



The USC Aphasia Lab Newsletter



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



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FIRST APHASIA LAB PROM

In February, the Aphasia Lab had its very first prom! Organized by the Speech Language Pathology and Audiology Interest Group (SLPAIG), comprised of USC undergraduate students, the event took place on the 17th floor of the Capstone building. Lab members, participants, their families, and students came together for an evening filled with food, music, and dancing, resulting in an unforgettable experience for everyone involved.



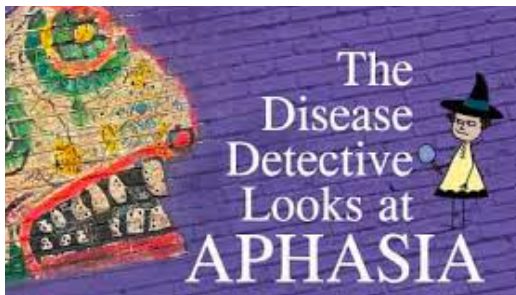
Aphasia on the Big Screen

SCREENING OF THE DISEASE DETECTIVE LOOKS AT APHASIA



In January, the Aphasia Lab hosted a screening in the Russell House Theater for the film “The Disease Detective Looks at Aphasia.” Emily Huckaby, a graduate student from the Aphasia Lab who appeared in the film, reflects, “The event provided a wonderful platform for our community to unite and listen to real stories about aphasia. The film beautifully showcased the personal journeys and growth of individuals living with aphasia, highlighting the crucial role of community support in their lives.”

If you have not watched the film yet, you can watch it on Amazon Prime Video, Tubi, or scan one of the links below.



[https://www.imdb.com/t
itle/tt30893851/](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt30893851/)



Igniting My Mind with Art

RICK ABLES

My name is Rick Ables. In January 2021 my life changed forever. I was a minister of music at Inman First Baptist when I was diagnosed with Covid. I went quickly from being only a little sick to being very sick, and ended up in the ICU. My life was in limbo. No one knew if I was going to make it from one day to the next.



Igniting My Mind with Art continued....

After two weeks of being in the hospital I woke up, however the man that I was, had vanished. I began to get better very slowly, but every little bit was celebrated and I was finally moved from the ICU and placed in a new room. I had suffered from a stroke, and I was left feeling scared, confused, and facing a diagnosis of something that my family and I had **very little knowledge of - Aphasia.**

With this new disorder, trying to understand why my brain and words were betraying me was incredibly hard. I had not only lost my words, I had lost my identity. My entire world has been talking and singing, both of which I could not do anymore. I had to relearn how to drive, prepare food, and take care of myself. Therapy was hard, and sometimes I wanted to quit, just give up, but I knew that God had bigger plans for me.

I began painting. At first it was just a suggestion from a friend, something to keep my hands and mind busy. Then I realized I really liked it. I loved how I felt after I saw the colors that were once meaningless dance together on a page recreating a picture I had in my mind. **I was finally able to express myself, even if my mind would not let the correct words come out of my mouth.**

As time has progressed my speech has gotten better, with my painting often helping me feel confident enough to communicate. I also decided to pick up the guitar again and try to relearn what was once so very important to me. Slowly, very slowly, it felt like I began one song -no one sentence- at a time to sing some of my favorite songs. **I was determined to find myself again, to get better!!**

My family researched and found the Aphasia Lab in June 2023 and **in September I began this journey of not only improving my brain and my speech, but also having the confidence to try new things, to paint and to sing more songs.** I have now begun playing the ukulele again as well as the guitar. I have started a private Facebook page, God Inspired Art, where I am selling my artwork so that I am able to share my story and meet and encourage as many people as possible. I am still working toward improving my speech and I have hope that I can someday communicate verbally with ease.

