fitchlee, who writes for every issue of our newsletter, has been busy investigating future fundraising opportunities. Margie has been responsible for our last three Fall fundraisers, which has covered the bulk of our operating expenses.

Treasurer Lisa Hill Nowicki has been handling all of our finances, and is

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It's worthy to note that even though the doctor had a very busy day in the operating room he spent more time with me after surgery to answer any questions I may have had. I said, "Doctor, after

such a busy day you must be very tired." "No," he said, "I'm going home to walk my dog."

Then I waited for a month before the next visit with my Audiologist. I was given my processor and the mapping process began. At first I heard "squeaks and beeps" and then conversation. It was not perfect, but I was hearing. After many mappings I felt like a new person.

In December 2014 I upgraded my speech sound processor to the Nucleus 6 ear level processor and I continue to use a hearing aid in my left ear.

There is an adorable 1991 Family Circus comic which shows a little girl explaining to other children, "When you're tryin' to talk with somebody who doesn't understand English, you JUST SPEAK LOUDER!" At times that's my experience. If people realize that I'm

hearing impaired, they think yelling is necessary. However, just speaking slowly and clearly suffices. Understanding song lyrics is still a problem.

I wish to express my gratitude to my Audiologist, Michelle Dubé, who has been most patient with me when we meet every six months for mapping. I would also like to thank all the C.I. users in the Buffalo Implant Group who have helped me on the journey too. Also, the leadership team of my Sisters of St. Joseph Community encouraged me from the start. I'm grateful for my CapTel phone and vibrating alarm clock. They have been a great help to me. Life has been good. I'm out and about every day and do quite well. I wish to encourage others with severe hearing loss to check into the possibility of a cochlear implant so that their lives can be better too.

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## from the editor... *cont. from page 1*

currently working on a plan to contact people whose dues are in arrears. Lisa also handles all our newsletter labels and our email updates. She writes a Treasurer's Report in every issue and also provides me with a list of people to thank in our Many Thanks feature.

Secretary Melissa Burroughs, who is a Speech-Language Pathologist at St. Mary's School for the Deaf, has had a lot on her plate with maintaining all our records and correspondence. The Board has discussed it and has decided to divide the job of secretary into two distinct positions. One will be the Recording Secretary, who will keep meeting minutes and retain records. The other will be Corresponding Secretary, who will write letters, send thank-you notes, and relieve the treasurer from some of the secretarial tasks she has taken on. In order to make this change we need to vote on and update our by-laws. Melissa has been working on the change and this will be presented to the membership for a vote at the June 7 meeting. The change would then go into effect in 2018.

Gloria Matthews has been busy maintaining our social media presence on

Facebook and Twitter, as well as serving as a liaison to her employer, Deaf Access Services. She has written an article in this issue updating us on the American Sign Language class offerings at DAS.

Jessica Holst is our liaison to the cochlear implant manufacturers. She provides us with updates from the three corporations that make implants and keeps in contact with their representatives. As a Speech-Language Pathologist at St. Mary's School for the Deaf, Jessica is a member of several organizations that assist children with hearing loss and their families. She keeps us informed about legislative and regulatory action in the field, and has written an article about the EDHI program in this issue. Jessica also frequently assists me with the newsletter by recruiting parents to write for us as well.

JoAnn Hammer is our University liaison. She is the only Audiologist on our Board and is a great resource to us. She coordinates all our graduate student volunteers and secures many of our guest speakers.

Will Licata is our web designer and he maintains all aspects of our website. He is also our resident photographer. You can see his photos in every single issue of The B.I.G. News. We turn to Will for all aspects of tech support.

And finally, I would like to mention that Fr. Bob McArtney, who has been a dedicated member of our Board and our former photographer and web designer, has been ill recently. Fr. Bob is on oxygen now and has difficulty coming out for our meetings. We miss him terribly. I would ask that you all keep Fr. Bob in your prayers. It is my hope that he will be able to come to our next meeting and/or our summer picnic. Please pray for his recovery.

There will be one more issue of The B.I.G. News before the summer picnic on August 4. Joe Kolis, our Past President, coordinates the picnic and we appreciate all that he does. You can look for additional details in the Summer issue. If you are interested in writing an article for the Summer issue, please email it to me by Monday, June 19 at [gdchronin@roadrunner.com](mailto:gdchronin@roadrunner.com).

