



JANET DESGEORGES

Janet lives in Boulder, Colorado with her husband Joe and is mom to three daughters, including Sara, who is deaf/hard of hearing. She is a co-founder and part of the staff at Hands & Voices Headquarters, serving as the Executive Director since September 2011, having previously served as the Outreach Director since 2005, and as the Executive Director of the Flagship chapter of Hands & Voices in Colorado for almost 10 years prior to that. Janet has presented to groups worldwide about the experiences of families as they journey through life with a child with deafness or hearing loss. Ms. DesGeorges is the author on the chapter for Family Support in the NCHAM e-Book, the co-author of the book Educational Advocacy for Students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing: The Hands & Voices Guidebook, and many other publications. Ms. DesGeorges received a program certificate from the MCH Public Health Leadership Institute in 2011 at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill.

Janet currently serves as the NCHAM Family Advisory Chairperson. As an EHDI Systems advocate, Janet believes in the principles and guiding philosophies of Hands & Voices towards a parent-driven, professionally-collaborative approach when supporting families in the early years. Professionals and parents can partner together to achieve appropriate outcomes for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Her areas of interest include Leadership Development for parents who participate in systemic improvement; Deaf Education Reform and Improvement; Children's Safety and Success(preventing child abuse and neglect); Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Systems; Parent/Professional partnerships in Quality Improvement processes.



AMANDA KAAHANUI

Aloha! I live in Hawaii. My husband and I have a 13 year old son who is deaf without aids, and hard of hearing when he wears his bone conduction hearing aids. I work for SPIN, the Special Parent Information Network supporting families with a child with any disability. I am currently the President of Hands & Voices Hawaii and also the regional coordinator. I am a parent advisor on NCHAM family advisory group, Hawaii's EHDI advisory group and Hawaii's Early Learning Workgroup on early language.



DEBBIE MITRE-SMITH

Debbie is the mama of 3 young children. She is an assistant professor at Madonna University, where she has been teaching American Sign Language and its linguistics and culture since 2005. She obtained both of her degrees, BA and MATESOL, at Madonna University. She has also been the director for the Deaf-Hearing Family Literacy Program since 2014. She attends various workshops and conferences related to literacy, language, cognitive and social developments, and understanding the IEP. Lately, she has been more involved with advocacy for children in the Special Education system – always learning and advocating.



MOLLY MARTZKE

Molly is married to Paul and have three children. Their oldest, Jack is 19 and a freshman at Michigan Tech University studying civil engineering. He was diagnosed at 10 months and began wearing hearing aids and learning sign language. He received a cochlear implant at 18 months and slowly transitioned to oral communication. Their second, Owen, 15 and hearing. Their youngest, Tressa is 13 and deaf as well. She was identified at birth, began wearing hearing aids at 2 weeks and received a cochlear implant at 6 months. She is currently in the 8th grade at a local parochial school.

Molly loves to see that families have the resources they need to make informed decisions. She believes that equipped with knowledge families will make the right choice for themselves, whatever shape that takes. Molly works in the Northeast Regional Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs, possess a great attention to detail, and a passion for helping others.



LAURA GRAMER

Laura Gramer and her family reside in Seattle, WA. They are deaf parents to two deaf sons. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in Occupational Therapy. Laura currently volunteers in WA Hands & Voices and Hearing Speech Deaf Center as board member. She served on various commissions and boards in Washington and Illinois. Laura and her family are involved in the deaf community.



ALYSON WARD

Alyson has a M.S. in Health Education and is an IHI certified Improvement Advisor and Certified Health Education Specialist. She has worked in public health for over 13 years and has been involved in improving public health programs, health promotion, education, research, policy, evaluation, grant development, and grant review from the community to national levels. Currently, she is the Director of Quality Improvement (QI) at the National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management (NCHAM), which provides targeted QI assistance to state Early Hearing Detection and Intervention programs. Alyson also works to ensure that the voices of families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing are represented through all of NCHAM's projects. Alyson is also heavily involved in raising awareness of Congenital Cytomegalovirus (CMV) and serves on the board of the National CMV Foundation.



SARA DOUTRE

Sara and her husband Will have three children. Liam, age 6; Daisy, age 4; and Bonnie, 15 months. Daisy is deaf and uses bilateral cochlear implants. She had a progressive hearing loss due to CMV and lost most of her hearing between 15 and 18 months. Daisy attends an oral preschool - Sound Beginnings at Utah State University. She recently was explanted and re-implanted (Oct and Jan) and is doing really well with her new implants.

