



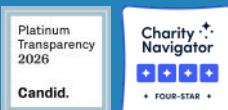
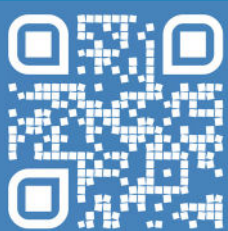
listen talk read succeed

For alumni, faculty,
staff, students
and friends of CID

314.977.0132
cid@cid.edu
https://cid.edu

CID teaches children
who are deaf and
hard of hearing to
listen, talk, read
and succeed. We
empower families
and professionals
in Saint Louis and
worldwide to help
children reach their
fullest potential.

Generous commu-
nity support enables
all CID students
with hearing loss to
attend tuition-free.



A young student angles for excellence

On one fateful day, a six-year-old in a rural Missouri grade school turned to his parents for help.

Jason Keeler was deaf and had been laboring to keep up with his classmates. He had received two cochlear implants and had mainstreamed in kindergarten with the aid of a part-time teacher of the deaf. At first, he found his implants too loud and wouldn't use them. A device failure led to more surgery. Access to sound



was already inconsistent when remote learning during the COVID months increased the challenges.

Meanwhile, Jason and his family moved from a rural area in New Hampshire to Rolla, Missouri, to be close to Dad's new job as forest supervisor for Mark Twain National Forest. When he finally returned to a proper classroom, Jason still struggled. Cathy and Vince worried their son wasn't getting the foundation he needed to fulfill his potential, but the specialized programs they considered were just too far from home.

Then, toward the end of first grade, Jason got in the car and stated, simply: "Momma, I can't learn in this school." From that moment, no solution was too far away for the Keelers. After

visiting CID, they committed to driving almost two hours each way, every day, so Jason could attend. Cathy landed a part-time job in St. Louis. Their school district agreed to reimburse the family for travel costs.

Once at CID, Jason's cochlear implants needed attention. Testing and classroom observation showed he had difficulty understanding, repeating and producing multi-word sentences with correct word order. His understanding and use of basic vocabulary and language were far below other children his age.

Fortunately, working as a team, our audiologists, teachers and speech-language pathologists knew how to address all of it. Soon after attending, Jason's scores improved. In his first year, he moved beyond following simple directions through listening alone to understanding complex directions with multiple critical elements (ex: plural and verb tense variations).

"Jason is a fast learner who responds well to hands-on activities," said Katy Hamacher, his first teacher at CID. "After only a couple of weeks, I watched his confidence blossom."

Meghan Schuler, his next CID teacher, described him as a perfectionist. "He works hard at learning — for example by repeating key words aloud while running around on the playground."

The Keelers are amazed at his progress. "The sacrifice is paying off in ways we could not have imagined," Cathy said.

Berges Family Foundation grant is transformational

The Berges Family Foundation has awarded CID a transformational sum to expand data systems and program evaluation work. The three-year initiative, titled "Building Momentum," will bolster CID's ability to collect, analyze and apply data to improve educational and clinical outcomes for children with hearing loss. The funding has enabled CID to hire new staff dedicated to program evaluation and data management.

The Foundation's support comes at a pivotal moment for CID. During the past three years, our strategic plan has been guided by a simple but powerful idea: Data and evaluation are not separate initiatives, but rather the lens through which we view everything we do. In short, better information helps us make better decisions. The grant strengthens that strategic lens by enabling deeper analysis of the outcomes, services

and experiences that shape the child and family journey.

A second project goal is to share what we learn with nonprofit partners, helping to build evaluation capacity across the St. Louis community. Many organizations face challenges related to limited time and resources for evaluation. We look forward to sharing tools and solutions developed through this work.

Initial activities include exploring ways to incorporate artificial intelligence and predictive analytics into CID's data systems. The goal is to give teachers and clinicians more immediate access to information that can help tailor instruction and services to each individual child's needs.

Over time, these enhanced systems may also generate anonymous aggregate data for use in broader educational research and help identify promising practices across the field.



Meet the
Keelers



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

**HEATHER
GRANTHAM, PhD**

hgrantham@cid.edu

Our stories connect us

The stories in this edition of *sound effects* remind me that CID's strength comes not only from what happens here each day, but also from the relationships that grow and deepen across generations.

