

The New

# SOURCE

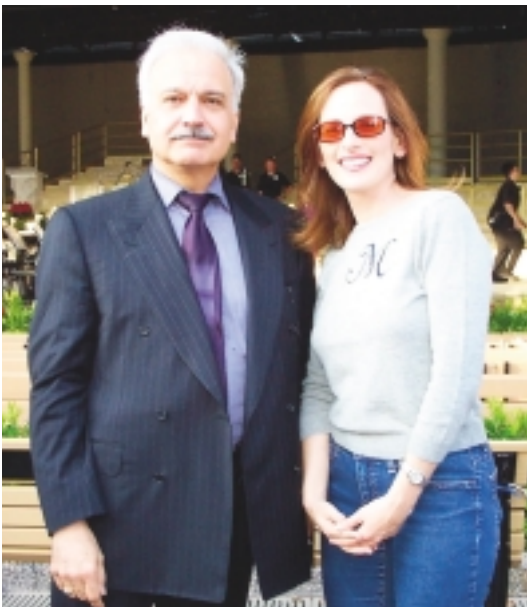
WINTER '03

A PUBLICATION OF NATIONAL DEAF ACADEMY

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

*James Tresh, President*

# NDA Meets Marlee Matlin!



### *Dear Friends and Families:*

Happy New Year to each of you! Over this past year, National Deaf Academy has provided quality mental health care to Deaf children and Deaf adults from more than 30 states! During this time, we also made the conscious decision to provide quality, focused care and education to Deaf children with Autism. The staff members of NDA and the Charter School at NDA now total 114, with nearly 50 of the

members of our staff being Deaf themselves! More than 50% of our direct care staff members are Deaf as are most of our program therapists. We are proud to share that Deaf persons hold positions within every level of responsibility in our organization. Deaf staff hold administrative, clinical and many para-professional positions in every department. The Charter School at National Deaf Academy now has 58 Deaf and Hard of Hearing students.

You will note the picture of Marlee Matlin and myself on the front page. Ms. Matlin is a highly recognized Deaf actress who won an Oscar for her performance in *Children of a Lesser God* in 1987 and continues to appear on screen and television. Ms. Matlin generously agreed to meet with a group of Deaf residents from National Deaf Academy before her performance, as narrator, at the *Candlelight Processional with Marlee Matlin*, at the American Gardens

see *Marlee Matlin*, continued on p. 4

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## EDUCATION

by Jennifer Tresh, R.N., Co-Founder of National Deaf Academy



# Considerations for Medication Use with Deaf Children

## “Do’s and Don’ts”

### ***Do select a qualified physician to evaluate your Deaf child.***

Typically, a Board-Certified Child Psychiatrist is best suited to diagnose and treat your Deaf child with behavioral problems to determine if medications may be helpful.

### ***Do insist on a thorough evaluation of your Deaf child.***

This includes interviews with both parents, the Deaf child, and a complete physical examination, including blood work to rule out any metabolic/endocrine difficulties. This will also help establish a baseline to track your Deaf child’s ongoing progress and response to medication.

### ***Do insist on the presence of a certified sign language interpreter during the interview with your Deaf child.***

Generally speaking, family members should not facilitate the communication between a physician and a Deaf family member. It is important to minimize misunderstandings.

Your Deaf son or daughter may not feel free to express his or her issues through a family member. It is understood that you, as the parent, know your child best. However, if your Deaf child has effective communication skills, he or she should talk directly with the doctor.

### ***Do ask for recommended literature or resources available for families.***

Be aware of the dangers involved in “over-analyzing” information found on the Internet or in inserts from medication bottles. Although the information found in these locations is certainly important, there are regulatory guidelines that require statistics about certain side effects be included, even if the side effect occurred in less than 1% of the sample population! Discuss all concerns with your physician.

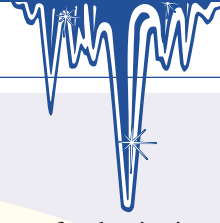
### ***Do ask questions.***

There is no such thing as a stupid question! If your physician is not taking the time to answer your questions, then you are in the wrong place!

see *Do’s and Don’ts*, continued on p. 3



## EDUCATION, continued



*Do's and Don'ts*, continued from p. 2

***Don't rely on information from other parents about what worked for their Deaf child.***

Children can react to medication very differently. There are many factors that can influence the physician's decision to prescribe medication. Dosages will also vary between patients. For example, an older child may weigh less than a younger child. In this example, the older child would require less medication than the younger child.