# Parents' Corner: Growing Up

By Jessica Jurusik

One of my biggest challenges as a mother has been letting our girls grow up. It can be a bittersweet feeling for a parent. This is especially true for

and feel comfortable doing so without me. At first, I struggled with how to make this happen so that we were both at ease. There were several areas that

that she knew how to play all sorts of kid games. The first few times we set foot on the playground I had a hard time taking a backseat. I stayed close by but tried my absolute hardest not to intervene. Sometimes she would choose to play with her sister Claire or would just run around on the playground by herself. But other times she would go up to kids and just stare at them or interject herself into their play without saying a word. I would take note and we just kept working on building those skills. Eventually it all came together and without any prompting from me she initiated play. Letting go of that control was very difficult for me because I did not want Kayleigh to get hurt but knew that she needed to do these things on her own and continue to grow.



our oldest daughter, Kayleigh. After being diagnosed with hearing loss and receiving her cochlear implants, all we wanted was for her to “grow up.” We could not wait for her to hit those milestones that we had been waiting so long for, for her to say “mommy” and “daddy” or smile big when she heard our voices. This time came and it was more amazing than we thought it would be, but Kayleigh also began growing faster than we could have ever imagined she would. It was not just her receptive and expressive language that was growing, it was her confidence and need for independence too.

For over three years I was her interpreter and essentially the bridge between her and those she was trying to communicate with. She did not need to advocate for herself because I was right there. This behavior is often typical for parents and their babies or young toddlers, but Kayleigh was getting older and I knew that she needed to start communicating and advocating for herself. I wanted her to make friends

concerned me most. The first being that when this need for independence started, Kayleigh was still speaking in two to three word phrases and her peers were far above that. The second, was that I wanted to make sure Kayleigh understood what someone was asking of her or telling her. And lastly, I never wanted her to miss anything because she did not hear it. I always wanted to give her the best advantage I could in every situation possible. I still try to do this but my tactics have changed.

In the past, when we would go to playgrounds, play dates, or children’s birthday parties, I would only be a few feet away ready to speak, interpret, and explain. I knew I could not pull these resources without putting something else into place, so we started prepping Kayleigh before we headed out. We made sure that she had the vocabulary for all things “kid.” We role played situations that often come up in play, and tried to give her language that was in her comfort zone. We practiced introducing ourselves and made sure

I can still remember the first time we went to the park and she told a child her name. Then she said, “Want to play me?” My first thought was that he probably did not catch her name and was not sure what she asked him because she did not say it perfectly. I was so scared that he would run off without acknowledging her attempts or worse yet, make fun of her in some way. I was wrong and before I could even think of intervening he told her his name and said, “Let’s go!” She looked over at me and smiled. She was more proud than I had ever seen her, and so was I. That was the first day I sat down on a bench at the park, just like all the other parents.

Letting her grow up is not easy, but watching her advocate for herself and build friendships all on her own is truly a blessing.

Jessica Jurusik

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607-426-0076 (call or text)

# Walk4Hearing Informational Meeting

By Tracy Balon



As many of you may have heard, the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) has decided to move the WNY Walk4Hearing to the Buffalo area!

This is very exciting news as it brings the Walk closer to us and opens the opportunity for more of us to participate in raising awareness of hearing loss. The ongoing goal of the Walk is to increase public awareness about hearing loss, help eradicate the stigma associated with it, and raise funds for programs and services related to hearing loss. This year, the Walk has a more focused goal of improving awareness of, and overall communication access for, those who have hearing loss. I know that this is a goal that is near and dear to the Buffalo Implant Group members and I am sure that it is to you as well!

