

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE HEARING AND SPEECH CENTER

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Empowering Providers and Patients

New program trains healthcare providers on assistive listening devices and more

Thirty-three percent of seniors over age sixty-five have a hearing loss. Because of a variety of barriers, such as cost, stigma, and lack of transportation, many seniors are not able to receive treatment for their hearing loss. Through a new program funded by the Disability Communications Fund, Clinical Practice Manager Jessie Johnson hopes to change that.

Throughout her career at the Hearing and Speech Center, Jessie has given numerous community presentations on hearing loss, hearing aids, and other services provided here at the Center. She quickly realized that nursing home staff, home health workers, and others who work directly with the senior population also need more information to better serve their clients. Many caretakers lack even basic knowledge on how to address their seniors' hearing needs, such as how to change a hearing aid battery.

These issues are personal for Jessie. Her grandmother had hearing loss and dementia, and would often take her hearing aids out. The staff at her nursing home didn't know how to be attentive to her hearing aid use, and because she couldn't hear, her grandmother would isolate herself. Eventually, she received an ALD (assistive listening device), which allowed her to hear and communicate as best as she could towards the end of her life.

Jessie uses this story from her life to illustrate both the importance of addressing a senior's hearing loss, and the importance of using an approach best suited to a person's individual needs. Hearing aids may not be appropriate for every senior, but there are still solutions, like ALDs and captioned phones, that many healthcare providers may not be aware of, which can dramatically improve a senior's quality of life.

In just the last few months, Jessie has presented to home health care workers, social workers, physical and occupational therapists, hospice care workers, doctors, nurses, and senior residential facility staff among others.

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Our new program trains providers in a wide range of facilities, including home health, nursing homes, and hospitals.



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A Message From Our CEO



Dear Friends,

Spring has started with a flurry at the Center. Thanks to two generous grants, we have begun restructuring a portion of our building to create a centralized space for the multitude of administrative activities that our immense operation requires – grant management, insurance reimbursements, contract management, and general administrative support. Our new space will allow us to be far more effective and efficient in our work.

Since we are in clean-up mode, our next project will be to carpet, paint, and furnish our three classrooms. We hope to begin that project during the summer break. At this point, we are confident we have raised enough funds for the carpet and paint. However, we are looking for donors who can help underwrite the furnishings. If our school is a favorite program of yours, please consider making a tax-deductible gift to help us create an environment that our children deserve and will thrive in!

Our outreach program received a boost in the fall with the award of a grant to support our efforts in training healthcare professionals. Professionals who care for patients with hearing loss need to know about the affordable technologies that can be vital in effective communication with their patients. Our program coordinator, Jessie Johnson, has been promoting the free program in the community and you can read a little more about it in this issue.

Finally, you may have heard about recently-proposed legislation to make over-the-counter hearing aids available, and there is a lot of opposition from the manufacturing sector, audiology groups, and lobbyists. While there are certainly both pros and cons to the proposed changes, the Hearing and Speech Center supports measures to improve affordability and accessibility of hearing devices, and we hope that this will result in an increase in the number of people with hearing loss who decide to seek treatment. As we continue to see many healthcare disparities faced by our community, it is important to reaffirm our commitment to providing low-cost solutions and comprehensive support for all clients. The Hearing and Speech Center is confident that we will continue to be the Bay Area leader in innovation and community-centered hearing care.

With gratitude,

Darragh Kennedy | CEO

Empowering Providers and Patients (cont.)

While many of the participating agencies work primarily with seniors, our presentations are helpful for anyone who works with the Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHOH) population. Jessie tailors all of her presentations to each agency's specific needs; when speaking to an agency that trains seniors on how to use technology, she emphasizes the use of apps on smartphones and tablets that are helpful for the hard of hearing community. Even though a significant portion of seniors have hearing loss, many are reluctant to admit they need help. Jessie encourages people who work with seniors to assume each client has some level of hearing loss. She teaches health care workers about audiograms, proper ALD use, advanced communication strategies, basic hearing aid care and maintenance, navigating insurance and other financing options, and more. We have received enthusiastic responses from our trainings, and even more demand than expected.

"We have been so fortunate to have the Hearing and Speech Center provide our health care providers (geriatrics, fellows and nurse practitioners) training on hearing devices. It is empowering to us and our patients!" said Dr. Carla Perissinotto of UCSF Geriatrics.

Occupational therapist Christa Raymond agrees. "Working with residents who are not utilizing traditional hearing aids or whose devices are inadequate for whatever reason is a challenge anyone who works with older adults can relate to. It can be exhausting speaking in a raised voice and repeating instructions for the therapist, as well as embarrassing and confusing for the resident who cannot hear well. I have yet to use [ALDs] with any resident who did not benefit."

