

NOW IS THE TIME!

We are a one-of-a-kind school in the entire country: our classic Montessori programs serve both hearing and deaf children, seamlessly, through the use of Cued Speech, so that all children have 100% access to our challenging curriculum – and to social interactions with staff and peers. Our deaf children also have the services of our teacher of the deaf and our speech/language pathologist, who assist them in developing excellent listening and speaking skills.

Lots of exciting things are happening that will help us grow to serve many more deaf and hard-of-hearing children and their families. Some very important outreach work that we have been doing over the past 2-3 years is finally beginning to bear fruit! We need your financial assistance in order to continue this momentum.

- **We are poised to start getting referrals from a prominent Chicago cochlear implant surgeon – but need to demonstrate continued growth in our staff’s credentials related to developing listening and speaking abilities of implanted children .** Children’s Memorial Hospital surgeon, Dr. Nancy Young, who implanted 110 young children last year alone, is interested in possibly referring her patients and their families to us for training in Cued Speech and for Early Intervention services. This past June, she invited AGBMS staff to present information on Cued Speech and our educational programs for the deaf to her entire Implant Team. She has acknowledged our reputation for providing age-appropriate language and literacy skills and wonderful mainstreaming opportunities, but wants to be assured that we are continuing to increase our expertise in providing quality Auditory/Verbal therapy, as well.

In Summer 2009, we sent our Teacher of the Deaf and our Speech/Language Pathologist to an Auditory/Verbal training institute offered by Children’s Memorial – but, in order to continue pursuing certification in A/V therapy, our staff needs to continue to receive additional training and mentoring. We are also planning to send several of our staff to an A. G. Bell Association Listening and Spoken Language workshop series in December. *We should be spending approximately \$8,000 per year over the next few years to cover these Professional Development needs.*

- **We are ready to move into the spotlight in early 2011 as a leading-edge Center for Professional Development and need start-up funding until this program can become self-supporting.** This year, compelling, new research has been published on Cued Speech and its impact on speech, auditory, language, and literacy development for deaf children. An entire new book, “Cued Speech and Cued Language for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children” (LaSasso, Crain, & Leybaert; 2010), a collection of 24 chapters written by 42 scholars in the U.S. and Europe, has been published – and clearly lays out the evidence that Cued Speech measurably enhances speech perception, speech reading abilities, and language acquisition in children with cochlear implants.

It is time for AGBMS/AEHI to become a recognized Center for Professional Development and a source of leading-edge information for teachers of the deaf, administrators of programs for educating the

deaf, audiologists, speech pathologists, implant teams, and parents of deaf children. We already have commitments from the following well-know professionals who would like to be included as presenters at seminars we plan to hold at our school: Dr. Carol LaSasso, Dr. Nancy Young (surgeon and head of implant team at Children’s Memorial), Dr. Beverly Trezek (Assistant Professor, Dept. of Education, DePaul University – and widely respected researcher on literacy for the deaf), Ann Bleuer (Teacher of the Deaf with over 60 years experience, with vast experience in using Cued Speech for language development and speech and auditory therapy), Brooke Whitted (well-known Chicago area attorney specializing in education law), and more.

We estimate that we will need approximately \$5,200 to invest in planning, organizing, and conducting our first Professional Development Seminar, tentatively planned for February 2011 timeframe.

- **We have started a groundswell of interest in Cued Speech at Illinois School for the Deaf in Jacksonville, IL, that may lead to its being used as a tool for facilitating the acquisition of age-appropriate English language and literacy skills – thereby allowing the ISD program to be a model of a successful ASL/English bilingual program.** Beverly Trezek, Assistant Professor of Education at DePaul University and researcher in literacy for the deaf, has introduced a tool known as “Visual Phonics” to ISD and other public special education programs for the deaf. In 20 lessons using Visual Phonics in a program of “direct instruction” in reading for deaf students, she was able to demonstrate a measurable increase in reading skills for these students. However, the increase was limited, due to the limited English skills of these children. Beverly visited AGBMS/AEHI last fall and was convinced that Cued Speech could pick up where Visual Phonics left off and actually help deaf children increase their English language skills – since Cued Speech is really a tool for presenting VISUAL ENGLISH. With Cued Speech, deaf children would then, truly, have no limits to developing age-appropriate literacy skills.

Since Beverly’s initial visit, several staff and administrators from ISD have attended Cued Speech workshops and learned to Cue. The same results that ISD saw after implementing Beverly’s program of direct instruction in reading using Visual Phonics was replicated using Cued Speech. We are now hoping to see movement at ISD toward implementing Cued Speech as a tool for enabling students of all ages to develop age-appropriate English proficiency and literacy skills. We are poised to assist in this process in any way that we can, including making arrangements through the National Cued Speech Association to assist in training and certifying instructors of Cued Speech at ISD.

If ISD successfully uses Cued Speech to enable their students to achieve age appropriate literacy skills, use of Cued Speech will surely spread throughout Illinois and the rest of the country as well – and many more deaf children will benefit.

