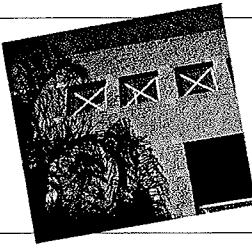


# HEALTHCAST

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**Saint Joseph and Tripod  
-Hearing the Children**

# Deaf Children Get Sound Support

SAINT JOSEPH LINKS WITH TRIPOD

**When Mary Harvey first noticed her daughter had a hearing problem, Chanel was two-and-a-half. "She was sitting in the hall and when her father called her she didn't turn around." Although her hearing tested normal when she was one, something changed causing Chanel to be profoundly deaf in both ears. "We still don't know what caused her hearing loss," says Mary. "It might be because she was born with the cord wrapped around her neck, or because she had several ear infections as an infant and a high fever. The doctors just aren't sure."**

Affecting 18 million Americans and one out of 30 school children, hearing loss when left undetected can greatly delay a child's expressive and receptive language skills, and profoundly impact the educational process. Fortunately, through a contact Mary's supervisor had, Mary and Chanel found the Tripod program.

A nine-year-old, non-profit support service and school for hearing impaired children and their families, Tripod helps children from birth to 12 years old learn sign and oral language through progressive, Montessori style schooling. Last year, the Burbank-based program enhanced its services still further by establishing an affiliation with Saint Joseph Medical Center.

"Without providing high quality hearing evaluations and hearing aids for our children, our program couldn't offer the comprehensive support we strive for," says Tripod Executive Director Carl J. Kirchner. "Saint Joseph's contribution enhances our program tremendously."

Under the direction of Michael Raffin, Ph.D., director of neurodiagnostics at Saint Joseph Medical Center, the hospital's audiology section provides all the school's audiology services, including initial screenings,

evaluations, annual check-ups and checks the classroom hearing devices.

"We enjoy having a working relationship with a full-service hospital, so as audiological and other medical needs arise, we know where to go," says Kirchner.

"To my knowledge no other educational program for the deaf has this kind of affiliation with a hospital," adds Raffin, who has his two children in the Tripod program. Although his children hear normally, Dr. Raffin and his wife, a Tripod audiologist, like the school's teaching philosophy and the fact that their children have become bilingual in English and American Sign Language.

At Tripod, Chanel attended pre-school classes with deaf, hard-of-hearing and hearing children. By the time she entered the first grade, she mainstreamed into the

Tripod / Burbank Unified School District elementary program at Washington Elementary School, in Burbank. Parents feel that regardless of their child's hearing ability students benefit by having two teachers—one regular teacher and one teacher of the deaf—in class.

Although the Harveys live in Crenshaw, Mary says the daily drive to Burbank pays off. "I know of other programs nearer to my home, but I prefer the Tripod environment. I have no question that without Tripod, Chanel would be well below her grade level."

As it is, Chanel functions well at her second-grade level, and after school enjoys ballet, Nintendo and bicycling to friends' homes. "I feel confident knowing that while my daughter's educational needs are progressing, Saint Joseph is keeping a close eye on her hearing needs." ■



**Tripod student Chanel Harvey, with her mother, Mary, expresses her gratitude to Michael Raffin, Ph.D., director of neurodiagnostics at Saint Joseph Medical Center, left, and Tripod Executive Director Carl J. Kirchner.**

*For more information about Tripod, or general information on deafness, call (818) 972-2080. For information about the medical center's comprehensive audiology or neurodiagnostic services, call (818) 843-5111, ext. 7034.*