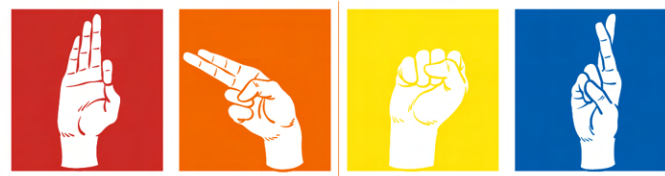


2025 Impact Report

FHSR

Foundation for Hearing and Speech Resources

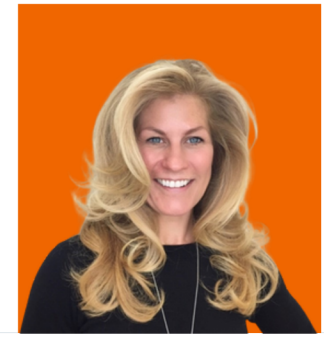


Our Year of **ACCESS & INCLUSION**

Expanding access. Strengthening inclusion. Reaching more families.



Reflecting on 2025, Our Year of **Access & Inclusion**



As we began 2025, FHSR set a clear and ambitious intention – to expand access and deepen inclusion across every facet of our work. We committed to:

- reaching more children and families by expanding the geographic reach of our programs
- strengthening communication supports by including ASL interpretation and Spanish translation whenever possible
- reducing barriers to participation
- investing in parent engagement
- advancing professional development for our teaching partners

Grounded in the proven impact of our programs for children who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH), **we also proudly reaffirmed a core value that defines FHSR: keeping all of our programs tuition-free for families and professional partners.** You'll read more about our efforts to expand access & inclusion across our three program pillars in the pages of this report, as well as our impact throughout Illinois.

As always, we are grateful to the DHH children we serve and their families, as well as for our Boards, volunteers, partners, and supporters. **Your trust and collaboration make this work possible.** Finally, FHSR also offers our heartfelt thanks to Events Manager & Director of Communications, Jean Kaiser, who retired this year after 15 years of dedicated service to children with hearing loss in Illinois.

Thank you for showing up for DHH kids in 2025, and helping make it a powerful and meaningful year of access and inclusion.

