

the **BIG** news

The Newsletter for the Buffalo Implant Group

Volume 25 • Issue 4 - 2013

B.I.G. staff

Gail Cronin – Editor and Acting
Publisher
Janet McKenna – Assistant Editor
Margie Fitchlee – Writer
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UPcoming Events

B.I.G. Meeting and Social October 23

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Meeting Notice
Wednesday, October 23
6:00 – 8:15 pm

**Buffalo Hearing
and Speech Center**
50 E. North St. Buffalo 14203



Jeff Jaskier

COLLEGE LIFE

By Jeff Jaskier

made before going to college, or one will be made very hastily upon arrival to avoid being the smelly kid in class.

I have yet to come across or even hear of a professor/doctor (not teacher because now you are in college) who walks around the room to make sure you are taking the proper notes and that you personally understand the material being addressed. In addition, there is no one hounding you to do the class work or checking to see if you do the reading. The way this is checked is on the tests and exams, which are the bulk of your grade. Very few professors even take attendance. They expect you to take care of all of these things because, after all, you are an adult in college and are probably paying a pretty penny in student loans for your education. If you are thinking of skipping a class, just think of throwing hard earned money into the wind, because essentially that's all you're doing by not showing up, participating, and learning the material. The biggest difference between college and high school is that the responsibility of the professors is simply to provide you with the lecture material, grades, and assistance if you are having trouble with some difficult concepts. It falls on your shoulders to see them in your own time for extra help. Going to school away from home also increases your responsibility for keeping up with your studies, because your parents are not there checking to make sure you are doing it. But it is all

~ Continued on page 5

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Sue Wantuck



Sue Wantuck

Hello! I hope that everyone had a good summer. I tried to enjoy each and every day staying busy and being outdoors. In late August my youngest son, David, had major surgery. Of course I did not leave his side and spent four nights in a very uncomfortable chair in his hospital room. Once he was home the recovery process went well but took almost three weeks. The end of my summer was a bit stressful and hectic, leading right into "back-to-school." I am going to miss the warm weather, and all the "sounds of summer." This summer was my first experience with bilateral implants. I heard a full range of sounds, hearing the birds tweet. For the first time I was able to localize the other sounds without depending on my dog, Bucky. I look forward to the "sounds of fall" as well.

Our annual B.I.G. picnic had a great turnout. The food was delicious as always, a B.I.G. thank you to Desiderio's Restaurant. It was wonderful to see current members as well as many new faces. Sister Dorothy did her usual great job on the baskets. Thank you to members who donated items to include in the raffle. Several people helped with the setup and take down of the event. It was nice to see everyone working together. It would not have been possible without you. The wind was a challenge but did not stop us from having a great time and enjoying ourselves.

The next B.I.G. general meeting will take place on Wednesday, October 23 at Buffalo Hearing and Speech Center from 6:00 to 8:15 pm. The guest presenter will be from MED-EL. There will also be an election for board members, and an optional survey to fill out. All current officers have agreed to remain in their positions and are running unopposed. Please feel free to visit our website www.buffaloimplantgroup.com and click on the "Board" tab at the top of the page to see current positions and descriptions of responsibilities. If you or someone you know is interested in joining the board please contact myself, suewantuck@gmail.com or Gail Cronin at gdcronin@roadrunner.com. I am looking forward to seeing all of our members at the next meeting. Hope you can make it! Happy Hearing!!

FROM THE EDITOR

By Gail Cronin



Gail Cronin

This has been a great year for B.I.G. with new members on our Board, better communication, better use of technology and social media, and four full issues of The B.I.G. News. That was our goal in January, and this issue marks the achievement of that goal. In the past few years we have typically fallen short and gotten out three issues in each calendar year. Now we are back on track. It is only because of the consistent support of key

people who have come through for me time and time again to assist in the production of this newsletter. I am grateful to Sue Wantuck, Janet McKenna, Shirley Jaskier, Margie Fitchlee, Lisa Hill Nowicki, and all the members of our Board.

You will note in the Treasurer's Report that our expenses have outpaced our income so far this year. We have had to dip into our limited savings to make up for the shortfall. The one down side to achieving our goal of four issues per year is that it costs more than three issues. We really need to be more assertive about collecting dues in the future if we are going to keep our finances stable. My hope is that those readers who haven't contributed in recent years will reconsider their commitment to our mission and pay their dues.

This past summer we lost two of our long-time supporters and generous benefactors. Don Walser, a dear friend to Craig Carpenter and believer in our mission, never missed a year in sending us a significant donation. He always included a kind note of support and encouragement. This, from a man with no personal or family experience with hearing loss. He believed in us and what we are doing. His kindness and motivation will be greatly missed.

