

The UofSC Aphasia Lab Newsletter

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

The 2022 Aphasia Community Event - A Success from All Perspectives!



From an Aphasia Lab Member's Perspective (Leigh Ann Spell)

Members of the University of South Carolina (UofSC) Aphasia Lab were SO excited to host the first in-person community event in over two years! While we have gotten to see some participants and their family members currently involved in research studies at the lab, we have really missed getting together with our Aphasia Lab community in a fun, relaxed, social atmosphere like we got to do at the 2022 Aphasia Community Event on March 21st, 2022. It was so good to see everyone and catch up, as well as share

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educational information about aphasia! The event was held in the beautiful Club Lounge, located on the second floor of Segra Park in Columbia. Our guest speaker, Dr. Argye Hillis, neurologist and former speech-language pathologist at Johns Hopkins University, shared some great tips on “Living Large with Aphasia”. She also answered questions with guests one-on-one after her talk. We were happy to see a pre-recorded message from Dr. Deb Meyerson and her husband, Steve Zuckerman (our guest speakers from our virtual event last year) about their latest adventure in raising awareness about aphasia. In their latest project, “Stroke Across America”, Debra and Steve will be riding their tandem bike from Astoria, OR to Boston, MA! More information about their cycling journey and goals can be found at www.strokeonward.org.



From a Care Partner’s Perspective (Martha Heath)

Thumbs up for a great community event! It was a fun time for all. The well-planned meeting was such a pleasure to attend. Being able to reconnect with so many people who have impacted our lives in so many ways, was a joy. The speaker presented a very interesting and positive perspective on dealing with aphasia. Thanks to all who planned, implemented, and attended this meeting!

From a Stroke Survivor’s Perspective (James Jett)

It was a great Aphasia Event with a stroke survivor conference. A lot of old and new friends that came talking about what Aphasia means. It was a great event for people who have had a stroke. We had a lot of laughs, a lot of chat, a lot of talk, and a lot of fun with pictures, puzzle, food, and of course speakers. We also had a lot of door prizes, especially me. I won a ticket for the first open game for the Fireflies Game.

I have been doing the Aphasia Group for a couple of quarters. Last year we went to the Christmas Light at the Riverbank Zoo (Dec. 2021) and before that we went to a Fireflies Game (Aug. 2021). Since we had the Conference this March, the next outing will be Summer. We are thinking about doing the cooking class or something adventure. And who knows, a bunch of us SC Aphasia Group, we are going on the road trip.



Get to Know Dr. Argye Hillis

WRITTEN BY CECI BRADLEY



Second year graduate student and Aphasia Lab member, Ceci Bradley, sat down with Dr. Argye Hillis, our guest speaker from the 2022 Aphasia Community Event.

Tell me a little bit about yourself.

"I was born in Denmark, but I lived all over the world growing up. I lived in Africa and India and other places. My father was actually doing clinical research in virology, so we sort of went to places where there were epidemics."

Why did you decide to pursue speech-language pathology?

"Well, I decided to go into speech pathology because I worked with deaf kids in a high school. I learned sign language, and I taught sign language to mothers [...] of [...] deaf children in a school for the deaf that used sign language. I thought I wanted to be a speech pathologist, so I could teach deaf children to talk. So I went to George Washington University for my bachelor's and master's degree. For the most part, I liked the neuro patients. [They] were the most interesting."

What made you decide to pursue your MD?

"[...] I worked as a speech pathologist for ten years, doing really all neuro [therapy]. And I started doing some aphasia research from the very beginning. I always liked research, and my first paper that I ever presented was at CAC (Clinical Aphasiology Conference). I just really fell in love with aphasia research, and I kind of stayed in that. I met Alfonso Caramazza at CAC [...] and we started talking about collaboration. We started doing a lot of collaborative research in cognitive science and then I was trying to decide if I wanted to get my PhD in SLP or go back to medical school. I told him I really love the clinical work in addition to the research. He said well you should really be a doctor because if you go get a PhD, then it's going to be hard to do any clinical work. So that's what I did. I went back to medical school specifically to become a stroke neurologist and keep doing aphasia research, so that's what I've been doing."

What is one thing you would tell families/caregivers to do to support their loved ones while recovering from neurological injury?