Throughout these pages, you will meet people whose commitment has endured over time. We celebrate donors who have supported our mission for decades, including the Kistner family's 46 years of consecutive giving. Their generosity reflects an extraordinary belief in the potential of children who are deaf and hard of hearing. It also gives CID the stability to keep learning and responding to what children and their families need.

That same sense of connection appears in the stories of our alumni. Kenan Alukic and David Ritchey remind us that graduation does not signal the end of a relationship with CID, and that all children have leadership potential. Our

Teen Connections Camp creates opportunities for young people to learn from adults who have traveled similar paths. Not only do they build friendships during the camp, but they begin to see themselves as leaders for the children coming behind them.

You will also read about dedicated staff members like Susie Whaley, who recently celebrated 40 years at CID and continues to carry the work forward every day. Each story shares something a little different, but all are part of the same continuum of expertise and commitment that has defined our mission for more than a century.

Whether you have been involved with CID for 40+ years or are just getting to know us, you belong to this community. I invite you to arrange a visit to see for yourself what has kept CID families, staff and students connected for decades! Thank you. —HG



Schepers bring the world to babies

CID board of directors member Dave Schepers and his wife, Carol, have stepped up again to meet an important need in the Martha E. Jones Pediatric Audiology Center. Their most recent generous donation will fund new auditory brainstem response (ABR) equipment.

An ABR hearing test can be conducted while an infant sleeps naturally, without sedation. This is important because babies can't say whether or not they hear a sound. Small sensors measure how their hearing nerve and brain-

stem respond to auditory stimuli, producing a reliable estimate when hearing changes are suspected or initial results require confirmation.

"Robust ABR testing reduces the need for outside evaluations," Brittany Wuebbles, CID's director of audiology, said. "This thoughtful gift strengthens our ability to provide early, seamless and comprehensive care for families."

Previous contributions from the Schepers have funded the CID earmold lab, bringing babies faster access to sound through hearing aids.

Congratulations

Class of 2026!



Top: Virginia J. Browning Primary School graduates Charlotte Van, Leo Van, Taylor Hampton, Amelia Rodgers, Bella Barron and Kaleesia Davis.

Above: Anabeth and John Weil Early Childhood Center (ECC) graduates Xavier Evans, Ella Rodgers, Amelia Kortkamp, Scarlett Cepicky, Rose Mohler and Harley LaBanca. Left: ECC graduate Diyon Bamunuarachchi.

Introducing Russ Austin Chief Development Officer



"I need to be able to tell the story and feel good about it."

Russ Austin, former Vice Chancellor for Development at Washington University, joined CID in September.

As he considered his next career move, Russ Austin had choices. A respected leader with more than 25 years of experience in higher education philanthropy and fundraising strategy, he could have joined a big university or nonprofit organization. He and his family wanted to stay in St. Louis, so he interviewed with local nonprofits who were hiring and explored remote development jobs. He received his share of offers. Then he received one from CID.

He was drawn to the idea of empowering children. As a father of a child with Down syndrome, he knows what it's like to raise a child who is different. "I need to be able to tell the story and feel good about it," he said. Further, over many conversations, he concluded

that CID is a well-run organization with amazing leadership. "A gift that might seem a drop in the bucket in a larger organization will have profound tangible impact for the children at CID," he said.

Previously, as Vice Chancellor for Development at Washington University in St. Louis, Austin led major fundraising initiatives and helped strengthen a culture of philanthropy across the institution.

"His decision to join CID as chief development officer reflects something we deeply believe," executive director Heather Grantham said. "When talented leaders encounter a mission that changes lives, they want to be part of it."

"Russ brings exceptional experience, strategic vision and a deep

continues on page 8



Daun Grempler has been an educator at CID since 2000.

CID taps Daun Grempler for key role

Over the past 26 years, Daun Grempler has served as a teacher and parent educator in every CID department and center, working with children and families from birth to age 12. In September, she started her new position as intake and transition coordinator for the Joanne Parrish Knight Family Center. She stepped into this vital role previously held by Claire Soete, who retired in August.

"I feel fortunate that CID has given me so many opportunities for professional growth," Daun said. "I have been able to follow my interests while working alongside and learning from so many excellent professionals. Most recently, Claire has been such a wise and helpful coach and mentor."

Daun's new responsibilities start with ensuring every family gets all the information they need when

they turn to CID for help with their recently diagnosed babies. She feels she can speak to new parents with confidence because she knows firsthand that "We will give them the best of the best services at CID."

