



# THE STUTTERING FOUNDATION

A Nonprofit Organization

WINTER 2025

Since 1947... Helping Those Who Stutter

THE STUTTERING FOUNDATION REMEMBERS

JAMES EARL  
JONES

# STUTTERING FOUNDATION REMEMBERS JAMES EARL JONES

1931 - 2024



When James Earl Jones died on September 9, 2024, at the age of 93 from complications from type 2 diabetes, both the stuttering community and the world at large lost a giant. A front-page article in the *New York Times*, “James Earl Jones, Whose Powerful Acting Resonated Onstage and Onscreen, Dies at 93”, began, “James Earl Jones, a stuttering farm child who became a voice of rolling thunder as one of America’s most versatile actors in a stage, film and television career that plumbed race relations, Shakespeare’s rhapsodic tragedies and the face menace of Darth Vader, died on Monday at his home in Dutchess County, N.Y.” The Stuttering Foundation lost a great friend and longtime advocate for its work on behalf of people who stutter.

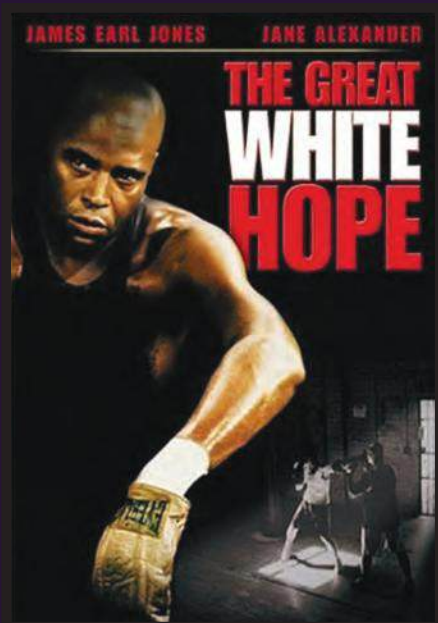
A comprehensive biography of Jones’ life and his extensive body of work is not possible in this article as it will focus on his lifelong struggles with stuttering and how he lent of himself to help his fellow people who stutter. He

was born in Arkabutla, Mississippi, on January 17, 1931, and at the age of five he went to live with his grandparents, who raised him on a farm in Dublin, Michigan. Once a pre-med major at the University of Michigan, he graduated with a degree in drama, later serving as an officer in the U.S. Army during the Korean War prior to pursuing acting full-time.

After working many years on Broadway, he won the Tony Award for Best Actor in a Play in 1968 for his role as a boxer in *The Great White Hope*, a role that he reprised in the 1970 film version which garnered him an Oscar nomination. In 1987 he won his second Tony Award for Best Actor in a play for his performance in *Fences*. The actor was presented with an Honorary Academy Award in 2011, making him one of the few actors to achieve the EGOT (Emmy, Grammy, Oscar, and Tony).







Of course, Jones' star shot to international fame for his voice role as Darth Vader in the original *Star Wars* in 1977, and in the subsequent sequels *The Empire Strikes Back* (1983) and *Return of the Jedi* (1983). Some of his more notable movie roles have been in *The Man*, *Claudine*, *Conan the Barbarian*, *Field of Dreams*, *The Hunt for Red October*, and *The Sandlot*.

The story of James Earl Jones exemplifies that of a person who stutters who discovers that creative expression guides him to break free of his stuttering bonds. In 1974 he was quoted in the *New York Times* as saying, "Just discovering the joy of communicating set it up for me, I think. In a very personal way, once I found out I could communicate again, it became a very important thing for me, like making up for lost time, making up for the years I didn't speak."

James Earl Jones teamed up with co-author Penelope Niven to publish a 1993 memoir, *Voices and Silences*, in which he vigorously addressed his stuttering at length.

In the foreword, Penelope Niven wrote of Jones, "Because he is a stutterer, he shapes written language uniquely and works with even more care than most writers do. His hands linger over every sentence. His eyes and ears are attuned to the resonance of words. And his years of silence have forged a sensitive listener and observer."

"A stutterer ends up with a greater need to express himself, or perhaps a greater awareness of how you would like to say something. The desire to speak builds and builds until it becomes part of your energy, your life force. "





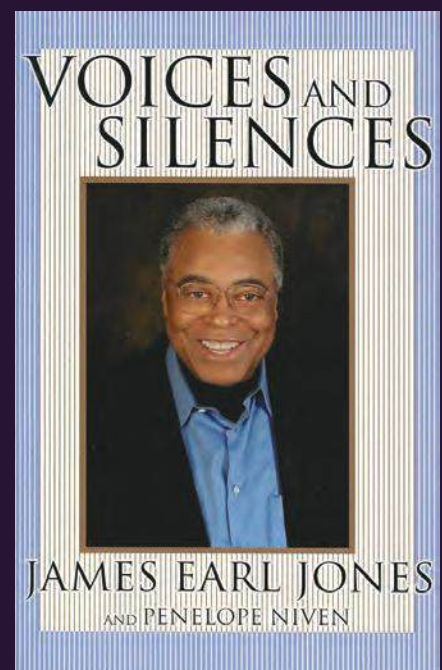
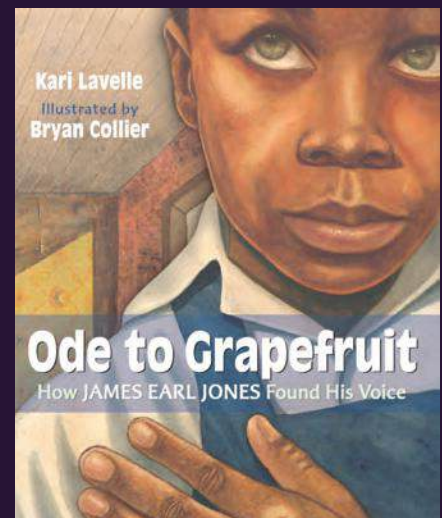
The actor stated that for a period of eight years from the time he was six until the time he was fourteen, he was virtually mute. His family and friends often accused him about lying about his inability to speak, saying things like, "We know you can talk. We have heard you talk." He talked to his family in basic terms. He spoke to the farm animals at length and had conversations with himself.

In an interview with the *Daily Mail*, he stated, "I did communicate with the animals quite freely, but then that's calling the hogs, cows, the chickens. They don't care how you sound, they just want to hear your voice."

He then stated that other children were not as accepting as animals. "Stuttering is painful. In Sunday school, I'd try to read my lessons and the children behind me were falling on the floor with laughter .... By the time I got to school, my stuttering was so bad that I gave up trying to speak properly."

He put forth in *Voices and Silences*, "A stutterer ends up with a greater need to express himself, or perhaps a greater awareness of how you would like to say something. The desire to speak builds and builds until it becomes part of your energy, your life force. But when I was a boy, speech became a wall I could not surmount."

Early on in the book, Jones wrote that he was still non-speaking when he entered high school but that the pivotal teacher for him was Donald E. Crouch, a former college professor who came out of retirement to teach his class English, Latin and history. He wrote, "The turning point in my ability to cope with my stuttering came in Professor Crouch's English classroom." James Earl Jones may have never made a bigger understatement in his life.





Professor Crouch took an interest in Jones and noticed that he wrote great poetry. He encouraged Jones to not just write the poetry, but to get up and recite the poems in front of the class. Jones wanted no part of that due to his speech, but Crouch insisted. Jones wrote, "I was shaking as I stood up, cursing myself. I strained to get the words out, pushing from the bottom of my soul. I opened my mouth – and to my astonishment, the words flowed out smoothly, every one of them. There was no stutter. All of us were amazed, not so much by the poem as by the performance."

He continued, "Professor Crouch and I had stumbled on a principle which speech therapists and psychologists understand. The written word is safe for the stutterer. The script is a sanctuary. I could read from the paper the words I had composed there and speak as fluently as anybody in the class."

"Aha!", proclaimed Professor Crouch as he went to sit down. "We will now use this as a way to recapture your ability to speak."

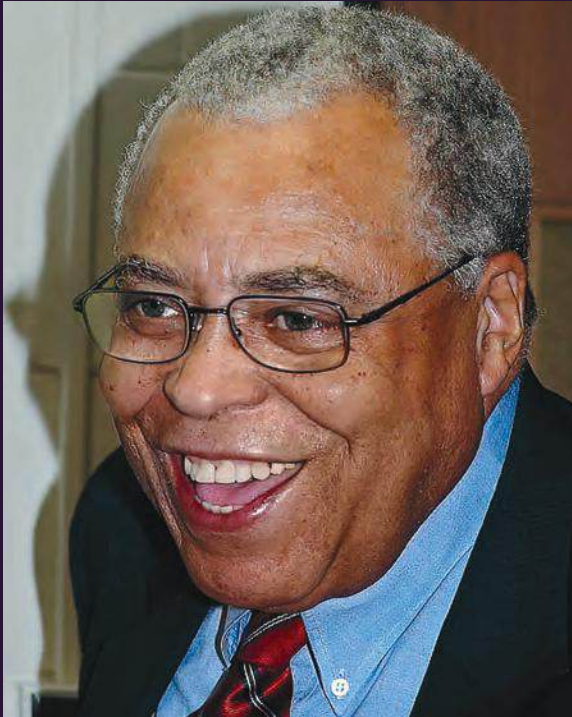
That recitation of his poem in front of his high school class was something that James Earl Jones always ranked as the biggest event of his life. It inspired him to recite Shakespeare to himself for hours on end, and to harness this fluent speech to take Professor Crouch's advice to join the debate team, where he became a champion debater not only of his high school, but in high school competitions in Michigan. Naturally, this led him into acting. He wrote in his memoir of this high school metamorphosis, "I could not get enough of speaking, debating, orating – acting. I became the school's champion public speaker. During those mute years, of course, my voice had changed, almost without my awareness, so in addition to the novelty of being able to speak, I could now speak in a deep, strong voice. People seemed to like to hear it, and I was overwhelmed to be able to speak aloud, in any voice at all." It is safe to say that the rest is history.

However, Jones always maintained that he was by no means cured and had to always work to manage his speech. In an interview with *NPR*, he said, "I don't say was 'cured.' I just work with it."

"In a very personal way, once I found out I could communicate again, it became a very important thing for me, like making up for lost time, making up for the years I didn't speak."

Several weeks before Jones' death, a children's book on the actor's stuttering was published on July 30, 2024. *Ode to a Grapefruit: How James Earl Jones Found his Voice* was written by children's author and speech-language pathologist Kari Lavelle and award-winning illustrator Bryan Collier. The book tells the story of how the young James Earl Jones did not speak for eight years except to animals and close family members, and how in high school the famed Professor Crouch made him stand up and read a poem he had written titled "Ode to a Grapefruit." The book describes in fascinating





detail how Jones amazingly found fluency in the recitation of that poem and thus embarked on his high school track of the debate team and acting, the path that would ultimately lead him to his brilliant career as an actor.

In an interview for the book, Kari Lavelle said, "As a speech pathologist, I frequently shared the story of James Earl Jones with my young clients for many years before I put pen to paper (or rather fingers to the keyboard). It can really be powerful to share the stories of celebrities who stuttered with these kids – a way to show that their stutter won't hold them back from their dreams. The more I learned about James Earl Jones, the more that I knew his story had to be shared with young readers."

In a 1993 PBS interview, Jones addressed the famous instance in his high school class in which he recited the poem fluently, "Like song poetry is rhythmic and most stutterers don't stutter when they sing. It's [the stuttering] always there... it's there right now...stutterers seem like they are ponderous and deep thinkers, we're not. We're looking for the word we can say without tripping on it."

On October 17, 2023, Manistee County in Michigan commemorated the mentorship of their native sons Professor Donald Crouch and James Earl Jones by unveiling bronze statues of the two outside of Kaleva Norman Dickson Schools in Brethren, which is right across from the former Brethren High School. Jones was not able to attend himself, but one of his first cousins, Terry Connolly, spoke on his behalf and related how Jones was a mentor to him. Sid Halley, a great-grandson of Professor Crouch, spoke and said, "Mentoring is a small way for each of us to make a big difference for someone else. If my great-grandfather hadn't taken the time to work with Mr. Jones... think of things that would be different for us. The plains of Africa would have a different voice, baseball in a homemade field in Iowa would sound different and Luke may not know who his father is."

The event was more than just celebrating a local celebrity as it was an event to celebrate mentorship. The public was asked to nominate local mentors, of which more than 100 names are listed on a plaque next to the statues.

Upon the death of James Earl Jones, the Stuttering Foundation released a glowing portrait of his accomplished life on social media with the statement, "He was a faithful friend, for many decades, to the Stuttering Foundation, and a true advocate for the stuttering community."

"Because he is a stutterer, he shapes written language uniquely and works with even more care than most writers do. His hands linger over every sentence. His eyes and ears are attuned to the resonance of words. And his years of silence have forged a sensitive listener and observer."



## ASHA CE CREDIT NOW AVAILABLE

*Big news! Our podcast just got even better—earn CE credit with our first ASHA CE Course Episode!*

***Season 6: Episode 15--Preparing Adolescents who Stutter for Life After High School Through Transition Planning***

Naomi Rodgers, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

Ginger Collins, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

Tim McCarren, M.A., CCC-SLP

The transition to post-secondary life can be daunting for all adolescents, but it presents unique challenges for students who stutter. While most adolescents face adjustments in social, emotional, and academic spheres, students who stutter must also navigate the complexities of their speech difference in new and demanding contexts. Despite growing recognition of the general supports needed for the transition to adulthood, research on the specific experiences and needs of adolescents who stutter remains limited. In this podcast, Naomi Rodgers, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, Ginger Collins, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, and Tim McCarren, M.A., CCC-SLP summarize the findings from focus groups comprised of high schoolers who stutter, their parents, SLPs working with high schoolers who stutter, and recent graduates who stutter in which they discussed the unique challenges of adolescents who stutter as they transition to adulthood. They also present the discussion guide developed from these findings, which can be downloaded from Additional References.

**StutteringCEUs.org**



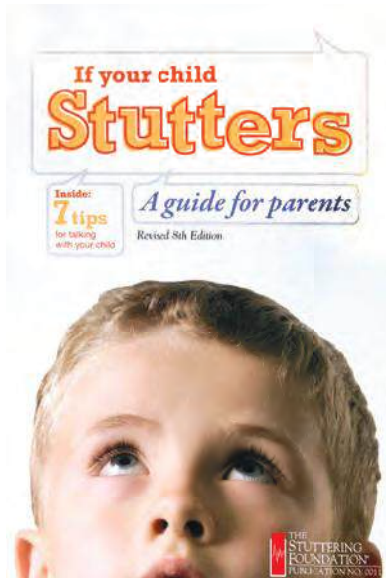
Watch for more  
Stuttering Foundation  
Podcast CE Course  
Opportunities in  
the New Year!



StutteringHelp.org/training

# Stuttering Foundation Book Can Help Children, Parents

By Loreen Mohr



BURLINGTON - Parents who notice their young child beginning to stutter should seek help right away; and help is available at the Burlington Public Library, 166 E. Jefferson St.

In the past, experts incorrectly believed that paying attention to a child's stuttering would exacerbate the situation. It was even feared that offering the child therapy "would arouse the child's awareness and cause more stuttering," said Dr. Ehud Yairi, speech-language pathologist and researcher at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana and Tel Aviv University.

However, research by Yairi published in the the Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research, reveals that all children may be aware of the differences between fluent speech and stuttering as early as age 3, and that they often display a social preference for fluent-speaking children

by the time they are 4 years old.

"These findings should provide support to the important idea that we should shift from a `hands-off' approach to more direct therapy techniques, and even more so with school-age children," added Dr. Barry Guitar, doctor of philosophy, of University of Vermont.

"Any time parents are concerned about a child's fluency," notes Jane Fraser, president of the Stuttering Foundation, "they should educate themselves about the disorder and the many ways they can work to prevent stuttering from becoming a chronic problem."

A new book, "If Your Child Stutters: A Guide for Parents," also available in Spanish, answers questions that parents and teachers often have. Written by leading experts, it describes the difference between normal disfluencies and stuttering and gives tips for parents of ways to help their child immediately.

For a copy, parents, teachers and others may contact the Stuttering Foundation, P.O. Box 11749, Memphis, Tenn. 38111-0749; (800) 992-9392; e-mail [info@stutteringhelp.org](mailto:info@stutteringhelp.org); or visit <http://www.stutteringhelp.org>

The nonprofit foundation also offers many books, videotapes and DVDs on stuttering.





