

# the **BIG** news

The Newsletter for the Buffalo Implant Group

Volume 26 • Issue 1 - 2014

## B.I.G. staff

Gail Cronin – Editor and Acting  
Publisher  
Janet McKenna – Assistant Editor  
Margie Fitchlee – Writer  
Shirley Jaskier – Writer

## UPcoming Events

BHSC Fundraiser March 1  
B.I.G. Meeting March 12

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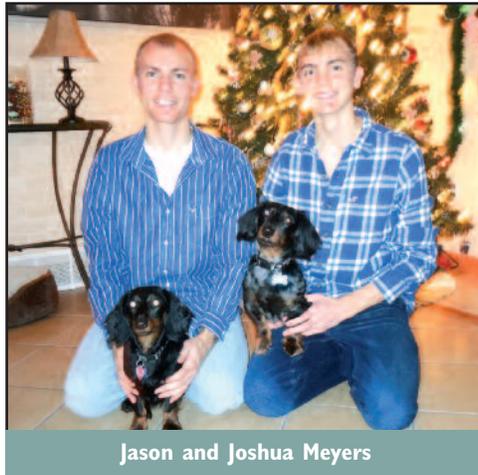
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**Meeting Notice**  
**Wednesday, March 12**  
**6:00 – 8:15**

**St. Mary's School for the Deaf**  
**2253 Main St. Buffalo**

## A CI STORY FROM THE MEYERS BROTHERS

*By Joshua Meyers*



Jason and Joshua Meyers

Hello B.I.G.! My name is Joshua Meyers. My brother's name is Jason Meyers. We are both die-hard Sabres fans. We are both CI users. We were both born deaf. We would like to share a little bit about ourselves and our CI backgrounds with the B.I.G. community. We hope that you enjoy reading. Here we go!

Jason is my older brother. He was born in Germany while my dad was in the armed forces and stationed there. My brother and I are about seven years apart. I was born in the USA but am proud of my German heritage. My mom's parents still live in Berlin, Germany. We have gone there several times to visit while growing up.

I will first share Jason's story. My parents learned that he was deaf when he was two years old. Jason started pre-school at Children Hospital Early Intervention and then went to St. Mary's School for the Deaf for kindergarten. He

graduated from SMSD in 2008 and was named Salutatorian of his class. He went on to study at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) where he earned an associate's degree in Laboratory Science Technology. After that he entered Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), studying Environmental Science. He hopes to work in the area of air and water quality. He will earn a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science at the end of this year. He is looking forward to finishing college and entering the working world.

Jason used a behind-the-ear hearing aid through elementary school. His hearing aid benefitted him very little; the way sound was amplified bothered him. Jason became interested in a cochlear implant after he saw my success. He and my mother decided to go contact BHSC and pursued testing that determined Jason was a candidate for a cochlear implant. His cochlear implant surgery was in 2001. He received an Advanced Bionics cochlear implant. Once activated, Jason was stunned to "hear" many things. He noticed the quality was different than his hearing aid. He worked hard to connect meaning to new and different sounds --- environmental and speech. The first year post surgery was the most challenging. There were many times that Jason was overwhelmed by this new sound and admits that he struggled to understand and assign meaning to what he was "hearing." However, he

*~ Continued on page 3*

# THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Sue Wantuck

Hello and Happy New Year! I wish everyone a healthy and happy 2014! Have you made any New Year resolutions for yourself? Are you sticking to them? I have set some personal, as well as professional, goals for myself and look forward to attaining them.

With regards to the organization, I will continue to be reaching out, educating and helping fellow CI users in the area. I hope to increase the number of active members of all ages. I know that many have inquired about technology updates as well as available resources such as sign classes and auditory rehabilitation therapy locally. These are all topics that will be addressed if they have not been already.

We have a presenter scheduled from Advanced Bionics for the spring meeting on March 12. That will complete our rotation of the three companies. If you have any future topics for upcoming meetings please feel free to email me or share your ideas in person. I am willing to host some informal sign language classes if a group of members are interested in participating. I will discuss this again at the next meeting. Due to the holidays we have not met as a Board as often as usual. Since our last general meeting we have had one Board meeting on January 13 and are tentatively scheduling another time in February. Hopefully weather will not interfere as we had to reschedule when the "Blizzard of 2014" hit. Please visit our website to see the topics we discussed listed in the meeting minutes.

It has now been six months since I became a bilateral cochlear implant user. I have to admit that the first four months were a difficult adjustment for me. However, once I had my mapping to equalize the balance of sounds things began to greatly improve. Each day continues to be a new challenging listening adventure for me. I am slowly realizing how wonderful I am hearing from the quietest of sounds to the loudest, coming into both of my processors at the same time. I experienced the sound of wind howling for the first time when we had a stretch of bad weather and it honestly scared me. Most of you might be well adjusted to this sound since you have heard it for a long time; for me it was different. I pushed myself to tolerate the sound the best I could for a short period of time. When it became late in the evening and time for bed I removed my processors and slept at ease in peace and quiet. The holidays this year were very exciting for me; I enjoyed listening to all the Christmas music. I would have to say that "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" is my current favorite tune. I also really enjoyed listening to "Twas the Night Before Christmas."

