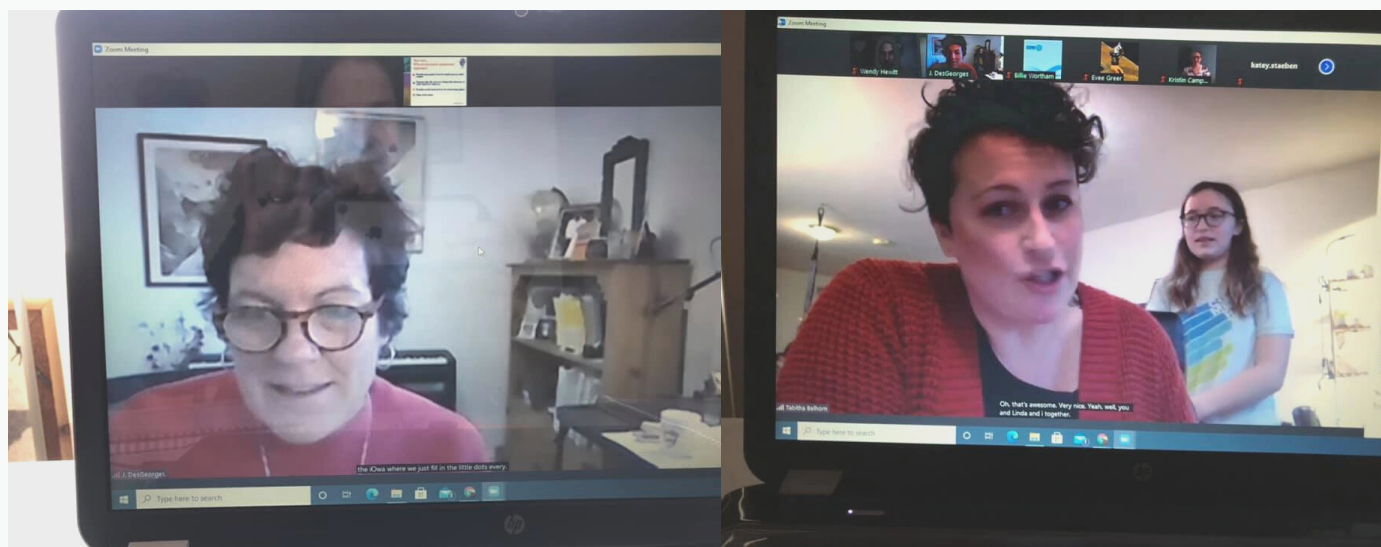




# WYOMING FAMILIES FOR HANDS & VOICES

"What works for your child is what makes the choice right"™



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## Hands & Voices Update

*by Wendy Hewitt, Executive Director*

Wyoming Families for Hand & Voices started the year off with a virtual Advocacy & Support Training (ASTra). Above are our amazing trainers pictured in their computers; Janet DesGeorges (left) H&V Headquarter Director, from Colorado and Tabby Belhorn (right) from Ohio. It was a great weekend and they made five hours on Zoom go quickly. In this newsletter you can read the thoughts shared about the training by three Wyoming parents and a D/HH college student.

Wyoming's very own Gabe Heuer is the cover story for "Hearing Our Way" Winter 2020 issue!! Way to go Gabe we are so proud of you! We highly encourage you to read about Gabe in this issue on pages 6 & 7! He is an inspiration to all of us!

Also, we are hoping to be able to have our 2021 Parent Training in person in Casper June 25 & 26. So mark your calendars for an amazing weekend. Check out the section in this newsletter about WDE's Transition Trainings offered to D/HH students in grades 7-12. This training provides valuable information for students and parents.

# ASTra Training: A Parent's Perspective

by **NataLee Lindstrom- Casper Parent**

My name is NataLee Lindstrom and I am a guide for Guide By Your Side in Wyoming. I have three beautiful children and two of them are on an IEP. My oldest is 14 and is getting ready to go to high school next year. My son is 12 and is currently in the sixth grade. My youngest is 6, in first grade, and she is Deaf with bilateral cochlear implants. I attended the ASTra training in January and the things I learned helped me be a better advocate for my children.



