1996 – 2016

Twenty years of providing and promoting speech communication training for children and adults with hearing loss

The HRF celebrated its 20th birthday with a dinner at Brassica Kitchen + Café in Jamaica Plain, MA on August 29, 2016.
This has been an extremely productive summer for the Hearing Rehabilitation Foundation (HRF). For the first time, we were exhibitors at the Hearing Loss Association of America’s Annual Convention, which was held in Washington, DC in June. We had a large number of visitors to our booth and it is apparent that many adults with hearing loss are now actively seeking auditory training. I don’t know how many people commented that they wished there was a service such as the HRF in their local area. There seems to be a growing awareness that technology such as hearing aids and cochlear implants do provide wonderful assistance, but, and it is a very big but, many HA and CI users want to be better; they wanted to reach their optimal performance level. Over the past twenty years, I have developed a number of training materials and training strategies for adults who want to improve their ability to understand speech. The HRF offers a comprehensive range of these training materials which are designed specifically for use with adults. Please visit our website – www.hearf.org – to find out more about these materials. If you are a professional and want to provide a broader range of services to your clients, consider making auditory training a part of your practice. HA and CI users want more than technology, they want to improve their listening performance, and you could be providing such services. There are some excellent auditory training programs available online, but these should be seen as an adjunct to face-to-face training, not as a substitute. The HRF will be offering training seminars for professionals over the coming months. Please think about attending and expanding your range of skills and expertise.

In early August, the HRF and the AR Laboratory at the University of Connecticut partnered to provide a four day intensive auditory training Retreat. Four adults with hearing loss attended the retreat, which was held in Storrs, CT. The participants received four days of intensive individualized training provided by four students attending PhD/AuD programs at UConn and Gallaudet University in Washington. There were also group activities and all of those attending rated the exercise a great success. You can read more about this program in this issue of AR Report. We are hoping to run more of these courses. Keep an eye on the HRF website and Facebook pages for details of upcoming courses.

The HRF was founded in 1996, and as part of the celebrations for our twentieth birthday we hosted a dinner at Brassica Kitchen + Café in Jamaica Plain. It was a great opportunity to catch up with old friends and start to plan for our next twenty years! Thanks to all who attended and made the event such a great success.

The Ninth International Adult Aural Rehabilitation Conference will be held in St. Pete Beach, FL on December 4 – 6, 2017. This conference offers the chance to hear reports on AR innovations from around the world. Past conferences have attracted participants from many different countries and have resulted in collaborative efforts aimed at improving the scope and quality of AR services. Although it is more than a year away, that time will pass by very quickly. We are asking clinicians and researchers to submit proposals for presentations at this conference. We hope to continue a tradition of having a mix of research and clinical presentations. If you are involved in research and would like to present your findings, please submit an abstract for consideration. Similarly, if you are a clinician and would like to tell others in this important field about your approach to AR with adults, please send an abstract giving details of your proposed presentation.

Fall is fast approaching in the Northern Hemisphere, while Spring is coming in the Southern Hemisphere. I wish everyone great success in the coming seasons, and hope to hear from many of you over the next few months.

Geoff Plant
GEOFF PLANT RECEIVES HLAA PRESIDENT’S AWARD.

Geoff Plant, the Executive Director of the HRF, was presented with the President’s Award at the HLAA Annual Convention held in Washington, DC in June. Geoff received the award at the Awards Breakfast held on the last day of the convention. The award was presented to Geoff by Margaret Wallhagen, Chairperson of the HLAA Board of Trustees. In his acceptance speech Geoff thanked the HLAA for this great honor, and called for better provision of auditory training for adults with hearing loss. “We live in a time where technology provides unprecedented benefits for people with hearing loss,” Geoff said, “but we are sadly lagging in the services provided after people receive hearing aids or cochlear implants. Training can greatly improve the ability to understand speech and help people with hearing loss reach their optimal level of performance.”

Pictures of Margaret Wallhagen and Geoff Plant taken during the presentation of the HLAA President’s Award.

HRF EXHIBIT AT THE HLAA ANNUAL CONVENTION

For the first time, the HRF had a booth at the HLAA Annual Convention. Geoff and Kerryn Plant were at the booth and greatly enjoyed meeting many of the participants who stopped by to find out more about the HRF. Many of those who stopped to talk were unfamiliar with the HRF and its programs. It was disappointing to find that many adults with hearing loss want to have access to auditory training, but cannot find any providers in their local area. Several visitors expressed the wish that the HRF was in their area so that they could attend for individualized training. Pictures of a few of those who visited the booth are shown on the next page.

