



AUSTIN SPEECH LABS

stroke recovery one word at a time

Newsletter 2014

Austin Speech Labs recognizes that stroke recovery takes place over many years and that learning never stops. To accommodate the continuing growth of existing clients as well as those of new clients, in 2014 we hired a volunteer coordinator, an afternoon clinical director, two new speech therapists and a development director. Our volunteer hours more than doubled, from 3,374 in 2013 to 8,536 in 2014.

Next year we hope to provide transportation so that more stroke survivors can benefit from intensive speech therapy. We will be initiating a program to enhance communication between stroke survivors and their caregivers. Austin Speech Labs continues to be about much more than just speech. As one of our clients stated, "Austin Speech Labs not only gave me my speech, they gave me hope to live again."



Austin Speech Labs Staff

2015 Boot Camp Dates

January 20th - March 13th
March 30th - May 22nd
June 8th - July 3rd
July 13th - August 7th
September 8th - October 30th
November 4th - December 18th



David Friend and volunteer Rachel working at the computer.



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As we reflect on the last year at Austin Speech Labs, we are thankful for the impact and difference you and your families and friends have made in many stroke survivors' lives. Most importantly, for helping us provide words to our amazing clients. Although often taken for granted, words are a fundamental tool used to express ourselves. Words offer insight into how we feel, physically and emotionally. Words connect us to our loved ones and the larger

community. With words, we can ask for help. Your support gives stroke survivors hope and confidence with every word they recover. We want to stress how important your generous grants, donations, time and hard work have been to Austin Speech Labs. Each dollar donated, each hour volunteered or advised, provided a stroke survivor an opportunity to receive intensive speech therapy. Their perseverance, courage, patience and resilience helps them continue to work toward regaining their speech, but none of it is possible without you.

The year of 2014 marked a turning point in the history of Austin Speech Labs. None of what we accomplished this year could have been possible without your support. This year you helped us...

Letter from the President

1. Increase our number of clients from 237 to 343 including repeat clients.
2. Quadruple our office space to accommodate our growth, from 1200 to 5000 square feet.
3. Provide chairs, tables, and snacks for our caregivers and stroke survivors.
4. Increase our staff from 4 to 12.
5. Expand our services to Laredo with the help of our very own Austin Speech Labs graduate Bill Hrcir and his wife, Dedee.
6. Launch a research program guided by Scientific Board Members from across the country to investigate and develop innovative approaches providing unique and cutting-edge therapy to our stroke survivors.
7. Increase our number of volunteer hours per quarter from 500 to 2000 by partnering with the National Student Speech Hearing Language Association at The University of Texas at Austin and Texas State University.
8. Graduate 100 stroke survivors, who were able to regain more independence and reengage in their community.
9. Provide stroke awareness information and education on the importance of post-stroke rehabilitation to twelve organizations including universities, assisted living facilities, rehabilitation centers and the Department of State Health Services.
10. Develop five unique innovative programs to help stroke survivors learn to read, write and speak.

It takes a community coming together to make a difference, and this year is a reflection of power of community. On behalf of our board members and the staff of Austin Speech Labs, I would like to thank you, our grantors, donors, and volunteers for your continued support in helping us accomplish our mission and provide language to stroke survivors
One Word At A Time.

Shilpa Shamapant
President



Life is precious. Life is a gift. We should never take it for granted. However, life can intervene. Sometimes we feel that we are on the right path; we have set our goals on a pedestal. Yet, in an instant, something happens that shatters your foundation and destroys your path. On September 29, 2013, my 34-year-old body failed me. My brain, literally and figuratively, stopped me from achieving my goals. After that fateful day, my world was an emotional roller coaster. I had a year of challenges, struggles, and tears. In spite of that, I had determination, perseverance, and a nonprofit organization that meant the world to me. It was clear that giving up was not an option. I now know that life is more precious than ever. My name is Christina Fleuriet and I am a stroke survivor.