It is hard to believe how amazing technology is and how much it has changed already since it was first introduced. How lucky this generation is, and those to come will have the opportunity to gain access to sounds and take advantage of the latest and greatest processors. It is exciting to see the three companies, Cochlear Americas, Advanced Bionics, and MED-EL continually competing against each other to develop and market their devices and accessories. I am thankful for my processors and how they have changed my life. I hope to hear your stories about your recent experiences during our social hour at the next meeting in March.

Just a friendly reminder, if you are not our friend on Facebook please search for the Buffalo Implant Group Facebook page, also consider following us on Twitter and visiting the website.

Stay safe and warm these next few weeks. Spring is drawing near... I hope! I can't wait to be outside again and get back to my walking routine with Bucky. Happy Hearing!

# FROM THE EDITOR

By Gail Cronin

Our group has suffered a great deal of loss in the past year, with the passing of so many of our friends. Then the year ended on a sad note with the loss of our past president and dear friend, Ed Bastian. I have a very soft spot in my heart for Ed. I was surprised to see him at our August picnic, knowing that he had not been well. It's a long drive from Wellsville, but he came and made sure to spend time with many of his old friends. I had my picture taken with him that day, and you probably saw that picture in the center of page 6 in our last issue of The B.I.G. News. Just after we had gone to press I received an email from Craig Carpenter telling me that Ed had gone to a nursing facility after taking a turn for the worse, so I printed out a copy of that picture and mailed it to him there, along with a personal note telling him how much he meant to me. I'm so glad that I took the time to do that, and didn't wait for the issue to be mailed to his home and brought to him. Ed passed very shortly after that. I'm so glad that I didn't wait. There is a message there that I want to shout from the rooftops. Don't wait! Tell the people in your life how much they mean to you. Make decisions. Take action!

We are in a new year now and while we are grounded in our past, we must look to the future. Sue has written about resolutions. Margie has written about making decisions. We also have an updated technology chart from Jessica Holst. We have information on sign language apps from Fr. Bob. And we have a wonderful cover story written by high school student Joshua Meyers about his experience and his brother's experience as young men with cochlear implants today, looking forward to bright futures. This issue is jam packed with good information.

Getting this issue out was a little challenging for me as I have a brand new computer and updated software. No longer will I have difficulty opening documents submitted to me or have to rely on Treasurer Lisa Hill Nowicki to convert so many documents for me. I'm finally in the 21st century like everyone else. However, there is a learning curve involved. I never realized before how limited my old email program was, or how rudimentary my version of Microsoft Word was. I am thrilled with all the possibilities of this new software, but learning how to use it is taking me a lot of time and caused some delay for me. Unfortunately, this also put our production schedule right in the middle of the relocation of my trusty sidekick, Assistant Editor Janet McKenna. Janet and her husband Paul are moving from Buffalo to Rochester. We wish them all the best in their new home. Since Janet is moving right now, literally as I am typing this, I don't have the benefit of her editing skills on this issue. So I warn you now. There are probably several typos and continuity errors in this issue. I look forward to Janet settling in and getting back on the computer to help me out on our spring issue. And speaking of the spring issue, we need articles. Please send your submissions to me at [gdcronin@roadrunner.com](mailto:gdcronin@roadrunner.com) by Tuesday, April 1.

I hope to see many of our readers, old friends and new, at our March meeting at St. Mary's School for the Deaf. Let's honor the memory of our dear friend and original member, Ed Bastian, by coming together and building bridges, as he did all his life. There are some wonderful tributes to him written by three of his closest friends in the center of this issue, along with some pictures from events throughout the years. Ed never saw obstacles, only opportunities. May we all follow in his footsteps.

## A CI STORY FROM THE MEYERS BROTHERS..... Continued from page 1

wants to be sure to say he has no regrets about getting a cochlear implant. He really valued one-on-one auditory/speech therapy. Jason is now able to understand some speech while communicating with hearing people. He comprehends the most during one-on-one conversation with the voice of a familiar person. During group conversation, he needs an interpreter. Jason uses an interpreter in all of his classes at RIT. He is quite amazed how hearing technology has advanced over the years for both hearing aids and cochlear implants.

Now onto my story! I am a 16-year-old sophomore. I attend Frontier Central High School (part-time) and St. Mary's School for the Deaf (part-time). I enjoy going to both schools for a combination of academics and social opportunities. Attending both schools has allowed me to develop a strong self-identity as a Deaf CI user; I can successfully participate in both the Hearing and Deaf worlds.

