

Austin Speech Labs

stroke recovery one word at a time



INNOVATION

Read about our latest research projects on page 7.



COMPASSION

Check in with our caregivers on page 5.



COMMUNITY

Find out what our clients have been up to on pages 4, 6, and 7.



OUR GLOW UP

You may have noticed that we have a new logo. As individuals and as a nonprofit, we've learned a lot since 2008, and we felt that our look needed an update. We enlisted former interns and PR professionals, Patrick Doran and Anthony Patrick, to help us with our rebranding. They decided the best place to start was by asking our community. They reached out to our students, board members, donors, referral sources, and clients to find out what Austin Speech Labs means to them. Those conversations led to forming the three fundamental pillars of our branding: innovation, compassion and community. These pillars helped us create our new website and will guide us in our future marketing efforts, one of which being our new logo! It was designed by Anna Sing and Minh Cao. Thanks to all of these professionals, and the insight of our community, we will step into 2021 with a fresh new look.

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2020: AN UNFORGETTABLE YEAR

"Odd how one took conversation for granted, a ribbon held taut between two people, until it was cut." - Julia Powers, *The Pull of the Stars* by Emma Donoghue.

The year 2020 turned out to be a year that no one could've expected. The unforeseen challenges caused anxiety, loneliness and stress in many of us. We had to learn technology overnight, cancel travel or wedding plans, become teachers to our kids, and juggle much more while dealing with our own challenges.

The only consistent thing throughout all the social distancing and lock downs was our ability to share our fears, listen to each other, and read to gather insight about the unknown. The ability to communicate helped all of us stay connected and find stability in the midst of fear and loneliness.

Now imagine not being able to pick up that phone and talk to a friend, or read and understand the news. This is exactly what our stroke survivors went through while we were locked down and social distancing. The isolation was ten times harder for our stroke survivors as they do not have the same *human connection*.

It is this constant struggle of our stroke survivors that helped us at Austin Speech Labs stay motivated and focused in order to quickly figure out a way to help our clients find the same human connection and sense of stability.

Because of your support we were able to purchase new iPads and provide internet to clients who did not have it. Our speech therapists trained clients and caregivers on technology and Zoom, and by March we were able to offer 100 percent online speech therapy.

The silver lining to the pandemic was we could see clients in their homes and provide functional therapy virtually, have clients learn the names of things in their rooms or fridge, and help them make doctors appointments or read to their kids. It gave us an insight into clients' everyday struggles that we do not see when they come to the office for therapy.

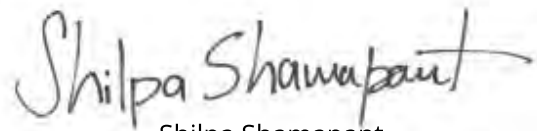
We hosted a successful virtual event in June. Thanks to all for your support through donations and marketing, our stroke survivors were able to continue the therapy they needed through Zoom. Additionally, our grantors allowed us to use the grants for general operations, making teletherapy a possibility.

Compassion from each one of you, collaborations from our community members, and our team's innovation helped us accomplish the following this year:

1. Provided 13,590 hrs of therapy to 415 clients
2. Returned five stroke survivors to work part-time/full time
3. Trained 13 graduate student interns from across the country
4. Launched our new logo
5. Helped stroke survivors read books

We cannot thank each one of you enough for continuing to provide your support as volunteers, advisers, fundraising committee members and donors. Because of your BIG hearts, stroke survivors continue to receive the highest quality therapy at an affordable cost so they can regain their ability to talk, read and write. Most importantly, they can *connect* with their kids, spouses, parents and their friends - a key to our survival.

