



MEDIA RELEASE

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CASLPA Supports International Literacy Day September 8th, 2009: “The Power of Literacy”

Canada is a top-ranked country in terms of literacy levels, but almost 50% of Canadian adults have difficulties with reading and numbers, according to the Movement for Canadian Literacy. To improve literacy levels, it is important for Canadians to develop literacy skills at a young age, and audiologists and speech-language pathologists have an important role to play in this area.

More than 5,400 speech-language pathologists, audiologists and supportive personnel are represented by the national professional association the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA). CASLPA members foster improved literacy in their daily work, including speech-language pathologists working in early speech development or emergent literacy programs and audiologists who diagnose early hearing problems.

“The role of both the audiologist and speech-language pathologist is significant in supporting the development of language and literacy skills in young Canadians,” says Marlene Bagatto, an Ontario audiologist and CASLPA member. “Audiologists have access to scientifically-based strategies and clinical tools to identify an infant’s hearing loss and provide appropriate intervention in the first few months of life. Speech-language pathologists have the expertise to work with infants and children with hearing loss to foster speech and language development.”

In recent years, CASLPA has worked to educate the public to improve early literacy by producing a *Speech, Language and Hearing Milestones* brochure and two fact sheets, *Preschool Speech and Language Development* and *Hearing Health for Children*. These resources are available at www.speechandhearing.ca. CASLPA members are also involved in Early Hearing Detection and Communication Development programs across Canada. These programs provide intervention, by six months of age, in order to maximize the development of language and literacy skills during the critical period (birth to 2 years).

In 2009, the UNESCO-led International Literacy Day on September 8th “will put the spotlight on the empowering role of literacy and its importance for participation, citizenship and social development.” CASLPA members are setting an excellent example by putting Canadians in a position to be able to learn.

For more information about the role speech-language pathologists, audiologists and supportive personnel play in the treatment of communication disorders or to find a speech-language pathologist or audiologist in your area, visit CASLPA’s website at www.speechandhearing.ca.

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