Our Fundraising For 2009 Takes Off

New ‘Options’ Service
Digital Access TV Campaign
This the opening verse of the hymn “There Is A Place” performed by the Dublin Deaf Choir at the funeral of Anne Robson, the much loved former Director of DeafHear.ie, and how appropriate it was for Anne. Over a period of thirty years she was one of the great driving forces of the Association. There were fears and falls as she set out in 1962, with the other founding members, to chart the course of the National Association for the Deaf. There were many triumphs as is shown by the vibrant Association that brings so many services to Deaf and Hard of Hearing people. Nobody did more to make this possible than Anne Robson whose long record of service is unparalleled.

I first met Anne in 1965. She recalled that meeting in an article in Link on her first twenty five years of working for the Deaf. “I went out to Beechpark to speak to the parents’ committee (Chairman, George King!) about NAD and he asked me how we could possibly call ourselves National when he had never even heard of us. I couldn’t have been too badly wounded. We’ve been the best of friends since”.

And so this gracious, charming lady persuaded me to come aboard and before long I found myself as a director and Chairman of the first working committee. Anne set a great example with commitment, energy and an unflappable demeanour. Those were the days before government funding. We had to raise the pennies and pounds ourselves. It was a hard grind that set the foundation for the Association we have today. That was one side of Anne, the always cheerful hard grafting fundraiser. Of even more importance probably was her input into the Association at Board level.

As the parent of a Deaf child, Anne was fully aware of the problems encountered not only by the Deaf, but by parents trying to cope with raising Deaf children. This led to setting up a weekly meeting in the Deaf Club where parents brought their children to interact and learn from the experiences of others. Many a parent can look back gratefully at those sessions.

Then, of course, there was Anne’s advocacy on behalf of the Hard of Hearing. We shared in many delegations to organisations and government ministers looking for funding and improved services, many of which are taken for granted today.

On a more personal note I remember Anne as a good friend, a great companion, a brilliant conversationalist and authority on a vast range of subjects, and a wonderful hostess in our numerous meetings in her house. How highly I prized her abilities is illustrated by the fact that when I was approached to take on the Chairmanship of NAD, one of the conditions I laid down was that Anne would continue on the Board of Directors even though she told me she wished to step down. Typically, she stayed and we retired from the Board of NAD on the same day.

Anne was indeed an exceptional person and the high esteem in which she was held by the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing was illustrated by the magnificent turnout at her funeral. The Robson family have lost a wonderful mother; the Deaf world has lost a true friend.
Parents’ Seminar
Education Options for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children

This One-Day Seminar is for parents/carers/guardians of a Deaf or Hard of Hearing child. DeafHear is planning to run this event in early October 2009. This will be our third ‘Education Options’ seminar.

The programme of the previous seminars included presentations from:

- The Visiting Teacher service
- St. Mary’s School for Deaf Girls and St. Joseph’s School for Deaf Boys
- Mainstream school with a Deaf/Hard of Hearing child in the classroom
- Mainstream school with a hearing unit
- A Special Educational Needs Officer – their role and how they assist parents and schools
- The Marte Meo Programme - presented by Patricia Byrne

It is envisaged that this year’s programme will have a similar content, although this is yet to be confirmed.

The provisional date is Saturday 3rd October 2009, venue is to be arranged. The cost of attending the seminar is €25 per adult (inclusive of refreshments and lunch). Please note that we will not be providing childcare.

If you would like to participate in the ‘Parents Seminar 2009’, please contact:
Siobhán Egan, DeafHear.ie, Church St, Tullamore, Co. Offaly. Telephone: 057 9351606, Fax: 057 9326425, Text: 057 9326421 or Email: siobhan.egan@deafhear.ie
Great News For People with All Levels of Hearing Loss

DeafHear.ie in partnership with Ascent, launched a unique community hearing service throughout Ireland on April 20th 2009.

The partnership – Options – finally brings a real and understandable choice to the private sector, whilst ensuring exceptional value for money and service. In these troubled economic times, we are delighted to offer such a great service to the public. The Options Community Hearing Service will provide top of the range Starkey hearing aids at two ultra low price brackets of just €950 or €1,250.

Saving the consumer thousands of euro on high street prices, the Options Community Hearing Service will provide hearing aids in any style with absolutely no hidden extras.

What is Options?
Options is a hearing services package uniquely designed to work in partnership with ethical organisations, which play a key role in supporting and providing services for people with all levels of hearing loss.

Options works in partnership with charities and general practitioners who share our vision of a better service and financial deal for the hearing aid consumer.

