

**Dothan Eagle, April 18, 2005**



## **New therapy develops listening skills**

By Linnea McClellan

Editor

Dothan Eagle (Dothan, AL)

Monday, April 18, 2005

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Lifestyle Editor

The before and after difference Charles and Angie Marshall see in their son is all the proof they need that a new training program can help children and others with speech delays and attention deficits.

When Angie heard other parents talking about the amazing results in their children after auditory processing training on an episode of the Today Show more than two years ago, she wanted to know more.

"The children were really smart kids, kind of like my little boy, but they were having problems with their speech progress," she said.

Dr. Alfred Tomatis, a French physician, started the field of sound listening training by demonstrating that the ear must work well for humans to effectively communicate, move and learn.

The Today Show program Angie watched included an interview with Tomatis and video clips of the children's progress.

The EnListen™ Listening technology and training program had not been developed yet, so the Marshalls enrolled Charles in the Listening & Learning Diagnostic Center in Metairie, La., for training in the Tomatis method. There are very few of the centers in the United States.

Now Angie has been through training herself and is ready to share what she learned at an information and assessment meeting in cooperation Dr. Billie M. Thompson, president of the Sound Listening Corporation. Thompson is one of two therapists who helped the Marshall's 4-year-old son Charles.

A two-part outreach course will be offered in Dothan May 25-June 8 and July 6-July 19.

Tuition is \$3,700 which includes four assessments by Thompson and 60-hour program. People of all ages can benefit from the training.

The EnListen™ outreach program in Dothan is one of the first of its kind to be offered in the nation, Angie said.

Thompson trained with Tomatis in France and with Dr. Susan Andrews established sound listening training in the United States.

Thompson was founding president of the International Association of Registered Certified Tomatis Consultants. She provided listening programs to more than 6,000 families in the past two decades and founded Sound Listening Corporation in Phoenix, Ariz.

Thompson now works exclusively with the EnListen™ Program through outreach and home programs. The software program allows clients to train with a computer and software on their own schedule to minimize travel. Dr. Kirk D. Thompson developed the EnListen™ software program.

Although the Marshall's son Charles was never diagnosed with autism, he showed early signs of speech delays and possible autistic traits, including attention deficits. Charles has completed two 15-day sessions of intensive clinical training in New Orleans so far with a break between, in addition to the computer software training at home.

"Even in the hotel during the first 15-day program, he started to communicate better and started to say bigger words and the words that came out were a lot more easily understood. And he didn't tend to repeat words," Angie said, adding that he also seemed to better comprehend what others were saying.

Her husband joined them in Metairie after four days and said he couldn't believe the difference.

"When he left, he didn't respond to any questions," Charles said. "It was remarkable. He can count to 40 now and read and write."

In fact, young Charles reads to his classmates at daycare and anyone else who will listen.

Charles has also benefitted from speech therapy through Southeast Alabama Medical Center and the Vaughn-Blumberg Center in Dothan.

Angie said their out-of-pocket expenses were steep when they went to New Orleans, but the Marshalls consider the training a worthwhile investment in their son's future. Their insurance classifies the training as an educational expense and won't provide coverage.

The sound listening program basically works by using a combination of bone conduction through special headphones to train the human ear to acquire, develop and refine listening.

"We hear through bone conduction as well as through sound," Angie explained. "We don't recognize that we're hearing with our bones, but we do."

The EnListen training helps participants focus on the proper frequencies of sound and language while filtering out distractions.

During EnListen™ training, participants listen to music and other content that can be adapted to meet individual goals. They can do other things while using the program, including sleeping. Strengthening the ear-voice connection improves learning and reduces distortion.

"Two years ago he wasn't smiling much and he would just sit there," Charles said of his son's progress.

"It's been the most incredible experience. We feel really, really blessed to have found this process," Angie added.

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