

APHASIA ADVOCATE

ADLER APHASIA CENTER | Spring 2022

CONNECTED at the HEART and at ADLER

A *Something Special* volunteer since 2009, Barb Tillman, first noticed Neil Haymes, former member with aphasia turned volunteer, at her own home where the Center's *Something Special* store was holding one of its jewelry sales in 2015. Neil was a volunteer with *Something Special* and was in Barb's home to help with the sale. He offered to fix her coffee machine, which wouldn't start, as she was preparing refreshments for customers. She felt a strange and wonderful sensation come over her when she turned to meet Neil. The only other time she had that 'feeling' was upon meeting her first husband of 27 years, Frank, who was one of the Center's first 4 members with aphasia when it opened in 2003. Frank, who thrived during his years at Adler, had passed several years prior and it was Elaine Adler that convinced Barb to volunteer with *Something Special* after her retirement of 42 years in education. At that point, Barb was more than familiar with the Center's work, having attended family events, parties, and caregiver support groups. She decided volunteering would be a good fit for her.

Neil, an epidemiologist, had also recently suffered the loss of his wife, Jill. He became a member of the Center in 2008 until his wife's illness required him to become a full-time caregiver. Upon her passing, he returned to the Center as a volunteer. Neil loved the camaraderie and social opportunities the Center offered him, in addition to appreciating how his

communication skills had improved while a member. Becoming a volunteer for the place and people he loved seemed like a natural progression for him.

On a stormy afternoon, a group of *Something Special* members and volunteers were planning to meet for dinner at a local diner. But harsh weather prevailed and only Barb and Neil showed up. Following a long meal and meaningful conversation, Neil, ever the gentleman, walked her back to her car, where they shared a kiss. That was the evening they connected at the heart, thanks in part to Adler. Captivated by his charm, kindness, generosity, and calming influence on her life over the next five years as they dated, Barb welcomed Neil to share her home.

Sadly, Neil's health failed in late 2021 and he passed at their home with Barb by his side. "The Center was so precious to me and Neil," Barb said. "We both referred to Adler as our second home. It was part of our souls and we felt nothing but love and generosity for this special place." She added, "Neil's aphasia was a non-issue for me as Neil and Frank both lived with the limitations of a stroke and aphasia. It changed me for the better."

Something Special program director, Chrysa Golashesky, watched their romance blossom firsthand. She adds, "Their connection was real - they both had strong ties to the Center and both lost spouses. These two were gifts to each other and to the Center."



Barb and Neil at home



Neil supervising Center members in a member-related volunteer project.

HELPING corporate partners STAY ENGAGED during the pandemic



Something Special sales event at Barclay Bank in Whippany

During the pandemic, our *Something Special* program continued to connect with the community via corporate partnership opportunities, with both virtual and in-person events, adhering to safety guidelines and restrictions. In 2021, *Something Special* partnered with Express Scripts and BD for a virtual Beading Buddy event and held a lobby sale at Barclays Bank at their global Technology and Operations hub in Whippany.

One of our longtime partners, Eisai Pharmaceuticals, has been committed to our cause since 2015 with more than 300 employees participating in *Something Special's* Beading Buddy programs, corporate sales events and Snack and Learns throughout the years. This year, their Neuro-Science Business Team asked the *Something Special* team to be its community service partner for the year. Zoom calls are held weekly between their staff and our members to provide socialization opportunities while members help them better understand aphasia. Eisai's goal is to develop meaningful relationships with our members, as their staff fulfills its community service requirements. Virtual training with Eisai staff launched earlier this year.

Additionally, *Something Special* plans to hold various lobby sales at other corporate locations throughout northern and Central NJ in 2022. *Something Special* also has plans to present a Spring and Fall Open House sales event in Maywood in April and November. Look for more information on these dates and times soon.

ADLER APHASIA CENTER

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Elaine and Mike* Adler

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MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT AND CEO

Dear Friends,

"Walking through those doors felt like coming home," announced one of our valued volunteers. Indeed, welcoming our members back for a full day of activities in February did feel like a homecoming. Adler Aphasia Center has opened our doors to our family: members with aphasia and their caregivers, and some very special volunteers that have enabled us to offer some of our most missed groups such as art and in-person exercise.

After so much social isolation and disconnection, we're rebuilding critical connections for people with aphasia – language connections, neurological connections, and interpersonal, social connections. We are building a community of connections for people who so often experience social marginalization, and we know this empowers our members and enriches their lives.

I am so grateful to our entire staff who have worked tirelessly to ensure a smooth reopening that maximizes program offerings for our members. I am equally grateful for your support and friendship that allows the Adler Aphasia Center to be a second home for people with aphasia. We look forward to a continued successful 2022 and a year of growth and connection.