Why is buying a hearing aid through Options so unique?
Choosing Options means you decide on your hearing needs and we only ever provide the best and highest level of technology in a hearing aid. So you always hear as well as you possibly can with Options! There is no confusion with product ranges which seem to keep going up and up in price to the top model. With Options you always get the top model, the best hearing aid for your needs but you pay less, a lot less.

With Options you can have the hearing aid style you want at no extra charge. All we have to ensure is that it is the most suitable for your level of hearing loss.

Professional Service
The “Options” service is provided by qualified audiologists working to our uniquely high standards. Our staff excel in their field of expertise and as an absolute minimum, qualify for membership with the Irish Society of Hearing Aid Audiologists.

We ensure you obtain the greatest benefit from your new hearing aid. We work to a structure and a Service Level Agreement which protects all aspects of your “patient journey” with us. There is a patient charter and an open and easy complaints procedure in place for reassurance.

Don’t forget, a proportion of every purchase you make with Options goes to DeafHear to support its work with Deaf and Hard of Hearing people. It’s one way to help yourself whilst helping others!

This unique partnership aims to provide the consumer with greater levels of service than the traditional private model as follows:

1 Offer the consumer more useful and understandable information so they may more independently decide on:
   a. their hearing needs for their lifestyle.
   b. the technology level required for their needs.
   c. the style of hearing aid preferred.

2 Exclude large product ranges and specifically entry level products which offer poor value for money.

3 Offer only the very highest levels of Starkey hearing aid technology for two lifestyle choices:
   a. Easy Listening = hearing aid technology for speech in quiet.

4 Offer the consumer a clear price choice for the purchase of a hearing system which represents the greatest value for money possible:
   a. Easy Listening = €950.
   b. Adaptive Plus = €1,250.

5 Offer all hearing systems with a two-year warranty.

6 Carry out all appointments with qualified audiologists; to an agreed standard with a Customer Charter and a simple complaints procedure for consumer protection.
7 Offer all clients a hearing therapy appointment to ensure the client is able to achieve total independence and long term success with their hearing aid.

8 Provide a no quibble, 60 day money back guarantee.

9 Offer a range of further services for the benefit of the Hard of Hearing.

10 DeafHear benefits directly from every hearing aid supplied, helping to support our important work with the Hard of Hearing and their families.

Your Patient Journey
Step 1 - Needs
Your needs are assessed based on difficulty understanding speech in different environments and during various activities and how much this worries you.

Step 2 – Technology
You select your technology level from a range of features with help from our audiologist.

Step 3 – Style
Your hearing aid audiologist will help you decide on the most suitable hearing system for your hearing loss at no extra charge.

Initial assessment - 60 minutes
We provide a comprehensive hearing testing service to the highest standards. Whether you wish to obtain information about your ability to hear and what solutions exist for you, or if you are looking to replace your existing hearing aids, you may wish to take advantage of our unique approach. Assess your needs, choose your technology level and with our clear, open pricing, buy with confidence.

Fitting - 60 minutes
We know that clients worry about how well they will hear with new hearing aids. Every effort is made to ensure that the acoustic response of your hearing aid is correct for your threshold of hearing for the full range of tones that you hear. We ensure your hearing aid is performing correctly whilst in your ear - no guesswork required! Once we have set the hearing instruments to a suitable target, we then involve you in ensuring that you hear soft sounds as soft but audible, moderately loud sounds without difficulty and finally, loud sounds as loud - but not uncomfortably loud. We regard our high level of testing and fitting detail as standard, regardless of whether you choose Easy Listening or Active Plus technologies.

Follow up appointments - 30 minutes
Like glasses, it takes a short period to get used to wearing new hearing instruments. It may seem like there are a lot of new things to learn. However, once you have adapted your daily routine slightly, you’ll soon be totally independent. We’ll call you on day two after your fitting and provide a minimum of two further appointments in our centre within the first four weeks.

Hearing Therapy
DeafHear will offer every customer a hearing therapy appointment. Qualified and experienced professionals provide aftercare and support to the highest standards. Available throughout Ireland, as an Options client you will be welcome in any centre, where you will receive the same high level of service.

“We invite people to avail themselves of our services and experience the difference of a safe, easy and most affordable hearing service from a trusted provider.”

You will enjoy an open and friendly welcome at centres in: Letterkenny, Galway, Dublin, Dundalk, Tullamore, Kilkenny & Cork.

Call 1800 677 247 Monday to Friday for an information pack.
Digital TV Access Campaign

As a member of the coalition TV Access Group (www.tvaccess.ie), DeafHear.ie is working to ensure that the switchover from analogue TV to digital terrestrial television (DTT) will be accessible and affordable for all. Julianne Gillen outlines the issues.

