

...for kids and teens
who stutter,
their parents,
SLPs and others who
support them!

family Voices



National Stuttering Association

Changing the lives of people who stutter



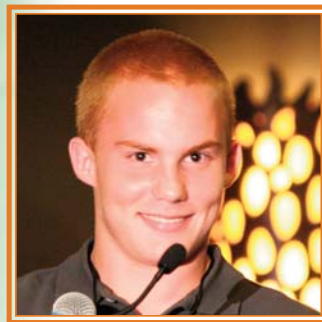
The Sunny Side of Stuttering, Scottsdale AZ

Over six hundred people gathered in Scottsdale Arizona in the middle of July for the 2009 NSA conference. There were a record number of children and teens who stutter with their families as well as speech-language pathologists. The weather was sunny and beautiful and so were the faces of all those who attended. Parents said it best: "My head is spinning with everything I experienced."... "This year's conference was so wonderful and extremely beneficial for everyone in our family." Enjoy reading articles by kids, teens, siblings and parents who attended this year's NSA conference.

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Youth of the Year



Robby Picken,
Chicago, IL

"I am very honored to be the 2009 Youth of the Year Award recipient. I was speechless when I got the award and I'm still in awe when I see it on my dresser. The NSA has changed my life dramatically and I am way more confident with my speech and accept it. The thing I liked most about the conference was the great people I met and the friendships that I will have forever. The award was just the icing on the cake!"



Conference AWARDS!

Congratulations to this year's NSA award recipients for your time, commitment and passion you've shown with the NSA! Visit the NSA website to see all of this year's winners.

Parent of the Year



Lois Hare
Coral Springs, FL

Lois Hare is the proud mother of Sean Hare and an active NSA parent and a philanthropist who has led a number of roundtable conferences for parents of youth who stutter. Her unwavering support of her son and his involvement within our organization establish Lois as a cornerstone of parental support. Her gracious heart and unbreakable spirit have made her a lifeline for a number of NSA parents.

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NSA Survey says Speech Therapy Helps Most Kids

by Jim McClure, NSA Public Relations



Children who stutter benefit from speech therapy, especially from a speech-language pathologist who specializes in stuttering. Eight out of 10 children have been bullied or teased about stuttering. And if you are having difficulty getting your child to do speech therapy “homework,” you’re not alone. These were among the findings of a recent NSA survey of 1,235 people including adults and teens who stutter, parents of children who stutter and speech-language pathologists.

About half of the 164 parents surveyed said their children avoid speaking situations and feel embarrassed when people find out they stutter. 47% said stuttering interferes with performance at school. Adults and teens who stutter reported similar effects of stuttering in their lives.

Speech therapy helps most children who stutter. Parents reported more successful speech therapy from university speech clinics, private-practice clinicians and intensive programs than from school speech therapy, but more than half also reported successful results from school speech therapy. Like adults, children appear to have more success with therapies that change attitudes than with therapies that focus on speech mechanics.

The expertise of the speech therapist is a significant factor, according to the survey. Children who worked with a speech-language pathologist who is a Board Recognized Specialist in Fluency Disorders had more successful therapy than those who did not. They also were significantly less likely to avoid speaking situations or feel embarrassed about stuttering.

The majority of parents have been involved with their children’s speech therapy, but “homework” assignments to practice speaking techniques can be a

source of friction. About half of parents said their children discontinued speech therapy at some point, either because of a joint decision with the clinician or the child’s own decision. In some cases the child wanted to take a break, was burned out on therapy or was losing interest.

Even though experts agree that early intervention is important for children who stutter, nearly 30% of parents were advised by professionals to postpone speech therapy until their children were older. This faulty advice most often came from pediatricians and physicians, but nearly as often came from speech therapists. (The NSA now has a brochure to bring pediatricians up to speed on stuttering.)

14% of parents said their children had been denied speech therapy in school. In some cases the school did not offer speech therapy, in others the school did not have a clinician who could treat stuttering.