As part of the effort to get the Walk planned, and to increase the success of the Buffalo Walk, members of the

HLAA held an informational meeting at Buffalo Hearing & Speech Center on Thursday, March 16. The Director of the Walk4Hearing, Ronnie Adler, along with the National Walk4Hearing Coordinator, Ann Rancourt, got a group together to brainstorm ideas for marketing, funding, and sponsorship for the Walk. Among those in attendance were parents, adults with hearing loss, Buffalo Implant Group board members, audiologists, and other community members who work within programs focused on improving communication for those with hearing loss. As this is a new Walk for the Buffalo area, much of the meeting focused on how to support the Walk through donations and volunteers. The Walk is run with limited funds, and by support of Ann Rancourt, who is the lead for the area Walk. Ann is looking for community support in identifying possible sponsors and volunteer groups. This is a great opportunity for businesses to get their name out (e.g. printed on signage throughout the Walk, printed on shirts, added to the website, etc., depending

on sponsored amount) and for local volunteer groups (e.g. Girl Scouts, community service, etc.) to assist in supporting the Buffalo community. If you know someone who might be willing to sponsor or volunteer for the Walk, please contact Ann Rancourt at [arancourt@hearingloss.org](mailto:arancourt@hearingloss.org). Ann can provide further details regarding this initiative.

The details for the Buffalo Walk4Hearing are as follows:

Sunday, October 8, 2017

Delaware Park

Registration to begin at 8:30 am

Walk begins at 11:00 am

We are hoping for a beautiful Fall day! Get your friends and family on board so that we can show the great support network that the Buffalo area has to offer for individuals with hearing loss!



## Reflections On: Looking Forward to New Beginnings

By: Margie Fitchlee



For so many of us in different locations throughout the world the season of spring offers us a time to appreciate the

beauty of nature. It offers us a time to look forward to milder weather, the smell of blossoms, the greening of trees and a chance to appreciate the beauty that nature itself affords us.

Spring is known as a time for hope and a time for the promise of new beginnings. We can feel the hope that spring brings with it and we look forward to its new beginnings.

Those of you who are contemplating cochlear implant surgery this spring will

feel that promise firsthand. Shakespeare wrote that "April hath put a spirit of youth in everything." May that spirit transfer over to all of you as you venture into this journey. May you feel refreshed, revived, and renewed, and full of hope that this new beginning will offer a better life for you.

We find relief in knowing that winter is temporary. We find relief in knowing that those cold winter winds will finally cease and that the promise felt in spring will lead us to the warmth of summer.

This is the promise I wish for all of you. May the dark days of your struggles with profound hearing loss make way for the sunny days ahead. May your journey to better hearing bring a new beginning your way. Bern Williams said, "The day the Lord created hope was probably the

same day he created spring." It is said that "all good things come from God. He is the source of our blessings in all seasons."

Season after season the Buffalo Implant Group continues to work hard for you. We work to bring you informational programs, support, guidance and friendship. The Buffalo Implant Group cares. We care about you, your families and your journeys to better hearing. Please know that you never have to face your hearing loss alone. I read somewhere that "we were not placed on this earth to walk alone." Check out the Buffalo Implant Group online at [www.buffaloimplantgroup.com](http://www.buffaloimplantgroup.com), attend our meetings and continue to support our newsletter. We are here for you! Happy Spring and blessings to all of you!

# Meeting Report

By Gail Cronin

Photos courtesy of Will Licata



On Wednesday, March 8 the Buffalo Implant Group held a meeting at Buffalo Hearing and Speech Center. There were over 50 people in attendance and we enjoyed three varieties of pizza, beverages, and over a dozen deserts provided by our members. Nelson Gannon of Deaf Access Services provided sign language interpreting.

A brief business meeting was conducted and President Sue Wantuck indicated that the Board was discussing adding another officer position for 2018 by dividing the duties of the secretary into two jobs, that of recording secretary and that of corresponding secretary.



Guest speaker Jamie Sklarski, northeast regional cochlear implant consumer specialist for Advanced Bionics, presented on the latest developments in AB devices. The most current device from Advanced Bionics is the Nadia CI Q90 Hi Res

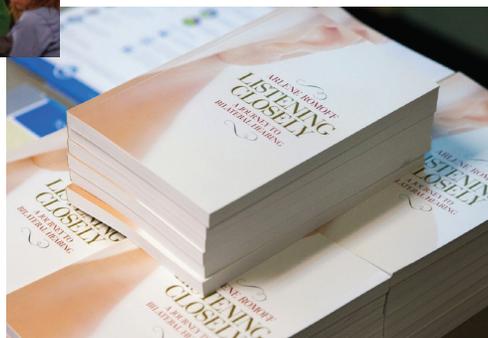
Ultra Cochlear Implant. The implantable portion is very thin, on 4.5 mm, with a removable magnet (removable by your surgeon) and a HiFocus Mid-Scala Electrode. There are seven battery options, including a new smaller battery with the same battery life as



previous models. The new device is compatible with the AquaCase, and can be used bimodally with a Phonak hearing aid in the other ear.

