

Starkey and Extreme Makeover Help Children Regain Their Hearing

The Eden Prairie-based Starkey Hearing Foundation will be on the pre-season premier of ABC's *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* on Sunday, Sept. 17.



As you may know, on the ABC show, a number of home designers go around the country rebuilding and designing homes for families in need (maybe the home was destroyed in a fire and the family can't afford to rebuild; or maybe the family has 15 foster kids living in a two-bedroom home and needs more space to keep the kids; etc.) The November 7, 2005 episode of the show included Marlee Matlin, a deaf actress, who worked with the designers as they designed a home for a family of four—the parents are both deaf, one son is fine and is the glue that holds the family together, the other son is blind and autistic. Matlin knows Bill Austin, who runs the Starkey Hearing Foundation. She encouraged the show to involve Austin and the Foundation in the episode. Therefore, Austin was on the show presenting the oldest son with a \$50,000 college scholarship (as a way of thanking him for all he's done to help the family function). He also then fit both parents with hearing aids.

Matlin was again involved in the taping of an episode of *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*. The family whose home is being rebuilt on the episode has a 15-year-old son who is hard of hearing. Again, Matlin wanted to get Austin involved. However, instead of just helping the 15-year-old, he decided to take two of the show's designers with him and his staff to Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador to see what it is like to help hundreds of children in need to regain their hearing (basically, what Austin is doing with kids and their hearing is what the TV show does with families and their homes). The trip took place in May of 2006. The designers included Ed Sanders and Eduardo Xol. They joined 14 Starkey employees and fitted 150 kids in each country—a total of 450 kids received more than 800 total hearing aids.



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