About one-fourth of parents reported that their children had treatment other than speech therapy for stuttering. Some success was reported with psychological counseling, airflow or breathing modification and prescription medication. In general, however, alternative treatments were generally less successful than speech therapy. Although assistive devices are not recommended for children, a few parents reported that their children had used devices such as the SpeechEasy with mixed results.

The full survey report is available on the NSA web site.

Jim was a chapter leader in Chicago for more than 20 years before relocating to Albuquerque, NM, and served on the NSA board from 1997 to present day. He also is the consumer representative to the Specialty Board on Fluency Disorders. Jim started his career as a newspaper reporter, worked in corporate public relations and his own consulting practice, and is a retired Navy reserve officer. His email is jim@jam-clure.com



Thank Goodness for NSA Kids

by Marybeth Allen

Wow! Was it hot or what in Scottsdale? No, no...not the weather! I mean those super hot NSAKids! They were steamy and on the move from one workshop to the other. If you didn’t get a chance to see what was happening, here’s a little run down of what the kids were up to at the NSA conference July 9 – 11:

On Thursday morning, we started off in the Family Orientation and Icebreaker games.... Who would have guessed there were so many families from the Northeast?? Then, while the adults and teens went to that boring long talk.... The kids had fun getting to know each other and making Memory T-Shirts with Debbie and Chloe. After lunch, it was off to the “Famous NSA Scavenger Hunt”. They really

cont. on page 7...



Look Me in the Eyes

by Chloe, Covington, WA

It's just a little embarrassment,
It won't kill me, I say to myself.
My expression remains still,
So the truth won't show.

You never get used to the laughs and chuckles.
I am a person who stutters,
Part of the one percent of the population.
There's not many of us,
But it's enough.

My name is C-C-Chloe.
Did you forget your name?
That's what the reactions are.
I'm enraged that people can be so ignorant.
Stuttering can be my personal hell.

I sometimes feel cut off from my happiness.
I didn't know anyone who shared this speech impediment.
I can't say anything sometimes.
There's always that day I'm afraid to talk.
I see the look on your face,
When you wonder what's happening.

You're thinking I'm stupid.
Your refusal to look me in the eye,
Is like a dagger stabbing at my self esteem.
But I know what I'm talking about.

It's not how I say it,
It's the content that counts.
Just listen to me,
I have a lot on my mind,
And I want to let go.

I want other people to know what it is like,
To have your words stuck in your throat.
To feel like something is clutching my vocal chords.
It won't let loose, no matter how much I plead.
It makes me wonder,
Why did it have to be me?

I wouldn't wish this upon anyone else.
But I am strong,
I know I'm not alone,
I know I can say what I want.

Your discomfort is not my priority.
It may take me longer,
But what I have to say is important.
And I will be heard.



National Stuttering Association

t.w.o.s.t.
Teens Who STutter

Sibling Point of View - For My Brother Braden

by Austin, The Colony, TX



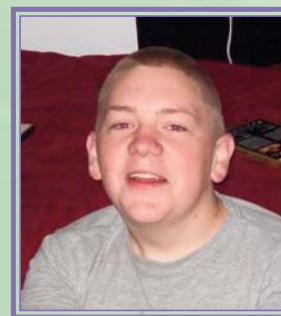
Through the years I have seen him struggle; it brings tears to my eye. I hate seeing my brother go through so much. It kills me to see him be bullied and picked on at school. I have always been supportive and helped him all these years.

At first I didn't know what stuttering was. I was told later on and started to understand more. I would pray that

someone would help him with his speech and make him feel comfortable with himself. I never thought it would be possible. Until one year he was told about the NSA conference. They said that it would help him be more positive with himself. He would meet new people and gain more knowledge on what he can do to stay confident with himself. That summer him, and our mom went to the conference. I never knew what was going on. All I hoped for was that he was having a great time.