PICTURED ABOVE: NATALEE LINDSTROM FAMILY

Having multiple children on IEPs is not something I take lightly. My son was born premature, has epilepsy, had cancer in his skull at age 3 and struggles in school for many reasons. When he was younger I used to go to IEP meetings for him and nod my head in agreement as he seemed to be making growth. It wasn't until he was in 3rd grade that I realized how important my role as his advocate is. The teacher that year wasn't following his IEP and he had one of the worst school years. He struggled so much that it took years to help him gain his confidence back. Knowledge is empowering. I didn't know what my role was and how important my voice is. I had to try to navigate my way through my rights and my son's rights to get help when he needs it. When Ayva was a baby I read that 1/3 of children who are deaf or hard of hearing will not read past a third grade reading level. I vowed then that I would do my best to help my deaf child surpass that statistic and accomplish anything that her hearing peers could.

The ASTra training that Wyoming Hands & Voices provided me more knowledge for my bag of tools to help me be the best advocate for my deaf child. There is so much to learn when it comes to the legal aspects of an IEP. There are so many acronyms or even things I had not thought of that could help my daughter continue to be successful in a mainstream classroom. I went to Ayva's IEP the following school day ironically and I even asked for things I had just learned about to help Ayva. I learned so much, yet there is still so much more I don't know or may need to be reminded of as Ayva continues to grow. I am grateful for trainings like these. Thank you Wyoming Hands & Voices as well as our speakers Janet DesGeorges and Tabby Belhorn.

**SAVE THE DATE**  
**PARENT TRAINING**  
**JUNE 25TH & 26TH, 2021**  
**RAMKOTA HOTEL**  
**IN CASPER, WY**

Special Appearance By DHH Captain America

More Details to follow in the coming months

HANDS & VOICES WYOMING

by **Gabrielle Reimann, UW Student**

The ASTra Training was a great opportunity to hear from professionals about advocacy. Even though the training was geared towards parent's (which I am not, I'm a young D/HH adult) I still learned a lot about advocacy. Some of the tips and strategies suggested I wish I would have known about years earlier, when I started out in college! Advocacy is a skill that can be applied to many different facets of life and there are many people who would benefit from attending an ASTra Training. I was so happy to be able to join this training and learn more self-advocacy skills.



PICTURED ABOVE: GABRIELLE REIMANN



# ASTra Training: A Parent's Perspective Part 2

by Kristin Campbell, Sheridan Parent

I am the mother of a 4-year-old daughter with unilateral hearing loss. We, as a family, are at the beginning of our journey navigating the public school system for and with a HOH(Hard of Hearing) child. I cannot begin to express how grateful I am to have the opportunity to experience the expertise and guidance of the families who have already plowed the way for families like my own through trainings like the ASTra Training.

For us, the ASTra Training provided valuable insight into how our journey through the school system may look and the tools and networks that are available to help us navigate through it. As a parent who has not had the experience of working with the process, I had many “ah ha!” moments throughout the training, one of which was a new view of the classroom. Without firsthand knowledge of what the classroom environment can be like for a HOH child I struggled to envision and overlooked the many challenges each setting presented. I pictured my child sitting in the front of the class facing the teacher who had the microphone of an FM system around their neck, and BAM! problem solved. But, as was highlighted in the training, kids don't sit in a desk facing their teacher all day. What about recess? Group projects? Playtime? Fieldtrips? Gym class? In the age of Covid, masks? Going from a simplistic view of the day in the life of a school child to one much more nuanced and complex could have been intimidating but thanks to the ASTra Training it wasn't.

