

SCOTT LINNETT / Union-Tribune photos

Speaking of success: Therapist Luz Angel-Paez helps Guillermo Bosareyes, 5, with a pipe-blowing exercise as the youngster's mother watches at the Logan Heights Family Health Center.

Speech

State association hails program in Barrio Logan

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inated the Barrio Logan center.

"I was amazed at how small their program is, in terms of doing a lot of service in a small area," Berry said. "And they don't do it for a profit."

However, Berry said the program is able to put only a very small dent in the overwhelming need for affordable speech therapy in San Diego.

She said the schools' speech programs are overflowing with children as young as 3 as insurers cut back on covering such services at private facilities.

The Barrio Logan program serves a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood where many people are living at or below the poverty level, clinic administrators said. The program supports itself with fees that families pay on a sliding scale and with coverage by Medi-Cal and some state agencies.

The speech and hearing program has about 130 patients, most ranging in age from 18 months to 8 years. About half have trouble speaking because of physical disorders such as cerebral palsy, Down's syndrome, cleft palate or deafness. Others are simply delayed in language development.

The center has two full-time and two part-time speech pathologists.

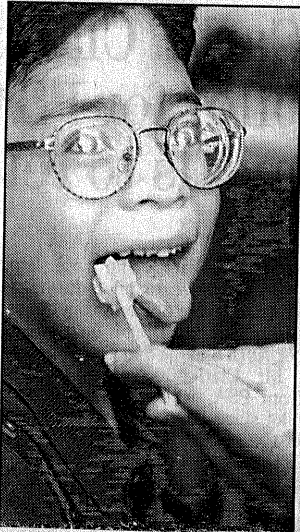
Visiting the center weekly, children often must work for years on simply learning to control the muscles of the mouth and tongue, said Luz Angel-Paez, one of the full-time speech pathologists. After farm animal sounds, they progress to practicing words.

Angel-Paez said she works with the children in the language spoken in their homes — usually Spanish — and focuses on involving parents in the therapy so they can continue the exercises and encouragement the rest of the week.

"In reality, the award should go to our (patients') parents," she said.

Maria Nolasco, who lives near the center in Logan Heights, said she is happy to help her daughter with the home exercises, such as learning to blow up balloons.

Before finding the program two



Tasting progress: Guillermo touches a foam-covered stick with his tongue in another helpful speech-therapy drill.

years ago, Nolasco said, she had been unable to find speech therapy for her mentally retarded daughter, Belinda Lopez, now 9. One program put her on a waiting list for a year; another said Belinda didn't need therapy; others wouldn't accept the family's Medi-Cal coverage.

Now Belinda is finally able to make herself understood by her three brothers and her friends at Perkins Elementary School, Nolasco said.

"Before, she was angry most of the time because she could not communicate with the kids or her brothers," she said.

Laughing happily as Angel-Paez congratulates her for closing her lips around a tongue depressor, Belinda looks anything but angry. With a shy grin, she says she enjoys coming to speech therapy "mucho."

Barrio Logan program for speech small — but best

By Susan Duerksen
STAFF WRITER

In a windowless room smaller than many walk-in closets, the top speech and hearing program in California is under way.

An animated young woman sits cross-legged on the floor in front of a 5-year-old boy, encouraging him to blow into a plastic saxophone.

"Bravo, Memo!" she exclaims when he toots a few notes. "Bravo!"

Not so long ago, Guillermo "Memo" Bosareyes couldn't close his lips tightly enough around the horn to produce sound. Born with damage to the language center of his brain, he still had not spoken any words a year ago.

Now he blows notes and soap bubbles with gusto. And he has learned to say his age, "cinco," although the "s" sound is one of his biggest challenges.

The speech therapy program helping Memo learn to talk is at Logan Heights Family Health Center in San Diego's Barrio Logan. This month, it was named the Program of the Year by the California Speech-Language-Hearing Association, the only statewide association of speech pathologists and audiologists.

"That is certainly saying a lot about a little community clinic, but they've done a lot," said Lisa Breaker, president of the association.

"What we're really looking for is a program that has created something unique and creative and has served the community. We're interested in results."

The awards committee was particularly impressed that the Barrio Logan program is bilingual and serves poor families who often don't have access to any other help, said the committee chairman, Kenneth Wolf, chief of communicative sciences and disorders at King-Drew Medical Center in Los Angeles.

Michele Berry, speech pathology and audiology coordinator for San Diego Unified School District, nomi-

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