

National Stuttering Association

...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 Art of Voluntary Stuttering

by Sarah D'Agostino



The majority of my life was spent trying not to stutter. Avoiding people, places, menu items and conversational topics, was the only way to avoid the chance that stuttering would show itself. I mastered all the covert tactics to dodge stuttering. Even in my attempt to use fluency techniques learned in therapy,

tried to fake laugh and you did it so well that it became real? Voluntary stuttering can happen that way if done right. When I voluntarily stutter correctly, reflexes start to take over and stutter becomes real. In this instance, however, being aware of the movements, I can pull out of it with grace. It was only with voluntarily stuttering that I was able to understand how other therapy techniques actually work.

I practiced getting into and out of blocks until finally I was ready to take my stuttering to the streets. To purposely stutter in front of someone for the first time is exciting. I quickly realized that my listener(s) reacts to my openness and comforts levels. They take cues as to how they should react. When you voluntarily stutter, you are in control of when and how it happens. Early on in a conversation, I introduce my stuttering with an easy controlled block. Sometimes, that small block will resonate with my listener and bring on a funny look or a comment to which I can respond. This instance opens the door for me to tell the listener, "I stutter." In doing so, there is less confusion, negative feelings and reactions.

Voluntary stuttering is the tool I use most to gain control of my own speech. It allows me to let people know that I stutter while maintaining control of my speech and my emotions. These days I am very open about my stuttering, willing to talk about it, educate others etc. But I still have moments where I feel the creeping anxiety of a block and habitually revert to my former patterns of negative thoughts. Now, I will curb those fears of being out of control by inserting a voluntary block (short and sweet) to remind myself that I am in control.

Read more about voluntary stuttering online and email me with your thoughts and questions at: sdowgiallo@yahoo.com

I was endlessly hoping not to stutter. As if stuttering had a mind of its own, it was in control of when, where and how it happened. The more I tried not to think about it, the more I feared the unknown.

Imagine my thoughts and fears as I was introduced to the idea of voluntary stuttering. What?! Stutter on purpose? Stutter aloud and in public? The answer is: YES! Stutter...while I am in control. Voluntary stuttering is stuttering on purpose. It is to stutter with a mission of moving into and through a block or repetition effectively. It takes practice and as this article's title indicates, it is an art. Voluntary stuttering serves many purposes including desensitization, stuttering in an easy non-shameful manner and ultimately reducing the intensity and frequency of stuttering.

Before I could even imagine purposely stuttering in front of other people, I had to become desensitized to it. I stuttered into a mirror and on video tape until I stopped crying and was ready to look at it objectively. I studied the way I moved my lips and jaw and how my breath came in and out of the equation. Have you ever

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Ask The Expert

by Lori Melnitsky, MA CCC-SLP



Question: My son (almost 8) is beginning to question why he should go to speech therapy. He states either that he does not feel he needs help or that he does not feel it is helping him. We have confidence in our program and as his parents feel it valuable to him in order to better understand how his speech is made to reinforce his tools and to receive support. He attends once a week for 90 minutes. I would like to ask for advice on how to respond to him. What I have said to thus far is that speech therapy is like going to soccer practice, learning to read and do math etc. It is important to practice and learn about speech.

This is an excellent question, and one that many parents ask. I will do the best I can to answer without background details on your child's past history of stuttering and speech therapy. Let me start by saying ages 7 to 10 are the most challenging ages to provide therapy to decrease stuttering for various reasons. Children at this age often don't have the concentration or motivation to practice enough to improve fluency.

My first thought is that I would talk with your child's speech pathologist to determine if 90 minutes is the appropriate length of time is for your son. Would he perhaps do better if he was seen twice per week for shorter time durations? This might help with carryover and be more tolerable for him.

The concerns you have are very common and I am sure on the minds of many parents. The issues you mentioned are that your son does not feel he needs help and also he does not feel what he is learning is helping him. To address your first concern, I think it is important to explore with your son why he feels he does not help.