Daun started as a houseparent in the former CID residential program, earned her master's degree in deaf education from Washington University in 2000, then began teaching at CID. In her new position, she will also help families and their children transition smoothly to an appropriate educational program when they turn 3.

"Daun understands that every family's journey is unique," CID family center director Amy Knackstedt said. "Her caring nature, extensive experience and commitment to building meaningful relationships make her exceptionally well-suited for this role."

Claire Soete retires

Claire Soete, a career teacher and parent educator at CID and elsewhere, recently retired from her role as family intake coordinator.

"Claire's enthusiasm for working with families was contagious," Amy Knackstedt said. "We will miss her expert guidance and support."

Claire is known for shaking a maraca every time parents decided

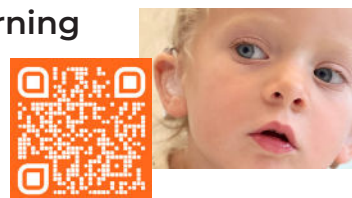


to trust their child to CID because she knew the child would get the specialized services they need to learn and grow.

At her retirement party this summer, CID staff surprised her by shaking maracas to honor her decades of teaching, friendship and dedication to families.

Listening unlocks learning

CID's latest annual impact report celebrates the "little listeners" who work and play hard every day to develop speech, spoken language, literacy and social skills. It describes how our community's support is making an extraordinary difference through bold initiatives and collective accomplishments.



Discover how Year 2 of our 3-year strategic plan amplified our impact on the children, families and professionals we serve.



Andrea Osman completes term as OPTION president

In June, CID's director of program evaluation, Andrea Osman, completed a four-year term as president of OPTION Schools.*

OPTION is composed of 36 member schools, 10 partner organizations and two individual associates, each year collectively serving 10,000+ deaf and hard-of-hearing children and their families.

"When I started, I knew the work mattered," Andrea wrote. "I underestimated the scale."

As president, Andrea led a strategic planning process to improve the organization's structure to enable each committee to focus on the plan's objectives. Perhaps her proudest accomplishment was

leading the strategic planning process. "It made reporting much easier and kept us on track as an organization," she said.

When Andrea was recently honored for her 20 years of service, she eloquently shared what keeps her at CID:

"It isn't only the children and families, though they're the heart of it. It's working alongside colleagues who believe these kids deserve excellence, not just good intentions — and who do the daily work to prove it. It's an organization willing to evolve, to measure itself honestly and ask harder questions about impact."

** Cathleen Mathes, CEO of the John Tracy Center in Los Angeles, is the new OPTION president.*



Anabeth and John Weil receive Honorary degrees

Congratulations to esteemed CID benefactors and board members Anabeth C. and John D. Weil. Each accepted an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree at Washington University in St. Louis during its 165th Commencement in May.

Anabeth, a longtime philanthropist, is a former executive for Forest Park in St. Louis who received audiology services at CID in the 1990s. John is an investor, philanthropist, emeritus trustee for the university, where he was a force behind creating the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts.

Together they are, of course, the namesakes of CID's Anabeth and John Weil Early Childhood Center.

John joined the CID board in 1980 at age 22 and is a life member. Anabeth joined in 2000. The Weils are among the founding members of the CID 1914 Society.

"It's impossible to overstate our gratitude for Anabeth and John's generous guidance and support of CID over decades," executive director Heather Grantham said.

At Washington University, the Weils shared the stage with five other honorary degree recipients, including a celebrity commencement speaker, Andy Cohen, from St. Louis. The university also bestowed 3,400 academic degrees.

Remembering CID family

We are sad to report the passing of the following individuals who have made extraordinary and lasting contributions, in some cases over the course of a lifetime, to CID and the children we serve.



Laura McCann

Teacher and steadfast friend

Mrs. Laura McCann, a much-loved and well-respected CID teacher for 25 years (1977–2002), passed away in August. She was 73.

In 1977, Laura earned a master's degree in from the then-CID-based Washington University deaf education program, then devoted most of her career to teaching at CID. As the CID upper school coordinator, she mentored many new and longtime teachers of the deaf.

After she left CID, she continued to serve through the St. Louis Special School District, first as an itinerant teacher and later as the coordinator for incoming students. CID is where Laura met her late husband, Arthur, who had been

deaf since early childhood. A gifted craftsman, Arthur created specialized furniture and cabinetry for the CID research department, clinics and school. Together, the McCanns nurtured numerous lasting friendships in St. Louis.