From 2012 anyone in Ireland who wishes to continue watching television will have to purchase and install new digital equipment and register for the service. If these services are not fully accessible and affordable, significant barriers will arise for older people and people with disabilities, many of whom are on a low income, resulting in a serious risk of social exclusion. A large number of organisations across the disability, ageing and poverty sectors have come together as ‘TV Access’ to highlight this issue and ensure that nobody is left behind in the enforced switch to digital.

Legislation

While we encourage the switch to DTT as it has the potential to create far better access to TV than the current analogue system, we do have concerns the DTT legislation currently going through the Dáil does not safeguard the right to access for vulnerable members of society. As it stands, the legislation allows various digital TV providers to provide services alongside analogue TV, but there is nothing to ensure that the access provision already in place by the broadcasters (eg RTE, Setanta Sports) is accessible via their boxes. Currently Sky is the only digital provider that enables full access to subtitles and audio description programmes; UPC (Chorus/NTL) do not. They continue to deny that there is a problem with their system, they place the blame with the broadcasters and they cannot be brought to task over this. If this situation exacerbates, it will lead to a lack of consumer choice for Deaf/Hard of Hearing or Visually Impaired customers in areas where Sky does not offer DTT service.

The Campaign

TV Access coalition members have been very busy making representations to various TDs, Senate members and Digital Services Providers. Representatives of the coalition appeared in front of the Oireachtas Committee on Communication on April 2nd, outlining the need for DTT services and equipment to be made affordable and fully accessible.

During the committee session, Mark Magennis of TV Access highlighted possible problems due to the lack of subtitles, sign language and audio description, inaccessible consumer equipment, practical difficulties with making the switch to digital and the extra cost of switching for vulnerable people. He also made some recommendations on behalf of TV Access:

- The Department of Communications to collaborate with TV Access organisations in planning and implementing the switch-off awareness campaign and a switch-over assistance scheme;
- The Department to convene a ‘Digital Ireland’ stakeholder group with a remit to look at issues of accessibility and affordability;
- RTE to cover accessibility within the DTT minimum receiver requirements;
- The Broadcasting Bill to guarantee effective representation of older people and people with disabilities on the structures that will regulate and oversee television in the future.

Joan O’Donnell from the Disability Federation of Ireland recommended that the information and assistance be delivered through the social partnership process in which the voluntary sector is properly supported and resourced. John-Mark McCafferty, Head of Social Justice and Policy with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul made the point that this is a social inclusion issue and called on the Committee to link up with the senior officials’ group for social inclusion. He said it cannot be left for the market to decide on affordability or left to voluntary organisations to provide information and assistance.

We will keep campaigning on this issue and recommend that you mention this to your local TDs who will be calling to your door very soon!
Deafblind Ireland

by Eric Ryan

In this second article on Deafblind Ireland we look at the services available for the Deafblind in Ireland and the issues facing the organisation.

The Anne Sullivan Foundation
Were it not for the goodwill and foresight of the Catholic Institute for the Deaf (CIDP) and determination of Sr. Nicholas Griffey we would not have St. Joseph’s House or The Anne Sullivan Foundation & Centre (ASC). It was Sr. Nicholas who received sanctioning for the establishment of a specialised class for Deafblind children in Cabra. This school & residential centre moved to Brewery Road in Stillorgan where there were more appropriate facilities, and shares a campus with St. Joseph’s residency for Deaf & Deafblind adults. The original support service catered for Deafblind children, who are now young adults. Most recently the ASC have renewed their service of developed expertise to enrol young Deafblind children. The Anne Sullivan Centre is a home for life for low functioning Deaf/Blind people.

It has a specially trained staff, as people with congenital Deaf/Blindness require intensive programmes with a substantial educational element on a life long basis. Most importantly, however, the Centre is a real home, where the dignity and happiness of the residents is of primary importance.

Diagnosis and Early Education
Yet still, there are Multi Sensory Impaired children (who have none or minimal Sight and Hearing) who have quite possibly been inappropriately placed with organisations that do not necessarily have the expertise required to educate and train Deafblind specific children and young adults.

Although those that are diagnosed as Deafblind are catered for by Visiting Teachers of hearing impaired and vision impaired, this is not an appropriate service because a Deafblind person/child is NOT Deaf and is NOT blind, but is a distinct disability of the distance senses - Deafblindness. Within the Visiting Teacher Service there is one qualified Teacher of the Deafblind and two VTs who are currently studying for the qualification in the University of Birmingham.

