The Hearing Rehabilitation Foundation is 20 years old!

1996 – 2016

Twenty years of providing and promoting speech communication training for children and adults with hearing loss
It’s hard to believe that the Hearing Rehabilitation Foundation (HRF) has just turned twenty! We were incorporated in April, 1996 with our stated mission being, “to provide and promote Speech Communication Training for children and adults with hearing loss.” I believe that we have done a great deal over the past twenty years to fulfill that mission. I will list some of the highlights from those twenty years.

- We have hosted eight International Adult Aural Rehabilitation Conferences in Portland, ME (2001, 2003, 2005, 2007), Tampa Bay, FL (2009), and St. Pete Beach, FL (2011, 2013, 2015). These conferences have brought together clinicians and researchers from around the world to share their experiences and findings. The list of Invited Speakers at the conference reads like a “who’s who” of aural rehabilitation. The next conference in this series will be from June 5 - 7, 2017, which will provide the opportunity to celebrate our 21st birthday! You will find further details on the conference in this newsletter.

- The HRF has provided Speech Communication Training to a large number of children and adults with cochlear implants over these years. At first, clients were seen for one-hour 1:1 training sessions, but more recently the “standard” time has been increased to two hours. I believe that this extended training period has many benefits, including providing clients with practice in maintaining listening focus over an extended period. A number of clients have commented that they feel that the sessions have increased their “listening stamina,” and report carry-over into everyday communication situations.

- An area of particular interest over the past ten years has been the development and provision of programs designed to improve the musical listening experiences of adults with cochlear implants (CI). The HRF pioneered the provision of Music Focus Groups, which provide CI users with the opportunity to discover how best to maximize their enjoyment of music. The HRF also hosted a series of live music concerts for adults with CIs.

- The HRF has published a number of testing and training resources for children and adults with hearing loss. These includes children’s books (“The Farmer’s Cheese,” “I want to go to the zoo,” and “ANTS”), and adult training programs such as “Tactrain,” and “Hear at Home.”

- I have contributed a number of papers and chapters to professional journals and textbooks on the work that I have undertaken at the HRF. These include reports on auditory training for adults with CIs, and descriptions of the music training activities undertaken at the HRF.

- The HRF has been very lucky to have some of the most prominent people in Aural Rehabilitation serve as members of our Board. The original HRF Board included Harry Levitt and Mark Ross, who have contributed so much to the field over the past 50 years. They would probably rail against being called “fathers” of AR in the US, but I hope that they will allow me to call them “favorite uncles!” Harry and Mike Reynolds are the only original members of the Board, and I want to thank them for their many contributions to the HRF. Mike has acted as the Treasurer for the HRF for the past twenty years, and he has made an invaluable contribution over that time. Our current Board members are Kathy Cienkowski, Martha Ann Ellis, Myles Kessler, Harry Levitt, Joe Montano, Mike Reynolds, Ted Simons, and Tad Zelski. My thanks to them for their ongoing support.

- In some ways, I feel that our most impressive achievement has been to survive for twenty years on extremely limited funding. Fundraising always represents a challenge, and there have been times when our bank account has been perilously low. Despite a number of close calls, we have always managed to survive, and continue to provide a wide range of services for people with hearing loss.

This past year has been a particularly productive one for the HRF, because, for the first time, I have been able to devote all of my attention to providing training and developing resources. I “retired” at the end of August, 2015, and I am now a full-time volunteer for the HRF. This means that I am able to see 8 – 10 clients for two hours 1:1 sessions per week.
I look forward to continuing this work for many more years. In some ways I have always seen the HRF as part of my “retirement plan,” and I am greatly enjoying the opportunity to devote my full attention to providing training and developing new test and training materials. The HRF has had a very successful first twenty years, but I like to think that the best is yet to come. There is increasing interest in Aural Rehabilitation, and the growing recognition of the need for intervention beyond the provision of technology should help us to continue our ongoing mission of promoting and providing Speech Communication Training.

Geoff Plant
Executive Director

HRF NEWS AND ACTIVITIES

STUDENT VOLUNTEER AT THE HRF

The HRF was very lucky to have Carolyn Michener (left) acting as a Student Volunteer from January to May. Carolyn graduated from Boston University in May, and will commence her Master’s Degree in Speech and Language Pathology at Gallaudet in September. When she graduates, she hopes to work with adults with hearing loss. Carolyn was of invaluable assistance during the time she was a volunteer at the HRF. She worked with clients, and recorded a large number of words and sentences that will be used for training materials currently being developed. We wish her every success for the future, and hope that she will be a regular visitor at the HRF.

VISITORS

Mike, Shannon and Ali, PhD students at the University of Connecticut visited the HRF to discuss the use of the KTH Tracking Procedure. This software program based on Gnossipelius and Spens’ (1992) original design, was developed in conjunction with the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (RERC) on Hearing Enhancement at Gallaudet University. Mike, Shannon, and Ali all expressed a desire to use the approach in their research.

