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SPECIAL NEEDS GUIDE

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with Sign Language

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COMMUNICATE now

By Lisa Nowicki Baer

Photo courtesy of Photography By Angel



*One Family and Their Success Story
Communicating With Sign Language*



Monica and Madie Blouin pictured signing the word "Daddy"

Imagine being the parent of a child who does not speak even though they are well past the average age of development for speech. Imagine also, watching other parents playfully interacting with their children while waiting in line at the grocery store as you stand in silence with your own child. There is also the daily heartbreak of not being able to understand why your toddler is crying as well as the stress of dealing with their tantrums due to unmet needs.

"Children with speech delays can often become frustrated and begin to tantrum because they cannot communicate their needs," explains Monica Blouin, licensed and certified Baby Sign Language instructor and owner of Lil Miracles Sign Language Academy.

Monica and her family have been using sign language with their daughter Madeleine Miracles since she was only a few months old. Madie was born with Down Syndrome and was challenged with speech delay.

"If it weren't for sign language, I don't know how well we would be communicating with her," said Blouin.

The Blouin family began signing with Madie by using a series of DVD's called Baby Signing Time. The DVD's are specifically designed for babies 3-36 months old and include sing-along

songs, playful animation, and a multicultural cast of signing babies ages 2 and under. After watching the first DVD the family was immediately able to make simple signs such as "water," "hot," and "potty." The program is designed so that it is easy for everyone in the family to learn, and provides a positive way for the children to express themselves and communicate their needs.

"This was absolutely life changing for Madie and for our family, beams Blouin."

"Madie has a very large sign language vocabulary base and our family loves to use sign daily," she explains.

Monica was so moved by the entire experience that she has since resigned from her position in the legal field and has chosen instead to commit herself to helping other families struggling to communicate with their speech delayed children.

"I have a passion and a divine inspiration to help children and their families that are struggling to communicate with one another," says Blouin.

After meeting with the co-creators of Signing Time and networking with other moms of special needs kids, Monica and her husband, Tim, began to connect the dots and realized they needed to start their own sign language acad-

emy and that is exactly what they did. Out of adversity, the Blouin family has created the opportunity to help other families by opening Lil Miracles Sign Language Academy. Named after and inspired by their daughter Madeleine Miracles, the academy will strive to release speech challenged children from feeling trapped and unable to participate and function in the world.

“It’s also a fun way to introduce communication skills to every child,” offers Blouin.

Studies indicate that infants who learn sign language may have a higher IQ, increased spoken vocabulary, improved communication skills as well as improved reading skills.

“When you believe in something this much and you have seen through your own personal experience the miracles that can happen for a child when they feel understood, you just have to Go for it!” exclaims Blouin.

She concludes, “It’s scary to start something from scratch, but we will get to help families and nothing is more important than that!”

For more information about Monica Blouin and Lil Miracles Sign Language Academy please visit www.signingacademy.com/monicablouin or call (312) 656-3046. ●



Photo courtesy of Photography By Angel

How to get started with Lil Miracles Sign Language Academy.

Get Started Right Now!

Signing Classes Tuesdays:

Lil Surprises Baby Boutique
22 S. Ash Street • Frankfort, IL
(815) 464-9856 • www.lilsurprises.com

Signing Classes on Fridays at:

Oak Lawn Children’s Museum
5100 Museum Drive • Oak Lawn, IL
(708) 423-6709 • www.cmoaklawn.org

Coming soon – new exhibit to bring awareness about what it’s like to have a disability.

Sundays:

Cutie Poops and Bottoms
14910 S. LaGrange • Orland Park, IL
(708) 873-4588
www.cutiepoopsandbottoms.com

Starting January 1, 2012. Take signing classes with Monica on Friday mornings at:

Frankfort Square Park District
7540 West Braemer Lane • Frankfort, IL
(815) 469-3524 • www.fspd.org

or Tuesday afternoons at 4:00pm at:
Lincolnway Special Recreation Association
21800 S. LaGrange Road • Frankfort, IL
(815) 464-2811 • www.lwsra.org

February 25, 2012 – Good Shepherd Center 21st Annual Conference. Meet Monica and see her presentation for Good Shepherd Center’s 21st Annual Conference being held at:

Prairie State College
202 S. Halsted St. • Chicago Heights, IL
(708) 709-3500 • www.prairie.cc.il.us