With best wishes for a healthy year,

Naomi Gewirtz



Annual member surveys continue to confirm that our programs are benefitting our aphasia community

A survey of our members is conducted each year by our research department to measure our members' interpretation of how the Center has impacted their communication, their confidence, their connections to others and their sense of self. These results, in conjunction with statistically reliable positive gains on functional communication, quality of life, and communication confidence measures, demonstrate the substantial benefits of our programming for our members. Below is a sampling of the positive responses received from our 2021 Telehealth Member Survey. Since joining Adler Aphasia Center:

- 98% of responding members reported that they maintained or improved their **communication skills**
- 98% of responding members reported that they maintained or improved their **friendships with others**
- 100% of responding members reported that they maintained or improved their **participation in social activities**
- 100% of responding members reported their **feelings about themselves** were the same or better
- 100% of responding members reported that they maintained or improved their **overall quality of life**
- 100% of responding members reported that they maintained or increased their **knowledge of aphasia**
- 94% of responding members surveyed agreed that they felt **connected with other group members**
- 90% of responding members surveyed were satisfied with the **virtual programs** offered during the pandemic.



Message FROM OUR Founder

Isn't love wonderful? Barb and Neil's romance in their senior years was so special to witness. Their connection to

each other and to our Center is what Mike and I had always hoped this place would be - a place of hope and help for everyone. For over 19 years, we have been helping stroke and brain injury survivors build better lives for themselves and their families. And we're not done yet!

This spring, we hope to be fully operating once again with our members and caregivers safely congregating in our Centers and ACGs throughout the state. We hope you will join us as we care for one another and embrace the hope and spirit of rediscovering ourselves that has always made Adler Aphasia Center the gold standard of aphasia rehabilitation programs worldwide.

Welcome back!

Elaine

SAVE THE DATE

VOICES of APHASIA GALA

SAVE THE DATE
 JUNE 8, 2022 | 6-9 PM
 SEASONS | WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP, NJ
 VIRTUAL OPTION AVAILABLE

MEMBERS **make** COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS **while giving back**

One of our newer programs, The Community Partners initiative, engages our members with aphasia in meaningful volunteer opportunities within their communities. The Community Partners program offers supported communication training for the participating local community agency and community integration for our members, allowing them an opportunity to give back.

This group held 2 programs that were conducted virtually last year. The Aphasia Coach program provided our members with an opportunity to meet virtually with patients recently diagnosed with aphasia at the Kessler Rehabilitation Center in Saddle Brook to discuss their journeys of living with aphasia, while providing words of encouragement, support, and advice to these patients.

The second program was set up to virtually meet with students from Ridgefield Park Jr/Sr High School in a program called Scarlet Studio, that serves teens with autism and other disabilities. Virtual meetings included a Beading Buddy activity, a meditation and movement activity, and a Halloween crafting/dance party. This was a meaningful opportunity for several of our members as one taught children with autism; two other members worked with children with special needs prior to the onset of their aphasia; and two more members were teachers prior to their strokes. For these members, the Scarlet Studio was an opportunity to return to a school setting, although virtually, revisiting a part of their professional identity prior to the onset of aphasia. Once Covid allows for in-person events, plans will be made to recruit other agencies and volunteers for our Community Partners program while resuming our initiative with the Scarlet Studio.



Community Partners program members participated at Bergen Community College's Day of Service to support the Center for Food Action for a project prior to Covid-19.

Center to offer FREE CLINICAL TRAINING for mental health professionals to MEET NEEDS of people with aphasia

A pilot program is being planned by Adler clinical staff in partnership with pioneers who fully understand the emotional and psychological needs of stroke survivors with aphasia to train mental health professionals in accessing the counseling and mental health services that people with aphasia need. There are very few healthcare professionals that have the communication tools they need to work with people with aphasia. This population has great difficulty finding appropriate counseling and support to address these needs.



Our staff developed this training in partnership with: Dr. Blaise Morrison, Rehabilitation Psychologist and Assistant Professor, University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill's School of Medicine, Dr. Debra Meyerson, stroke survivor, advocate, professor at Stanford University Graduate School of Education and author of "Identity Theft: Rediscovering Ourselves After Stroke," and Steve Zuckerman, care partner and co-founder with Dr. Debra Meyerson of Stroke Onward, a nonprofit that works to ensure that stroke survivors, families, and caregivers have the resources they need to successfully navigate the emotional journey critical to rebuilding their identities and rewarding lives.

The training will teach these professionals about aphasia; address the psychological and identity impacts of stroke and aphasia on survivors; give them the tools and strategies to help them communicate with patients with aphasia; and highlight successful counseling approaches that have been used.



We're *serv*ing people with aphasia in their own *homet*owns

Adler's Aphasia Communication Groups (ACGs) offer nine less intensive groups and socialization opportunities near or in our participants' hometowns around NJ in partnership with community organizations such as community centers, houses of worship, colleges, etc. ACG participants meet for two hours twice a month.