The latest device uses Stereo Zoom and Auto Ultra Zoom feature for noise reduction, Sound Relax to block out sudden loud noise, Wind Block, Echo Block, and is EAS (Electro Acoustic System) ready. It can connect wirelessly to several other devices including a DECT phone, ComPilot, and the TVLink II for television and audio streaming.

Dr. Sklarski passed around



several devices for participants to feel and see up close and brought literature on all Advanced Bionics products. She also provided us with printed copies of all the slides in her power point presentation. She answered participants questions as well. Dr. Sklarski brought



copies of the book Listening Closely, by AB cochlear implant user Arlene Romoff, for everyone in attendance who was interested.

The meeting was followed by social



time and everyone continued to enjoy the many desserts. A special thank you goes to Joe Sonnenberg, V. P. of Administration and Development at Buffalo Hearing and Speech Center, who not only provided us with space for our meeting but also made hot coffee for us all. We certainly enjoyed that special treat.

# Sign Language Classes at DAS

By Gloria Matthews



Are you interested in learning sign language? Well you are in luck! Deaf Access Services (DAS) holds classes year round. This year we introduced a new curriculum, and classes are now broken down into six levels as follows:

Level 1 – No previous Sign Language experience required. This class will focus on proper handshapes, sign space, parameter of a sign, alphabet, numbers, introductions, personal information, yes/no questions, basic greetings & conversation, and basic grammar.

Level 2 – Some Sign Language knowledge required (fingerspelling, numbers, colors, basic greetings, etc.)

OR completion of Level 1. This class will focus on honing the basic skills learned in Level 1, allowing students to feel comfortable with basic conversations.

Level 3 – Completion of Level 2 OR comparable skills required. This class will introduce you to classifiers (handshapes), the importance of facial expressions, and further develop their grammatical skills.

Level 4 – Completion of Level 3 OR comparable skills required. This class will focus on Fingerspelling words and techniques, and introduction of storytelling techniques. This level includes a student video project/assignment.

Level 5 – Completion of Level 4 OR comparable skills required. This class will be discussion-based.

Students will discuss their opinions in ASL on topics related to Deaf Culture. Students will be introduced to ASL Idiomatic Expressions. Students will make a How-To video giving instructions on how to complete a task. This level includes a student project/assignment.

Level 6 – Completion of Level 5 OR comparable skills required. This class will focus on ASL as a visual language. Students will explore ASL poetry, handshake poems, and number poems. Students will also be introduced to Basic Interpreting Skills. This class will include student videos of ASL poems.

We are currently in-session with our spring classes, but they will be offered again in the Fall. During the summer we hold one 4-6 week special class that is related to Deaf Culture, Fingerspelling or special topics. The cost for the general community is \$125, \$75 for Family/Friends or workers in the Hard of Hearing/D/deaf communities, and FREE for those who are Hard of Hearing and D/deaf. So if you are interested in learning sign language, keep an eye out on DAS' website ([www.wnydas.org](http://www.wnydas.org)) for upcoming classes and registration. DAS is located in the Tri-Main Building at 2495 Main St., Suite 446, Buffalo, NY 14214. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us at [communications@wnydas.org](mailto:communications@wnydas.org).

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## The Western New York Assistive Technology Project Continues – WNYAT.com

by Mike and Karen Ward



that is available to help the D/deaf and hard of hearing community. Examples

include wireless receivers, hearing loops, video phones, captioning devices, as well as smart phone and tablet applications. Our hope is to make it easier to find and use the devices that are already in place, as well as inspire other businesses and organizations to add this technology. If you would like to learn more about these devices, visit [www.wnyat.com](http://www.wnyat.com) and click on the "AT info" link.