Kristen J Van Dyke,
FHSR Executive Director

Follow FHSR on social media @FHSR.Chicago



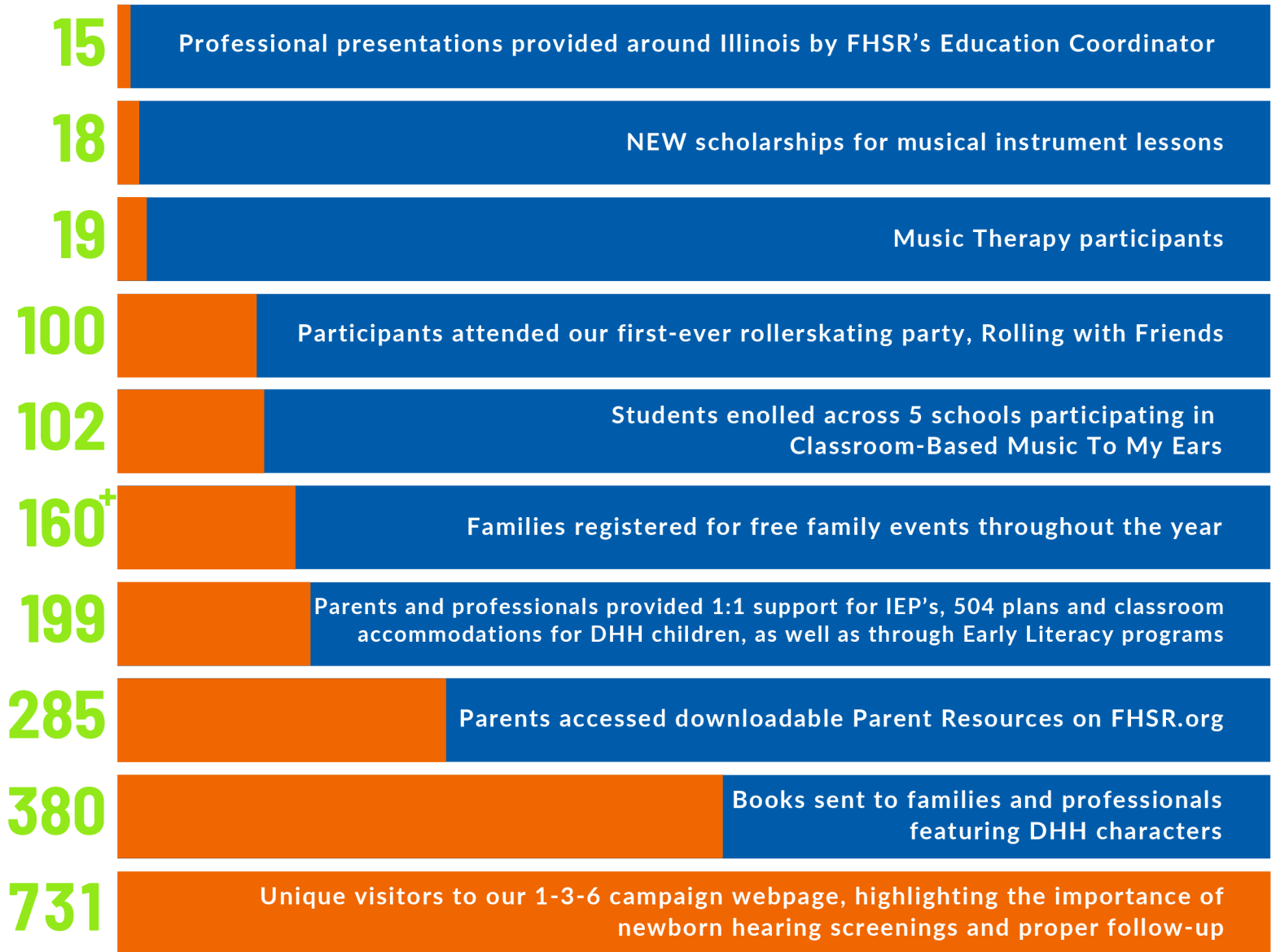
Or sign up for our monthly newsletter (available in English & Spanish) at [FHSR.org](https://www.fhsr.org).

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2025 By the Numbers



952 Total number of children served in 2025



Education Coordinator

Dr. Anna Tess has been offering free 1:1 counseling to families seeking to establish, maintain or adjust an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan as well as technology and resource support. She also provides support to classroom teachers and administrators seeking to implement accommodations. In 2025, Anna supported 160 parents and professionals with IEPs, 504s and classroom support.

In 2025, Anna presented at local and national conferences such as the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Conference in Pittsburgh as well as poster presentations at American Cochlear Implant Alliance Conference and Council for Exceptional Children. Anna has provided over 15 presentations for the Chicago Public Schools, Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Teachers, Illinois Council for Exceptional Children and Early Intervention Providers.

Anna also provided monthly updates through the FHSR newsletter, highlighting advocacy issues including the importance of newborn hearing screenings and funding changes that may affect hearing screening and intervention services in Illinois.

Early Literacy Initiatives

FHSR is stepping forward to provide support for the education of DHH children across Illinois, and advocating for a new standard of care. Key to this effort are trainings for parents, educators, Early Intervention providers and school professionals. Those who complete the trainings receive a set of four free books that feature characters with hearing loss for their home or classroom. Together, the books and training teach the basics of early literacy and set the stage for a lifelong love of reading and language.

Anna has helped me advocate for my students. For example, she helped me identify and ask for the right equipment to allow them equal access to videos in computer class...Anna is the most knowledgeable person in the world when it comes to technology and deaf education! She is really responsive, and I have come to rely on her so much.

