

Stuttering Center News

Fluency Fantasies Across America

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Stuttering Center of Western PA:

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The 2005 **Fluency Fantasies Across America** contest has been completed and the results are in! The December 2005 issue of the **Kids Speak** newsletter has the winners listed, along with the states they have won.

During the coming months, we will be printing some of the winning entries. There were so many terrific stories and we hope to share many of them with you. The December 2005 issue of **Kids Speak** contains the entry with the highest score from the judges. This month's entry, written by 9-year-old Ashley, received a perfect score from nearly every judge.

Judges scored the entries in two ways: first, based on the content of a story about the child's experiences with stuttering, and second, based on the child's ideas about how stuttering should be addressed in the future. Children with the highest scores won their own states. Many children who did not win their home states still had high scores and were awarded other states.

Winners received a letter of congratulations from the Stuttering Center, a State Title certificate, and a copy of the December 2005 **Kids Speak** with their names and winning states listed.

In addition to the Stuttering Center staff, many other judges participated in the contest. The judges, all speech-language pathologists, included Hilary Clark, Sherrie Koch, Jennifer Coleman, Kristine Campbell, Rosemary Wilson, Heather Carr, Leah Blinn, Stacie Graham, Shannon Plowey, and Amy Zerhusen. All worked hard to ensure that the contest ran smoothly and all spent a great deal of time reading the entries. We thank all of them for all their hard work.

Thanks also to Kelli Talicska (Miss Michigan 2004-2005) for helping to organize and publicize the contest!

The judges were all impressed by the effort the children put into writing their stories. In fact, several judges commented that the stories should be "required reading" for everyone who works with children who stutter. The children shared not only their daily experiences with stuttering, but also their attitudes and emotions about their stuttering. In addition, the children showed their creativity in presenting many fascinating ideas for the future.

We received many calls and emails from speech-language pathologists who felt that the contest helped their young clients express their attitudes and emotions toward stuttering in a helpful and productive manner.

We want to thank all of the speech-language pathologists who had their children who stutter participate in the contest. It was a great experience working with all of you and we hope that we can run more contests like this in the future.

Congratulations to all of the winners and all of the children who participated in the contest. They are truly an inspiration to everyone.



Insurance and Stuttering: Becoming an Advocate

Craig Coleman, M.A., CCC-SLP

The Insurance Advocacy Committee of the National Stuttering Association (NSA) has developed an information brochure titled *Insurance Advocacy and Stuttering*. The committee, chaired by the Stuttering Center's Craig Coleman, has also developed sample appeal letters that may be useful for those attempting to overturn denied claims.

The sample appeal letters are available for both children and adults who stutter. Thus, the appeal letters can either be used by parents for their children or by adults seeking their own treatment. In addition, appeal letters that can be used by physicians and speech-language pathologists are also available. In many

cases, physicians or speech-language pathologists are asked to write letters to insurance companies in support of their treatment recommendations, and these letters can help facilitate this process.

The brochure and sample appeal letters can be found at the Stuttering Center's website (www.stutteringcenter.org) or on the website of the National Stuttering Association (www.WeStutter.org).

The Stuttering Center's website also now has a link to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) website (www.asha.org) that will help visitors to evaluate their insurance coverage.

The Stuttering Center will continue to work with the NSA and ASHA to develop materials for consumers to facilitate the reimbursement process.

One of our goals for 2006 is to establish an "Advocacy Network" consisting of speech-language pathologists, consumers, physicians, and others involved in helping children who stutter. The Network will help participants share information about reimbursement, mobilize to lobby for reimbursement issues when needed, communicate with other professionals and legislators, and share success stories.

For example, some insurance companies still view treatment for stuttering as not "medically necessary" despite significant and growing evidence of genetic and neurological components of the disorder. One purpose of the Network may be to educate the community about the factors associated with the development of stuttering and highlighting the need for treatment – and especially, for early intervention.

In addition, the Network may be utilized to communicate with legislators about key issues such as Medicaid, therapy caps, and other issues that can have a significant impact on a person's ability to access treatment.