Our list has grown but we still need your help! If you know of any additional businesses or religious, educational, or entertainment venues in Western New York that offer assistive technology, please go to our website and click on the "Add Venue" link to submit the information. You can also contact us by emailing [info@wnyat.com](mailto:info@wnyat.com), or by calling/texting 716-984-8810. We welcome any other feedback on this project as well. Thank you!

# Fitness Trackers: A Useful Tool for People with Hearing Loss

By Gail Cronin

Last year for Mother's Day, my family bought me a Garmin vivoactive HR fitness tracker. For those who are unfamiliar with fitness trackers, they are pedometers that you wear on your wrist, but usually with many additional features that help you track your activity and more. Many fitness trackers are designed to motivate you to get up and move when you have been sitting too long by notifying you by vibrating. When you feel the vibration, you can look at the tracker and see a notification that it's time to get up and move. Personally, I find it very motivating. Since wearing the device, I am definitely sitting less and moving more.



Not all fitness trackers have advanced features such as vibration, but those that do often use that vibration feature to do much more than just notify you when you are sitting too long. Many fitness trackers can connect via Bluetooth to a smartphone and can be set to notify you when you have a text and/or an email on your phone. I have set my fitness tracker to notify me only when I have a text, and when I look at my tracker it tells me who sent the text and gives me the first few words, right on my wrist. This is very useful to me when I am out for a walk, or driving, or in a meeting. I can see if it is my husband or children trying to reach me or if it is a text that can be looked at later.

For me, the most useful application of the fitness tracker's vibration feature is the vibrating alarm, which can be set to go off at any time of day or night. Multiple alarms can even be set. I wear my fitness tracker 24 hours a day. (My model tracks my sleep and sends a handy sleep chart to my smartphone each morning.) One night while traveling, I used the fitness tracker as my alarm clock and I fell in love with this feature! It gives a series of short



pulsing vibrations to my wrist at the time I set the alarm to go off. I find that it wakes me almost instantly, but if I don't wake right away and shut off the alarm by pressing a button it will slowly increase the strength of the vibration until I wake and either turn it off or set it to "snooze" as you do with many traditional alarm clocks.

The vibrating alarm on my fitness tracker would be a very useful tool for people with hearing loss who rely on vibrating beds, lights connected to an alarm clock, or a partner to wake them.

I see the fitness tracker alarm as superior to all of those for two reasons.

First, the fitness tracker is tiny, portable, and it automatically goes with you wherever you are. You don't have to think about taking it with you since it is attached to you. You don't have to pack it when you travel. You don't have to hook it up in a hotel or the home of your overnight host. And you can spontaneously sleep somewhere else without worry. There have been times when my child has had a nightmare and I find myself falling asleep in her room with her. No worries! My alarm is always set and it goes wherever I go. And even in a power outage, my fitness tracker, which I plug in and recharge once a week while I shower, is always working.

The second major advantage is that the vibrating alarm does not wake anyone else in the bed. When I first started using the fitness tracker alarm I noticed that it didn't wake my sleeping husband, but I mistakenly assumed that it was because he is such a heavy sleeper. However, six months after I got my fitness tracker I bought the same model for my husband and he began using his vibrating alarm. I am an extremely light sleeper so I was expecting that his vibrating alarm, which does create a low-level hum, would wake me. I was very pleasantly surprised to learn that his does not wake me. We each have our own alarms now, and neither disturbs the other. Aaaaah, precious sleep!

This is a wonderful feature for people with hearing loss, college students who share a dorm room, parents of young children, anyone who lives in a home with thin walls, and people who travel frequently. In addition to Garmin fitness trackers, many fitness tracker models made by Jawbone, Fitbit, Pebble, and others also have vibrating alarms.

# New York Early Hearing Detection and Intervention: Focusing on Education and Training

By Jessica M. Holst, Western NY EHDI Contractor



In 2016, an article about the Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Process was published in Issue 3 of the

Buffalo Implant Group newsletter. Author, Gail Cronin, outlined the theory and process of Universal Newborn Hearing Screening dating back to the 1993 National Institutes of Health (NIH) Consensus Conference on Newborn Hearing Screening, where this program was deemed both necessary and feasible for implementation across all states and territories. This declaration was then supported by legislation in 2000, when Congress passed the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Act to provide federal funding for newborn hearing screenings, and with the assistance of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), developed goals for State EHDI Programs. Each state was responsible for developing their own program on their own timeline.