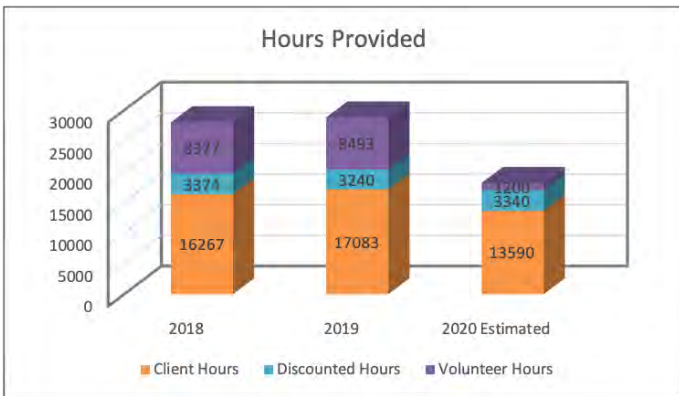
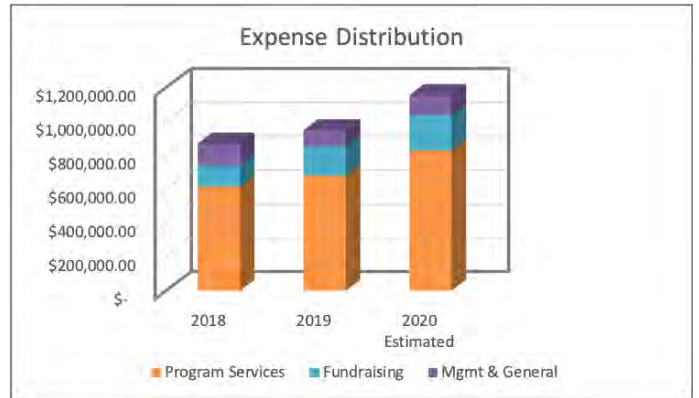
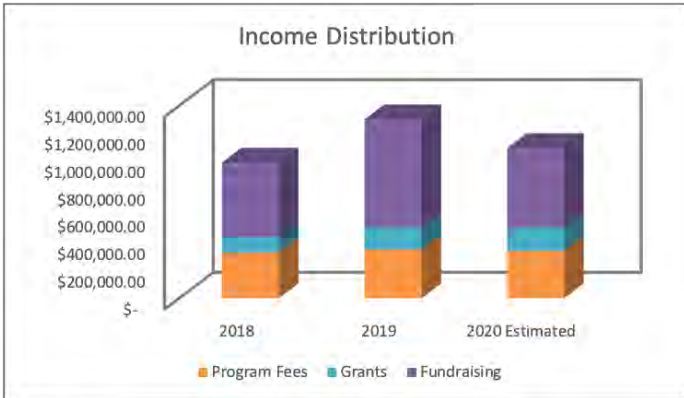
On behalf of our staff, board members and advisory board members, I wish all of you Happy Holidays and Happy New Year. Stay healthy and safe!



Shilpa Shamapant
President and Co-Founder



AUSTIN SPEECHLABS GROWTH 2018-2020



A SILENT HERO



In 2009, when we were looking to find our very first office space, Diana Holford graciously offered to help. She then helped us a year later when we needed to quickly move office spaces, and a year after that when we outgrew our third office space. Diana works in commercial real estate, specializing in marketing, strategy implementation, coordination and review of research with a special emphasis on financial analysis, and lease review and negotiations. She has successfully negotiated an excess of \$750 million worth of building leases in the past 10 years. Not only has she had a wide range of personal success, but Diana has used her talents to help Austin Speech Labs. She has been the negotiating force behind every new contract. She has had our back when issues arose with our property managers, and with each new contract, she has generously donated her entire commission to Austin Speech Labs so our stroke survivors can receive the therapy they need to find their words. We cannot thank Diana enough for her BIG heart and her generosity.

"One step forward;
every time you make
progress."
-Tom H., stroke
survivor

VICTORY IN 2020

BACK TO WORK

ETHAN



Ethan is a Computer Aided-Engineer. He had his stroke in October 2019. After almost a year of weeks filled with 15 hours of therapy during a pandemic, he is finally back to work!