The cause of my deafness is unknown, similar to my brother. When my parents learned that I was Deaf during my toddler years, they decided to enroll me in the Deaf Infant Program at St. Mary's School for the Deaf where I could learn how to speak and sign. At that time, I wore a hearing aid. However my hearing aid did not provide much benefit. By the time I was four years old, I had received my first CI on my right side. That implant did not help me to "hear." It was clear the implant was not working well. I did not respond to much of anything. I remember going to a bunch of ENT appointments and mapping sessions. An additional surgery was scheduled to remove the right implant and place a new implant on my left side. I did not want another surgery and was very emotional about the situation. I remember my Mom telling me that if I didn't cry when I woke up from surgery she would give me a big surprise. I made it through the surgery with no tears and got a new Playmobil set for my surprise!

My left implant was a success. As time passed, I started to "hear" many new things and learned how to listen for environmental sounds and understand speech. My early speech and language therapy at St. Mary's School for the Deaf helped prepare me for listening when I started mainstreaming. I started mainstreaming when I was in sixth grade at my home district, Frontier Schools. I am now taking ELA, math, science, social studies and a few electives at Frontier High School. I go to St. Mary's School for the Deaf in the afternoon and participate in activities including Academic Bowl, Jr. NAD (National Association of the Deaf), sports (soccer, basketball, track0), and yearbook. I also joined a bowling league with my hearing peers every Saturday at Brierwood Country Club.

I have had my CI for 13 years. I currently use the Cochlear Freedom processor and am doing quite well. I am looking forward to upgrading to the NU 6 in the near future (now that insurance issues are resolved). I am able to communicate well with my hearing friends

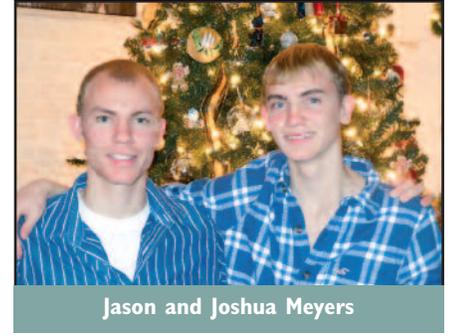
but I do best in one-on-one conversation. Conversation is hard to follow in a group. At Frontier, I have an interpreter in all classes. I am usually able to understand my teacher but having an interpreter to clarify is always a

good idea. An interpreter is also important to follow what other students say in the surrounding areas of the classroom because conversation shifts quickly and I often am unable to see them. Most importantly, using a visual language such as sign language supports me to understand the materials in class.

As I mentioned previously, my family has traveled to Germany many times to visit my mom's family. In 2009, I became a German citizen (US remained as my primary citizenship). In that same year, I relocated to Germany to attend Ernst-Adolf-Eschke-Schule, the Deaf school in Berlin. I stayed with my Oma and Opa (grandparents) during this time. I was placed in their 4th grade (grade levels are different than in the US). There were five other students in my class. I took Math, English, Deutsch, and a few other electives. I found it interesting that History was not a required class. It is however required to take swimming class once a week in Germany. I began school in August and returned to the US by the end of November because I was homesick. I learned that I am not much of a "city kid." The lifestyle in Berlin is totally different than life here in Western New York. I learned a lot from that experience, especially about German Sign Language and their culture.

My future goals include going to college, hopefully to RIT because it has both a Hearing and Deaf culture. I would like to study aerospace engineering. My travel to Germany got me interested in airplanes - how they work and how they are designed.

I would like to say "thank you" to my parents, especially my Mom, for making the tough decision to get me a cochlear implant and then pursue a second surgery in hopes of a better outcome. I have no regrets when it comes to having a cochlear implant. I also would like to say that I will always look up to my older brother as a Deaf CI user role model. I appreciate Jason especially when there are "hearing experiences" that we both understand but find difficult to explain to hearing people or even our hearing parents. Jason and I are happy with where we are in life and our successful use of CIs. Thank you for reading our story! If you have any questions or would like to reach out, feel free to email us. My email is Joshberlin1122@aol.com. Jason's email is jhm5130@rit.edu.



Jason and Joshua Meyers



## REFLECTIONS ON: THE YEAR FOR THE DECIDERS

By Margie Fitchlee



Margie Fitchlee

Decisions, decisions, decisions...

Like it or not we have all had to make them. I read an article in the local paper on New Year's Day. It was titled "A year for the deciders." It stated that the first day of a New Year is a time for setting lofty goals and dreaming big, before vital decisions are made. Perhaps that is why it is a holiday? A day to relax, refresh, ponder and yes, even dream.

I look at the New Year as a time of "hope"... a time to remind oneself of the new beginning that lies ahead for each of us. A new calendar, a new slate. Alfred Tennyson said, "Hope smiles from the threshold of the year to come, whispering 'It will be happier.'" I hope those whispers will be heard by all of you and that the year 2014 finds all of you happy and healthy.