Laura's colleagues and students describe her as a wonderful friend and an amazing, patient teacher.

"Laura McCann was much more than just a teacher," wrote 1987 CID school graduate Helen Young. "She had a truly deep and genuine heart. She was full of life ... always smiling and laughing. [She] had such a kind spirit. ... Her warmth, compassion and talents made her someone truly special."

"Her impact went far beyond the classroom. She brought a special light to the Deaf community."



Carl Bohl

Caring, generous scientist

Carl D. Bohl, DSc, specialized in hearing conservation research for decades, including several years as a volunteer visiting research scientist at CID. We are sad to report his passing in April. He was 92.

Dr. Bohl was an expert on how noise affects hearing. He worked closely with research scientists and then-CID educational and clinical directors, Drs. William Clark and Gerald Popelka.

Bohl served for more than 20 years as a fellow in industrial hygiene and head of hearing conservation for Monsanto. He conducted and published numerous research studies and served as a knowl-

edgeable expert at noise-related worker's compensation court cases and Congressional hearings.

As an assistant professor, he taught environmental health in the CID Department of Speech and Hearing, the precursor to today's Program in Audiology and Communication Sciences (PACS) at Washington University School of Medicine.

Carl Bohl had a special place in his heart for CID, which he said was "always at the leading edge of what's going on." He was a member of the CID Legacy Society. His longtime dedication included a generous bequest gift through his life insurance policy.



Michael Freund

Stalwart St. Louis leader

This year brought the loss of former CID board member (1978–2020) and longtime friend, Michael H. Freund. He died in February at age 86.

Mr. Freund was a 5th generation St. Louisan with deep ties to the community and CID. He served as president of the board of directors from 1983 to 1985 and was among the founding members of the CID 1914 Society.

Three generations of his family also served on the board. His grandmother, Sadye Edison, served from 1937 to 1979. His daughter, Nancy Freund Fox, served from 1996 to 1998. He was a member of the CID Legacy Society.

Freund's career included roles at Freund Baking Company, Edison Brothers Stores and Washington University, where he served for 20 years as Director of Special Projects for Alumni and Development.

He is described as a "kind gentleman who lived a life of career accomplishment, civic pride, community involvement and devotion to family and friends." He maintained relationships with people from all chapters of his life, and "knew someone in every room he entered."

Freund was a consistent CID donor over decades as well as a devoted steward of the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts' Henry L. and Natalie E. Freund Teaching Fellowship and Visiting Artist Lecture, both established by his parents.



Betty Mendelson

Sweet, compassionate soul

With heavy hearts, we share the passing of our dear friend, Betty Mendelson. She died in February at the age of 91.

Betty was the beloved wife of CID board member Paul Mendelson for 65 years. They were the parents of three daughters and grandparents to seven grandchildren, including current CID board member Michael Laycob.

After Betty and Paul married in 1953, they successfully grew the family business, American Loose Leaf Business Products. Betty also spent more than 15 years developing and managing the Forms Distributor Roadshow, one of the

country's first traveling distributor networks.

Betty brought her compassion to her longtime volunteer work at the Ulcerative Colitis Foundation and at CID, where she and Paul started the after school tennis program in 2004. After Paul died in 2018, Michael continued the program, which remains a student favorite today.

Family was Betty's greatest joy, proudest accomplishment and true purpose. Together, she and Paul built a life rooted in unwavering love and deep commitment to family, friends and community.

Ben in
2018



Early intervention was a lifeline for Ben

One day, 14-month-old Ben Ruppel got sick and vomited. His dad, Phil, thought he was getting the flu. His mom, Erin, a nurse, noticed her baby had become extremely lethargic.

Within a couple of hours, they found themselves sitting in the Children's Hospital ICU learning their son had bacterial meningitis. The doctor said he could go deaf, blind, lose limbs and even his life — he had a 50 percent chance of making it 24 hours.

The nurses immediately started IV antibiotics. Within a few days, he began to recover, but something was still wrong. He had not responded to sounds since he arrived.

"The audiologist did an ABR test and told us Ben was profoundly deaf in both ears and was a cochlear implant candidate," Phil said. "We knew nothing about deafness, but we knew we wanted our son to regain as much of his hearing as possible."

The surgery took place within two weeks of Ben's initial symptoms. Afterwards, the audiologist recommended local programs for children who are deaf.