# 2024 PODCAST EPISODES

## SEASON 6

S6: E1- ARTS® Series: The Essence of Avoidance Reduction Therapy for Stuttering (ARTS®)  
- Vivian Sisskin, M.S., CCC-SLP, BCS-F | Sisskin Stuttering Center, University of Maryland

S6: E2- ARTS® Series: The Power of Language and the Significance of Intent  
- Vivian Sisskin, M.S., CCC-SLP, BCS-F | Sisskin Stuttering Center, University of Maryland

S6: E3- ARTS® Series: Impatience, Habit, and Other Barriers to Change  
- Vivian Sisskin, M.S., CCC-SLP, BCS-F | Sisskin Stuttering Center, University of Maryland

S6: E4- ARTS® Series: The Active Ingredients  
- Vivian Sisskin, M.S., CCC-SLP, BCS-F | Sisskin Stuttering Center, University of Maryland

S6: E5- 60 Years of Clinical Teaching in Counseling: Reflections with Dr. David Luterman  
- David Luterman, Ed.D., CCC-SLP | Emerson College

S6: E6- Rupert's Story: Stuttering and Building Community in Academia  
- Rupert Johnson, Ph.D., CCC-SLP | Nazareth University

S6: E7- Clinical Problem Solving: What We Do When We Feel Stuck as Clinicians  
- Daniel Shaw, M.S., CCC-SLP | Vanderbilt Medical Center

S6: E8- SLPs Who Stutter Series: Mandy's Story  
- Mandy Rodstrom, M.A., CCC-SLP | School-Based SLP

S6: E9- SLPs Who Stutter Series: Ben's Story  
- Ben Goldstein, M.A., CCC-SLP | Prince George's County Public Schools, Sisskin Stuttering Center

S6: E10- SLPs Who Stutter Series: Angelica's Story  
- Angélica Bernabé, M.A., CF-SLP | Florida State University

S6: E11- SLPs Who Stutter Series: Derek's Story  
- Derek E. Daniels, Ph.D., CCC-SLP | Wayne State University

S6: E12- The Cluttering Experience with Rutger Wilhelm  
- Rutger Wilhelm | Author and Clutterer

S6: E13- Research Update: Treating a Young Child Who Stutters' Lateral Lisp: A Case Study  
- Cara Singer, Ph.D., CCC-SLP | Grand Valley State University

S6: E14- Microtransitions and Mindfulness with Kristin Chmela  
- Kristin Chmela, M.A., CCC-SLP, BCS-SCF | Chmela Communication Center

S6: E15- Preparing Adolescents Who Stutter for Life after High School through Transition Planning  
- Naomi Rodgers, Ph.D., CCC-SLP | University of Iowa  
- Ginger Collins, Ph.D., CCC-SLP | University of Montana  
- Tim McCarren, M.A., CCC-SLP | Hopkins Public Schools

S6: E16- Let's Talk School-Age and Adolescent Stuttering Assessment  
- Daniel Shaw, M.S., CCC-SLP | Vanderbilt Medical Center

S6: E17- Research Update: Lived Experiences of Children who Stutter in Their Own Voices  
- Shelley B. Brundage, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, BCS-SCF, Fellow-ASHA | George Washington University  
- Julia Kerrigan, B.A. | University of Iowa

S6: E18- All Things Cluttering with Dr. Kathleen Scaler Scott  
- Kathleen Scaler Scott, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, BCS-SCF | Misericordia University

# STUTTERING FOUNDATION Q & A: AVY TAYLOR



**About Me:** I was born and raised in Dallas, Texas! I have a little sister, dad, mom, and stepfather. I am involved with the Miss Fort Worth and Miss America Organizations.

**My Hobbies and Passions:** I'm a standup comedian, an electric violinist, and a lover of anything rock & roll! I am deeply passionate about mental health advocacy! I believe creative expression is an extremely powerful tool for coping with mental illness and understanding trauma, so I founded my service initiative, 'Amplify You,' to teach people how to embrace their creativity and their unique selves.

**My Successes:** As Miss Fort Worth, I am a queen who's open, real, and unafraid to break barriers to connect with others. By being transparent about things like my mental health struggles or my speech impediment, I've been able to build more strong, memorable, and meaningful connections with people.

## Do you remember when you first began to stutter?

In first grade, I was diagnosed with a speech blocking disorder. I would be speaking, then suddenly be unable to move my mouth or produce any sound. It was embarrassing, frustrating, and ultimately defeating not to be able to speak normally like the other kids.

## Does stuttering run in your family?

I am the first person in my family to stutter.

## Did you seek treatment? Did it help?

When I was in 2nd grade, I began going to speech therapy. After many years of developing awareness around what sounds I struggle with, and strategies to get over speech blocks, my stutter is much less noticeable!

## Tell us about your experience with stuttering as a child.

Stuttering as a child shattered my self-confidence. I feared public speaking, struggled with eye contact, and got accustomed to people looking away or leaving in the middle of a conversation.

Speech blocking as a teenager is one of the least fun things imaginable. Making friends or talking to a crush is hard enough without the added pressure of a speech block disorder, knowing that half the time your words won't come out right.

## Has your stuttering gotten worse or better since you were younger? How?

As I've grown more confident and learned to love myself, my stutter has improved exponentially! Although I've never stopped stuttering, I found my voice as a standup comedian and a pageant performer. I've realized that I love to make people happy and laugh more than I worry about how my words are coming out.



## How does stuttering affect you as a pageant participant?

Stuttering initially hurt my confidence as a Miss Texas contestant. The high-pressure, public speaking nature of competition intensified my stutter and insecurities with my speech. After suffering through holding myself to impossible standards, I decided to be open about my stutter. I now embrace this as something that makes me more unique and more competitive. Every time I step on stage, give an interview, speak to judges, or network with people in the pageant community, I'm actively battling this disorder. Choosing to be honest, and be proud of myself for fighting through has actually made me feel stronger and more confident.

## How is your stuttering today? What do you do to control or manage it, if anything?

I still stutter regularly, but to help me manage it, I try to stay relaxed and I back off of a word if I feel myself forcing it. On a deeper level, I remind myself that I am worthy, that others want to hear what I have to say, and to always practice patience with myself.

## What are the biggest challenges of stuttering?

Speech blocking as a teenager may be one of the least fun things imaginable. Making friends or talking to a crush is hard enough without the added pressure of a speech block disorder, knowing that half the time your words won't come out right. Stuttering as a child shattered my self-confidence. I feared public speaking, struggled with eye contact, and got accustomed to people looking away or leaving in the middle of a conversation.

## What is your greatest accomplishment with regard to stuttering?

My dad told me recently that I was his hero. He told me he never would have expected the shy little girl who rarely spoke, to become someone who takes the stage and speaks to hundreds of people. Hearing that made me cry.

## Based upon your experiences, what would you like to tell children who stutter?

Your voice matters! It doesn't matter how long it takes for your words to come out. If people can't be patient with you, they're not worth your friendship. Believe in what you have to say—you are worthy.

**" I remind myself that I am worthy, that others want to hear what I have to say, and to always practice patience with myself."**

## Based upon your experiences, what would you tell parents of children who stutter?

Be patient with your children and create a comfortable environment for them to express themselves. Avoid making them doubt their speaking abilities or fear social situations. Instead, encourage their voice and support their confidence.

## What else should we know?

Follow my journey on social media! Instagram: @missfortworthtx





# 2024 VIRTUAL LEARNING SESSIONS

Find future virtual learning sessions at [stutteringhelp.org/virtuallearning](https://stutteringhelp.org/virtuallearning)

## RECONSTRUCTING RELAPSE IN STUTTERING

Sara MacIntyre, M.A., CCC-SLP, Ali Berquez MSc, PG Dip. CT (Oxford), BRIEF Cert. SFBT, MRCSLT, RegHCPC | Michael Palin Centre

## DEMYSTIFYING WORD-FINAL DISFLUENCY: FINDINGS FROM A PILOT THERAPY PROGRAM

Vivian Sisskin, M.S., CCC-SLP, BCS-SCF; Samantha Wasilus, M.A., CCC-SLP, BCS-SCF | Sisskin Stuttering Center

## MINING FOR HOPE: EXPANDING THE WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES FOR CLIENTS WHO STUTTER

Daniel Shaw, M.S., CCC-SLP | Vanderbilt Medical Center  
Ana Paula G. Mumy, SLPD, CCC-SLP | East Texas Baptist University

## UNDERSTANDING STUTTERING: THE VALUE OF A SIMPLE (BUT NOT TOO SIMPLE) EXPLANATION

Evan Usler, Ph.D. | University of Delaware

## OUR STORIES: A PANEL DISCUSSION AND Q&A EXPLORING THE LIVED-EXPERIENCE OF STUTTERING

Panelists and Sara MacIntyre, M.A., CCC-SLP moderator

## ATTENTION AND EXECUTIVE FUNCTION IN DEVELOPMENTAL STUTTERING

Amanda Hampton Wray, Ph.D., CCC-SLP | University of Pittsburgh

## SOLUTION FOCUSED BRIEF THERAPY AND CLINICAL SUPERVISION

Ali Berquez MSc, PG Dip. CT (Oxford), BRIEF Cert. SFBT, MRCSLT, RegHCPC; Martha Jeffery, BSc, BRIEF Advanced Cert. SFBT, MRCSLT, RegHCPC. | Michael Palin Centre for Stammering, London, UK

## ARTS®: AN ACTION-ORIENTED APPROACH FOR YOUNG CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS

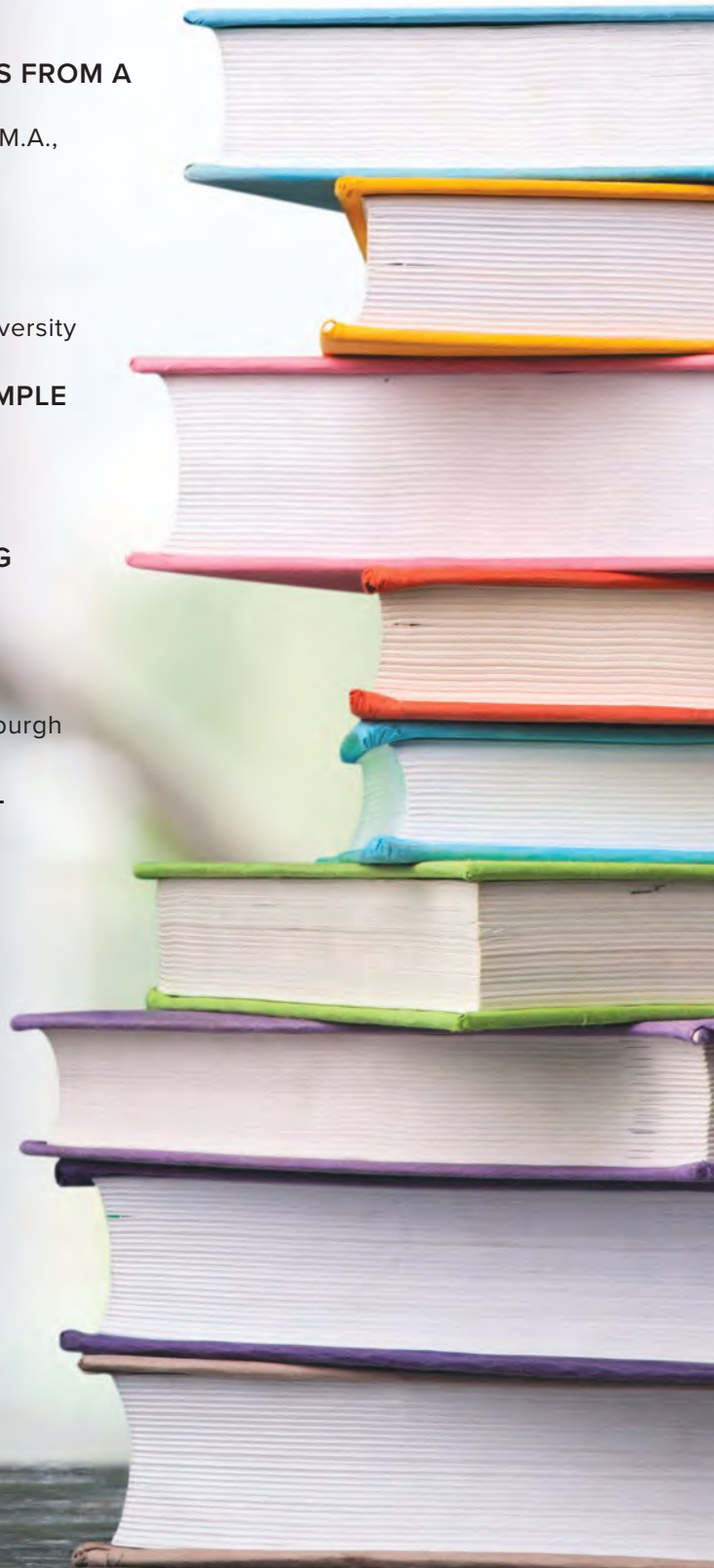
Vivian Sisskin, M.S., CCC-SLP, BCS-SCF; Jessica Wertz, M.A., CCC-SLP | Sisskin Stuttering Center

## CLIENTS, FAMILY, & THERAPIST: A CONVERGENCE OF TEMPERAMENTS

Katerina Ntourou, Ph.D., CCC-SLP | Case Western University

## BUILDING PARENTS' CONFIDENCE AND RESILIENCE IN STUTTERING THERAPY

Sarah Caughter, MSc, RegMRCSLT, RegHCPC, European Fluency Specialist | Michael Palin Centre





STUTTERING AWARENESS WEEK . MAY 12-18, 2025

# HELP SPREAD THE WORD

The second full week of May is Stuttering Awareness Week. This is a great opportunity to focus public attention on a complex disorder that touches 80 million people around the world and more than three million in the U.S. alone.

“Actions speak so much louder than words,” said Jane Fraser, president of the Stuttering Foundation. “This year, the focus of our effort to celebrate Stuttering Awareness Week is to spotlight helpful activities everyone can do for the people who stutter in their lives. One in five children stutters for at least a short period of time, and one in 100 adults struggles with fluency on a regular basis. Most people know someone – a family member, a friend, a coworker or a classmate – who stutters.”





**2. DESIGN A T-SHIRT:** At every convention we attend, and on our online store ([www.StutteringHelp.org/store](http://www.StutteringHelp.org/store)), we sell out of our T-Shirts regularly. Help us create a new design! Submit your ideas to [info@stutteringhelp.org](mailto:info@stutteringhelp.org).

### 3. SIGN UP FOR SOCIAL MEDIA:

Visit us on Facebook, Twitter/X, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram and Pinterest. Engage with thousands of others on topics around stuttering and fluency. Please engage with us on our social media channels and share our content. We love when people “Share” our social media posts on their page each more of the stuttering community.

#### 4. SHARE YOUR CHILD'S ART:

In our newsletters and on our website, we often feature the drawings, letters and poems created by children who stutter. Please help children who stutter to understand they are not alone! Any child wishing to share their artwork with us, please request a form by emailing us at [info@stutteringhelp.org](mailto:info@stutteringhelp.org).

## 5. LEARN ABOUT A FAMOUS PERSON WHO STUTTERS:

Learning about famous people who stutter helps us to understand we are not alone in our struggles with fluency. It provides hope and inspires our community with the knowledge that great things can be achieved by people who stutter. Read our ever-growing list of famous people who stutter at [www.StutteringHelp.org/FamousPeople](http://www.StutteringHelp.org/FamousPeople).





**6. GET INFORMATION:** Visit your local public library and ask if they have resource materials on stuttering from the Stuttering Foundation. If they don't shelve them, tell them they can get a set very easily by contacting [info@stutteringhelp.org](mailto:info@stutteringhelp.org).

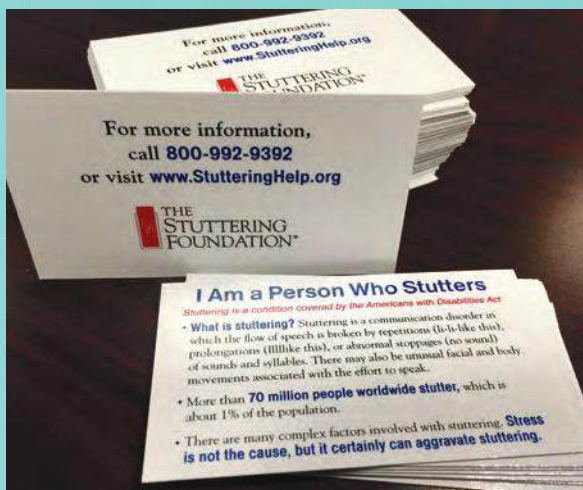
**7. SIGN UP FOR OUR EMAILS:** If you wish to receive our emails, please send your email address to [info@stutteringhelp.org](mailto:info@stutteringhelp.org).



**8. READ A BOOK:** There are many excellent books on stuttering. The Foundation offers several for free in E-book format. Many have been translated into other languages. Visit [www.StutteringHelp.org/free-e-books](http://www.StutteringHelp.org/free-e-books).

**9. LISTEN PATIENTLY:** When talking with a person who stutters, avoid finishing their sentences unless they invite you to do so. Keep eye contact and be patient – many people who stutter just need a little extra time to finish their sentences. For more tips, see our brochure at [www.stutteringhelp.org/brochures](http://www.stutteringhelp.org/brochures).

**10. "I STUTTER" ID CARD:** This card is designed to help people identify themselves in a nonverbal way as someone who may have trouble speaking. Download it at [www.StutteringHelp.org/IDCard](http://www.StutteringHelp.org/IDCard).