I find much inspiration by reading the words of others. Dr. Wayne Dryer is a writer who offers words of inspiration to those lucky enough to stumble upon his thoughts. He tells us, "Everything you do is based on the choices you make. It's not from your parents, your past relationships, your job, the economy, the weather, an argument or your age. You and only you are responsible for every decision you make. Period." Very profound words... Words that make you examine yourself, where you come from, where you want to see your life go and perhaps even what decisions you might work on making in 2014.

I have read that "Some people believe there is a 'right' decision for their life. Others make sure the path they choose is the best it can be. Whatever you believe, it is important to take charge of the decisions in your life. No value is gained by sitting on the fence."

It is hard for me to believe that almost five years ago I was stuck on that fence, afraid to come down off of it for fear of the unknown. Afraid that the life I knew and often times took for granted was gone, never to be the same again.

Then, I was lucky enough to meet some very incredible people: Craig and Jackie Carpenter, Diane Mogavero, Sam Spritzer, Sister Dorothy and of course Dr. Ernesto

Diaz-Ordaz. They helped me put that fear behind me and showed me that "for every set back, that God has a major comeback." After I saw firsthand their accomplishments, I knew help was on the way. Yes, there was a chance for me. I scheduled my cochlear implant surgery and did exactly what Henry Ford told us to do when he said, "The best we can do is size up the chances, calculate the risks involved, estimate our own ability to deal with them, and then make our own plans with confidence."

This is the challenge I give to all of you this year who are struggling with the decision to go forth with the cochlear implant surgery. Do your homework, size up the chances, and make your plans with confidence. This is a very difficult challenge that I propose to you. One not to be taken lightly. Make this your year to come down off that fence.

When I was told that I had to be the one to decide which implant I wanted, you would have thought that task impossible. I did my homework (under much duress). I did my research. I talked with individuals who had each of the three implants available to me. Confusion and doubt overcame me. Then finally calm, the kind of calm that overcomes one when they finally feel confident that all is going to work out. Jack Canfield was so right when he said, "Everything you want is on the other side of fear." I found that out firsthand and I hope that those who decide to proceed with the implant surgery find it out too! Join the Buffalo Implant Group. Talk to those whose lives have changed because of this wonderful device called a cochlear implant. Do not be fooled; there will be challenges ahead. Be ready to meet them head on knowing that others are right there to hold your hand, to capture your heart, and to show you first hand that miracles really do come in moments. Be ready and willing for the members of our group to help you in any way they can. Angels are amongst us.

I have been so fortunate to have had many cheerleaders on my journey to better hearing. I thank

all of them so much... my husband, my family, my friends, members of the Buffalo Implant Group, Dr. Ernesto Diaz-Ordaz (the man who saved me) and many others. But to me one individual rises above the rest. He is an incredible man, a very important part of my life...the father I never had...who eagerly waits to read every article I have written for the Buffalo Implant Group's newsletter. He is my ninety-year-old father-in-law, Everett Fitchlee. He never ceases to praise my work, to encourage me to continue writing, to continue to be successful in all my struggles. He is a rock, always there for me and for his family in any given situation. He is an individual who has never taken decision-making lightly. I am reminded of this each time I visit his home. There he proudly displays a plaque that was made especially for him upon his retirement from General Motors. The plaque is pie shaped and divided into three sections, saying yes, no and maybe. Of course whenever he spins it the arrow always lands on maybe. He took, and still takes, making decisions seriously. He has taught us by example that taking the time and energy to try to make the right decisions in life is very important. Nothing is to be taken lightly. He has also always been there for his family during the times that perhaps we didn't make the best decisions. Always there, waiting with open arms to offer support and guidance. Thanks Dad, you mean the world to me.

Make the year 2014 the year of the decider for you. Make it the year you follow one of Dr. Joyce Brothers Rules of Advice when she says, "If we can take the worst, take the risk." For as Napoleon stated so long ago, "Nothing is more difficult, therefore more precious, than being able to decide." God Bless All of You.

