Connections

2022 Annual Newsletter



eTFF7

Letter From The President

"Connection is why we're here. We are hardwired to connect with others, it's what gives purpose and meaning to our lives, and without it there is suffering."- Brene Brown

Human connections give purpose to our lives and help us form friendships, as well as family and professional relationships. The ability to communicate with others is key to forming and maintaining these human connections.

At Austin Speech Labs, we are committed to helping stroke survivors regain their ability to communicate by supporting them in their efforts to connect with others. Last week, as I was supervising and walking through the hallways, I heard a client's frustration and walked in to see what it was. I could hear Sarah saying, "Ugh....wedding...... don't know... I mean... don't know." Sarah is a young 44-year-old mother of three beautiful children. Before her stroke, Sarah thrived on socializing and was part of a large group, so not being able to get her words out frustrates her and causes a lot of anxiety now. Through back-and-forth questions, I understood that she was going to a friend's wedding and was anxious about how she was going to be able to communicate that night. So, our session focused on helping Sarah develop words that she could use to interact with and connect with her friends.

Sarah is one of about a hundred stroke survivors that we are currently seeing at Austin Speech Labs. Each client was part of a vast network of friends, family and coworkers, and suddenly, these networks were broken, leaving them isolated and alone after their stroke.

Human connections are not easy to build; it takes time, effort, trust, and knowing each other well. After a stroke, it takes significantly more effort, as stroke survivors must first work towards rebuilding those brain pathways that help us form connections. It takes years of intensive speech therapy to rewire the brain pathways to retrieve words and sentences so they can connect with their kids, families, and friends again.

Tom Warmbrodt, a 40-year-old stroke survivor, walked up to me as I was writing this article and said that for the first time since his stroke in March of 2020, he had a conversation with an Uber driver. The smile on Tom's face was priceless. He could connect to the driver and communicate his needs, instead of quietly sitting and feeling lonely. Your donations help stroke survivors like Sarah and Tom receive Austin Speech Labs' intensive speech therapy so they can reach their maximum potential. Because of your generosity and contributions, we were able to provide 16,248 hours of therapy to 492 stroke survivors this year and help them rebuild connections that give them more purpose in life.

On behalf of the Austin Speech Labs Board and Staff, I would like to thank each one of you. Your continued support through donations, volunteering, and advocacy is making a huge impact in the lives of stroke survivors so they can regain communication and connections **One Word At A Time**.

Happy Holidays!!!

Shilpa Shamapant Shilpa Shamapant M.S., M.A., CCC/SLP President and Co-Founder



Shilpa, clients, a student volunteer and a graduate student, connecting during a therapy session.

Growth and Impact

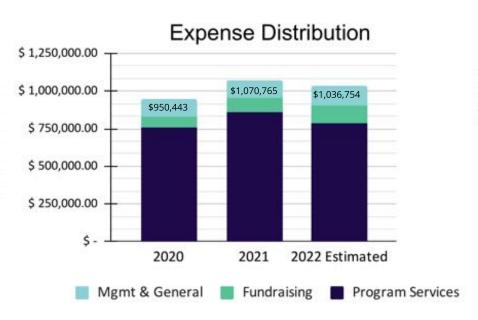
1500000 \$676,393 \$690,774 1000000 \$539,139 \$319.647 \$294,216 500000 \$152,230 \$303,887 \$303,504 \$324,782 0 2020 2021 2022 Estimated Fundraising Grants/PPP Loan Program Fees

Income Sources

Therapy Hours Provided & Total Clients 2020-2022



It has been a busy year at Austin Speech Labs. We are continuing to expand and grow our programs. This year we have collecting been data on comparing in-person therapy to teletherapy. Our numbers indicate that progress is slightly more significant when the client is in-person, but all delivery models have shown progress. We currently have a caseload of 100 clients and have a running wait list.



Donor Spotlight Sherrie Frachtman

Very few times in life do you meet someone who has dedicated themselves to serving their community like Sherrie Frachtman has. Sherrie Frachtman is a current member of Austin Speech Labs' Board of Directors. Sherrie has been involved with Austin Speech Labs since 2009 when she learned about us during an informational learning session presented by Shilpa Shamapant at a friend's house. Little did she know that this was the beginning of a long relationship. Inspired by Shilpa's passion and determination, she and her husband, Bob, became contributors and supporters of Austin Speech Labs, attending their first One Word At A Time fundraising event in 2010.

Shortly after that, Sherrie joined the Austin Speech Labs Advisory Board. In 2016, she was invited to join the Board of Directors, where she continues to serve the organization. As if that wasn't enough, Sherrie served as the Chair to our major fundraiser, One Word At A Time, as well as in other development endeavors to ensure the organization's sustainability.