The day he came back, he walked through the door with a smile on his face, a smile of which I have never seen on him before. I was so happy that the NSA made a difference on him. He would not stop talking about it. Then he went again the next year and then again this year in 2009. He told me he wanted me to go. I wanted to meet the people who put that smile on his face, and who made it possible for him to be himself. I was so surprised when I arrived. It was one of the most amazing experiences I have ever seen. I never knew that it could be possible.

The NSA is one big loving family. I would just cry knowing that there are such nice people out there who care for others to make them know that they are never alone in this world. I have met so many wonderful people and gained so many memories. I cannot wait for the next conference. Thank you NSA for making a difference and helping my brother.



Empower Me

by Theresa Martinez

My name is Theresa Martinez. I'm Gabby's mother who is seven. I feel that the conference gave me a better understanding of my daughter. I feel I accept her for who she is more. I am now a better advocate for my daughter. The conference helped to empower me to better meet her needs. I am truly grateful to all of you.



Until Next Year

by Debbie Nicolai
I hope that you were able to attend the conference in



Scottsdale. The hotel was awesome! The kids loved the pool and the lazy river. Many families took advantage of the activities that the hotel provided and I heard stories about those S'mores! If you missed the conference this year, I sure hope that you can make it to Cleveland next year. The conference is a great way for your child to meet other kids and teens who stutter and for you to meet other parents who understand exactly what you are going through. Many people say that the conference is a life-changing experience.

At the conference this year, our Teen Advisory Council (TAC) added some new members! We are so excited to introduce them: Braden Barber, Sarah Onofri, Drew Kiser, Sean Ridder, Lizi Pina and Robbie Picken. These new members along with returning member Chloe Whitaker and TAC Leader and NSA Board member Stephanie Nicolai, are teens selected by their peers and the Family Programs committee to act as mentors and liaisons for the kids and teens of the NSA. This group will work hard to help your child understand stuttering, accept stuttering and to be successful in anything that they do as they come to realize that stuttering should not ever keep them from doing what they want to do. Please go to the NSA website to meet each TAC member and to see their smiling faces! They are always available to answer any questions that you or your child may have.

Please feel free to email me with any questions about anything! I am here to support you and to be with you on your journey as a parent of a child who stutters. This is a lifelong journey and we need each other for support. You are not alone! We are in this together.

Forever Grateful

by Dynell Rynd

I have a 10 year old wonderful son that stutters named Jack- he has been stuttering since he was 3 years old. He has been in therapy since we found out. This year we started private therapy in addition to his school therapy. Thankfully we found a wonderful therapist named Karen Kumar near our home. She told me about the conference months ago- I kind of put it out of my mind and had decided not to go. I realize now that I still have a hard time accepting that he will probably stutter for the rest of his life.

That still, small voice in my head kept telling me to check it out- and thankfully I sent an email out and was kindly responded to by Debbie Nicolai. After reading her email and letting my son read it we decided to attend the conference. Jack was so excited to meet other kids that "talked like him"

The conference was life changing for me and my son- I felt so welcomed and supported by everyone. I think that for me I just soaked everything up and listened to all the other parents. It was overwhelming to hear stories and experiences that our family has felt or gone through. I loved learning how to be a better listener with Mr. Schneider and had several Ah Ha moments with Mr. Hicks and Sarah D'Agostino. To be able to listen to the TAC was incredibly informative for me. They are all so confident and self assured and so full of promise- their parents must be so proud. It gives me such hope for my son.

At the end of each day when we would drive back home from Scottsdale I would ask Jack if he wanted to come back the next day and he excitedly said Yes! He was learning so much and meeting new friends. His sister Ashlyn, who does not stutter, also benefited from attending the conference. She has become a better listener and supports her brother 100%

100%

I am forever grateful to Jack's therapist for telling us about the conference and to the NSA for an amazing 3 days. I now know that Jack is not alone in his journey and that we have support that will help us along the way. He is already looking forward to Ohio and so am I!