# DEAR SFA:

KIDS' LETTERS TO THE STUTTERING FOUNDATION

We'd love to hear about your dreams, your victories, the fears you have faced, the ways you've been challenged, or anything you wish people knew about stuttering! If you would like to send us a picture, letter, or poem, please e-mail us at [info@stutteringhelp.org](mailto:info@stutteringhelp.org). We'll make sure you get a permission slip to fill out the needed information. We attempt to answer every child's letter personally, so be sure to include a contact name and postal addresses for either a parent or the SLP of the child along with your submission.\*

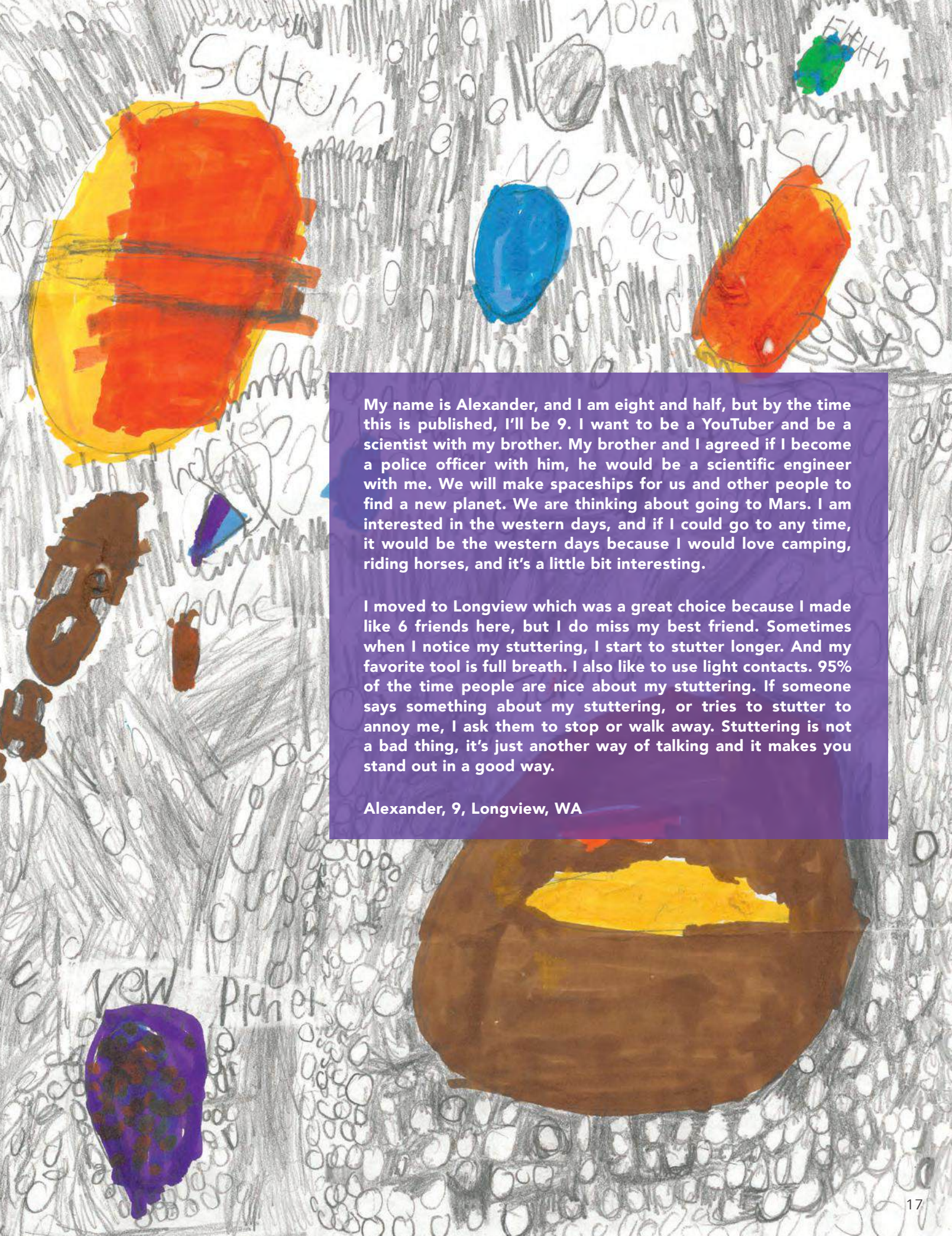
*\*Please mail original artwork submissions on plain, unlined paper. Photocopies, scans and faxes of artwork cannot be accepted. Colorful markers and crayons are encouraged as pencil drawings can be difficult to reprint. If you'd rather submit a photo, it can be mailed directly along with your permission slip and letter; digital photos can be sent via email.*

For more information and/or to receive a permission form via email, please contact us at [info@stutteringhelp.org](mailto:info@stutteringhelp.org).

Mail your letter, permission form, original color artwork and/or photographs to:

The Stuttering Foundation  
P.O. Box 11749  
Memphis, TN 38111-0749





My name is Alexander, and I am eight and half, but by the time this is published, I'll be 9. I want to be a YouTuber and be a scientist with my brother. My brother and I agreed if I become a police officer with him, he would be a scientific engineer with me. We will make spaceships for us and other people to find a new planet. We are thinking about going to Mars. I am interested in the western days, and if I could go to any time, it would be the western days because I would love camping, riding horses, and it's a little bit interesting.

I moved to Longview which was a great choice because I made like 6 friends here, but I do miss my best friend. Sometimes when I notice my stuttering, I start to stutter longer. And my favorite tool is full breath. I also like to use light contacts. 95% of the time people are nice about my stuttering. If someone says something about my stuttering, or tries to stutter to annoy me, I ask them to stop or walk away. Stuttering is not a bad thing, it's just another way of talking and it makes you stand out in a good way.

Alexander, 9, Longview, WA



Hi my name is Alina, and I am 8 years old. I am in 2nd grade and my favorite things are skin care, Stitch, flowers, and my favorite color is lilac. My favorite animals are giraffes, Elephants, Dolphins, and birds. My favorite speech tools are Belly Breathing and Light contact. I like to be on phone calls with my friend. My favorite subject in school is math. I love my teacher. I love helping people on math.

Alina, 8, Vista, CA



I first started stuttering when I was around 5 years old in kindergarten. When I found out I never really understood what stuttering was until my stuttering moments started to occur in my classes and at home. I didn't really know how to feel other than being scared. I always thought that people were gonna judge me or make fun of me for my stuttering, especially the thought of getting older. That thought completely disappeared when I learned to advocate for myself and teach others about my stuttering. It helped me to show more people this is who I am and that I am not ashamed of stuttering, but instead I can say I'm learning from it. To younger kids who think stuttering is going to be a pain or people are going to judge you for it, I want to send a message to you. From a person who stutters too, remember this, "to always be there for the person who should be your top priority, yourself."

Carlos, 13, Buffalo Grove, IL



**Hi! My name is Jonathan. I'm in 3rd grade. I am 9 years old. I live in Vista, California. My favorite sport is soccer. I like playing Fortnite with my friends. I like slow rate as my tool. My advice is to not let stuttering get to your head and to be positive.**

Jonathan, 9, Vista, CA

Did you know that around 1% of the population experiences long-term stuttering? If you don't know what stuttering is, it's when you have trouble with fluent speech. The 1% of the population that stutters is not destined to fail just because they stutter. I myself stutter. Many famous people stutter. Even the president Joe Biden stutters.

Bumpy speech is how I would describe stuttering. The types of stuttering are block, repetition and prolongation. This means stopping, repeating and stretching your words or sounds. Stuttering might make someone feel discouraged, depressed, anxious and alone.

Sometimes stuttering has been a problem. Timed tests cause me stress. Because it's having to show what I know, but it's hard to show it when I stutter. Many people can be rude or not understand. I know that there's nothing wrong with me. I'm just different or unique.

Across history, there are many celebrities and family people that stuttered. Elvis Presley, Kendrick Lamar, and Ed Sheeran are successful stuttering musicians. Bruce Willis and Samuel L. Jackson are both well-paid actors and are well respected.

Long-term stuttering is something that happens rarely to people. Stuttering makes it hard for people to understand me. I stutter and I'm happy with my life. Anyone can be successful with a stutter. Don't let stuttering overpower you.

Joseph, 11, Portland, OR



Hi My name is Josue. I'm 8 years old. I live in Vista, Ca. My favorite thing is to go to school. My favorite speech tool is belly breathing. I'm in 2nd grade. My advice is: think smarter not harder.

Josue, 8, Vista, CA



Hi, my name is Archer, I am 7 years old, and I live in Tigard, Oregon. My favorite game is Mario's Wonder. I like to play at school with my friends because we build stuff, and I like building stuff and creating stuff. I really like being a big brother and I like playing with my little brother.

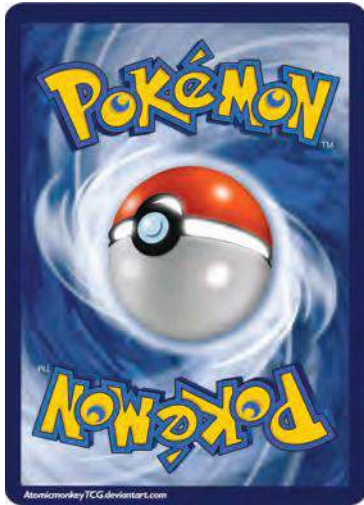
I stutter and when I do, my favorite strategy is panda talk - that's when I talk slower than a cheetah but faster than a turtle. I like to use reset breaths too. I really like to play games at speech therapy, one of my favorites is called Gnomes at Night. I like playing in the gym at speech therapy.

Archer, 7, Tigard, OR

Hi, my name is Sanvi. I am nine years old. I live in Minnesota. I am in 3rd grade. I go to Greenwood Elementary. I do gymnastics. My favorite books are Harry Potter #3 and #5. I like sports. They are so fun! I have two cousins. One is 14 and one is 12. Sometimes I get stuck on a sound. My victories are piano, gymnastics, and doing a back handspring. When you stutter, never give up. Always use positive self-talk. Always stand up for yourself. If someone makes fun of you, you can say don't make fun of me.

Sanvi, 9, Plymouth, MN





My name is Jude, I'm 11.  
I love to collect PEZes.  
I play lacrosse and own a  
\$500 Pokémon card. But  
there's one thing. I stutter.  
But don't worry! I am never  
bullied or teased about  
my stutter. The way I get  
through my stutter is I  
have friends that don't pay  
attention too much.

Jude, 11  
Lafayette, LA

Levin

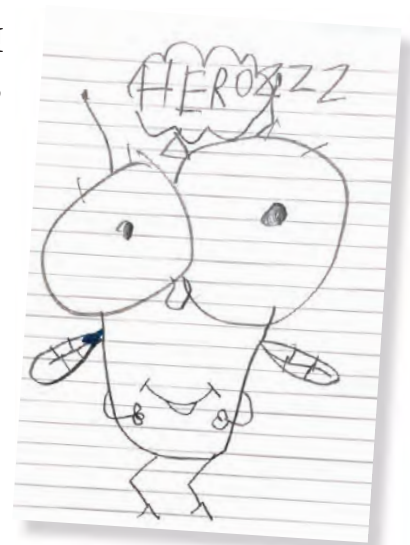


Hello and my name is Levin.  
I'm 8 years old. I started  
stuttering when I was 5.  
When I stutter, I have  
repetitions. I do not get  
embarrassed when I stutter.  
I practice using slow speech  
to help with my stutter. I live  
in Virginia. I love to play with  
my little brother. My advice  
to people who stutter is don't  
worry because it is okay to  
stutter, and you are trying  
your best.

Levin, 8, Roanoke, VA

Hi, my name is Bryan, and I  
am 9 years old. I play Roblox,  
soccer, and basketball with my  
friends. I like math because  
I'm good at math. I go to  
speech at school to work on  
my bumpy speech. I want to  
be a scientist when I grow up  
because I love science.

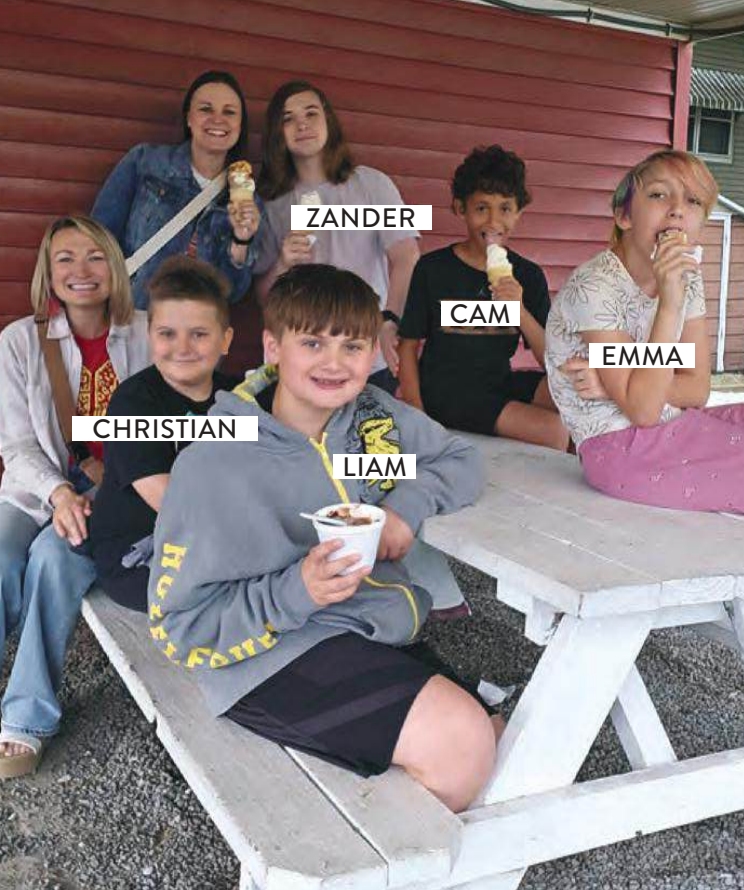
Bryan, 9, Silver Spring, MD



Hi, my name is Jillian, and I like to support my  
brother who is a person who stutters. I love my  
brother, and I know he loves me too. In learning  
how to support my brother in his stuttering I  
have also learned how to be an ally for friends  
or acquaintances who stutter. Some techniques  
I have learned include being patient and letting  
them finish their sentences and not speaking for  
them. Meet them with a friendly smile and give  
off the vibe that they can be comfortable being  
themselves. Supporting them to speak freely. I  
have learned that people who stutter are just as  
smart, strong, loving and able as anyone else and  
that we should do all we can do to never promote  
them to feel otherwise.

Jillian, 9, Lafayette, LA  
(Sister of Jude)





We are students from Roxana, IL. We're all in different grades, but one thing we have in common is that we stutter! We also found out that we all like animals, ice cream, playing games, and coming to speech therapy! Every Friday, we meet as a group and talk about ways to make stuttering easier. We often use easy onset to help with our stuttering and cancellation when we feel like our message wasn't clear.

We don't like being interrupted while we're speaking, and it's easier for us to talk when we don't have to talk over others. We tend to stutter more at home and during recess because there's a lot going on around us.

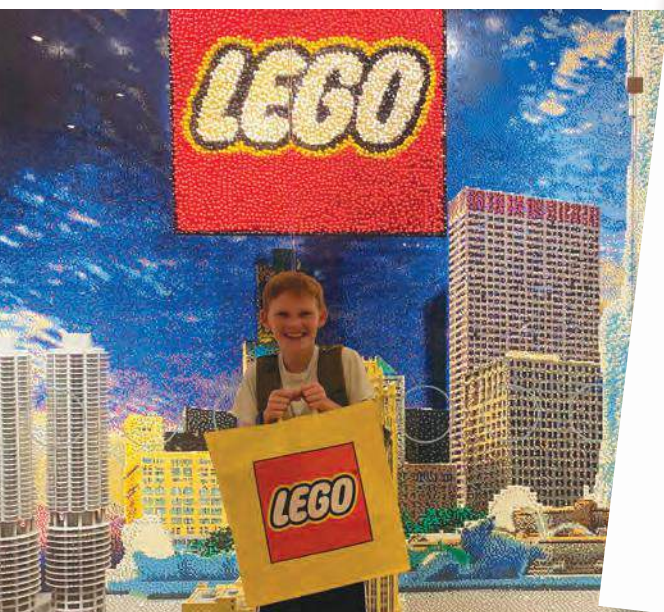
Christian is 9 years old, loves watching *Phantom of the Opera*, and his favorite animal is a macaw. Cam is also 9 years old and loves playing Fortnite and Rainbow Six Siege. Liam is 11 years old, and his favorite animal is an axolotl. He also loves playing Gorilla Tag. Emma is also 11 years old, likes cats, and enjoys playing Minecraft.

We've become good friends and even went on a field trip together to get ice cream with a high school student who also stutters. We've also given presentations to our classmates to help them learn more about us and stuttering. When you think about it, stuttering is pretty cool and makes us unique!

Cameron, 9; Christian, 9; Emma, 11;  
Liam, 11; Zander, 16

Hi, my name is Calix and I'm 11 years old. I live in South Bend, Indiana with my family of 4 (5 plus my dog). I like to play the piano, play with Lego, and play soccer. I hope to be a Lego employee when I'm older. I started stuttering when I was about 3 or 4. The types of stutters that I have are prolongation and repetition. The strategy that I use the most is the Syllable Timed Speech Technique. On a normal stuttering day, I normally feel pressured, stressed, and frustrated. Then on a good stutter day when there is barely a stutter it makes me feel good to speak fluently without my stutter.

Calix, 11, South Bend, IN



Hi my name is Shamir Conteh, I'm 11 1/2. My birthday is in July. I go to Union elementary, Dayton Ohio, and I'm in the 6th grade, but 6th grade is over so I will be going to the middle school. My hobbies are riding my bike with my friends, playing football, video games (3) and running. I've been stuttering since the 1st grade. People who were jealous of me bullied me over my stuttering. My favorite things to help me with stuttering is Lily pad pauses and easy current. Advice: people who stutter are the unique ones who change the world.



Shamir, 12  
Union, OH





Hi, my name is Seth,  
I am 9 years old. I  
love soccer. Like some  
people I stutter. It held  
me back in 2nd grade.  
Now it doesn't. Also,  
I love Pokémon. My  
best card is a Galarian  
Darmanitan VMAX  
Dynamax. My most  
favorite one is a Holo  
Rare Snorlax.

