**The following is a transcript of a virtual panel focusing on Fathers of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children that took place on April 13, 2021 in Virginia. The transcript was provided to Virginia Hands & Voices by Virginia Relay. Call moderator was Jacob Thornton (member) and co-facilitator was Terese Urban (board member) of Virginia Hands & Voices. The panelists included Jacob Thornton, Colin Wells, Erik Rodriguez and Robin Ramirez.**

Test test >> JACOB: Hi, everybody. We'll get started shortly. But like I said, they're spotlighted. So you won't lose that. And then at the bottom of your screen, you have a lille button that says CC, it says live transcript. You can click that and Hamilton Relay is doing that. They have the closed captioning set up. So it actually is in the Zoom screen. So you don't have to deal with the second screen and juggling that. If anybody wants to see closed captioning, that is available and there's -- like I said, there's somebody doing that live, which is nice. So we're really excited to have this group together. Auto not really a presentation. It is more of a conversation. If it's not appropriate for you to be here, that's all the hint that I'll give. I think that's probably clear enough. Parent driven organization supporting deaf and hard of hearing children and the hearing and professionals who support them. Hands and voices is unbiased about communication choices and believe that the choice that a family makes is the right choice. Couple thank yous before I get started. Renee from Pacific Access who is our interpreter. I believe that I heard that Monica was our captioner's name there Hamilton Relay. We appreciate their services to make this available to everybody. And I would also like to thank terry Urban. She's running all things, Zoom behind the screens and making -- scenes and making sure people are highlighted. Thanks to being here and coming up with this idea and setting all this up. Finally before we get started, I want to introduce the panelists and they will say more about themselves. So I will be real quick about everybody. Eric Rodriguez and Robin Ramirez are both dads are hard and hearing kids. Colin Wells is a D his kids are hearing and he's hard of hearing. That's something we really wanted to do when we talked about who the panelists would be. So thanks to Colin for being here and then, again, I'm Jakeon Thornton. I will facilitate and I will probably be a sometimes panelist. I will keep it on track in terms of time. I think I have to offer the other guys have said and I will jump and I will skip some questions. We'll see how it goes. So with all that, let's go ahead and get started. Because Eric and Robin are fathers of deaf and hard of hearing kids, I will let those guys go first with the questions being that Colin's perspective is a little bit different. Sometimes we're changing the question up a little bit for him and then I'll jump in at the end if rhyme going to or we'll go to the next question. With that again, thanks for being here. And we'll go ahead and get started. We will start with Eric. Robin, this question is for you as well. Please tell us about yourself, where you live, the age of your child or children, how old they were when you received the diagnosis of hearing loss and what amplification, if any, did they use. >> Eric: Hi, everyone. My name is Eric Rodriguez. I live with my wife and we have four kids. My youngest son, is thiso who is 3 years old now was diagnosed with bilatera hearing loss. He currently uses hearing aids on both ears as well. Something pert minute for this discussion later is when we were getting fitted for hearing age at 3 months, we had some genetic testing done and it came back he has a rare syndrome which leads to progressive hearing loss. At some point in his life, he will lose all of his hearing. So, um, that's it. >> Hi, everyone. Robin Ramirez. I'm a college soccer coach here in Roanoke, Virginia. I live with my wife and our daughter Isabella is almost 6 and then our son Leo is 2. Leo was diagnosed with being profoundly deaf on both sides. He received a diagnosis at less than 2 months after he failed his new born screener and he is implanted with bilateral cochlear implants. He was implanted at 8 and a half most and activated at 9 and a halfmonts. We use total communication. So we're in the process of learning sign language, our family is and in teaching Leo sign language along with him learning to process sound. >> JACOB: Great. And then Colin falls along side the same thread. Please tell us about yourself and at what age, if you know this, at what age your parents received your diagnosis or identification and tell us if you have ever used amplification before. >> Hello, everyone. I am deaf myself. I am the only deaf person within my family. My whole family is hearing. I became deaf around 18 months of age. I was deaf from bacterial meningitis. So after that, I became fully deaf but luckily, my parents acted upon that right away. They explored various options and I understand at that time, this was in 1981. There was not a lot of options available at that time like there is now. At that time, you had oral communication available, accused speech or sign language. Those were the three options available. Of course, my parents were encouraged to oral communication only, but my parents did more research and found that wasn't the only option they could pick. They had several different options or methods to choose from. Basically that became a total communication approach. I did wear hearing aids, but back in elementary school where you had the large device that was like a box with wires hooked up to the hearing aids. It was a very old school hearing