



History

As Mr. & Mrs. Robert Stites Sr. sat in a PTA meeting at Saints Peter & Paul Catholic School during the spring of 1969 hope began to ferment within them. The speaker, describing her own child, was also describing their child, Robert Jr., called Bobby. The speaker, Mrs. E. P. Goodwin was explaining that her child, who had been unable to learn to read in his classroom, had done well when given a particular kind of help in Louisville, Kentucky. The term dyslexia began to have meaning to the Stites family.

For seven years, the Stites had gone from specialist to specialist seeking someone who could tell them what was wrong with Bobby, and more importantly, how to help him learn to read.

In seventh grade, Bobby had his sixth psychological evaluation. Bobby was described as having a perceptual-motor problem; and for the sixth time, they were told that their son was bright. George Peabody College was again recommended as a source for help. Upon contacting the College, the Stites learned that they would have to bring Bobby to Nashville three times a week for an hour each visit, and were given no assurance that these visits would help Bobby with his still nameless problem. With six other children in the home, the Stites found commuting to Nashville three times a week impossible. In eighth grade, Bobby was reading on second grade level.

As Mrs. Goodwin spoke to the Saints Peter & Paul PTA in the spring of 1969, she called upon other parents to help children such as her own and Bobby. The PTA voted funds to bring a nationally know expert on dyslexia to Hopkinsville, Kentucky. This expert was Dr. Charles L. Shedd, who had originated the method of instruction, which had been so successful with the Goodwin's child. Robert Stites Sr. was made chairman of a committee to prepare the community for Dr. Shedd's visit. After hearing Dr. Shedd speak in January 1970, Mr. Stites said, "He was our first hope. What he said didn't prove he could help Bobby, but he gave us hope."

Dr. Shedd had described a low cost type of help that could be available in this community. Robert Stites Sr. then took on the task of working with other parents and teachers to organize such a program. One teacher with whom Mr. Stites worked was Ruth Fuller Lature, who had recently completed a Master's Degree at George Peabody College.

The wheels began turning in April 1970 when the president of the Kentucky Association for Specific Perceptual Motor Disabilities (S.P.M.D) held a telephone conversation to advise local community members to become an affiliate chapter. The Christian County Association for S.P.M.D was organized with a charter and election of officers. It was suggested that local dues be set with a percentage sent back to the Louisville Association of S.P.M.D. and bylaws would be the same as the Louisville Chapter. Officers would be President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. Officers were elected for one-year terms or until a successor was elected. Duties of officers were specified in the bylaws.

It was advised that a Board of Directors would be needed at a later date. Robert Stites Sr. was the first president.

During the summer of 1970, Mrs. Lature trained under Dr. Shedd in his program at Berea College. To oversee the reading program, Mr. Stites became the Association's first president. The first Dyslexia Clinic in Hopkinsville, Kentucky began its operations November 14, 1970, meeting at 10:00am in the Koffman Junior High Annex. Ruth Fuller Lature operated as Program Director, as well as School Supervisor.

In the early years, Ruth Lature had all the mail sent to her home address until an office was established. Mrs. Lature and the tutors were paid a small stipend for their duties.

Bobby attended the program on Saturday for two years. He also attended Dr. Shedd's summer program at Berea College for one summer. Today Bobby is a grown man and a high school graduate.

While Bobby never achieved that which he is intellectually capable of in reading, the Stites' only regret was that they could not find this kind of remediation when Bobby was younger, before he had suffered so much defeat and frustration. Research has shown that early intervention services are highly effective and can support children in closing the achievement gap, developing a positive self-concept, enjoying reading and school, and reaching their maximum academic potential.

On July 15, 2002, the Christian County Association for S.P.M.D. dissolved its affiliate membership with the Kentucky Association for S.P.M.D. (whose name was changed to Charles L. Shedd Kentucky Association, Inc.). Then on November 2, 2009, the corporation of Christian County Association for S.P.M.D. was dissolved completely and the Dyslexia Association of the Pennyrile was organized as a 501(c) 3.

Vicky Waggoner Jones, who was a special education and regular education teacher in Christian County and Trigg County public schools in Kentucky, was hired as an Administrative Assistant in 2012. She also served as the Barton Reading & Spelling Program Supervisor. In October, 2015, Ruth Fuller Lature retired after serving 45 years as director of the tutorial program. After Mrs. Lature's retirement, Vicky became the Executive Director of Dyslexia Association of the Pennyrile. In January of 2016, the Association changed their program material from what was used since the inception of the Association to using the Orton-Gillingham based Barton Reading and Spelling Program.

Dyslexia Association of the Pennyrile continues to serve the community by helping children and adults who are struggling with dyslexia and other learning differences.