— Kiersten,
Teacher of the Deaf



C&CO: Clinical & Community Outreach



FHSR is dedicated to building a community of compassionate support for deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) children across Illinois by partnering with families and hearing professionals. We provide key funding for pediatric loaner hearing technology to audiology centers, and support the Hart Family Cochlear Implant Education Coordinator at the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago. FHSR supports parent connections and fosters self-esteem in DHH children by hosting free social events for families throughout the year. Learn more at FHSR.org/clinical-community-outreach/ or scan the QR code above.

Lurie's Partnership

The FHSR-funded Hart Family Education Coordinator at the Ann and Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago (Jen Haney) served 181 children and gave 11 professional presentations. Jen served 17 school districts and cooperatives in Chicago and the surrounding suburbs.

We also celebrated an extraordinary moment of recognition for our Youth Ambassador, Mallory (pictured below with her family), who was honored by Lurie's with the naming of a treatment room in recognition of her ongoing support through the Walk for the Kids fundraising event. Mallory now joins a distinguished group of FHSR luminaries including some of our founders: Louise Hart, Herta Hess Kahn, and Hub Stern, who have also been honored with rooms dedicated in their names.

FHSR additionally made a one-time grant of \$7,000 to Lurie's for their loaner hearing aid bank to establish a loaner technology bank at their new Outpatient Center in Schaumburg.

Free Family Events

Free family events have been the cornerstone of the Foundation's community outreach and are a highlight of many families' calendars! FHSR hosted four family events throughout 2025:

- Rolling with Friends (38 families registered, 28 attended)
- Morton Arboretum (45 families registered, 20 attended)
- Daisy Doo (34 families registered, 10 attended)
- Cheers for Ears (44 families registered, 40 families attended)



We love the family events! We really look forward to them.... the idea that the kids can see other kids like them? There's no other way to provide that. I can't overemphasize how important that is. She'll spot another kid with a cochlear implant a mile away — it's that important for them. FHSR offering that opportunity is really important.

— Jenna, mother of a young daughter who uses cochlear implants



Loaner Hearing Aid Banks

In 2025, FHSR took a significant step by providing \$8,000 in seed funding to the Pediatric Audiology Department at Rush University Medical Center for their loaner hearing technology bank. This investment ensures that children have access to loaner hearing aid equipment while their own devices are being repaired or replaced, and during the cochlear implant process. Serving families across Chicago and the surrounding suburbs, Rush is now better equipped to ensure that no child goes without access to sound at a critical moment.

Parent Ambassador Program Launches

In response to parent and caregiver feedback, we achieved a longtime goal with the launch of our Parent Ambassador Program. In 2026, these dedicated volunteers will offer peer-to-peer support at six free family events, drawing from shared experience to foster connection and build a strong, supportive community for families navigating pediatric hearing loss.



MTME: Music To My Ears



FHSR's Music To My Ears program pillar brings the joy and power of music to deaf and hard of hearing children. Scholarships provide access to early childhood music enrichment and individual instrument lessons, while our Classroom-Based Program provides music education in five Chicagoland schools. FHSR's groundbreaking Music Therapy program provides a twelve-week tuition-free therapeutic intervention and is the subject of ongoing academic research aimed at creating a replicable model that can be followed by other organizations. Learn more at FHSR.org/music-to-my-ears-mtme/ or scan the QR code above.

Music Therapy

In 2025, the Music Therapy program expanded to serve 19 children, supporting growth in communication, social skills, early literacy, and self-confidence. All participants (100% of those enrolled) demonstrated measurable progress in at least one individualized goal area, with many achieving gains across multiple domains.

Additionally, the program celebrated the graduation of a cohort of six children who completed two years of participation and successfully met all established goals.

FHSR is also proud to be participating in a multi-phase research study launched in partnership with the University of Iowa's Department of Music Therapy. This initiative aims to publish program findings, validate the diagnostic tools used for participant evaluation, measure outcomes, and assess the program's replicability for broader implementation.