"I think just trying to find out what the person recovering wants. So a lot of spouses say, 'Should I talk for him when he's struggling or should I wait and let him talk?' And I think that's very personal; you should ask him."

'Do you want me to jump in? Do you want me to wait for you to look at me? And if you look at me, I'll help you. If you don't, I'm going to wait and let you try to get it out.' Establish it concretely with your loved one. Also helping them find things that they enjoy, but also feel valuable. [...] That's the hardest thing for people if they feel like they're a burden or don't feel valuable, yet any aphasic patient can do something to feel valuable whether it's folding laundry or [...] sorting coupons. [...] Be patient and encouraging."

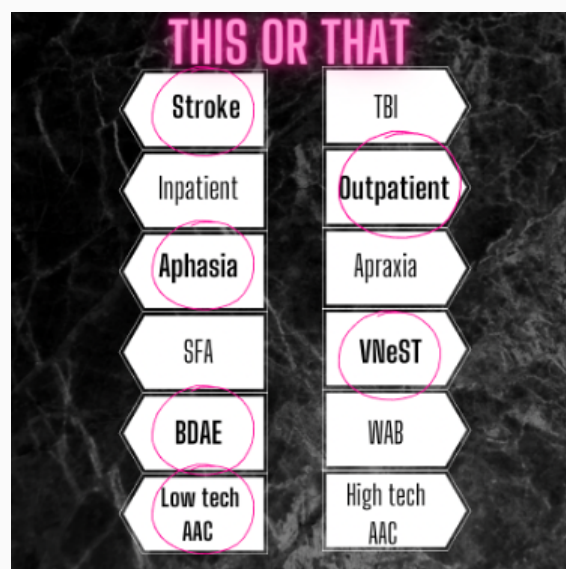
What is some advice you would give students pursuing a career in the medical field (whether it be rehab/therapy, medicine, etc)?

"I think the people who are most successful are the people who, with patients, establish a relationship with the patient. You don't always have to be 'Mr. or Ms. Professional.' You can be friends. I see [speech pathologists] hugging on their patients, and [...] I think that being able to establish a good relationship, whether [...] the person likes to joke around a lot or the person wants sympathy. Trying to feel out what they want in terms of relationship [is important]. Just thinking of how you would feel in that person's position, you would want to be treated with respect [or] kindness or empathy [...], I think, is critically important."

What are some of your hobbies?

"I live on a horse farm and I ride horses. I have four horses [...] I have a retired 39 year old horse. [...] I run every day, between five and twelve miles, but I've done that forever. I love to garden. I grow all of my own vegetables. [...] I love to grow vegetables on our farm and fruits too. We have a lot of fruit trees."

Dr. Hillis shared her preferences for evaluating and treating patients as a speech-language pathologist in our "This or That" quiz:



Farewell To Our Second Years!

WRITTEN BY KRISTI SNOW

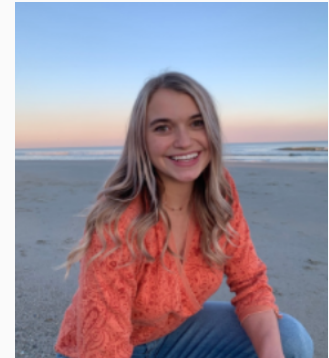
As the spring semester wraps up, our second year students are preparing for their final externships. These externships will provide students with valuable experience in the setting of their choice before they begin working full-time. We will miss them all, but we are so excited to see what the future holds for them. Read about their externship plans below!



Lily Jarold will be in Charleston, SC completing her externship at Trident Medical Center before moving to Pittsburgh, PA for a position with the VA.



Liz Stein will be completing her final externship with the inpatient brain injury team at Craig Rehabilitation Hospital in Denver, CO.



Alexis Capell will be at Prisma Health Baptist Hospital in Columbia, SC working with the adult population and in the NICU.



Janie Logue will be completing her final externship at Trident Medical Center's Inpatient Rehabilitation facility in Charleston, SC.



Ceci Bradley is heading to Atlanta, GA to complete her final externship in the spinal cord injury unit at Shepard Center.



Jane Stratton will be at Craig Rehab Hospital in Denver, CO in inpatient rehab, outpatient rehab and CHAT (Craig Hospital Aphasia Therapy).