GEOFF PLANT PRESENTS A WEBINAR FOR THE HLAA

Geoff Plant presented a webinar entitled “Auditory Training: Improving Speech Perception” for the HLAA on June 20. The presentation stressed the importance of auditory training for adults with hearing aids and/or hearing aids. Geoff pointed out that auditory training was once an integral part of the services provided to adults with hearing loss. Unfortunately, this is no longer the case and many people with hearing loss feel that they have not attained their optimal level of performance with their selected technology. There were a number of questions and comments following the presentation, and many of these expressed frustration at not being able to find such training opportunities in their local area. If you would like a copy of the PowerPoint presentation from this webinar, please contact Geoff at hearf@aol.com.
THE HRF AT THE HLAA CONFERENCE JUNE, 2016
The HRF and the Aural Rehabilitation Laboratory at the University of Connecticut combined to run an Auditory Training Retreat for adults with hearing loss. The Retreat ran for four days (August 8 – 11, 2016) and, although very tiring for the participants, it was rated a great success by everyone involved. Four adults with hearing loss attended the Retreat. Three of the participants had cochlear implants and one had hearing aids. The training “staff” were Ali, Mike, Shannon, and Torri Ann. Ali, Mike, and Shannon are AuD/PhD candidates at the University of Connecticut, while Torri is studying for her AuD at Gallaudet University in Washington, DC. Other members of the team were Kathy Cienckowski from UConn, and Geoff and Kerryn Plant from the HRF.

Each morning started with a group singalong led by Geoff and Kerryn Plant. The songs included sea shanties, and American and Australian folk songs. It may sound an unusual choice of activity for people with hearing loss, but it was a great way to start the day. Following the singalong there was a presentation on a subject with which most of the group were unfamiliar. On one morning, Geoff presented a slideshow entitled, “Australia: the land down under.” This provided practice in following a speaker giving a “lecture,” a situation many people with hearing loss find daunting. On other mornings, he introduced two Australian folk songs, “Waltzing Matilda” and “Botany Bay,” and then gave some background information about them. “Waltzing Matilda,” for example, has many unusual words such as “swagman,” “billabong,” jumbuck,” “tucker bag,” and “billy,” which are unfamiliar to most Americans. “Botany Bay” provided the opportunity to talk about the founding of Australian as a penal colony and the horrors of being transported to a prison colony on the other end of the world.

For most of the day, the participants worked 1:1 with one of the trainers. During these sessions, the major focus was on the use of the KTH Speech Tracking procedure presented auditory-visually and auditory alone. In this technique, the trainer reads a story line-by-line and the person with hearing loss has to repeat exactly what was said. Near enough is not good enough with this approach; the line has to be repeated without any errors or omissions. The whole process is scored using mouse clicks on a PC. At the end of a set time period – five minutes for the auditory-visual presentations, and ten minutes for those presented auditory alone -- the person’s Tracking Rate in words-per-minute (wpm) is calculated. This is automatically calculated by the computer, and is derived by dividing the number of words repeated by the time elapsed. For example, if the client correctly repeated 500 words in a ten-minute session, her/his Tracking Rate would be 50 wpm. The participants worked with two different trainers each day and this provided good practice in adapting to different speakers, speaking styles, etc. Other activities in the 1:1 sessions included the use of word level contrasts, number patterns, and conversational training.

On the evening of the second day of the Retreat, all of those attending went to dinner at Geno’s Grille on the UConn campus. Geno’s is owned by Geno Auriemma, who is, perhaps, better known as the coach of the UConn women’s basketball team. It was a very enjoyable meal and gave everyone the opportunity to practice understanding speech in a noisy background. Looking around the table it was obvious that all of the participants found the situation challenging, but, most importantly, all were prepared to try to follow the conversation.

One of the highlights of the Retreat was a group session in which each of the participants discussed their “journey” with hearing loss. By this time all of the members of the group were familiar with each other and this allowed them to feel comfortable sharing their stories. It was an extremely interesting session and highlighted the difficulties of an acquired hearing loss. It was particularly interesting to find that although the participants shared some difficulties such as hearing in noise for example, each had a unique story to tell about their hearing loss and how it impacted on their lives.
Katherine Bouton, one of the group attending the Retreat, has written about the experience in her blog. This article can be found at https://katherinebouton.com/tag/auditory-rehabilitation/.