Also, with little or no understanding among professionals of the uniqueness of Deafblindness as a distinct condition mis-diagnosis is understandably a frequent occurrence. Consequently a young child misses out on crucial early learning and as many Deafblind children are developmentally delayed, they are often placed inappropriately in schools for learning disabled.

The Disabilities Act 2005 states that children under the age of five with disabilities are entitled to have an assessment of their needs. In this context Deafblind Ireland are willing to give guidance and assistance to professionals who may be called upon to carry out such assessments.

Campaigning
No survey of Deafblind people has ever been carried out in the Republic of Ireland. Based on UK and European research the incidence of Deafblindness averages between 80 - 100 per 100,000 of the population. Applied to Ireland this would lead us to expect between 3,200 – 4,000 people with a significant dual sensory loss. A major strategic aim of Deafblind Ireland is to conduct research into the needs and numbers of Deafblind people in the whole of Ireland, North and South. With this information we intend to gain recognition of Deafblindness as a separate disability and improvements in the number and quality of services for Deafblind people.

In the context of new legislation, EPSEN Act, the setting up of NCSE (National Council for Special Education) and the new developing role of SENO's (Special Education Needs Organisers) we feel it is vitally important that we influence policy starting with a recognition of this disability as unique. We have to begin accessing the specialist training available, and raising awareness amongst professionals and influencing decision makers.
Damien Owens tells us about his nerve-wrecking sky-dive in aid of DeafHear.ie and how he’d do it all again...

Last September, Shane Hamilton asked myself and Shane Keogh if we would be interested in doing a sky-diving jump at 10,000 feet to raise money for DeafHear. We were both delighted at the opportunity to take part.

We set dates four times, but due to bad weather we had to cancel. Finally on March 15th the weather was good enough and we were given the all-clear to jump! We arrived early and there was a lot of excitement and nervousness knowing the day had finally come - we were jumping out of that plane. Shane Hamilton was first to be called to get his jumpsuit and instructions, off he went and jumped out!

I was next in line and as I put on the jumpsuit I realised ‘this is it’ and there was no going back. I was grand to begin with, then the door opened at 10,000ft and I thought “oh God not now...” but as I jumped with the trainer it was an amazing feeling, which I can’t describe, the speed was mind-blowing with the land coming up at you at about 200mph. All I can say about it is: WOW and I will definitely do it again, maybe next year.

Shane Keogh was next to jump, he is also hooked and will be doing it again.

We were delighted that we did it, especially after it was cancelled three times and it would have been so easy to drop out. We raised €2,414.91 for DeafHear. We would like to say thank you to all the people who sponsored us and supported us on the day. Keep a look out for us again next year! See ya in 2010.

Our heroes from top right to bottom right: Damien Owens, Shane Hamilton and Shane Keogh. Below centre: Shane Keogh comes in to land. Below left: Damien Owens in full flight.
The Flora Women’s Mini Marathon is the biggest all-women’s event of its kind in the world. It has grown steadily in numbers since it began in 1983 with some 600,000 women having entered the event - and last year’s Mini Marathon saw a record field of 40,516.

Charities are the big winners. In 2008 it is estimated in excess of €13m was raised by the participants bringing the total since the race started in 1983 close to €123m. The women decide themselves who they will support and many local causes gain vital revenue from the event. It is now the biggest single day charity event in the country.

This year 12 staff members from DeafHear are taking part in the Flora Women’s Mini Marathon on Bank Holiday Monday June 1st.

The race starts at Fitzwilliam Square at 3pm, covers a distance of 10km and finishes at St. Stephen’s Green.

To sponsor one of our participants please email: aideen.foran@deafhear.ie or check out www.mycharity.ie

What Your Contribution Will Do

€15 will contribute towards Day Centre Services provided to older persons by DeafHear
€30 will contribute towards the cost of hosting summer camp activities for Deaf and Hard of Hearing teenagers
€50 will contribute towards the screening of one newborn baby’s hearing
Student’s Film Wins Festival Award

An original documentary into deaf culture resulted in sweet success for a Tallaght IT student at the NOISE Flicks Youth Film Festival Awards. Hosted by South Dublin County Council with support from the Institute of Technology Tallaght and DCTV (Dublin Community TV), the Festival was open to individuals or groups of young filmmakers (14 - 25 years) living or studying in South Dublin County.

Audience Award
The 15 minute documentary 'A Sign for Life', directed by Laura Greally (21) focused on Laura’s friend Amanda who is the only hearing person in her family. Through adopting a natural approach to filming, the documentary hit home with viewers on the night who voted ‘A Sign for Life’ for the Audience Award.

According to Laura: “I think the documentary creates a sense of awareness as this family doesn’t let deafness hold them back. In the documentary we follow the family to a Deaf Club where they socialise so it shows a different side to the lives of people who cannot hear.”

