

HEAR HEAR!



WINTER 2009
VOL. 4

Trusted Leader in Hearing Healthcare

The
HEARING &
BALANCE
Lab, PC

THE DIRECTOR'S CUT: GUATEMALA



Dr. Michael Mallahan, Director of The Hearing & Balance Lab, will be returning to Guatemala in February to lead a team of audiologists, a dentist and a primary care physician on a two week medical mission trip. They will be visiting 5 different

towns and will serve more than 500 children. This will be the sixth year that teams have been to Guatemala to be of service to children with hearing loss.

When Dr. Mallahan was asked about his experiences in Guatemala, he replied, "The first time that I was able to help a 5 year child hear his mother for the very first time, the mother's tears sold me on this mission. While serving in Guatemala I became acutely aware of how many blessings we have available to children in the United States that we take for granted. I have the great honor of serving with dedicated folks as part of a group of medical professionals that pay their own way and give up their vacation time to serve. Our group is part of a larger national organization called "Healing the Children" that was started by a mother from Spokane. They serve children all over the world, providing surgical care, primary medical care and health promotion to those that do not have access to services in their communities. I am grateful to have the opportunity to work with such a great organization."

Guatemala is a country of 13 million people and borders Mexico, Belize, Honduras and El Salvador. Due to the consequences of a 36-year civil war ending in 1996, Guatemala has struggled to provide healthcare services to its people. More than 50% of the



population is younger than 18 and 38% of the population survives on \$2 dollars per day.

Dr. Mallahan began serving with Drs. Ron Krueger and Jeff Adams who are otolaryngologists at the Everett Clinic. Dr. Krueger and Dr. Adams had been providing surgical care for children in Guatemala City for a number of years. Dr. Mallahan was delighted to be able to become part of their team. Two surgical teams every year continue to serve the poor.

The audiology teams now travel throughout the country serving the children in or near the villages where they live. Previously, families had to travel in to Guatemala City, which is very unsafe in many areas and accommodations are expensive. The team evaluates children and determines who would benefit from surgery or hearing aids. If hearing aids are needed, the team will fit them with new hearing aids that have been donated. Some of the hearing aids are solar powered. "The other good news is that we are establishing follow-up care centers locally for the families. The centers provide replacement batteries, new earmolds and repair or replacement of damaged hearing aids with loaner hearing aids" noted Dr. Mallahan.



The team is working to establish a self sufficient program that can serve the children with trained personnel from their communities. "Hopefully we can work our way out of a job in Guatemala," Dr. Mallahan said. "Then, we can start the same type of program in other countries that need our help."

If you would like to donate to Healing the Children or to the trip that Dr. Mallahan is taking in February, items such as markers, coloring books, small toys and soccer balls are still needed. Or, feel free to make a monetary donation for hearing aids in your name or in honor of someone in your family who has hearing loss.

Contact our office for more information at 425-316-5102.

WHAT ARE OUR PATIENTS SAYING?



I want to let you know how pleased I am with The Hearing and Balance Lab and what an excellent Audiologist Nichole Kingham is. After a tour in Vietnam and 22 years of Law Enforcement I had a serious hearing problem. I tried both in ear and over the ear hearing aids, but they never worked right. I went to different Audiologists but no one could fix the problems. I gave up on hearing aids until a friend recommended The Hearing

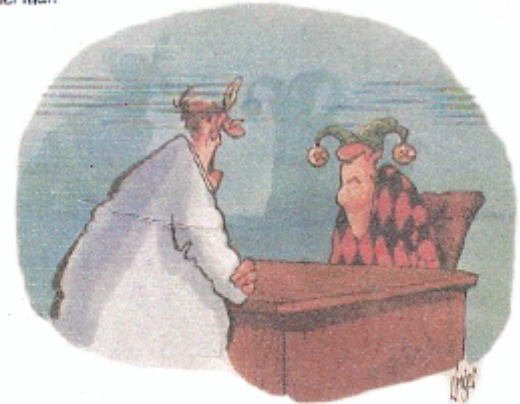
and Balance Lab and Nichole. I decided to give it one last shot and made an appointment. Best decision I ever made. Nichole tested my hearing and fitted me with a set of over the ear hearing aids. That was over a year ago and now I wear my hearing aids everyday. I don't know how I ever heard anything without them.

I found that it's not just the hearing aids that make the difference; it's having an Audiologist that knows what they are doing. Nichole definitely knows what she is doing and takes the time to make sure everything is right. Over the past year I have recommended several people to Nichole and all have had nothing but good comments about The Hearing and Balance Lab and especially Nichole. The service has been excellent and your FREE BATTERIES for life program is great.


Jerry Sampont

HEARING TO

Herman



You say you've got a ringing in your ears?!?

FEATURE ARTICLE: GOOD SCIENCE MEANS GREAT BENEFIT!

If you've worn hearing aids for any amount of time, you know that getting them to work the best for you is not like getting glasses. I wish it were as easy as just putting them in and *TADA!*, hearing is returned to the way you remember hearing when you were twenty. The process of getting fit with hearing aids at The Hearing & Balance Lab can seem time consuming, but the end result is proven in our satisfaction surveys. Of the patients surveyed 6 months after getting their hearing aids in our clinic, 97% were satisfied with the hearing aids and overall service they received. Those are incredible statistics! If we compare that to the national average, studies show that the satisfaction rate is between 60 and 80% (Stika & Ross, 2007, MarkeTrak VI, Kochkin 2002). The reason we have such great success? Good Science!