Seth, 9  
Lafayette, LA



My name is Aria. I'm 9 years old and I am from Pennsylvania. I go to Providence Elementary School. I love to draw. I live with my mom, dad, and little sister. I have been in speech for 4 years. My favorite stutter strategy is stretchy speech. I love hamsters, arctic foxes, art, speech, kittens, puppies, and my iPad. That is it.

Aria, 9, New Providence, PA

Hi! I'm Sofia. My favorite subject is social studies. I also like reading. I live in Katy, Texas! My favorite baseball team is the Astros. I am a gymnast. Today I write this to share what I like. I stutter. I am in second grade. I like stuttering because I like my speech teacher!

Sofia, 8, Katy, TX



Hi, my name is Stratos. I am 9 years old, and I live in Longport, NJ. I like swimming in the ocean in the summer. I like watching basketball on television, my favorite team is the Milwaukee Bucks. My favorite players are Damian Lillard and Giannis Antetokounmpo. Recently, I started taking my old RC cars and using the usable parts to build new ones. My favorite subject is Science. I really like doing labs.

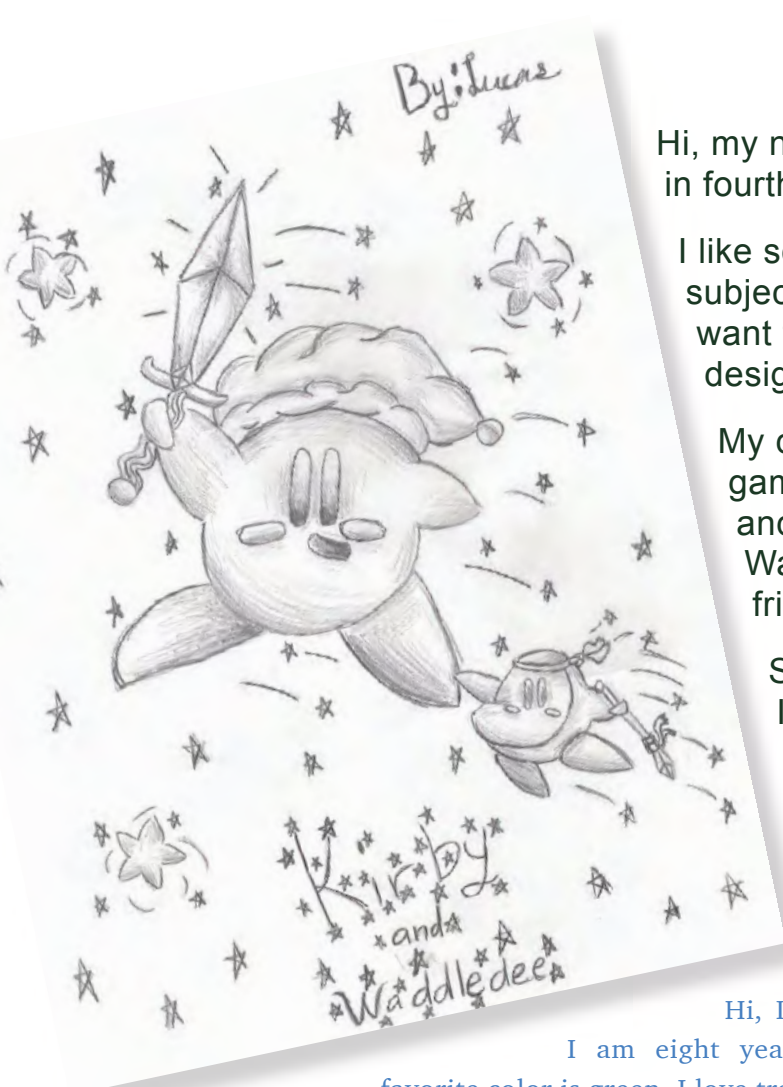
I have been collecting Hess Trucks since 2009. On the weekends, I like playing on my XBOX. My favorite game is Forza Horizon 4. My favorite show is Fast & Furious: Spy Racers: Homecoming. When I get older, I want to go to Rutgers University. I have 3 siblings, 2 sisters and 1 brother. My favorite car is the Ford Raptor F-150.

My favorite stuttering strategy is Circumlocution. Circumlocution is when you exchange a word for another word that you don't stutter on. I've been in speech for 6 years. When I am in a large group of people I stutter. It doesn't really bother me when I stutter.

Stratos, 10, Longport, NJ







Hi, my name is Lucas. I am ten years old, and I am in fourth grade. I live in Elkhart.

I like soccer, Kirby, and drawing, and my favorite subjects are art and math. When I grow up, I want to be an artist and work for a company that designs video games.

My drawing is Kirby. Kirby is in a lot of different games. I like him because he's cute, powerful, and puffy. I drew Sword Kirby and Bandana Waddledee flying. I like to play with my friends at their house and wrestle.

Sometimes I stutter when I'm nervous and I go to a speech therapist, where I learn to stretch my speech. I'm learning now to use light contact and use pauses.

Lucas, 10  
Elkhart, IN

Hi, I am Chase.

I am eight years old. My favorite color is green. I love trampolines. I want to be a soccer player, tell jokes, clown, diver, doctor, policeman, and work as a firefighter, and I stutter. If you're nervous, just believe in yourself. Like my first time when I went to a speech, I was scared like you so do not be afraid to let you show yourself. If you ever are down, just say "I got this." Just face your fears. I was so scared the first time I went to speech. Everyone makes mistakes when they talk. There are different kinds of stuttering, like blocks, prolongations and whole word repetitions. I love going to speech and I love stuttering. It is scary, but fun. You can play with monkey noodles to help. They stretch, so that is why it helps. We have game days and get prizes if you get like 4 or 5 stickers.

I got better at stuttering but soon I will be like a bird flapping its wings to freedom and I will graduate from this group. If you are scared, say **"I got this, believe I am brave, I am smart, I am kind, I love speech and talking about stuttering"** and you will too! Tell your family that you want to go to speech!

Chase, 8, Coon Rapids, MN



Hi, my name is McKinzie. I am 7 years old. I am from New York. In speech I use my mountain to take a breath. I love my speech teacher. I keep trying.

McKinzie, 8, Rotterdam, NY



Hello! My name is Mwajuma. I am 9 years old, and I am in 4th grade. I like playing video games with my best friend, Diana. I also like math and speech class. I go to speech almost every Monday and I love speech. I stutter a lot when I get mad or sometimes I stutter when I'm shy or scared. I know liking to do homework is weird but I love doing homework because it helps my brain. At home I also practice my speech strategies. My favorite speech tool is easy onset. In the outside world people make fun of me for how I speak but I let that out of my brain the moment I leave. **If people make fun of you, just ignore it!**

Mwajuma, 9, Silver Spring, MD

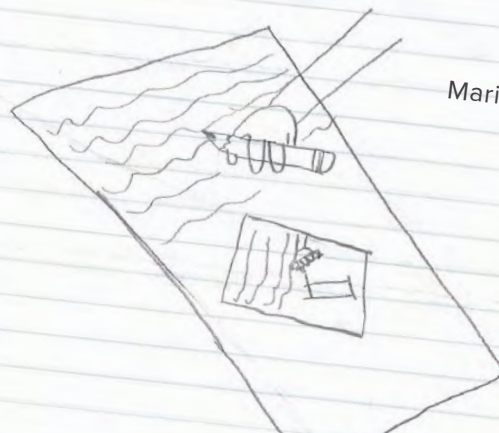
My name is Sulaiman I am ten years old. I'm in 4th grade and my favorite thing to do is watch tv. My speech tools are pausing and cancellations. When I stutter, I feel sick because I get a tiny headache. It is ok to stutter. Thanks for reading.

Sulaiman, 10, Dearborn, MI

Hello, my name is Brayden. I am 7 years old. I like basketball and I stutter. I use cancellation. That is when you're stuck on a word and restart. I also use slow rate. Everybody stutters, even adults. I am wearing my cape in my picture because it makes me feel like I can work out my stuttering. I hope this message helps you guys.

Brayden, 7  
Waterville, ME

Hi, my name is Marie and I'm a person who stutters. I like to draw & read books. Right now I'm reading a book called Dresscoded. The last big art project I did was a shadow art. I like art and drawing because I can how I'm feeling expressively. It's just like talking except people can see with different perspectives. It shows much more!



Marie, 11, Lafayette, LA





Hi, my name is Markos. I am 10 years old. I am from Cyprus, which is an island in the Mediterranean Sea near Greece and Turkey. My favorite games are Fortnite and Brawl Stars.

I began stuttering around 4 years ago. When I stutter, I repeat monosyllabic words or the first syllable of a longer word. Very rarely I might have some mild blocks. Because of stuttering, I avoided raising my hand to speak in class, ordering in restaurants, or placing a phone order. I also avoided asking for assistance in shops or socializing with boys or girls that I just met.

After going to speech therapy, I feel more comfortable speaking in different situations. I am still not as comfortable as I would like to be when I place phone orders or when I am asked at school to go from class to class and make a short announcement. I believe that in the following months I will be able to speak without any fear in every situation.

Markos, 10, Yeri, Cyprus



Hello! My name is Tahmid. I'm a Muslim and I'm from Bangladesh. I'm also 13 years old. Some things I like include: Video games (more specifically Roblox and Geometry Dash), learning, studying, Cartoons, anime, spending time with family and friends, walking outside, quiet time, and God. And I'm sure you've guessed it already, I have a stutter. However, that same stutter isn't everything that defines me. It's just something I have, and sure it may be difficult sometimes, but that's totally fine. It's just how life is. And if you also have a stutter, or some other thing, then just know you can persevere through it. You still have so much of your life left, so don't waste it on what could've been. Just live with what is.

By: Tahmid upper Darby, PA



**Hi! My name is Iris.  
I am 7 years old. I  
live in Saint Paul,  
Minnesota. I like**

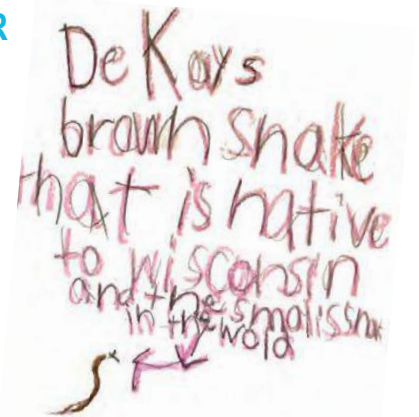
**to read. I am really good at Wobble Dogs. Sometimes, I  
stutter. When I stutter, I feel calm. Something that is hard  
about stuttering is feeling shy. My advice for other kids  
who stutter is to keep on talking, even if you stutter.**

**Iris, 7, Saint Paul, MN**



Hi, my name is Eisley, and I am 9 years old and in 3rd grade. My stuttering can make me frustrated because it is hard to express my messages to people. I stutter more when I am nervous. I started speech therapy this year. I like to pause in between words and sentences because it helps me think about what I want to say. I also like to use slow rate and take a full breath before I speak to help me stop rushing what I want to say. I like wolves and reptiles.

Eisley, 9, Gresham, OR



Hi, my name is Elaina. I am 9 years old, and I live in Minnesota (MN). I like to use cancellations and blocks. Stuttering can be hard for lots of people in the world and I'm one of those people sometimes. Stuttering is okay because lots of people in the world stutter a lot. My culture is Hmong so I can speak Hmong and English. I only stutter in English and not in Hmong. There are a lot of different kinds of ways that people can stutter. Some people stutter in different languages. No one can speak perfectly, so it is ok to stutter!

I like art and I like to draw a lot. I've improved my art skills over time. I practice and over time I grow from mistakes. I make and I grow from every mistake. I have a YouTube channel called Sistertime. I make it with my little sister. On our channel we do toy unboxing and get to play with the toys. Sometimes I have videos where I read books out loud.

Elaina, 9, Coon Rapids, MN







Dear 5th Grade Teacher,

I want to tell you that I stutter and need some time to process words. When I stutter, sometimes I will not have words come out even though my mouth is open. Some tools I use to help with my stuttering are taking a second to breathe and restart my sentence. When I stutter, it is helpful if you let me pronounce my word and don't try to guess my word. Did you know over 70 million people in the world stutter? Some famous people who stutter are Ed Sheeran and Shaq. Some other things about me are that I'm a hard worker. I also have a hamster named Berry. Thank you for reading this note about me.

Sincerely,

Tyson

Tyson,  
Mt. Pleasant, MI



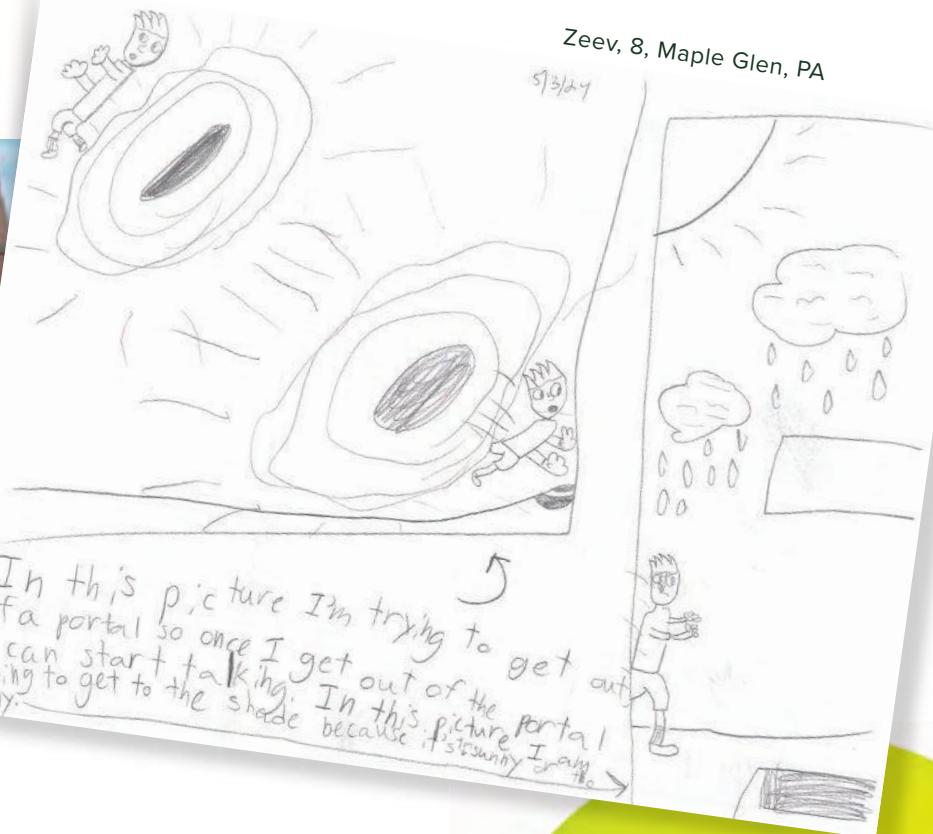
Hi, my name is Raheem. I am 9 years old. I live in Saint Paul, Minnesota. I like to play drums. I am really good at football. Sometimes, I stutter. When I stutter, I feel okay. Something that is hard about stuttering is talking. Like when I was in 3rd grade, I was doing a presentation and people were asking me what I was saying. My advice for kids who stutter is to take a deep breath, think about the words you want to say, and just say it.

Raheem, 9, Saint Paul, MN

In this picture I'm trying to get out of a portal so once I get out of the portal I can start talking. In this picture I'm trying to get to the shade because it's sunny and rainy.

Hi, my name is Sam. I am 12 years old, and I am in 6th grade. Some things that I enjoy doing in my free time are playing soccer, playing video games, and playing pickle ball and badminton in my driveway. I think that stuttering is really annoying especially when I am talking to people I know. Stuttering is also hard to explain mainly because I am still learning about it 4 years after I started.