Interview With Anna Pietrzak

WRITTEN BY JANE STRATTON



Anna Pietrzak is a speech-language pathology graduate student from France who recently completed an internship at the UofSC Aphasia Lab. To learn more about Anna and her work in aphasia research, please read her interview below.

Tell us a little bit about yourself.

"I am a [speech-language pathology] student in France. I study in the South of France near the Mediterranean Sea [at the University of Montpellier] but I was born in the North, near the Belgium France border. So, I crossed the whole country to study! I like where I am in Montpellier, I like it very much! [In my free time] I do some music, I play the double bass, I like to do some gardening, and I like to bike a lot."

Tell us about your internship at the UofSC Aphasia Lab.

"[At the lab,] I've been observing a lot of different things: some sessions from the TERRA and the SpARc studies, the lab meetings...I [also] had lots of time to sit and talk with the PhD students, post-docs, and doctors such as Dirk, Leigh Ann, Lisa and Lynsey, which was very important for me because I could ask lots of questions... Fun things I got to observe were two cochlear implant activations, that was very cool and very moving to be there for such an important moment for these people. So that was very special. I also liked the MRI observation...and I loved the aphasia groups! [The aphasia groups] felt like a bunch of friends gathering and just having a good time together; it gives some hope that you can live with aphasia and actually live."

What is your research project/thesis about?

My thesis took a huge step forward while I was here because every time I wasn't observing something I was in the cubicle and thinking about [my thesis], reading and writing and asking questions...It went really well! My thesis is about adapting the PCA (phonological component analysis) therapy but in sign language because right now from what I know there is no signed therapy for sign language users that [have aphasia] and I think that is really too bad because it is an actual need. I've been learning French sign language for two years; I am not at all fluent in it but I have some clues about how it works... and I sometimes have conversations in sign language with deaf people...

but I still have to improve [to sign with deaf people with aphasia]. The plan [for my research project] is to assess the [participants' performance] on a naming test, functional communication tasks and then a questionnaire about how they feel about their aphasia. Then [the participants will receive] the [adapted PCA] treatment... and then [undergo the assessments] again to see if [the treatment] improved their performance. One follow-up assessment [will be given] two months later to see if [the effects] last."

What do you hope to do once you graduate?

"The first part is not working! It's going traveling around, see what's going on in Europe, like maybe camping, hiking, hitch-hiking... I hope to have some kind of gap year. After that I want to try little jobs like [temporary positions that] replace maternity leaves, so I could go to different places and see different things and keep on choosing what I want to do. Right now, I know I'm really interested in working with deaf sign-users and [children and adults with intellectual disabilities]."

What have you enjoyed the most about the UofSC Aphasia Lab?

"What I enjoyed the most about the lab was the people. Everybody was super nice and super patient, like willing to hear my questions and answer them... and [that's] what made my internship...Thanks to everyone; to the lab members and also the participants who let me see their sessions and who shared things with me during the aphasia groups!



Aphasia Podcasts

WRITTEN BY KRISTI SNOW



Looking for a new podcast? Whether you are a person with aphasia (PWA) or a caregiver, these podcasts offer invaluable insight into life with aphasia.

1. **The Slow Road To Better:** "This podcast is produced by members of the Stroke Comeback Center in Vienna, Virginia. In each episode our members share honest and uplifting stories of how they adapt to life after stroke and brain trauma, and what keeps them going on The Slow Road to Better."
2. **Caregiver Dave:** "Your guide to avoiding burnout & surviving grief."

Both of these podcasts can be found by typing in the podcast names on the Apple Podcast app on your phone, or online at <https://www.apple.com/apple-podcasts/>.

The UofSC Aphasia Lab

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2022 Aphasia Community Event - THANK YOU!

We would like to thank everyone who was able to attend the 2022 Aphasia Community Event, whether in person or online. We would also like to thank our kind donors, Mr. Mack Howard and Mr. Murray Howard, who helped make this event possible. Finally, we would like to thank the 2022 Aphasia Community Event planning committee who really came through with an outstanding event this year. The committee included Lynsey Keator, Lisa Johnson Norris, Mary Aitchison, Makayla Gibson, Leigh Ann Spell, Sara Sayers, Hanh Adkinson and Kelli Powell. THANK YOU!