Lori Melnitsky, MA CCC-SLP, specializes in stuttering & prompt therapy for children and adults, Lidcombe Trained, prompt certified therapy and accent reduction as the owner of All Island Speech & Stuttering Therapy in Plainview, NY. She recovered from a severe stuttering disorder to dedicate her professional life to helping children and adults improve their fluency and communicate more effectively. She is an expert in stuttering and oral motor therapy. Lori volunteers her time by leading the Adult and Teen (TWST) Chapters of the National Stuttering Association. lmelnitsky@yahoo.com www.allislandsspeech.com

A Day of Learning and Fun

by Emily Sharpe

On Saturday October 16th, the NC Triad NSA chapter partnered with the National Stuttering Association and a group of speech-language pathologists from Guilford County Schools to host a Youth Day and CEU workshop in Greensboro, NC. This was the first Youth Day or CEU workshop sponsored by the NSA in North Carolina. Small group sessions were offered for parents and children who stutter.

The parents learned about the latest research on stuttering and how they can help their children. They were also able to talk with adults who stutter about their experiences growing up. Afterward, one parent reported that the most important thing they learned was how to help their child to accept their stuttering. Many of the parents said that what they enjoyed the most was talking with other parents of children who stutter.

Does he understand why he is going to speech therapy? Is stuttering openly talked about? Sometimes we as parents worry more than our children do causing added environmental stress in the home. Secondly, you mentioned he does not feel therapy is helping him. That to me is a bigger concern. Does he possibly feel that he is not able to use the tools presented to him? It is difficult for children to understand there is no cure for stuttering, but if they are presented with appropriate role models it gives them something to strive for. This is where support groups are helpful.

Sometimes children are trying to be more fluent for their parents and not themselves. In this case, sometimes they are often too young to benefit fully from therapy or don't understand what goals they are trying to achieve. Sometimes it is best to wait until they express concern that stuttering is bothering them. I try and recommend a three month block of time at the onset of therapy and ask the child if that is acceptable to them. Children and adults at any age must be active participants in their therapy for it to work successfully. This approach works well with a child who is hesitant to attend and empowers them to be in control of their success. I tell them if at any point in time they don't understand any aspect of the therapy process to stop and tell me.

We also figure out homework practice together and explain it to their parents at the end. At this age, it has to be both challenging yet fun. At the end of three months, if a child doesn't want to come then it is time to take a short break and revisit therapy in a few months. I view each stint in speech therapy as a step in a lifelong journey with a little more to learn each time.

If I would have realized this as a child who stuttered severely, my self esteem would have been higher, thus enabling me to go back to speech therapy without feelings of failure when I was ready as an older teen. It sounds like you have the best intentions for your son and I applaud you for this. I would suggest sitting down and talking with him and his speech pathologist regarding the above questions above. It is important for him to hear that you love and accept him whether he stutters or not.

In their small group, the children were able to talk about situations they have trouble with and brainstorm together ways they can deal with those situations. They also talked about how to deal with teasing and made homemade play-dough which they then shaped to describe their stuttering. At the end of the day, one child stated that at first he thought the Youth Day was going to be "too childish" but that he ended up having a lot of fun and wants to come next year. All of the children asked if there would be another Youth Day next year.

In an adjacent room, a group of speech-language pathologists attended a CEU workshop presented by Dr. Gary Rentschler titled, "Shifting Perspectives in Treating Stuttering: Managing Attitudes and Emotions." At the end of the workshop, the children, parents, and SLPs reconvened to the same room for an open mic session where they could share what they have learned. For all involved, it was a day of sharing and learning about stuttering.



For My People by Chloe W.

For my people who just want to say who they are, to perform the simple task of presenting themselves, working so hard to say their name but nothing comes out as they watch confusion turn to blatant pity across the faces in the room, as they attempt yet again as they stutter to utter the clutter of words in their heads and then faced with “did you forget your name?” comments from the ignorant.

For my people being tortured by the unknown thoughts of the other person and torturing themselves for worrying everyday about the comments they will have to endure the next 24 hours and asking themselves why me and are my parents ashamed because I can't talk like they do and is there anyone else out there who might remotely understand?

For my people out there hiding in their shells of loneliness and fear and uncertainty and wonder and self loathing, pondering the positions people obtain to possibly find a cure to end the suffering they go through to assert the words they so greatly need to express.