aids set up. But I couldn't hear anything, but I was required to wear the device. This was from kindergarten through 5th grade. However, I did get a cochlear implant at the age of 9 and this was in 1989 around that time. And if anyone wants to ask me more specifically about that, I want to share my experience about my cochlear implant. Right now, I do not use it. And that's pretty much in a nut shell about myself. >> JACOB: Great. Thanks. If everybody knows who everybody is, um, I am Jacob. I have -- I live in Richmond, Virginia with my wife interest two kids. Margo is 4. She'll be 5 in August and Charlie is turning 3 in a couple days. Both of them were born with profound bilateral hearing loss identified -- I think Margo was identified within 2 weeks and with Charlie, I think it was a little bit later. We could tell. He didn't pass the new born hearing screening. So just with our experience, we pretty much knew right away with him because we had also done genetic testing. It was (inaudible) 26 a genetic thing that may or may not pass deafness on to a child, but when he didn't pass the hearing screening, we knew. Bolt of my kids have bilateral cochlear implants. We do both spoken English and American sign language but, I mean, you know, this changes from day to day. But ideally, we try to keep the languages spright to focus on the grammar in both languages. That's ouripality as we stand right now. Hence, I think it's going well, I like to think. So we're going to move into the next question. In the early, we'll start with Erick. In the early days after learning about the diagnosis, please share with us how you were feeling in ways you coped with the news about your child? >>Ex wreck: Just some context when I left this out. I have three other children all are hearing. Right now they're 10, 8 and 5 and Theo is 3. When we got this news a few years ago, I had a 7, 5 and a 2-year-old that were all hearing. When we got the news from the audiologist, we also failed the screening and we had failed on previous kids as well. So we're familiar. We went to an audiologist and she let us know that he had significant loss in both ears. I think originally I was sad, but also a little bit overwhelmed because we had these other children as well. And, um, you know, I didn't know what that was like and I really felt for him personally. It was a moment of sadness. Not ager, but just immediate sadness for him. I just couldn't relate. What were we going to do? So since this was new for my wife and I, something I will never forget, something we did to cope early on is I don't have any social media. So my wife and I went home. She pulled up her social media outlet, pretty much does what a lot of people do is Google search everything you can. So we were Google searching Pendried syndrome and infants hard of hearing or deaf and she found some really great posts with a bunch of very positive united comes and outlooks with reassurance that things will be okay, you can do it. Those kind of things. So I'll never forget that because we were just kind of in a state of what are we going to do? So that really, really helped us in that moment and it actually let us to also reach out to the community which we didn't know. There's a very small community in Fredericks burg, but now we're realizing it is much bigger than we thought because we were in that deaf community and I was aim to meet my first deaf adult. I heard his story and I told him mine obviously through an interpreter. He gave me a hug that I'll never forget. You're doing it. You got this. You know? And it just really helped me spreading the love really on that. It was just a great moment I will never forget. >> Robin: I know for me, very similar to what Erick was saying. Those first early days, um, after learning the diagnosis, it was tough if I can be honest. And looking back, you know, I blame my own ignorance, I guess, and lack of knowledge. Never really knowing anyone who is hard of hearing or deaf. But after a few days of that first initial feeling of, you know, whether it's sadness or just not knowing what to do I think, you know, what really helped was starting to educate myself and ourselves -- our family, you know, really reading up on famous people and on athletes, being a coach on athletes, you know, that are deaf or hard of hearing and just thinking more not of what my child will not be able to do or experience, but starting to change the mindset of thinking what are all the things that he is going to be able to do and that he is accomplish and that he can experience. So with that, ah, it has kind of given us a positive outlook on what my child will be able to do if he puts his mind to it. >> JACOB: Great. And then Colin, this will be a great no pressure because I feel this is going to be a great -- I'm excited to hear what you have to say. What advice can you give fathers that received diagnosis that their child has hearing loss? >> of course this can be very difficult for hearing parents to find out the news that their newborn has failed a newborn hearing test. Often times they don't know what to do. They feel in the dark and stuck. Lucky look, I think now in this day and age, we have so many more resources, more organizations out there that are willing to help educate people. The resources that are out there to help educate people on what to do with their children. My advice to fathers or to parents would be to not dismiss them, to not make them feel that they have to conform or fit into a hearing culture, keep them and it's okay to be who they are, acknowledge that they are different and there is nothing wrong with that. Do what works for that person and remember that, you know, not every method of communication