Sara has a background in special education policy and tries very hard to empower other parents with knowledge about the rights of their children under IDEA. She believes in advocacy through the processes under IDEA and through other means - parents can learn to advocate and through that, teach their children to advocate for themselves. Sara firmly believes that parents can make the best choices for their children. We hear so many voices criticizing us and questioning our decisions - we have to build each other up.



YIESELL RAYON

Yiesell Rayon and her family reside in Chino Hills, California. She is a proud mother of two boys. Christian is 10 years old and hearing. Markie is 4 years old and has moderate to severe hearing loss. Markie uses hearing aids and is enrolled in a total communication DHH preschool learning both American Sign Language and spoken language. Yiesell currently works as a bilingual advocate for the Southern California Parent Center that provides support, education, and advocacy to families who have children with diverse abilities. Yiesell is also the LA County Chair Representative for California Hands and Voices. She looks forward in bringing together DHH families throughout LA County. She enjoys offering support by educating and guiding parents on how to advocate for their own deaf or hard of hearing children.



JESSICA SANCHEZ

Jessica has three children, one deaf and two hearing. She's been married for almost 14 years. They found out their son was born deaf at 2 months old. They started off using American Sign Language and then moved to oral language. Their son who was born deaf is doing amazing things! He is now in 2nd grade in which he is mainstreamed. They are beyond proud of their son and his success. Jessica is currently enrolled in college pursuing a degree in Human Services.



LISA WEISS

Lisa lives in Denver, Colorado with her partner, Jason Rudofsky, and their four sons, including one of Lisa's teenage twins, Max, who is deaf due to auditory neuropathy/dyssynchrony. When Max's AN/AD was initially realized at nearly the age of three, Lisa chose to learn Cued Speech, which has allowed Max full visual access to spoken languages. Lisa has been active in various organization related to deaf/hard of hearing issues, including the Colorado Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the National Cued Speech Association, Hands and Voices, Interpreter Advisory Board for the Colorado Department of Education, and the NCHAM Family Advisory Board.

Professionally, Lisa is an attorney with a focus on special education. She currently works at the Colorado Department of Education where her primary role is within the state complaint system, as well as providing technical assistance to parents, advocacy groups, school districts, and dispute resolution practitioners within the special education system. Lisa has also lead the effort to create an Early Dispute Resolution project which currently provides professional development in meeting facilitation and facilitative skills to educators and parents throughout Colorado.



WILL DOUTRE

Will and his wife, Sara have 3 children, Liam, Daisy, and Bonnie. Daisy is deaf with bi-lateral cochlear implants. She was born hearing but due to congenital CMV progressively lost her ability to hear. By the age of 18 months she deaf in both ears and was bilaterally implanted in December of 2012. Since that time Will has enjoyed connecting with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community and learning from so many other wonderful parents of deaf children.

Will has a M.S. in Computer Science from Brown University and works as a software engineer. He is involved in various community organizations and enjoys supporting and sometimes coaching his kids in their many sporting and other activities.



DJENNE-AMAL N. MORRIS, BA

Djenne-amal brings passion, humor and real life experience to her role as national parent/professional trainer, facilitator and motivational speaker whose view of the world not as it is, but as it could be. As a mother of an amazing son with CHARGE Syndrome she strives to build an atmosphere of support and empowerment for families of children with special needs and the professionals who serve them. This has led to her career working with families of children with special needs in various roles as Women's Ministry Leader, Family Specialist for the New England and North Carolina Deaf-Blind Projects, Parent Educator/ Training Coordinator at BEGINNINGS for Parents of Children Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing and current Chairperson of the Board of Directors for Hands & Voices. Djenne and her husband provide consulting, trainings, workshops and coaching to families and professionals in the area of family dynamics and special needs (www.todaywithdjenne.com). She lives in Knightdale, N.C. with her husband, Michael and have three children, a cat and a dog! Malik, 20, attends the Eastern North Carolina School for the Deaf. Imani, 21 is a senior at Abilene Christian Univ. in Texas, majoring in Global Studies. Her youngest, Zakiya, 15, is a high school sophomore. Djenne is an avid reader, fun-loving, and a newly published author! Life is good!