Christina Fleuriet

A year ago I attended Arizona State University to pursue a Communication Studies Ph.D. I taught various undergraduate courses such as interpersonal communication and relational communication. For me, communication was my life. Almost done with my degree, dreaming to be a professor, my stroke stopped me in my tracks. In a movie theatre in Tempe, AZ with my friends, relaxing between classes and research papers, my life changed forever. It's ironic that I love to teach communication and public speaking, but because of the stroke, I had no ability to speak or comprehend. I wanted to speak in the movie theatre and in the Scottsdale hospital, but it was gibberish or nonexistent. My expressive, receptive, and written communication was severely diminished. For two weeks in the hospital, I was a student again. Instead of being fearful or angry, I was intrigued and enlightened. I was learning language again. I was studying the art of talking. As an academic, education and instruction--in any way, shape, or form—are imperative and life changing.

When I moved to Texas for more rehabilitation, reality hit me. I felt like I had no future. I couldn't work, my insurance was running out, and I couldn't contribute in many ways. Even though I had my family and my partner supporting me to no end, I was severely depressed. When we need positivity and motivation, we sometimes feel negativity and discouragement instead. When I heard about Austin Speech Labs, though, I had hope. I had a reason to get out of bed. I was using my brain again for the better. The activities in the group sessions were fun, entertaining, and interactive. During 1-on-1 sessions and writing hours, I wrote poems, movie reviews, and creative stories, and worked on my speech nonstop. Shelley pushed me in the best way, and I loved the challenge. I was improving everyday. Shelley, Shilpa, the employees, and the volunteers *believed* in us.



In September 2014, I interviewed for an academic advisory position --the first interview I had after my stroke. I was nervous that I still had some speech deficits, but my courageousness, my passion for students, and my preparation won out. October 13, 2014 was my first day on the job, and I, without doubt, partially owe it to Austin Speech Labs. The intensive therapy, the support, and the encouragement are unparalleled. Yes, life intervenes. Stroke can bring you to a standstill. However, your foundation can be rebuilt. Your path is “construction in the making”. Keep walking forward steadily and with confidence— and smell the roses on the way.

Our very own graduate, Bill Hrcir, is helping connect and support stroke survivors in his community with the help of his wife, Deedee. Like most small cities, Laredo has limited resources for speech therapy after a survivor's insurance coverage has run out. With the help of Bill and his family, Austin Speech Labs has been able to offer its services in Laredo through teletherapy, using study rooms graciously donated by the UT Health Science Center Regional Campus in Laredo.

**Austin
Speech Labs
has expanded
to Laredo!**

The Hrcirs are not only helping facilitate speech therapy for stroke survivors, but they also created a support group for stroke survivors and their caregivers to help them through such a traumatic life event. Their goal is to provide a safe, caring, and friendly environment where all affected can find guidance from the moment someone suffers a stroke.

The Laredo site is excited about the potential to build a great team of volunteers and hire a licensed speech therapist for Austin Speech Labs – Laredo, so that face-to-face therapy can be provided every day.

On top of all this success and hard work, the Hrcirs also organized the first annual HOPE ROCKS benefit concert, which took place on November 8th, 2014. Funds were raised to provide therapy to those who cannot afford it on their own. The event was a huge success and paved a solid path for the future!

To learn more about the Laredo team, you can visit their website at www.laredostrokesupport.com or follow them on Facebook (Laredo Stroke Support Group). Deedee and Bill can be contacted at 956-286-0641 or at knowstroke956@gmail.com.



HOPE ROCKS BENEFIT: Sarah Bennett, Shilpa Shamapant, Peggy Newman and Clema Owen



Bill Hrcir (seated) and new client, Armando Martinez, at Austin Speech Labs - Laredo office.



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Austin Speech Labs celebrated its fifth annual *One Word at a Time* event this past May.

