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Babies communicating without speaking a word

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Jed Boal reporting

A Utah couple who simply wanted to communicate with their deaf baby ended up sharing sign language with families across the country.

Many parents now teach their babies to sign, and the woman who helped unleash this educational potential is up for a big award.

Barbie Miranda and her son Josiah communicate with sign language. Miranda says, "When he was about 3 months, I started showing him "Signing Time," and he loved it."

He's now 20 months and has a growing vocabulary signing and speaking. She says, "When he started using signs, it was exciting because we could understand what he wanted."

Sign language isn't only for the deaf. Many parents and children tune in to "Signing Time" on public TV. Others buy the DVDs.

Rachel Coleman and her husband started signing with their daughter, Leah, as soon as they learned she was deaf.

First, they created videos for friends. Now there are 30 in all, flash cards and books, and they're shooting more right now.

Coleman says sign language is for every single child. She says, "You know and love a child? Sign with them whether they have Down syndrome, autism, or hearing impairment or a typical, beautiful, healthy 9-month-old, 1-year-old child ... sign with them. It's an incredible gift you can give."



Coleman writes songs and sings. Her husband shoots and edits video, and the children perform.



Her nephew learned to sign before he could speak. "Alex started signing at 9 months old. He didn't cry for it anymore. He just looked at my sister, Emily, and signed milk. So we knew. It's great for deaf kids. It's awesome for hearing children. If you want to start communicating with them early, do it. It's a second language."

Surprised that she was Emmy-nominated for Outstanding Performance in a Children's Series, it occurred to her what the recognition was for. She says, "There wasn't this resource for my child. I didn't just say, 'Somebody ought to do this,' or 'Who's going to create this so my child can have freedom to communicate with people around her?' I said, 'I can do this.'"

She stepped up for her children. She says, "I got nominated for being a great mom. For me, that's how I look at it."

Why does it work? Coleman says because it's simple.

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