Iowa's researchers and FHSR's music therapists have been invited to present on our unique program in 2026 at several conferences, including:

- The Music Therapy International Conference in Bologna, Italy
- The Great Lakes Music Therapy Conference in Kalamazoo, Michigan
- American Cochlear Implant Alliance 2026 Conference in Chicago, IL





Classroom-Based Program (Pre-K—1st Grade)

In 2025, FHSR expanded its MTME Classroom-Based MTME Program to Villa Park's Early Childhood Center, partnering with SASSED (the School Association for Special Education in DuPage County). In September, we welcomed eight new Pre-K–1st grade students into a weekly music class specifically designed for DHH children. Over all five schools served by classroom-based MTME in 2025, FHSR enrolled a total of 102 students.

Mid-Year Parent Satisfaction Survey Results:

92%

of parents indicated that their child experienced increased self-esteem and confidence as a result of their participation

92%

of respondents reported satisfaction with the program

Student Outcomes — Self-Esteem

Self-esteem was a key outcome measure for the Classroom-Based MTME Program. At the start of the 2024–2025 school year, 64% of all participating students scored in the good, very good, or excellent range. By the end of the school year, that figure increased to 95%, demonstrating substantial growth in student confidence and self-perception.

Longitudinal Impact

In 2025, FHSR examined for the first time whether multi-year participation in the Classroom-Based MTME Program provided additional benefits for students. Comparative analysis of students re-enrolled for a second year (using end-of-year assessment data from 2024 and 2025) revealed notable improvement across all key performance components. The most significant gains were observed in Music Solo skills, an important indicator of their growing ability to self-advocate.



MTME: Music To My Ears (continued)

Individual Lessons & Early Childhood

In 2025, FHSR expanded our geographic reach by partnering with new community-based music schools serving the North Shore and suburbs to the northwest, south and west of Chicago. These partnerships reduced transportation barriers and made participation more feasible for families.



Our experience with the music lessons has been extremely positive. The teacher was patient, flexible, and genuinely invested in my son's success. Adaptations such as visual cues, repetition, hands-on demonstrations, checking for understanding made a big difference. FHSR was incredibly helpful in matching us with a teacher who was open to learning about my son's needs and adapting their teaching style accordingly. We felt supported every step of the way.

— Debbie, mother of a child with cochlear implants

Music builds confidence.



Rock the Town for Hearing



**Save the date:
October 23 – to Rock the
Town for Hearing with Us in
2026!**

Thank You!

To our sponsors:

- Thoma Bravo
- Electronic Media Technicians
- Arrowbrook Advisors (ASL Sponsor)
- Carlson Integrated
- Cochlear Americas
- Rush University Medical Center
- MED-EL
- Raymond James
- IL Academy of Audiology
- @properties

And to the UPS Store on Lincoln for providing discounted printing and decor!

2025's Rock the Town for Hearing boasted our biggest turnout to date and was a fundraising success. We also celebrated our first-ever Rising Star Award honoree, audiologist Dr. Kate Farnsworth.

For that, we thank our volunteers, and especially the 2025 Rock the Town For Hearing Committee:

- Kat Allen
- Megan Fealy
- Liz Galster
- Kate Giliat
- Steve Hallenbeck
- Megan Worthington



2025 Financial Report

INCOME

Total Individual Contribution	\$195,720
Release of Investment Reserves	\$165,000
Release of Program Reserve for A&G	\$35,205
Grant Income	\$160,000
Corporate Sponsorships	\$17,030
Special Event	\$41,826

TOTAL INCOME **\$614,781**

PROGRAM EXPENSES

Clinical & Community Outreach	\$65,690
EARs Education Program	\$125,530
MTME Music Program	\$187,069