For my people yearning for someone to apprehend, for another to contemplate what they have to go through just to blurt out the thoughts they want to make known, and those who are wondering and hoping and wishing and praying and pleading and searching for someone else they can share their stories with but cannot find a way to let go.

For my people all over the world who stutter, you are not alone. There is freedom in the fact that many individuals know what it is like to deal with discrimination, and yet have an affiliation with the organization that supports those who stutter. If you open up and accept this flaw as a blessing, it will give you confidence and respect from



others to exclaim and declare and question and present your ideas to whomever you wish in life. My people, be heard.

Where's Your Focus?



One of the NSA's teen members, Phillip G. can often be found behind his camera. He has volunteered to be one of the NSA's conference photographers. This past year, he submitted one of his framed photo prints into the live auction. It was a great success! Here's what Phillip says about the experience:

How was it to see the NSA conference from behind your camera?

Photography is (and has been) my foremost passion in life. This is the second year I've done photography at the conferences, and it always enriches my experience, as well as improves my knowledge of the craft. I love being able to give back to such a wonderful organization.

What are a few of your favorite shots?

Anything of first-timers. It's great to see new people finding the NSA.

How does it feel to have raised so much money for the NSA by donating your photo to the NSA auction?

Can I start off by saying I'm not a \$4,000 photographer? Not even \$2,000? Haha. Kidding aside, I was shocked and honored when my photograph went for such an extreme price. Huge factors in the price were 1), Tammy Flores's decision to put the photograph in the live auction (THANK YOU!), and 2), an excellent auctioneer. A very, very, (etc.) big thank-you to the Liben, and Games families. Real recognition, and appreciation of value is something that all artists strive for, and something some never get. A very sincere thank-you to all the people that made this possible. The auction was truly a highlight of my life. I can think of no better organization to receive the money.



TEEN SURVEY PARTICIPANTS will be entered in a RAFFLE to

WIN an IPOD!

Because the survey leaves you anonymous, email the NSA and let us know when you have completed it.

Visit westutter.org for the link.

Quick Q & A w/TAC



Sarah D'Agostino, NSA's family programs administrator, sent a question on e-mail to the Teen Advisory Council (TAC) and most of them quickly replied from their smart phones.

Q: When did you most recently advertise your stuttering?

A: I advertised to my teacher at the beginning of my current class. She was very nice about it and just said, "Alright, I'll keep that in mind." - **Drew Kiser**

A: I recently wrote a paper for my psychology class on stuttering. My professor liked it so much she used it as a discussion topic for class. - **Lizi Pina**

A: I'm student teaching this semester and I actually advertised to all my first graders. It was weird but good to explain it in such kid friendly terms. But since they're so little, they're not really so good at thinking about others and what others want/need, so I always have to remind them to not finish my words for me. Eventually maybe they'll get the hang of it! - **Sarah Onofri**

A: I've never really advertised my stuttering - **Braden**

Elevator Pitch

by Beth Bienvenu

As a person who stutters, you may worry about what people may think about you and your speech when you first meet them. Does your stuttering seem to make them uncomfortable? Do they think you are nervous or anxious, or that you aren't smart or sure of yourself? Do you worry that they can't see past your blocks and struggles to see the person that you are or what you are trying to communicate?

One way to handle this is to address it up front with an "elevator speech". This is a term that was coined to describe a brief speech that someone might give in the short time it takes to ride in an elevator with someone he or she needs to give a sales pitch to. In the case of those of us who stutter, giving a short speech about our stuttering up front can help people understand what stuttering is and make them feel more comfortable with hearing us stutter.

Tell the person up front that you stutter and that it may take you a little longer to get something out, and ask them to be patient with you. If they are curious, you can explain what stuttering is, and reassure them that it is not necessarily something you can control and that it's not an indication of nervousness or anxiety. It's just how you talk. If you are speaking to someone about a job, it's also important to address it right away and let them know that your stuttering doesn't impact your intelligence or your abilities, and that people who stutter can be excellent communicators. Then explain what you may have done in other jobs or school to manage your speech and describe any positive influences it has had in your life (leadership or organizational experience through the NSA, better listening skills, more empathy, or more creativity in communication – as long as it's truthful). This will also work with teachers and professors, and will help ease their concerns about your speech.

