

The UofSC Aphasia Lab Newsletter

Research and Community News for People with Aphasia, Their Families
and the Rehabilitation Professionals Who Work with Them

Thank You to Our C-STAR Community Outreach Donor!

Jane Stratton, Graduate Assistant

The Center for the Study of Aphasia Recovery (C-STAR) at the University of South Carolina (UofSC) would like to thank **Mr. Murray Howard III** for his generous donation to support the Aphasia Community Outreach Program. This funding will allow C-STAR to extend its community outreach efforts statewide, while also raising awareness of aphasia. Mr. Howard, a graduate of the College of Information and Communications at UofSC, named the C-STAR donation after his parents, Murray M. Howard Jr. and Josephine Elizabeth Suit Howard. Mr. Howard has personal experience with aphasia and shared his story in an email:

"Our Dad was totally disabled by a stroke in 1977. His [stroke caused] aphasia. Dad could not return to work. He was a chemist. But thanks to the work of therapists at Roger C. Peace Rehabilitation Hospital at PRISMA Health in Greenville, he did regain the ability to walk, dress himself, and feed himself. And the ability to do arithmetic!"



Mr. Murray M. Howard III

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Website: <https://web.asph.sc.edu/aphasia/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/StrokeRecoveryProject/>

Thank You to Our Community Outreach Donor (Cont.)

“His Aphasia was such that, while his audible speech was mostly garbled, there were times when he spoke softly--barely above a whisper--and pronounced some words that we understood. We were confident that Dad understood much of what was said to him. He would physically respond in appropriate ways. And the most wonderful thing of all was he understood musical notes, could sing in perfect harmony, even if the lyrics were jumbled. Dad could play the piano again, something he had learned as a child.”

“After Dad left Roger C. Peace, there was no help available. Mom was on her own. How she cared for him 24/7 and kept him out of a nursing home, I'll never fully understand. Dad lived ten more years. She took him everywhere: church, grocery shopping, gas station, doctor's offices. Mom said she knew where every men's room was in Greenville!”



Josephine Elizabeth Howard



Murry M. Howard Jr.

“And Dad knew just how much Mom was doing for him. He would show her gratitude whenever and however he could. Before and after his stroke, he loved shopping for presents for her birthday and Christmas. They were married 44 years (1942-1986).”

During the COVID-19 pandemic, one project that this funding is being used to support is a loaner program for tablets, allowing participants without technology to attend virtual C-STAR events such as Aphasia Recovery Groups and Lunch Bunch. Additionally, C-STAR is planning a virtual Aphasia Community Event for individuals with aphasia, family members, caregivers, and clinical professionals, statewide.

C-STAR is happy to be collaborating with the Carolina Agency, a student-run organization through the College of Information and Communication at UofSC, to raise awareness about aphasia in South Carolina and to advertise upcoming community outreach events.

If you are interested in learning more about C-STAR's Aphasia Community Outreach Program, including the tablet loaner program, please visit our Facebook and website pages (see page 1 for links) or contact Lynsey Keator (lkeator@email.sc.edu) or Leigh Ann Spell (spell@mailbox.sc.edu) at the UofSC Aphasia Lab.

Welcome New Lab Members



Ceci Bradley

Ceci Bradley is a graduate student in UofSC's Speech-Language Pathology program. She grew up in Knoxville, Tennessee and earned her B.A. in Spanish and her B.S.Ed. in Communication Sciences and Disorders from the University of Georgia. Ceci aspires to work in an acute care setting, specifically with individuals who have suffered strokes or traumatic brain injuries. When she has a moment of free time, Ceci enjoys reading, running, practicing yoga, and spending time with her friends and family.



Alexis Capell

Alexis Capell is a graduate student in the Speech-Language Pathology program at UofSC. She is from Hickory, NC, and received her undergraduate degree at Western Carolina University. Alexis, herself, had a stroke at a young age and aspires to work with children or adults with neurogenic disorders. Alexis has a personal connection and passion for neurogenic disorders and stroke survivors. In her free time, Alexis enjoys spending time with her husband, friends, and dog.