works for every person. No two children are the same. And also it's important to instill them with confidence and encourage them they can do anything that they want to set their mind to. It doesn't matter if they're deaf or hard of hearing. Still encourage them they can do what they want.aim for the sky. And, of course, there will be many times where they do -- it can be quite heart breaking. They feel like they're different. They feel they can't do things that other things can do. But it is important that they know that you as the parents will always be there for them and that's what my father did for me. And just to let you know some background about my father. He is a Vietnam veteran. Blue collar, worked for the electric company. When he found out that I was deaf, you know, he was in shock. What was he going to do, but he go not give up. He persevered and kept learning. He Evern lungd -- even learned how to signing himself. He could communicate there 18 months all the way to now. And if he can do it, then any father can do that. >> JACOB: Yeah. Amazing answers. Great. It is interesting. I think part of the thing about tonight for me there seems to be not a great outlet if dads to have these discussions. So I don't think I have much to add, but I will just add to what -- especially Erick and Robin and Tom said about his dad. When I first found out, I was devastated. I'm a musician. That's what my life had been built around until that point and I think in terms of coping with it, very similar to what Robin and Erick are doing and what Colin's dad is, you know. For me action, I need something to do to help me process things and just, you know, like those guys said, go in and meeting deaf adults. That's part of why I was devastated. Robin said, I was ignorant. I didn't know any deaf people. So meeting some of those people and I also remember at the time, you know, one of the first things I did was learn the alphabet in ASL. And I would run just to kind of get out some energy and while I ran, I would finger spell. I would just think of words and I would just spell the whole time and it helped me practice that and it just feeling like I was making progress, just kept me pushing through it in those early days. I wantedy to add on some dads here with really young kids. So I think what everybody shared is great. So moving on to the next question. We get into making some of those decisions for your kids. As we know, there are many different options regarding what may work best for your child whether it's amplification or communication choices. How did you as a family come to make your own decisions for your child and did you feel supported by family, friends, medical personnel, anybody else that's involved in your life or that you involved in your life at that point? >> Erick: Yeah. So for our situation, this is something that was new territory for us, right? So, you know, my youngest son, hearing loss, brand new scenario we were dealing with. We did our research, figured out what worked for us. We're mostly a hearing family, but I think instantly, we started doing ASL. Because we had done baby sign with all of our other boys, simple stuff when they were younger and it worked really well. We continued with that and now it's obviously grown. We have used a total communication as well. Keeping a mixture of verbal sign language and gestures, lip reading, Theo is 3. We can tell he predominantly lip reads if his hearing aids are out. Some of our boys are taking to it. Some of them are, but my oldest is really great to see. We'll do what we need to get done kind of thing. I will say family is for the most part been very supportive. When we told him we were going to do verbal ASL, all these things, instantly some folks on both sides of the family were learning sign on their own. Like what you just said, the ABC. If you can get that down, you can have a conversation essentially. There is still family members who I think are in denial. As far as medical professionalss, most of them are tight lipped. They just kind of ask questions about what we're doing at home and how we're communicating and just, you know, that's great. They don't really -- they haven't given any do this, do that. >> Robin: For us with all the different opinions, what helped us was, you know, my wife and I decided we needed to get on the same page and just not really listen to any of the outside opinions and make the decision, you know, what works best for our child. She and I, we have our daughter who's hearing. What's going to be the best decision for Leo, the best decision for our child. We went ahead and do our research and, you know, those first few months just kind of -- all right. We're going to do what works best and not really listen to. And they gave some opinions and we're going to do what we know, you know, is best for Leo. And so that's what we went ahead and decided that he was going to get to be implanted, but also to learn. We were going to learn ASL and we tried -- we're still learning, but by no means proficient. I doubt -- I'm hoping that one day we'll get there, but we're learning. We found signing time videos that we play our -- our daughter picks up sign language so fast and so I know that can be a little frustrating for myself. But yeah. We're working on that. In terms of medical professionals personnel, we did get pushback and there were audiologies that we are going to sign and but, you know, we just, you know, we just say okay. And then, you know, go ahead and keep doing our thing as a family. We think he's doing well, doing both. So we're we take into consideration with the medical professionals say, but you have that gut feeling of what you're doing as a parent is right for your