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## Walking To Raise Awareness for Apraxia of Speech

By Sophie Braccini



Claire Chan courtesy of the Chan family

On Saturday, November 7, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., parents, supporters and friends of children with Childhood Apraxia of Speech (CAS) will meet at the Moraga Commons Park (at the corner of Moraga Rd. & St. Mary's Road in Moraga), to walk and raise awareness about this disorder and raise money for the Childhood Apraxia of Speech Association of North America (CASANA). CAS is a neurological speech disorder affecting children's ability to correctly and consistently say what they want to say. According to the Speech Therapy department of the Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, one to ten in 1000 children suffer from some degree of CAS.

Moraga based Speech and Language Pathologist Monique Eurich is the organizer of the event. "As apraxia of speech in children with and without autism is my specialty area, I have chosen to host the first ever West Coast walk, here in the Bay Area...please check out the website and let everyone know to sign up to walk, sponsor walkers, donate prizes, or to provide support of any kind," pleads the pathologist.

" 'I love you, mom.' How wonderful! I will never forget the first time Claire said this to me," recalls Amelia Hong. If this occurrence is particularly emotional for this mother, it is because when her daughter was almost four a teacher had told her, "I am sorry to say this, but be prepared that Claire may never speak."

Claire Chan was diagnosed with CAS by the age of 18 months, but the therapy she went through had little result. "Claire was one of the

most difficult cases I ever encountered," said Eurich, "usually, the earlier the right therapy is applied the better, but every child's potential is a mystery that with support can be unfolded and revealed." Eurich sees Claire three times a week and now after ten months of treatment the little girl can read her books aloud. "She went from a vocabulary of three words to one hundred in just three months," adds Eurich.

Children can be diagnosed at about two years old. One of the symptoms is that the child does not babble. "By the time they are twelve months most children have a vocabulary of about five words, and by eighteen months about fifty words," says Eurich, "there are many possible causes to speech delay and usually pediatricians will refer their patient to a speech language pathologist." Claire will come with her family and friends to the November 7th event, along with about a dozen other affected kids and their support groups. There will be songs, refreshments and a nice 2-mile long walk in the trails surrounding the park. "The support of the community has been very heartwarming," says Eurich, "Asia Palace of Moraga is giving the food, many others are offering gift certificates and baskets to reward the teams that will raise more money for CASANA."

To register go to [www.apraxia-kids.org/sanfranciscowalk](http://www.apraxia-kids.org/sanfranciscowalk). To contact Monique Eurich, check her website at [www.independenttherapistsnetwork.com](http://www.independenttherapistsnetwork.com).

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