Liz Stein

Liz Stein is a graduate student in the Speech-Language Pathology program at UofSC. She is from Midland, MI and obtained her B.S. in Communication Sciences and Disorders from Central Michigan University. Liz hopes to work with both adults and children in an outpatient rehabilitation setting. In her free time, she enjoys hanging out with friends and family, hiking and reading a good book.

Advocacy in Action: South Carolina Statewide Independent Living Council (SCSILC)

Michael A. Wellman, SCSILC Council Member

The South Carolina Statewide Independent Living Council (SCSILC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting *Independent Living* for people with disabilities throughout the state. Independent Living, as seen by its advocates, is a philosophy, a way of looking at society and disability, and a worldwide movement of people with disabilities working for equal opportunities, self-determination, and self-respect. Independent Living means the ability to examine alternatives and make informed decisions and direct one's own life. On behalf of the aphasia community, my application for a three-year SCSILC Membership was submitted and approved by Governor McMaster last year. I have served on the Council since July 2019. Ten council members jointly develop, monitor, review, and evaluate a three-year State Plan for Independent Living.

The SC Centers of Independent Living (CILs) include *Able South Carolina* (Columbia), *Walton Options for Independent Living* (North August), and *AccessAbility* (Charleston).

The core CIL services are:

1. Information and Referral
2. Peer Support
3. Independent Living Skills Training
4. Systems and Individual Advocacy
5. Nursing Home and Youth Transition



To promote inclusion in all aspects of life for South Carolinians with disabilities, the SCSILC fosters the independent living philosophy of consumer choice, peer support, self-help, self-determination, equal access, and individual and systems advocacy.

The South Carolina SILC believes that people with disabilities should:

1. Be accepted, respected, and valued members of society
2. Have equal opportunities to live, work and participate in their communities
3. Be expected to be productive, active, and responsible citizens

The quarterly meetings are open to the public. If you are unable to attend these meetings in person, please join us via Zoom. See the SCSILC website for more information:

<https://scsilc.com/wp/>

Introducing Aphasia Ambassadors

Marsha Ryninger, Newsletter Editorial Board Member

How does an outreach program begin?

Someone has a need. Someone has an idea.

The idea is shared and so begins Aphasia Ambassadors.

I had the privilege of interviewing Charles Nottingham to find out more about this outreach program. When asked what prompted him to start an outreach program that involves members of the lab visiting with people in the hospital who have recently experienced a stroke, he recalls his personal stroke story. After Charles suffered a stroke in May of 2016, he spent 45 days in the hospital. During this time, he had no one to talk to about his stroke, no one to answer his questions. When he started going to the Aphasia Lab, folks there helped answer his questions and let him know what to expect. Charles said Dr. Leigh Ann Spell talked to him for several hours to answer questions. "I've already been through it, so I can help answer their questions, I can help with issues. If I can't help, then I can find someone who can. They have questions, I have answers."



Charles Nottingham, Aphasia Ambassador

Charles also believes this program will help those providing the outreach. "I can practice my speech, I can help answer questions, and I can help point them in the right direction."

I interviewed Marcus Ryninger about his involvement in this program. Marcus suffered a stroke in May of 2015. He wants to see others recover and live a productive life as he has. When asked how he sees this program as beneficial, Marcus said, "bringing awareness and education to stroke survivors, their family and friends and the community at large. I'd like to see this program expand so more stroke survivors will get back into mainstream society. Stroke survivors have a lot to offer concerning skills, ideas on many subjects and personal experiences. This connection not only helps the new stroke survivor, it helps the 'seasoned one' to express himself/herself more and use their talents and skills. I witnessed this firsthand when I was in the rehab hospital in DC. A former stroke patient came to talk to me. He told me his story and gave me hope." On a personal note: the beginning days were dark and scary as a caregiver. I knew they must be more so for my husband, but I didn't know how to help him, and he couldn't ask.

I also had the privilege to interview Buffy Stoner. Although Buffy sometimes struggles with finding the right words, she is very eager to help others. Her compassion will help her reach stroke victims in a way that is much needed. She told me she was in a wheelchair for two years after her stroke. She mentioned the word FIGHT several times, explaining how she had to fight every day to get better, and that she had therapy every day. I asked Buffy if she was excited to help others and her response was "YES." Will it help women? "YES, for me that's a good idea."

