

Family VOICES

Celebrating 35 Years of
Changing the Lives of People Who Stutter

THIRD QUARTER 2012

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A Conference Veteran's Story

KAREN SPOHN, CA



As a “veteran” of NSA Conferences, St. Petersburg being The Spohn Family’s third, I thought I knew what would happen. However, I was incorrect. At each conference we learn new things, experience new feelings, and renew the reasons why we love the NSA. Listening to the first-timer parents, I see their tears and underlying fears at the Opening Parent Roundtable. I have felt that emotion before, at my first roundtable in 2010. I felt such empathy as I related to their stories and understood their reason for traveling – sometimes great distances – to find out their “why” for being there.

This year, my son Justin and I attended. I was quite hesitant about whether he would want to attend the workshops. For the two prior years, my daughter had attended and basically “escorted” him around. This year I didn’t have time to do that, so I left it up to him. I gave Justin a copy of the “Day At A Glance” and a map of the hotel. He surprised me by attending many workshops and “trying to mingle” (those are his words!). Justin isn’t a great social butterfly; he never has been. So, by him voluntarily attending the workshops he took a huge step ahead. He especially enjoyed learning about college and getting a job.

Not only am I a parent of a person who stutters, but also the chapter leader of the Orange County, CA TwST group. I had been looking for a chapter for my son for awhile, but disappointed that there wasn’t one in Southern California. So, after the conference in 2011, I contacted the NSA and they hooked me up with another parent who felt the same way. Mike Lee and I set up our chapter with great ease that I attribute to Tammy Flores and Family Programs. As we parents know, we are not alone and the NSA is there to support all of us. I am excited that we can reach out to the teens and parents of Southern California to provide a place where they can be themselves. The young people who stutter can be with others who stutter and we can provide a shoulder for the parents to lean on.

My family and I are super excited that the 2013 Annual Conference is headed back to Scottsdale, AZ. Because it’s so close to us in Southern California, many of our chapter members will now be able to experience what my family has experienced for the past 3 years! ::

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

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Be sure to check out
'WeStutter' on Facebook
and Twitter today!

Congratulations

to our 2012 Family Programs Award Winners!

Family Chapter of the Year :: Orange County, CA
(Chapter Leaders Karen Spohn & Mike Lee)

Volunteer of the Year :: Sarah Onofri

Youth of the Year :: Miranda Smith

Parent of the Year :: Debbie Nicolai

'Tween | Teen TALK



NSA 'Tweens Find Their Place

DANNY W., NH

The 2012 National Stuttering Association Annual Conference in St. Petersburg, Florida was very exciting! It was my first conference as a member of the Teen Advisory Council (TAC) and the addition of 'tween workshops made it even better. In the past few years, kids between the ages of 11 and 14 sometimes had a hard time fitting in a conference. They were too old for the kids' workshops but they were too young for many of the teen workshops. The 'tween workshops offered this year were perfect for kids this age, including myself.

Since this was my first time presenting workshops, I wasn't sure what to expect. Once I got the hang of it and felt more comfortable, I really settled in and had a lot of fun!

From roundtables, to an open microphone, and even the *Transitioning to Middle School* workshop, the 'tween offerings were an excellent addition to the conference line-up. I am very excited, as are my NSA friends new and old, for the 2013 Annual Conference in Scottsdale, AZ. I know it will be as enjoyable and life-changing as the 2012 conference. Can't wait to see you all there! ::

Life After Conference

KATIE D., PA

Leaving the NSA conference is always bittersweet for me. The NSA is like a family and leaving your family (even to go live your life) is hard. You want to take what they have taught you and use it, but you also don't want to leave them, knowing that it will be another whole year of braving the world on your own. Like family, we may drive each other nuts at times, but we are always there for one another.

Although it is hard to walk away from that environment of complete love and acceptance to go out into a world that doesn't have much of either at the end of the conference that's what we have to do. However, the family never really leaves you, even if you live on opposite sides of the country. All it takes is one call, one text, one message on Facebook to anyone in the NSA family and someone will be there to help you with any situation and to comfort you.

