Giving locals something to talk about

Popular Northbrook speech language practice moves to Northfield

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Studies estimate that every day, the average person speaks upwards of 16,000 words. Keep in mind, that figure is not even including the thousands more words that pop into peoples’ heads throughout the day as they think and try to formulate phrases.

While clarity of speech and conveyance of thought is something most people don’t think twice about, for some children, being able to speak without stuttering, using proper grammar and understanding social cues are real daily struggles in which they need coaching and guidance to overcome.

For North Shore families looking to help their children alleviate speech and language obstacles, many are turning to Comprehensive SLP, a speech language pathology center formerly based in Northbrook that for the past few months, has called Northfield its new home.

For those unfamiliar with the field of speech language pathology, it is a growing field of educational therapy in which highly trained specialists work to assess, diagnose and treat speech, language, social communication and swallowing disorders in children and adults.

Owned and operated by longtime Deerfield resident Mara Lane, Comprehensive SLP offers diagnostic, individualized therapeutic and consultative speech language services for local children ages 18 months all the way through high school.

While Lane’s business was located in Northbrook for three years prior to relocating to Northfield, she has been helping area children fine-tune their speaking skills for more than two decades. Before establishing Comprehensive SLP, Lane, a Brooklyn, N.Y. native, had been coaching North Shore children from her in-home therapy office in Deerfield as well as through visiting various community public schools.

After wanting to expand her services to children from other communities, Lane opened Comprehensive SLP, hiring a staff consisting of fellow speech language pathologists, clinical social workers and psychologists for a true multidisciplinary approach. Now, dozens of children come through her doors every year, from Northbrook, Winnetka, Northfield, Glenview, Glencoe, Wilmette, Kenilworth, Lake Forest, Lake Bluff and Highland Park.

“I loved the community in Northbrook and I felt very supported in that community, but truthfully, the practice was growing and we wanted to be able to serve more children in a comfortable environment so I needed a larger office space,” Lane said about the move to her Northfield office, now at 778 W. Frontage Road.

At her practice, Lane and her team specifically gear their work toward receptive and expressive language disorders, auditory processing, articulation disorder, language processing, apraxia, children on the autism spectrum and social pragmatic language therapy.

“We try to be multi-disciplinary and provide the services from different vantage points,” she said. “We assess and then treat if necessary, so that a child’s communication skills are within age and grade expectations.”

Regarding services offered, Lane said each child is different and her practice prides itself on very individualized approaches in terms of length of treatment dictated by each person’s specific needs.

“We arrange for a consultation session, review all records and make a joint decision with schools and parents as to what the next steps are,” Lane said.

Along with standard speech language therapy, Comprehensive SLP also specializes in treatment for children who are deaf and hard of hearing as well as those with social communication disorders due to conditions like autism and Asperger’s syndrome.

Lane believes in the past few years, her business has boomed because parents have begun to understand the importance of early intervention when it comes to communication problems and specialized care for speech disorders.

“Speech language pathology is important because we want to have really competent and age-appropriate communication skills so that we can make our needs and wants known effectively,” she said. “We want to be able to make sure that what’s going on in the child’s head is being communicated effectively. We want to make sure that a child is able to follow directions and follow auditory directions effectively.”

Mara Lane — Owner of Comprehensive SLP, a speech language therapy practice that recently moved from Northbrook to Northfield

“We had a hard time finding a social pragmatic group like Mara’s for speech,” said Edson, whose son is on the autism spectrum. “Mara has a very unique offering of a social pragmatic language group which is more in terms of how to use language in a social way than how to say “s” or “z.” They work on very real-life situations and scenarios with them and help them navigate this social world that is very hard for them.”

Overall, Lane said with her larger Northfield facility, she hopes to continue improving the language needs of North Shore children for years to come.

“I feel what distinguishes our practice here from other practices is that we’re really highly individualized,” she said. “We’re really looking at children as if they’re our only kid.”

For more information about Comprehensive SLP, visit comprehensiveslp.com or call (847) 291-0700.