child. I think that's what we have going on here. >> JACOB: What's the best way to make that homeschool connection? >> First I want to share some information about myself. So I've been a teacher with the deaf and hard of hearing for 12 years. The first 5 years I worked in elementary school and now this is my 7th year working in middle school. So over those 12 years, from what I've seen, of course, 90% of deaf and hard of hearing children are born into hearing families and know 90%f those hearing families don't know what to do initially. So I always provide them with resources, some ideas about what to do. Unfortunately often times, I see sort of like not walking -- talking the talk, but not walking the walk. It's easy -- it's important to be involved with your child's lives to make sure that you're supporting upon students and children with communication and I will give you an example. So often times deaf and hard of hearing children will -- go home after school, but they can be neglected by the family. They don't have anything to talk about, which can cause more delays in communication for the student, for the child. And, of course, their self-confidence kind of erodes with time because of this. It is important to be involved with kids in their lives. Ask them how they're doing, what's going on at school. So simple little things like that will really help them have that self-esteem and feel confident. And team work is so important. Parents and teachers really need to work together. It doesn't work when the teacher is providing all the information or the things to do for the child, but the parents they say okay. But then they don't follow through. They'll get to it later. Something like that. Timing is very crucial and deaf and hard of hearing child's life. Anyone moment to disregarding the approach is going to delay their communication, their education. So I don't want to insTim fear, but the point is be involved as much as you can and make sure that they know that you are there for them. >> JACOB: Great. It's kind of wild everybody's experience with parenting and with deafness is different. Like I said, (inaudible) how much I resonate with everything you're saying. One thing that I would add because in terms of the family stuff, I think that's pretty similar for me. I think there is this stillma about medical -- stigma about medical professionals and Robin, you touched on medical professionals a little bit. I think if you go on the internet and try to find out about those filters and where they but heads, it is kind of brutal. That gets talked about a lot. In our experience, I think we had negative experiences with both. We had a couple medical professionals that really did push hard against sign language. We met a couple deaf people that were really against implants. And I guess what I would say is through those couple negative interactions, what we ultimately found is that when you move past that experience, they're really just individuals. It is to group the whole cultures as one big thing is not accurate and we now have an audiologists and a speech therapists and an early intervention person that are all 100% supportive of us, you know, going full steam ahead with spoken English and with American sign language. At least I consider myself as part of the deaf and hard of hearing Richmond community. Colin, for example, somebody that we met through the gatherings in that culture, but now is a personal friend and I think for the most part, if you have to hack through a couple experiences like that, it really is worth it. Just like any other group of people, you kind of figure out who you match with and who you get along with and who you're paired to and you're on with that. And since figuring that out, we've had great experiences really with both -- with both the medical folks and with deaf culture. Um, so next question looking back on your journey, looking back on the part of your journey you have been through so far, I know there's a lot to go, you can tell on one of the biggest challenges and one of your biggest successes? >> Erick: Sure. So for us, one of the biggest challenges is based on Theo's diagnosis with his syndrome diagnosis. He has progressive hearing loss. He's gone down a little bit over the past year. And at some point, he'll either wake up one day or hit his head and all of a sudden he will lose all of his hearing. Based on everything we read, there's not a lot of research on this particular syndrome because there hasn't been any cases of it. That can happen any time. What I'm reading is that it in is the earlyef years, probably pre-10. He's 3 now. But really we're prepping for that. We're anxious and it makes me wife very anxious as well. So that's why we're fast charging, you know, as much ASL and my wife took a class on queued speech really trying to find everything we can possibly do to get him as far along as possible before we have to make that decision on what we will do next. But I would say that's the biggest challenge right now. I've had many other challenges, but I know we're kind of running out of time. I will stick with that one and then, um, the other part of the question of success is, you know, I kind of touched on it earlier. The journey that we had thuses far has only been a couple years. It has really opened the door to this community that we never knew existed. Right? We had no idea, but now we've had immersed ourselves in it. We have been reaching out all over the Fred wrecks burg area. Under arrest audiology team is in Richmond. So we do go to richmond frequently just trying to find people not necessarily -- well, for the most part, finding people with children with hearing loss and so then we can kind of hear their