

GRAND ROUNDS

Caring for communication health

Many of us take our ability to communicate for granted, but the ability to speak, hear and be heard can pose challenges for some, and RVH's Speech and Language program is here to help.

While the service is for everyone and includes help for difficulties associated with stroke, head injury, Parkinson's Disease, ALS, and multiple sclerosis as well as swallowing assessments for adults, the majority of clients are pre-school children from one year old up to starting Senior Kindergarten.

"The bulk of my work is with young children who are not saying first words, playing or interacting as they should," says Denise Dominy, RVH Speech-Language Pathologist. "I'm often the first to see them and may flag other problems and refer to another service as well."

Dominy works with children who have trouble with pronunciation, grammar and sentence structure, or who stutter. Referral can be made by parents, or by physicians, schools and daycare, but parental consent is always required.

The first step of intervention is almost always training the parents with strategies to help their kids. "Parent training is crucial to the process," says Dominy.

"I love seeing a child tell you something they couldn't before, seeing them do something they couldn't before, and seeing their parents' joy," says Dominy about her work.

Parents Alexandra and Kyle Rowley, feel very fortunate to have accessed the speech therapy program through RVH for both of their children.

"Our family doctor suggested assessing our now four-year-old when he began missing verbal milestones before two years old and she put us in touch with the Sprouting Speech program. Denise has helped Gavin make huge improvements in his speech and it shows in his confidence when communicating with others. Denise also taught us how to support Gavin, and later Quinn, effectively and appropriately. Awareness, early detection and availability for treatment locally has been key," state the Rowleys.



Denise Dominy, RVH Speech-Language Pathologist, seen here with Quinn Rowley and her dad Kyle, uses play as one strategy to help develop children's communication skills.

Referrals to RVH Speech and Language Program can be made through the regional program, which will be called "First Words" as of July 1, at 1-866-994-8124 ext. 5905