You can also do this when giving presentations in school or work. Start by telling your audience that you stutter, and you can even make a joke about how your speech will take a bit longer because you may stutter. This type of joke will put both them and you at ease because it shows them that you feel comfortable with yourself, and it will help ease your tension.

Work on different ways to give your elevator speech and practice with friends or family. The more you practice it the more comfortable you will feel, and the easier it will be for both you and your listeners.

Write to the NSA and tell us your elevator pitch on stuttering info@westutter.org



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Beth Bienvenu works at the National Endowment for the Arts, where she works to ensure access to the arts for everyone, including people with disabilities. She has also worked to promote the employment of people with disabilities. Her experiences with the NSA and her work in disability employment have taught her that disabilities don't have to limit our options in the workplace and can actually be an asset to employers. She has been member of NSA for 7 years and is a member of the Rockville, Maryland chapter.

Sister Who Cares

from Molly F. of Vancouver, WA

Dear Stutter Buddies,
My brother stutters so I just get to go on these fancy schmancy vacations. I feel bad for him sometimes. The weird thing is, when he's talking in front of an audience, he doesn't stutter. But when he's talking at home, he stutters.



Having a friend who understands is awesome!!

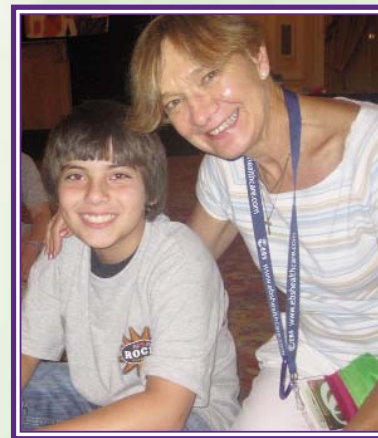


Stutter Buddies

A Little About J.D.

From J.D. of Cox's Creek, KY

Dear Stutter Buddies,
My name is J.D. I am 11 years old, and was born on February 21st, 1999. I have two dogs and a cat. One of my dogs died of old age. I stutter and have been stuttering for as long as I can remember. I am mostly the only one at my home, family, and school that stutters. I already have a girlfriend. So ladies, it looks like you have to find another guy. I have only one sister and her name is Alexis. She is seven years old. I love video games and sports. I play basketball, golf, football and track and field. I am going into the sixth grade. If you want to e-mail me, my e-mail address is jdwhizkid@gmail.com. Bye!



Stuttering Just Like You

From Christian Z. of New Holland, PA

Dear Stutter Buddies,
I stutter just like you. You might stutter a lot or a small bit. I only stutter a small bit. I'm a 10-year-old boy. I have gone to the NSA Conferences for the past two years. I like a lot of sports and I have three pets.



Stuttering can be frustrating!



Meeting People Who Stutter

From Valeria A. of Easley, S.C.

Dear Stutter Buddies,
I stutter and I've been stuttering all my life, but I learned to live with it. No one in my family stutters so I've never met anyone else who stutters before the convention.



Stutter Buddy Letters were collaborated by Bonnie Weiss and Gary Rentschler. E-mail Bonnie and Gary your letters at Blweiss1@verizon.net and rentschler@duq.edu

NSA Member Speaks

by Caryn Herring

The Celenza Family

When Anthony started stuttering a few years ago, his father, Mike Celenza, searched for a qualified speech-language pathologist to help his son. Mike observed that finding an SLP who knows about stuttering was extremely difficult and Anthony's school was unsure how to help. After doing his own research, Mike connected with Patricia Wood, an SLP who specializes in stuttering.

Anthony began seeing Patricia for therapy and she also helped the family get involved with the NSA. Anthony and his parents began attending their NSAKids local chapter and had the opportunity to meet other people who stutter. Mike described how Anthony has grown since attending the NSAKids meetings, and has benefited from the modeling of other children, teens, and young adults.