FINDING HIS VOICE

BLAS

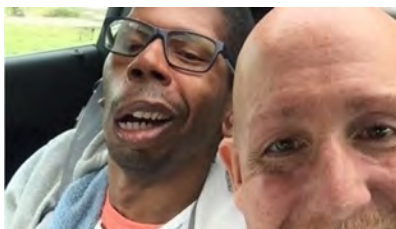


Over the past year, Blas has been learning to use an AAC device on his phone. He has recorded all the words himself! His device helps him say words that he can't get to. He can tell you what he wants to eat, where he wants to go and when!

HAVE ZOOM WILL TRAVEL

JASON

Do you want to watch a movie with your bestie, but they're in a different state? This isn't a problem for Jason! He and Randy watch movies through his AAC using Zoom.



YOU ARE GOING FORWARD

TOM



Tom had a stroke on February 5, 2005. He was able to say some words, but couldn't speak in sentences, read, or write. Tom persevered and 15 years later, he was offered a full-time position as an IRS clerk this past June!

SMALL BUSINESS QUEEN

SARAH



Our very own Sarah has taken the pandemic by storm and started sharing her make up expertise. She is working with Beauty Counter and is doing an amazing job. Stop by her page to chat!

COOKING UP IDEAS



ZACK

Zack Northcutt was a chef in Austin, TX prior to his stroke in 2018. During the pandemic he has been working on creative ways he can put his skills to use. So, he and his speech therapist, Mayra Carrera, came up with the perfect solution, a virtual cooking class. We asked Zack to share his thoughts on the class:

"My cooking class was created because it was something that I did for a living, and now I've learned to do it with one arm. I was excited to share with the stroke community that even with limitations you can still make great food. For this event we made steak, brussels sprouts and roasted potatoes."

Mayra thought it would also be a good way for me to practice speaking. She and I practiced the event over and over again. My good friend Joey brought all the audio/video equipment. My wife Jenna worked behind the scenes to make the whole thing happen. It was a team effort!

This first class was with Austin Speech Labs, but I hope to open it up to other stroke survivors too.

The next cooking class will be December 6, 2020 at 6:30 pm via Zoom. We will be cooking pork, sweet potatoes and green beans."

To find out more about what Zack has been up to, check out his YouTube channel "Stroke of Ingenuity."

CAREGIVING DURING COVID

THE POST-IT NOTE

The Post-It or Sticky Note was invented in 1977, famously by _Romy & Michelle_, but really by a company called 3M. That was 43 years ago folks! But I have a feeling 2020 was their best revenue generating year yet.

Being a caregiver is challenging at best, but being a caregiver during Covid is over the top. I became a caregiver officially in May of 2019 when my 31-year-old daughter, Haley, suffered a hemorrhagic stroke that changed our lives. At the time, I was living in Katy, TX (Houston) and my aging mother was living with me. My 21-year-old son, Cade, was leaving for a study abroad trip in Japan that day. Suddenly, we picked up and moved to Austin to help Haley with her recovery. I learned very quickly about strokes, the brain's neuroplasticity, seizures, medications, surgeries, adaptive devices, logistics, multi-tasking and the list goes on and on, as many of you know!

Ten month's later, throw in a Pandemic, working from home, tele-therapy, tele-docs, grocery delivery, looking for supplies, and additional anxiety about my mom, and stroke warrior, staying home and keeping them safe. How do we manage keeping our warrior's recovery moving, mentally and physically, and not feel more isolated than Aphasia already contributes to the situation? Like we all needed another chore added to our caregiver list! But we are 3 generations of strong women, we got this!

I had always considered myself an organized person, but now this was another whole level of organization my friends, the struggle is real. I try my hardest to stick to the K.I.S.S. mantra (keep it simple stupid) and the Post-It has become my main arsenal in the journey of recovery. While Haley was using them to identify objects in her home for Speech, I was using them to remind me of my daily tasks I had to do for the day. It is an ever-changing world, and I find that my brain cannot keep up. The Post-it is bright and visible, portable and disposable, small and convenient. Every morning I get up before everyone, grab a coffee, check the calendar, make my Post-It note. Then it is ready, set, go, and repeat!

So please caregivers, be kind to yourself, take time for yourself, breathe and we will get through this!