# 2014 COCHLEAR IMPLANT COMPARISON CHART

	Advanced Bionics	Cochlear America	Med-El
Current Implant	HiRes 90K HiRes 90K Advantage	CI24RE CI24R Double Array CI422	CONCERT (titanium) SONATA (titanium) PULSAR (ceramic)
Implant Warranty	10 years	10 years	10 years
Current Sound Processor (wearing options)	Naida CI Q70  Neptune 	Nucleus 6 CP910 & CP920 	RONDO  OPUS 2 
Eligibility for Upgrade to the Current Sound Processor	Recipients implanted with a CI2 or 90K (implanted since April 2001) can upgrade to the Neptune or Naida speech processor system.	Recipients implanted with the CI22 implant are eligible to upgrade to the Freedom Processor. All other recipients are eligible to upgrade to the Nucleus 6.	All implant types are able to upgrade to the next generation speech processor technology as all are backwards compatible. OPUS 2 users can purchase the RONDO as an alternative wearing option.
Processor Warranty	Naida: 3 years Neptune: 3 years	Nucleus 6: 5 years	RONDO: 5 years OPUS 2: 3 years
Remote Control	Naida CI Q70 MyPilot 	Nucleus 6 Remote Assistant CR230 & CR220 	FineTuner for use with the RONDO and OPUS 2 
Microphone	Naida: T-mic 2 (three sizes) at ear canal entrance, omnidirectional mic at top and one on headpiece Neptune: Located in headpiece; T-mic available with accessory	Two omnidirectional microphones at top of ear programmable with SmartSound and Autosensitivity for different listening environments	RONDO: One omnidirectional mic OPUS 2: One omnidirectional mic at top of ear
Waterproof	Naida IP57: water resistant for 30 minutes in up to 1 meter of water Neptune IP68: Waterproof sound processor & AquaMic configuration	Nucleus 6 with rechargeable battery module IP57: water resistant for 30 minutes in up to 1 meter of water Nucleus 6 with disposable battery model IP44: resistant to water splashing for up to five minutes Aqua accessory with rechargeable batteries IP68: waterproof	No claims made
Manufacturer Sponsored online Rehabilitation Materials	The Listening Room Musical Atmospheres	Rehabilitation Resources HOPE (Re)Habilitation Resources Listening Tools	SoundScape Interactive Listening Activities Bridge to Better Communication Bridge Downloads



## THE BUFFALO IMPLANT GROUP LOSES A BELOVED FRIEND



Ed Bastian

graduated from Saint Mary's School for the Deaf in 1957. He graduated from Williamsburg Technical Institute in 1969. He was employed by the New York State Department of Transportation in Hornell for 31 years. He was a member of the Wellsville Moose Lodge # 601, the Kiwanis Club, and the Wellsville Rod & Gun Club, where he was a past vice president. He was a member of the Emerald Hook and Ladder Company for 42 years, where he had served as president, vice president and fire police captain for eight years. On August 6, 2010 he was named "Fire Policeman of the Year" by the Southwestern Association of Volunteer Fireman. He was a member of the Buffalo Club for the Deaf for 40 years and a member and past president of the Buffalo Implant Group. He was also an avid fisherman and hunter.



Ed as B.I.G. President at an early meeting at SMSD

long drive. As I became more involved in Cochlear Implant Club International, I turned to Ed to

B.I.G. and I lost a good friend this past October when Ed Bastian succumbed to his long illness and went on to meet his Maker. Ed, age 75, a resident of Wellsville,

become President of B.I.G., a post he very capably held for several years. Ed also became Newsletter Editor for a couple of years. In the early years Ed was instrumental in making the B.I.G. picnic a well attended event held annually at Letchworth State Park, as well as our annual Christmas parties which were usually held at Saint Mary's School for the Deaf.

Surviving, in addition to his wife Barbara are two sons, Terrance A. (Helen) Bastian of Huachuca City, AZ and William E. (Nancy) Bastian of Wellsville as well as eight grandchildren and one nephew. In addition to his parents, he was predeceased by two brothers, Terry W. Bastian and Jan H. Bastian.

Ed is finally resting in peace. I often wonder who he is playing his famous jokes on now! He will be missed. May the road rise to meet you, May the wind be always at your back, May the sun shine warm upon your face' The rains fall soft upon your fields, And until we meet again, May GOD hold you in the palm of his hand.



Ed and Barbara Bastian at the Fishkill CI Convention

*Craig Carpenter*

Ed was one of the original members of B.I.G. and was very loyal in attending meetings and events despite the

The first time I met Ed Bastian was at the Buffalo Implant Group annual picnic held at Ellicott Creek Park. I was grilling chicken. Ed came by, we talked, and we hit it off right away. Ed, being born deaf, was something else. He loved hunting and fishing. We talked for hours that day.

At our meetings for B.I.G. Ed was always very supportive. Being an alumnus of St Mary's School for the Deaf, to me he helped bridge a gap between the deaf world and those who are hard of hearing. Ed also invited me to activities at the Deaf Club.

Ed resided in Wellsville and I was in Buffalo. We kept in contact regularly through emails and

## IN MEMORIAM – ED BASTIAN



Ed at a B.I.G. picnic at Letchworth State Park

Facebook. The last time I saw Ed at a B.I.G. event was at our annual picnic in August. He was very thin and walked slowly. It was pretty hard to take, knowing such a strong man succumbing to the end of his life.

A week before he passed I had the opportunity to visit Ed at the nursing facility. We got him outside on that lovely fall day. We sat under the gazebo enjoyed ourselves. One week later I received the call that Ed passed away.