This month we also lost our beloved friend Winnie, who not only supported us financially but also served us with her time and talents. Winifred Morrison was an active member and past president of B.I.G. Until her health declined, she attended all our events regularly. Even as her mobility decreased, she tried to come whenever it was possible for her to do so. She will be sorely missed.

It is good to see our mission continue, so that the generosity and support that people like Don and Winnie provided us for so many years will help to serve generations to come. We can look to the young people in our organization to give us hope for our future. Gloria Matthews, who moderates our Facebook page, channels her zeal into action by focusing on the technologies that our younger generation embrace and depend on. Jeff Jaskier wrote the cover story about what it is like to be a college student now. After reading his story it occurred to me that only a tiny portion of his experience as a college student related specifically to his hearing loss. This is an important realization, because it reminds us all that hearing loss is not who you are. It is only a part of who you are. Jeff is not very different from any so-called "hearing" college student.

If there is a theme to be found in this issue it is that things don't always stay the same, and we have to adapt as we journey through life. Margie Fitchlee talks about this in her article about embracing change. Both Sue Wantuck and Janet McKenna also embraced change when they chose to go "bilateral" with a second cochlear implant. Sue has written about that change in this issue.

One thing that I don't think will be changing in the immediate future is the leadership of B.I.G. As of this writing, our current slate of officers is running unopposed for 2014. It's nice to see that our leaders are willing to continue for at least another year. They accomplished a great deal in 2013 with the reorganization of our group, and I know there are big plans for 2014 as well. I hope that all of our readers will take an active part in our B.I.G. future.





Jessica Holst

MEET JESSICA HOLST – OUR COCHLEAR IMPLANT LIAISON

Hello Buffalo Implant Group membership! My name is Jessica Holst. I am the Buffalo Implant Group's inaugural Cochlear Implant Liaison. I am originally from Rochester, NY and relocated to the Buffalo area in 2009. I currently

reside in Orchard Park with my husband Derek, one and a half year old son Liam, brand new daughter Molly, and our Weimaraner Jameson. We are an active family and most often can be found at area triathlon events, boating on Chautauqua Lake, or hiking at Chestnut Ridge Park. We are a busy bunch to say the least!

I am a Speech-Language Pathologist at St. Mary's School for the Deaf. I provide services to children with hearing loss, from birth through high school age. I joined the St. Mary's School for the Deaf Speech-Language Pathology Department

in Spring 2010. Prior to that, I received my MS in Speech-Language Pathology from Nazareth College and a BS from SUNY Fredonia. I also hold Specialty Preparation for Speech-Language Pathologists to Serve Children with Cochlear Implants from Nazareth College and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf. My professional areas of interest are language and literacy development of children with hearing loss, as well as early intervention services for families of children with hearing loss. I am currently the co-chair of Erie County's Local Early Intervention Coordinating Council Hearing Subcommittee, working to improve services for families of children with hearing loss.

I am excited to become a more active member of the Buffalo implant community and look forward to providing up-to-date access for our group on the latest and greatest cochlear implant technologies.



Donald Walser



IN MEMORIAM

By Craig Carpenter



Sadly, I must report that a long time B.I.G. member and benefactor, Donald Walser, passed away on July 19 after battling several major health problems. Don initially joined B.I.G. in June of 2002 after Gail Cronin and I did a presentation on cochlear implants at the Kenmore Lions Club at the request of Dr. Ann Stadelmaier AuD, who was involved in the early days of ci's and was one of my audiologists.

Don, who left this world to join his wife of 55 years, was the father of three children and grandfather to six. I met Don when I began working for the Ken-Ton schools back in 1966. Don became Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds and encouraged me to move up by giving me opportunities to prove my worth to the school district, first as the district-wide equipment mechanic and later as an electrician. He was very supportive of me, and I like to think I justified his commitment to me. When I went for my first implant back in 1985, Don was right there offering encouragement and later amazement at the effects the implant had on my ability to hear and understand, as well as the improvement to my self esteem. He often would remark on how he previously had to stomp the floor or flash lights to get my attention. But right after my return to work I was responding to his verbal requests. Jackie and I kept in touch with him via phone and mail, and I included pictures of our new home and the work I was doing on it. We had the good fortune to enjoy breakfast with him this past June when we came up to WNY for a quick visit. He was a strong willed but very good man and will be greatly missed.

***"May the road rise to meet you. May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face.
May the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again,
May the Lord hold you in the palm of His hand.***

DOES YOUR CHILD USE A COCHLEAR IMPLANT?

The Department of Communicative Disorders and Sciences at the State University of New York at Buffalo is inviting children with at least one year of experience using a cochlear implant to participate in an important research study. Each child must be between the ages of 2 years, 0 months and 7 years, 11 months.