One Word At A Time Event

Held at the beautiful Four Seasons Hotel in downtown Austin, the event consisted of dinner, a silent auction, client testimonials, a video presentation, and a keynote address. Thanks to the leadership of Missy McCarroll, Shilpa Shamapant, and Adrienne Pingel the evening was a huge success, attracting more than 300 attendees and raising over \$160,000.

Consistent with the last four years, the day of the event was cold and rainy. The planning committee was nervous about the turnout as they completed the final preparations for the event. The guests arrived slowly but surely and in no time the foyer was abuzz with doctors, therapists, stroke survivors, family members, and our very supportive community.



The evening commenced with the President of the organization, Shilpa Shamapant, engaging the crowd with the growth and changes at Austin Speech Labs. Clients Tom Hilgendorf and Jerica Garcia were brave enough to take the stage next and share their personal stories of stroke and how it has changed the course of their lives and the lives of their loved ones.

Austin Speech Labs was thrilled to have Neurologist Dr. James Grotta as our keynote speaker. Dr. Grotta is the Director of Stroke Research at the Institute for Research and Innovation, Memorial Hermann – Texas Medical Center. He is also the Director of the Mobile Stroke Unit Consortium in Houston.

Dr. Grotta shared with us his research involving mobile imaging. Dr. Grotta and his team have outfitted an ambulance with a CT scanner, allowing his team to scan and treat patients on the spot rather than waste time traveling to and checking in at an emergency room. Dr. Grotta is studying the importance of giving patients the clot-buster medicine tPA (tissue plasminogen activator) within an hour of suffering a stroke. Dr. Grotta and his team believe there will be a significant increase in the recovery of ischemic strokes with this earlier diagnosis and implementation of the medicine.

Another huge success of the night was the Fund-a-Need campaign. A long time supporter of Austin Speech Labs generously offered to match dollar for dollar up to \$20,000 if we could successfully raise that same amount during the evening. We were amazed by the generosity of our supporters: We exceeded the goal by more than \$10,000 and we did so in approximately ten minutes.

Thank you to everyone who worked tirelessly to organize the event, to those who braved the cold, rainy night, to those who spent an evening listening to our story, and to the many of you that gave generously. We are grateful.

SAVE THE DATE!!

Austin Speech Labs 2015 *One Word At A Time* Annual Fundraiser

Four Seasons Hotel, Thursday, May 7, 2015 at 6:30 pm

Keynote Speaker

S. Claiborne Johnston, MD, PhD

Dean, Dell Medical School

The University of Texas at Austin

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at a Time
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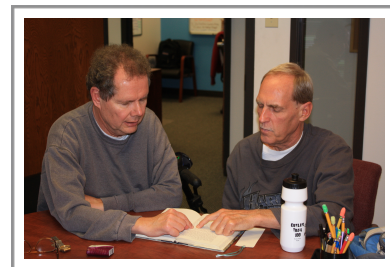
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Danny Roberts and Amanda Clark ready for computer time.



Willeda Rae and graduate student Jenanne working hard.



Tom Hilgendorf and Jon Schubkegel in book club.

In the summer of 2014, we officially launched the Austin Speech Labs Research Program to conduct data driven studies and to collaborate with experts in the stroke recovery field across the country. The purpose of the research program is to investigate new approaches and develop the most cutting edge, innovative treatment for stroke survivors. A Scientific Advisory Board was formed to guide our research designs, plans and results. The current research study we are conducting will use neuroimaging to gain understanding of the language areas of the brain. It is also designed to determine how neural changes are related to behavioral changes pre- and post-intensive speech therapy provided at Austin Speech Labs. For this study, we are collaborating with Dr. Maya Henry and Dr. Bharath Chandrasekaran from The University of Texas at Austin and utilizing The University of Texas at Austin Imaging Research Center. We have also launched a pilot study to determine the effects of phonological awareness in clients with aphasia and apraxia.