"When we showed up at CID in the middle of the summer, the lady dropped everything and spent three hours with us," Phil said. "The staff treated us like we were already family. They showed us everything and emphasized the difference early intervention makes."

Parent educators from the Joanne Parrish Knight Family Center began visiting the Ruppels weekly to help them work with Ben at home. When he turned 2, he joined the toddler class two days a week, also receiving targeted pull-out

speech-language therapy. When he enrolled in the Anabeth and John Weil Early Childhood Center full-time at age 3, he was still somewhat shy, but was learning to listen and talk.

CID teachers introduced dramatic play and social language interaction in the natural environment of the preschool discovery room. Soon, Ben began to shine. By age 6, his kindergarten teachers were remarking on his kindness and fun sense of humor.

Ben lives in a St. Louis suburb with his parents and three brothers. His dad recalled them talking and yelling boisterously as they wrestled and played basketball in the driveway. "After a short time at CID, Ben was further along than any of my kids were," Phil said. "If I could have sent all of them to CID, I would have."

As a student in the Virginia J. Browning Primary School. Ben continued to work on his listening, speech and academic skills. In 2021, at age 11, he graduated and moved on to his neighborhood middle school. Throughout junior high, he played lacrosse and also saxophone in the band. Now he is a high school freshman learning to drive. He loves football, mountain biking and hanging out with his friends.

"After we chose CID, I went online and found people all over the country saying what a top-notch school it is," Phil said. "People come from around the world so their kids can attend."

"We're really lucky we live in the St. Louis area and are grateful to the community here for supporting this special place."



Kenan considers an audiology career



Kenan and Armin in 2019

Twenty-year-old Kenan Alukic's eyes light up when he talks with kids. During a recent reunion with his former CID teachers, he was naturally personable and curious with everyone. As a college student who may be interested in becoming a pediatric audiologist, he spent an afternoon shadowing CID audiologists working with children.

Kenan comes by his interest honestly. Before he was born, his parents, Alma and Refik, fled civil war in Bosnia. The family arrived in St. Louis traumatized, not knowing they would soon face even more adversity. Two years later, their 2-year-old, Kenan, was diagnosed as profoundly deaf. He started at CID right away but stayed silent and

withdrawn for months. Eventually, after he was able to receive a cochlear implant, he began to come out of his shell and express his personality. He attended CID for 11 years and graduated in 2020.

Sometime after Kenan started at CID, his parents experienced another shock: Their second son, Armin, was also profoundly deaf. Kenan's success paved the way for Armin to get cochlear implant surgery earlier, and he graduated from CID in 2021. Today, he is 17 and a junior in high school.

Kenan appreciates the teachers and audiologists at CID. Whatever field he pursues, he said they have inspired him to help children in meaningful ways.



Deborah and Paul Lange

Alumna's family makes a special trip

Jacqueline (Jackie) Novit was a residential student at CID who graduated in 1954 and mainstreamed into her local public school in Melville, New York, then attended Gallaudet University in Washington, DC. There, she met her husband, Richard Gluckman.

Jackie worked for many years as a hospital therapy aide while the couple raised their family. She passed away in 2020 at age 82. Earlier this year, at Richard's suggestion, the Gluckmans' daughter,

son-in-law, granddaughter, grandson-in-law and grandson made a pilgrimage to St. Louis from New York to discover where Jackie learned to talk.

The group toured the CID facilities and were able to peek into the old school building at 818 South Euclid, where Jackie lived and attended class. The Gluckmans' daughter, Deborah Lange, later visited her dad in Florida to share their adventure and a gift of the CID history book.



We love it when our alumni visit!



L to R: CID executive director Heather Grantham with CID alumna Edith Bailey (2023); CID board member Bill Sheldon (1954), Sally Hewlett Taylor (1952) and Bob Tweedie (1953); teacher Sunny Kemp Ortega, ECC coordinator Meg Samson, Anam Hussain (2016), principal Lynda Berkowitz and Anam's dad, Jahangir Hussain.