I believe that God allowed me to live for a reason. Even though this new reality is difficult, and certainly not what I wanted, through my experiences I have been able to meet and help new people and have a purpose in life. **I want my art to glorify God and to communicate what my words no longer can, my gratitude to Him for bringing me this far in my journey and my hope for continued improvement.**



**Scan the QR code or click the link to view
some of RA's wonderful paintings!**

<https://tinyurl.com/RA-ART-GALLERY>



What is the Aphasia Ambassador?

Aphasia is a language disorder that limits a person's ability to understand language, speak, read, and writing. The Ambassador not only help them but also help other awareness. Each person should have their own long-term goals to speak talking other like their family, friends, and other people who don't know what Aphasia means.

The last mission is having fun like lunch bunch, activity like pot luck, art work (rock paint)

Here are some of the Ambassador quotes from our last meeting:

- Woody – Stroke, not so good . . . Talking, Little Bit . . . New Friends Happy.
- Carolyn - After my stroke I feel like I am go back to 1st grade learning all over again.
- Marcus – I like to talk to people, especially new people.
- Charles - It may seem like you are down when all the stuff is going on but keep fighting. Look at me now I have my voice is back, don't wear my brace anymore, and I am working again It's almost 9 years since I've had my stroke and I am getting my life back. Don't give up!
- James - I like to help people who had a stroke, including me.

Mission of Aphasia Ambassador:

Lifetime Stroke Survivors
Aphasia Group Activity
Future Event for Awareness
Listening
Having Fun



**So next time you think what Aphasia is,
the Ambassador will tell you the story!**



**If you are interested in speaking with an ambassador via text, zoom,
email, or over the phone, you can complete our short survey.**

<https://redcap.link/USCAphasiaAmbassadors>





More than Words

DIRK DEN OUDEN, PHD.



Many of you who have participated in our research have named pictures from drawings and photographs, for example before and after treatment. Yes, we sure love our picture naming tasks! The information we get from these tasks tells us about what parts of language are particularly challenging for an individual speaker with aphasia, and about how they do after treatment. But language is so much more than naming pictures and the naming data do not tell us all we want to know.

We also analyze how someone tells a story, like Cinderella (Oh no ... not another Cinderella!!), or how someone describes the making of a peanut-butter-jelly sandwich! From those types of 'discourse', we can learn about a person's ability to make sentences, come up with words to describe situations, and to keep track of the order of different events.

In data from our recent studies, we are now seeing that a treatment that targets word production actually also has positive effects on the sentences that someone is able to create in discourse (length, structure), as well as on the amount of information they are able to communicate in a limited time. Everybody is different, so these effects are not the same for everyone, but it is promising that training on single words can improve production of stories and sentences. **Those are more than words!**

Aphasia Awareness All Around!

Together we can increase public awareness of aphasia and teach strategies to help support communication. This spring we have shared our knowledge of aphasia with:



Volunteer
Chaplains



SLP Day!



Local elementary
school
5th graders



Presented on chronic aphasia
at the SC Speech Language
Hearing Association



Student National
Pharmaceutical
Association chapter

In addition to scheduled events and social media, spreading aphasia awareness can happen when you least expect it!

- Traveling to another country and getting stopped by TSA because they spotted a rock in your suitcase (painted aphasia awareness rock)!
- Students walking around to local businesses to ask for support of our ACE event and running into a well-known comedian and explaining what is aphasia is!

A few tips on how you can help to spread awareness of aphasia:

- Share your story with others
- Carry a personalized aphasia wallet card: <https://aphasiarecoveryconnection.org/wallet-cards/>
- Educate the community (click the link for the NAA's Communication tips poster: <https://tinyurl.com/NAA-communication-tips>)



Mindfulness & Tai Chi

Written by

Dr. Dee Gulledge

Edited by Laura Oliver

Photo credit: Allison Croxton

Have you ever thought about exploring mind and body practices for overall well-being? Mindfulness and Tai Chi can help in learning to move gracefully through life's challenges.

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is defined as a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness of the present moment while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations used as therapeutic techniques.

What is Tai Chi?