People who knew him all his life gave testimony. They talked about him being a fireman, then later on a fire policeman. Being a firefighter was Ed's greatest thrill. He loved everything about it.

When talking to Ed about fishing, you could visualize fish hitting your line. Ed may be gone, but certainly never forgotten. He left a strong legacy to his family and to his friends. Rest in peace, my friend.

*Jimmie Sorrento*

I have known Ed Bastian for very long time. He had been a wonderful and most dear friend of mine and my family. It is very hard to express this huge loss of Ed. I know he is in a better place with the Lord.

Ed was the one who persuaded me to get the Cochlear Implant. Actually, it took him three years for me to go through with it. He said I am so stubborn. I guess I was, but now I love it. I have a lot to thank him for. Now it is ten years since I had it done. Yes, time for a new one too. I can't go without it.

I loved Ed's great sense of humor and loved to listen to his storytelling of his hunting, fishing and the many other things he was involved in. They are endless.

Ed had a wonderful family. He and his wife Barbara were parents of two boys, Terry Bastian and Bill Bastian. I have known them since they were kids. He was also grandfather of eight.

I'm glad I was there at his passing. God bless you, Eddie. I miss you very much. There is no one like you.

Love,  
*Mary Ann Slon*



Ed Bastian and Mary Ann Slon



Ed Bastian, Jimmie Sorrento, and Craig Carpenter at a B.I.G. picnic



Missed  
You Will Be

## MEETING REPORT

By Gail Cronin

On Wednesday, October 23, members of B.I.G. gathered at Buffalo Hearing and Speech Center for our fall meeting. At this meeting we adopted a new order of business, as recommended by the Board. As a result, we started the evening off with our pizza dinner during the business portion of our program, followed later by our guest speaker and then questions, and finally social time.

B.I.G. President Sue Wantuck began the meeting by welcoming the many members in attendance. She reported that all officers from 2013 were running unopposed for their offices for the year 2014 and asked if there were any final nominations that had not been previously submitted. Since there were none, the slate of officers from 2013 will continue into 2014. Sue Wantuck will remain president, Kathy Maroney will remain vice president, Lisa Hill Nowicki will remain treasurer, and Melissa Burroughs will continue as secretary.

Sue Wantuck also reported on B.I.G. participation in Deaf Awareness Week at the Walden Galleria Mall and stated that we hope to have a larger presence in this annual event next year, in cooperation with Deaf Access Services. Sue, along with Secretary Melissa Burroughs, spoke about a member survey that they hope will assist the Board in setting goals for 2014.

Member Jimmie Sorrento took the floor to report the passing of our longtime member and past president, Ed Bastian. Jimmie talked about Ed's many contributions to our organization and expressed how much Ed will be missed by all those who knew him.

Lisa Hill Nowicki provided a treasurer's report and summary of our finances for the past year. We are currently operating at a deficit and have dipped into our reserves to cover operating costs. The main problem is that the majority of our members have not been current with their dues. Therefore, Lisa is actively encouraging members to pay their membership of \$15 per year. She

set up a treasurer's table at the meeting and collected dues from several members. She asked that if you haven't paid your 2014 membership dues, please mail it in immediately. Lisa also reported that the organization has set up a separate bank account for our future scholarship fund, so that the scholarship finances will be kept apart from the operating budget.

Gail Cronin reported on the newsletter, stating that we reached our goal of returning to 4 full issues in the year 2013. This will continue to be our goal in 2014. Joe Kolis reported on the success of our picnic, and stated that a date for the 2014 picnic will be chosen in February. Joe also thanked our CART reporters Chrisann and Linda, from WNY Court Reporting Services, for their donation of services to our organization. They were presented with flowers to thank them for their contribution. Joe also presented a plaque to Gail Cronin for her years of dedication to the newsletter.

Sue Wantuck then introduced Jeanne Fredriksen, consumer outreach manager for MED-EL Corporation. Jeanne shared some background information about herself and an extensive history of the company and its founders. She reviewed MED-EL's current processors, and introduced us to the new Rondo – single unit processor. Models were passed around for participants to view and handle. Jeanne described the unique features of MED-EL's products and took questions from the audience.

The meeting concluded with social time and informal discussion. Many members brought fall desserts to share. There was much discussion and sharing of information.



Jeanne Fredriksen and  
Kristin Miller

## A HEARTFELT THANK YOU

I would like to thank the Board of B.I.G. for their very thoughtful gesture of presenting me with an award of appreciation at the October meeting, and especially thank Joe Kolis for his kind words. This was completely unexpected and touched my heart. The plaque will have a prominent place on my office wall. I'm also very impressed with the Board's stealth in keeping this a secret from me. I thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

Sincerely,  
Gail Cronin

Thanks

## TREASURER'S REPORT

By Lisa Hill Nowicki

It's hard to believe 2013 is over. A transition year for us all at BIG, we ended the year \$861 in the red, but had many unforeseen expenses with the website domain and the P.O. box, just to name a few.