These groups provide a point of entry for people with aphasia and their caregivers as they take their first steps in learning about aphasia and begin the long road to rehabilitation. They also offer them the opportunity to engage with a community of peers, which is vitally important to people who can live very isolated lives due to their inability to communicate effectively. These programs include therapeutic discussion groups, information on aphasia, rehabilitation, and relevant community services and entitlements. Caregivers are invited to participate in these regional support groups.

In addition to offering a Spanish speaking group for people with aphasia and their caregivers, our ACG members enjoy partnerships with speech-language pathology students from local universities; incorporate wellness into their programming by offering yoga; zoom with other Adler locations, connecting them with the larger Adler community; serve as focus groups for future Adler materials to be distributed; and meet with aphasia researchers and rehabilitation professionals.

For more information about our ACGs, contact Gretchen Szabo, Program Director at gszabo@adleraphasiacenter.org or call 551.287.2238.

UPCOMING

VIRTUAL CAREGIVER EVENT

Legal and Financial Planning for Aphasia Caregivers

Presented by Shana Siegel, Esq., Certified Elder Law Attorney, Norris McLaughlin, P.A.

Thursday, March 24th, 4 pm – 5 pm

In this session, caregivers will learn about how to include the person with aphasia in healthcare and long-term planning decisions. Shana Siegel, Esq. will discuss how powers of attorney, healthcare directives, wills and trusts can help to ensure the wishes and needs of the person with aphasia are fulfilled. She will also discuss paying for long-term care. There will be time allotted for Q and A.

To register for this VIRTUAL workshop, contact Meredith Gemeiner at 201-898-2193 or email mgemeiner@adleraphasiacenter.org.

We acknowledge and thank the following foundations and funders for their grant support since September 2021 and as of this publication date:

- County of Bergen, Human Services; Clinton D. and Grace A. Carlough Charitable Foundation; Cestone Family Foundation; Federal Home Loan Bank of NY; Greater Bergen Realtors Care Foundation; Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey; Kessler Foundation; Alfiero & Lucia Palestroni Foundation; Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation; Fred C. Rummel Foundation; Lillian Schenck Foundation; Henry & Marilyn Taub Foundation; Lucy & Eleanor Upton Foundation; Valley Hospital Foundation; Wallerstein Foundation for Geriatric Life Improvement

WAYS TO



There are a many ways to make your contribution to the Adler Aphasia Center, one of the few community-based, long-term rehabilitation centers in the country dedicated to providing a therapeutic environment of innovative programming for people with aphasia and their caregivers.

GIFTS OF CASH: Make an immediate impact and receive a charitable income tax deduction.

GIFTS OF SECURITIES: Gifts of stock are an easy and tax effective way to make a gift which permits you to avoid paying capital gains tax on the sale of long term appreciated stock while potentially receiving a charitable income tax deduction. Contact Naomi Gewirtz at 201.368.8585 for instructions on how to transfer securities from your brokerage account to Adler Aphasia Center.

IRA CHARITABLE ROLLOVER: Qualified charitable distributions are available to those 70½ or older. The distribution must be transferred directly from your IRA to Adler Aphasia Center. Contact your IRA plan administrator to make a gift from your IRA and notify Naomi Gewirtz.

CHARITABLE BEQUEST: Make a gift through your will or trust or by using a beneficiary designation form on your life insurance policy, retirement account, donor-advised fund or bank or brokerage account. Please let us know as all planned gift donors will be inducted into our Legacy Society.

DONOR-ADVISED FUND: Recommend grants to Adler Aphasia Center and/or name Adler Aphasia Center as a beneficiary of your donor-advised fund.

PRIVATE FOUNDATION: Consider supporting Adler Aphasia Center through your private foundation to provide immediate impact for those living with aphasia and their caregivers.

This information is not intended as legal or tax advice. Please consult your attorney or tax advisor.

Full-service Centers located in Maywood, Toms River and West Orange, NJ. Aphasia Communication Groups located in Bridgewater, Haddonfield, Hammon, Maywood, Monroe, Morristown, North Bergen, Scotch Plains and Toms River, NJ. Adler Aphasia Center is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.



Last October, The Center celebrated the grand opening of our newest facility, housed in Congregation B'nai Shalom in West Orange, with a presentation by award winning SNL comedy writer Alan Zweibel, and a ribbon cutting ceremony. Pictured L to R: West Orange Councilwoman Susan McCartney, Adler board member and event co-chair Jill Tekel, Adler Board Chair Charles Berkowitz, President and CEO of Adler Aphasia Center Naomi Gewirtz, Sharon Glaser, West Orange Program Director, George Giesey, West Orange Center member with aphasia and featured speaker, event co-chair and Adler board member emeritus Barbara Drench, and featured speaker Alan Zweibel, Adler supporter.

Ribbon cutting ceremony marks opening of our West Orange Center's new location



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