



The Dallas Morning News: Kim Fitzenthuler

Tara Moore shows son Blaine that his father, Randy Moore, has the same cochlear implants that he does.

Blaine and Mr. Moore had the devices programmed Monday at Medical City Dallas Hospital.

## A SOUND DECISION

*Dad, 2-year-old son enter world of hearing together, thanks to surgical implants*

By Krista Larson

Staff Writer of The Dallas Morning News

**R**andy Moore has never heard his son cry. And Blaine Moore, who turns 2 next week, has never heard his dad's comforting voice.

All that should change in the months ahead.

For father and son, both deaf since infancy, Monday marked a new chapter in their lives: Cochlear implants allowed them to take the first step into the hearing world — together.

"I feel like today is the first day of Blaine's

life," said Tara Moore, Blaine's mother. "This is a huge beginning for us.

The implants have become relatively common, Dr. Robert Peters said. But this was the first time he had done the necessary surgical procedure on a father and son.

Mr. Moore, who spent his first 36 years in virtual silence, said he feels fortunate that his son will be able to communicate in the hearing world from an early age.

"I want him to have a better life than me," the Garland man said. "I'm helping him to be normal. I'm giving Blaine a better chance

Please see **IMPLANTS** on Page 18A.

# Implants let father, son hear for 1st time

Continued from Page 11A.

than I had."

The two have undergone the process together from start to finish. Both had surgery July 21 to implant the device, which provides electrical stimulation to auditory nerve fibers in the cochlea, part of the inner ear.

And Monday, each had his device digitally programmed to meet his hearing needs, beginning the process of learning to interpret sound.

Blaine, who remained oblivious to the process, had his father alongside as an example.

"Look, Blaine," Ms. Moore, 26, told her son as he tried to understand why he was wearing a device on his ear. "Daddy's got one. It's like yours."

It was an unexpected twist that father and son could benefit from the operation, which an estimated 3,000 people worldwide have each year.

The Moores initially contacted Dr. Peters hoping Blaine could receive the implant. After meeting other local children with the implants, Ms. Moore said, they knew this would be the best opportunity for their son.

"If it didn't work," she said, "he didn't have anything to lose."

Only after talking to Dr. Peters did Mr. Moore learn he could also benefit

from the surgery. Unlike most adult implant recipients who lost their hearing later in life, Mr. Moore was born profoundly deaf and doubted the implant would work for him.

But his parents had taught him to lip-read and speak, making him an excellent candidate.

"Because he was in the hearing world and not in the deaf culture, he was a candidate for the implant," Dr. Peters said.

Blaine, who turns 2 next Tuesday, will spend just a fraction of his life in silence.

His mother said it was little consolation when people assured her that Blaine and Mr. Moore did not know what they were missing in the hearing world.

"I know what they're missing out on," she said. "There's no reason for a child to be deaf."

Now Blaine will know the sound water makes when he splashes it, his mother said.

"He's going to be shocked when he gets home and finds out everything makes noise," she said. "I keep buying all these videotapes and toys that talk. If it makes noise, I'll buy it."

But first, Blaine and Mr. Moore must undergo speech therapy for several years to make sense of what

they now hear.

"They don't know things in their world make sound," Dr. Peters said of children as young as Blaine. "It takes months to learn that."

On Monday, Blaine was initially frightened by the sounds he heard. He whimpered and touched his ear.

As he grows older, Blaine will understand the sounds and be able to communicate — something his mother appreciates.

"If he ever gets lost, he can ask for help," Ms. Moore said. "If he's staying at his grandmother's, I can call him and tell him I miss him."

Mr. Moore and Blaine will visit an auditory-verbal therapist about twice a week for several years until they have improved their hearing and language skills.

Although the success is not guaranteed, both are expected to see results from the implants.

"We never can predict, but we can tell parents what other children have done," said Linda Daniel, the auditory-verbal therapist who will work with the family.

In the months and years to come, Ms. Moore said, father and son will grow even closer.

"His dad finally gets to hear Blaine laugh and play," she said.