Stuttering can be a wild roller-coaster, but as long as we have the NSA, we don't have to ride it alone. People there will remind you just how special you are and they will restore your confidence so you can stutter like a rock star! So this year, after you leave the conference, remember that you are never really leaving the NSA. The NSA accepts us as we are – quirky, different, special, crazy, and still loved! All you need to do is reach out to someone and you can count on them to show you just how special you are, and nothing can ever take that away from you. ::



Teens Taking Over St. Pete's

MIRANDA SMITH, TAC CHAIRPERSON



The teens of the National Stuttering Association had an amazing conference this year! From workshops that showed how to handle the college scene, to open mic roundtables, to a stuttering jeopardy game, the teens learned a lot this year and most importantly had fun. A new workshop this year was the Teens Design Your Own T-shirt workshop, where each teen designed an NSA t-shirt on paper then everyone voted the next day on their favorite design. Congratulations to

Katie Hautman, the winner of this year's Teen T-shirt Design Contest! The shirts will be available to order on the NSA website and Katie will be receiving a free shirt.

As teens, we all enjoy going to workshops and connecting with other people our age while learning more about stuttering, but the real connections and the real lessons are outside of those workshops, where the memories are being made, friendships are being tied together, pictures are being taken, and our mouths

don't stop talking! It's when we're all sitting in the lobby at 3 A.M even though we know we have workshops to attend at 9 in the morning, talking about nothing and everything at the same time. It's when we see each other in the morning while we wait for workshops to start and we all look like zombies and are still rubbing our eyes from staying up all night with each other. It's lunch break when we all scramble to grab as many friends as we can to go to lunch down the street and be back in time for the workshop after lunch. It's when the day of workshops finally ends and we all scurry to our rooms, change, and race to the pool or the beach. It's when we're all sitting under the stars, with full bellies from an awesome BBQ, watching an amazing fireworks display together, knowing that the week ahead is going to be awesome and unforgettable. It's when we hear a first timer talk in a workshop for the first time after three days or when we shake somebody's hand for the entire time we are stuttering through our name and it doesn't feel weird at all. It's Saturday night when we're all singing (or screaming) "baby, you're a firework, come on show 'em what you're worth!" Then it's Sunday when we're all in the lobby, crying and saying our goodbyes to people that we just met four days ago...people that have changed our lives, people that are instant best friends, people that are unforgettable and that we can't wait to see next year in Arizona when we do it all over again. ::

NSA Family Radio

Your Virtual Family Chapter for Parents, Kids, and Teens!



NSA Family Radio is hosted by the Family Chapters Committee of the NSA. The mission of the show is to bring together kids and teens who stutter and their parents, siblings and other family members in a way that is convenient from all over the world! We will be sharing ideas, information, and providing support. Best yet, you can join us for a live conversation as the show allows you to call in and participate. In addition, all shows are recorded and archived if you can't catch us live! For dates, times, and upcoming show schedules, please visit WeStutter.org. **Join us live!** Call (310) 807- 5072 or toll free number: 877-560-5873

Finish That Sentence

Sarah Onofri held the workshop *Finish That Sentence* at the 2012 Annual Conference in St. Petersburg. The kids of the NSA were asked to finish the following sentences in regards to their speech. Read below to see what they had to say!

At the conference, I learned:

- ...how to treat my brother when he stutters
- ...what to do if I need help if I ever stutter
- ...karate
- ...stuttering is ok
- ...how to make cupcakes
- ...stuttering is a ok and very awesome
- ...how to ignore bullies
- ...how to make the mad face to bullies
- ...to stand up for others
- ...to be nice



If stuttering was an animal, it would be a:

- ...tiger shark
- ...cat
- ...lamb
- ...goat
- ...hamster
- ...sheep
- ...elephant
- ...man
- ...lion
- ...rabbit
- ...tiger
- ...parrot
- ...bulldog
- ...chicken



“The NSA Conference in Florida was so fun, awesome, amazing and understanding. My favorite things were the Beach Party (I was in the Gulf waters playing volleyball for 2 hours straight!), the dancing at the banquet (so much fun!), and the cookie making workshop. I also really liked being able to go to the lobby just to talk to new people any time of day. I will miss the NSA!”

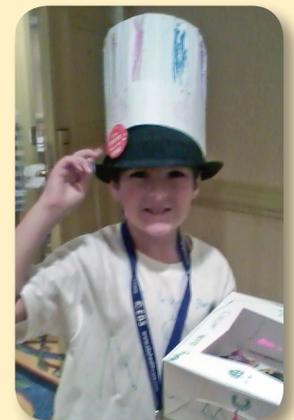
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Cooper C., CA

Back to School

It's hard to believe that summer is winding down and that before long the kids will be back at school! The start of school can be a stressful time for everyone, but especially for children who stutter. Talk to your child about how they would like to discuss their stutter with their teacher and their classmates. Do they want you to have that conversation, would they like to speak to the teacher with your help, or would they like to handle it on their own? Perhaps your child would like to give a presentation to their class

about stuttering. We have found that if classmates have information about stuttering it becomes less of an issue in the classroom and in social settings at school. Please visit the NSA website at the following link: www.westutter.org/whoWeHelp/Family_Resources.html for Back to School tips and brochures that you can pass along to your child's teacher(s). There is great information available that we know you will find helpful. Remember, you are NOT alone! ::



Upcoming Family Events

November 3, 2012 | Phoenix, AZ
CEU/Family Fun Day

November 17-19, 2012 | Atlanta, GA
ASHA

Please visit our website at www.westutter.org for more details!