Sam, 12, Los Gatos, CA



Zeev, 8, Maple Glen, PA



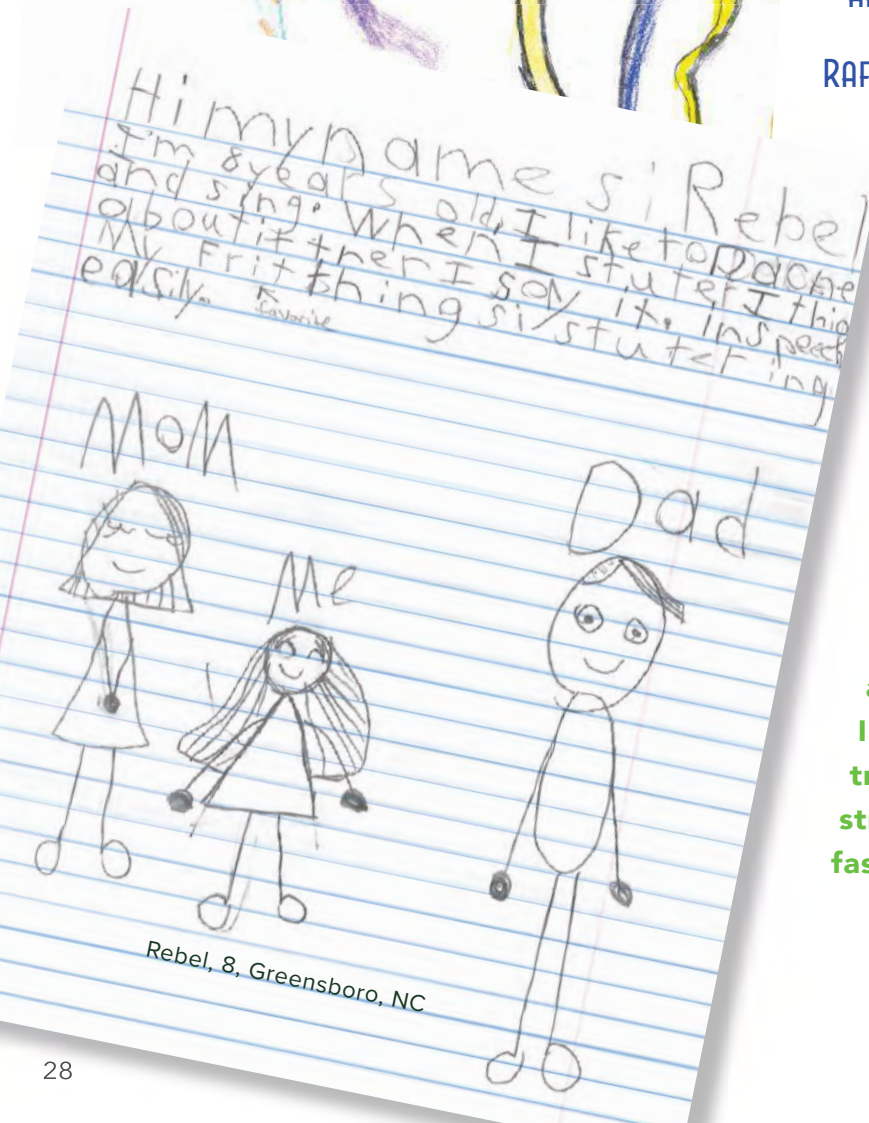
Hi! My name is Harrison. I am 9 years old and I really like Legos and roller coasters. I have had a stutter for a long time. My favorite strategies are light contact and stretchy speech. I really like light contact because it relaxes all of the stress of trying to get the words out. It's usually harder to talk when I am talking to someone other than my parents, when there's music or a video on or when I have to make quick choices. I would like the world to know what stuttering is and that it's just a normal thing that you sometimes can't control. One of the reasons why is that sometimes when I stutter, kids think I'm just trying to be funny and they may laugh or say "stop" or "this isn't the time to be funny." My speech teacher at school is a great teacher. She taught me a lot of ways to help me with stuttering and without her it would have been a lot harder.

Harrison, 9, Columbus, OH



Hi, my name is RAFAEL. I LIVE IN RHODE ISLAND. MY AGE IS 8. MY FAVORITE STRATEGY IS LIGHT CONTACT. I LIKE REPTILES. MY FAVORITE REPTILE IS A SNAKE. I STARTED STUTTERING AT AGE 3 ½. I HAVE A PET GECKO NAMED SUNSHINE. I LIKE TO WATCH SOCCER. I HAVE 2 COUSINS. I ALSO HAVE 5 PET FISH.

RAFAEL, 9, PROVIDENCE, RI

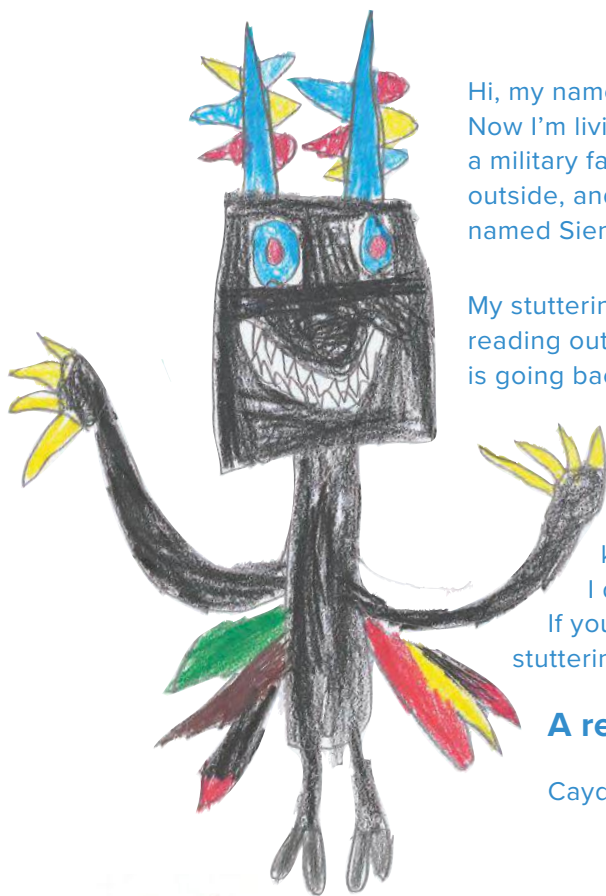


Rebel, 8, Greensboro, NC

Hi, I'm Jayden and I'm 10 years old. I want to be a football player or a police officer. My brother stutters too. I love sports. My favorite game is basketball. I love Michael Jordan. I want to play basketball more than any other sports or jobs or soccer. I love the outside and the inside. My grandma stuttered as a kid. I love to go to Timberwolves games. My favorite color is green. I love Uno and Battleship. Board games are so fun. I like Xbox more than PlayStation. I love trampolines. In my opinion, my favorite strategy is easy onsets. I stutter. I'm really fast. I stutter when I'm out of breath or when I talk too fast.

Jayden, 10, Coon Rapids, MN





Hi, my name is Cayden, I am 10 years old and I'm from Fort Lauderdale, FL. Now I'm living in San Diego, CA. My family moves around a lot because we're a military family. Some of the things I like to do are playing video games, going outside, and drawing. Sadly, I do not have any pets now, but I did have a dog named Sienna. She passed away.

My stuttering includes blocks and repetitions. It usually happens when I'm reading out loud or talking to my parents when I'm nervous. How I deal with it is going back to the word I stuttered on to say it again using easy onset.

I started stuttering when I was 5, but I hope I get better with using cancellations in the future.

How do I feel inside when I stutter? I feel embarrassed. I don't know why, but I feel embarrassed. I just don't like doing it and when I do, I just hope I never do it again, but obviously it will happen again. If you have trouble with stuttering, what do you do to slim down your stuttering?

**A reminder to all: It's okay to stutter-it's going to be fine.**

Cayden, 10, San Diego, CA



**Hi! My name is Rumano and I'm nine years old and I stutter. I love Roblox, drawing, and painting. Sometimes I stutter when someone's talking over me or if I'm trying to talk and I'm mad. I use the stretch it out strategy when I stutter. It's also ok to stutter and if you get bullied because of your stuttering, just brush it off and tell an adult.**

**Rumano, 9, Burlington, VT**



**Hi. My name is Hassan and I'm ten years old. I'm in the 4th grade. One fun fact about me is I stutter. Don't feel upset if you stutter. A lot of people stutter. If you stutter it is special.**

**Many people stutter once in a while, and some apologize for stuttering because some people think it is not that normal to stutter. Some people ask me why I stutter, and some people tell me to stop stuttering. I feel ok if I stutter.**

**The best thing about stuttering is that it makes you different and special. It's not permanent so you can know how it feels to stutter and how it feels to not stutter.**

**That is all for my speech. Thank you for reading.**

**Sincerely, Hassan, 10, Dearborn, MI**



Hi. My name is Jane. Sassy is our cat, and she is adorable! Here is a list of the things she likes: 1. CATNIP, 2. GOING OUTSIDE, 3. HER TREATS, 4. ATTENTION. Sassy had kittens before we adopted her, although we did not (very sadly, as you can imagine) get to keep them too!

We also recently got chicks! They are ADORABLE! Their names are Maui, Te Fiti, Pua, and Tala. Maui is my favorite.

I live with my sister, mom, and dad. My favorite technique is easy beginning.



Jane, 7, Summerfield, NC

**Hi! My name is Joaquin. I am 7 years old, and I live in Saint Paul, Minnesota. I like to play soccer. I am really good at winning soccer. Sometimes, I stutter. When I stutter, I sometimes feel mad. Something that is hard about stuttering is blocks and repetitions. It feels like a rubber band in my throat. I don't stutter that much, but sometimes. My advice for other kids who stutter is to keep on talking, even if you stutter!**

**Joaquin, 7,  
Saint Paul,  
MN**



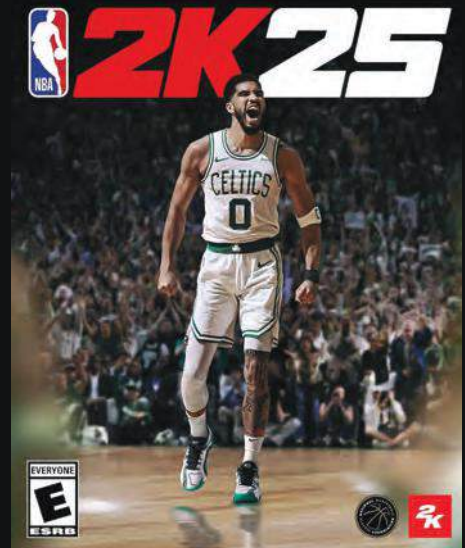
Hi, my name is Ryan, I am 10 years old, and I live in Munster, Indiana with my family. I go to Eads Elementary School. I stutter when I talk in a rush, or when I'm excited. I use the deep breath strategy, and I sometimes use the easy starts strategy. One thing I'm not proud of is that I get sick a lot, but I make the most of it by making stuff and reading. I like to do stuff that most kids don't do, such as attempting to make a book or a paper toy train. I also like to engineer and make things that replicate the real thing. One of my favorite things to do is to set up and operate my N scale model train in the basement.

Ryan, 10, Munster, IN



Hi, my name is Lucas, and I live in Charlotte. My favorite sports to play are football, baseball, and basketball. I enjoy playing video games, like Minecraft and NBA 2K. My favorite song is UP! by Connor Price and Forrest Frank. I have a stuttering problem and even though I don't like to stutter, I usually stutter when I get called on in class. Then, I use my speech strategies to help me when I stutter. My favorite speech strategies to use are pausing, slow speech, and light contact. My advice to others is to show people that it is okay to stutter.

Lucas, 8, Charlotte, NC



Hello, my name is Rylan, and I am in 5th grade. I live in San Diego, CA. I like a whole lot of anime, and my most favorite is Dragon Ball Z. I like a whole lot of games, too. My favorite games are Halo and Dragon Ball Z Kakarot. My favorite movie is Black Panther.



I have a stuttering problem. My stuttering sounds like repetitions. I don't always stutter, but if I'm talking to someone for a long time, I stutter. If I'm talking with a friend, I'm usually okay with it, but if it's a school presentation I would worry, and I would start to stutter even more and get nervous. Usually when I stutter, I laugh if it's someone that I know, but if I'm talking about something seriously, it's not a laughing matter.

I relate myself to a character named Gohan from Dragon Ball Z. When he was a kid, he had a lot of potential and was trained in martial arts, and even he stutters sometimes. As an adult, he never gives up. Whenever he's going against a villain, he remembers his friends & family and memories from the past, to help him fight. Or he uses his anger to fight.

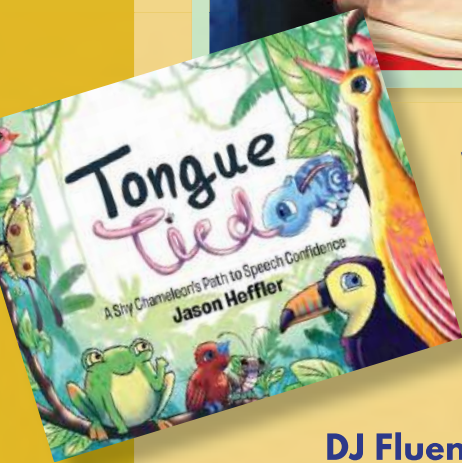
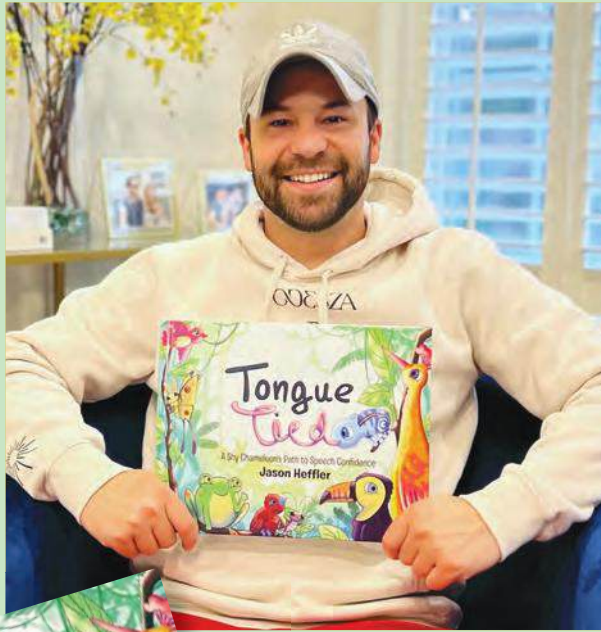
My dad says, "Think before you're going to say something," and it always works. I breathe in and I breathe out to calm down and not be nervous. If you start to stutter and you get nervous, calm down and think about what you want to say.

Rylan, 10, San Diego, CA

## FOLLOW UP: WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

# JASON HEFFLER

(AKA DJ FLUENCEE)



**We interviewed Jason Heffler for our Fall 2019 Magazine when he was on tour as**

**DJ Fluencee. We caught up with Jason once again to learn about how things are going, and what new projects he has been working on since we last connected.**

**When we last met you, you were performing as a DJ—how is that going and any major milestones since we last interviewed you?**

Yes! I performed at EDC Orlando, one of the nation's largest and most popular electronic dance music (EDM) festivals. It was one of the most incredible experiences of my career. I was in a zone onstage and could really feel the crowd's energy, especially when I spoke on the mic. However, my priorities started to change, and the stressful life of a touring artist became less appealing. I got married to my beautiful wife and we're thinking about kids soon. I became an uncle after my twin sister had her first baby. I also landed an amazing job as the Managing Editor of EDM.com, the world's leading electronic dance music publication, which keeps me very busy. So, I'm not DJing much anymore but I get to travel, cover the world's best music festivals and interview artists I consider idols.

**What new projects have you been working on since we last spoke of special interest to the stuttering community?**

I wrote a children's stuttering book for kids struggling with confidence issues related to their speech. It was a grueling project, and it took over a year to publish. Holding it in my hands after it all was a wild feeling.

The book is called *Tongue Tied* and it's about a kind chameleon who's shy because of a speech problem that makes it tough to get her words out. She stumbles over her own tongue and camouflages into the forest because she's scared, she won't fit in with the other animals. Through eye-opening encounters with a compassionate cricket friend and a mean frog bully, it's a story about how she learns that her speech doesn't hold her back from doing amazing things.



## What should other people who stutter take away from your new project?

That you can, and will, live a very fulfilling life. Stuttering doesn't define a person's worth or potential. Your voice matters, even when it comes out differently. I also hope it sparks compassion in non-stutterers, helping them understand that patience and empathy can go a long way in supporting those who communicate differently. Since our thoughts are literally trapped in our throats, we're constantly misunderstood and aching to connect deeper—if you let us.

## Have you spoken with other people who stutter about your work and what it means to them? How can we find out more information about your latest project?

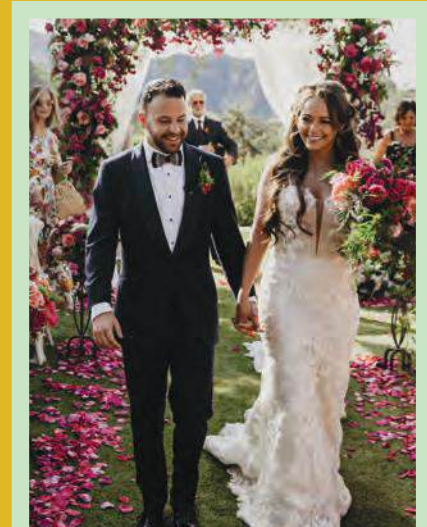
I've had the pleasure of hearing from doctors, parents and people who stutter, and what strikes me most is how they connect with the book's central message: the idea that stuttering doesn't need to be "fixed." Instead of chasing a cure, they've shared how liberating it is to embrace the truth that their voice—exactly as it is—can carry them through a life filled with all the same possibilities as others. The book helps them see that their speech is just one part of who they are, and it can even be a weapon for self-assurance if wielded with intention. It's a shift from trying to hide or "correct" their stutter to actively acknowledging it. Far too late in life, I realized that if I overtly acknowledge my stutter in conversations with new friends, potential employers, interviews and so on, the person on the other end values my honesty and authenticity. You can find out more about *Tongue Tied* online at this link: [rebrand.ly/tonguetied](https://rebrand.ly/tonguetied).

## Anything new, fun, or interesting to report in your personal or professional life since we last spoke?

I appeared on the Emmy-winning show *Good Day Philadelphia*, the city's top morning news segment, to talk about the book and what it was like growing up with a stutter, and how I coped as a kid. I was extremely nervous. I'd never been on television and speaking for that many viewers in such a public manner was daunting, to say the least. But I sat down in front of the cameras and just went for it and got real. It was a surreal experience after rarely talking about my speech and childhood in private, let alone for this large of a viewership. And the best part? My parents and wife were there to see it. The anchors even pulled them from behind the cameras and asked them a few questions on-air, which was a completely unexpected shock.