A Great Learning Experience
While the documentary raises awareness around the issues faced by Deaf people, such as the lack of services available to Amanda’s father when he had a heart attack, it also focuses on the funny and positive elements in the family’s life, such as Amanda throwing parties downstairs while her parents are sleeping. Laura added: “It was a great learning experience, the whole team learned a lot. “I think people take hearing for granted, I know I did before I made the documentary.”

Scooping a Special Recognition Award as well, Laura’s team included Fiona Ryan on camera, Kate Bedford on sound, Keith O’Neill as Editor and Emma Coogan as Production Manager. The production will now go forward to the Oxegen Student Media Awards.

Bringing back the music!
Sally Harvest introduces Music-Link and T-Link

Since the age of 11 I have grown into deafness and am now profoundly deaf: qualifying for a cochlear implant. There are two things I really miss. One is being able to hear on the phone and the other is listening to music. In the past week I have been able to do both!

Using the Music-Link, for the first time in about 15 years I am now able to hear the individual instruments! Although I need someone to tell me what some of them are, once I know what they are my memory bank of sound ‘remembers’ them. I cannot identify the words of new songs but most CDs have them included so I read and learn them and the next time enjoy the music along with the lyrics. This weekend I’m off shopping for an iPod, something I never thought I’d be able to use!

Using the T-Link I am now able to have a relaxed conversation on my mobile! Once the T-coil inductive stereo ear hooks are behind my hearing aids, I’ve switched to the T-switches on I am able to talk! There is a small microphone on one of the wires leading to the ear hook and so it’s a ‘hands free’ conversation. My daughter was thrilled to chat without me saying ‘say that again’ all the time!

I cannot describe the feelings – perhaps ABBA sings it all: ‘Thank you for the music…..for giving it to me’.

Music Link T-coil inductive stereo ear hooks for iPod and audio Music Link offers a great alternative to conventional stereo headphones, providing people with hearing loss loud, clear audio without feedback and background noise.

T-Link T-coil inductive headsets for cell and cordless phones provide a great alternative to conventional headsets, offering hearing impaired users clear phone conversations without feedback and distracting background noise.
Residential Information Weekend for Families with Newly Diagnosed Deaf Children

On Friday February 27th, DeafHear.ie held its third Information Weekend for Families with Newly Diagnosed Deaf Children in The Heritage Hotel, Portlaoise. The aim of this weekend was to provide families with relevant information and an opportunity to meet families in a similar situation to them from around the country. There were ten families from Cork, Limerick, Dublin, Galway, Laois and Westmeath with 18 children, 11 of whom were deaf.

On arrival the families were greeted by Kieran Melican, DeafHear Social Worker and Siobhán Egan, DeafHear Family Resource Worker. The evening provided a chance for people to meet each other, relax and enjoy a meal. The families were asked to take part in some creative activities supervised by Frances Doyle, a local ‘Creative Art and Craft Party Organiser’; there were also games and toys to provide entertainment for the children.

Diagnosis Experiences
On Saturday, while the children were supervised by qualified childcare providers, the parents came together for a session to discuss their experiences of diagnosis. A lot of the parents found it very beneficial to hear other families’ stories and could identify with them. One parent said “It was great to hear other people were having the same problems and you weren’t in it alone”, and another said “This set the basis for the weekend as we got to know how everyone found out about and dealt with their diagnosis”.

After a coffee break the parents were split into mothers and fathers groups. This enabled parents to share a variety of experiences in smaller groups, which many parents found constructive. One father said “It was good to see how fathers understand hearing loss in their children”.

Audiology
After lunch with the children, Audiological Scientist Dr. Dayallen talked to the group about the role of the audiologist and how to read an audiogram. He also demonstrated to the parents what their child can hear with and without hearing aids by inputting the results of an audiogram into Audio Scan Verefit System. Dr. Dayallen was extremely accommodating and took questions from the floor throughout his session. Parents commented by saying “It was excellent to get our audiology report explained in such simple terms that we could understand it perfectly, it opened our eyes to what our son can actually hear with & without aids” and “Would like to avail of more opportunities to listen and learn from Dr. Dayallen. Would travel to attend this type of session”.

The next presentation was from Sinéad McClay a Speech and Language Therapist who spoke about the role of the Speech & Language Therapist, what is Speech & Language Therapy and developing listening & comprehension skills. Sinéad also took the time to talk to parents on an individual basis. Parents said “Sinéad was fabulous, interesting and informative”, “I found this session very good and I got great ideas for books that would really help them come along” The parents had a couple of hours to recuperate and relax, go into town or enjoy the swimming pool with their children before dinner, which was followed by an entertainer for the children.