Kids Reflection

SARAH ONOFRI, MA

If you've ever been to a National Stuttering Association conference, you know that it's a jam-packed few days. This couldn't be truer for the kids who attended this year's conference in St. Petersburg, Florida! Kids were constantly moving from one workshop to the next and from one exciting experience to another.

We kicked off our conference together with an icebreaker, where we were able to introduce ourselves, play a few games, and talk about why we came to the conference. Throughout the week, kids had the chance to get to know each other, as well as many of the NSA's inspiring teens and adults.

As always, the kids loved interacting with our Teen Advisory Council (TAC) leaders - Alex, Ben, Chloe, Courtney, Danny, Katie, and Miranda. With them, they had the chance to decorate their very own conference t-shirts, participate in a scavenger hunt lead by Debbie Nicolai, and much more.

Kids were able to stretch their creative muscles in our *This is What My Stutter Looks Like* workshop with Jessica Giuffre, test their stuttering knowledge by competing in a game of *Jeopardy*, practice martial arts (an ever popular workshop with Tom Scharstein!), and serve as bakers in our Kids in the Kitchen workshop with Jean Finstad.

These are just a few examples of the wonderful activities the kids participated in throughout the week at the conference. A special thank you to all of our kids workshop presenters: Jessica Giuffre, Shannon Beaty,

Pattie Wood, Debbie Nicolai, Ellen Lanouette, Tricia Krauss Lehrman, Heather Ross, Marybeth Allen, Tom Scharstein, and Jean Finstad. Thank you all for bringing your creativity, enthusiasm, and energy to the kids program.

I know that for me, as a person who stutters, I come back to the NSA conference year after year to connect with others who stutter and to be in place where stuttering is the norm. My hope is that all the kids who attended the conference, whether they themselves stutter or they love someone who stutters, were able to experience that too. As I go back into "real life," I think of everyone that I've met through the NSA and how attending the conference truly reminds me that stuttering is okay. I hope that as you all return to your homes and your daily routines, you too have been touched by the NSA, and can take with you the lessons you have learned at the conference.

Next year's conference in Scottsdale, Arizona may seem far away, but use this time to jot down your memories and favorite moments, to teach others about stuttering and the NSA, and to stay in touch with friends you've met at the conference. I feel honored to have had the chance to get to know so many of you and your families, and am looking forward to seeing you all again next year in Arizona! ::



Thank You, Thank You!

STEPHANIE COPPEN, FAMILY PROGRAMS ADMINISTRATOR



The 2012 conference in St. Petersburg, FL was a huge success in part thanks to the hard work and dedication of the many Family Programs volunteers whose focus is to provide support to those who stutter and their families! I would especially like to thank **Sarah Onofri** for her tireless efforts in providing amazing workshops for our NSA kids, **Lee & Nina Reeves** for putting together the Family Teaming event which was a blast even in 90 degree heat, and **Diane & Larry Games** for coordinating the wildly successful Conversational Breakfast! I would

also like to thank the many volunteers who provided insight and guidance during conference planning and at the conference; **Shannon & Kevin Beaty, Joan & Dave Ross, Helene, Tim & Dan Haus, Joan & Rob Duffield, Kayla Wood, Karen Spohn, Melanie Rogers, Debbie & Stephanie Nicolai, Alex Rosenbaum, the Teen Advisory Council** and of course, thank you to all of our fabulous workshop presenters! And lastly, a special thank you to our **Executive Director, Tammy Flores** and **Family Programs Chair, Pattie Wood.** ::

First Timer Conference Reflections

JENNY ADAMS, FL



I am the mother of a beautiful 11-year old daughter named Jada, who is smart, creative, caring, and just happens to stutter. Our Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) introduced us to the NSA, and we were thrilled to find out that the 2012 Annual Conference would only be 2 hours away from us this year. Arrangements were made and we begin to count down the days until the conference, not knowing the adventure we were in store for.