The study involves three to six visits of approximately one hour each to the Department of Communicative Disorders and Sciences on the South Campus of UB. In

compensation for your time, you will receive 15 dollars for each visit and a copy of the evaluation report.

For more information about this study, please call Dr. Ling-Yu "Hugo" Guo at 716-829-5553, or email lingyugu@buffalo.edu. You may also visit the department in person at 118 Cary Hall, University at Buffalo, Buffalo, NY 14214.



REFLECTIONS ON: MAKING ROOM FOR A NEW LIFE

By Margie Fitchlee



Margie Fitchlee

If I were a betting person, I would put my money on guessing that most of you in the Cochlear Community have been asked numerous times: "How did you lose your hearing?" I am confronted with this question time and time again. The journey into deafness for each of us will vary, but what doesn't vary is the fact that by the grace of God and the skillful hands of talented doctors like Dr. Ernesto Diaz-Ordaz, we have been given the chance of a lifetime - "a chance to hear" - a chance to make a new life for ourselves.

In my case they were never able to give me a tangible reason for my profound loss of hearing. It has taken much time to adjust to my circumstances, but I have come to accept the fact that over the course of 14 years it kept getting worse. It just happened. Why? I will never really know.

Smack in the middle of my hearing crisis we were building a new home in South Florida. We were looking forward to the excitement of retiring, meeting new people, doing new things, and making room for that much anticipated new life.

Smack in the middle of my hearing crisis I was encountering the bitter-sweet realization that it was going to be a real challenge for me to make room for that new life.

Lastly, smack in the middle of my hearing crisis God granted me by his grace the chance to have Dr. Ernesto Diaz-Ordaz perform what I call life-altering surgery on me. A chance to help make those dreams of a new life for me come true.

I have been blessed with meeting the most wonderful people in Florida. Many I consider good, caring friends. I have a special friend from Long Island, Joanne LaGois, whose elderly mother endured profound hearing loss for years. She gave me a wonderful piece of advice when referring to my hearing loss. She said, "Margie, IT IS WHAT IT IS." So simply put, but so powerfully taken in by me. She often told me if only her mother could have had the benefit of a cochlear implant that her life would have been so different.

I have never forgotten those words or what they meant to me regarding my given situation. My friend was quite taken back when I boldly proclaimed to her, "Joanne, I wish you could have known me before!" "Before what?!" she exclaimed. Why, before I went deaf. Was I really that different? Well, I did take a lot for granted. I did smile a lot more. After losing my hearing I did seem to be holding a lot of baggage, baggage that was weighing down my entrance into a happy retirement. Her simple five words "IT IS WHAT IT IS" made a huge difference on my outlook. They brought to my mind a story I heard that might be of some help to those of you who are encountering all that the journey into deafness brings with it.

David W. Jones wrote this about Jonah Thompson, a seventy plus year old, tired but not yet retired, widowed but not alone, competent but not quite sane gentleman. "And Jonah heard God's voice." "Jonah, Do you know what the difference is between you and the trees?" He was

confident it was God because God usually asks questions but gave no answers. Jonah didn't need a divine answer to this question; he knew it. "Yes," he said. "The difference between me and the trees is that the trees let go of their leaves. I keep holding onto mine. The trees make room for a new life. I don't."

How many of you find yourself feeling just like Jonah? Remember, just as the tree changes, so do we. Make room for that new life; you will be amazed at what lies ahead for you. If given the chance for cochlear implant surgery, accept it. Along with it accept God's grace. The definition of God's grace tells us, "It is an unmerited favor. It is kindness from God we don't deserve. There is nothing we have done, nor can ever do to earn this favor. It is a gift." A gift I will always cherish. In closing let me say that, "for me making room for a new life has opened the door for many new friendships, friendships that mean the world to me." This is my wish for all of you... and of course it comes straight from the Irish:

May the friendships you make,
Be those which endure,
And all of your grey clouds
Be small ones, for sure.
And trusting in Him
To whom we all pray,
May a song fill your heart,
Every step of the way.
God Bless All of you.....
a gift." A gift I will always
cherish.

TREASURER'S REPORT

By Lisa
Hill
Nowicki



Year to date B.I.G. income is \$1,226 from dues, donations and pop can returns. Unfortunately our expenses for the same period are \$1,979.76. A deficit of \$753.76 exists due to the expenses from the picnic and newsletter. At the October 23 meeting there will be a treasurer's table to review your current database info and

to take next year's membership dues. next month's picnic will have us dipping into our reserves. Your membership status is the date to the right of your name on the newsletter. Please consider supporting B.I.G. by renewing your 2013 membership if you have not done so already.

COLLEGE LIFE..... Continued from page 1

manageable as long as the tasks are broken down into bites as opposed to taking on chunks that last hours.

