

Crank It Down! Update

Deanna Meinke

NHCA's Task Force on Hearing Conservation Education for Children and Adolescents (HCECA) continues the grassroots efforts begun in 1995 by core members of the association. The Task Force emanated from the development of classroom presentations.

Members of the current task force met at the NHCA Conference in Raleigh last February and shared their reasons for participating on the task force. Responses included; "We must begin young." "We have to reach the children." "To teach children to appreciate their sense of hearing." "To change behaviors early." "Children need to grow up using hearing protection, just like seatbelts or bike helmets." It is apparent that the task force members believe it is critical for the future success of hearing conservation programs that we begin young and instill an appreciation for the sense of hearing.

The issue of noise-induced hearing loss in children is now a mainstream healthcare issue. The Healthy People 2010 goals include a specific goal to reduce the incidence of noise-induced hearing loss in children. The July 2001 issue of *Pediatrics* featured an article by Amanda Sue Niskar et al. Over 5.2 million children are at risk for noise-induced hearing loss between the ages of 6 and 19 years according to this research. (See "News Briefs on p. 14.) Imagine the outreach effort NHCA would have to undertake to disseminate information to this number of children. Each individual NHCA member would need to reach 11,555 children—certainly more than a full-time job for each of us.

Consequently, we must collaborate and disseminate the information available, with an emphasis on *disseminate*. As I've become familiar with the early outreach efforts of NHCA in collaboration with Sertoma and become familiar with other related organizational outreach programs, such as the Military Audiology Association, H.E.A.R., Sight and Hearing Association, American Tinnitus Association, House Ear Institute, Wise Ears etc., a fundamental realization became apparent. The knowledge is there, the tools are there, and some financial resources are there. What is lacking is *dissemination*. These programs, curricula, videos and pamphlets need to be readily available to every teacher, school nurse, scout troop leader, 4-H leader, school audiologist, school speech-language pathologist and health department staff. The NHCA Task Force sees its role as a means of facilitating this charge for our members and the general public.

NHCA has provided over 250 copies of the *Crank It Down* training videos that were originally funded by contributions from Sertoma and Sonomax in 1998-99. Many of the requests

for materials come into the NHCA office from elementary teachers, school audiologists and speech-language pathologists as well as concerned parents. In addition to the hearing conservation program training videos, a copy of the California *Crank It Down* curriculum packet, a copy of the Sight and Hearing Association's "Know Noise" video, and two cassette tapes entitled "Listening in Noise: The Virtues of High Fidelity Hearing Protectors" and "Audio and Hearing Loss Demonstrations" were provided free of charge. The NHCA office has exhausted the original supply of training videos and is looking for resources to continue this particular outreach effort. If you or your organization are interested in providing any funding resources to underwrite additional videos or have specific training materials to donate, your contributions and suggestions are most welcome.

As the task force looks ahead, the goal will be to provide most of the resources on an NHCA Children's Resources website rather than mailing materials from the NHCA office. The goal is to have a central information bank to refer members and the general public to when they need specific information. The website will have links to established programs and also a bank of articles, presentations and curricula for specific age groups for the public to access in their children's noise awareness outreach efforts. The website is currently under development, and suggestions for other links are welcome.

It is apparent that one program or one educational tool will not reach all the children, and that one organization or one task force cannot reach all the children. Programs and educational efforts need to be tailored to the age, language, background and circumstances of each location. NHCA members have generated ideas and created outstanding tools to reach children in their local schools and communities. Help us share those efforts with each other and the public. If you have developed a classroom lecture or curriculum, developed a teaching activity or game, organized learning stations, discovered a successful promotional item or created an eye-catching graphic, please contribute them to the NHCA website. Members may submit website contributions to HCECA task force member Theresa Schulz at e-mail: ihearu2@earthlink.net. The task force will facilitate converting files for web use as necessary, so please share your information.

Abe Lincoln said, "The best thing about the future is that it comes one day at a time." The key to reaching the future workers in hearing conservation programs is to reach the children of today, one day at a time. **NHCA**

For more information or to join the HCECA task force please contact Deanna Meinke by e-mail at mountainear@mindspring.com