story, but also seeking out folks that may have the same syndrome Theo does. So, um, it's just really opened the doors for us to the community and the folks that we have met are so very nice and caring. I would say that's been one of the greatest successes. We're very lucky to have found this community and have been welcomed in the way that we have so far. >> Robin: For us, I think one of the biggest challenges has been learning a new language and a new communication style. As far as successes, I think, you know, he's only 2. So we've been -- every time we see him sign a new word or, you know, say a new word, it's a huge success. So, um, we celebrate that and my wife has a list of all the words that he signs and all the words that he says and, you know, it's amazing just, you know, every new word or new sign, you know, is celebrated. So I think those are the biggest successes so far. >> JACOB: Colin, this is the wage question for all of us. >> So one of the biggest challenges for myself as a deaf individual is learning to have a lot of patience. Let me clarify what I mean. So there are going to be a number of struggles growing up through life. You have various struggles, but you have to continue to have an open mind and that's what fathers need to do to teach their kids that you will go through difficult times. And but when you fall, you Auld get back up. You get back up again and you keep moving. You persevere. So for whatever reason, those things are happening. I think most of the times there's legal reasons, accommodations, issues. I will share a story. I will try to be quick about this. So when I was in 8th grade, I was trying out for JV football team for high school. So I made the team. And at that time, the school refused to provide an interpreter for the football team because they said it was an afterschool hours activity. My parents were furious. So they contactd the ADA and at that time, this was 1992? I think '88 had just been signed into law. So they got a lawyer, sued the school board. We won and that -- at that moment, my parents taught me that nothing is impossible. You have to major general sure you know what you can do and you have to be aware the resources out there, especially the ADA. And that would help you through those struggles getting what you need to getting some of the successes in life. >> JACOB: Great. I will tag on this one too. (inaudible) instead of (inaudible) panelists at this point. Just a fun topic to talk about. I think my biggest challenge was probably just accepting Margo being identified as deaf and just kind of that lifestyle change. Everybody in this meeting knows it's a lifestyle change especially if you're learning a new language or if you're supporting devices. There's a new community. There's a new schedule. You meet a lot of new people. It's a big change. There's a lot of things to figure out. This works for us. This doesn't really work for us. How much can we take on. What's really critical and just moving through that was the biggest challenge. And at the moment, I think the biggest success is really just my kids. They are showing me that we were right to trust the choices that we made and that doesn't mean that we had made wrong choices here and there and they show us how to adjust. But ultimately, they made us feel like I think successful parents and our decision making and they're just doing well. And, you know, I share how difficult it was to learn about Margo's deafness when he was born. I guess a follow-up to that story that exemplifies the success is when Charlie was born, I mean, it was -- that was perfectly fine that he was deaf. We were almost excited about it because I think we were excited about it because we had that to share with his sister. We didn't have any questions. We were comfortable with what we were doing. So that, to me, (inaudible) of success. 9:15. We got 15 minutes left. I'm just curious. I think this question will be correct and some of you may or may not have an answer. But I wanted to ask since this is an event that is specific for dads and guys. Are there things is that you noticed or experienced in your journey with parenting or hard of hearing child that are unique to being a father? And you don't have to go in order. I don't know if anybody has an answer, just jump in. >> The panelists? Yeah. So for me, um, I don't think there's anything unique. But what I would like to share is through this interaction that I've had with this deaf community, I have gotten congratulated for some odd reason that I'm a dad putting in the time and effort. Maybe that is something that is not seen very often. But I've been just, you know, encouraged, really, but a lot of the folks that met. You're doing an awesome job. Your son is so young and so lucky. I think I heard so many stories about the negative part of being deaf, which I don't think I even understand. I think it actually is just eye-opening and kind of a blessing for Theo to be welcomed by the community and just have all this access to new and exciting things. So, um, what I would say is to the dads on the panel, just show, you know, be there for your child really. Just be the advocate for your child. You would probably be already anyway. Just continue to fight for him, for us personally right now with Theo, he's 3. He's got early intervention that just ended. We've getting him into the school system. So we're doing the IEP track and I'm coming to every single meeting. I will not be in the back getting notes from my wife basically asking how the meeting goes. I'll be there for him and be just as educated as she is helping me be as well so we can be an advocate for our little man basically. Just keep sticking with it. I know it's probably a