Granted, there is a distance between home and college. But it is not overwhelming for me since I attend Rochester Institute of Technology, which is only about an hour and a half drive away. The first few days reminded me of middle school again, when the freedom had exponentially increased from walking in lines with the teacher everywhere to having the freedom to get to class at your own pace. The same happened in the first few days at college. You set the pace in which everything will be done. It may be sad to leave friends back home, but you can't stay home to be with friends. After all, they have their own lives to begin just as you do.

Living in the dorms has been a wonderful experience. There are a lot of friendly people, but also a lot of "shut-ins." The best thing to do is to be a friendly, easy going person and meet a lot of people in other dorms and floors, not just your own. Fortunately, I had the pleasure of attending high school with my roommate, so we didn't have a harsh transition into dorm living. Some people have difficulty living with another person due to their quirks. Remember, it's only for a year and as my mom always told me, "You can hold your breath that long."

When you get to college, you can meet so many people with different personalities and backgrounds. This time period is another chance to define what kind of person you will eventually become. The college experience will also give you a chance to make potential lifelong friendships with people from across the nation. From working on similar homework with dorm mates to just hanging out in the halls, there is a time and place to make friends with the people around you. Plus, after a year or two, the opportunity to live in an apartment becomes available. So you want to surround yourself with the right type of people.

So far, the second year has been sort of a "been there, done that" year. The fear of the first college midterms and finals has come and passed. But with that, the expectation of the professors has also increased. They expect you to have figured out how to study and learn the course material. With that, the load has increased and the course material has increased in complexity.

A nice thing about being a sophomore is that there is more freedom as far as meal plans goes. Last year, I was on a meal plan where I got some spending money, some meals to eat at any campus location, and some meals that were good for the central campus dining hall. This year, I have all spending money so I can eat wherever and whenever, which brings me to my next point, eating healthy. You choose what you eat and choose what not to eat. If you want to make french fries count as a vegetable, by all means go ahead, but beware of the freshman 15. (They say most college students gain 15 lbs. in their freshman year.) The best thing to do is to build healthy eating habits as well as exercise habits because these will carry on for the rest of your life.

The adjustment has not been difficult at RIT. There is a whole college for the deaf within the university. Plus, a lot of people become used to being around deaf people, because the campus has approximately 1000 deaf or hard of hearing students. Naturally, I have tried to be an outgoing, friendly person and this has worked out wonderfully. One challenge is that I do not like any light at all when I sleep, so I bought an eye mask to block out the light of my roommate getting up at 5:45 am for ROTC PT. This probably isn't recommended given that I have no hearing without my implant and that my fire alarm is a blinking strobe. I have an agreement with my roommate that he will make sure I am safe in the case of an emergency, since I may not see the light.

Overall, your college experience will become what

~ Continued on page 9



Kathy Maroney, Gloria Matthews, Sue Wantuck, and Melissa Burroughs at Walden Galleria

B.I.G. PARTICIPATES IN DEAF AWARENESS WEEK

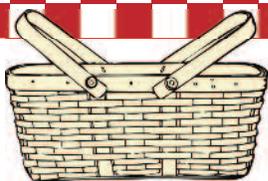
By Sue Wantuck

week was announced and shared.

Representatives from our group included myself, Gloria Matthews, Kathy Maroney and Melissa Burroughs. We displayed recent newsletters, answered questions, and provided helpful handouts with basic information about cochlear implants and membership forms. Freebies included B.I.G. pens with our next meeting details attached as well as some chocolate treats that were a big hit.

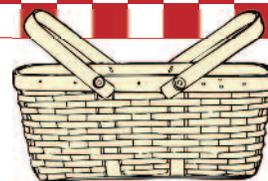
This is the first year that the "kick-off" was held at the Galleria Mall. I am glad that we were able to represent our group and participate in this special community event. Next year we hope that more members will come out and participate not only in the kick-off but the additional happenings throughout the week.

Mary's School for the Deaf, Buffalo Implant Group (B.I.G.), Niagara University, and the University of Buffalo ASL Club. It was a great opportunity to learn more about local programs/support agencies and socialize with others. A calendar with additional events for the



PICNIC REPORT

By Gail Cronin



On Friday, August 2, members of B.I.G. once again gathered at Westwood Park in Lancaster for our annual sunset dinner picnic. It was a beautiful, clear night, but we did battle the wind in the early part of the evening.