Communication
On Sunday morning parents gathered for an interactive session from our Deaf and Hearing Awareness Training Package. The parents learned some communication skills, what makes a good communication environment, assistive technology and Irish Sign Language. Parents said “Made me more aware of how Deaf people communicate, how they may hear and the equipment available”, “The content of the session was well presented and answered a lot of my questions regarding Deaf people”.

Personal Experiences
After a short break Damien Owens talked about his experiences of being a Deaf child in a hearing family, “I found this session with Damien brilliant from sharing his experiences as a Deaf child through to adulthood”. It was then the turn of the Barrett family which consisted of Maria who is deaf, her mother Mary, sister lida and grandmother Ila. They all spoke about their experiences of having someone in their family who is deaf and Maria, who is now attending college, spoke about how she felt growing up and how she is very happy being the person she is and wouldn’t change anything. The group of parents were enthralled with this session and commented “I loved hearing this family story – I could relate to it a lot”, “Brilliant to hear their experiences of growing up, going to college etc. Source of great hope and positivity for my child”.

The weekend ended with lunch where contact details were exchanged with lots of promises to stay in touch. The overall response to the weekend was extremely positive. Families returned home with a more positive outlook and the feeling of not being alone. “This was such a fantastic weekend and beneficial to all. This is the first time we’ve been given any real info regarding hearing loss and supports available”. “We have gained invaluable knowledge and contacts over the weekend – delighted we made it”. “The weekend surpassed my expectations, we are all going home with more hope for our children”.

The organisers Kieran Melican and Siobhán Egan would like to thank all the families for participating so well, the children for behaving brilliantly, the childcare staff, the hotel staff and the DeafHear staff who gave their time so willingly – Joan O’Toole, Angela Mitchell, Catherine Keane, Orla Moore and Kathleen Daffy.
Limerick School for the Deaf

The Limerick School for the Deaf was founded in 1979. Until then the only option available to hearing impaired children was residential schooling in Dublin. The school is situated in Rosbrien, Limerick and is the only mixed school for the Deaf in the country. It is unique in that it is not formally attached to a mainstream school which brings pupils to the school from all over the Mid-West and as far away as Kerry.

The school currently caters for pre-school, primary and post-primary Deaf pupils from the Mid-West regions. Pupils are taught through sign language or orally, where appropriate. Pupils can avail of an on site multi-sensory room, a library and a fully equipped playground.

Pre-School

Limerick School for the Deaf recognised the importance of early educational intervention and set up a pre-school for Deaf children in 2002. It offers an early educational programme individualised for each child, including social development, toileting, and self-help skills with a small pupil-teacher ratio. The purpose-built classroom is equipped with a sound field system to enhance the acoustic environment. The child is exposed to a bi-lingual environment of sign and oral communication with opportunities to integrate with other hearing impaired children, and adults. Children can attend the pre-school on a full time basis or as part of a dual placement with their local primary pre-school. A joint decision is reached among parents, teachers and the speech and language therapist regarding suitable future schooling options at the age of four.

Primary School

Children in the primary sector of the school follow the National Primary Curriculum with an exemption from Irish. The curriculum is adapted to each child’s needs and every child has an Individual Educational Plan which, along with a small pupil-teacher ratio 6:1, ensures greater individual attention. All classrooms are fitted with a sound field system to enhance the acoustic environment and with Promethean Interactive Whiteboards to enhance lessons by making them more visual. Social outings and swimming are also an integral part of the Primary Curriculum.

Post-Primary School

The practice of both sign dependent and oral classes is continued in the senior cycle, as is the small pupil-teacher ratio. On entering the senior cycle, each pupil is enrolled in the Junior Certificate Schools Programme (J.C.S.P). The ethos of this programme is that every student is capable of success. The goal of the programme is to ensure students enjoy positive experiences of school through a creative and broad-based curriculum and go on to achieve success in their Junior Certificate examination. The J.C.S.P. helps the student to develop a positive self-image and a sense of belonging in the school community and it aims to improve literacy and numeracy.

Following the Junior Certificate exams, the senior cycle of the school offers FETAC Level 4 Awards or Leaving Certificate. A FETAC Level 4 Certificate enables learners to gain recognition for the achievement of personal and vocational skills to specified standards. Having completed Level 4, students may progress to Post-Leaving Certificate Courses to pursue a course at Level 5 in their chosen field of study. From there they can apply to third level institutions which reserve a percentage of their places solely for FETAC entrants. This programme removes our students from the points system and offers an alternative route to third level education, thus making it more feasible and obtainable.