Current funding will enable us to reach more than 100 healthcare providers in San Francisco this year, but we hope to expand the program so we can train as many people as possible, and ensure Deaf and hard of hearing people can communicate clearly and easily with their providers and loved ones.

Do you know
of an agency that
would benefit from
these trainings? Contact
Jessie Johnson at
jessie@hearingspeech.org
or (415) 921-7658
ext. 31.

Helping Every Child Find Their Voice



By Allison Jung, volunteer and aspiring Speech-Language Pathologist

About five percent of children are diagnosed with a speech disorder by the age of seven, and many attend speech-language therapy for a variety of reasons. Speech-language pathologists play a vital

role in helping children succeed in their social and academic lives.

There is a wide variety of speech/language disorders, and each case is unique. I sat down with Hearing and Speech Center speech-language pathologist Rose Phung to talk about what this means for a therapist.

- **Speech vs. Language:** The terms “speech” and “language” are somewhat misunderstood and are often incorrectly used interchangeably. Speech is the “specific sounds used to produce words.” According to Rose, language is “conveying thoughts you have – often abstract.” Language refers to a whole system of words and symbols that we use to convey meaning. This is an important distinction to make, as speech therapy may mean tackling both through different techniques.

- **Receptive and Expressive Language:** Receptive and expressive language disorders are common reasons for children to attend therapy. As a result of a receptive language disorder – trouble with comprehension of language and understanding information – a child may encounter challenges when trying to read sentences which are especially complex. Expressive language consists of “communication and the expression of an idea to produce language.” A child with an expressive language disorder may face challenges when trying to expand his or her vocabulary, so part of therapy may be learning to talk about wants and needs, for instance.

- **Beginning Communication Skills:** Rose also notes that when working with children, the process often involves practicing “beginning communication skills.” This could include modeling polite behavior or learning new words to expand children’s vocabulary.

- **Staying Motivated:** Most children attend therapy on a weekly basis for at least one year. Part of the therapist’s job is to encourage and motivate patients. One of the ways in which progress is rewarded for children is through a “token system” in which speech therapy participants earn a sticker or other small item when they complete certain tasks. Rose also notes that



A CENTURY OF HEARING

Donor Corner: Planned Giving

As we reflect on the Hearing and Speech Center’s 100 year history and prepare for the years to come, we would like to let you know about an important way that supporters can help continue this legacy.

Through a charitable bequest in your will or living trust, you can help ensure that the Hearing and Speech Center will keep its doors open to all those in need. This thoughtful act can result in the largest and most lasting gift you make. Your legacy gift will let us provide essential services and programs for generations to come.

There are many options to consider when making a planned gift, so we recommend that you consult a tax professional. You may also contact our Development Office for more information: development@hearingspeech.org or (415)921-7658, extension 44.

many children have intrinsic motivation in therapy, as they want to improve their communication skills in order to have their voices heard.

Being a speech-language pathologist is no easy task, but the rewards of helping a child build confidence and find their voice are worth all the challenges.





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www.hearingspeech.org

Visit us online to learn more about how we can help you, or someone you know.

Community Spotlight: Jennifer Henriquez



When Jennifer Henriquez was five years old, she was diagnosed with a bilateral hearing loss and fitted with hearing aids at the Hearing and Speech Center. "I was pretty young. I didn't know what a hearing loss was. I was pretty confused at that age," Jennifer said. "[Hearing loss] impacts you a lot: your social life, school life, home life, everywhere you go...but you eventually get the hang of it."

As Jennifer grew up, she became active in the Center's youth programs. The Hearing and Speech Center's programs are dedicated to provide lifelong services to Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHOH) children, youth, and families. Our services are individualized for the specific needs of each family, and range from general counseling; home visits; IEP support and advocacy; summer camp at Camp Jones Gulch, trips to Great America, the San Francisco Zoo, Giants and Warriors games; college readiness and support; resume writing, and job placement.



Hearing and Speech Center youth programs emphasize identity, confidence, and self-advocacy skills, and are designed to prepare young DHOH people for college, employment, and independent living. Every member of the social services and counseling staff is Deaf or Hard of Hearing, and thus can relate to our participants' experiences. The Hearing and Speech Center is proud to be the only agency that provides such a wide range of services for DHOH children, youth, and families.

When Jennifer was younger, she was reluctant to wear her hearing aids because they made her look and feel different. By becoming part of the Hearing and Speech Center community, Jennifer befriended others who share her experiences, and became confident in her identity as a person with hearing loss. Now, Jennifer advocates for herself and others with hearing loss, and wants to help the rest of the community have a better understanding of what hearing loss means. We are so proud of the young woman she is today!