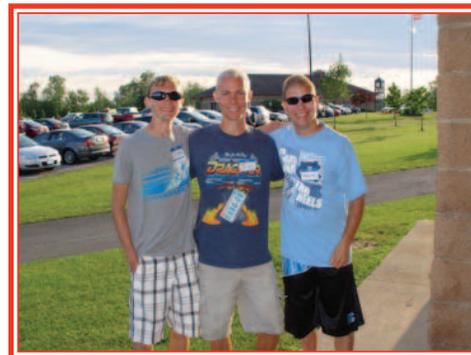
Members brought appetizers and desserts to share. Dinner and beverages were provided by B.I.G. and catered by the very popular Desiderio's. This year we added chicken fingers and Italian sausage to our pasta and chicken buffet. There were few leftovers. Many members raved about the food.

We held a short business meeting at the picnic, during which Sue Wantuck and Joe Kolis presented an award of recognition to Shirley Jaskier to thank her for her many years of service to our organization. Joe spoke eloquently about how much Shirley had personally helped and guided his family, by sharing her experience as a parent of a child with a cochlear implant. From the look on Shirley's face during Joe's presentation, it was apparent that the award was a complete surprise.

Throughout the evening, participants enjoyed the annual basket raffle put together by Sr. Dorothy Feltz. We set a record with over 25 themed baskets, which were raffled off to raise funds for our upcoming scholarship program. At the end of the evening, the winners were announced and all were present to pick up their prizes. There was a lot of laughter, and many people joked that there was one "lucky table" since the majority of the winners were all sitting together. Be assured that this was just chance.

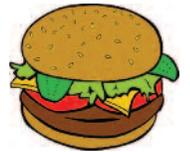
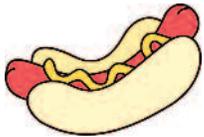
There was a wide age range among the children attending this year's picnic, as we continue to watch our earliest recipients grow up, and new young children join our group. Most of the children spent the evening on the playground or at the pond fishing. There was certainly ample entertainment for all ages.

Over 50 of our members, family, and friends attended this year's picnic and most stayed until the very end. It was clear that people were enjoying their evening spent together. There was much conversation and laughter.



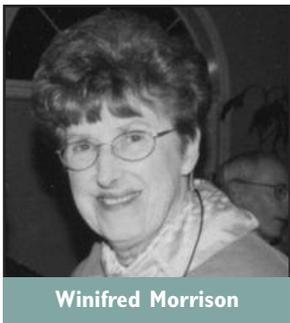
PICNIC





WINIFRED MORRISON, PhD 1925-2013

By Janet McKenna



Winifred Morrison

As a charter resident at Canterbury Woods retirement community, Winifred Morison PhD continued educating the management there about hearing loss and cochlear implants.

Dr. Morrison died September 18 after a long series of illnesses. She was an early member of (the defunct) Self Help for Hard of Hearing People (now Hearing Loss Association) of Western New York

and a former president of B.I.G.

An extensive Buffalo News obituary related her many professional accomplishments as an educator, but nothing was mentioned of her profound hearing loss and its impact on her. I knew her as Winnie and first met her about 1969 at the School of Information and Library Studies at SUNY Buffalo where we both studied. Enduring progressive hearing loss, we rediscovered one another in the hearing support groups.

After I received an Advanced Bionics cochlear implant at Strong Hospital in Rochester in 1998, Winnie followed with the same brand at the same hospital. Shockingly, the hospital staff misplaced her clothes and personal belongings at discharge time and sent her home on a rainy day in a hospital scrub suit. Her surgeon was livid when he was

informed. The clothes eventually turned up. I recall there being problems with the implant, leading to her being bilaterally implanted a few years later.

Before her health began to fail she was active in B.I.G., serving as president. Now and then we met for breakfast or lunch. She strongly encouraged the Canterbury management to make their dining room more compatible for hearing disabled residents by changing the noisy glass topped tables to tablecloths and introducing sound-absorbing interiors. They learned about assistive listening systems from her. Proud of her cochlear implants, she mentored residents with profound hearing loss.

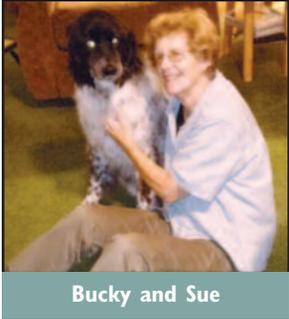
Winnie's hearing loss made her feel as though she were trapped in a glass cage, she said, looking out at the world but unable to know what was happening outside. It was difficult to interact with students in her university classes because of her difficulty understanding them.

A world traveler, Winnie covered thousands of miles, mostly by sea. She was an enthusiastic and knowledgeable cruiser. At least twice she sailed around the world on the Queen Elizabeth.

In addition to B.I.G. and HLAA, Winnie was heavily involved with Rotary Club and Zonta and many organizations devoted to helping developmentally disabled citizens, as well as serving as a strong advocate for the rights and accommodations of people with hearing loss.