TRIBUTE GIFTS 12/1/25–8/31/26

IN HONOR OF

Chloe Blacklock

Ms. Betsy Blacklock
Ms. Robin Wills

John Costello, MD

Mr. James
& Mrs. Christine Vaughan

Marjorie Delzell

Ms. Barbara Hansen

Carson Eighmey

Ms. Jennifer Binkin
Ms. Diane Easley

Michelle Holcomb

Mr. Douglas Holcomb

Larry Jeske

Ms. Susie O'Grady

The Keeler Family

Mr. Robert
& Mrs. Margaret Jenkins

Nicholas Lampi

Ms. Anne Elliott
Mr. Tyler & Mrs. Kim Glynn

Tricia Lindley

Ms. Ann Brinkerhoff

Felix Charles Mueller

Mr. Tal Fisk

Gabriel Orlet

Mr. Jed Buechele

Robert Reynolds

Ms. Lois Reynolds

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Mr. John Childress

Christian Sikorski, MD

Mr. James
& Mrs. Christine Vaughan

Claire Soete

Mrs. Amy
& Mr. Douglas Varble
Ms. Susan Whaley

Parker Vanausdall

Ms. Lori Deters

Debbie & Thanh Vo

Harvey, Sharon
& Lauren Rudy

IN MEMORY OF

Frances Arenberg

Mr. Steven Arenberg

Eleanor Coates

Mrs. Courtney Thomas
Ms. Chelsea Walters

Jerome Cox, Jr., ScD

Dr. James
& Mrs. Judy Seeser

Mitch Dorson

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Ms. Janett Edelberg
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Dr. Heather
& Mr. Don Grantham
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Ms. Lisa Brougham
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Betty Mendelson

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Ms. Stephanie Brockmann
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Kathleen Thomas

LMC Industries
Mr. James & Mrs. Tina Thomas
Ms. Christine Whitehead

Lewis Weissenborn

Mr. David Weissenborn

Enid Denbo Wizig

Ms. Lynn Wizig Kilroy
Mr. Jeffrey Wizig

Daniel Worth

Mrs. Ann & Mr. Chris Holmes

40 years and counting

Susie Whaley marks a rare CID milestone

Congratulations to Susie Whaley on her 40th anniversary with CID!

In 1985, Whaley became a CID houseparent, guiding and nurturing children living in a new environment, far away from their homes. In her time so far at CID, she has worn many hats — as a house supervisor, van driver, switchboard operator, teacher's aide, research office assistant, aftercare aide and administrative assistant for audiology and the school, where she continues to work today.

"Susie has seen leadership come and go and ... watched generations of students grow up," said

CID chief operating officer Amy Tighe at a ceremony honoring her service. "Through it all, she has been a steady and welcoming presence ... connected in ways that remind us that this organization is more than just a workplace — it's a community. Susie gives back to our community in deeply meaningful ways that come from genuine care, generosity and love for the people around her."

In the annals of CID history, Whaley joins former executive directors S. Richard Silverman and Robin Feder, principal Helen Lane and teacher Marcia Tash. Each completed over four decades of service to CID.



Susie Whaley is the administrative assistant for the CID school.



To explore planned giving options that meet your needs, contact Russ Austin: raustin@cid.edu or 314.977.0144.



To make a gift to CID in honor or memory of a loved one, visit cid.edu/donate.



Summer Teen Connections Camp brings older kids together

Networking, team-building, leadership training and fun with peers who know what it's like to be deaf motivated 10 participants in our second annual CID Teen Connections Camp. The week-long program was developed to help meet the interests and social needs of 13- to 17-year-olds, mostly alumni, who attend general education schools.

This year, five young adult CID alumni visited to share their experiences in panel discussions with the teens and their parents. We were delighted to welcome so many familiar faces!

The group shared their thoughts and experiences around identity, dreams, challenges, social situations, career prospects and more. Activities and field trips gave them important time to socialize.

"It's really nice being able to talk to someone who's like, 'Oh, you also struggle with this,'" said one partici-

"I forgot how amazing it is to be around people who understand."

pant. [It's good to know] "I'm not alone."

The teens spent time with our younger summer enrichment camp students, answering questions and sharing advice as they navigate school and learn to advocate for themselves. Together, they participated in a virtual conversation with Curtis Pride, a former professional Major League Baseball player who is deaf.

"It has been wonderful to see the teens build confidence and friendships and encourage one another — all while building connections across age groups." CID teacher and camp coordinator Julie Deno said.

Family honors dad with 46 years of giving

In 1954, John Reynolds Medart became the first deaf person to serve on the CID board of trustees. After he died in 1981 at age 80, his wife, Josephine, started a permanent endowed scholarship fund in his name. The fund's proceeds were to be applied "to teach needy and worthy deaf children in the CID school."