Building upon their involvement with their local NSA chapter, the Celenza family decided to attend the 2010 Annual NSA Conference, in Cleveland, Ohio. Mike explained that at the conference Anthony was able to see a wider group of people who stutter and learned from them that stuttering is not a big deal. The children and adults at the conference inspired Anthony, through their comfort with stuttering, and Anthony left the conference knowing that stuttering need not be an overwhelming issue.

Here are some questions and answers with Mike Celenza: **What advice would you give to parents of children who stutter?**

"You need to be a zealous and persistent advocate for your child. The reason I feel that way is because when my wife Joanna and I first noticed Anthony stuttering, my wife and I went to his teachers and the school speech therapist for help. They were completely at a loss as to what was going on with our son. They gave us horrible advice about how to work with our son, because they had literally no experience with stuttering. I found this to be a common problem when I spoke with other parents at NSA Cleveland. Speech therapy for stuttering is apparently a specialized area of practice and we did not know that at the time. We literally searched high and low for **the only** specialist in our home-state of New Hampshire. We found her and she is wonderful, but we had to be zealous and persistent to find her."

"Another important thing is "acceptance and perspective". Stuttering is a part of who Anthony is, just like his twin sister Gianna wears contact lenses, just like I

NSA Member Highlights

have gray hair, it is part of who we are. If you can accept that, then you can relieve some of the stress associated with stuttering, and you can move onto to other, more important things...like fully enjoying life. I honestly and truly feel that if at the core of the child you are raising lies the qualities you believe are important in a person (i.e. intelligence, inquisitiveness, generosity, compassion, passion, and caring) in other words, if you have successfully instilled in that child those qualities that you personally deem important and necessary for a successful and contributing member of society, then that is who that person really is.

It is not the stuttering. In fact the stuttering becomes nearly irrelevant. That is what I mean by acceptance. And the "perspective" part, again: if your child is caring, compassionate, generous, healthy etc., then that is the important thing. Be thankful that your child is not ill, ailing, in pain. Perspective."



What would you like people who don't stutter to understand about stuttering?

Stuttering doesn't mean the person is less intelligent. This is unfortunately still a stigma. People who stutter aren't less willing to participate in activities or in class. Also, just be patient. Don't finish the person's sentences with what you assume is going to be said.

Caryn Herring is a person who stutters and is currently a graduate student at Purdue University, studying speech-language pathology. She is the chapter leader/founder of the Lafayette, Indiana National Stuttering Association chapter. In 2007, Caryn was featured on the MTV documentary "True Life - I Stutter."



SURVEY OF PARENTS & TEENS

The National Stuttering Association and Friends, The Association of Young People Who Stutter, are conducting a survey on the experience of children, teens and young adults who stutter. If you're a parent or teen we invite you to participate.

The questionnaire should take about 15 minutes to complete online. You will be asked about the impact of stuttering on your (or your child's) life, and about your experience with stuttering treatment and support. If you are a speech-language pathologist, we hope you will encourage parents of children on your caseload to participate in the survey. Visit westutter.org for the survey link.

The North Family

Julie North is the mother of two boys who stutter, Daniel (age 12) and Ben (age 15).

Do you remember how old you were when you started stuttering?

Daniel: 2 or 3 years old

Ben: 5 years old

Have you ever been to the NSA's annual conference? If so, when was your first one?

Daniel and Ben: We started attending the NSA annual conferences in 2008. We have attended every year since and plan on attending regularly.

Do you belong to a local NSA chapter?

Daniel and Ben: We don't belong to a local NSA chapter, but are interested in starting one in Massachusetts.

What would you like people who don't stutter to understand about stuttering?

Daniel: I want people to know that there is nothing wrong with stuttering.

Ben: I want people to know that stuttering doesn't make you less of a person.

Who inspires you the most?

Ben: Taro Alexander (Our Time Theatre Company) inspires me.

What do you want to do when you grow up?

Daniel: I want to be a photographer when I grow up.

Ben: I want to do something with chemistry when I grow up.

Do you go to speech therapy?

Daniel and Ben: We do not attend speech therapy.

Do you ever talk to your friends about stuttering?