Within the first moments after our arrival the fabulous Tammy Flores, NSA's Executive Director,

greeted us. She immediately made us feel welcome, as if we were already apart of the NSA family. Moments after meeting Tammy, we were introduced to several other returning NSA'ers. Everyone was so friendly and welcoming to us. I was especially amazed by the members of the Teen Advisory Council (TAC). They quickly approached us, introduced themselves, and made sure Jada knew they were there for anything she may need throughout the conference. Jada immediately felt relaxed and comfortable.

As Tammy helped to get Jada off to her first workshop I entered my first workshop of the conference,

the Parents Roundtable discussion. I tend to be pretty quiet, and find it extremely hard to speak in a crowd. I was able to get out my name, and Jada's name and age, but do not recall much else I said at that time. In this very workshop I had my "ah-ha!" moment when I realized that these parents "get it". Throughout most of the conference I sat back during the workshops and just allowed myself to absorb all the information, advice, and support that were coming my way. For the returning families that so graciously shared their stories, advice, and words of encouragement, I am so thankful for you all. I connected with each one of you in some way or another, as we all have been through such similar situations. The many informative workshops left us both empowered and educated more than ever before. From the conference lunches to the dinners, the 4th of July BBQ to the fireworks to the beach party, not a single detail was overlooked.

Words cannot begin to describe what this conference meant to Jada and I. I asked Jada to explain the conference in one word and her response was "life-changing". She said the conference made her more confident with her speech. We are both already excited for next year and Jada has begged her grandmother to join us this time around. For anyone who may be unsure about going, it's something not to be missed and a decision for your family that you will never regret. Financially, I did not think there was a way we could make it happen, but I am so grateful to the NSA's scholarship for helping to make it happen for us. If you truly want to be there, let nothing hold you back, they will help make it happen.

We are so thankful for the NSA and will forever be grateful. See you all next year! ::

Family Chapter NEWS

Shannon Beaty/Dallas TwST - At the last meeting of the Dallas TwST, there were four families in attendance. After the Opening Words, the group voted to begin the game night with everyone playing the game "Catch Phrase". It is an interesting game and gives the term "time pressure" a whole new meaning, whether you stutter or not! Meeting attendees played a couple of rounds for practice so that everyone got a chance to see what it was like both giving clues and guessing

and then the group played until one of the two teams won (the teams were comprised of both teens and adults). Next, the teens played Twister, which was as fun to watch as it was to play! Lastly, the group finished the evening with a fun game of Hedbanz. All four teens, 1 parent, and 1 chapter leader played, and everyone decided it is a lot harder than it looks. The meeting wrapped up with the Closing Words and everyone agreed that they had had a really good time,

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Speech Therapy in Public Education Settings: A Former Student's Perspectives

JACK MCDERMOTT, MA



I remember the moment vividly. About one year ago, I sat in on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting for the first time. As part of my mentorship program for younger stutterers, I thought it would be valuable to see the special education process in action.

It was in this small public middle school that my journey as a stutterer had finally come full circle. As these parents and teachers met, tears rolled down the mother's face. I couldn't help but think of my own mother who, undoubtedly, sat in that very seat a decade or so earlier. Meanwhile, the discourse regarding the child's stutter came to definitive terms as a plan was put in place and all parties left in agreement.

I, however, was not one of them. Looking back, this moment gave me incredible insight into the shortcomings of many IEPs and special education plans as a whole. From my perspective as a student, here's what I wished I could have said then:

1. A child's stutter is not something to put statistics

to: many schools look (rightly so) for quantitative data, especially in their special education programs. Administrators are always striving to quantify the municipal investment in their educational programs. Yet it is important to realize that these students are developing socially, intellectually, and physically—areas that are remarkably difficult to put a figure on. By counting each stuttered word or reporting specific moments of dysfluency in the classroom, I would argue that this places an unnecessary burden

on the young stutterer. I have been lucky to witness the extraordinary work of numerous special educators who resist this pressure. Take it from my firsthand experience, educators are able to make a lasting impact by working closely with their student without quantifying his or her communicative performance.

2. Speech therapy should not be the enemy: It's true, public schools must foster a learning community for a diverse range of students, and each with his or her own needs. However, when it comes to speech therapy, removing structured therapy sessions from the student's schedule should not be the focus. The notion that "If Johnny does this, he won't need to see Ms. Sue any longer" just doesn't work. Any student of psychology will tell you that this model targets speech therapy as a negative factor, one which the student must work to eliminate. To me, this represents an outdated model of thinking.

3. The student must "own" his or her speech therapy:

This is perhaps the most challenging - yet most rewarding - tenet of successful speech therapy programs. Speech therapists must place a greater emphasis on facilitating ownership by the student. In the end, however, it comes back to the maturity of the individual student—this step takes a huge amount of self-awareness and personal responsibility. But as long as the student feels he or she must attend mandatory sessions, the special education model is not working to its fullest capacity. In my case, the moment I conquered my stutter was the moment I chose to own my speech therapy.