## You gave children and parents some advice during our last interview—anything you might change or add now?

My biggest piece of advice for parents of children who stutter is to embrace empathy and patience as their most powerful tools. Imagine a child who, like the chameleon in *Tongue-Tied*, feels vulnerable or different because of how they speak. In those moments, it's not about fixing or hurrying them along, but about being a calm presence that shows them they are heard and loved just as they are. Don't celebrate the moments when they speak up—normalize them. A child who feels safe and supported will build confidence in themselves, and that will carry them through challenges far beyond stuttering.



# DEAR SFA:

Dear SFA,

The recent SFA Magazine article by Brittany Rodriguez entitled What Would You Like To Order? was excellent. It reminded me of my own experience.

A Jack-in-the-Box drive-through near me has a sometimes faulty intercom system. It plays back your voice at a slightly delayed rate. This is called Delayed Auditory Feedback. DAF is sometimes used in speech therapy.

This feature allows me to speak fluently no matter how much I may be stuttering at the time. It's an amazing feeling. And gives me a giant boost for the day!

Thank you,  
Dan Pappas

P.S. Ed Sheeran recently performed at our local football stadium. Traffic was backed-up for miles. One popular man!

Virtual Stutter; Remote Communication by Madeline Wahl, Excellent photos and descriptions.

Self-Therapy for the Stutterer One of the best books there is on stuttering.





# TAKE THE FIRST STEP

There are many proven, effective ways to reduce stuttering. Doing nothing is not one of them.

**We can help.**



THE  
STUTTERING  
FOUNDATION®

800-992-9392

[StutteringHelp.org](http://StutteringHelp.org)

[Tartamudez.org](http://Tartamudez.org)



When Malcolm Fraser started the Speech Foundation in 1947, he used his personal home phone number, 452-0995 as the SFA official business contact number.

Many years later, the NIH issued a pamphlet on stuttering and printed millions of copies. Malcolm printed his personal phone number as a way for people who stutter to reach the Foundation.

This February, the 901-452-0995 will be ported to our phones in Memphis once again. We will continue to keep that old number in memory of Malcolm and his willingness to be reached at any time of the day or night by people who stutter looking for help. Such was Malcolm's dedication to others who struggle to speak! We are honored to share in his vision all of these years later.



## Stuttering Foundation Books: Now at Your Local Library



from top to bottom: Hart County Public Library,  
Keizer Community Library, Brookfield Library



A full-page photograph of Eamonn Hubert performing on stage. He is a young man with dark, wavy hair, wearing a grey t-shirt and a black guitar strap. He is singing into a black microphone with a red pop filter and playing an acoustic guitar. The background is a bright blue stage backdrop. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

# WHERE ARE THEY NOW: **EAMONN HUBERT**

We interviewed Eamonn Hubert for our Fall 2019 Magazine when he was on tour with the Broadway musical “School of Rock.” We caught up with Eamonn once again to learn about how things are going, and what new projects he has been working on since we last connected.





ROCKS  
*the*  
STUTTER

Ever since he was 6 years old, Eamonn Hubert has been performing. While he's been in countless shows with his dad, thanks to their band Hot Dogs & Gin, this year he performed on one of his biggest stages yet – School of Rock the Musical. While Eamonn, 10, was on a U.S. tour with the group, we caught up with him to learn more!



WHAT IS THE SCHOOL OF ROCK THE MUSICAL  
BROADWAY TOUR? WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

**ROADWAY TRUTH** What is the 2003 School of Rock musical starring Jack Black about a School of Rock out-biging rocker who can't pay his rent and dreams of winning Battle of the Bands. After the band he started kicks him out, he takes a class intended for his housemate, a substitute teacher, and shows up at a fancy pop school pretending and shows up as a teacher and takes the job. He finds that to be his housemate and his class are also that the grade-grubbing kids in his class are also his gifted musically and then recruits them into his gifted musically and then recruits them into his band for the Battle. He almost puts it off but to not quit. Everyone learns that it's best to not judge a book by its cover and also to be who you are, not who someone else wants you to be and never give up your dreams. Everyone is great at something!

The tour has been going on since 2017 and wraps up this June. I joined in January 2019 and have been in rehearsals since then. I am a swing which is sort of like an understudy, but I will cover 4 different male kid roles when the primary actors are out for whatever reason. There are several child and adult swings in the Company, some of whom know as many as 10 or more tracks or roles! My debut was March 13 as guitar whiz Zack Mooneyham. I was also on as Billy the stylist and then James.



WHAT WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH

[illegible]

To our surprise, just before Christmas 2018 my mom got another email from casting inviting me to return to NYC for another audition. This time, I made it to the final 2 boys and got the part!



*When we last met you, you were performing in a Broadway show on tour - how is that going/how did it go - and any major milestones since we last interviewed you?*

The tour was incredible! I am beyond grateful to have had the time I did with the cast and crew of “School of Rock” and learned a lot about myself. Being on stage was amazing, but learning all my tracks was very challenging. Being away from home for so long was also really hard, but I’m so glad I had such a great opportunity. Since then, my regular life has “taken over,” so to speak. I am now a junior in high school, the principal cellist of the Binghamton Youth Symphony Orchestra, a section leader in my school marching band, was selected as the guitarist for New York State School Music Association All State Vocal Jazz Ensemble and also earned a spot with the All State Mixed Chorus, and released the first two singles from my first album to all the major streaming platforms. My voice has changed a lot, so I’ve had to spend a fair amount of time growing into the new one and learning good vocal technique. Recording and writing music has also been a major step forward in the last few years. I’d been writing music since I was 11, but I

hadn't really bothered with lyrics until I was about 14 when I wrote my first song. In terms of performance-related accomplishments, since returning from tour I've performed twice at the NYS Blues Festival and won their KJ James Memorial Scholarship, my band and I opened for blues guitarist Eric Gales, I've attended several concerts, and continued to perform 40-50 shows a year which is one of my most favorite things to do. In the last 6 years, so many amazing things have happened that sometimes I can't believe it all happened to me.

***What new projects have you been working on since we last spoke of special interest to the stuttering community?***

I'm really proud of my new EP, "*Can't Get The Words Out*." It's a deeply personal title that had been in my brain for a while, and I really wanted to use it to send a positive message to others who stutter or have a speech impediment. The title track specifically deals with my own journey from frustration related to my stutter to acceptance.





### ***What should other people who stutter take away from your new project?***

Well, I essentially wanted the EP and the title track to signify that you can do anything you put your mind to, regardless of how different or challenging your voice may be. I know many young people in the stuttering community struggle with feeling different or anxious about speaking. One program I recently learned about is Camp SAY, a two-week summer camp with activities and programs to help build speech confidence and form friendships. I'm doing this because I want to help other kids have an amazing experience like that and find confidence in who they are.

### ***Have you spoken with other people who stutter about your work and what it means to them?***

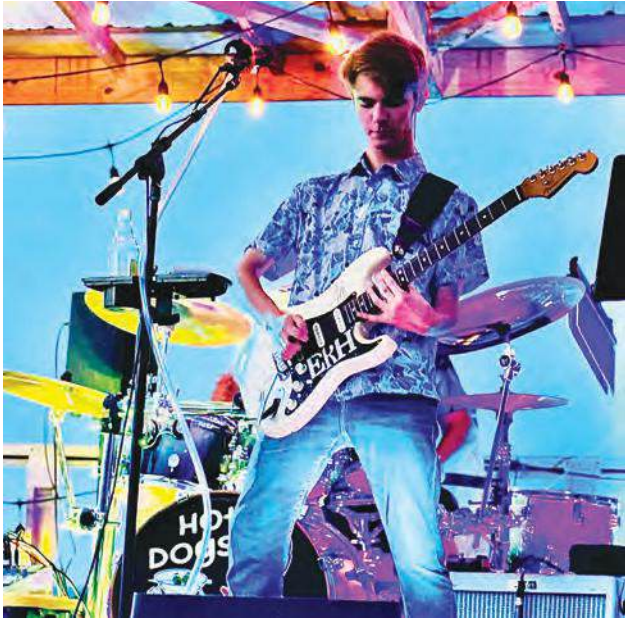
It's unfortunate that since I stopped stuttering therapy many years ago, I haven't met anyone else in my area who stutters. I would certainly enjoy talking about my experience with someone who also stutters and really hearing from them what they take away from the work I do, but I haven't had the opportunity yet.

### ***How can we find out more information about your latest project?***

You can listen to my first two singles on YouTube, Spotify, iTunes, Amazon Music, Pandora, and all the major streaming platforms. The full EP will be released on 11/2/24. You can also check me out on Instagram and see what my band "Hot Dogs & Gin" is up to on Facebook.

### ***Anything new, fun, or interesting to report in your personal or professional life since we last spoke?***

I've definitely changed quite a bit since I was 10! Transitioning from elementary school to middle school to hybrid learning because of COVID and then moving up to the high school have all been both challenging and exciting. Acting in many of my school's musicals and playing instruments in several of my school's musical ensembles has been really enjoyable, but it's also a lot of work and requires hours of practice, rehearsals, and lessons to be able to give them all my best efforts. I'd say the biggest new thing in my life since we last spoke is that I'm finally figuring out who I am. I think that starts to happen for a lot of people in high school, and it can take a long time. For me personally, the last couple of years have been a real eye opener to the person I'm becoming and the potential for who I can be. I've discovered this through a few painful experiences, personal growth, and really a lot of analyzing those experiences and self-reflection. It's been quite interesting.



***You gave children and parents some advice during your last interview—anything you might change or add now?***

I do remember mentioning creativity as a coping mechanism, and I stand by that to this day. People sometimes create the most wonderful things when their minds are in dark or difficult spaces, and I've experienced this firsthand as a composer. And as far as determination goes, just be who you are and don't let life get in your way. I like to think the universe, fate, or whatever you want to call it does throw little lessons at you in one form or another, and you have to watch for them and be open to them. And for those who stutter, try to learn to coexist with it. I returned to stuttering therapy for a short time a couple of years ago, and during that time I read something that compared a stutter to a lion. You can keep it in a locked closet until it breaks the thing down, or you can let it out and accept it for what it is. You can't hide who you are, so show it to the world. Doing that has made a huge and positive difference in my life. I still sometimes use word substitutions and get nervous when I have to order food in front of people other than my friends and family, but I realize now that even if I do stutter in those situations, it's not the end of the world.

SEPTEMBER 27 - OCTOBER 1, 2024

## American Academy of Pediatrics Conference

Dr. Joe Donaher, CCC-SLP



The AAP is a great conference and an amazing way to reach pediatricians who are the ones families reach out to first with questions about stuttering.

The most popular materials were the "Concise Guide to Stuttering" and the brochure "If You Think Your Child Stutters." They were also excited to see the link on the back of the business cards and many took those. The brochures on ASD and ADHD were also asked about by many.

It is amazing how many folks recognized that the "concise guide" used to be called something for the pediatrician. The brand is well known for sure at the AAP!

ADVICE TO THOSE WHO STUTTER

**"Stuttering on purpose...drains away the fear."**

Lon L. Emerick

STUTTERINGHELP.ORG



# Palin Parent Child Interaction Therapy for SLPs/SLTs



In October 2024 we sponsored a two-day Palin Parent Child Interaction (Palin PCI) Therapy course, with 1.55 ASHA CEUs, delivered in the American time zone (9am to 5pm ET) to make it more easily accessible to a wider audience. Palin PCI is an evidence-based therapy approach which aims to build confident communication in young children who stammer by supporting their parents with knowledge and skills, focusing on developing what parents already know and do that is helpful.

The Palin PCI training course is interactive and experiential, providing therapists with the knowledge and practical skills to carry out the approach, using videos and exercises to bring the programme to life. The Michael Palin Centre team are highly experienced both as therapists and trainers in stuttering therapy.

## Feedback given at the end of the October course:



*Gemma was one of the best PD presenters I have ever had. The mix of breakout rooms and information was excellent.*

*Gemma was lovely! I loved her tone. Her curiosity. Her kindness. I appreciated her knowledge, experience and expertise.*

*Gemma was an excellent presenter. She was an active listener, made the presentation very interactive among participants, and made the content very interesting.*

*It was easy to learn the material because Gemma included practical real-life videos as well as interesting personal stories.*

*Gemma was very positive and made each participant feel heard and validated. Her voice was extremely easy to listen to and she had an easy, relaxed calm style.*

*I gained SO MUCH! I feel confident that I could provide Palin PCI support to my clients and their families moving forward and I learned a tremendous number of skills that I will be able to use with ALL families, regardless of diagnosis or treatment approach.*

*This course brought a wonderful variety of clearly modelled clinical skills, scope and sequence for best presentation of materials. I appreciated the pre-webinar handouts and videos to prepare for best absorption of material and skill. This course offered micro-level skill development, with awareness for macro-level implementation. The Palin PCI manual is an excellent resource.*



# Solution Focused Brief Therapy for all Professionals

Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) changes the focus of therapy from the problem to the solution, exploring what clients want from therapy and using clients' resources and strengths to achieve their best hopes. SFBT is applicable to clients with a range of difficulties and the team at the Centre have been using it with parents, children, teenagers and adults who stutter for many years. SFBT is also highly applicable for use in clinical supervision and team meetings.

The course includes teaching, discussion and practical exercises and is supported by video observation. The video material and case studies presented during the training course involves clients who stutter, however the approach is applicable to all clients with speech, language and communication differences and their families. The training is based on the clinical manual *Solution Focused Brief Therapy with Children and Young People who Stammer and Their Parents*.



The Stuttering Foundation is hoping to sponsor a two-day online course in Solution Focused Brief Therapy by the expert team at the Michael Palin Centre. This course will be open to all professionals and will be a practical introduction to the principles and practice of Solution Focused Brief Therapy (de Shazer, 1985; Ratner, George & Iveson, 2012).

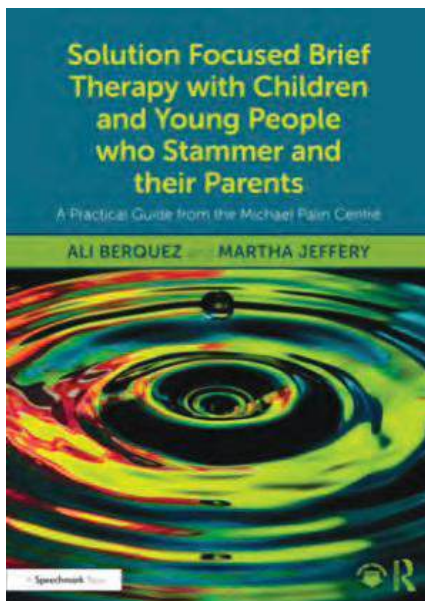
## Feedback given at the end of the October course:

*This approach has turned my clinical practice around!*

*Applicable to so many different areas of our role and client groups, and in so many different contexts, so helpful for developing therapy skills and for understanding the power of hope and curiosity*

*I like that we covered how SFBT can be used in different contexts*

*The course content was fantastic – theory so we really understand the rationale and inspiration behind it and also the opportunity to watch a lot of videos so that we could see the approach in action – and this was done in an interactive way so that we could comment and ask questions.*





# STUTTERING FOUNDATION Q & A: RAPHAEL STARK



## About Me:

*I presently live in Honolulu, Hawaii; where I was born and raised. I am a homeschooled student beginning my senior year this fall. I am also the President of a nonprofit I founded in 2021 called CHATS: Caring For Hawaii Teens With Speech Challenges.*

## About My Family:

*I come from a musical family. My father is the associate principal violinist with the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra, my mother is an opera singer who performs with Hawaii Opera Theater, and I have an older sister who is studying musical theater in New York City. I grew up playing piano, organ, percussion, and singing main stage roles with the Hawaii Opera Theater. I learned the importance of serving the community from my parents. From the age of 5, my family and I would visit local senior centers during the holiday season and perform for the residents and staff. My sister and I would include vocal and piano duets, I would accompany her on violin while she danced hula and the family would perform original arrangements of holiday favorites. One highlight was my portrayal of the Little Drummer boy on snare drum with my father on violin and my sister and mother on vocals.*

## **My Hobbies and Passions:**

*My interests include my work advocating for the acceptance and normalization of those with speech differences. I enjoy playing the piano, church organ, and percussion. As part of the worship and production team at my church I run visual slides and delegate video switching between three cameras. I also train others to operate these positions as well. Enjoying local Hawaiian beaches is a must for me as well as traveling and touring museums. As a future film production major and tech “nerd” I enjoy all things relating to video and camera, this includes creating videos, films, and shooting award winning photos. I am passionate about helping others and showing my community how we can all make a difference together. Other passions include, film making, music, and teaching teens how to make their community a better place.*

## **My Career Success:**

*In living with a stutter and growing up performing in front of big crowds, I’ve had to grow comfortable with the way I talk and trust that others will be patient and give me the time I need to finish talking. While gaining more and more confidence in speaking in front of others, I’ve been able to share the message about my nonprofit, CHATS, and spread awareness about mental health, anti-bullying, and the importance of community efforts. This also led me to highlight my love of videography, where I made a video that was shown on PBS Hawaii, highlighting a mental health clinic for youth. I’ve been recognized by Mental Health America of Hawaii as the recipient of the “Youth Mental Health Advocate 2022 Aloha Award” and was featured on local television news programs. I was recently honored as a Taco Bell Ambition Accelerator 2024 Seed Prize Awardee for my project, “Bridge of Aloha”: Hawaii to Africa-Empowering Youth in Kenya with Speech-Language Challenges.*



## **Do you remember when you first began to stutter?**

I have had a stutter for as long as I can remember. It was a gradual progression, I would stutter for a few weeks then I would not stutter for a month. Eventually, the time between stuttering got smaller and smaller until one day, my stuttering stayed.

