

Fluency Friday 2007!

The Amazing Race to Fluency!



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Fifty seven children/teens who stutter participated in the Fluency Friday Plus Intensive Stuttering Program November 2nd and 3rd at Mercy Healthplex-Fairfield located in the northern part of Cincinnati. The children/teens received individual and group treatment in sessions developed by graduate clinicians from the University of Cincinnati and Miami University. The graduate clinicians were supervised by experienced speech language pathologists from the Cincinnati area. Each graduate clinician and supervisor received a manual containing diagnostic and treatment ideas developed by the Fluency Friday Plus Team along with handouts from four guest speakers attending FFP.

Fluency Friday Plus activities focused on providing the children and teens with positive speaking experiences in supported speaking situations. The theme of FFP - 07 was “The Amazing Race”. Students worked towards obtaining personal speaking goals. Pictures of famous people who have overcome various challenges were presented to the students in a framework of “everyone has strengths and weaknesses”. As the students continued on their FFP Race, they were encouraged to become better communicators and learn new skills. On Saturday morning, the

students received a “Passport to Fluency” as they practiced speaking in various speaking stations.

In addition to the FFP Manual, each graduate clinician was given a Workbook to structure the initial sessions of FFP. Treatment activities were designed to focus on the child/teen’s special qualities and interests. The booklets also included “Affirmations” (skills or talents) for each participant, group treatment ideas and various worksheets to help in the treatment portion of FFP. An Assessment Protocol along with suggestions for Goals gave the graduate clinicians a framework for developing a comprehensive treatment plan.

Attitudes and Emotions group sessions were held to discuss the difficult aspects of dealing with stuttering including teasing, embarrassment and anxiety. The children/teens participated in games and role playing to evaluate emotions and generate solutions to manage difficult speaking situations. FFP 2007 provided many activities for the participants to practice speech skills including a group skit performed at the end of the day. Students also told jokes during Open Microphone during lunch on Friday. On Saturday morning, they participated in a Conversational Breakfast where they visited 10 Talking Stations.

Parent sessions on Friday and Saturday morning were led by Nina Reardon, Donna Cooperman, Rod Gabel and Derek Daniels. These sessions dealt with topics such as how to talk to your child about stuttering and various aspects of treatment. In addition, members of the FFP planning team fielded questions in an open forum where parents shared their personal questions and concerns. Later on Friday, a Teen Panel answered parents’ questions and gave opinions on various issues concerning dealing with friends, teachers and parent concerning stuttering. On Saturday, Adults with Stuttering shared personal experiences/reactions, both positive and negative, about growing up with stuttering.

A special session was held on Saturday morning for the siblings of the children/teens who participated in FFP. Nina Reardon led the siblings in an interactive program designed to educate the participants about stuttering. The siblings made an activity and asked about stuttering.

Feedback forms from the students who attended FFP-07 included the following comments:

- “It is OK to stutter.” Max, Second Grade.
- “I learned how to be confident when talking.” Clifford, Age 8.
- “Most people stutter more when they are nervous.” Drew, 6th grade.
- “I hate stuttering.” By Allen, Fourth Grade.
- “There are a lot of people who stutter, not just me. I learned very helpful way to practice my strategies and help me improve my speech.” By Maddie, Seventh Grade.

Fluency Friday Plus is a combination of an intensive treatment for children/teens who stutter along with a training program for graduate students. Experienced clinicians from the community participate to learn more about stuttering, to support the students who stutter, and to participate in the training of graduate clinicians. This program could not exist without the financial support of grants such as the Affiliate Grant Program from the Ohio Speech Language and Hearing Association and ongoing financial support from the Southwestern Speech Language and Hearing Association. In addition, Hamilton County Education Service Center lends support in printing materials and recruiting community speech language pathologists for this training experience.

An event of this nature requires the support of many people. The entire team of speech language pathologists who participated in FFP-2007, the children/teens who stutter and their families and the graduate students from the University of Cincinnati and Miami University would like to thank OSLHA, SWOSHA, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, Hamilton County Educational Service Center, the staff of Tri-County Speech Associates and the many individuals who work behind the scenes for their support!

