

MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS

Anat Sohn Combined Her Professional Experience, Love for Music, and Personal Parenting Challenges to Create Metro Speech Therapy

By Gina Dropik

Nearly 10 years after receiving her Master's degree in Speech Pathology and Audiology in New York City, Anat Sohn had already achieved extensive experience as a speech therapist working with children and adults. Along with her husband, Adam, and their newborn son, Mikey, she moved to Maryland in 2007 and settled in Lakelands. Three years later, their daughter, Sivan was born. All was going as planned for the young couple and growing family. It was about that time that the former New York native and current Lakelands resident realized that Mikey was having social difficulties in preschool and had him evaluated. Mikey was diagnosed with sensory processing disorder and would require a variety of therapies to help manage his condition. "I was told by a child psychologist that I should not return to work for at least another year or two because of the amount of support he would need," Anat shared in the office of her Speech and Language practice, Metro Speech Therapy.

Anat followed the doctor's advice but found that getting insurance to cover the therapy that Mikey needed was, in many instances, an insurmountable challenge. "We spent thousands of dollars on therapy and hours on the phone with insurance companies," she said. Knowing that she eventually wanted to return to work as a speech language therapist, Anat decided to pursue the goal of opening a private practice that would accept insurance for working families. "I decided I would endure the lengthy process of becoming credentialed to accept insurance in my practice, so that other families didn't have to endure the same challenges I did," she said.

Although Anat's vision for starting her practice was noble, she knew there was no magic wand to help develop the thriving speech practice Metro Speech Therapy is today. "I was home a few years with the kids and wanted to get a better handle on the speech and language landscape in the area so I could identify where a private practice in the community could add value." Anat returned to the field of speech and language pathology at a MCPS elementary school and a home health care agency to give herself a well-rounded view of what services she could provide to both children and adults. She then set up an office in her home and started seeing clients there. "The demand grew faster than I ever imagined! In about a year's time, it reached the point where I couldn't easily find parking for clients and no longer had enough hours in the day to handle the caseload myself," says Anat.

"I had done everything from working at Beth Abraham Hospital in the Bronx, to a renowned traumatic brain injury center in Florida, to a variety of hospitals, home health agencies and public and private school settings, but I felt that some of my

personal experiences might be equally important towards the goal of developing a speech practice that was really different," Anat stated. Besides being one of the few practices that accepts insurance (including Medicare), Anat says that there are several other aspects that set her practice apart from others. One is that they provide tele-therapy which means that they offer their services remotely, on a case-by-case basis, to patients who have challenges with transportation or time constraints.



Anat is also one of a few Speech-Language Pathologists in Montgomery County certified to provide a cutting edge technology called Interactive Metronome (IM). IM is a computer-based software program that retrains the brain to work more efficiently, by addressing timing in the brain (or what scientists call temporal processing). "This is something that had intrigued me since my early days working with traumatic brain injury patients as well as observing how my son seemed to calm himself by playing a repeated beat on the drum", she said. At Metro Speech Therapy, the therapists use this treatment tool with some of their clients to improve attention, coordination, impulsivity, self-regulation, memory, and language processing. "These principals can be applied to so many everyday tasks," explained Anat.

Metro Speech Therapy was recently invited to participate in a pilot program developed by two Developmental Pediatricians at Johns Hopkins. The web-based program allows for a patient's team of medical professionals to share information so that they can collaborate on the most effective treatment plan. The platform, called CHADIS (Comprehensive Health and Decision Information System), has been rolled out to nearly one thousand pediatricians offices, many of which are in the metro DC area. Metro Speech Therapy was selected to be the first allied health care professional to participate in the pilot and will begin offering this platform in the fall.

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Tapping into her love and appreciation for music's positive impact on many forms of social, cognitive and behavioral challenges, Anat has recently introduced Melodic Connections into her practice. This program combines speech language

objectives with melodies and rhythmic arrangements to help target speech-language goals and increase communication and social skills. She worked closely with one of the other speech therapists at Metro Speech Therapy, who is also a professional musician, to create all original music for this class. "It is extremely beneficial in improving academic skills, social awareness, attention skills and following directions," Anat explained. She said Melodic Connections has gotten great reviews and she has recently brought the program into a MCPS kindergarten class and is planning to offer it as an enrichment class at local schools.

Today, Metro Speech Therapy has five therapists on staff, with offices located at Maple Springs Medical Center on Darnestown Road, specializing in the evaluation and treatment of children, adolescents and adults with communication, cognitive and swallowing concerns related to autism, ADHD, auditory processing disorders, apraxia, dysphagia (swallowing problems), cerebral vascular accidents, traumatic brain injuries, genetic disorders, stuttering, developmental delays, and articulation disorders. Anat's passion for her work is palpable. "Experience, both personal and professional, overlaps in ways that help you be a better person and professional. I hope that by folding my own parenting challenges into the creation of Metro Speech Therapy, people that come to the practice leave feeling like we get it."

Metro Speech Therapy is located at 10810 Darnestown Road, Suite 102. For more information visit www.metrospeechtherapy.com or call 240-200-5305.

Coming Up in July

4th of July Celebration

Thursday, July 4

11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Celebrate with lots of fun activities at the pool and on the lawn!

Kentlands/Lakelands Adult Pool Party

Saturday, July 13

8:00 – 11:00 p.m.

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FULL DAY CAMP:

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Session 3: July 15 - 19

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Time: 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM

Fee: \$150

BOYS' & GIRLS

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