



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Janet Seelhoff, Executive Director  
(402) 476-9573 or [nslha@assocoffice.net](mailto:nslha@assocoffice.net)

### **Nebraska Speech-Language-Hearing Association Selects Three Representatives for Better Speech and Hearing Month**

(April 18, 2014) The Nebraska Speech-Language-Hearing Association is proud to recognize Wyatt Strom, of Verdigre; Joan Burney, of Lincoln; and Matthew Cedar, of Wilcox as the 2014 Better Speech and Hearing Month representatives. The representatives were selected on the basis of their representation in the areas of speech, hearing, and swallowing, and their efforts to overcome these difficulties.

Wyatt Strom was diagnosed with Charge syndrome at a young age and has severe bilateral hearing loss. He has undergone 12 surgeries, including a cochlear implant, and lacks a vestibular nerve, so balancing is difficult. As a 17-year-old sophomore at Verdigre Public Schools, Wyatt has learned to communicate with peers and faculty in ways that best work for him. He uses sign language, gestures, and photos on his iPad, depending on what kind of communication the situation warrants. Within the past year, Wyatt's parents and teachers have seen significant improvement in both his communicative efforts and confidence. He has become more comfortable with saying longer phrases and initiating conversation through pictures. Wyatt's lack of a vestibular nerve makes P.E. class a challenge, but Wyatt's confidence and willingness to try new approaches has helped him succeed. Wyatt's newfound confidence has helped him project a positive outlook for classmates. This year Wyatt was chosen to attend Close Up in Washington D.C. through the Northeast Regional Program for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Close Up is a program where students experience their government in action. Wyatt is a true testament to how speech-language services can have a positive impact.

Joan Burney, an award-winning columnist, writer, and motivational speaker, suffered a traumatic brain injury in 2007. The injury resulted in receptive and expressive aphasia. Aphasia can create difficulty in remembering words, cause loss of the ability to speak, read, or write. This also affects visual language such as sign language. Joan's conditions were made worse after suffering a stroke, causing reading impairment and difficulty finding words. Joan has good comprehension, so she uses tools from speech therapy to help in finding words. These include using pictures, word associations, and first letter cues. She has stayed active in church and card groups, the community, and socially. Joan has a positive outlook and does not let her speech difficulties slow her down. She remains independent and keeps in close contact with friends and family. Joan sees that research and outreach not only help her, but help others. Recently, she addressed the Brain Injury Association of Nebraska, and urged survivors to persevere. Joan is exemplary in not letting a communication disorder change her life course. She remains in good spirits and continues to live life to the fullest.

-more-

Matthew Cedar has a severe fluency disorder that makes communicating thoughts and ideas difficult. Dysfluencies consist of stuttering, long pauses, interjections, and sound, syllable or word repetitions. Through speech techniques, Matthew has been able to push forward in his communicative issues. Matthew works diligently to utilize fluency enhancing strategies to communicate with peers and communicate his message. Matthew is a bright student and has a lot to share, so he puts great effort in his communication. Matthew's constant determination to battle through his stuttering is an inspiration to others with speech dysfluencies. Matthew has not allowed his speech difficulties to impair his ability to express himself and show all he has to offer. Matthew plans to attend the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago and become an advocate for Christianity by majoring in Christian Apologetics.

The Nebraska Speech-Language-Hearing Association will host a proclamation ceremony on Wednesday, May 14<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 a.m. in the Warner Chamber at the State Capitol in Lincoln. The ceremony will honor these three recipients. A luncheon will follow at the Cornhusker Marriott.

NSLHA's more than 460 members represent speech pathologists, audiologists and students. Audiologists specialize in preventing and assessing hearing and balance disorders as well as providing audiologic treatment, including hearing aids. Speech-language pathologists identify, assess, and treat speech and language problems, including swallowing disorders.

NSLHA's mission is to promote services for speech, language, hearing, swallowing and related disorders in Nebraska; to encourage education and research activities; and to advocate for the rights of persons with communication disorders. To learn more about NSLHA, visit [www.nslha.org](http://www.nslha.org). Learn how to identify the signs of communication disorders at [www.identifythesigns.org](http://www.identifythesigns.org).

#####