

The UofSC Aphasia Lab Newsletter

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



Meet the Newest Member of the Newsletter Editorial Board

Martha Health is our newest Newsletter Editorial Board member, and we are so excited to have her! Martha is a native to Columbia, SC and has 3 children and 2 grandchildren. In her free time, she enjoys reading and making greeting cards. To learn more about Martha and her husband Mike, please read her Care Partner Corner interview on the next page.

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Care Partner Corner

WRITTEN BY MARSHA RYNINGER



When a person has a stroke and is diagnosed with aphasia, the whole family is affected. This Newsletter's Care Partner Corner will spotlight Martha Heath and her husband Mike.

Tell us your story.

"On 1/10/2015, my husband, Mike, had a massive stroke. It was totally unexpected... In 2015 we had been married for 45 years and Mike had never been sick with anything more serious than a cold. On that January day we were thrown into a whole new world of hospitals, doctors, tests, questions, and few answers. After 3 weeks in the hospital and 4 weeks in rehab, Mike was a stroke survivor and I was a caregiver! To say we were unprepared for these new roles, is an understatement. We had lots to learn and learn we did! We had ups and downs, ins and outs, highs and lows. It didn't take us long to learn that laughter really is the best medicine. On good and not so good days we learned to find something to laugh about! Our journey continues and I still make lots of mistakes and often do things backwards... we still try to see the humor in it all!"

What kind of changes took place in your lives as a result of your loved one having a stroke and aphasia?

"The changes in our lives were innumerable. Mike was soon immersed in the world of therapies and I was introduced to the world of waiting rooms. Both therapies and waiting rooms provided invaluable information and often much needed encouragement... I was also grateful for 'waiting room friends' who provided encouragement and a wealth of information!"

What do you know now that you wished you had known right after your loved one had a stroke and aphasia?

"Everything! We didn't have any idea what aphasia was! Talking to the doctors in the hospital was not very encouraging. We listened to their opinions and decided to investigate for ourselves what kind of help was available. After weeks of searching, Mike's brother called and said he had seen a bumper sticker that had the word "aphasia" on it and that he was unable to get any more information. He said it was connected with USC. After looking on the internet, I discovered the aphasia lab and all the wonderful people there! Hope! What a blessing it has been!"

What advice do you have for other caregivers/support partners of someone experiencing aphasia?

"I would say that the best advice would be to find positive support for yourself and your loved one. Never quit trying and forgive yourself when you make mistakes along the way. It's a long journey and no one is really prepared for it. Ask lots of questions of all the people you meet along the way. Sometimes answers come from unexpected sources!"

Welcome New Lab Members



Alexis Baldwin is a graduate student in the Speech-Language Pathology program at UofSC. She is from Dallas, North Carolina and graduated from Western Carolina University with a B.S. in Communication Sciences and Disorders and minors in Special Education and Psychology. She's interested in working in a hospital setting with adults who have neurogenic disorders or dysphagia in the future.



Hi! My name is India Godlock. I am a graduate student in the Speech-Language Pathology program at the UofSC. I received my undergraduate degree from The University of North Carolina at Greensboro in Communication Sciences and Disorders. I am thrilled to be working towards becoming an SLP, and I hope to one day work to with young children. I am excited and honored to have the opportunity to work in the Aphasia lab!



Aubrey Nickelson is a graduate student in the Speech-Language Pathology program at UofSC. I grew up in Connecticut, but have been in Atlanta, Georgia since high school! I received my undergraduate degree in Speech and Hearing Sciences with a minor in Psychology from Auburn University...War Eagle! I hope to work with children or adults who have neurogenic disorders and have a particular interest in those who have had a stroke or a traumatic brain injury.



Kelly Ryan is a graduate student in the Speech-Language Pathology program at the UofSC. She is from Yardley, Pennsylvania, and earned her B.S. in Communication Sciences and Disorders and a minor in Spanish from Penn State University. Kelly aspires to work in a medical setting as an SLP after graduation, with particular interest in stroke, TBI, and neurodegenerative disorders so she can help these patients regain their communication skills.

Person with Aphasia Spotlight

WRITTEN BY JANE STRATTON

Tell us a little bit about yourself.

"I was born and raised in Spartanburg SC. I moved to Columbia in 1984 when my husband began a career in state government. We have two daughters and four grandsons. I am a graduate of the USC with a BS degree in Early Childhood Education. I taught 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade classes at Hyatt Park Elementary School for over twenty years. I was at work and in the class room when I had a brain bleed and what has been diagnosed as a mild stroke. My students helped me get through the day and the ordeal until my husband got to me. I was always active in my church and I love arts and crafts and decorating. I also like planting flowers for indoors and outdoors."

How did you find out about The UofSC Aphasia Lab?

"I found out about the USC Aphasia Lab through my speech therapist employed by Prisma Hospital (Mary Aitchison). She explained the aphasia program at USC and that I was a good candidate for the treatment program and the services being offered at no cost. I was interviewed, tested and was accepted into the treatment program."



In what ways are you involved with The Aphasia Lab?

"...I have participated in several research studies. And I also participate in the lunch buddy program and other workshops... I am currently involved in an in-person aphasia group that meets every Wednesday."

What have you enjoyed the most about The Aphasia Lab?

