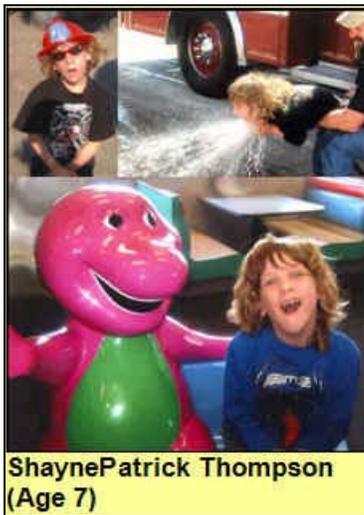


OPERATION RESCUE: Accessible Instruction in Action!



ShaynePatrick Thompson
(Age 7)

He navigates his world using touch and trailing strategies. He communicates using American Sign Language (ASL). He walks hand in hand with his beloved sister, GeorgiaGrace who has a passion for helping him communicate. They learn to blow bubbles, play in the park, and pick wildflowers. They are inseparable; they are "[Beautiful!](#)" (Link to "[Beautiful!](#)" for an informative video on life without the ability to hear.)

He watches her attach brightly colored lollipops on a metal coffee can and decorate it for display. Bright colors get his attention and stimulate his visual system. Nina smiles and says, "I love my brother; I'll make one for him too."

Shayne, his father, watches him make a sign. He is trying to communicate something. There is limited exchange of ASL communication. "What is it like to live in a world where you work hard every day to provide for your family, and the one thing that you need most is more training on how to communicate with your son?" In instances like this one, where there is a "gap" in ASL knowledge, Shayne relies on basic deaf intervention strategies to communicate with ShaynePatrick. This intervention prevents total loss of communication between father and son.

He seeks out his mother, Rose, to help him communicate with others. With her basic knowledge of ASL, she is able to marry spoken words and ASL so that her husband and son can communicate. Her days are long and begin at 5:00 a.m. and run deep into the night. She is exhausted; she keeps the pace for her family with the hope that one day a miracle will happen and people will understand deaf-blindness; perhaps too, a butterfly will land for

her child and others with similar hearing and vision problems. Perhaps, on a nice spring day for all!

This story is similar to Gloria Reece's experiences as a young girl when she watched her extended family care for a deaf child who was later killed in a tragic train accident. You rely on printed materials to learn ASL language. You struggle to find the right picture for what is going on at a given point in time. Then, you quickly teach yourself the sign and hope you make it correctly or that it is understood.

Those with hearing problems may or may not be familiar with ASL. Some people speech read, use hearing devices, use tactile approaches (includes fingerspelling), hand written messages, non-verbal cues, speech reading, text, and total communication methods to communicate when this sense is impaired or not working. Link to [DEAF-INFO](#) and to [Deaf-Hearing Communication Centre, Inc.](#), for more information. Some people also use guide dogs trained with hearing technologies. And, other technologies are also in research and development.

The case of 7-year-old ShaynePatrick Thompson of Houston County, Georgia was brought to the attention of Gloria Reece after an article written by Jake Jacobs, entitled, "Working miracles: Deaf-blind boy responds to innovative intervener" broke in *The Telegraph* on Sunday, March 23, 2008, (Vol. 182, Issue 83, now in [archives](#); text only at [alld deaf](#)).

The use of an intervener for teaching a child with dual sensory disabilities was of high interest to Gloria because of her own life-long experiences in fighting blindness while also achieving a doctoral degree. Gloria uses a variety of digital technologies to facilitate communication. Most helpful to her are digital audio and photography (images for clarification of a visual scene), non-verbal cues, speech reading, text (with enlargement and bold print), and video. Dr. Reece is passionate about accessible design of instruction for children with diverse needs. She is eager to use her expertise to make information more accessible for ShaynePatrick and others. Gloria is an internationally recognized expert on accessible, user-centered design and specializes in augmentative communication, hearing, mobility restriction, and vision problems. Use of technology has transformed her ability to communicate with others.