To this day, fiscal support of State EHDI Programs is completely grant funded through federal agencies including the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Health Resources and Services Administration-Maternal and Child Health Bureau (HRSA). Regardless of annual birth rate, each state is allocated the exact same amount of money to execute respective EHDI programs. Having the third highest birth rate in the United States, New York State must be strategic in EDHI program planning and follow-through.

State level EHDI coordinators are responsible for overseeing and strengthening the following program components: Universal Newborn Hearing Screening (Birthing Hospital

Staff), Medical Home (Primary Care Physicians), Diagnostic Audiology (Pediatric Audiologists), Specialty Referrals (ENT, Geneticist, Ophthalmologist, etc.), Early Intervention (County Program Early Intervention Program Officials, TOD, SLP, etc.), Family Support (Parents of Children with Hearing Loss and organized support agencies), as well as Tracking and Data Management (NYEDHI-Information System). As noted, each component adds an additional layer of individuals to coordinate with and educate about program requirements, adjustments, and performance. Luckily, NYEHDI has adopted a strong information system that can help guide who and what needs attention in order to ensure the delivery of services.

Based on 2015 information, 96.3% of infants born in New York State had received a documented newborn hearing screening. This is similar to the national average which hovers around 97%. However, only 12.5% have a documented result of follow-up audiological testing in the New York Early Hearing Detection and Intervention-Information System (NYEHDI-IS). The important word to pay attention to here is “documented.” This means that it is likely, in fact probable, that a much higher percentage of children in New York State who fail their newborn hearing screening go for follow-up audiological testing. However, this testing is not being entered into the NYEDHI-IS system which leads us to the necessity for education and training efforts of the New York Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (NYEHDI) program. NYEHDI tracking and management is only as strong as the information inputted.

Over the past grant cycle, the NYEHDI Program has focused on

education and training. Regional meetings were held inviting individuals involved in all components of the NYEDHI program. At these meetings, New York Public Health Law requirements related to the EHDI program were reviewed, specific performance in screening, diagnostic testing, and start of intervention services were shared, and collaborative discussion topics reflecting on areas of strengths and improvements were introduced. Meetings were rich in information sharing, cooperation, and brainstorming for strategic improvement strategies.

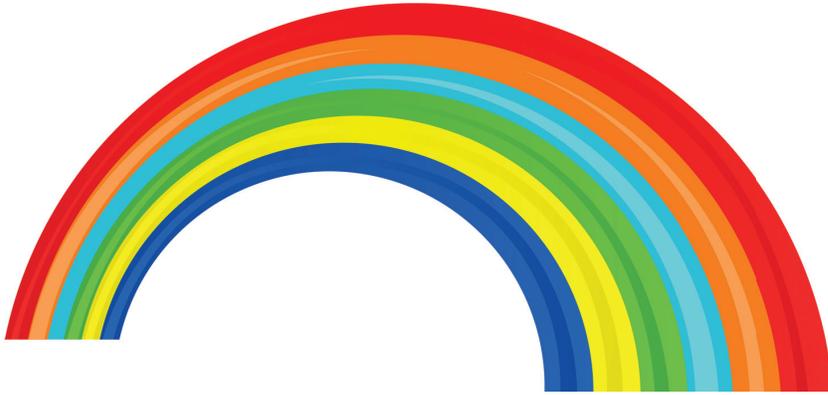
Many of the suggestions developed at these meetings, were brought to the State Level EHDI Workgroup meeting on April 14, 2017. Two Buffalo area professionals were invited to participate in this meeting as a direct result of regional education and training efforts. It is important for our Buffalo Implant Group members to know that effective change can be made at the level of the individual and Buffalo voices are at the center of these discussions!

The NYEHDI office should be commended for their efforts in engaging individuals involved in EDHI across the state. Their collaborative spirit and empowering programming will continue to further the EHDI vision and improve screening, diagnostic and intervention rates across the state. NYEHDI is truly centered in ensuring that all infants receive a timely and accurate newborn hearing screening so that those with hearing loss can be identified and receive appropriate intervention, enabling each child to reach his or her full potential.