Austin Speech Labs will be presenting our first published intensive speech therapy results at the International Stroke Conference in February 2015 and at the Texas Speech-Language-Hearing Association's Annual Convention and Exhibition in March 2015. The article is titled "Intensive Speech Therapy Promotes Recovery in Chronic Post-Stroke Aphasia." The results indicate that clients, regardless of the time post-stroke and their age, showed improvements in naming and discourse when provided with intensive speech therapy. Research is ongoing to determine the optimal amount of speech therapy that would provide clients with the most benefit.

Our goal is to not only provide the clients of Austin Speech Labs with the best possible therapy, but also to share our findings with other individuals and organizations, so that stroke survivors across the country can share in the positive outcomes.

Our Scientific Board Members include:

Bharath Chandrasekaran, PhD, Assistant Professor, University of Texas at Austin

Dr. James Grotta, Neurologist - Director of Stroke Research, Clinical Institute for Research and Innovation, Memorial Hermann - Texas Medical Center

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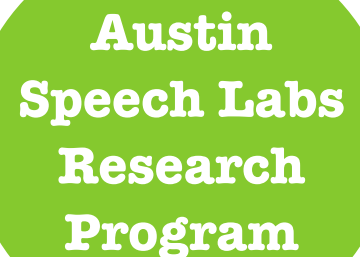
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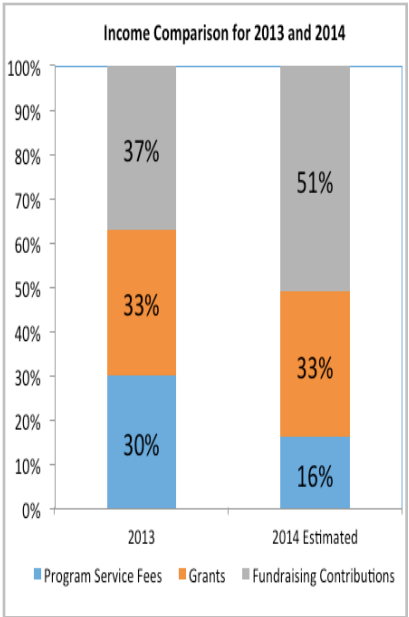
Dr. Steve Warach, Neurologist - Seton Brain and Spine Center



