

Aphasia Connects: Engaging Individuals with Aphasia with Community Volunteer Opportunities



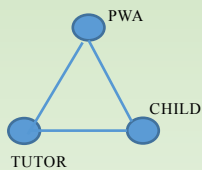
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Abstract

Aphasia Connects is an intergenerational reading project that provided a bridge to purposeful engagement utilizing age-specific communication partner training. Acquiring more than communication skills, results support an increase in empathy, self-worth and satisfaction across the participants. (Funded by NCGSK Foundation, 2017)



Aims of this Collaborative Community Project

- Targeted community reengagement for PWA
- Provide PWA an opportunity to engage in purposeful volunteer work, regain communicative confidence in social engagement pursuits and encourage return to like opportunities in their own communities.
- Concurrent aims included the education and awareness of aphasia for RAF tutors/staff.
- Efficacy of Children's Training Program to gain understanding and empathy in communicating with individuals with disabilities.

Princess Crumpe and the Baker of Battertown Silverman, 2017
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kf0FRnH5FJ4>



Methods and Procedures

- 9 week summer program at TAP Unlimited's Home Office with Read and Feed, Inc (RAF)
- Sessions twice a week (orientation & final week party)
- RAF clients identified as at risk by WCPSS (academically challenged and food insecure)
- SLP provided support-needs assessment and cuing/training for RAF volunteers & clients at each session as needed.
- 15 minutes of food service/socialization followed by 45 minutes of age-appropriate language and reading tasks within the triad.



APHASIA CONNECTS VIDEO SUMMARY:
<https://vimeo.com/twosuitsfilms/aphasia-connects>

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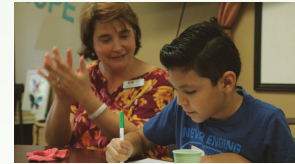
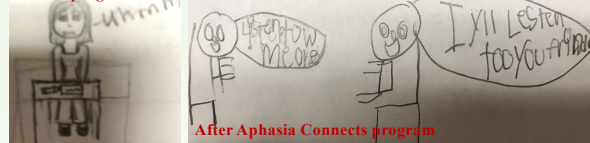
Lessons and Outcomes

Pre and Post Test surveys were provided to the TAP Clients (PWA), RAF volunteers and participating children. Difficult to assess statistically due to format/structure but identified gains in empathy, understanding of aphasia and confidence/willingness to volunteer.

- PWA: 0/14 volunteer in any capacity at onset; 14/14 requested more collaborative volunteer programs and reported they will attempt volunteering in their community. "I felt needed" "The children want to know and be with us" "The tutors, through the program, learned about aphasia"
- RAF Tutors: Pre=training understanding of aphasia was 3/10 point scale; but accurate description of aphasia was 94% post. Differentiation b/w cognitive and language abilities was most significant change noted. "They are intelligent and vital people with a lot to share", "They remain intelligent, caring people", "They LOVE helping others and want to contribute".
- Children: None of the participants knew what APHASIA was prior to the program; increasing comfort and interaction was evident with each session and bonds formed. Post survey comments included: "They can't talk well, but they know what they want to say" "Give them a picture and write with them"

Before program

Draw a picture of someone with Aphasia:



Conclusions and Future Plans

- TAP encourages and provides training for individual's identified volunteer/community engagement pursuits; but this program challenged access to positions, confidence to engage and interactants perceptions of abilities of PWA.
- Unique dynamic evident between children with literacy/learning challenges as communicative partners with individuals with aphasia.
- Post-program avocational pursuits increased with
 - Collaboration with adapted sports and arts programs
 - Supported volunteering at church, preschool, soccer program and TAP committees.
 - One client started a yoga/meditation class at TAP
 - "TAP Into Life" group started (i.e. group projects)

TAP Unlimited wishes to thank the Ribbon Of Hope Grant (NCGSK Foundation) for its generous support and Read and Feed, Inc. for their passion in joining efforts with us.