

BY CYNTHIA FARRELL

The Southern Gazette

A Hearing-Impaired workshop was hosted at Holy Name of Mary Academy in Lawn with 10 students from Kindergarten to Level One attending.

Colleen Moyst, Impaired Specialist-Eastern School Board-Burin Region, co-ordinated the workshop which involved seven Burin Peninsula schools –

St. Lawrence Academy, John Burke High in Grand Bank, St. Joseph's Academy of Lamaline, Sacred Heart Academy and Marystown Central High, Fortune Bay Academy in St. Bernard's-Jacques Fontaine and host Holy Name of Mary Academy.

Special guests for the workshop were Myrtle Barrett, President of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association and Alison Day, who is the Outreach Co-ordinator for the CHHA.

Mrs. Barrett has lived with a hearing loss all her life. She grew up 'hard of hearing', but after contacting a virus that destroyed the remainder of her hearing. She is now totally deaf.

She's an excellent lip reader and was able to read and understand the students.

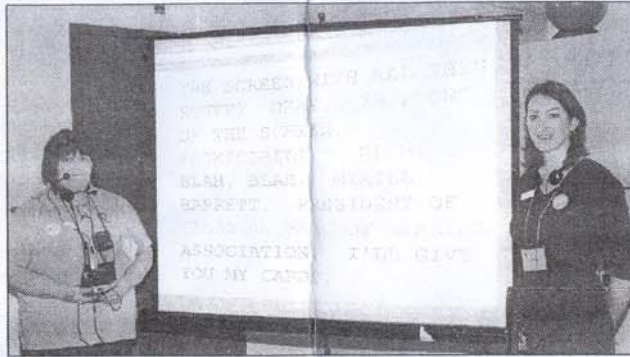
One of the topics Mrs. Dad covered was 'Assertiveness Skills'.

When the students came together, they got an opportunity to meet others 'just like themselves', suffering from a hearing loss, wearing hearing aids and a FM Speaker in a regular classroom. They shared similar experiences because of their hearing loss.

Often these students are the only students in the entire school who have a hearing loss.

Mrs. Moyst indicated, it's great that they can meet each other and share their experiences."

Mrs. Barrett and Mrs. Day brought 'assistive devices' to demonstrate to the students. One



CHHA president Myrtle Barrett and CHHA Outreach Co-ordinator Alison Day demonstrating the 'Real Time Captioning' device.

piece of technology was 'Real Time Captioning', which was set up so an individual who was deaf or hard of hearing could read what is spoken at the same time.

A computer is connected to the internet and a real time captioner in British Columbia, then transcribes every word spoken at the moment it is said. It's transmitted by another device, which displays the words on a large projection screen for everyone to read.

The person speaking wears a microphone so the real time captioner can hear what is being said. Everyone in the room could be included at the same time as a result.

Other equipment used and demonstrated included the 'Personal FM Systems', which are worn daily by the Hearing-Impaired Students. The 'Solaris FM System' was demonstrated, a unit most of the students already use.

Also, the 'Wireless FM System' was demonstrated. Two of the students on the Burin Peninsula have this system. Eventually, it is hoped all students will be using this Wireless System.

The Workshop was not restricted to study and education; it also included fun and leisure.

The students enjoyed 'icebreaker' activities where the students

meet each other or renew old friendships. They carried out 'Role Playing', where students demonstrated actual classroom experiences.

The main activity other than role playing was a lesson on how people behave in three different ways – non-assertive or passive, aggressive and assertive.

Mrs. Barrett and the students shared a lot of experiences and they role played to demonstrate those different behaviours and how to act assertively so people's feeling are not hurt and their rights are respected.

Later in the day, Mrs. Barrett had the students write poems about who they are, that the hearing loss is 'not who they are but a part of them', that they are much more than their hearing loss, that they can do a lot of things.

Mrs. Barrett shared some words of wisdom with the group. One important thing was to 'self-identify'; that is 'it is okay to say, "I have a hearing loss, could you repeat what you said or could you turn around to face me, so that I can read your lips?"

The second important thing is to learn 'To laugh at yourself' and the mistakes you make in trying to figure out what a person says. Miscommunication occurs on a daily



PHOTOS SUBMITTED

Participants in the Burin Peninsula Hearing Impairment Workshop hosted in Lawn were (seated on floor, from left): Colleen Moyst, Hearing Impaired Specialist-Eastern School Board-Burin Region; Nicholas Tarrant, Holy Name Mary Academy and Blake McIssacs, Fortune Bay Academy. Front Row: Brandon Prior, John Burke High; Mark Rennie, St. Lawrence Academy; Jordan Baker, Sacred Heart Academy and Joshua Maloney, Marystown Central High. Center Row: Brian Keeping, John Burke High; Myrtle Barrett, CHHA president; Blake Loveless, John Burke High and Hannah Walters, St. Joseph's Academy. Back Row: Angela Moyst, St. John's; Marcus Turpin, St. Lawrence Academy; Alison Day, Outreach Co-ordinator-CHHA; Ernest Baker, parent and Tracey Allen.

basis for people with a hearing loss, so if the students can laugh at it, than this will help them to deal with it better. 'Humour' helps!

Mrs. Moyst stated "the changes that occur within the students are amazing to watch, since it builds their self confidence, self esteem

and self worth, and to realize that they are not alone, that there are other students just like them who live on the Burin Peninsula. "They are accepted for who they are. The hearing loss is not seen first, rather they are seen as a person first and this workshop helped them to real-

ize that. As well their feelings are normal and it is okay to have a hearing loss."

Mrs. Moyst wanted to thank the Eastern School District-Burin Region, Charles Penwell, Wade Prior and especially Holy Name of Mary Academy.