2014 is coming in strong. To date we have 25 membership renewals. We need just over 100 more to cover the newsletter, picnic and website. With a newsletter that is sent out to over 170 individuals and many organizations this should be an easy task. We will again have a table set up at our March meeting and hope you will consider bringing your \$15 annual dues. If you cannot attend the meeting, please consider sending them to us via mail. Remember your dues expiration is to the right of your name on your newsletter mailer.

# ASL TRANSLATION APP ENHANCES COMMUNICATION

By Fr. Bob McArtney



Fr. Bob McArtney

I have often wished that I knew American Sign Language (ASL) so that I could better communicate with friends who use that means of “speaking.” The thought of taking classes and the hard work associated with it discourages me. But now I’ve found an app for my iPad, which should help. In fact, searching the iTunes store

for such an app gave me several to choose from. This app is also available for Android devices. An app is a small program to accomplish some result for portable devices such as a phone or tablet computer.

The app I chose is called, “ASL Translator” and is available for just \$2.99. It has two parts: common phrases and a “text to sign generator.” The app recognizes 30,000 words and has over 1,400 idioms and phrases. A video shows a person signing the phrase chosen. The text to sign generator allows the user to

type in a word or phrase. After a few seconds you can view a video of someone signing what was typed in. This part of the app requires an internet connection, preferably WI-FI.

I use the text to sign feature to learn an individual word used in different sentences. For example, to see the sign for the word, “favorite,” I might type in, “Steak is my favorite food.” Then I’d type, “My favorite movie is ...” I would continue this to learn how the sign for “favorite” is used in different circumstances.

A handy feature for the common phrases is a button to slow down the action to about half-speed. This slow-down feature does not work with typed in phrases. One slightly annoying characteristic is that the hand movement to sign a phrase causes a blurring and a trace on the screen, at least on my device.

I have used books unsuccessfully to learn ASL over the years. I am hoping that this app will help me to begin learning to sign myself, if only I have the will to stick to it!

## BILATERAL BETTER, BUT...

By Janet McKenna (aka. Deaphyduck)

There were no bilateral ci miracles for Deaphyduck at Chautauqua Institution in 2013.

I had hoped that my year-old second Advanced Bionics cochlear implant might significantly improve hearing at lectures and talking with Road Scholars (formerly Elderhostel) in our group. The verdict: Bilateral is better, but noisy crowds still confounded understanding speech

Of our 36 Scholars, I’d guess approximately a third had some hearing loss. When all talked together during meals, cross-table conversations were struggles. The shouting was exacerbated by 14 foot ceilings.

Yet our Road Scholar professor presented clearly. Just sitting up front to see George’s face enabled me to understand his talks on Civil War battles well, markedly better than in the mono-eared past when I’d have hooked up my personal FM system.

During eight one-eared years using Chautauqua’s FM system, my own auxiliary microphone, and the Institution’s infrared system, I still found dialog from onstage either echoed or garbled.

The Amphitheatre’s infrared system is aging. Apparently over 125 stethoscope receivers are distributed at the big lectures. People I questioned reported them satisfactory. There also are two powerful neck receivers, but you’d better bring your own neck loop and patch cord. When they work, all batteries charged and fresh cables, and sitting within ten rows of the stage, it was a pleasure to hear and participate like a normal Chautauquan. And bilateral IS better. The ushers are kind and respond to suggestions.

Hearing systems exist in four Chautauqua venues when ushers are on duty. They do NOT exist in other venues or when ushers are NOT on duty. Sunday worship in the Hall of Philosophy? Lecture in Hall of Christ or Smith-Wilkes Hall? You’re on your own.

Chautauquans with hearing loss should be trained and prepared to advocate for themselves.

Modernizing the Amphitheatre is a forthcoming major capital project now in renderings. Allegedly the audio system will be modernized too. They welcome comments on the renovation.

Road Scholar evaluation forms inquire whether Scholars used their “state of the art” hearing system provided for some programs. We lacked such things at Chautauqua, but Scholars in other places should be alert for them and certainly comment.



photo courtesy of Chautauqua Institution

## CONGRATULATIONS CRAIG AND JACKIE



B.I.G. would like to congratulate our founders, Craig and Jackie Carpenter, on their recent celebration of 50 years of marriage in November. Happy Golden Wedding Anniversary!

## C I USER JUSTIN LEBLANC BECOMES PROJECT RUNWAY FINALIST

By Gail Cronin

Justin LeBlanc, 27-year-old fashion designer and cochlear implant user from Raleigh, North Carolina, made it to the 2013 finals of Project Runway. While Justin did not win the highest prize in the competition, he was one of 3 finalists to make it to the October Project Runway finale and show his collection during New York Fashion Week at Bryant Park in New York City.