TOTAL PROGRAM EXPENSES **\$378,289**

OPERATING EXPENSES

Fundraising	\$16,552
General Operations	\$72,327
Professional Services	\$201,865

TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES **\$290,744**

TOTAL EXPENSES **\$669,033**

NET OPERATING INCOME **(\$54,242)**

NET OPERATING INCOME W/ RELEASE OF PROGRAM RESERVES **\$381,812**

VALUE OF INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO **\$2,571,000**

Board of Directors

Co-Chairs

Heather Bennett
Robert Radasevich

Treasurer

Daniel Lockwood

Lifetime Directors

James G. Borovsky
Patricia Livingston

Directors

Kat Rayes Allen
Ellen Babbitt
Scott Berman*
Jennifer Evangelides
John DiChiara
Brett Fealy
Liz Galster
Carey R. Gelfand
David J. Gelfand
Kate Gilliat

Kate Gilliat
Steve Hallenbeck
Robert Handler
Valeri Le Beau*
Eva Lopez
Janice Louie
Paul M. Lurie
Steven Salzman
Sara Sortal*
Megan Worthington

*Denotes new board members added in 2025

The people behind the **impact.**



A Letter from our Co-Chair: Heather Bennett



Through our 2025 focus on Access & Inclusion, FHSR met our mission of helping deaf and hard of hearing children achieve social and educational success. Looking to the future, in 2026 we will further that mission by focusing on the advocacy required to make positive changes in individual lives, schools and communities, on the national and state level.

As a Board Director and the mom of a child with cochlear implants, I know the time, effort, and stamina it takes to help a child get what they need to thrive at school and in the world. FHSR has been a crucial partner to our family, supporting my daughter's journey by providing music therapy, educational guidance and events to connect her with a community of peers. FHSR has helped her grow into a role model for younger kids and we are so grateful for the positive impact on our family and the families supported by FHSR.

These amazing results are only possible through generous grants, corporate gifts, fundraising event donations, and giving from so many individuals who understand the impact FHSR is having and will have in the future.

Thank you for being a part of this success!

Heather Bennett

Co-Chair, FHSR Board of Directors

(Pictured above with husband David, another longtime supporter and volunteer for FHSR)



Looking Ahead: 2026



We have seen firsthand that **children who are deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) thrive when they are empowered to speak up for themselves, understand their rights, and lead with confidence.** We also know that the entire community benefits when parents and caregivers are empowered to become their children's strongest advocates as they navigate education systems, identify and access resources, and build circles of support. In 2026, we are affirming and expanding our commitment to helping every child and family affected by hearing loss find their voice.

In 2026, FHSR will:

**Strengthen
Education
Support**

**Build
Strategic
Partnerships**

**Advance
Research**

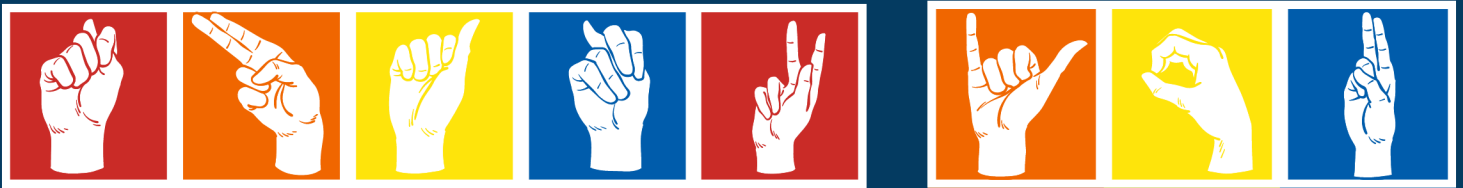
**Engage in
Advocacy to
Impact
Public Policy**

Learn more by visiting FHSR.org/our-year-of-empowerment-and-advocacy/ or scanning the QR code above.

We are building a future where every voice **matters.**



Thank You



Thank you for showing up to support DHH kids in 2025. Whether you attended an event, volunteered with a Board or event committee, made a donation, or referred a family to our programs — you've made a difference in the life of a child living with hearing loss.

FHSR.org



@fhsr.chicago