Josephine gave faithfully every year as a CID Sponsor. She lived to be a centenarian, passing away in 2007. Since then, the Medarts' daughter, Adelaide Medart Kistner, and her husband, Robert, haven't missed a year of giving to the fund.

"Forty-six years of consecutive annual contributions is amazing — a true testament to a family's compassion for deaf children like John," CID director of individual giving Ann Holmes said. "The fund's interest has meant a great deal to many families. We are ever grateful for their abiding support."

The Medarts owned a wholesale distributor of lawn and garden equipment that began in 1912 as an automotive repair shop. It evolved into the Medart Company, a well-known St. Louis manufacturing firm operated by three generations of family members.



David Ritchey and friends plan Deafstock 2

In 2023, mild-mannered marketing specialist David Ritchey (CID class of 1969), Sandra Ritchey, Dan Cook, Tony Maucere, Jo Granaas and John Turi founded a nonprofit charitable organization dedicated to creating a diverse and vibrant music and art festival.

They assembled an all-volunteer team, launched a successful crowd-funding campaign and secured a spacious, accessible park for the first "Deafstock," held in April of 2025. Partnering with local d/Deaf and hearing artists, they incorporated vibrating dance floors, visual light shows and the "most powerful speakers in the world" (110 dB) so everyone would feel the bass.

More than 950 fans attended the inaugural event. For two nights and three days, energetic bands belted out hard rock, psychedelic rock, folk rock and blues, playing original songs and covers from the Summer of Love. From the music to the art installations and stage-



CEO David Ritchey spoke to the crowd at the first Deafstock Music and Art Festival.

craft, the experience felt like the 1969 Woodstock music festival, except with accessibility built into every detail. "We believe everyone should be able to freely attend regardless of their physical restrictions, limitations or barriers," Ritchey said.

Deafstock aims to be a national event, bringing together diverse communities in the southeastern states. The next festival will be held March 18–20, 2027 at the Farm of Dreams Resort in Brooksville, Florida. Purchase tickets by March 6 at deafstock.org.



Enid Denbo Wizig

Remembering Enid

CID alumna Enid Denbo Wizig passed away in February just shy of her 103rd birthday. Deaf since she was 6 months old, she attended CID in the 1930s and later received additional speech training from a drama coach at MGM studios. After studying art at LA City College and Chouniard, she joined Looney Tunes in 1942 and eventually became an assistant animator for Chuck Jones.

Mrs. Wizig served as a community volunteer for more than 50 years. She was an avid supporter of the No Limits Theatre Company, which produces original plays starring deaf children who listen and talk.



Scan for a list of CID named endowed funds.



CID ALUMNI:
Join our private Facebook page
to catch up with classmates
and friends.

2026 CID OUT LOUD! raised \$365,270

In April, 184 guests joined us at Husch Blackwell for a thoroughly enjoyable evening to support CID families and their children learning to listen, talk, read and succeed. We are grateful for our event chairs, Jeff Kapfer, Karen and Terry Leebolt and Shelby and Charles Reneski. A special thank you to the Sponsors, whose support put this special event over the top, enabling students who are deaf and hard of hearing to attend CID tuition-free.

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A CID OUT LOUD! event Sponsorship is a testament to leadership and a profound statement of care for children who are deaf and hard of hearing and their families who rely on CID every day. Contact Melany Nitzsche at 314.977.0163 to learn about 2027 opportunities.



Back by popular demand, the annual CID Trivia Night will take place again next year at the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. To receive registration details, sign up for e-mail at the bottom of <https://cid.edu>.



2026 CID Trivia Night alumni table: Craig Aslin, Michelle Willenbrock, Josie Kurz, James Priscu, Justin DeFord, Holly Christopher Govero and Tiara Mason

Introducing Russ Austin continued from page 2

commitment to building meaningful philanthropic partnerships," Frank Childress, president of the CID board of directors, said.

"His passion for connecting donors with opportunities to make a lasting impact will help strengthen CID's ability to serve children and families for generations to come."

As CID's chief development officer, Austin will oversee fundraising and

philanthropic initiatives, including major gifts, annual and planned giving, corporate and foundation partnerships and campaign development. He will work closely with leadership, donors and community stakeholders to expand support for CID's educational programs, audiology services and family-centered resources.