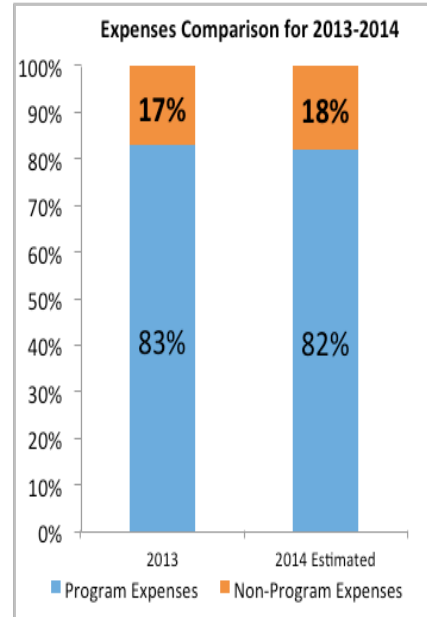
**Austin
Speech Labs
Research
Program**



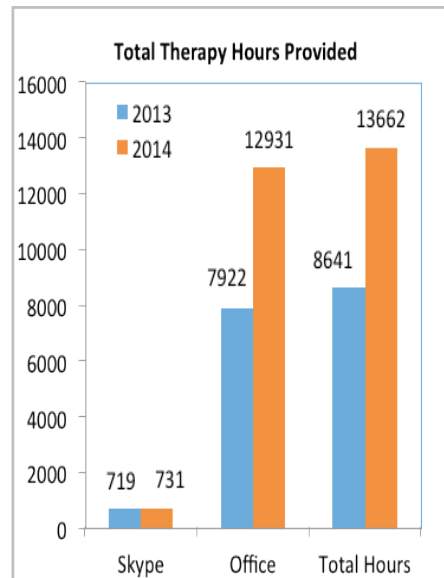
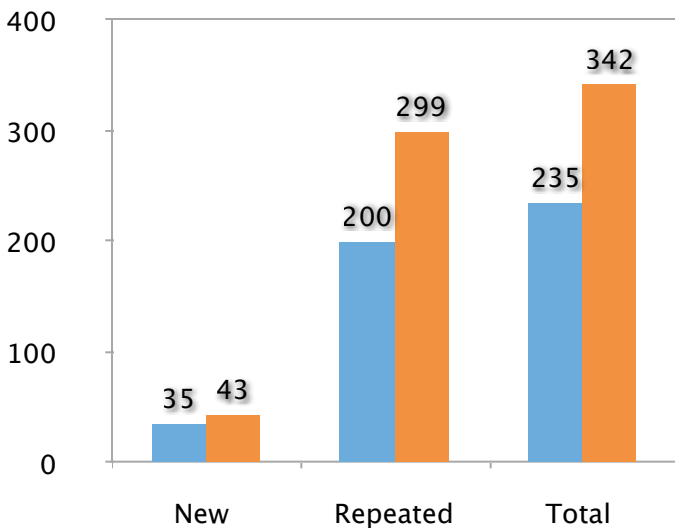
Austin Speech Labs Growth Comparison From 2013-2014



■ 2013
■ 2014



Number of Clients Served 2013-2014



Our 2014 Year End Celebration was a huge success!! On November 19th clients, caregivers, staff, board members and supporters of Austin Speech Labs came together to honor the hard work of the amazing clients of Austin Speech Labs and their dedicated caregivers.

November was National Family Caregivers Month and we would be remiss not to use the newsletter to emphasize again how much caregivers do day in and day out for their loved ones. We see firsthand the love and commitment these individuals demonstrate without expecting anything in return. The role of a caregiver is often underappreciated, but without these caring family members and friends, a stroke survivor's already difficult journey would be impossible.

2014 Year End Celebration

Our celebration was also a chance for us to give thanks in the spirit of the holiday season and to reflect on 2014, but the highlight of the night was definitely the presentation by our clients. The bravery shown singing and speaking to a crowd of about 100 people was inspiring and moving. Our own speech therapist Megan Bunsey led the group to a few rounds of Jingle Bells on her guitar, before individual clients got up and shared the words they have learned and worked so hard to recover. There were definitely tears shed as the crowd was reminded how much these stroke survivors have to overcome. The client program ended on an uplifting note with Ron Crose playing his didgeridoo!!

We couldn't have had such a fabulous event without the generosity of the Jewish Community Center, who provided the space, and Whole Foods Market, who provided the delicious spread.

Thank you to all who attended and supported this wonderful evening!



The McGinn Family



Student volunteers from the University of Texas.

This semester we have ninety student volunteers. Without the dedication and commitment of these undergraduate and graduate student volunteers, Austin Speech Labs would not be able to maintain its commitment to low-cost speech and cognitive therapy.

Not only do the students work tirelessly in the office, but they also contribute to program development outside the office. Examples this year included designing intern t-shirts, spreading stroke awareness on their respective campuses, providing carpools for students without transportation, and raising funds through bake sales. Words cannot express the depth of our gratitude for these volunteers.

"I am impressed by the dedication of the volunteers. They have such busy schedules-tests, papers, labs, jobs, and they still take the time out of their day to come and volunteer. They come to Austin Speech Labs with high energy and really boost the clients' spirits. We couldn't survive without such awesome volunteers."

-- Adrienne Pingel, Volunteer Coordinator

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AUSTIN SPEECH LABS
stroke recovery one word at a time

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Our Mission

Austin Speech Labs is a 501(c)(3) approved nonprofit dedicated to improving the quality of life for stroke survivors and their caregivers. We provide intensive speech, language, and cognitive therapy at an affordable cost.