What a blessing you all are- sincerely, D'neil Rynd



Stutter Buddies

Stuttering Achievement

by Michael L., Iberia, LA

If you stutter, you are not alone because I stutter too. Imagine stuttering as an achievement because other people can't stutter as good as you!



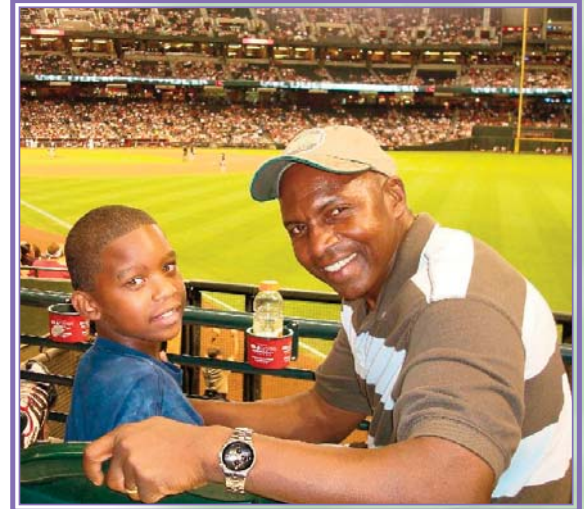
"Great letter Michael!
Sarah really gave a
great presentation!"



Just Keep Talking

by Sarah B, Scottsdale AZ

Hi, I am Sarah B. I have stuttered since I was 3 years old, and at that time it took me a minute to say a simple sentence like "Can I have a cupcake?" Luckily I found a speech therapist and I still know her today. But I moved when I was 7 years old to Arizona, and here I just keep talking and that rule helped me get through it and now I can talk a lot smoother than I could two years ago. And that just shows you that hard work can pay off.

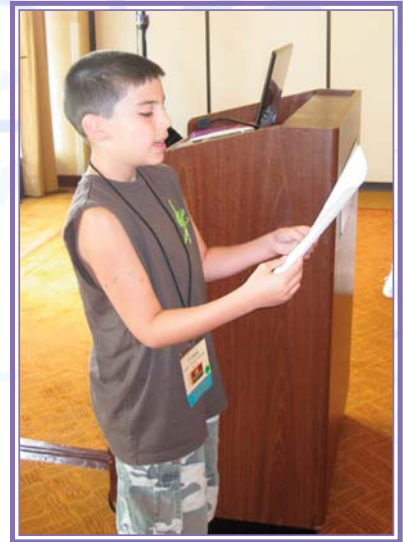


Stutter Buddies

5th Grader Speaks Out

by John Dereck D., Louisville, KY

I am J.D. The J stands for John and the D stands for Dereck. I don't know if this is spelled right but...I was named after my dad. I just like to be called J.D. I am ten years old and I stutter. I love to sing and I'm a great singer. I also have a crazy sister that is six and her name is Alexis. I am smart and going into the 5th grade. Farewell my friends.



JD and Nathan are cool guys, and good friends!



Full House

by Nate S., Wildomar, CA

Hello. We are a lot alike. I've been stuttering since I was 3 years old, basically ever since I could talk. The only reason people make fun of us is because they don't know what it is. I live in a house with 10 people. That's me, my mom, my sister, my aunt and my uncle, my two cousins, and my grandma and grandpa. I'm the only one that stutters. I can get hurt

sometimes but I get used to it. My cousin would always tell me "normal is weird and weird is normal. That means everybody is different. Don't ever forget that!"



Family Voices would like to hear from YOU!
Please send us your thoughts, ideas, questions and stories.

Contact the NSA or Sarah D'Agostino at sdowgiallo@yahoo.com

Stutter Buddies Stories and drawings may be submitted for publication. Send them to the NSA or to Bonnie Weiss at 1484 Kensington Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14215 blweiss1@verizon.net

All in Good Fun by Stephanie Nicolai

Kids playing, adults reconnecting, and teens causing trouble and disappearing-another great conference!