MY EXPERIENCE GOING FROM UNILATERAL TO BILATERAL COCHLEAR IMPLANTS

By Sue Wantuck



Bucky and Sue

Being a unilateral cochlear implant recipient for three years has been a rich learning experience and an enjoyable adventure into the world of sounds for me. There were many things that I couldn't hear given the limited auditory access via my hearing aid, which I had never realized.

Over the past three years I have consistently discovered new things with my processor every day in different listening environments. At the end of a busy and stressful day I like to relax by taking my dog, Bucky, for a walk. During our outings I would find myself watching him closely as he sniffed away for scents and responded to every little sound he heard. I would stop and look around to try and figure it out for myself and "re-train-my-brain" to remember what it was and how it sounded for next time. After a while I started to rely on him and watched which way his head turned to localize sounds. This started to become concerning to me. The ability to understand and participate in spontaneous conversations with others came with time, patience and practice. But I would often find myself automatically standing sideways with my left ear towards the person and/or group of people I was interacting with. At first it didn't seem to bother me too much. I made accommodations for myself as needed. But after awhile this too became concerning as I felt that maybe I was missing out on information I would be able to pick up on if I had two "bionic ears" instead of just one.

Thoughts began to cross my mind as I wondered about becoming bilateral. As I started to consider this possibility more and more I decided to do some research and educate myself. I used the Internet, Cochlear America's community chat rooms, and consulted with my audiologist. Within Cochlear America's community website I was able to find a variety of articles and read about personal experiences. In everything that I had read thus far I could not find anything negative about becoming bilateral. Still the decision was not an easy one for me for many reasons. Outcomes from surgery and rehabilitation are always unpredictable. My audiologist and ENT reminded me that I had not used a hearing aid on my right side for over forty years. The success I was experiencing from the additional auditory access the cochlear implant provided me above and beyond my hearing aid from the left side would be a totally different experience with the right due to auditory deprivation/non-use. Thoughts of recovery from surgery concerned me as well. I decided that I had nothing to lose and everything to gain. I would set

my expectations low and prepare myself for the good and the bad.

I underwent surgery for my second implant on Tuesday, June 11, 2013 at Sisters of Charity Hospital, almost exactly three years after my first surgery on June 15, 2010. Thankfully it went well without any complications. I ended up having to stay overnight due to nausea, but I was glad to be monitored by nurses while I was resting and regaining my strength. A month later, I went to Buffalo Hearing and Speech Center for my first stimulation with my audiologist, JoAnn Hammer. I remembered my first hook-up experience and knew what to expect for the second time around. After JoAnn was done programming the NU5 settings, she turned it on. At first I was hearing a lot more buzzing than actual sound. It seemed like Mickey Mouse was talking. I thought that I didn't like it and it sounded awful. JoAnn reminded me to relax and be patient, and that I would need to get used to it. I was able to pick up several words, but the buzzing and Mickey Mouse sounds kept interfering with incoming auditory information. When I got home Bucky barked in excitement because he was happy to see me. His barking surprised me because it sounded so different. I started to problem-solve to figure out what was going on.

First I disconnected my right implant for a few minutes to listen to Bucky's bark. It was fine, just as I had remembered. Then I disconnected the left implant and listened to it only with my new right implant. I kept processing it over and over, but it still sounded different. How could this be? I then realized that all the sounds I had "re-trained-my-brain" to hear with my first implant I would need to do all over again with the second. Now I have messages/sounds/information coming in that need to be processed and understood from both sides. When I get frustrated I try to remind myself that it takes time. I need to be patient and allow my right side just as much time to catch up with the left side. I wear both of my implants during all waking hours and am getting better every week. I continue to self-monitor my listening and adjust my processors as needed while I am practicing more words and sounds in a variety of environments.

I am pleased with my decision to go bilateral and thankful for the success I have experienced thus far. I am excited to see what "the world of sounds" holds for me in the future. By the middle of August, soon after my first mapping appointment, I had an unforgettable experience. I was letting Bucky outside, just like I do every day, in the backyard when I noticed birds chirping. I stood quietly and didn't move as I focused in on how beautiful their tweeting sounded from both of my processors. Finally! I thought to myself, I am

BILATERAL COCHLEAR IMPLANTS..... Continued from page 8

hearing the full sound! Tears began to build in my eyes as I enjoyed listening to them and reflected back to my childhood when I was frequently reminded about the things “I couldn’t hear” or “would never hear.” I felt such a sense of accomplishment and was proud of myself.

My journey has had its ups and downs, but I wouldn’t change the decisions I have made. Now when Bucky and I walk we compete with each other to see who will pick up a new sound and locate it first. He is beating me now, but not for long! I really feel that I am

hearing more clearly and picking up more details. I enjoy listening to the weather/news/traffic reports on the radio and listening to music even more than I did before. Nothing is perfect yet, but I know with patience, hard work, dedication and determination I will reach my personal goals in time. I am a proud bilateral user and plan to spread awareness and educate others about the possibilities unilateral/bilateral cochlear implants can provide candidates.