## **Does it run in your family? Who else stutters?**

Stuttering runs on both sides of my mother’s family. She had a stutter as well as her mother and her grandfather on her father’s side of the family.

## **Did you seek treatment? Did it help?**

I did receive treatment from a speech pathologist who happened to be a family friend. The sessions helped me discover what my stutter was and how I could best work with it.

## **Tell us about your experience with stuttering as a child.**

Though I was bullied as a child, I didn’t think of my stutter as something that was wrong with me. Part of that came with the support from my family and friends. A number of people didn’t even notice I had a stutter until I told them.

## **Has your stuttering gotten worse or better since you were younger? How?**

My stutter hasn’t gotten better or worse. Through accepting my stutter, that has helped me to not have a negative mindset towards it.



## How does stuttering affect you in the work you do?

As a public speaker and working in the entertainment industry, I've found that my stutter doesn't hinder me from doing what I love to do. A lot of that comes from positive environments and amazing "co-workers."

## How is your stuttering today? What do you do to control or manage it, if anything?

Currently I just go about my life with the knowledge that I may need to take extra time to get my words out. I find that feelings of excitement, nervousness, or anxiety can trigger my stutter, so I try to manage those feelings as much as I can. I also take into account which words/sounds may trigger my stutter and substitute if needed.

## What are the biggest challenges of stuttering?

As actor James Earl Jones said, "One of the hardest things in life is having words in your heart that you can't utter." I feel this challenge is the hardest that I've had to deal with through having a stutter. I have words that I want to say, but I know that it's going to be difficult to say them, so sometimes I choose not to.

## What is your greatest accomplishment with regard to stuttering?

In 2021, I was looking for groups in Hawaii for teens like me who have a speech challenge. But, there weren't any, so at the age of 14, I decided to start my own. Through dedication and hard work I was able to create a nonprofit organization called CHATS: Caring for Hawaii Teens with Speech Challenges. I've spoken to over 5,000 students, teachers, parents, and medical professionals about inclusion, acceptance and ways they can best help those with speech differences.

## Based upon your experiences, what would you like to tell children who stutter?

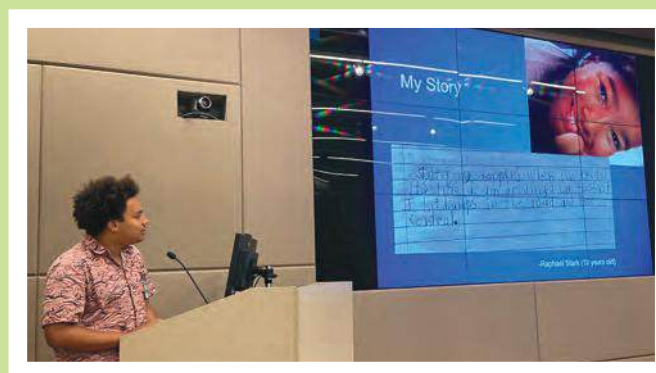
Through being teased and mocked myself I found that it is important to educate others rather than show hatred or anger towards others. While having this mindset I've come to the realization that in order for others to accept you, you first have to accept yourself along with your unique challenges. I would encourage children with a stutter to face their challenges and speak often, while educating those who tease or mock you. In realizing that this is easier said than done, I encourage children to let their parents know if they are ever bullied or hurt physically or mentally because of what others are doing to them.

## Based upon your experiences, what would you tell parents of children who stutter?

Parents play a vital role in helping their child navigate in a fluid world. Parents act as the first advocates for their kids by working together with their pediatrician and school, to find ways to help their child to feel comfortable and supported. It is important for parents to have a positive view about their child's stutter, therefore the child will have a positive view of themselves. Parents should also know the do's and don'ts when helping someone who has a stutter. This can be learned from speaking to speech pathologists or just by talking to other stutterers including their own child. Parents should never force their child to hide their stutter or to speak if they aren't comfortable, instead they should be encouraging their child to talk and to teach others to listen.

## What else should we know?

I recently partnered with a nonprofit in Africa to help kids in Kenya with speech challenges. My "Bridge of Aloha" initiative is connecting Hawaii-based speech and language resources with kids 10,000 miles away in Kenya.





STUTTERING FOUNDATION CELEBRITY CORNER  
**MAGGIE O'FARRELL**  
AMERICAN BEST-SELLING AUTHOR



Award-winning novelist Maggie O'Farrell was in the news in late 2024 with the publication of her children's book *When the Stammer Came to Stay*, which has received rave reviews on both sides of the Atlantic. It is the author's third children's book.

Her career as a novelist took off when her first work in 2001, *After You'd Gone*, won the Betty Trask Award. Her novel *The Hand That Held Mine* won the 2010 Costa Novel Award. In addition, she was twice shortlisted for the Costa Novel Award with *Heatwave* (2014) and *This Must Be the Place* (2017). Her memoir *I am, I am, I am: Seventeen Brushes with Death* topped the Sunday Times bestsellers list. O'Farrell's novel *Hamnet* won the Women's Prize for Fiction in 2020, in addition to the fiction prize at the 2020 National Books Critics Circle Awards; *Hamnet* will be released as a movie in 2025 starring Jessie Buckley and Paul Mescal and directed by Chloe Zhao. Her novel *The Marriage Portrait* was shortlisted for the 2023 Women's Prize for Fiction.

The celebrated author penned an essay about growing up Irish in Great Britain in the November 22, 2024 edition of the *Irish Times* that carried the

headline, "Author Maggie O'Farrell: I had a teacher at school who took the register, saw my name and said to me, 'Are your family in the IRA?'. She wrote, "Being Irish in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s wasn't easy." In the piece she also addressed how her stammering was anything but easy: "I was about seven when I first became conscious that I was stammering. In my child-brain I thought maybe nobody else noticed. Then of course the kids at school started imitating me, and I thought, 'No it's not just inside my head.' It was painful starting in a new school as a teenager in Scotland. English was one of my favourite subjects and I couldn't get my words out to read in class. Pronouncing the letter M was hard, which is tricky when your name is Maggie, and you want to read *Macbeth* out loud in class. I never got any speech therapy as a child, you just got on with it. Much later, I had to talk about one of my books on live radio, my worst nightmare, and I shut down in the middle of talking to Jenni Murray on BBC Radio 4's Woman's Hour. I did manage to get past it, but I realized I couldn't go on like that anymore so I got some therapy. The therapist asked me to keep a stammering diary."



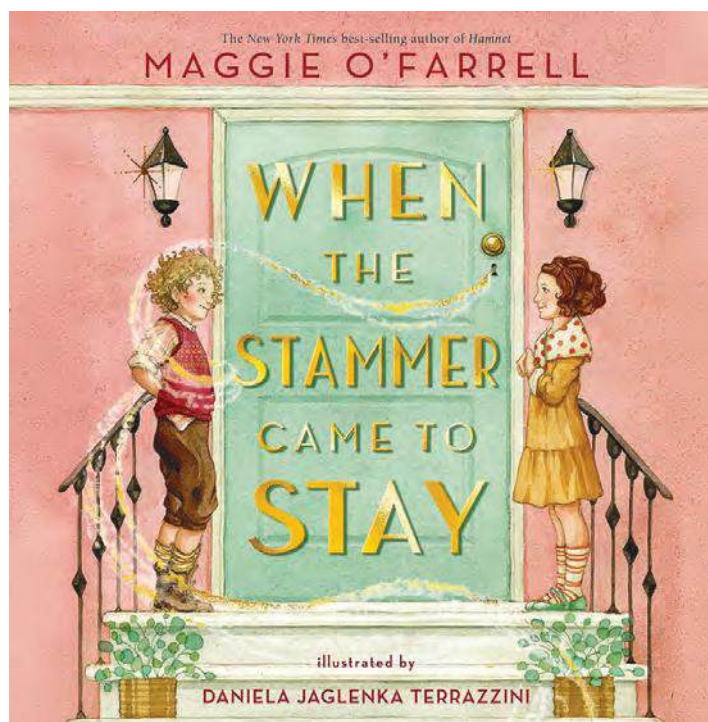
"One day I told her about getting a prescription in the chemist and not being able to get my name out. The pharmacist said, 'Oh, have you forgotten your name?' The therapist suggested that next time it happened I should look the person in the eye and say, 'I've got a stammer.' So, I practised that, and it helped. If someone reacts badly or laughs, that's their problem, there's no shame. You wouldn't laugh at someone who was limping, would you?"

In a November 2, 2024, article in *The Guardian*, "Maggie O'Farrell: Having a stammer was instrumental in making me a writer," she put forth, "Having a stammer has been the single most defining experience of my life. It's a crippling and agonising affliction, especially if you happen to be a teenager, but I'm certain it was instrumental in making me a writer. Watching words flow from your pen, unchecked, feels like a magic trick to someone who can't rely on their verbal fluency."

In a December 10, 2024 article in *People* magazine, "Maggie O'Farrell Reflects on Stammering in New Kids Book: 'Don't Think I Would Be a Writer Without It,'" O'Farrell theorized that her stuttering led her to becoming a writer because her stuttering was prominent in guiding her to "rewrite" sentences in her head while speaking, in order to avoid letters or words that might cause her trouble. In the article she explained by saying, "I always have problems with M, which is difficult when your name is Maggie," O'Farrell says. "You have to launch off a different sound. You are always thinking of about five or six different ways to say the same thing ... I don't think I would be a writer without it." The act of writing itself, O'Farrell says, was also a liberating experience.

"I still remember, as a child, watching my pen moving in these sentences and words just coming out onto the page, and it's such bliss," she says. "I still find that amazing, the idea that there's nothing stopping it. I can just say whatever I want, however I want to say it, and I'm not going to have any problems with it, and no one's going to judge me or laugh at me."

Her life as a person who stutters was examined in-depth in a November 2, 2024 article in the *Irish Times* titled "Maggie O'Farrell on Living with a Stammer: It's Still There, It Lurks Beneath" in which she addresses the difficulties her speech caused her in her childhood and adolescence, and how she benefited from speech therapy as an adult. She put forth, "Speech therapists talk about it as an iceberg where only the tip is available to others, but underneath the water there's this huge, dangerous, jagged mass of ice. I still say that I have a stammer. In my teens I would never have been able to talk to you like I am now. It's a lot better and I have had speech therapy in adulthood. But I think it's still there, it still lurks beneath, and I worry about it."



Later in the article she said, "I think it is the thing about my life that has most defined me, defined what I can and can't do, what kind of job I can do, who I can be friends with.... And the thing about a stammer is, it's unpredictable. You think you've got over it and it will come back. Only the other day I was in a pharmacy and I had to pick up a prescription and the woman said, 'What's your name?' And I suddenly couldn't say it. It is terribly shaming, because people make fun of it. I carried that kind of shame and embarrassment and cringing self-consciousness about it all the way through my life until I had speech therapy when I was 40."

The Northern Ireland native expounded on her life-changing speech therapy experience in an article in the *Sunday Post* on November 24, 2024, "My stammer has instinct for good, and not so good, people. It tells me if things are wrong: Maggie O'Farrell on writing the book she wishes she had as a child." She said of seeking out speech therapy as an adult, "I decided around 12 years ago that I needed to have speech therapy. I was a bit desperate. I had had it for so long and there is very little in life you can do professionally that doesn't involve speaking. I thought it would be complicated, but it wasn't. Within a couple of weeks, I had an appointment with a speech therapist while my tiny daughter was asleep in a buggy. The therapist was brilliant. She talked to me about my stammer and asked me to keep a stammering diary."

*When the Stammer Came to Stay* was released to highly positive reviews. The story centers on two very different sisters, Bea and Min, and how one morning Min wakes up to find that she has trouble getting her words out. With the compassionate help of her sister Bea, Min learns how to navigate the choppy waters caused by her speech problem in this story of self-acceptance that will resonate with readers.

"Watching words flow  
from your pen, unchecked,  
feels like a magic trick to  
someone who can't rely on  
their verbal fluency."

A glowing five-star review of the children's book in the *Telegraph* on November 20, 2024, ended with this high praise: "Her latest book, by contrast, has nothing to spook the horses – and the story's mix of cozy domesticity and gentle suspense will find much wider appeal. O'Farrell acknowledges that the book turned out to be more personal than she had intended. ("Fiction sometimes has a way of playing a sleight of hand on the writer," she concedes in an author's note.) But the result is a touching, beautifully written story which will resonate with readers well beyond its target age group of five-plus."

In the *People* article, the Londonderry native said of her new children's book, "It's very rare in fiction, any kind of fiction, to meet a character with a stammer who's taken seriously. Often, it's played for laughs. We're invited as audiences or readers to laugh at this person who has a kind of verbal disfluency, or we're invited to think of them as weird or weak or nervous or anxious. But actually, stammerers necessarily aren't those things. I wanted to write something which takes a stammer seriously and talks about what exactly it's like and the bad things about it, but also the things that it can possibly give you."

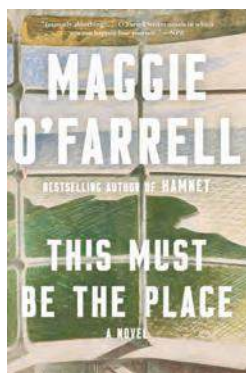
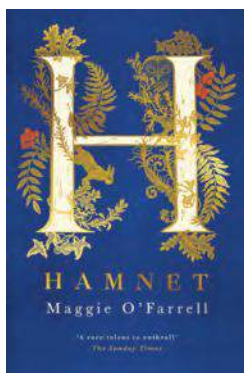
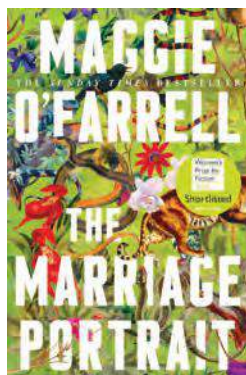
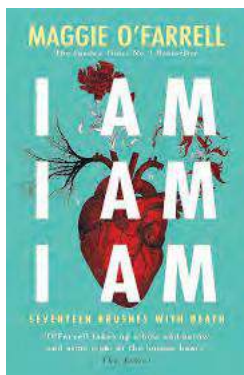




## 2024: IN MEMORIAM

Maggie O'Farrell is a brave woman who has fought a battle with stuttering her entire life and wants to use her gifts to bring attention to the speech problem and foster a better public understanding of stuttering. Her new children's book stresses the importance of self-acceptance and conveys a positive attitude. Gone are the dark ages of the not-so-distant past when children who stutter were made to feel ashamed. With the ratio of males who stutter far outnumbering females, Maggie O'Farrell is an important role model for girls and young women struggling with stuttering. Her success with speech therapy as an adult strongly conveys that speech therapy knows no age limits.

***Most public libraries gladly accept suggestions from their patrons in terms of which new books to purchase, and new books are usually displayed in a special section. Feel free to make the recommendation to your library to purchase *When the Stammer Came to Stay* so that it can be read by more people.***



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## CONGRATS TO OUR FRIENDS IN COLOMBIA!

With brochures from the Stuttering Foundation, the Colombian Stuttering Foundation has been working on raising awareness through free virtual talks and in-person presentations in schools throughout the country.

**More information in Spanish**  
is available at [Tartamudez.org](http://Tartamudez.org).



Dear Jane.

I want to thank you for the support with the information brochures on stuttering, delivered to the Colombian Stuttering Foundation, it is Sandra Garzón who brings them to Colombia, contributing to our awareness work in the country. Free talks have been given virtually and in person in schools in Colombia.

Jhoan Stiven Gallego Bermúdez  
Fonoaudiólogo

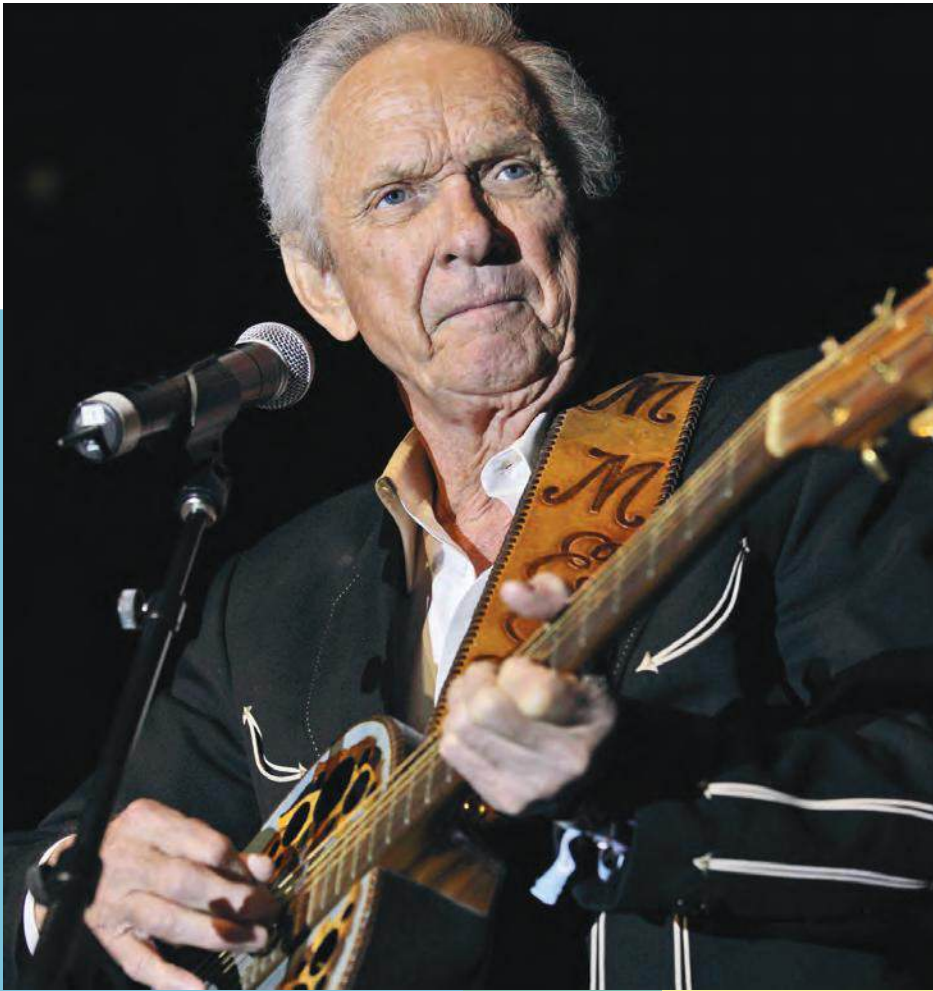




# The Secret Lives of Mel Tillis

We all know what a superstar and a legend Mel Tillis was in the country music world and in the entertainment industry as a whole. We could fill up many pages listing his accomplishments and accolades. We were very fortunate to have him as a dear friend of the Stuttering Foundation for many years, and he famously served as our 1998 national spokesman and honorary chairman.

