

## **Sponsored Silence Project:**

Intent: Ohio Speech, Language and Hearing Association (OSLHA) would like to increase public awareness regarding the importance of communication and the impact of the lack thereof. Communication, in any setting: whether it be social, educational, vocational, or employment locations is critical to daily life.

### **Format:**

The sponsored participant will be asked to be verbally silent for a 15 minute period within their work day. The participant can specify the 15 minute period in which they will remain verbally silent, but it is recommended that this time period include daily, routine activities associated with that person's job function that would include interpersonal interactions.

### **Conditions:**

The sponsored participant will be provided an augmentative communication device that would provide topic-related vocabulary to the day's events. The vocabulary will be specified BY the participant to a speech pathology graduate student who will obtain this information via a 10 – 15 minute phone interview one week prior to the Sponsored Silence event.

### **Sponsorship:**

Colleagues, coworkers and children all have the opportunity to “sponsor” the participant's silence for a fifteen minute period. This is expected to be a facility wide project. Sponsorship cost is 25 cents per minute (for a total of \$3.75) or a discretionary donation of up to \$5.00 for the fifteen minute period. All monies sponsored for go directly to the participating site in hopes that it would be used for materials, programs and activities for the speech pathology and/or audiology staff and departments.

### **Staff Commitment:**

Number of staff involved (those taking monies/record acknowledged sponsorship, displaying paper acknowledgements of sponsored time, and person being sponsored) will vary from site to site. Designation of time commitment will be governed by participating site.

Optional for site participation: Displaying paper acknowledges of sponsored time within the building (a specified location will need to be selected).

**Media:**

Local news coverage is expected: Participating sites have the option to contact the media independently. Under the agreement that media contact is made at least one month prior to event and SWOSHA personnel is notified of the media coverage (TV coverage, newspaper/internet news articles, or interviews) secured and in which manner. OSLHA personnel are available is gladly willing to take on this responsibility if the participating site does not wish to. Therefore, the sponsored participant can expect to be interviewed by the media for a fifteen to twenty minute period.

Total Time Commitment of Sponsored Participant over the course of the entire event 45 to 60 minutes

A confirmation of participation is expected one week after the meeting with the OSLHA representative.

# Sponsored Silence Project

## Key points to consider when organizing this event:

- 1) Key Participant Choice: Since public awareness is the main goal of this project, the choice of the key participant is critical. Past events have demonstrated that the greatest impact on increased public awareness is through using a community leader as the key participant. It is preferable to choose a community leader whose job responsibilities impact budget or policy decisions related to communication disorders. However, an equally effective key participant choice would be someone who is well-known by the public, creating increased event interest and attendance.
- 2) Activity of Key participant during SS: Each Sponsored Silence event is unique, as the “key participant” (person who will be verbally silent) dictates the activity, day and time of its occurrence. The activity in which the person will be silent, will vary from event to event because the activity is often directly associated with that individual’s job responsibilities (e.g. interacting with students, colleagues, board members, the public, etc.)
- 3) Sponsorship aspect/choice:
  - a. As a general rule, sponsorship is most appropriate when the verbally silent participant has a personal relationship with the observers of the activity (e.g. teacher at school, boss in the office, board President at a board meeting). Sponsorship is less effective and at times inappropriate when the activity involves the public.
  - b. The “sponsorship” portion of the project is entirely event dependent. For example, having elementary students sponsor a teacher to remain quiet would result in greater inclusion of the number of people who are personally invested in the event itself, create a sense of “fun”, transform the observers of the event into direct participants that try to make the community leader speak, and increase the “audience” of the event. Sponsorship of other events may not be appropriate (e.g. a politician making a public speech)
- 4) Timing of SS Event: most organizers to date have conducted their SS event in April as a media launch for a local May is Better Hearing and Speech Month campaign. The intent would be to use the media coverage of the SS event, asking the news station to include information related to upcoming local professional BHSM activities. Since “air-time” is expensive and TV viewers attention can be limited,

providing the news station with a web-site address they can announce (e.g. your region's OSLHA affiliate, or you may use OSLHA's) that contains summary information of your area's BHSM public offerings is recommended. The month of your SS event, however is completely determined by you.