- **We are successfully attracting new, young deaf children to our new Parent/Child and Toddler programs – and need to create a scholarship fund to cover our costs until the Illinois EI system and/or their school districts cover them.** Our tremendous efforts at outreach over the past few years are beginning to bear fruit – and we now have at least 5 new children between the ages of 0 and 3 whose families are learning to Cue and who are participating in our Parent/Child and Toddler programs – or soon will be. The families of most of these children cannot afford to pay the tuitions for these

programs without help. Our understanding at this time is that the Illinois Early Intervention system will only pay for the direct services that these children receive from our speech pathologist and our teacher of the deaf – although we are working with the Child and Family Connections centers that serve each of these children and are trying to maximize what the Illinois EI system will cover. Our goal is to create a scholarship fund to pay for the balance of the cost of the Cued Speech programs and services that we will be providing for these children until such time as they turn 3 and their tuition can be covered by their respective school districts.

The uncovered cost for the average child who comes to us initially at age 6 months and continues with us through the age of 3 is \$17,500, which includes about \$2500 for 1 year of the Parent/Child program and \$15,000 for 1 ½ years of the Toddler program. Given the ages of the 5 children now in our EI “pipeline”, we will need \$17,500 for 2 of them who are 6 months old and \$15,000 for 3 of them who are about 18 months old. *This is a total of \$80,000 needed over the next 2 ½ years – or about \$32,000 per year. What we really need is an endowment fund, the income from which would be used to scholarship deaf children in the 0-3 age group on an ongoing basis. Until we are able to raise enough to create such an endowment fund, we have an urgent need to raise the \$32,000 needed to cover at least one year’s unfunded costs for educating these 5 children (i.e., the costs unfunded by the Illinois Early Intervention system).*

- **Our efforts at Cued Speech Outreach over the past few years have been so successful that we should now be hiring a second teacher of the deaf and growing our capacity to directly serve more families with deaf children and more professionals who will, in turn, serve literally thousands more children over the next few years.** These families and professionals are responding to our prior Outreach efforts and we must staff up to serve their needs. We are in the process of writing grants to ask for funding for specific projects requiring the services of an additional teacher of the deaf but, until these efforts have time to bear fruit, we are asking for your help NOW. For example, we need to raise funds to pay for conducting more Cued Speech workshops, here at the school, at nearby universities, at homes of families where entire groups of family members want to learn to Cue, etc. We are in the process of building a relationship with the Illinois School for the Deaf (ISD), where they are now actually piloting the use of Cued Speech in a Direct Reading Instruction program that was originally designed to work with Visual Phonics. Within the next 3 months, we expect to incur costs to send staff to observe and consult with ISD staff on expanding their use of Cued Speech. This represents a tremendous breakthrough opportunity for the potential use of Cued Speech with many more deaf children in the state of Illinois. And, let us not overlook the fact that we are WAY overdue to sponsor a summer Cued Speech Camp (affectionately known in past summers as “Camp Chi-Cue-Go”).

A new part-time teacher of the deaf could be working on all of the above and furthering our cause of changing the lives of thousands of deaf children in the state of Illinois and beyond! We are poised at a crossroads where resources applied effectively NOW will tip the balance in favor of the rapid spread of Cued Speech – and age-appropriate language and literacy skills for the deaf – that many of us have been working to achieve for over 20 years!!

- We need to continue to invest in our staff, our programs, and our facility in order to realize our vision of being the most sought-after Montessori school in the North/Northwestern suburbs.**

Although we are already an Affiliate of the American Montessori Society and have 100% Montessori-certified teachers and use authentic Montessori materials and methods, we are now in the process of becoming officially “Accredited” by the AMS. To continue to improve our already-excellent programs and to meet some of the more stringent accreditation criteria, we will need to raise money to invest in additional Montessori materials, additional training for staff, etc. Carol Martorano, our Educational Administrator, is leading the Accreditation team and has put together, with the help of all of our teachers, including our teacher of the deaf and our speech/language pathologist, a “Wish List” of items that the school still needs. We cannot afford to invest in these items without your help, as our operating costs, at this time, are budgeted to use all of our tuition income and all of the income from this year’s annual Gala. Please see the enclosed Wish List if you would like to make a donation targeted to meet one of these areas of need.
- We must raise capital toward paying off our mortgage in order to improve the financial condition of the school and ensure our long-term survival.** This is actually our greatest need: to pay for our wonderful building so that the monthly mortgage payments do not continue to overwhelm our ability to keep up with our annual operating expenses. As we expected, our first two years in the building were years we had to spend “growing into” our new and bigger space. Our Capital Campaign (from inception until now) has raised only about \$175,000. This helped to cover our mortgage payments while we were in that growth process, but we continue to need more help in this area. Our dream is to find an “angel” with the resources to donate \$5 million, which would pay off our entire mortgage and cover the cost of building “Phase 2” – which would allow us to more than double our enrollment and ensure that we survive and thrive for as long as there are children who need us! Unless and until we find an angel with \$5 million, we are counting on all of you angels with slightly less than that amount to spare to be as generous as you are able to be with your support.

We recently had a visit from a very important person in the history of our school: the former hearing officer who decided a due process hearing in the 1980’s that resulted in denying a deaf child the right to have a Cued Speech transliterator in his public school educational program. Because of that decision, the family of that child helped to found AGBMS/AEHI. We are happy to report that this hearing officer, after spending several hours in careful observation of our programs, concluded that we had a true full-inclusion program where a deaf child had complete access to all spoken communication with all staff and students – and could fully participate in our educational programs alongside his hearing peers. It was certainly a proud day for our wonderful staff, who work so hard every day to make our programs fully accessible to our deaf students.