

Hearing Ambassadors

A Rotary District 1220 Initiative

Newsletter

July 2019

OUR GRATEFUL THANKS

to **Chesterfield Scarsdale** and **Belper Rotary Clubs** for their kind donations to Hearing Ambassadors; it will make a real difference to what we can accomplish. Thank you.

In the Newsletter this month, we hear from three inspiring people. Enjoy!



Read My Lips by Linda Woodroffe

Lipreading Tutor

We all lipread – whether we have a hearing impairment or not. We all know when our televisions are not in sync, or if someone is miming badly. That is because our brain knows which lipshape matches each sound. And if someone speaks with their hands in front of their mouths – the visual is gone and even ‘hearing’ people can find it frustrating.

Each word is made up of many sounds and lipshapes; take the word ‘shape’- three lipshapes for three sounds. The start ‘sh’ the middle ‘a’ and the end ‘p’. It is a tricky skill to learn when needing it as an aid to hearing. However, lipreading classes bring out knowledge that we already have. Knowledge hidden so far back in our subconscious, as we all learn how to lipread when we are babies, matching those very first sounds and lipshapes that we hear and see. But lipreading classes are not just sound and lipshape. Hearing loss can make people feel isolated and not part of conversation or community. It is just as important to learn strategies for coping with hearing loss. Strategies such as, where to sit in a restaurant, using furnishings to take away a room’s echo, and how to find courage to say - ‘I don’t hear very well. Please look at me when you speak to me’.

I can now..



The last words I heard from the NHS facilitator were “perseverance” and “I am sure you will cope admirably” What wasn’t quite so clear was for how long and how awkward you feel when first getting used to them.

I am now so grateful for that advice. Initially I couldn’t see myself ever just popping the hearing aids in and dashing off, but I can now. I couldn’t see myself wearing them on the golf course – but I do now. Who worries about the wind whistling past them diminishing their effectiveness a little? At least I can hear when I am playing golf. I didn’t think my spectacles would ever sit comfortably on-top/around the aids but they do now. I also worried about whether I would know when the batteries would run out and would I recall what the various bleeps meant what. How would I know where to get replacement batteries and would they really just give them to me? It was easy and annual replacement extras were given too. How on earth would I remember how to poke the piece of plastic through the system to increase their efficiency having just been shown once? Practice of course.

So, perseverance has paid off and I can now hear initial sounds, words and sentences and not look quite so vacant when a conversation is begun without my name being called first. I can pick up parts of conversations across the table which means being included in group chats. I don’t just nod across the table, and now, I don’t even know I have them in.

Yes, it took time and I struggled to get the hearing aids in my ears, yes I still don’t always hear quite what is being said especially in a noisy environment and yes, many noises still seem exaggerated and ‘out of kilter’; especially rustling bags etc. but perseverance has helped to alleviate these and the hearing is worth it. I do recall though the first time I heard the microwave beep. I thought an alarm had gone off!

Geraldine Matthews

Rotary Club of Retford



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by Derek Wright (Long Eaton Dawnbreakers)

How Lipreading Classes have helped me

I was a competitive (and successful) shooter from the age of 14, starting with small bore rifle (.22) in indoor ranges and later graduating to full bore (.303) outdoors. In 1956 hearing protection was unheard of on rifle ranges, so my ears were subjected to a lot of loud noises. The sound level of a small-bore rifle is in the region of 140 dB and full bore around 170 dB. Practice sessions usually involved each shooter firing 100 to 120 rounds and there were normally four people firing. In my mid 30s, I frequently suffered from tinnitus, a condition which still affects me today but to a much lesser extent, as it is generally masked by my hearing aids.

During a visit to Derby Royal Infirmary for ear syringing, I took a hearing test. I was told that I had high frequency hearing loss. I was prescribed Oticon digital hearing aids.

Two weeks later, (March 2007), my ear moulds were ready and I was fitted with my 'lectro-lugs'. The first thing that I noticed was the noise level in my car. I had thought that it was quite quiet up until then. I was sadly disillusioned! Early the next morning I heard birdsong for the first time in many years. I had not realised that this beautiful sound had been missing for a long time; it must have gradually faded away.

Listening to classical music, opera and jazz has been an important part of my life. Surprisingly, I did not notice an enormous difference in the sound at first. I think that because I was very familiar with all the recordings in my collection, my brain was filling in the sounds that I could not hear. What I did notice, is that when my wife, a professional pianist played her piano, not only could I hear



all but the three top notes, I could also hear the sound of the hammers hitting the strings!

The most important job that hearing aids should do, is aid one's interpretation of speech. I had been aware that I was finding it harder to understand what people were saying, especially in groups and in noisy environments. The hearing aids helped but were not perfect. As time went on, I was given more advanced aids from Seimens and switched to 'slim fit' eartubes, which were much more comfortable than the older style moulds. However, speech discrimination was still a problem.

In 2014 or 2015, I saw a flyer from the Adult Education Centre in Long Eaton, which mentioned lip reading classes. Cutting a long story short, I am now in my 5th (I think) year of studying this craft.



Our class usually has a dozen students, we have a tremendous sense of community as we all have similar problems. We are taught by an inspired and inspirational teacher, Linda Woodroffe. We always have fun and we learn a lot. However, only 40% of English can be read from the lips. Knowing the context of the conversation is an enormous help.

As far as Rotary is concerned, I almost left the club at one point. We had moved to a venue, where the acoustics were so bad that I had little idea of what had taken place during the meetings. Fortunately, our current location, Bennetts Hotel, is much better and I usually hear at least 85% of what is said.

SOUND SYSTEMS – Do you have questions about sound systems for your club? Email us and we will put you in contact with a recently retired District 1220 Rotarian who is a sound engineering professional.

TELL US YOUR STORY We would love to hear from you about your experience of hearing loss and what your club is doing to promote hearing awareness please email us on RotaryHearingAmbassadors@gmail.com