- 5) Securing an Augmentative/Alternative Communication Device: most school district educational resource center's will loan a device. Other options include contacting hospitals or private practices in the area of the SS event. It is imperative that someone who has been trained to use the particular AAC device on loan be involved in your SS event to program the device and train the key participant in its use.
- 6) Media Coverage: Notifying your local press and TV stations prior to the event is important, but does not guarantee coverage of your event. You may be told of the media's intention to cover your event, but an important "breaking story" may intercede resulting in no public media coverage at all. TV news coverage is more likely during January and February, but your event's level of public interest is the greatest predictor.
- 7) Recording the SS Event: OSLHA asks that the organizers record the event themselves using a tripod, regardless of outside media coverage, and provide a copy of the event on DVD for archival purposes.
- 8) Release Forms: Obtaining a signed release which gives permission for videotape recording is required for all individuals shown on the video. Many schools and corporations obtain recording permission forms to be signed upon enrollment or employment, eliminating the need for additional signatures for this event. A separate release form should always be obtained from the key participant, however.

## **Sponsored Silence Interview Q's:**

- 1) Tell me your impressions of the ease or difficulty you experienced in the Sponsored Silence event when trying to communicate with the children.
- 2) Knowing that you had a communication device to use during those 15 minutes of silence, did you feel the communication would be easier?
- 3) Were you surprised by the results?
- 4) If you could have done something different in the preparation of the communication device, what would that be?
- 5) Prior to this experience, had you ever thought about the challenges that people with limited communication face?
- 6) Do you feel that your involvement in the Sponsored Silence project has been positive, and if so, in what way?

## **Q's for Candace:**

- 1) As the SLP in this building, how much time did this project require of you?
- 2) Did you feel it was a success, and if so, in what way?
- 3) How did you determine how the monies collected from the sponsorship would be used?
- 4) Do you think this had a positive effect on the school?
- 5) Do you think the project helped increase the student's awareness re: the importance of communication?



## *Ohio Speech-Language-Hearing Association*

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January 29, 2008

Dear Mr. Machock,

I represent the Ohio Speech-Language-Hearing Association (OSLHA) as Chair of a unique state-wide event called "Sponsored Silence." I would like to extend an invitation to you to participate in this event, this spring 2008 in Cincinnati, due to your role as radio announcer for WLW.

The purpose of OSLHA's Sponsored Silence event is to increase public awareness of the importance of communication and the profound impact and isolation that can occur when communication is disrupted or completely lost. Communication, as you know in your role as WLW's voice of the University of Cincinnati basketball program, is critical to daily life and is often taken for granted by the majority of the population --**until it is lost.**

Each Sponsored Silence event features a community leader whose profession depends upon the ability to communicate effectively. During the event, one community leader agrees to remain quiet for 15 minutes during a work activity that normally involves interaction with others. In order to communicate during this 15 minute time period, an augmentative device (a computerized voice output system activated by using a keyboard) will be available to use. The participating community leader will receive training on this device prior to the event. The community leader may choose the date and the time to be "silent."

The intent of this event can be solely to increase public awareness, or can additionally include the contributions of "sponsors." Sponsors may be co-workers, students, audience members, etc. who pay a nominal fee to keep the leader quiet! These monies are then donated to OSLHA's consumer scholarship fund that is in the process of being established. This consumer scholarship will provide families funding to learn how to use an augmentative communication device.

OSLHA President, Katrina Zeit, and I were hoping to discuss the opportunity for you to participate in OSLHA's Sponsored Silence event in more details over lunch in the next few weeks. Please contact me via email at [martha.coen-cummings@cchmc.org](mailto:martha.coen-cummings@cchmc.org) or by phone at (513) 636-6824 to let me know if you are interested. On behalf of OSHLA, we very much appreciate your consideration to participate in this important event. The news coverage this event is likely to receive will have a wonderful impact in raising public awareness regarding the value of communication!

Sincerely,

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Martha Coen-Cummings, PhD CCC/SLP

OSLHA Sponsored Silence Chairperson