Daniel: I have talked to friends in the past about my stuttering, occasionally they ask if the stuttering has gone away because they don't hear me stutter very often

Ben: I talk to my friends about my stuttering and when people ask if it has gone away, because they don't notice it, I tell them that it comes and goes and that I'll always stutter

What do you like to do?

Daniel: I like to hang out with my friends, run, bike, play violin and games.

Ben: I like to speed skate, run, do martial arts and hang out with friends.

Where do you go to school?

Daniel: I go to Oak Middle School in Shrewsbury, MA.

Ben: I go to St. Johns High School in Shrewsbury, MA.

What's your favorite food?

Daniel: My favorite food is bacon.

Ben: My favorite food is Chinese food.

What's your favorite movie?

Daniel: My favorite movie is Clash of the Titans.

Ben: My favorite movie is Law Abiding Citizen.

If you could be invisible, where would you go and what would you do?

Ben: If I were invisible, I would walk around and follow random people.

If a genie granted you three wishes, what would they be?

Daniel: If a genie granted me three wishes they would be: 1. immortality 2. all the money I would ever need 3. never stop granting me wishes.

Ben: 1. wishes for the rest of my life 2. immortality 3. the ability to visit heaven and hell.

Where is the farthest place you have travelled?

Daniel and Ben: the furthest place we have travelled has been eastern Europe this past summer with our grandfather.

If you could have a superpower, what would it be?

Daniel: My superpower would be flying.

Ben: My superpower would be to have every superpower and to be the most powerful human being on earth.

Anything else you want to share about yourself or stuttering?

Daniel and Ben: We want to say that it's important not to let stuttering stop you from doing anything you want to do and that stuttering is a part of you, but it isn't all of you.

Julie's Answers:

What would you like people who don't stutter to understand about stuttering?

I want people to know that stuttering is not an intellectual or emotional disorder; that it is a genetic disorder with an identified disruption between the language and motor cortexts - a physiological disorder, not a psychological disorder.

What advice would you give to other parents of children who stutter?

I would advise parents of kids who stutter to try and talk openly about stuttering with your children - how they are feeling, what experiences they are having, etc. I would also encourage parents to do what they can to advocate for their kids (e.g. advertising about stuttering, talking to teachers, coaches, etc) and to educate family members and neighbors about your child's stuttering when appropriate.



Mark your calendars now!!

NSA's
Annual
Conference
July 6-10, 2011

Fort Worth, TX

Tips for Family Chapters

In coordination with our efforts to strengthen NSA Youth Groups, family programs will share tips and suggestions that have created an environment for your group to thrive.

Please look for this information in each issue of Family Voices. Share your tips with us by emailing committee co-chair Sheryl Hunter with your ideas: shunter@tamplabay.rr.com

Tip #1: Continuously spread the word about your Youth Chapter. Bringing in new members is a great way to keep the group energized and offers opportunities for long term members to welcome and mentor new members. You don't want to wait until attendance drops to start publicizing your meetings again. And don't forget to ask the existing members to share in spreading the word to their pediatricians office, SLP and school administration.

Family Chapter Reports

Support is the foundation of the NSA! Local support groups across the country meet each month to share.
Read below some of the family chapter reports.

From Karen Kumar, MA, CCC-SLP, Phoenix Metro NSAKids/TWiST co-leader

The Phoenix Metro NSAKids and TWiST meeting on Saturday, September 18 at ASU with 17 people in attendance. We had 3 leaders, 1 adult PWS, 2 school SLPs, 3 grad students, 3 CWS, 3 parents, and 2 siblings.

Theme: Stress, what it is and how to deal with it.

Kids program---We designed a challenge course for the kids program where they had to perform some silly tasks with time pressure and then they rated how easy/hard things were for them. Tasks included: dropping clothespins while standing over a bottle with a small opening; carrying a feather on a spoon without dropping it) while walking as fast as possible on a straight line; stacking Fruit Loops with time limit; stringing small beads in time limit; spooning popcorn into a container while looking in a mirror. The kids had a great time participating in the games. They also received squishy balls, punch balloons and inflatable hammers for stress release.