The Aphasia Ambassadors' outreach will focus on providing support and counseling to stroke survivors, in their early days of recovery. For more information contact Leigh Ann Spell @ SpellL@mailbox.sc.edu 5

Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) Spotlight

Lallie Bennett, Graduate Assistant

Jennifer Leger has been a speech-language pathologist at Roger C. Peace Rehabilitation Hospital in Greenville, SC for almost 4 years. She is an active member of the aphasia community and is a co-leader for the only aphasia support group in the area. Jennifer graduated with her Masters from UofSC and was once a volunteer in the Aphasia Lab. She often refers her patients to participate in UofSC Aphasia Lab studies, and since COVID-19 has restricted their in-person meetings, she has been encouraging her group members to participate in the Aphasia Lab's Lunch Bunch or with the National Aphasia Association's Aphasia Café.

Jennifer says her motivation to become an SLP "began in 2007 when I was a junior in high school. At this time, my dad suffered a stroke at the age of 49.

His stroke occurred on the left side of his brain and he acquired aphasia, affecting his ability to use and understand spoken and written language. My interest in this field began while my dad was in acute care, meeting and observing an SLP completing assessments. My dad participated in over 100 speech therapy sessions and was unable to return to his career, but made great strides. He is an employee for the West End Co-Op, a place that gives individuals recovering from brain injury the opportunity to learn a trade and regain skills and their dignity as a part of therapy. He is a mentor and can empathize with those individuals by sharing his own story. I attribute the exposure to this situation with awakening a desire to pursue a career path toward speech pathology. I strived to make the best grades possible to be a strong candidate and accepted into a graduate program at the University of South Carolina. Speech pathology is a rewarding field, and I became a SLP to help others the way that my dad's SLPs helped him. My dad is my true inspiration!"

Jennifer says the personal experience of having a family member with aphasia allows her to connect with caregivers in the same situation, which is her favorite part of her job. "I have experience with living with someone who has aphasia and know that communication is a two-way street and requires patience from both sides. I have also incorporated initiating caregiver training into my professional goals at work." This has become more challenging with COVID-19 restrictions. "At this current time, it is difficult to not have caregivers available to visit at all times as education and training is essential at this level of care."



SLP Spotlight (Cont.)

Jennifer is also active in educating her community about aphasia. “Within the last year, another co-leader and myself met with an officer from our local police department to advocate for people with aphasia and initiate the process of completing education with other officers about what aphasia is and problem-solve together about the best way for a person to communicate their deficits if pulled over or in an emergency situation.” Some solutions they discussed included using a wallet card or having a sticker visible on their window.



Jennifer with her Father

When asked what advice she would give to aspiring SLPs who want to work with people with aphasia she says, “try to get as much experience as possible as a graduate student through placements, but also get active in the community with support groups or other avenues. It is important that we advocate for people with aphasia as it is difficult for a person with aphasia to advocate for themselves as their deficit is in communicating. Aphasia is more common than a variety of well-known conditions; however, 85% of people have never heard of this term including medical professionals. People with aphasia do not want to be deemed ‘incompetent,’ especially when their intellect is still intact. Just as anyone else, people with aphasia want to participate in everyday life and be as independent as possible, making their own decisions and communicating for themselves. Teaching others about aphasia can help people with aphasia achieve this through support from communication partners.”

In her free time, Jennifer enjoys spending time with her husband and their miniature dachshund, Bentley. She enjoys watching sports, especially hockey and football, and has recently started doing yoga. As a professional caregiver, Jennifer is grateful for her husband reminding her of the importance of self-care. In closing Jennifer says, “I am thankful to have my dream job at such a young age. I strive to make a difference in my patients’ lives, adults who have suffered from acquired or traumatic brain injuries, just as much as they make a difference in my life.”

The UofSC Aphasia Lab

Communication Sciences and Disorders
Columbia, SC 29208

[Recipient]

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

Address Line 3

Address Line 4

Aphasia Activities Committee

Hello Everyone,
We have started a Facebook Group Chat so that we can have conversations outside of the UofSC Aphasia Lab programs. The group name is **SC Aphasia Group Chat**. This is a social activity chatroom where we can talk about cooking, recipes, poems, gardening, hobbies, funny jokes, social activities after COVID restrictions go away, etc.

For more information, feel free to contact me.

Best,

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