Sherrie was drawn to Austin Speech Labs because her grandfather had suffered a stroke and she saw first hand how debilitating it was for him, her grandmother, and their family. Sherrie says, "ultimately, though, my support has been because I believe in the organization's mission to 'support stroke survivors and their loved ones in rebuilding their lives by providing intensive, affordable, and innovative speech and cognitive therapy.' Their determination to provide stroke survivors access to the therapy they need to thrive at home, at work, and in the community' and, the way they go about doing this, is truly awe inspiring." As a physician, Bob has been impressed with the research conducted by Austin Speech Labs, which demonstrates that our model and delivery of intensive therapy allows stroke survivors to continue improving even many years after the onset of their stroke. He also admires the leadership and staff's dynamic approach to treatment: to constantly improve the therapy experience for stroke survivors and to get the most impact in the shortest amount of time possible. Austin Speech Labs remains special to Sherrie because of how amazing and

life-changing of an asset it is in Austin. She loves witnessing the daily miracles that happen as a result of the hard work of our clients and therapists.

On behalf of the clients and staff at Austin Speech Labs, we can't thank Sherrie enough for her service to this organization. Her contributions have been extraordinary. She gives, and gives, and gives, and then gives some more. We all have benefited tremendously from her time, efforts, and contributions.

Thank you for everything, Sherrie! You truly are one in a million.



Dr. Bob and Sherrie Frachtman

Small Victories

We have all experienced major changes in the past couple of years. Today, we wanted to take a moment to think about the little things. Everyday we use speech as our main way to communicate, but it's easy for us to forget how important it is. Let's take a moment to recognize these small victories because **every word counts**.



Dr. Hinds has been working hard to take on more roles in the household. As her reading, writing and math improved, so did her ability to follow recipes and prepare a menu. This boot camp she started helping cook the meals for herself and her 6 year old son.



By focusing on his reading and writing skills, Delvin was able to fill out an application, interview and get a job. He is working part-time for Amazon. He has to travel about an hour by bus and foot each way, but he is so happy to be working again.



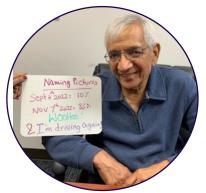
As soon as Cherry got discharged from the hospital she wanted to get her nails done. Her husband went with her the first few times to make sure she could communicate her needs. Now she is going all on her own.



As Tom's language has improved, so has his confidence. He recently learned how to get himself to and from therapy by using Uber or his electric scooter. This has not only increased his independence, but been a huge help for his wife as well.



Monty has been living with friends since his stroke, but as his communication has improved, he's been able to move out and into his own apartment. He was so happy to get the keys to his new place this October.



Mr. Patel is getting his words back. He made huge gains on his ability to name objects in just one month. He is also driving again!

Karen Never Quits

My name is Karen. I live in Paige, Texas with my husband, three cats, and two dogs. I love spending time with my husband, daughter, son-in-law, and two grandsons. I love animals– that's why I worked as a receptionist for a vet clinic. I was there for three years before I had my first two strokes. I was able to go back to work after my first two strokes for 10 more years. I have always been a big talker. Language, for work or for socializing, is very important to me.

I had two strokes in November 2007. I was getting ready for my grandson's soccer game. Then, my husband found me on the bathroom floor. He picked me up and saw my mouth was drooping and my forehead was bleeding because I hit the toilet. He told me that I had a stroke. I was mad at him. I told him that I didn't have a stroke. I just needed to lay down a little bit and get going again. Then, I heard him on the phone asking for an ambulance. I was mad at him again. In the ambulance, I told the EMT, "He thinks I had a stroke." The EMT said, "I hope not." In the hospital, they did tests. My husband was right. I DID have a stroke. Later that evening, I had another stroke. Then I couldn't talk or swallow.

After a week at St. David's in Austin, I was transported to Temple for insurance purposes. My husband stayed with me for two weeks. He, my daughter, son-in-law, grandsons, friends, my boss and his family came to see me. I had lots of support! My mom used say, "later on we'll laaauugh about it." My daughter said that to me when she saw me in the hospital. She was right. We just laugh about it. After six months, I could drive again and I went back to work. I could swallow and talk. My speech wasn't really good, but I could talk!



Pictured (left to right): Tim Ristow (son-in-law), Tracy Ristow (Daughter), Ben Ristow (Grandson), Matthew Ristow (Grandson), Karen Matthijetz, Gene Matthijetz

Then, I had another stroke in February 2021. And, my speech was worse. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, my family and friends couldn't come to visit me. But, the doctors, nurses, speech, physical and occupational therapists were awesome! They had me "working" for three hours a day. I was tired! Things were better when I left ICU and went to rehab. My husband, daughter and grandson came to see me at the window. I just wanted to hug them so tight. My neighbors sent letters and a friend knitted a beautiful prayer shawl. When it was time for me to go home, my doctor recommended Austin Speech Labs. I'm so glad he did. They have helped me so much. My speech has really improved. At first, I couldn't say long words. Now I can. The therapists at Austin Speech Labs told me to clap out the syllables. Now I can pronounce my prescriptions.