For further information about the school you can check out our website www.limerickschoolforthedeaf.com, or contact us by email mwshic@eircom.net or by phone 061-227722, 086-8227722.

Other Activities and Achievements

- The school won a Digital Schools Award in 2006 and uses computers and interactive whiteboards as well as mobile and video conferencing equipment (some of which is sponsored by 3G).
- In 2008 the school hoisted their first Green Flag. This was as a result of lots of hard work on the part of staff and students. Green-Schools, is an international environmental education programme and award scheme that promotes long-term, whole school action for the environment.
- The pupils have regular classes with part-time teachers and outside staff for extra curricular activities such as home economics, cookery classes, swimming, upholstery and woodwork.
- Once a week, senior students get together with transition year students from Laurel Hill to participate in drama classes. Our students teach Irish Sign Language to the students of Laurel Hill. Once a term, students play indoor soccer with students from Castletroy College who are also learning ISL.
- Art features prominently both on and off the curriculum and students have gone on to third level to study the subject while last year’s graduating class also had several promising artists.
- The school takes part in the Dissolving Boundaries Project - which links it to the Loreto Grammar School in Omagh. The students communicate using video conferencing and recently collaborated on a research project about the differences between services for the Deaf in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland.
- Senior students get help in preparing for their driver theory test and an interpreter is provided for driving lessons. Several students have attained their full driving license while studying in school.
A Hearing Therapy Clinic at DeafHear.ie

One-on-one aural rehabilitation for adults with acquired hearing loss.

by Brigid Mac Sweeney

DeafHear has recently established a hearing therapy clinic at its Dublin North centre, at North Frederick Street. This development has been welcomed enthusiastically by adults with an acquired hearing loss who require one-on-one facilitation to include information, advice and some induction training to ease their integration into an established group-based Hearing Help and Lipreading class.

Aural Rehabilitation at DeafHear.

The provision of group-based weekly classes has been an evolving service, nationwide, since the foundation of Aural Rehabilitation (AR) at DeafHear in 1996. Information, education, communication therapy, lipreading and life adjustment coping skills, to include family, are the main building blocks of AR. Like any other rehabilitation model, AR is an enabling process towards self-help which requires time, patience and a positive attitude.

Individuals undergoing a life-changing experience as a consequence of hearing loss need to adopt an assertive approach when re-connecting with the acoustic world. This is possible for those who confidently make their communication needs known to their loved ones at home, colleagues at work and to the general public with whom they have spoken communication. Misunderstandings and communication breakdown are daily experiences which can be dealt with positively if the person with the hearing loss knows how to take control and win the cooperation of others. Coping skills do not come easily to those who try to conceal their hearing difficulties by bluffing or isolating themselves from uncooperative speakers. Confidence and self-esteem soon erode when this passive approach is adopted.

Group based or one-on-one?

There is no doubting the fact that helping self to take control is fuelled vigorously in a group setting where problem-solving is a shared experience and a powerful ‘cure’ for social isolation. It must also be acknowledged that there is always the need to address individual issues in a one-on-one setting – like our new hearing therapy model at DeafHear. This is because no two experiences of hearing loss are the same, for a great many reasons – even when audiogram readings show similarities. We also recognise the fact that individuals wishing to join an established class of weekly participants have missed out on the opportunity to get ‘broken in’ if there isn’t a beginner’s class running in tandem with the one for established members.

Signature (CADCP) comes to Killarney

Last September Shane Hamilton - sign language tutor and Community Resource Officer with DeafHear.ie - successfully registered with Signature as an accredited Sign Language Awarding Tutor for Irish Sign Language Level 1 and 2.

What is Signature?

Signature is a UK-recognised awarding body and registered charity whose aim is to improve communication between Deaf and hearing people. Signature offers a portfolio of qualifications in signing and other forms of communication with Deaf and Deaf-Blind people. All of Signature’s qualifications are accredited by the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and appear on the National Qualifications Framework.

DeafHear Killarney already has 25 students who are currently doing their Irish Sign Language Level 1 course which consists of three different units and examinations. The classes are provided along with an Irish Sign Language DVD with Irish Sign Language media clips.

Holistic Hearing Care at DeafHear: hearing aid provision and AR – together.

DeafHear has recently launched its first ever service of providing privately purchased hearing aids by Options Community Hearing Services. This, over time, will operate from many of the DeafHear resource centres around the country. The integration of AR and the audiology service provided by DeafHear–Options is central to the expected positive outcomes of this holistic approach to hearing care in Ireland - see pages 4-5 for details.