PRESENTATION AT THE BIONIC EAR ASSOCIATION

Geoff Plant from the HRF gave a presentation to the members of the Boston branch of the Bionic Ear Association on Sunday, March 20. The meeting was attended by around 40 people who came to hear Geoff talk on two important topics – Auditory Training, and Music for CI Users. Geoff spoke about the work of the HRF and training opportunities for adults with CIs. He also spoke about “Musical FAVORS,” which he recommends that CI users should consider when first listening to music with their CIs. The “FAVORS” are FAMILIAR, AUDITORY-VISUAL, ORIGINAL, RHYTHMIC, and SIMPLE. Geoff explained each of these musical features and gave examples of each.
INTERVIEW WITH GEOFF PLANT

Stu Nunnery recently interviewed Geoff Plant for the hearinglikeme.com website. The article is entitled “An Honest Conversation about Aural Rehabilitation. If you would like to read the interview, it can be found at http://www.hearinglikeme.com/a-conversation-with-my-hearing-rehab-specialist/.

GEOFF PLANT SELECTED FOR HLAA’S PRESIDENT’S AWARD

HRF Executive Director Geoff Plant has been selected to receive the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) 2016 President’s Award at the HLAA Conference in Washington, DC in June. This award is chosen by the HLAA Board of Trustees and is given to an individual who goes above to educate, inform and support people with hearing loss and who exemplifies the mission of HLAA. Barbara Kelley, Executive Director of HLAA, in her letter of award told Geoff that “as a writer, educator, and clinician, you have worked tirelessly throughout your career to further understanding among hearing health care professionals of the importance of aural rehabilitation in improved functioning for people with hearing loss and to provide counselling and individualized and group face-to-face auditory training to a wide range of clients, including those at great disadvantages.” Geoff said that he was extremely honored to receive this award. He will be presented with the award at the HLAA Awards Breakfast and Ceremony at the Washington Hilton Hotel on Sunday, June 26.

HRF TO EXHIBIT AT THE 2016 HLAA ANNUAL CONVENTION

The HRF will be an exhibitor at the HLAA Convention 2016 to be held in Washington, DC from June 23 – 26 at the Washington Hilton Hotel. This will be the first time that we have exhibited at this meeting and we are looking forward to letting attendees know about the HRF and the services we offer. The HRF have been allocated Booth # 424 and will be represented by Geoff Plant, Kerryn Plant, and Joe Montano. If you are attending the meeting, please drop by the booth to say hello and find out more about the HRF.

PAPER ON TRAINING FOR SINGLE-SIDED DEAFNESS

Gemma Mole and Geoff Plant contributed a joint paper to the ASHA Leader online presenting their perspectives on training for a CI for single-sided deafness (SSD). Gemma from the Midlands Hearing Implant Programme in Birmingham, UK, related her experiences following receiving a CI in one ear. Gemma has lived with SSD for most of her life, and has unique insights into the effects of the condition. Geoff’s section of the paper outlined the recorded materials he developed to use with Gemma following her CI being activated. Gemma and Geoff worked together for a total of 6 days, and the results of the testing and training program adopted showed the great value of the CI and a systematic training approach. The paper can be viewed at: http://leader.pubs.asha.org/article.aspx?articleid=2478924
Several long-term clients were recently asked what they thought they gained from the auditory training program provided by the HRF. Speech Tracking rates and scores for sentence tests indicate that their ability to understand speech improves over time, but I wanted to see what the clients felt about the effects of training. Here are a few of their responses.

I have a severe, progressive, sensori neural hearing loss and work with a terrific audiologist who has fitted me with hearing aids that really help me to make the most of my residual hearing. However, my hearing aids rarely, if ever, provide me with the ability to passively hear and automatically understand what I’m hearing. For that, I must actively manage the hard work of listening. The great benefit of auditory training with Geoff is that, over time, his exercises have enabled me to become a more skillful listener, better able to sustain attention and build meaning from context. It’s not just that I’ve become more resilient in difficult listening situations – which I have. It’s also that I’ve become much more insightful about how to focus my attention and how to recognize my listening habits - those that work well for me and those that run me into difficulties. For me, auditory training is practice in problem solving around listening; it’s training in smart listening.

Peggy, binaural hearing user

I always want to get still higher tracking rates and sentence scores in aural rehab sessions, but I’m finding that it’s really more about continuing to develop listening endurance/stamina and learning to listen mindfully, regardless of stress/energy levels, or distractions. I’ve noticed the more mindful I am during an individual 5 minute tracking segment, the higher the number and ease of listening.

Carol, unilateral CI user

When I started auditory training, I was already doing very well with my implants. Like physical training, you don’t really believe it will help until you notice tangible benefits. Perhaps the greatest gift I received from auditory training was the demonstration of real progress - such as hearing in more challenging situations, understanding with greater ease, comprehending and enjoying increasingly challenging music, convincing me of the true value of therapy. That conviction has remained with me, encouraging me to continue to practice rehabilitation on my own.