***Don't be impulsive!***

If a medication is prescribed for your Deaf child and you are concerned, always contact your physician before stopping any medication. Some medications require a slow reduction in the dosage of the medication in order to stop it completely. Abruptly stopping a medication of this kind could result in serious injury or illness.

***Don't feel discouraged if your psychiatrist has recommended medication for your Deaf child.***

Many Deaf children demonstrate significant progress and improvement in academic areas, as well as areas of daily

living, after beginning the use of medications. Your Deaf child may only need medications for a brief period of time.

***Don't rely exclusively on the opinion of a professional that does not have training or an experience base in Deaf Culture.***

Remember that "Deafness 101" is not taught in medical school! There are cases of Deaf children who have been misdiagnosed. As a result, they could receive the wrong treatment. Seek licensed Deafness professionals whenever possible.

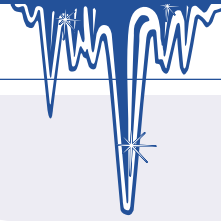
Deciding to use medication as an intervention for your Deaf child can be an anxiety-producing event. Although at NDA we do not believe that medication is the answer to every situation, we do find that it is often necessary to alleviate symptoms and provide additional support for the Deaf patient. These guidelines are used with our families and patients to assist with making the most informed decision regarding medication use.

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## Remember, Good Physical Health Promotes Good Mental Health!



## PRESIDENT'S CORNER



*Marlee Matlin,*  
continued from p. 1

Theatre at Epcot Center. Ms. Matlin spent considerable time visiting with our Deaf residents. She shared a great deal about herself, and moreover, graciously engaged the group, while answering their questions about her Deafness and her work. Ms. Matlin, as a profoundly Deaf woman, served as an excellent role model for these young Deaf people. Furthermore, the show was very colorful, and the music and songs were artistically interpreted for the benefit of all Deaf people in the audience. The staff at Disney World were very kind and generous in coordinating the visit with Ms. Matlin and arranging for us to see the Holiday Program. I want to extend a personal "thank you" to Ms. Matlin and the staff of Disney World that made this event possible for the residents of National Deaf Academy.

I also want to call your attention to the articles in this edition of THE SOURCE, as well as make a few special announcements. First of all, you will find an article by co-founder, Jennifer Tresh, RN, Vice President and COO. Jennifer offers the readers important guidelines to medication consumers titled "Do's and Don'ts of Using Medications with Deaf Children." Her article is concise, and gives practical guidance to consider when making decisions, with your physician, regarding medications.

I am proud to announce that NDA will host The Southern Counselors of the Deaf Association (SCDA) annual conference beginning March 19, 2003. Rhonda L. Fung, MA, NDA Lead Therapist, is the current President of SCDA. Rhonda, Deaf herself, grew up in the culturally diverse state of Louisiana. She attended and graduated from the Louisiana School for the Deaf, during the "old days" when all the students communicated with fingerspelling only!!! Rhonda continued her formal education, receiving both her undergraduate and graduate degrees at Gallaudet University. I first met Rhonda in

1994 when she joined our team as an intern from the Gallaudet Mental Health Counseling Program. After completing her internship, we quickly offered her a full time career opportunity. Rhonda has been affiliated with us ever since. Rhonda has developed refined clinical skills in working with Deaf youth with behavioral disorders. You will find an article in this issue by Rhonda introducing SCDA, and announcing the upcoming conference in March. I need to add that the conference will have limited space availability. Be sure to register early with Rhonda, if you wish to attend the annual Southern Counselors for the Deaf Association Conference. I would encourage each of you to also become members of SCDA and become active in helping the organization grow.

Lastly, I am pleased to inform the readership that National Deaf Academy has added a therapeutic Equestrian Program to our repertoire of services. National Deaf Academy patients engage in weekly trips to the stables where a Licensed Clinical Social Worker teaches them to develop relationship skills through their interaction with these majestic animals. Deaf patients learn to understand and appreciate the diversity in the temperament of individual horses. By learning to respect the individuality of each horse, Deaf patients have an opportunity to experience relationship building from a unique and enjoyable perspective.

In closing, I want to thank you for your ongoing support for the care and services provided to Deaf and Hard of Hearing people at National Deaf Academy. I wish each of you a very successful and peace-filled year in 2003.

