

A Bootcamp Experience!

In 2008, *Hear For You* participated in a three-day holiday program for deaf children (Years 5 & 6).

Participants attended a bootcamp session on the second day at Bronte in Sydney's east. The session was led by trainers "Chief" and "Gunny" from The Original Bootcamp.

We spent the morning doing a whole range of physical activities that hearing people would probably take for granted. One exercise, for example, involved the kids carrying one member of the group for 50 metres, then they had to lower that person to the ground.

These young charges, like many young deaf people, had no concept of team work. It's a common problem because they're so used to working one-on-one in speech therapy, education support and so on. Teamwork is not something that comes naturally to them.

The first few people to be carried were unceremoniously dropped onto the ground. The kids had no idea of working together to gently carry and lower the person. But we kept reinforcing the message of doing it together. By the time they got to the fifth person the kids had worked it out. Then "Chief" told them, "Carry me - if you can work together you can do this." Although we were a little anxious, they did it - and it was fantastic to watch them do it beautifully.

In the afternoon on the same day there was a Question & Answer session led by Olivia Andersen and David Herridge.

To the kids enrolled on the holiday program, we are the older generation. We grew up with relatively ineffective hearing aids. These young kids have grown up with cochlear implants. These days babies as young as six months receive implants. That means they have a greater opportunity to learn language naturally.

Despite the changes in technology, many of our personal experiences were the same as those that our young charges are going through now, and there was a lot we could share.

They asked us about everything. How did we survive as deaf teenagers? How did we manage university? How do we manage day-to-day life as deaf adults? They were worried about who they were going to marry and having deaf children. They wanted to hear all about David's little boy Josh, who is three and has perfect hearing.

On the last day of the holiday program, the children attended a workshop with cartoonist, David Carter, who has a cochlear implant and is currently working in USA with Mike Judge (the creator of *Beavis and Butthead*). The kids were inspired by David Carter's success and creativity.

Overall, the program was very successful - the participants were motivated and excited. One of the kids went back to school and approached his sportsmaster about becoming a sports captain! It definitely confirmed our view that there is a real need for something like this for young deaf people.