The training offered a variety of tangible tools and achievable goals and strategies to overcome these challenges, not just technological, but social as well. Following the training I took one of these social tools, passed it on to my child's preschool teacher, and saw immediate results. I look forward to taking the training again, as I am certain that at each stage of my child's journey, the ASTra Training will provide new and valuable insight. Then I can be the best advocate for my child and she can learn to be her own best advocate. Thank you, Janet and Tabby for putting on this exceptional training; thank you, Wendy and Wyoming H&V for hosting this training; and thank you, parents and professionals for attending and continuing to set precedence and break barriers in your communities for families like mine and those who will follow us!

by Eeve Greer, Cody Parent

It was my pleasure to remotely attend the 2021 ASTra Training made available by Wyoming Hands & Voices in early January. My husband and I have a large family, including eight children, six of which are currently attending public school. Our youngest two children will soon be starting school as well. We have a 4 year old daughter with unilateral microtia and atresia and a two year old son. I feel like I have experienced much of what the public school systems in Wyoming have to offer during the education of our older children, but I understand that there will be additional elements of education necessary for our daughter with a hearing impairment. This ASTra training was my introduction to the available resources in publicly funded schools for children who are deaf and hard of hearing. What an eye-opening, motivational, and informational opportunity!



PICTURED ABOVE: EVEE GREER FAMILY

The seminar was jam-packed with discussions on a wide array of topics including: special education laws, special considerations for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, eligibility requirements for services, assessment/evaluation types, and IEP components. Both of the four hour sessions included useful information from our presenters about understanding how we should be advocating for our kids and how to effectively procure the resources that our children need to be successful. I found it very helpful, as a parent getting ready to start our hard of hearing child in public school, to know what the acronyms like FAPE, LRE, IDEA, and IEP mean. I appreciated the fact that both of our presenters for the training were parents of deaf or hard of hearing children. They have walked the path I am beginning to walk and navigated it successfully. The presenters emphasized that parents are the key to our children's success. I left feeling empowered as a parent advocate, not afraid to ask questions and present ideas about what I feel that my child needs.



PICTURED ABOVE: ELLA CAMPBELL

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## Wyoming Families for Hands & Voices Contact Information

PO Box 1033  
Mountain View, WY 82939  
[www.WyHandsAndVoices.org](http://www.WyHandsAndVoices.org)



Wendy Hewitt  
Executive Director, Parent  
307-780-6476  
[wendy@wyhandsandvoices.org](mailto:wendy@wyhandsandvoices.org)



Kim Reimann  
GBYS Coordinator, Parent  
307-258-0967  
[kimr@wyhandsandvoices.org](mailto:kimr@wyhandsandvoices.org)



Tiffany Hamblin  
Technical Coordinator  
307-747-3703  
[tiffany@wyhandsandvoices.org](mailto:tiffany@wyhandsandvoices.org)

Wyoming Families for Hands & Voices is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization.



## You're Invited to *What's The Plan?*



### VIRTUAL TRANSITION WORKSHOP

WDE Outreach Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing & Wyoming Workforce Services are hosting a Transition Workshop Series.

During the months of February & March these workshops will be available. Upcoming topics include - Staying in the Job, DVR Services, Financial Literacy, Budgeting, Self-Advocacy, College Preparation.

Contact Christie Fritz at 307-286-6282 or [christie.fritz@wyo.gov](mailto:christie.fritz@wyo.gov) for more information and to learn how to access these trainings.

To see what other resources WDE Outreach has to offer visit their website.

<https://wyominginstructionalnetwork.com/outreach-services/outreach-services-for-deafhard-of-hearing/>

"One of the most important gifts a parent can give a child is the gift of accepting that child's uniqueness."

Fred Rogers

Wyoming Families for Hands & Voices wants to thank all those who participated in the Run from 2020 Virtual Race!

We had a great turnout! We are so grateful for your support. The proceeds from this race will allow us to continue supporting families of children with hearing loss in the state of Wyoming. You truly make the difference for us!