The process of obtaining good success with hearing aids really starts with the hearing evaluation. It's pretty easy to understand that an accurate hearing test in a sound proof booth is

necessary, but the other tests completed in the booth are just as important. For instance, a test of your uncomfortable loudness levels (UCL) will tell your Doctor of Audiology how to make loud sounds be perceived through the hearing aids as loud but not so loud that they are uncomfortable.

We will also perform speech understanding testing. We hear with our ears, but we listen with our brain. Speech tests tell us how well you (i.e. your brain) understand conversational speech in quiet and in background noise. Speech tests give us an idea of how much training or "physical therapy for the ears" might be necessary in order to obtain good benefit with hearing aids.

One training method that we often use in this clinic is Listening and Communication Enhancement training (LACE). In essence, we are in charge of making sure you can hear the important speech sounds as well as other environmental sounds. This is done through the hearing aid programming. The second part of the equation, though, is what your brain does with the sound and in essence, you are in charge of what



Top: Anita Miller, Dr. Michael Mallahan, Dr. Nichole Kingham, Dr. Lori Caldwell, Angel Miller. Bottom: Jane James, Amber Bong, Ryan Bahl

CON'T...

happens with this portion of the equation.

After testing in the booth is completed, the hearing aids are programmed. Here's the catch...the programming process really takes 4 weeks and sometimes longer. I explain it like this...you lose your hearing gradually, we're going to give it back gradually. It's sort of like training for a marathon. You wouldn't decide to run the Boston Marathon one week prior to the marathon. You'd start training months beforehand. The long-term goal is to make sure you are receiving the best possible benefit. The immediate goal, however, is to start with hearing better than without the hearing aids and slowly improve how the instruments are working for your hearing loss and for your listening environments. One great tool that we use to determine what needs to happen in the hearing aids is what I call "The Spy." The spy is a data logging system available in most hearing aids. It can tell us things like how much time you wear the hearing aids (or don't, for that matter) or even what type of noise you are exposed to.

After several appointments, a final test is completed with the hearing aids in your ears. We know how you



hear without the hearing aids; shouldn't we know how well you hear *with* them? You're right, sounds like good science! The test we use to do this is called Real Ear Speech Mapping. This involves a small microphone being placed into the ear canal with the hearing aids on. Then, a passage of speech is played from a speaker.

The volume of the speech is measured in the ear canal and compared against the target volume we are looking for to best match the amount of sound that is missing because of the hearing loss. The great thing about this technology is that it is done in real-time and allows your audiologist to make instantaneous adjustments to the programming to best match your hearing loss.

With all of these tools, we can make sure that you are receiving the best possible benefit from your hearing aids. We are committed to being at the forefront of technology advancements and will make sure to keep educating ourselves with new science so that you receive the best possible care. We hope you agree, it's good science!

Written By: Dr. Nichole Kingham

NEWS AND UPDATES

Patient Appreciation Luncheon A Success

On December 8, 2008 we hosted our first patient appreciation luncheon. Thanks to all of you who attended. We were pleased that so many of you could join us to celebrate Christmas. It was a great time filled with great food and great prizes! We hope that the tour of our office was interesting and that you came away with a better understanding of what The Hearing & Balance Lab is all about.

If you didn't receive your invitation in the mail, don't fret! Four such luncheons will be held each year. We have so many great and loyal patients that we had to split everyone in to groups. The next luncheon will be in May. Watch for your invitation to this FIESTA CELEBRATION!

Rate the Restaurant

Listening to friends and family in a restaurant can be a very difficult situation that many of you have experienced. There are some restaurants that seem to be better for listening with hearing instruments than others and we would like to know what you think. Dr. Mallahan will be compiling the results and publish them in our next newsletter. Our goal is to provide our patients with restaurant choices that will be more enjoyable for dining! You can email us at drmallahan@hearingandbalancelab.com, call us at 425-316-5102, or let Jane know what you think the next time you come in for an appointment or just to pick up batteries.

MEET OUR STAFF: ANGEL MILLER

NEXT ISSUE

Our next featured staff member will be our Senior Audiologist, Dr. Nichole Kingham.

We will be starting a new Aural Rehabilitation Program in May. Look for more information on how you can participate in this program in our Spring Newsletter.

Contact us at (425)316-5102

Or send us an email

www.hearingandbalancelab.com



Angel joined The Hearing & Balance Lab in 2003 with a degree in Business from Washington State University. She began her career as the Billing Specialist, but soon found her passion was helping people overcome the challenges of hearing loss. Angel obtained her degree in Hearing Instrument Sciences, which allowed her to pursue her ambition for hearing healthcare. Angel has also trained and worked alongside Audiologists Pam Swendrowski and Nichole Kingham for several years. She now works as our Hearing Instrument Specialist.

Angel was born and raised on the Kitsap Peninsula with her mom, dad and two younger sisters, but

now resides in the greater Seattle area with her husband and daughter.

When she isn't at The Hearing & Balance Lab, Angel and her husband love traveling to warm and sunny destinations. Her favorites so far have been relaxing on the white sandy beaches of Grand Cayman and climbing up through a 600 ft. waterfall in Jamaica!

Angel also loves spending time with her friends and family, skiing with her husband, scrap booking, and teaching her daughter how to swim.

Go Cougs!



12800 Bothell Everett Hwy, Suite 270
Everett, WA 98208

Return Service Requested