We hope to be able to offer similar Retreats in the future. If you would be interesting in attending, or know someone who might benefit from the experience please contact the HRF at hearf@aol.com.

Training was provided by (clockwise from top left) Torri Ann, Shannon, Ali, and Mike. Course participants (left to right) Marcia, Bob, Katherine, and Nancy.

The HRF was founded in 1996 so it was felt that we needed to celebrate this milestone with a birthday dinner! The dinner was held at Brassica Kitchen + Café in Jamaica Plain and was attended by almost 40 clients and/or supporters of the HRF. Chef Jeremy Kean had prepared a special menu that included scallops, Cornish hens, and Brussel sprouts! Many of those attending professed themselves to be “haters” of this vegetable, but those who plucked up the courage to try this dish were surprised to find how delicious it was. Geoff Plant thanked everyone who came along to support the HRF and made a special presentation to Mike Reynolds who is a founding member of the HRF Board, and has served as Treasurer and Secretary of the HRF since 1996. “Mike’s contribution to the HRF has been invaluable,” said Geoff in thanking Mike for his friendship and support.

The evening was a great opportunity to celebrate the first 20 years and we look forward to celebrating our “coming of age” in 2017. Thanks to everyone who came along and supported this important milestone.
The HRF will host the Ninth International Adult Aural Rehabilitation Conference at the Sirata Conference Center and Beach Resort in St. Pete Beach, Florida from December 4 - 6, 2017. This conference is a great opportunity for researchers, clinicians, and therapist to come together to discuss their work in the field of aural rehabilitation. If you work with adults with hearing loss, and want to find out more about AR, this is the perfect conference for you. We always have an excellent panel of Invited Speakers, and their presentations are supplemented by many contributed papers. We have held three previous meetings at the Sirata, and all who have attended have rated the facility very highly. Circle the date in your calendar and join us for three days of the best of AR.

CALL FOR PAPERS: If you would like to present a paper on your work at this conference, please send a one page summary of your proposal, using Microsoft Word with 12 point Arial font. Please provide a title, the names of all authors and their affiliations, and the name of the contact author. Please indicate the time you would like allocated for your presentation – 15, 20, or 30 minutes. The closing date for proposals is June 2, 2017. You will be notified regarding acceptance of the paper by June 15, 2017. Please send your proposal to hearf@aol.com.

COSTS: We are in the process of determining the registration cost of the conference, but estimate it will be in the range $350 - $400 for “early bird” registrations. The cost of rooms at the Sirata is around $120 per night.

REGISTER INTEREST: If you would like to be placed on the mailing list to receive updates regarding the conference, please contact hearf@aol.com and ask to be included on all mail-outs.

We look forward to seeing you in St. Pete Beach in 2017!

The Sirata Conference Center and Beach Resort is located on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico and is a perfect place to take a break before or after the Conference. The sunsets every evening are a spectacular sight.
The HRF is an all-volunteer organization and, as a result, we are able to run on a very limited budget. Despite this, we do have ongoing expenses such as rent, utilities, office supplies, etc. Clients are asked to make a small donation (around $50) each time they attend a session, but this is waived if the person cannot afford it. We are determined to provide a service to anyone who requires assistance.

If you would like to support the work of the HRF, please consider making a donation. The HRF is a registered not-for-profit organization and all donations are tax-deductible. Here are some suggestions to consider.

- Send us a book of FOREVER stamps to help us with postage costs.
- Make a donation of $80 to cover our monthly electricity bill.
- A donation of $100 will go a long way towards our phone and Internet service.
- We would love to reintroduce our program of live music concerts for adults. A donation of $500 will pay for the cost of hiring a musician or group of musicians to perform.
- A donation of $1,000 will be a big help with our monthly office rent.
- If you are an artist or a craftsperson, please consider donating a work that we can auction at our next fundraising event.
- Send a donation of any size to be used to help subsidize clients who cannot afford to make a contribution.
- If you are a clinician, consider purchasing some of the programs published by the HRF.
- If you are a parent or grandparent of young children, please purchase one or more of the children’s books that Geoff Plant has written. All proceeds from the sale of Geoff’s books go directly to the HRF.
- If you know others who might be interested in donating to an organization working with people with hearing loss, please tell them about the HRF.

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF THE HRF