I used to love reading before my stroke. After my stroke, I couldn't read at all. When I started here, I could only read short passages. Now I can read several pages at a time, slowly. My church is encouraging me to read verses for the children. I wasn't sure I could do it. The Sunday school teacher said, "Yes, you can do it." I also asked the speech therapists at Austin Speech Labs about it. They said, "Yes, you can do it. We'll help you." I love scrapbooking , but after my stroke I couldn't find the words to describe the stories my pictures represent. I would write, "We had fun" or I wouldn't journal at all. Austin Speech Labs helped me to write paragraphs. I'm enjoying scrapbooking so much more now. I wouldn't change my experience at all.

My life is better than before. I was always close to my family but I'm even closer to them now. Little things don't worry me as much anymore. Have faith, work hard, and every day will be better than the day before.

Karen Matthijetz

Volunteer Spotlight



This year, we are spotlighting one of our community volunteers, **Julie Jacob**. Julie has been volunteering with us since 2018, pre-pandemic! She graduated from the University of Texas at Austin with a bachelor's degree in Speech Communication and completed her post-bachelor's studies in education and biology. Julie had a long, rewarding career working at the American Cancer Society, focusing on Counseling, Patient Services and Performance Support. After she retired, she began to look for ways she could use her strengths and experiences to give back to her community.

Q: How did you find out about volunteering at Austin Speech Labs?

A: I heard about Austin Speech Labs from a colleague at another non-profit organization who saw a posting about volunteer opportunities. I checked out the website to learn more, and immediately knew I wanted to get involved.

Volunteer Julie working with Kendall

Q: How has volunteering at Austin Speech Labs impacted your life?

A: Three words immediately come to mind: inspiration, gratitude, relationships.

I am inspired in all my sessions by the resilience, commitment, and positive attitudes I see from every client. The opportunity to be a part of someone's recovery path is a huge privilege that I am grateful for every day. And, I truly value my relationships with the clients and staff.

Q: Is there a particular moment or client that stands out to you as a volunteer? What is your most memorable experience as a volunteer here?

A: Honestly, there is no way to pick out one moment, one experience, or one client as most memorable. That's kind of like making me pick my favorite dessert - too many great choices to select just one! What feeds me every day is discovering what's most impactful and important to each unique individual, and trying to find creative and meaningful ways to help them work toward their goals. Even though a client can get frustrated with the pace or degree of their progress, each one remains completely committed and focused on doing the hard work needed to get there. That makes me even more dedicated to finding the most effective approaches for each person. Along the way, we seem to always find ways to laugh and connect, human to human.

Having volunteers like Julie makes a huge impact on our clients and our organization. Julie isn't here to check a box or get a grade, she's there to help our stroke survivors rebuild their lives and reach their goals. She is thoughtful with her time, and even plans and creates tasks that are meaningful to each client she works with. Julie gets to know our clients, she remembers their birthdays, she celebrates their highs and encourages them throughout their lows. She is making a huge difference in the lives of our stroke survivors and we are so grateful.

WAYS TO GIVE

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We accept college

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Designate Austin Speech Labs as your charity of choice on AmazonSmile and each time you shop, Amazon will donate a % of your purchase to US.

thank you!

One Word At A Time Recap

Our 2022 One Word At A Time event was a phenomenal success! With your support, we raised over \$400,000 towards our efforts to change the lives of stroke survivors. After two years of virtual events, it was wonderful meeting new people and reconnecting with so many familiar faces. Our Austin Speech Labs community continues to grow and thrive, and with each contribution, our mission to help stroke survivors communicate is advanced.

A highlight of the evening was our stroke survivors, Candace Barrow, Tom Leonardis and Jocelyn Harris taking the stage to share their stories of stroke and recovery. Each speaker was given a well-deserved standing ovation as the guests were captivated by their stories.

We are excited to share that one of our speakers from the evening, Jocelyn Harris, has completed her final boot camp session with us and has become a volunteer to help other survivors move along in their recovery.

These kinds of success stories are what we live for, and is what you support with your gifts. The Austin Speech Labs team could not thank you enough, and we look forward to sharing many more stories like Jocelyn's in the future.

The wheels are already in motion for our next annual event. Save the Date for April 27th, 2023 at The Four Seasons Hotel. We can't wait to share our stories and to celebrate the accomplishments of our clients.

Save the Date

ONE WORD AT A TIME

April 27th, 2023 Four Seasons Hotel Austin

benefiting
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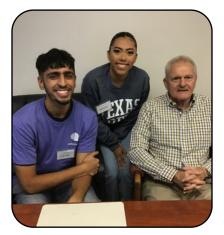
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