Howard, bilateral CI user

I thought I had speech discrimination and understanding pretty much under control after wearing a hearing aid for the majority of my life, but, as a new cochlear implant recipient, there were plenty of nonsensical sounds swimming around in my head that I struggled to understand. Auditory training simply helped to make sense of sounds and turn them into comprehensible speech. Geoff not only helped me to maximize my comprehension and processing time, but, more so, guided me in gaining the confidence in my own ability to do so.

I thank him for that from the bottom of my heart.

Sue, HA and CI user

Engaging in aural rehab with Geoff has given me greater confidence in my hearing “abilities.” Auditory training has helped to refocus my attentions on listening and how better listening addresses a broad spectrum of hearing issues both for speech and for music. It has been a tremendous gift that I wish was made aware of many years ago.

Stu, hearing aid user
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 Farmer’s Cheese” started life as a picture book written by Geoff Plant and illustrated by Jane Eldershaw. It’s aimed at beginner readers, but is also popular with preschoolers. The text is simple and repetitive, which makes it very suitable for reading aloud, or as a book for children on the path to independent reading. In 2009, it was adapted as a musical for children with CIs by the Scottish composer Oliver Searle (left) and, over the next two or so years was performed in the UK, South Africa, and the United States by a talented ensemble of musicians and actors. The adaptation of the book and subsequent performances of the musical was supported by the Austrian CI manufacturer MED-EL, who also published the book with a CD of the music and a DVD of the first performance of the work in Glasgow, Scotland.

Oliver Searle has composed two works for CI users. The first, “Noise Carriers,” was aimed at an adult audience, and much of what Oliver learned from this work influenced the music in “The Farmer’s Cheese.” Six instruments (flute, viola, cello, bass clarinet, baritone saxophone, and trombone) are used to portray the animals in the story, and two very accomplished actors (Clare McGarry and Martin O’Connor) play the roles of the cunning mouse and the hapless farmer. It is a wonderful piece of children’s theater and we would like to see it become more widely known and used.

There are several options available for purchasing “The Farmer’s Cheese.” All prices include shipping and handling within the United States. Please contact us for rest of the world prices.

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<tr>
<th>Pack Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>CHEDDAR PACK</td>
<td>Hardback of “The Farmer’s Cheese” including DVD and CD</td>
<td>$25.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>PARMESAN PACK</td>
<td>Hardback of “The Farmer’s Cheese” including DVD and CD and five copies of the softcover book. This pack is intended for classroom use.</td>
<td>$40.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>STILTON PACK</td>
<td>Stilton is the king of cheeses and this pack includes the hardback of “The Farmer’s Cheese,” including CD and DVD, plus one copy of the softcover version of the book. Purchasers of this pack will also receive one copy of Geoff’s other books for children – “I Want to Go to the Zoo,” “ANTS!” and “Speech Rhymes.”</td>
<td>$50.00</td>
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Contact the HRF at hearf@aol.com or phone 617 628 4537
Geoff Plant

Hans Christian Andersen’s “The Nightingale” is one of his most famous stories. It tells the tale of a mythic Chinese Emperor who is enthralled by the sound of the nightingale’s song, but rejects the birds when he is presented with a mechanical jewel-encrusted bird. Although the nightingale flies away, he later returns to save the Emperor from Death. In common with almost all of Andersen’s stories, there is an underlying meaning/moral, which is probably beyond the understanding of most children. It is this feature that I believe makes Andersen’s stories suitable for use with adult clients.

I have adapted the story for use in training, and present it in 49 short segments, each containing around 60 words. I made audio-recordings of each segment, and these are embedded in slides, using the Microsoft Windows PowerPoint platform. Each segment is presented using a simple “click and play” procedure, and the user can select to hear the segment with or without the text.

All that is required to use this material is a PC with PowerPoint and speakers, or a direct connection to the client’s CI. The user can click to hear the recorded segment as many times as s/he wishes, and can verify what s/he heard using the written text.

I sometimes use this material in training sessions at the HRF. On occasions, I play the recorded segment to the client without the text being available, and then ask him/her to rate their listening performance using the seven-point scale shown below.

How many of the words in the passage were you able to pick up?

1  None at all
2  Only a few words
3  Quite a few words, but less than half
4  About half of the words
5  More than half of the words
6  Almost all of the words
7  Every word

Once the client has made the rating, I show her/him the text, and play the recording once again. This allows the client to determine the accuracy of her/his rating. I sometimes ask the client to then make a second rating, based on how much of the segment they actually understood now that s/he can see what was presented.

If you would like a copy of this material, please contact the HRF (hearf@aol.com) and we will be happy to send you it on a CD or via dropbox. There is no cost, but we ask that you make a small donation (recommended $10) to help cover our expenses and ensure that we are able to keep making such materials available.
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**