DeafHear Killarney will be running an Irish Sign Language Level 2 course in September 2009.

For more information on courses contact DeafHear Killarney at 064-6620052 or email killarney@deafhear.ie
Introducing the Comfort Contego

The Comfort Contego is a unique, wireless communication system designed to improve and enhance the quality of sound. Unlike conventional FM systems, Contego's digital processing system provides high definition sound over multiple channels. The high definition sound is based on Comfort Audio's unique digital signal processing technology. The Comfort Contego transmits its signal encrypted to prevent electronic eavesdropping. Both the transmitter and the receiver have built-in zoom microphones that are user adjustable for maximum sound customisation. Depending on conditions the microphones can be set for omni or directional use and volume levels can be adjusted remotely. Contego has all the functions you need for better hearing in a discreet, easy-to-use and portable package that offers total flexibility whether one-on-one, in noisy crowded areas or in a lecture hall.

Maximum Functionality
Contego is the basis for a total sound solution for those using a headset or a T-coil equipped hearing aid, using the optional neck loop. The Contego can be linked to a television or other audio sources.

Easy to Use
Contego is small, light and easy to use. The clear menu system eliminates guesswork and provides quick access to functions and settings.

Security
The transmitter and the receiver are paired by the transmitter sending a coded key to the receiver. The digital, coded radio transmission makes it impossible to intercept a conversation.

Environmentally friendly
The Contego uses an environmentally friendly Li-Ion rechargeable battery.

Digital Wireless System
Sound is digitally transmitted, which eliminates the distortion often present in conventional FM systems.

Dual Zoom Microphones
Contego transmitters and receivers both feature microphones with a zoom function for omni or directional use to “focus” sound. The volume level is user adjustable on the receiver and, remotely, on the transmitter.

Modern Design
The Contego’s discreet, modern look is functional yet elegant. The internal antenna keeps the Contego sleek.

Earplugs Taking off with Concert Goers

At a recent ‘My Bloody Valentine’ concert in London the door staff were handing out free earplugs. The band all wear earplugs on stage and don’t want to ask their audience to listen to their sonic assault without protection too. The reality of earplugs is that instead of blocking out sound they accentuate it - the decibel level is reduced without distorting the sound.

In the UK the Royal Institute for Deaf People has teamed up with the super-club Ministry of Dance to promote the use of earplugs at live events. The charity hopes that the trendy design coupled with testimonials from Ministry of Sound DJs will encourage young people to wear them.

These Ministry of Sound ER-20s are ready to wear, re-usable, one size fits all, high fidelity ear plugs. They protect the ear against dangerously high levels of noise, but do not muffle voices and the surrounding environment. This allows users to protect their ears but still enjoy the music and atmosphere around them. The earplugs come in a funky yellow carry case.

Check out the website: www.ministryofsound.com/product/Yellow/merchandise/onesize/Earpugs
Tax On Texts

DeafHear.ie reacted angrily to the proposal put forward by the Green Party Deputy, Mary White TD, that a tax should be put on texts sent from mobile phones. Chief Executive, Niall Keane, described the proposal as “another tax on disability – another tax on deafness”.

In addition to outlining the higher living costs already borne by Deaf and Hard of Hearing people (hearing aids €1,500 - €3,000 each, batteries €100 p.a., Sign Language interpreters €500 - €750 p.a.), Mr. Keane also highlighted Deaf people’s inability to use radio and their limited use of television despite paying a full licence (€162) to the state. Mr. Keane stated that Deaf and Hard of Hearing people are already paying exorbitant telephone costs, compared to others. “In field tests, we found that it takes 23 texts (12 sent & 11 received) to make the equivalent of a one minute spoken call. A deaf person already pays €2.30 (@ 10 cent per text) for this privilege compared to a fully hearing person @ 20 cent per one minute call.”

Calling on the Government to ignore what he described as a “daft idea” Mr. Keane said: “I challenge the Government to be fair about this and tax voice calls instead of taxing the lifeline for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people, which text has become. This proposed tax is ill-thought out and will be disproportionately paid by the already marginalised.”

It is estimated that up to 300,000 Deaf and Hard of Hearing people will be affected by this move.

90 Years Young

On March 10th 2009 a group from the Dublin Deaf Day Centre travelled to Carlow to meet up with their friend Ellen Aspinel. Ellen celebrated her 90th birthday on March 14th. The group met and enjoyed lunch together in the Tara Arms Hotel Carlow. They presented Ellen with a bouquet of flowers, some gifts and a birthday cake. The day was a great success and Ellen was delighted to celebrate her birthday with all her friends.

Catherine Keane
DeafHear.ie Resource Centres

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