- Lynne Williams



Nana, Cade Williams, Haley Piotroski, Lynne Williams



"Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. **For, indeed, that's all who ever have.**" - Margaret Mead, anthropologist

THE LONG JOURNEY

BY DAVID LITTLE
BOARD MEMBER

I was on top of the world, or so I thought. At 40, I had a wife, Amy, three kids Sam, Ashley, and Sarah, and one on the way. I was a deacon at my church, had gone to combat with the U.S. Marines Corps, was a partner at an Austin law firm, and was a Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Marines Corps Reserve. Life was good, until January 8th, 2008 when I had a massive stroke. Out of nowhere, healthy, driving the car, the world which I knew was about to disappear forever. "Spontaneous" was what they called it medically; it was the new beginning for me!

On January 12, 2008, I was allowed to come out of an anesthesia-induced coma to see what I would be like conscious. To my eyes, it wasn't pretty; the Marine Officer, litigator, and Jack-of-all-trades was broken – and then some. I half-joked that I was drooling on the pillow, and that's about it. My right side was frozen, I only could make out a word or two, and my brain was foggy. I'll never forget the speech therapist came in, showed me a picture of a duck, and I said it was a 'dog.' That was the

"I'll never forget the speech therapist came in, showed me a picture of a duck, and I said it was a 'dog.' That was the beginning of a long journey that I'm still on ."

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Why do I tell you that background? Because my stroke did damage to my brain, and correspondingly my psyche, physical abilities, speech, cognitive ability, anger, and the list goes on and

on, but you get the picture: in my eyes, "I was broken."

But that's when the story of sadness, despair, and lament starts to bring hope. Because just like the nurse who cared for me – who brought hope to me – people like Shelley Adair, Shilpa Shamapant, and other care providers started to build me back together. I spent 2 weeks in the ICU at South Austin Hospital, 6 weeks in the Rehab Facility at St. David's, and 6 months at their outpatient program. It was in the rehab facility that I first got to meet Shelley. In September of 2008, the insurance company decided that I was good enough to discharge to live a life – but I was nowhere near what I needed to be to be a husband, father, deacon, lawyer, Marine Officer, and a productive member of society.



And that's where Austin Speech Labs ("ASL") comes in... The non-profit organization, founded by speech therapists Shilpa Shamapant and Shelley Adair who were tired of being hamstrung by the insurance companies hours, and discharging patients from St. David's who they believed could come back – like me – in Austin, Texas. In my faith, it was God's grace that ASL started about the time I was discharged.

I started by going to Shilpa Shamapant for a meeting to see if I could be helped. The amazing thing about ASL is they thought out-of-the-box then, and still do! I did 2 boot camp sessions, reading therapy, cognitive therapy, and writing therapy; basically they and their speech therapists took me and began to "fix" me. I have a total of 26 months of speech and cognitive therapy, 19 of which were at ASL. They did more than just fix my speech and my ability to reason, remember items, and write

above a 7th grade level- they fixed the new "me," along with other care providers, by creating a family atmosphere. I am forever grateful!

Though I tried, I can no longer do all the things I did before my stroke. The practice of litigation law and the life of a Marine is behind me. But I am a husband, a father, went and got a Master of Divinity, practice law part-time, am ordained and licensed to pursue my calling of helping the challenged in ministry, am a candidate for a Doctor of Ministry, and a Healthcare Chaplain at St. David's North Austin Medical Center. With ASL, other care providers – and in my faith, God – I have everything to minister to folks in crisis, and have empathy for their challenges, because of mine. I have a purpose in life, hope to spare, and a ministry that – along with being a husband to Amy, and father to Sam, Ashley, Sarah, and now Jacob (who has known me only as a Stroke Survivor) fulfills and blesses me. I hope that it blesses the people I walk with!

Thanks, Shilpa, Shelley, and Austin Speech Labs! I would not be where I am



RESEARCH

In response to COVID-19, Austin Speech Labs switched our delivery service model to 100% teletherapy. This change required us to put many of our research projects on hold, with the exception of our ongoing work with Boston University.