really hard road interest what Robin was saying too. The ASL part, it's very fun, but it is very hard to learn a language this late in the game. I'm enjoying it and we're seeing the positive benefits. So keep sticking for whatever you guys decide for your child. It's the right move. >> Robin: I'll say, I don't know about being unique to a father, but I know the thing that stuck the most with me is when a first speech therapist told us -- told us that the experiences that our child is going to have is the most important part because that will help, you know, whether it's learning ASL or he hearses a new sound. And as soon as I heard that, the first thing I thought was vacation. This was pre-COVID. So, um, I started thinking, all right. Where can we go on vacation where he'll experience all these different -- he'll have all these different experiences and so, you know, then COVID hit and so this we're hoping that this summer we'll be able to take a good little trip. I think it doesn't have to be just vacation. I think just any experience in the time that you commit to your child is huge because whether -- for outside, he'll hear an airplane, he'll look up. It's just amazing seeing the different things that he's experiencing for the first time. And also signing because then if there is something we don't know and he'll point to or he'll look at, we quickly look up how do you sign XY and Z? And so I know hearing that from the speech therapist and that give him as many experiences as possible, as many unique experiences as well, um, I think that's been what stuck with me the most. I think, you know, it's what is going to be fun raising them. I will always be looking out for what are the best experiences, the most awesome experiences that he can have. >> JACOB: I would just add -- I have experienced the same thing, Erick. Robin, same for you. When we come on vacation, we're going to the beach? I know how to sign crab. It's beach words, whatever. So stuff like that is pretty fun for me. As far as specific to beg a dad, it's kind of funny that I notice there seems to usually be some assumption and so for example, we've done a couple signing courses online and we're doing one now because of COVID. We have a local one that we like, but we're not meeting right now. We signed up for level 2 instead of level 1 and the teacher e-mailed and said is the dad in level 2 also? It's kind of like -- what's that supposed to mean? [Laughter] But then on the flip side, you know, it seems like I can also jump in sometimes and push something forward. An example would be we didn't -- our both of our kits were implanted around 10 months. We had been signing for 10 months with both of them and they didn't hear anything. So I didn't want them to go into surgery with afternoon interpreter and I basically just pushed for me to be their interpreter and my wife asked that and it was kind of like no. And then I seemed to be able to jump in as the dad for some reason and go yeah. We're doing this and semi it worked out. It's just kind of funny that people have a perception of what a dad is. So they're just figuring out how to leverage it maybe. So we have what? 10 minutes left? About that. So if you have questions, feel free to put them in the chat. We had one that was submitted ahead of time. I think you can submit a question when you signed up and the question was: Did you speak more than one verbal language at home? If not, why? If so, did the child pick up any other verbal language? I will jump in and say we did not. We are doing two languages. We didn't simply because we don't speak two languages. I wish we did. But we don't; however, I would say the one thing we do, my wife took Spanish in high school and college and she retained some and got my daughter into dorra which introduces a limit bit of Spanish. She can count to 10 in Spanish now and she's picking up words. It wasn't my experience, but I dong do think it's possible. That's just my sense. Anybody else on the panel? >> Erick: We don't use a second verbal language in our family. >> Robin: So I'm a Native Spanish speaker. And it was, you know, it's been tough because I have, you know, a lot of it is on me. I feel like I dropped the ball a lit bit because before Leo was born, I was teaching our daughter and speaking to her in Spanish. So once Leo came and now we're learning ASL, it's kind of now it's ASL and English. But I'm hoping that we can -- now that, you know, now that I educated myself a lot more on Leo and, you know, his -- and just kind of what, you know, things have settled down a bit, I think we'll go back to trying to teach both of our children Spanish. >> JACOB: That's cool. I don there are resources out there for bilingual kids with cochlear implants. It's just because the brand that we have is Madel and there's a person at Madel that specializes in that and there's literature in that. Like I said, to some degree now, but I don't know a second spoken language, but I do know that it's out there. Trying to see if there's anyrd questions. It looks like somebody raised their hand earlier. It might have been a question. So whoever that is, if you want to type it, you can. If you want, I can unmute. If you want to jump in and ask questions, now is the time. I don't see anything else at the moment. So, kind of leave it at that. Do any of the other panelists have anything do add? >> Erick: I can add. It might be in the registration. Is anyone local to the Fredericksburg area of Virginia? Maybe not. >> JACOB: Nobody that's speaking up at least. We'll see. This is a good plug, a good moment to do a plug for hands and voices because we have -- by the way, don't think I said this. The only thing that qualified me to be the facilitator