Happy Hearing!



COLLEGE LIFE..... Continued from page 5

you want it to be. If you want to stay in your room like a turtle, go ahead. Who’s stopping you? Life can be compared to an hourglass filled with sand; you can’t flip it over once the last grain falls, so live it up and have fun being yourself. The amount of possibilities and freedoms are endless. College is one of the cornerstones in the foundation for the rest of your life. Many habits will carry over, and the experiences (lessons learned) are hopefully ones to look back on and share down the road. As Socrates said, “The unexamined life is not

worth living.” It’s college - go for it and make your college experience one to remember in spite of all of the long study sessions and the stressful, worrisome nights. Most of all, have fun!

Editor’s note: Jeff Jaskier is a second year student at RIT studying Mechanical Engineering. He lost his hearing at the age of 2 due to meningitis and received his cochlear implant at the age of 4.

OUR READERS SAY

Thank you!



Shirley Jaskier

I would like to publicly thank the B.I.G. officers and Board members, as well as the group membership, for presenting me with an award at the 2013 B.I.G. picnic. It was quite a surprise, and I was overcome with emotion. B.I.G. has been such a great source of hope, information and support for me and my family, and I will be eternally grateful for its existence!

I truly believe in the mission of the group - to assist cochlear implant recipients and their families through communication, sharing, counseling, and supporting. I am honored to be a member of this organization. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart!

Sincerely,
Shirley Jaskier

First of all, heartfelt gratitude to Fr. Bob who transported a trunk load of tables and 15 raffle baskets. Then he unloaded and helped set up the tables, baskets and cans. He also made all of the numbers for the cans and baskets as well as all of the signs on the table. Thanks, too, to Norma O’Brien for the hard work she did to get gift certificates for the raffle.



Jimmy Sorrento and Jack Phillips also helped to get things together. The wonderful staff members from Buffalo Hearing and Speech worked diligently too, to help get the last-minute details organized. “Wow” to the ticket sellers, Margie Fitchlee and Diane Mogavero.

Last but not least, thanks to all those who donated beautiful baskets and to all those who bought tickets.

Sister Dorothy

2014 DUES NOTICE

Hello everyone. It is that time of year again... time to think about your 2014 B.I.G. dues. We will have a table set up at our fall meeting on October 23 to collect the \$15 annual dues and verify that your mailing and email addresses are correct in our database. I look forward to seeing you.

Lisa Hill Nowicki

ITEMS FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER DUE MONDAY, JANUARY 6, 2014

COCHLEAR IMPLANT USER COMPETES ON REALITY TV

By Gail Cronin

The popular Lifetime Television reality tv competition for fashion design known as Project Runway broke new ground this season by including a deaf contestant who uses a cochlear implant.

Justin LeBlanc, a 27-year-old native of Raleigh, NC, has been proving that there are no limits to what a deaf person can achieve in today's world. Justin's full-time job is that of an assistant professor in the College of Design at North Carolina State University in Raleigh. He holds a master's degree in design and received a Louis Vuitton Scholarship to support his graduate study. Justin has stated that he has always had an interest in fashion design and credits his deafness for making him a more visually oriented person.

Justin was born with a bilateral severe sensorineural hearing loss and used hearing aids throughout his childhood. He received his cochlear implant at the age of 18. He

communicates with both speech and with American Sign Language. Justin has the support of an ASL interpreter at all the challenges, and can often be seen focusing on the interpreter when rules for the challenges are presented. Justin communicates verbally with the other designers and is able to hear them using his implant. He reports that the implant has enabled him to start using a telephone as well. Since receiving his implant, Justin has begun to appreciate music more than ever before. He has become a fan of the singer Adele because of her powerful voice. At times, the contestants on Project Runway can get very stressed and begin bickering with one another. When the drama starts, Justin likes to turn off his Nucleus speech processor so that he can tune out all the distractions and focus on the work.

Justin attributes much of his success in life to his very supportive

and loving family. At press time, Justin is still competing on this season of Project Runway as the field of designers narrows. He was voted out by the panel of judges during the sixth challenge, but mentor Tim Gunn used the one "Tim Gunn Save" that he was given for the duration of the season in order to give Justin a second chance. Tim made a point of saying on camera that he didn't use his "Save" for Justin simply because he is "one of the sweetest people to ever be on Project Runway" or for any other reason. He used it to save Justin solely because he believes that Justin deserves to stay in the competition due to his outstanding skills as a designer.

With only five competitors remaining, Justin's fans are hoping to see him make it to the end of the competition and win at the finale, which will air on Lifetime on Thursday, October 17.