Tai Chi is an ancient Chinese tradition developed for self-defense. The practice has evolved into gentle, slow, and flowing movements used as exercise. It is generally safe and adaptable for everyone. It involves taking deep breaths while stretching the muscles through low impact movements. You can think of it as "Meditation in motion."

Benefits of Tai Chi for **individuals with Aphasia** and their **Care Companion** may include, but are not limited to:



Increased mobility, flexibility, balance
 Decreased stress, anxiety, depression
 Improved muscle strength
 Increased energy and stamina
 Improved mood and sense of well-being
 Enhanced quality of sleep
 Lower blood pressure
 Reduced risk of falls in older adults
 Increased community engagement



As we learn more about the neuroplasticity of the brain, there is some research suggesting that, over time, repetition of Tai Chi movements combined with mindful breathing may contribute to building new neural pathways in the brain.

How to begin the practice of Tai Chi or mindfulness:

- Locate a certified Instructor: <https://tinyurl.com/find-TaiChi-instructor>
- Join a class in person or virtually
- View YouTube demonstrations
- NAA Mindfulness for Aphasia: <https://aphasia.org/event/mindfulness-meditation/2024-04-04/>

More information and references: <https://tinyurl.com/more-info-and-references>

Let's welcome our new post-docs, Dr. Giglio & Dr. Rangus!



Laura is originally from Italy. She earned her PhD in the Neurobiology of Language Department of the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics. She investigated the brain networks for sentence production and comprehension. After a postdoc in the same lab, she moved to USC to study language processing after stroke. In her free time, she enjoys bouldering, reading and travelling.



Ida Rangus, MD, studied medicine at the Charité in Berlin, Germany, where she also earned her doctoral degree in cognitive neurology and undertook a neurology residency at the Charité. Her passion for working with acute stroke patients fueled her research interests on the disruption and recovery of neural networks following strokes, particularly those impacting language. Ida finds joy in exploring the world through travel and immersing herself in art exhibitions.

Cheers to these amazing new SLP graduates!

Congratulations to our second year students who are graduating in May! They will all be completing their final internships this summer. We are **so thankful** for their contributions to the lab the past two years! They have a bright future ahead as Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs)!



Anna



Emily



Katie



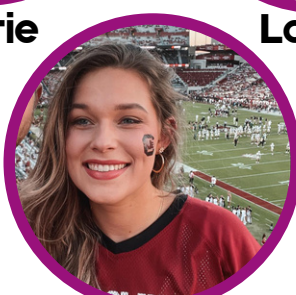
Lacey



Allie



Kiera



Danielle



Corrie

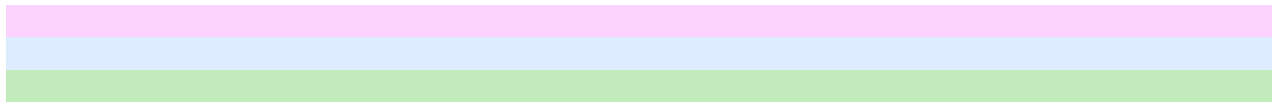


Gianna



The USC Aphasia Lab

Communication Sciences and Disorders
Arnold School of Public Health
Columbia, SC 29208



SPRING EVENTS!



Tuesday, April 30th | 11 am - 3 pm | Stone River

This annual event is free and open to individuals with aphasia, caregivers, rehab professionals, and community members who are interested in aphasia. We look forward to connecting, sharing resources, guest speakers, food, and a beautiful view of the river.

Saturday, April 27th | 7 pm | Drayton Hall Theatre

"Alice" will be performed by the aphasia drama group Play on Words. This play explores how having a stroke can be somewhat like entering a wonderland, but rest assured: there is humor too, and it has a Caterpillar, a Cheshire Cat, a Mad Hatter, and tantrums from a very scary Queen of Hearts!

Drayton Hall Theatre: [1214 College Street, Columbia, SC](#)

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