We have found that the most important components of changing the reimbursement landscape is educating people and having the ability to mobilize a large number of concerned individuals quickly so they can have the most impact in public policy and public awareness. Reimbursement continues to be an issue that professionals and consumers consistently identify as one of the most important issues they face on a day-to-day basis, and it will be our goal to use the Advocacy Network to achieve substantive gains in coverage and reimbursement for stuttering therapy in various treatment settings.

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Message From the Stuttering Center

Craig Coleman

J. Scott Yaruss



More Contests! We have been amazed at the response to the *Fluency Fantasies Across America* contest! We will look forward to another contest soon.

Please let us know if you have any comments or suggestions. You can also submit articles or ideas for future articles. We now have over 700 people who receive the *Stuttering Center News* and we look forward to more joining us soon!

During the coming months, we will begin establishing the formal goals of the Network and begin recruiting an initial group of members. Stay tuned to the newsletter and website for continued updates. If you are interested in becoming a part of the Advocacy Network, please contact Craig Coleman at craig.coleman@chp.edu

In establishing the Network, we will be looking to include not only those who specialize in stuttering, but also other professionals from all backgrounds. We feel that it will be invaluable to include consumer and other professionals (such as physicians and teachers) in the Network, so if you have suggestions for group members, please let us know!

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The Stuttering Center offers evaluation and treatment for children who stutter through Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh in Oakland and at our satellite offices in Bethel Park, Monroeville, and Wexford. Visit the Children's Hospital website at www.chp.edu for directions.

Find us on the Web!

www.stutteringcenter.org

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Send us your questions
and comments!!

SLP Corner: Individualized Treatment

Stuttering, like many other disorders, presents unique challenges to each individual. As such, it is critical to formulate treatment plans based on the needs of the individual who stutters. For example, some children may need extensive work on their attitudes and emotions related to stuttering, while stuttering may have little impact on speaking attitudes of other children. The number and type of disfluencies does not solely determine overall severity. A child who exhibits a low number of speech disfluencies may still have significant avoidance of speaking situations or activities that may represent more difficult speaking situations. Thus, the child may have a greater overall severity in terms of the impact of stuttering on his life, even if he doesn't show it in the frequency of disfluencies in his speech.

Clinicians should gain a thorough understanding of the child's stuttering at the evaluation and during the early stages of treatment to formulate an appropriate treatment plan. Here is a case example:

Child's Age: 12 years

Dx Summary: disfluency rate = 6%; speech repetitions and prolongations; avoidance of classroom participation; child often changes words or avoids speaking situations where he feels he might stutter; child is occasionally teased about his stuttering; child demonstrates very limited knowledge of stuttering.

Treatment Plan: Target increase knowledge of stuttering through stuttering quizzes and information handouts; target responses to teasing and bullying; target tension reduction and stuttering modification techniques; target increase in communication participation (decrease in avoidance behaviors); target speech modification techniques to reduce speech disfluencies.

A comprehensive treatment plan, such as the one above targets all aspects of the disorder, and will help the child make progress in all areas of stuttering.

Upcoming Events

Stuttering Center staff will present several workshops in the coming months. For more information, check out our website at www.StutteringCenter.org

Practical Treatment Strategies for School-Age Children who Stutter (J. Scott Yaruss)

January 12, 2006: Cherry Hill, NJ
January 13, 2006 Annapolis, MD
January 26, 2006 Raleigh, NC
January 27, 2006 Columbia, SC
February 2, 2006 Collinsville, IL
February 3, 2006 Oak Lawn, IL
February 16, 2006 Cerritos, CA
February 17, 2006 San Diego, CA

Evaluation and Treatment of Children who Stutter: Objectives and Activities for Success (Craig Coleman)

February 23, 2006 Minneapolis, MN: 26th Symposium on Intervention for Persons with Special Needs

Working with Parents of Children with Communication Disorders: Achieving Optimal Progress (Craig Coleman)

February 24, 2006 Minneapolis, MN: 26th Symposium on Intervention for Persons with Special Needs

2006 Pennsylvania Speech and Hearing Association Convention (Craig Coleman)

April 6-8, 2006: Valley Forge, PA; Numerous presentations on stuttering throughout the conference by Stuttering Center Staff

Visit our website to view handouts from previous talks! To schedule a seminar, contact Craig Coleman (craig.coleman@chp.edu) or Scott Yaruss (jsvaruss@csd.pitt.edu)