

SIUE Speech Language Hearing Center Partners with Children's Hospital to Provide Collaborative Care

by Megan Wieser

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EDWARDSVILLE – Medical pioneers from St. Louis Children's Hospital's Cleft Palate and Craniofacial Institute (CPCI) are collaborating with established clinicians and educators, and aspiring speech-language pathologists (SLP) at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville to offer high-caliber care for area children and adults.

Thanks to St. Louis Children's Hospital's Collaborative Care for Speech Differences in Cleft Palate and Craniofacial Disorders Continuing Education Program, clients like four-year-old Holden are making great strides in speech development through top-notch, accessible, consistent and collaborative care offered in the SIUE School of Education, Health and Human Behavior's Speech Language Hearing (SLH) Center.

Holden, of Mount Olive, was born with cleft palate, and underwent major surgery at age one to close the opening between his nose and mouth. His speech-language pathologist at St. Louis Children's Hospital Lynn Marty Grames, MA, CCC-SLP, connected his family with the SIUE Speech Language Hearing Center so he could get the therapy he needed, close to home, as he was leaking air through his nose when he spoke.

"Holden's air leakage was in large part due to mis-learned speech behaviors, and surgery would not correct the air leak nor the speech disorder," Grames explained. "Holden's parents understood that he would need further therapy, but live too far away to come to St. Louis Children's Hospital every week. When collaboration was offered to SIUE, they enthusiastically agreed, and Holden's therapy progress has been excellent. He has not required further surgery to date."

SIUE's SLH Center is a learning environment for graduate students enrolled in the accredited speech-language pathology and audiology degree programs. The applied learning space allows student clinicians, under the direct supervision of licensed and certified speech-language pathologists, to strengthen their skills while serving clients experiencing various speech, language and hearing difficulties.

"This semester I've been doing articulation therapy with Holden to improve his speech production," said SLP graduate student clinician Chelsey Short. "We're working with him to help establish correct productions of sounds so that his speech is intelligible and age appropriate. We follow the program that Lynn has created for him. She's a valued member of an impressive team, so it is a tremendous opportunity to work alongside her."

According to Grames, SIUE's program is a model for graduate programs due to its commitment to collaborative care and insertion of a curriculum section on cleft palate speech disorder.

"In the United States, SLPs are not required to have coursework or practicum experience for cleft palate, craniofacial or other oral structural disorders," she explained. "The consequence is that there are many excellent SLPs practicing in the field who know very little about cleft palate speech disorder and appropriate therapy techniques. Collaborative care gives us an opportunity to provide education and support for our colleagues who are doing the hard work of providing appropriate therapy. Our patients can now receive best practice-based therapy close to home, which in turn assists the specialists of the Institute to provide timely and optimal care."

"Lynn is an incredible clinician," noted Kathryn Brady, PhD, associate professor in the SLP program. "She takes a personal interest in her clients' cases and in our students. Through the collaborative care program, and thanks to her on-campus lectures on cleft

palate speech, our students gain incredible educational experience, and clients get a positive, consistent clinical experience. It's a wonderful opportunity for all involved."

The strong partnership is providing a specialty service that may not be available otherwise, positively impacting the lives of clients and their families and providing a solid foundation for future SLPs to continue this important work.

"You want your son to be able to communicate. It's such an important part of life," said Holden's dad Doug. "People come from all over the world to receive this kind of life-changing care. We're grateful to Lynn and SIUE for their amazing work. We feel extremely lucky."

For more information on SIUE's Speech Language Hearing Center, visit siue.edu/slh-center/.

For more information on St. Louis Children's Hospital's Cleft Palate and Craniofacial Institute, visit stlouischildrens.org/conditions-treatment/cleft-palate-and-craniofacial-institute.

The SIUE School of Education, Health and Human Behavior prepares students in a wide range of fields including community and public health, exercise science, nutrition, instructional technology, psychology, speech-language pathology and audiology, educational administration, and teaching. Faculty members engage in leading-edge research, which enhances teaching and enriches the educational experience. The School supports the community through on-campus clinics, outreach to children and families, and a focused commitment to enhancing individual lives across the region.

Photo: SIUE speech language pathology graduate student clinician Chelsey Short works with four-year-old Holden during a therapy session in the Speech Language Hearing Center on campus.