Austin Speech Labs is continuing to collaborate with Boston University on a study that investigates the nature of language impairment and the outcome of rehabilitation in the bilingual aphasic population.

The aim of the study is to optimize the treatment plan for bilingual stroke survivors using a new computerized model to "design personalized treatment recipes" (Kiran et al. 2013)

Austin Speech Labs has successfully completed eight treatments, and intends to continue recruiting volunteers interested in participating in the study

We are seeking bilingual stroke survivors speaking English and Spanish!

Enrolled participants will receive free therapy, which targets phonological and semantic networks.

Bilingual stroke survivors interested in participating should contact Mayra Carrera at mayra@austinspeechlabs.org, or call Austin Speech Labs at 512.992.0575 for more information about enrollment.

IN THE WORKS

This year, teletherapy has become an important tool to continue treating stroke survivors.

As Austin Speech Labs' therapy sessions switched from in-person to teletherapy, we decided to investigate two components:

1) What is the effectiveness and efficiency of telerehabilitation when compared to face-to-face treatment in stroke survivors with different levels of severity?

It is well known that many stroke survivors, for different reasons (e.g. living in rural cities, alone), are not receiving adequate treatment as they are unable to attend in person-therapies. Teletherapy could therefore be an option for this untreated population.

2) How do we improve the telerehabilitation approach? We want to understand the challenges that speech therapists face during telerehabilitation with survivors of moderate to severe stroke with aphasia.

Jussara Vitorino Woiler
Research Assistant



WORLD STROKE DAY

October 29th is World Stroke Day. World Stroke Day was started by the World Stroke Organization in 2006 to raise awareness of the prevention and treatment of strokes, and to ensure better care and support for survivors.

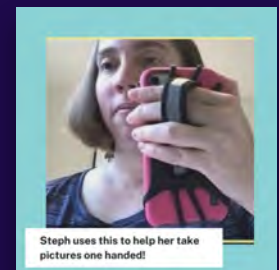
Over the past four years, Austin Speech Labs has hosted a health fair for our clients and community, but this year we decided to share ways our clients and caregivers are adapting to their new worlds. We called it "Life Hacks After Stroke". We shared our hacks all day long on social media platforms, and then posted a compilation video on our YouTube channel (Austin Speech Labs OWAAT). It was such a fun way to see and share the creative ways our clients have found to be more independent at home and in their neighborhoods. You can find all our great life hacks on our Facebook page, [@austinspeechlabs](https://www.facebook.com/austinspeechlabs)



Jon attached this bike water bottle to his cane so he doesn't have to worry about trying to carry it.



Casey attached this chain to his wallet to help him get it out of his back pocket.



Steph uses this to help her take pictures one handed!

ONE WORD GOES VIRTUAL



Last June we held our first **virtual** fundraising event. While we missed seeing our clients and friends in person, we were thrilled to share this treasured evening with friends and family across the globe. We were honored to have Dr. Steven Warach talk about the latest information regarding new cases of strokes due to COVID-19. We loved hearing our clients share their stories of challenges and successes while adapting to the "new normal." Most importantly, we were so grateful for your support. You showered our clients with love and compliments on our YouTube Channel, while they spoke live. You showed us patience and grace when our connections were spotty, and you donated. You gave when there were so many uncertainties, and for that we are beyond grateful. Your donations have allowed us to keep connecting with our clients, extend our reach to Utah and California, get clients back to work, and continue to develop new ideas for stroke treatment. We hope to bring our live event back in the future, but for 2021 we are planning another virtual event. We hope you will join us Thursday, May 6th, 2021!

Save the Date

ONE WORD AT A TIME

Virtual Event
benefiting

Austin Speech Labs

Thursday, May 6, 2021



BOOT CAMP DATES 2021

- 1) JANUARY 19 – MARCH 12
- 2) MARCH 29 – MAY 21
- 3) JUNE 7 – AUGUST 6
- 4) SEPTEMBER 7 – OCTOBER 29
- 5) NOVEMBER 2 – DECEMBER 17



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