COCHLEAR IMPLANT LIAISON REPORT

By Jessica Holst

There is exciting news from two leading cochlear implant manufacturers. Both Advanced Bionics and Cochlear Americas have announced new FDA approvals.

On August 28, Advanced Bionics announced that the new Naida CI Q70 is now commercially available in the United States. This processor provides cochlear implant recipients access to combined Advanced Bionics cochlear implant and Phonak hearing instrument technologies. If you use Phonak products and get a cochlear implant from AB, you now have the opportunity to enjoy many of the same Phonak features and accessories. The Naida CI boasts a quantum leap forward in performance and with a chic, modern InStyle

design. AccessLine provides 100% wireless connectivity to consumer electronics, streaming from Bluetooth devices, phones, and countless other popular products by leading brands, including Apple, Samsung, and Nokia. A bimodal first, media can be streamed to a compatible Phonak hearing aid and a Naida CI sound processor at the same time.

On September 5, Cochlear Americas announced Nucleus 6 and launched the New Technology Exchange Program. Nucleus 6 is built on a new microchip platform with five times the processing power of Nucleus 5, enabling a range of automated sound technologies and wireless capabilities that will take advantage of future wireless

accessories. It also includes new design features, two choices in processor and remote style, data logging capability, and a comprehensive five-year warranty for new implant recipients. A full commercial launch of the Nucleus 6 Sound Processor is planned for September 30. In the interim, there will be a Technology Exchange Program for anyone who chooses a Cochlear System today. This allows new Nucleus 5 recipients to exchange their Nucleus 5 Sound Processor(s) for Nucleus 6 Sound Processor(s) at no additional cost upon availability of the product.

For more information about cochlear implants, contact your local hearing clinic.

NEW MEETING AGENDA

The Board has elected to change and formalize the meeting agenda for future meetings. We will now have pizza delivered earlier so that participants can get their pizza and beverage at the start of the meeting, while we conduct business and make announcements. This will be followed by the presenter and/or guest speaker. We will then conclude with questions and social time. Also, please look for our newly designed evaluation form at the next meeting, which will help us to get feedback from members.

Buffalo Implant Group



Subscription/Membership Form
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Implant User

Parent Child's Name _____

Device Name _____ Age Implanted _____

Professional, What field _____ School _____

Other _____

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OUR NEXT B.I.G. MEETING AND SOCIAL

The Buffalo Implant Group is excited to welcome Jeanne Fredriksen, MED-EL Outreach Manager, as the guest presenter at our October meeting. As the MED-EL Outreach Manager for the northeast, Jeanne travels the region reaching out to schools, communities and clinics that serve individuals with hearing loss. She provides information about hearing loss, technology and rehabilitation. Her background in Deaf Education spans a career of more than 35 years and includes public and private school programs.

Jeanne has an undergraduate degree in Deaf Education from Eastern Michigan University, a graduate degree in Special Education from Temple University, and another in Administration from University of Missouri. She taught in Michigan, Pennsylvania and Missouri, became a Special Ed. Director in Missouri and later worked as the Director of St. Joseph Institute for the Deaf in Kansas City, KS.

Jeanne is excited to share the latest and greatest from MED-EL with our group. Her presentation will be focused on technology updates and connecting with local MED-EL users. She will provide information regarding MED-EL's FDA approval for MRI compatibility.

Please Join Us

Wednesday, October 23, 2013 • 6:00 – 8:15 pm

Buffalo Hearing and Speech Center • 50 E. North St. Buffalo 14203

Free parking is available in the lot behind the building.

Enter at E. North St. and press the button to lift the gate.

Meetings are held in the lower level conference room.

Pizza, pop and water will be provided.

Please consider bringing a snack or dessert to share if possible.

MANY THANKS

Buffalo Hearing & Speech Center

Melissa Burroughs

Craig Carpenter

Elsbeth Chidiac

Joe Cronin

Sr. Dorothy Feltz

Margie Fitchlee

Jessica Holst

Jeff Jaskier

Shirley Jaskier

Dawn Kolis

Joe Kolis

Kathy Maroney

Gloria Matthews

Chrisann Militello

Diane Mogavero

Shirley Moorehouse

Fr. Bob McArtney

Janet McKenna

Lisa Hill Nowicki

Norma O'Brien

Jack Phillips

Tina Pilkey

Jane Ploetz

St. Mary's School for the Deaf

Sandra Swaciak

Jimmie Sorrento

WNY Court Reporting Services

Sue Wantuck

Zenger Group



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Awards our Newsletter has Received:

Best National Chapter Newsletter by CIAI

Service to the Hearing Impaired by Kenmore Lions Club

Judy Weiner Award for Service to the Hearing Impaired by Western New York Academy of Audiology