If you would like to learn more about the NYEDHI program or become involved in regional efforts to support EHDI components at the local level, please contact Jessica Holst at holst.jessicam@gmail.com.

# Save the Date!

Our 2017 Summer Sunset Dinner and Picnic will be held at Westwood Park in Lancaster on Friday, August 4. Once again you will find us in Shelter #5 at 5:00 pm for dinner and our basket auction. Please mark your calendars!



If you shop on Amazon under their Amazon Smile program, 5% of your purchase will be donated to B.I.G. Simply go to smile.amazon.com, select Buffalo Implant Group as the charity of your choice, and then shop as you normally would. It's that simple.



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# Many Thanks

Tracy Balon

Ashley Bucci

Buffalo Hearing and Speech Center

Melissa Burroughs

Craig and Jackie Carpenter

Joe Cronin

Sean Cronin

Deaf Access Services

Ingrid Ennis

Sr. Dorothy Feltz

Margie Fitchlee

Nelson Gannon

JoAnn Hammer

Lisa Hill Nowicki

Jessica Holst

Karen Hornung

Jessica Jurusik

Will Licata

Mark Morehouse

Shirley Morehouse

Kathy Maroney

Gloria Matthews

Fr. Bob McArtney

Dianne Mogavero

Norma O'Brien

St. Aloysius Gonzaga R. C. Church

St. Mary's School for the Deaf

Mary Schneider

Jamie Sklarski

Joe Sonnenberg

Sue Wantuck

Karen Ward

Zenger Group

# Treasurer's Report

By Lisa Hill Nowicki



Thank you everyone who has paid their 2017 dues. To date 50% of our subscribers have paid for this calendar year. I will be sending out a separate email in the next few weeks to those who may not have had the opportunity to look to the right of their name on their mailing label to see if they are up to date for their 2017 subscription. On the financial side, we are doing well for the first quarter of 2017. Our expenses are below our revenue, which is typical for this time of the year. Our largest expense to date has been the newsletter, which is around \$450 per issue. I look forward to seeing you at our next general meeting in June, and you can bring your dues payment then or you can mail in your dues.



# Quarterly Newsletter

## Subscription/Membership Form

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*Please make your check payable to Buffalo Implant Group and send the Subscription/Membership Form and/or donation to:  
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*Without your support, there can be no B.I.G. News. It is our belief that the B.I.G. News is of great value to our readers and to those who would like to learn more about us. We strive to provide you with current, useful information, inspiring stories and valuable resources for cochlear implant users and the people who care for them. Please show us your support by joining B.I.G. now!*

## Our Next B.I.G. Meeting and Social

Nucleus Updates from Cochlear Americas with Lori Davidson Au.D.

**Wednesday, June 7, 2017**

**6:00 – 8:00 pm**

**St. Mary's School for the Deaf**

**2253 Main St. Buffalo 14214**

The Buffalo Implant Group is excited to welcome Dr. Lori Davidson, who is the Clinical Territory Manager for Cochlear Americas, covering the region of Eastern OH and Buffalo. She has been with Cochlear Americas for the last five years. Dr. Davidson also has over thirteen years of direct clinical experience providing comprehensive audiological services for both pediatric and adult populations.

She will be sharing all the latest developments from Cochlear Americas.

The meeting will be held in the St. Mary's School Assembly Hall. Free parking is available in the lot behind the building. Enter from Main St. in the driveway marked "Main Entrance."

Sign Language interpretation will be provided.

Pizza, pop and water will be served. Please consider bringing a snack or dessert to share if possible.

But most importantly, we need YOU. Friends and family are welcome.

Social time will follow the meeting and speaker.



## **BUFFALO IMPLANT GROUP**

P.O. BOX 350

CLARENCE CENTER, NEW YORK 14032-0350

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### *Awards our Newsletter has Received:*

Best National Chapter Newsletter by CIAI

Service to the Hearing Impaired by Kenmore Lions Club

Judy Weiner Award for Service to the Hearing Impaired by Western New York Academy of Audiology