While it was widely known that stuttering ran in Mel Tillis' family as both his father and brother also stuttered, many admirers of America's most loved person who stuttered might be surprised at some interesting parts of his life that are little-known.



## Mel's musical talents

are well known throughout the world, but what about his football talents? As a star halfback on his high school football team, Mel received tryout offers at the University of North Carolina and Florida State University, both of which were nationally ranked programs. He set his goals on making the team at Florida State and attended their summer camp but was not offered a scholarship or a spot on the team. Since most of his high school friends were enrolling at the University of Florida, he decided to enroll there and try to make the football team as a "walk on." He stayed with the team for the entire tryout period, but ultimately did not make it. During the tryout camp, he became friends with two players, Rick Casares and Buford Long, both of whom would go on to have solid NFL careers.

Since football was his main interest in going to college, he only stayed at the University of Florida for one semester and left to pursue his music. However, in the typical good spirit of Mel Tillis, despite being cut from the team, he became a major supporter of University of Florida football and the school's athletic programs in general, organizing a big country music fundraiser each year for the athletic department.

Besides music and football, Mel Tillis was deeply entrenched in another profession. In his hometown of Pahokee, Florida, the Tillis family had a well-known enterprise called the Tillis' Hometown Bakery, where from an early age Mel worked alongside his father, his uncles and his cousins. From a young age, he learned to bake breads, muffins, donuts, pies, cookies and decorate fancy cakes.



He worked for the family business for his entire childhood and high school years, becoming a star baker while honing his musical skills. At age 20, he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force at the start of the Korean War and hoped that during this military service he could learn a new trade. He specifically did not tell the Air Force about his background as a baker as he wanted to move on to something else. After taking an aptitude test, the Air Force told him that they determined he would be of good service as a baker and were sending him to baking school. He spent his military service years as a baker. The country music star would tell people that when his father heard this news, his father never laughed so hard in his life.

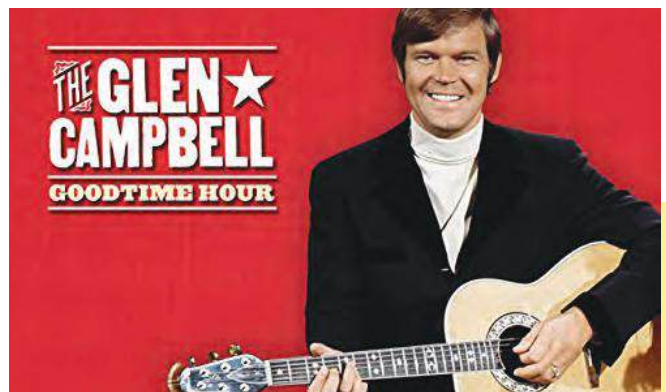
While Mel Tillis was the most famous person who stuttered in the U.S. for decades, he was also the catalyst for the movement for civil rights for people who stutter. Just like Rosa Parks ignited the modern-day civil rights movement when she refused to give up her seat on the bus on Montgomery, Alabama in 1955, Mel Tillis inspired a watershed moment in the civil rights movement for people who stutter in the United States.

In 1972, Tillis was a regular cast member of the popular weekly CBS show, *"The Glen Campbell Goodtime Hour,"* which required him to speak lines. Many times, he was not fluent. After one show, a lady who was a regular viewer wrote to Campbell and said that having Tillis on the show with his stuttering set a bad example for children. The producers flagged the letter and showed it to Campbell, who was irate. On the next show, Campbell read the letter on the air with the introduction, "Here's a letter from a lady who says that Mel Tillis' stuttering is a bad influence on our young people

and shouldn't be allowed on television."

His answer to the woman's letter was, "Why shouldn't Mel Tillis be on television? They let Ray Charles be on." Campbell proceeded to blast the woman's letter and say that people who stutter have the same rights as everyone else and should not be treated any differently just because they have a handicap. The next week, Campbell received thousands of positive letters about his tirade. Kudos to Glen Campbell!

Mel Tillis was an absolute champion in terms of putting a human face on stuttering to say the least. He certainly led an accomplished – and interesting! – life.



# CLINICALLY RELEVANT UPDATES IN STUTTERING



In October 2024, Nan Bernstein Ratner, Ed.D., CCC-SLP, University of Maryland, College Park, Pei-Tzu Tsai, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, and an Associate Professor in the Department of Communicative Disorders and Sciences at San José State University, Zoi Gkalitsiou, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, and an Assistant Professor in the Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences at Cal State University-East Bay, and Lisa LaSalle, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, a Professor in the Masters-SLP program in the Department of Education and Leadership at Cal State University Monterey Bay led a workshop entitled 'Clinically Relevant Updates in Stuttering' at Cal State University-East Bay in Hayward, California.

Participants learned about current research in stuttering, assessment considerations, and treatment goals in working with young people who stutter. The role of the SLP in stuttering treatment was also discussed. The event, the first of its kind, was sponsored by The Stuttering Foundation.

"There's a lack of stuttering specialists in this region of California, and we wanted to help train the next generation of SLPs with current approaches in stuttering to reach the underserved communities," said Bernstein Ratner.

Attendees were excited to take in the materials and hoped there would be similar events in the future. Most recognized that they felt the least trained in stuttering among all the speech-related issues.

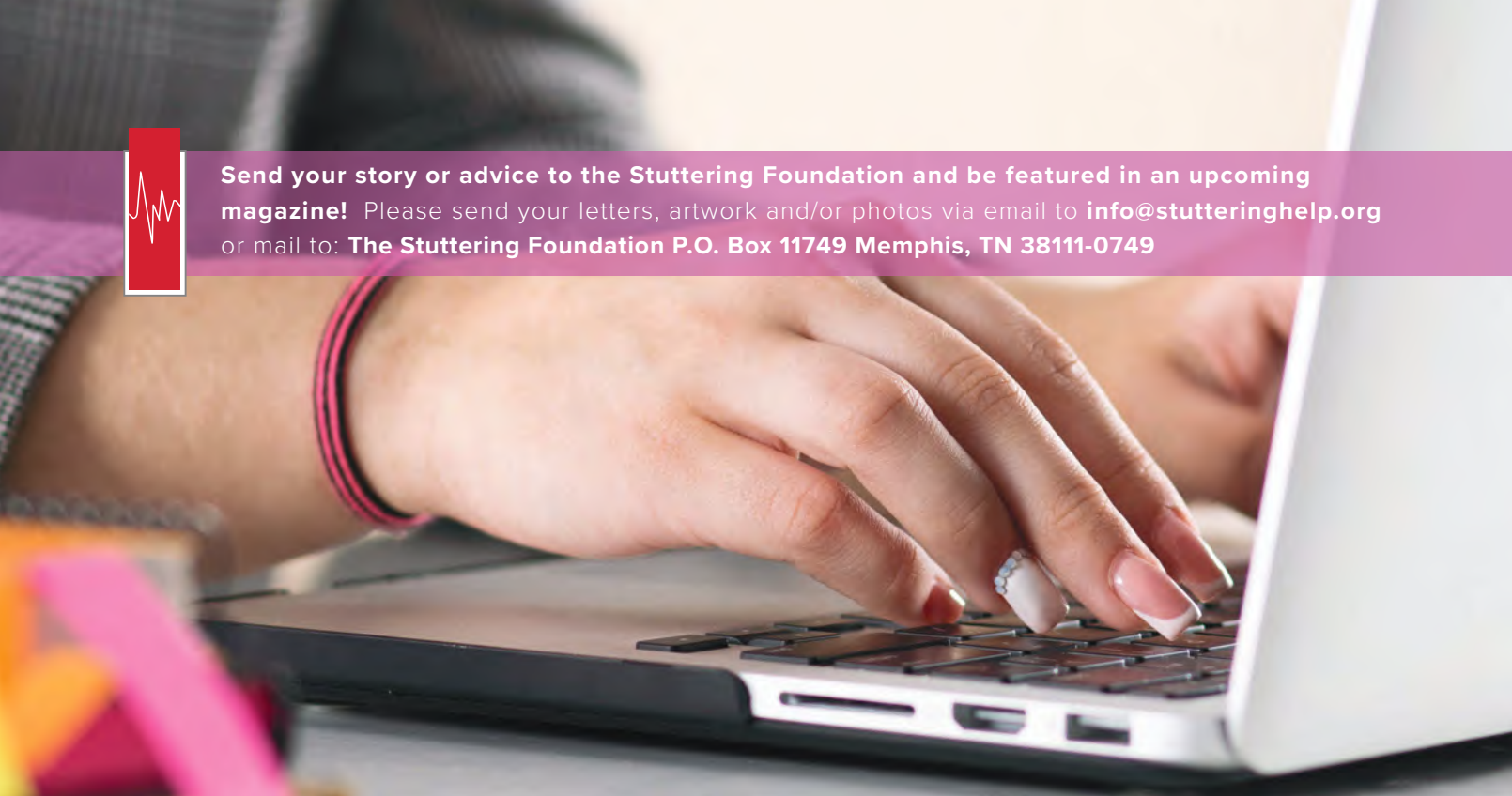
Workshop organizers are hoping to expand programming as soon as Fall 2025, with support from local education authorities and through in-service training sessions. They also hope to find a workshop location in the San Francisco area to reach the greatest possible number of attendees.

Interested participants can contact [nratner@umd.edu](mailto:nratner@umd.edu) to help organize an event in the area. Parents in Northern California are encouraged to reach out to their local schools and encourage them to help organize future workshops.





Send your story or advice to the Stuttering Foundation and be featured in an upcoming magazine! Please send your letters, artwork and/or photos via email to [info@stutteringhelp.org](mailto:info@stutteringhelp.org) or mail to: **The Stuttering Foundation P.O. Box 11749 Memphis, TN 38111-0749**



## 2024 GIFTS IN HONOR

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Guy Bradshaw	Art Frank	laurabriguglio6	August Casey O' Neil	Adam Tankersley
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**We are thankful for all of our generous donors!** When you donate to the Stuttering Foundation, you can rest assured that your gift will go to support our program services, benefiting people who stutter (and those who seek to educate and serve them) all around the world.



## CASH GIFTS

Checks can be mailed to:  
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## OTHER GIFTS

Stocks, Securities, Remainder Trusts, Employer Matching Gift Programs, Annuities, and Retirement Asset Donations are just a few other ways to make a lasting impact with your donation dollar. Please check with your financial advisor, employer, and or legal advisor for details.



## TRIBUTE GIFTS

Memorialize a deceased family member or friend with gifts to the Stuttering Foundation. Honor a birth, an anniversary, graduation, wedding, or any important occasion in the name of a loved one.



## LEGACY GIFTS

It's easy to include the Stuttering Foundation in your will, and it will do a world of good! Contact us and/or your legal advisor for assistance.

*Charitable contributions, and bequests to the Foundation are tax-deductible, subject to limitations under the code. We welcome gifts of appreciated stock for which you may deduct full market value for income tax purposes. The Stuttering Foundation is a recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and your contribution is tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Please check with your financial advisor, employer, and or legal advisor for details.*

*The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (the CAA) signed into law on December 28, 2020, maintains and expands the charitable contribution incentives originally enacted by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (the CARES Act).*

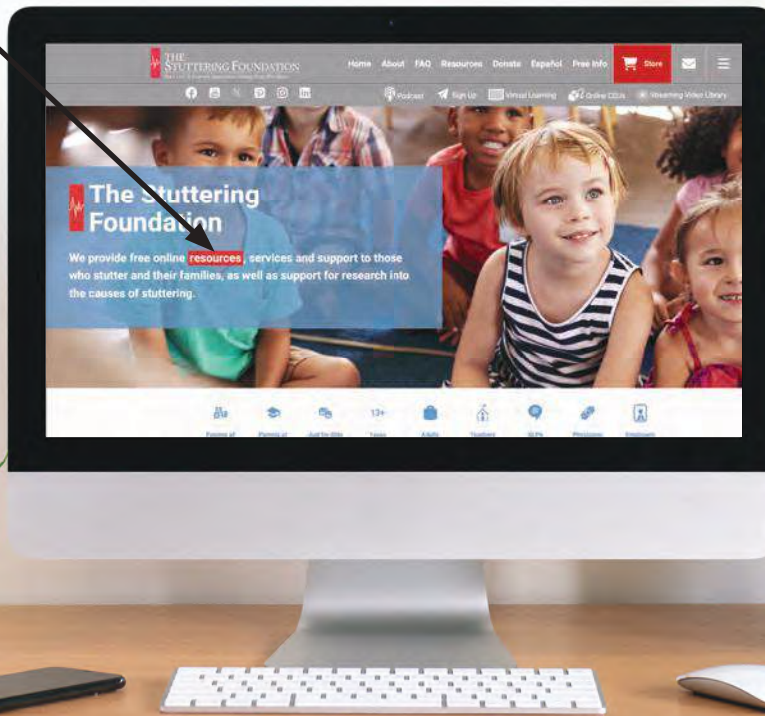
*The enhanced charitable contribution deduction benefits apply solely to qualified charitable contributions, which are contributions made in cash to a public charity or "50% charity." For these purposes, this includes a private operating foundation, such as the Stuttering Foundation.*



**DONATE FROM YOUR  
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The Stuttering Foundation revised its website, StutteringHelp.org, to focus on resources available to people who stutter, parents of children who stutter, and those who treat stuttering. The Foundation's digital content reaches people in 7,761 cities in 168 countries across the world. Resources, generally available for free, include:

- Brochures**
- E-books**
- Videos**
- Virtual Learning sessions**
- Podcasts**
- Books**
- Posters**
- Worksheets**
- "I Stutter" ID card**
- Classroom presentation**
- Blog posts**
- Magazine**

Many resources have been translated into 46 languages by people who stutter. Materials are also available on social media platforms including Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, X (formerly Twitter), and Pinterest, and in 16,571 libraries across the United States and Canada. An E-catalog and product list are available for speech-language pathologists working with children and adults who stutter.

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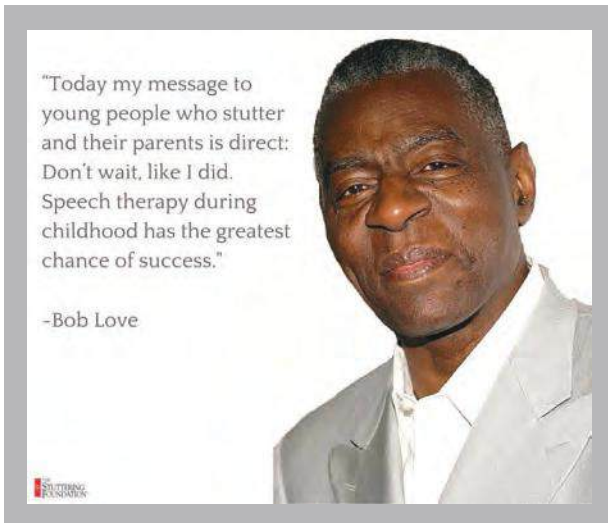


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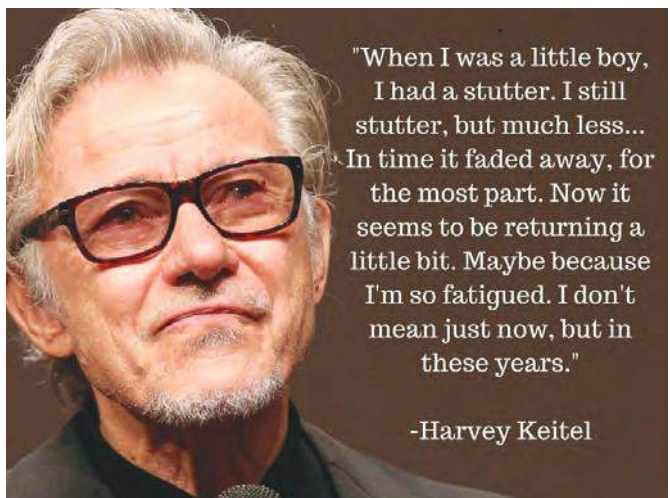


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**-Joseph G. Sheehan, Ph. D**





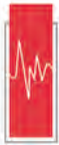
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