All went well at the conference for everyone, but again I think the teens took the cake for having the most fun and getting in the most trouble. All in good fun, of course. There were about 35 of us this year between the ages of 13-20 and it was amazing to see everyone reconnect and connect with new friends. There were a few teens that returned to the conference after not coming for a few years and even they immediately recognized people. The teen workshops had quite a variety this year, which differed from last year's "free time" goal which didn't work out as planned. It turns out teens don't know what to do with too much free time, who knew? So this year's workshops were very cool to have new presenters and old ones present to us and keep us busy.

There were a few highlights that pop into my mind, but one that really stands out (and I'm sure all of the teens will agree with me on this one) is the workshop with Jay Jones-Doyle. What an amazing guy! This workshop was for all of the teens and their parents and we talked about questions/concerns/stories that we all share. We all know that the NSA has our back no matter what and stuttering people rule and all that good stuff, but to actually have everyone in one room and talk about all of the same struggles and issues and be able to laugh about it and embrace it is a completely indescribable feeling. Those are the times during the conference that make me want to keep coming back every year, I can't get that type of support anywhere else. Although us teens try to avoid our parents at all costs during the conference, except for when we need more money, it was a good feel-

ing to have my parents next to me experiencing it with me. It's not every day you can get that kind of support both from people who stutter and your parents all in the same room. So I would like to thank Jay for putting that together and hosting such a great workshop!

Besides the workshops and bonding through our speech during the day, the teens would hang out at night and even all go out to lunch together. I think those may be some of the best times at the conference as well because that's when we all can go into the real world together and experience life as it really is, instead of in the perfect NSA bubble. Teens have an immense bond that only we can share. Let's face it, being a teenager isn't always easy, and to be a teen that stutters is a little bit harder on the ego. So to be together with these people makes me feel truly at home and more comfortable than ever. Obviously all of the other teens feel the same way because they are inseparable! So overall, it was of course another great conference for not only the teens but for everyone. But here is a note to the parents and other adults-when you see us walking down the hall in our big group and you think we are up to something, we probably are, but just keep in mind that this is the one time of year that we really get to let loose with not only our distant friends, but also our speech and we are just trying to have some fun together (good clean fun, of course!).



"Thank Goodness..." cont. from page 7...

got to know the hotel better and bravely asked all kinds of people for things off the scavenger hunt list. Hmm... hope everyone got back their sunglasses, shoes, lipsticks....etc.

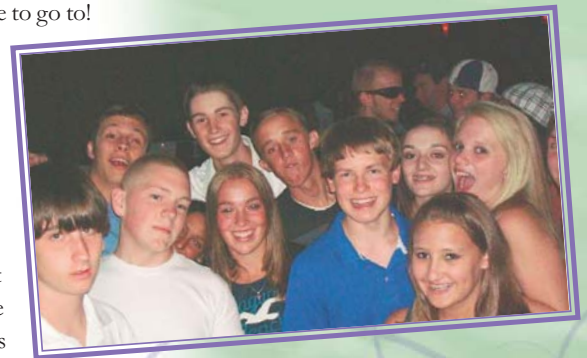
Friday morning the NSA kids got to make bugs! Yep Bugs...I (Marybeth) helped to think about what "bugs" us about stuttering. The kids helped each other come up with ways to deal with those things. Next, thank goodness the NSA kids didn't have to go to that next "boring adult" gathering...instead, we met with Taro for open mike. The kids were brave and often really funny telling their story. Then it was time to write: Bonnie and Sarah played music while we wrote Sutter Buddies letters (turn the pages...there they are!) After lunch, everyone had GREAT things to say about each other, with Taro and his friends leading the way. The NSA kids moved down to TV land next and Nina and Diane led the kids in a fast paced game of Stuttering Jeopardy! NSA Kids are so smart! Bring on the teens for the next game!

