



Welcome Spring

*At University of Washington Speech and
Hearing Clinic, we believe that "Speech is
Worth Hearing!"*



UW Speech & Hearing Clinic

UNIVERSITY of
WASHINGTON

POLAR PLUNGE

This February, University of Washington Doctor of Audiology students aimed to make an impact within their community and across the nation! Close to home, the UW Student Academy of Audiology (SAA) and other members of the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences joined forces to take on a very chilly endeavor. On February 5th, this enterprising group of students participated in the Washington State Special Olympics Polar Plunge. After raising over \$1000 for the Special Olympics of Washington, this group of students, along with other courageous participants, took the chilly plunge into the Puget Sound at Golden Gardens Park! "This was an amazing opportunity to show support for a program (Special Olympics) that we work so closely with and a program that provides great support to many of the patients we work with in the clinic!" explained Gina H, a member of the Class of 2019.

On a national level, UW Au.D. students wanted to see changes happen within our government to help benefit patients who

need hearing aids. The Hearing Aid Tax Credit Act (s. 48) was introduced in the 115th Congress. This bill would provide a tax credit of up to \$500 per hearing aid. In the interest of providing better access and affordability to hearing health care and devices, students decided to write to their respective state senators about this bill. While individually we may not make the greatest impact, together we hope to achieve our goal of making hearing health care available to and a possibility for all who need it. More information about the Hearing Aid Tax Credit Act can be found here: <http://capwiz.com/audiology/issues/alert/?alertid=65218651>

Steven Gianakas,
AuD Graduate student,
Class of 2019

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Help Others While Helping Yourself!

Upgrade & Donate
(RECEIVE \$250 OFF EACH HEARING AID!)
(VALID THROUGH JUNE 15, 2017)

Beginning in October of 2015, the University of Washington Speech and Hearing Clinic developed the UW Hearing Aid Assistance Program (HAAP) to connect patients in financial need with donated hearing aids. While numerous individuals have received the gift of hearing through generous hearing aid donors, our goal is to help even more!

If you are wondering whether it is time to upgrade your hearing aids, please keep in mind that they typically last 4-6 years. Some user-friendly improvements in hearing aid technology include greater connectivity with cellphones, TVs and looped systems. We urge you to consider taking advantage of our "Upgrade and

Donate" program, which provides \$250 off each new hearing aid purchased with a donation of a used hearing aid. We also appreciate donations of any types of hearing aids to the UW HAAP during this quarter!

May is Better Hearing and Speech Month



UW Speech & Hearing Clinic

LISTENING IS *Tiring!*



Hearing loss is not simply a matter of needing more volume or getting fewer words correct on a hearing test.

It also affects a person's confidence in conversation, their job performance and their willingness to engage in social activities. In addition, their health is affected; research shows that people with hearing loss call out sick more often and need more time to recover from a day's work than their typical-hearing peers. Worst of all, some people simply give up on their hobbies and fun activities with friends and family because the frustration of hearing difficulty is too much to handle. The unifying theme of these observations is that living with hearing loss is tiring.

At the Listen Lab at UW, we explore what makes speech understanding difficult and measure effort by tracking changes in pupil diameter as you listen to sentences. Pupils rapidly get larger as a person becomes more stressed; this can tell us whether speech is more or less taxing in situations that are noisy, degraded or challenging in other ways.

**Pupils rapidly get larger
as a person becomes
more stressed**

Our research tries to uncover aspects of your hearing that might not be fully understood by the percentage of words you get correct in a clinic test. For example, how quickly did you grasp the meaning of a sentence? How hard did you have to try to hear the words? Did you misunderstand a word and then correct your mistake a moment later? Does that process slow you down when preparing to hear the next sentence? These experiences are difficult to measure but we are motivated to understand them, and therefore better understand the experience of living with hearing loss. If you want to contribute to this research, please contact Dr. Matthew Winn, the lead researcher, at mwinn2@uw.edu, or read about the work at www.mattwinn.com.

- Matthew Winn, PhD

Communicate to Connect

Lisa Illich, MCSD, CCC-A

Hearing loss, because of its invisible nature, is frequently misunderstood.

Intuitively, it would seem that if someone can't hear, then making sound louder would help. Very often though, individuals who have hearing loss not only want sound to be louder, they want speech to be clearer! Because hearing loss is not easy to understand from the outside, there are frequent breakdowns in communication, which lead to frustration and sometimes isolation. As audiologists, our goal is to help individuals with hearing loss stay connected to their world.

A new workshop at the UW Speech and Hearing Clinic, called "Communicate to Connect", focused on providing support to individuals who live with hearing loss by going beyond the technology. Taught by Lisa Illich, M.C.S.D., and Jacqui Metzger, M.S.W., the program paired year clinical audiology doctorate (AuD) students with volunteer participants who had hearing loss. The participants invited a primary communication partner (e.g. spouse, friend, co-worker) for weekly meetings with their student. Students learned to take the time to truly listen to their participant(s) as they shared the various ways hearing loss touched their lives. And participants received support and guidance from the students that went beyond focusing on technology.

A new workshop...providing support to individuals who live with hearing loss by going beyond the technology

Each week the students and participants reflected on topics related to hearing loss, such as "Describe the three biggest challenges related to your hearing loss. How do you currently manage these challenges?" Students considered how they could take the knowledge gained from this experience and incorporate it into their everyday practice as a future audiologist.

Feedback about the six-week experience, from both the students and participants, was profound. Students indicated that they gained a better understanding of how communication is shared between two people; that hearing loss is ever-present and technology doesn't take it away; that listening takes increased effort when hearing loss is in the picture; that communication partners need to be taught and reminded of what the communication needs of the person with hearing loss are; that living with hearing loss is a journey; and, when a person is willing to share their emotions and feelings about hearing loss then the audiologist has a better idea of how to provide guidance and support. Participants shared that it helped immensely to learn strategies for making others aware of their hearing loss; that they experienced increased recognition of how hearing loss has impacted their life; that they learned to be comfortable in acknowledging their hearing loss to themselves and others; that it's natural to have hope for hearing aids/cochlear implants to make everything better, but good to learn that when they don't, there are still strategies to use. Finally, one participant shared, "I think you've got something special here!"

"I think you've got something special here!"