Gloria observes that ShaynePatrick also enjoys using technology—especially his F.M. System and seeks out opportunities to use it. Technology has the potential to "awaken" ShaynePatrick's creative abilities. He also enjoys hands-on activities where he can make things. We have the best opportunity to increase his problem-solving skills with sensory and tactile learning materials. Soon, we want to obtain a Young Explorer Learning Computer for ShaynePatrick. This computer is designed for low vision students and is developed by IBM and Little Tykes. Link to [Little Tykes](#) for pricing and a technical description. *Can you reach out to help us?*

Using differentiated instructional design strategies, Gloria designs customized multimodal learning materials for ShaynePatrick in English, American Sign Language (ASL), and Braille based upon her subject matter expertise (includes being a

principal investigator for a clinical, low vision study for a large metropolitan area in the mid-south), prior experience in designing educational outreach efforts for professional activities, life-long observations of people with augmentative communication and dual sensory problems, experience in designing materials for multimodal and mobile environments (laptops, i-Pods, PDAs, web, etc.), and experience (research and practice) in using and testing assistive technologies. Hence, the project—**Operation Rescue**—was born!

Thus far, Rose and Shayne Thompson have conducted research on uses of interveners for deaf-blind; brought an intervener to Georgia for the first time for their son; built a one-room school for ShaynePatrick; enrolled Rose in an on-line intervener course; and are developing a website with a content focus for Georgia's deaf-blind children.

This project can ultimately benefit many more children with dual sensory problems. The initial curriculum is being developed in consultation with those who have similar problems. We have also requested assistance from experts in ASL and Braille and are expanding and refining the learning materials. We welcome help from you by attending [Juliette June Jam II!](#) We welcome assistance with this project in areas of fund raising activities for intervener salaries, learning community programs, new technologies for learning, and ultimately the creation of an advocacy organization for deaf-blind children. We believe it will demonstrate a powerful story for others who are deaf-blind by showing how we can leverage web-based technologies to link international experts and students in multicultural communities of practice for valuable contributions to student engagement, teaching and research.

International Community Support for Operation Rescue!

Previous community support and donations for ShaynePatrick have been made by [Davidson's Grocery](#), [White Diamond Grill](#), [Friendship Baptist Church](#), Renee Walker, [Slynn McMinn](#), [Warner Robbins Air Force Base](#), and [The Reindeer Gang](#) (Reindeer Fund). Media coverage has included [Fox 24](#), [Channel 58](#), and [The Telegraph](#).

Current contributions to **Operation Rescue!** include an extensive pro bono effort for private school leadership; coaching, and mentoring by Renee Walker; web design by Rose Thompson and Tara Newcomb; fund raising and publicity by Tara Newcomb; instructional design, fund raising, product branding, and media planning and promotion by Dr. Reece; publication support from Rob Pierce of [The Association for Computing Machinery's SIGDOC \(Design of Communication\)](#); research-based project support by Drs. Gloria Reece and [Venton Kepuska](#); fund raising support from Kirby Optical at the [2008 Memphis Italian Festival](#); whole-hearted community support from Jason Lowe and [The Georgia Grass](#) (a Macon, GA Bluegrass Band led by Jack Wood) who have worked tirelessly to spearhead a community benefit in consultation with Bryant Leggett (owner of [Juliette Opry](#)) for the **Juliette June Jam II** to be held on **Saturday June 7, 2008**, in Juliette, GA. All of the participating bands and shops/stores in Juliette are donating their time, effort, and a portion of their **Juliette June Jam II** proceeds for this benefit. Bryant has also contacted numerous sponsors who are also supporting the event and benefit. Initial resources from the fund raising activities will go toward salaries for an intervener, which can cost upwards of \$40-50K per year. Second priority areas of focus for the funds will be to get parents (Rose and Shayne Thompson) better ASL skills through attendance at workshops and seminars. We anticipate that funds will also be used to obtain adaptive and assistive technology for ShaynePatrick. Longer term goals include development of a deaf-blind advocacy organization. We invite you to visit [DeafBlind Children of Georgia](#) to learn more about our project. You may reach Rose Thompson at georgiadeafblind@yahoo.com Donations (Checks and/or airline sky-miles are welcome anytime. Cash donations will be taken at the benefit.) Please make checks payable to:

Wynfield Christian Academy ShaynePatrick Deafblindness Account. For questions regarding donations, please contact: Renee Walker, Principal, Wynfield Christian Academy 143 Williamson Dr. Macon, GA 31210 Contact: (478) 944-9776 (Office), (478) 944-6771. (Fax), e-mail: rkwalker@wynfieldca.org