The teen program we had planned was to open with the Bop It Extreme, which tests a player's mental skill by inducing the player to follow directions at a faster and faster pace. Gameplay consists of the player following a series of commands issued by the toy through speakers. As the game goes faster, you get quite stressed. It's a fun game, but it emphasizes how stress can cause us to make physical errors. Then we planned to have a discussion about stress and how it affects us. (No teens were in attendance.)

In the parent program we presented a short PowerPoint about stress that is common to parents and then we opened a discussion that was parent driven. We talked about how we preemptively manage stress and how we deal with it in the moment. The parents also discussed specific stress associated with being a parent of a child who stutters; how family dynamics affects the CWS; we discussed various resources; it was great discussion. One of the parents who attended is and adult who stutters and he provided some wonderful insights to the parents there who do not stutter. One of our parents asked if we could invite more PWS to come and be a part of the kids program so that the kids and teens can meet adults who stutter. Great idea. Looking forward to a recap of the October 23 Youth Day/CEU program in Phoenix in our next issue.

From Hannah Laday, Central NJ TWST Chapter co-leader

Central NJ held its autumn meeting and had a turn-out of 8, including 2 teens and 1 father. We discussed such topics as what the biggest misconceptions of stuttering are, what parents should do at home, which homework assignments in speech therapy help and which do not.

The two teens who were present are excellent communicators and really value meetings. Are those two traits connected? One of the teens and another person at the meeting who also stutters were raised in households with multiple languages and they spoke about the challenges of that and how that complicates stuttering for them.

The leaders got right to work on how to better advertisement the chapter to attract more teens. We submitted a newspaper announcement right away and

hope for better turn-out in the future. Actually, several teens who have attended previously and expressed enthusiasm said they will be back but just couldn't make this meeting.

From Sonya Worosz, Northern Virginia:

Tidbits of the September 14, 2010 meeting: The attendance included four teens (ages 13-17) and four parents. I spent time with the teens and discussed various 'back to school' issues related to stuttering; participation in class; socializing; goals for the school year; interesting classes; etc. Vivian spent time with some 'new parents' who are focusing on different techniques (i.e., yoga, herbal/spice therapy, etc.) to help their child's stutter.

From Cathy Olish, Royal Oak, MI's co-leader:

On Thursday, August 12 the Royal Oak NSA/Beaumont Kids/TWST group held a special parent information night to educate parents of children who stutter on the subject of stuttering and to introduce our group to them. We figured that we first need to reach the parents before we can even get to the kids because they are the ones who need to be sold on the concept first and who will bring their kids to the meetings. This newly formed chapter is led by myself and Mark Piepsney, who is also a PWS and an SLP at Beaumont Hospital, which is a nationwide known hospital.

Needless to say, it was a very AWESOME meeting and experience! We had nine families attend, with a total of 13 parents. Some of the kids currently see Beaumont SLPs and others heard about the meeting through the e-mail blast that was sent via the NSA. Their kids who stutter ranged from 4 - 11. Only two people brought their kids since we wanted to make this meeting for parents only. We opened with introductions (both of Mark, myself and all in attendance) and discussed the objectives and goals of the NSA and the Kids/TWST groups. The parents had tons of great questions, of which included how they should handle bullying and teasing that their child encounters, does stuttering go away, how to speak to their kids teachers and school SLPs to make the school year easier for their child, how to react to their child's stuttering, and many more great questions.

We gave each family a nice packet of information that included all the latest and greatest NSA pamphlets along with other stuttering information. We then followed up with a thank you note that includes links to our website, videos and on-line newsletter links. They were very perceptive to participating in the Yahoo Parent group but first have to see if they have to be a paid member to participate - a little too soon to push membership so hopefully that is not part of the criteria.

All in all, it was a great way for our youth chapter to become more active and we will continue to have these parent information meetings every month, except going forward, the meetings will be open to the kids as well. Our plan is to have one room for the parents, both new and returning, and one room for the kids and Mark and I, along with the help of some of our adult group members, will take turns spending time between the kids and parents.

I highly recommend all new youth chapters starting out this way as it is a good way to introduce our youth chapters to the parents and will increase the chances of them bringing their child to an actual meeting.