Best regards,

James Tresh

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## MEET THE STAFF

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**Elena L. Moore**  
**Community Relations Director**

As the Community Relations Director, Elena L. Moore, serves as our “ambassador” and first point of contact for National Deaf Academy with the community. Ms. Moore establishes and maintains relationships with mental health and Deafness professionals throughout the country on behalf of NDA. Ms. Moore oversees the development of this newsletter and organization of all marketing events. Within this community relations directorship, Ms. Moore also coordinates the admission of new patients into National Deaf Academy’s residential treatment programs. Ms. Moore first came to work for Mr. James Tresh, Founder and CEO, as the manager of Magnolia House, an assisted living facility, in Safety Harbor, Florida in early 2000. Ms. Moore brought with her three years of experience working in the mental health field with Deaf people, educational interpreting experience, and a bachelor’s degree in psychology from the University of South Florida. Ms. Moore is also a National Association of the Deaf, Level III Certified American Sign Language interpreter. She transitioned into her current role at National Deaf Academy in late 2000. Please direct any questions about NDA or patient referral inquiries to Ms. Moore. You may email her at [emoore@nationaldeafacademy.com](mailto:emoore@nationaldeafacademy.com), call her at 352-735-9500 V or 352-735-9570 TTY. You may also visit her personally at one of the many national conferences she attends on behalf of NDA.

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## The Southern Counselors of the Deaf Association



***Dear Readers:***

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Rhonda Fung, and I am the Lead Therapist in the Adolescent Treatment Program at National Deaf Academy. I am writing, at this time, as the President of an evolving professional organization called The Southern Counselors of the Deaf Association (SCDA). As SCDA is not widely known, I would like to share a bit of it’s history. SCDA emerged out of the need for professional counselors working in school programs for Deaf students, and from other environments, to have a venue that was specific to our needs. In 1995, twelve counselors from five different state schools for the Deaf came together at the Louisiana School for the Deaf and conceptualized SCDA. The mission of the organization is to provide training opportunities through an annual conference. In addition, we aim to share the most current information regarding counseling with Deaf clients with our membership through a newsletter and fellowship.

I am proud to announce and share with you that National Deaf Academy will be hosting this year’s SCDA conference. The

conference is titled “Integrating Mental Health Services and Deaf Education,” and will offer a series of workshops addressing topics that were identified at last year’s conference. Most of us, in the field of counseling Deaf clients, are challenged by the great diversity of our Deaf clientele today. The goal of this year’s conference will be to identify some of the more complex groups of Deaf clients, and discuss diagnostic approaches as well as strategies for helpful counseling interventions. The workshops this year will feature speakers with expertise in Deaf children with Autism, Deaf Sexual Offenders and Deaf victims of Sexual Abuse, Personality Disorders in Deaf youth and other pertinent mental health topics.

The conference will be held, beginning March 19th with an opening Keynote presentation at National Deaf Academy. The conference will continue through March 21st. The cost of the conference will be \$50 for members of SCDA, and \$75 for non-member registrants. Availability will be limited, so it is important that you mail me your registration as soon as possible.

***You will find a registration form in this issue of THE SOURCE (back panel).***

I look forward to meeting many of you here in Mt. Dora, Florida in March 2003!



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COMING SOON!

*Information About Addictions Treatment at NDA*

## Registration Form

Southern Counselors of the Deaf Association (SCDA)  
**2002 ANNUAL CONFERENCE — March 19-21, 2003**

*Integrating Mental Health Services and Deaf Education*

Sponsored by and located at: National Deaf Academy

*Conference Fee: \$50 for SCDA Members, \$75 for Non-Members*

ATTENDEES NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ORGANIZATION: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Voice or TTY)*

*\*Early Registration ends February 17, 2003 \*\* Priority Registration provided to SCDA members as seating is limited.*

**PLEASE SEND ALL REGISTRATION FORMS, INQUIRIES AND CHECKS OR MONEY ORDERS TO:**

Rhonda Fung c/o National Deaf Academy • 19650 US Hwy 441 • Mt. Dora, FL 32757

352.735.9570 TTY • rfung@nationaldeafacademy.com

Hotel reservations can be made at the Hampton Inn, Mt. Dora • ph: 352.353.4267 • Rate: \$69/night • Reservation#: 8375-4829