:::::

Jack McDermott

Jack is a person who stutters and is currently studying at Tufts University. He is the Founder & CEO of Balbus Speech (BalbusSpeech.com), a start-up that uses social media and mobile technology to enhance speech therapy.

Family Chapter News, continued from page 6

and couldn't remember the last time the group laughed that much!

Hannah Laday/ Central NJ TwST - Central NJ TWST Chapter had a quarterly meeting on Friday, June 8th. The group had pizza and games planned but only one new 19-year old and her mother attended. Instead, the group had a more intimate discussion with this very bright and confident young college student. They are getting her hooked in to the larger stuttering

community and also (as with a couple of other young adults in this area), she will likely start attending the adult chapter. ::



National Stuttering Association



A Message from Family Programs

PATTIE WOOD, CHAIRPERSON

This year's Annual Conference in St. Petersburg, FL was nothing short of amazing! The location was perfect for the 4th of July fireworks and the NSA Beach Party.

There were many new additions to the Family Programs portion of the conference. It was my first year as Family Programs Chair and working with Stephanie Coppen, Family Programs Administrator, was so much fun. In this position, I was fortunate enough to meet many families, new and old, and witness first-hand the impact NSA has had on them. First-time families were thrilled to see their children meeting other children who stutter and having a great time with Sarah Onofri, who did an excellent job running the kids workshops.

Another great addition to our workshop line-up was the set of workshops geared towards our ever-growing "tween" population. These are children, ages 11-14, tend to feel too old for our kid workshops but a bit young for some of the teen content. These workshops were great! The 'twens loved them, and as a parent it was great to see my kids excited about their own workshops.

Another Fabulous Conference!

STEPHANIE COPPEN, FAMILY PROGRAMS ADMINISTRATOR

Another fabulous NSA Annual Conference is in the books and we could not have done it without you, the families of the NSA! We had 72 families join us in St. Petersburg with an amazing **38 first time families** in attendance! We were pleased to offer workshops for every age group and family member.

Over the last few years the NSA Family Programs 'tween (ages 11-14) demographic has grown significantly and it became necessary to tailor workshops for them. Members of the Teen Advisory Council's (TAC) favorites were *Advertising, Teasing and Bullying*, and *Game On*.

Parent workshops were presented by knowledgeable and highly respected professionals, as well as dedicated parents whose goal it is to support other parents who may be new to the stuttering community.

Teen workshops were fantastic, as well, but it was clear as I observed these amazing young adults that much of the sharing and bonding they do is between workshops and "after-hours". Each year I am in awe of the support the teens provide each other, not only at conference but all year round.

Family Programs was also pleased to offer Family Teaming and Conversational Breakfast again this year.

The Teen Advisory Council (TAC) was out in full force helping in workshops, spending time with kids and teens, and answering questions and concerns for parents. What an amazing group of young leaders!

There were several new parent workshops this year as well. Based on the discussion at our Parents Closing Roundtable, they were a huge success. The support that parents receive at conference has always been one of my favorite parts of NSA. Now with the NSA Parent Facebook page, that support can be felt all year long.

With workshops for kids, 'twens, teens, and parents, there was truly something for everyone. I hope that if you attended conference this year you were able to connect with old friends, make new ones, and have an amazing time. If you were not able to attend, plan to attend next year's conference in Scottsdale, Arizona. You do not want to miss it. I look forward to seeing everyone there! ::



Both events were well attended. It was wonderful to watch the kids of the NSA having the opportunity to speak freely. Family Teaming was a blast! Everyone was laughing, smiling and having fun! I'm not sure if finding my team (oink, oink!) or the relay races where we had to spell out "NSA It's OK To Stutter!" were my favorite part. (Ok, maybe the barnyard noises were the most fun!)

This year's Closing Ceremony was particularly touching listening to the stories of various members of the NSA Family. There was not a dry eye as teen Garrett McDevitt shared his story. These are the things that make each conference special and reinforce how fortunate I am to be surrounded by such thoughtful and caring people.

Each year at conference I am amazed by the volunteers, the attendees, and the NSA staff. I mentioned in Parent Opening and Closing Roundtables that each year when I arrive at the conference I feel like I'm coming home. As a mom, do I wish sometimes that things would be 'easier' for my son, Cameron? Yes. But if he never stuttered, I would never know all of you who inspire me daily. See you in Arizona! ::