Justin's parents appeared in the show's season finale and their pride in their son's achievements was evident. Mrs. Leblanc, having seen her son's performance on the show, said, "You displayed such humility and integrity, the whole world fell in love with you."

Justin integrated a wave pattern in his textiles and also in custom accessories which he made himself using a

3D printer. Justin explained that the wave represents the sound waves that served as inspiration for his fashion line. "The collection is actually inspired by sound waves. I want to tell the audience my story of the transition before and after I got my cochlear implant."

Justin did an extraordinary job of educating viewers about deafness and cochlear implants. He surely inspired many who can look to him as an example of someone who sets goals and achieves great things, in spite of life's challenges and obstacles. Congratulations to Justin LeBlanc, Project Runway finalist.

## BHSC ANNUAL FUNDRAISER

Buffalo Hearing and Speech Center will hold their annual fundraiser on Saturday, March 1 at the Hyatt Regency Buffalo. This event, titled, "Good Vibrations 2014," will be a 60's themed "black tie-dye" gala. Participants are encouraged to wear period costumes from the 1960's. The evening will kick off with an "outta site" silent auction using a mobile auction bidding system, followed by a "fab" dinner and live auction to raise some "bread" for the Center's foundation. Dancing will follow, featuring music from the 1960's. Tickets for this fundraiser are \$175. Join event chairman Lou Billitier and honorary chair couples Mary Beth and Pat LaFontaine and Anne Marie and Marty Biron in helping to support this great charitable cause. For more information call Jeanne Dallas at Buffalo Hearing and Speech Center, 885-8871 ext. 2202.

## CONGRATULATIONS MARGIE

Congratulations to Margie Fitchlee, whose reflection on "time," which first appears in our summer 2013 issue, was reprinted in The Buffalo News on October 3, 2013 under the title, "Lucky to live in a time of medical miracles." Congratulations to Margie for reaching such a large audience.

## SHARE YOUR IDEAS!

We are in the process of redesigning our logo. If you have ideas to share, bring them to the next meeting or email a member of our Board.

**FOLLOW ALL THE LATEST UPDATES AND  
NEWS FROM BIG ON  
TWITTER @BFLOCOCHLEAR AND  
LIKE THE BUFFALO IMPLANT GROUP  
PAGE ON FACEBOOK!**

**ITEMS FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER  
DUE TUESDAY, APRIL 1**



## MANY THANKS



Melissa Burroughs  
Craig and Jackie  
Carpenter  
Darlene Carpenter  
Gail Cronin  
Joe Cronin  
Kathleen Danahy  
Arleen Eberle  
Jon Erwin  
St. Dorothy Feltz  
Margie Fitchlee  
Jeanne Fredriksen  
Elanor Groff  
Mary Healy  
Jessica Holst  
Shirley Jaskier  
Donna Johnson  
Joe Kolis  
Kathy Maroney  
Gloria Matthews  
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Janet McKenna

Barbara Meyer  
Paul and Joyce Meyer  
Kristin Miller  
Mark Morehouse  
Shirley Morehouse  
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## Buffalo Implant Group



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## OUR NEXT B.I.G. MEETING AND SOCIAL

The Buffalo Implant Group is excited to welcome Katie Skipper, AuD, Senior Cochlear Implant Consumer Specialist for Advanced Bionics in the Northeast, as the guest presenter for our March meeting. Prior to joining AB, Katie spent ten years as the lead audiologist on the pediatric and cochlear implant teams in Charlotte, NC where she still resides. Her mission, and that of the Bionic Ear Association (BEA), is to improve the quality of life of those impacted by hearing loss through cochlear implant education, awareness, mentoring, and support for recipients, candidates, families and their support networks. Katie is excited to share Advanced Bionics' most recent advances with our group. Her presentation will be focused on technology updates and connecting with local AB users.

**Please Join Us**  
**Wednesday, October 23, 2014**  
**6:00 – 8:15 pm**  
**St. Mary's School for the Deaf**  
**2253 Main St. Buffalo 14214**

The meeting will be held in the St. Mary's School Assembly Hall. Free parking is available in the lot behind the building. Enter on Main St. In the driveway marked "Main Entrance." Sign Language interpretation and CART transcription will be provided.

Pizza, pop and water will be provided. Please consider bringing a snack or dessert to share if possible. But most importantly, we need YOU. Friends and family are welcome. A 50/50 raffle fundraiser will take place, and the treasurer will be available to accept your 2014 dues.



**BUFFALO IMPLANT GROUP**

**P.O. BOX 350**

**CLARENCE CENTER, NEW YORK 14032-0350**

**[www.buffaloimplantgroup.com](http://www.buffaloimplantgroup.com)**

## **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**