



# PARENTS PACK

MONTHLY UPDATES ABOUT  
VACCINES ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

## FEATURE ARTICLE: BORN ALMOST DEAF, KAREN DID NOT LET RUBELLA DEFINE HER

November 2023

*Editor's note: Dr. Karen Sadler has a PhD in science education and a master's degree in neuroscience. She is also deaf. As a result of a rubella infection her mom had while pregnant with her, Karen was born with limited ability to hear and eventually lost all hearing. We are grateful to Karen for sharing her story, and we hope she will inspire you as much as she has inspired us.*

Her mom's rubella infection during pregnancy robbed Karen of the simple joy of hearing birds sing or leaves rustle in the breeze. Yet, Karen considers herself lucky — lucky because she's "only deaf."

Rubella is a viral infection that is most dangerous when it occurs during pregnancy because often the unborn baby's development is affected. Some babies die in utero, and those who survive, as Karen did, are often born with congenital abnormalities, including blindness, deafness, heart defects or mental deficits.

A vaccine didn't come in time to save Karen from the effects of congenital rubella. The first rubella vaccine was licensed in 1969. Karen was born in 1956.

Recently, the Vaccine Education Center had the opportunity to talk with Karen about her life experiences.

Check out the interview in which Karen describes her childhood experiences and school years, including how she learned to listen to her sister's piano music and the moment that made her mom cry.

Read Karen's story, [bit.ly/karen-story](https://bit.ly/karen-story).



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### TRIVIA CORNER

**What Academy Award nominated actress gave birth to a daughter with birth defects caused by congenital rubella syndrome (CRS)?**

- A. Meryl Streep
- B. Gene Tierney
- C. Susan Sarandon
- D. Gwyneth Paltrow

## DR. HANDY'S CORNER — TREATING A COUGH: WHAT TO CONSIDER

Watch as Dr. Handy describes the infectious and non-infectious causes of coughs, how to make children more comfortable when they have a cough, and when to seek medical care for a cough.

Watch the video: [bit.ly/treating-cough](https://bit.ly/treating-cough).



## 2024 essay contest for middle and high school students now open!

The annual Maurice R. Hilleman essay contest is on a new schedule! The 2024 contest opened on Nov. 2, 2023, and essays will be accepted through mid-February. Winners will be announced and celebrated in the spring of 2024.

Speaking of winners, the 2024 contest will have first and second place winners in middle and high school levels in both the United States and Canada. First prize winners will receive \$500 each, and second prize winners will receive \$250 each.

Please share this opportunity with any students in 6th to 12th grade in the U.S. and Canada or share it with teachers, troop leaders, or other adults who work with students. We want as many students as possible to have the opportunity to participate!

Find out more, [hillemanfilm.com/contest](https://hillemanfilm.com/contest).

## NEWS & NOTES

### "Fall 2023 Vaccines: Considering Flu, COVID-19 and RSV"

Still wondering if you need one of these fall vaccines? Check out our recent video in which Dr. Paul Offit, Director of the Vaccine Education Center, describes who is most at risk from these infections and can, therefore, benefit the most from these vaccines.

Watch the 4-minute video, [bit.ly/fall2023vaccines](https://bit.ly/fall2023vaccines).

### TRIVIA ANSWER

**The correct answer is B.** While pregnant, Gene Tierney was infected with rubella after an infected fan hugged her. Gene's infection passed to the baby, causing congenital rubella syndrome (CRS) as a result. The baby was born prematurely with cataracts, mental retardation and deafness.

Go to [vaccine.chop.edu/trivia](https://vaccine.chop.edu/trivia) to play Just the Vax, the Vaccine Education Center's trivia game, where you can find this question and others like it.