is that my wife is on the board and she asked and I volunteered. [Laughter] So nothing special. Because we chose implants and American sign language and because we felt a little bit of pushback here and there from both communities, our hands and voices felt like a really comfortable spot for us to meet people because they are supportive of your choices no matter what your choices are. I think it's just by chance we have three dads here that are all learning sign and are using amplification. However, I know plenty of dads and friends with some of them that are only doing implants. We heard from Colin. He only uses American sign language and I think all those things are valid for different reasons or just because they're your choice and that's school. American hands and voices is really supportive of that. Everybody has this through -- if you know the web address, it's VAhandsandvoices. Before we sign off, I definitely want to again thank Renee, the interpreter and what was that. Monica who is our captioner. I really enjoyed it. Maybe we'll do a dads group in person or a family thing in person some time, anything with other people at this point would be great after the passed year. But definitely thanks to all the panelists for joining in and with that, if there are no other questions or additions, I think let's say good night for the evening. >> Robin: I saw a hand raised. Jake ICM did you see a hand raised? >> I had my hand raised. My name isra Shawn and I live in the Roanoke area. I am also a coach and my son is bilateral hearing loss. He has cochlear implants. Provide a little context. My first 3 years of coaching, um, I was at Gallaudet University. So I had an opportunity to see what my future was certainly with my son. And one of the things that, you know, when I had to get reacclimated to learning ASL, it was getting back to the swing of thing ises again. So I guess the question I want to present to everyone is you know, when you're learning ASL,there's a lot of different methods. I know we're very app driven nowadays. There are one or two that I use, you know, when rime looking for different things and I think somebody made a statement about when you're out in public and you're like, hey, what's the sign for it? Orang tang or ladder. What apps or what methods do you people use to learn American sign language? Or whatever type, you know. >> JACOB: Anybody have a good quick answer? >>Ex Rick: For me, I probably have an ASL dictionary app. I am looking at my phone. I don't have too many apps. I try to stay off my phone as much as possible. What I found is every day I try to carve out about 30 minutes of YouTube videos. I have done all the signing time. We had access to sign it. There's a bunch of famous people out there. But really I have been using Dr. Bill Vickers. I'm sure a lot of people know. I repeatedly watch those videos over and over again. And I try to do 20 or 30 minutes a day. My biggest thing is Theo is 3. So he knows words. He knows airplane. Those kind of things. So that's what I'm trying to do is build that vocabulary. Not really focused on the conversation part as of yet. I can get that through courses I take online or really my wife. I can have a conversation with her and she can teach me. I try to set that time. I usually try to get in 20 to 30 minutes to build in vocab through YouTube videos is probably the quickest way to do it nowadays. >> JACOB: I agree. Go ahead, Colin. >> Just to comment on ASL apps or videos would help to some degree. But, of course, social interaction would be the best way to learn a language. So unfortunately, we are in a pandemic right now. So we can't just show up in person where we can learn sign language and interact. But I do have one suggestion. There's one company called sign language central. I believe auto SLC. They're based out of New York City. And they do wonderful ASL classes through Zoom. They offer a variety of different types of classes. You have beginner all the way up to advanced level classes and I think the price is very reasonable. I think the last time I colleged, I think it was TKPW $60 for a class that lasts 2monts, which is pretty good. I know several people who teach in that company and they're top in their field with ASL. So these are deaf professionals as well. >> JACOB: What those two guys have said is the right answer, of course. But just to give a very specific answer because I definitely agree with what those guys said. However, I also to the point of the question, there are times when I'm out in public or in the back yard or whatever and I see something and I just -- we're having a conversation and I'm trying to express something to my kid and I just don't know one or two words and there's an app called ASL dictionary and I think there's a lot of apps called ASL diction. This one is blue and it's got a lady on the app like this. [Laughter] You can find it in the app store. But it's a video dictionary and you don load everything. So you don't have to be connected. So no matter where you are, it's not like you are waiting for a video to load. I think it's -- I feel I paid 6 or 7 bucks for it. But I've been using it for 5 years and I'm still using it. You can keep a list of favorites. If there's a couple things or couple words that you just learned and you want to make sure you tonight forget them, I will go back to my favorites. That conversational stuff is the way to learn. That app has really helped me when I need to find those one or two words. Any other questions? Great. It is shortly after 9:30 and I definitely don't want to hold up anybody especially blare interpreter or captioner that are working for us tonight. I hope that we can connect again shortly. Have a great night.