Saturday morning, the NSA kids were movin' n

www.WeStutter.org

groovin' and displaying so much talent you wouldn't believe it! Cool noises, weird faces, interesting gymnastic moves and more! To avoid another adult session that thank goodness the kids didn't have to go to!

Instead, the NSA kids got to hang out with the TAC having fun playing games. And then...wow! more open mic with Taro. By the time this session rolled around the kids were really finding their voices...they were booming! Finally, Sarah and Marybeth and a whole other gang of people helped get ready for the closing ceremony. The music was great... it sung to our feelings and emotions! Our ribbons and rainbows helped us share the love and support NSA kids feel all through the conference! Guess what...we can't wait to see you all in Cleveland next July! NSA will really Rock in 2010!





Back to School

By Debbie Nicolai

It's hard to believe that a year has already gone by since I wrote about going back to school. It's back to school time again and once again its IEP time and time to educate another teacher about stuttering. My last year's article is available on the NSA website.

The NSA website is a great place to get information and download brochures for your teacher and give ideas to help your child in school.



Classroom Preparation

By Stephanie Coppen

Summer is winding down and school is right around the corner! As you and your children prepare for the upcoming school year, consider talking with your child about doing a classroom presentation on stuttering. This past May my 8 year old son Cameron did a presentation about stuttering for his 2nd grade class. His dad and I had mentioned doing this in previous years, but he wasn't ready to do it until this spring. The presentation was a success and a wonderful experience for him and his classmates. With some help from mom and his speech therapist at

school, Cam talked about what stuttering was, types of stuttering, i.e. blocks, repetitions and prolongations and how it felt. He explained to his class that stuttering is not something he does on purpose. He also shared what his class-mates can do to when he stutters such as not interrupting, be a good listener and giving him the time he needs.



Cam shared what he works on in speech class and that using the tools he learns there is hard work. He was so proud of himself as were his teacher, and of course mom and dad! His classmates asked him questions which he was excited about answering. He was the expert educating his friends and he loved being able to do that. The presentation helped his classmates understand that stuttering was just part of who Cam was, but it didn't define him.

If your child is interested in doing a presentation for their class I encourage you to support them and provide as much (or as little!) help as they need. The NSA has some great information about classroom presentations @ www.westutter.org or call 1-800-937-8888 (westutter).

Parents, kids and teens meet across the country to support each other. Check the NSA website for a group in your area.

NSAKids and TWST GROUPS...

- Dallas, TX
- Longview, TX
- Mesquite, TX
- Rochester, NY
- Low Country, SC
- Lafayette, LA
- Sacramento/Roseville, CA
- Chicago/Naperville, IL
- Illinois State University, IL
- Chicago/Skokie, IL
- Orlando, FL
- Auburn, NH
- Jersey Shore, NJ
- Southeast, MI
- Milwaukee, WI
- Queens, NY
- Rockville, MD
- Ft. Lauderdale, FL

UP & COMING GROUPS...

- Long Island, Nassau Co., NY
- Long Island, Suffolk Co., NY
- Brooklyn College, NY
- Phoenix/Scottsdale, AZ
- Tampa, FL
- San Diego, CA
- San Francisco Bay Area, CA
- Baltimore, MD
- Rio Grande Area, TX

FAMILY VOICES is a forum for views and information about stuttering directed toward families of the NSA. The opinions expressed are those of the individual contributor, and are not necessarily the opinion of the National Stuttering Association. The NSA accepts no responsibility for the accuracy of any opinion or information provided by the contributor, nor do we endorse or reject any therapeutic strategies, programs or devices mentioned in these pages. FAMILY VOICES is published by National Stuttering Association through the collaborated efforts of Bonnie Weiss, Gary Rentschler, Marybeth Allen, Debbie Nicolai and Sarah D'Agostino, as well as the many NSA members who wrote letters and articles for inclusion.

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