"I enjoy working on the various speech, communication and language exercises offered by the therapists. All of the therapists have been so kind and patient with me and I have the upmost respect for them."

Have you made any new friends through The Aphasia Lab?

"Yes, I have met many of people through the Lab over the last 18 months and some have become friends. We play word games, listen to music and we are supportive of each other. I especially enjoyed the Columbia Fireflies baseball game that I attended with James and some of the other new friends that I met through the Lab."

Please share anything else you would like to!

"The Aphasia Lab has helped me in so many different ways. Because of the Lab I am now more confident in my ability to speak my words and communicate effectively."

Aphasia Group Activities

WRITTEN BY JAMES JETT

We had a great Aphasia Group activity event this past summer at the Fireflies Game on July 22, 2021. There was a great turnout with our friends, family, and baseball! Everyone got a free hat and 2 people caught fly balls, Mr. James Jett and Mr. Herbert Walker.



The next Aphasia Group activity will be the "Lights Before Christmas" at the Riverbanks Zoo on December 9, 2021 at 5 pm – 8 pm. The cost will be \$12 per person to get in. Bring your friends and family, and have FUN!

If interested, please contact James Jett at jjett@sc.rr.com or call (803) 315-0841.



Communication Tips for The Holidays

WRITTEN BY KRISTI SNOW

As the holiday season quickly approaches, many of us are looking forward to spending time with friends and family. While social gatherings can be a great time to reconnect with loved ones, they can also be daunting for people with aphasia and their families. However, making use of a few communication tips can help make this season a little less overwhelming.

As a family member or friend of a person with aphasia, it is important to remember to speak at a slow pace, and to try and keep the conversation to one person at a time. It is also best to try and avoid as much background noise as possible, such as singing or playing loud music. If you yourself have aphasia, it can be helpful to keep a pen and paper on hand to write down questions you might want to ask, either to follow up on a conversation or to clarify. Additionally, paying attention to facial expressions, body language, and gestures can help support verbal communication.

If playing games is part of your holiday traditions, choosing aphasia-friendly activities such as Jenga, checkers, or cards ensures that everyone has the best experience.

You may also choose to travel over the holidays, which can present its own set of challenges. If your plans include flying, you may choose to apply for TSA PreCheck, which will make the security checkpoint much quicker, and less stressful. Letting a gate agent know that you or your loved one has aphasia can also help avoid any unnecessary communication breakdowns during the boarding process and throughout the flight.

No matter where the holidays take you, the UofSC Aphasia Lab wishes you a happy and healthy season.



<https://www.aphasia.org/stories/tips-holidays-aphasia/>

<https://www.aphasia.org/aphasia-resources/communication-tips/?>

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tACS Study

WRITTEN BY LYNSEY KEATOR



Hello Aphasia Lab Family! My name is Lynsey Keator and I am a speech-language pathologist (SLP) and doctoral candidate in the Aphasia Lab. I come from a clinical background in speech-language pathology and have worked in a variety of clinical rehabilitation settings over the last five years.

While training to become an SLP, I was fortunate to work in a number of research labs that investigated the underlying neural mechanisms that support language. One particularly important experience was my work as a research assistant at the University of Massachusetts

Amherst, where I pursued my Master's Degree. There, I worked in a lab dedicated to investigating post-stroke aphasia. I helped create and conduct research studies that relied on script training via telepractice. I enjoyed applying my clinical skills in the context of a research setting, and after completing my clinical fellowship year, I discovered I had a number of questions about aphasia recovery that I wanted to answer, so that I could improve rehabilitation approaches for people living with aphasia.

To do this, I worked with our C-STAR collaborator, Dr. Argye Hillis, a neurologist at Johns Hopkins University. The projects in Dr. Hillis' lab aim to answer many of the same questions I had amassed during my time as a clinician and share a common goal with the work we do here in the Aphasia Lab. I arrived at UofSC in the Fall of 2018 and had the opportunity to work with lots of fabulous folks along the way – yourselves, included!

Currently, I am in the final stages of my doctoral training. My dissertation study will consider a novel approach to aphasia treatment. This new approach is a noninvasive brain stimulation called: tACS. tACS stands for transcranial alternating current stimulation and is hypothesized to synchronize different parts of the brain. Research from the Aphasia Lab and other labs have shown that other types of noninvasive brain stimulation, when paired with a therapy task, can improve language outcomes for people living with aphasia. tACS has not yet been explored in the context of aphasia, but may be a promising therapy approach to help people speak more fluently after their stroke. It is my hope that this study will determine if tACS can 'boost' language recovery by capitalizing on a network approach. I am currently recruiting for this study and I would love to hear from you if you are interested (see page 8 for eligibility criteria). Lynsey Keator - lkeator@email.sc.edu or 803-777-9242



The UofSC Aphasia Lab

Communication Sciences and Disorders

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Eligibility Criteria for the tACS Study

You may be eligible to participate if you:

1. Experienced a left hemisphere stroke
2. Are at least 6 months post stroke
3. Have nonfluent aphasia
4. Have previously participated in a study at the Aphasia Lab (e.g. POLAR, SpARc)
5. Have completed an MRI at the McCausland Center for Brain Imaging
6. Have not experienced a seizure in the last 12 months
7. Have not had brain surgery or any metallic implants in your brain/head
8. Have your COVID-19 vaccination