

ALL EARS



EARS inc.

Suite 302, 220 Collins Street
Melbourne 3000, Australia
Ph: (03) 9654 5511
Fax: (03) 9650 4862

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For those reading for the first time.....

EARS Inc. is an Australian based interdenominational Christian organisation comprising audiologists, audiometrists and allied health professionals. EARS Inc. is dedicated to serving, and addressing the needs of those affected by hearing impairment and deafness, who live in the developing world, irrespective of nationality, race, gender or religion.

The work of EARS Inc. aims to provide ongoing training and support to local workers or health clinics, hospitals, deaf schools and mission groups in developing countries, to empower them with the necessary skills and equipment to rehabilitate people with hearing loss. The aim is to help people help themselves and others.

Did you know?.....

- The EARS Inc website at www.earsinc.org is up and running thanks to our volunteers.
- EARS is keen to receive second hand hearing aids (Behind The Ear and Body aids) which are still in good working order, so that they can be refitted overseas. We also take hearing aids that appear dead but have useful parts (so as long as the dog nibbled it and didn't eat it we'll take it).
- Donations of second hand equipment (audiometers, tympanometers, insertion gain machines, ultrasonic cleaners, otoscopes etc.) in good working order is also most highly valued and appreciated.

EARS recognised in the Queen's Baton Relay

Volunteer EARS Audiologist Peter Bartlett was recently selected to run a leg of the Commonwealth Games Queen's Baton Relay in Ballarat, in recognition of his contribution to hearing rehabilitation in developing countries and his community. On 9th March, Peter carried the Baton passed Damascus Secondary College on the last Ballarat leg before it headed for Melbourne, and was cheered on by family, friends, locals and the school staff and students. "It is a wonderful privilege to be part of such a significant community event, and one that I will be grateful for and remember for a very long time to come," Peter said after his run.



Peter Bartlett (right) receiving the Queen's baton.

EARS at the ASA conference

David Pither, our President, has been invited to run a workshop at the upcoming Audiological Society of Australia conference in Perth. Peter Bartlett, our Vice-President, will be assisting him with the topic of transferring your audiology skills to the developing world. If you will be at the conference come and join us for a meal on Wednesday 17 May. Meet Peter and David near the Australian Hearing stand in the trade display after the 'Happy Hour' session.

The Dominican Republic

Donna is keeping very busy in the DR. She has recently been able to rent her own place and move out of the hospital house. This has been a great blessing for her and has also meant a new family addition...a dog. She recently went to the US to attend an audiology conference and was able to make many good industry contacts and raise an interest in the project. Most recently the first of our courses has started with three students. This course is for technicians and Donna is still working on the audiometry course.

The project is also being blessed with many visitors whose contributions are invaluable. Below is an article written by Michelle England, a speech pathologist who spent three months with Donna in the DR working on setting up a rehabilitation group for the hearing impaired children. Michelle did an awesome job and wrote some fantastic programs for us. Thank you Michelle!

“Los Girasoles” “The Sunflowers”



I met Donna Carkeet in 2003 while sitting in my first Spanish language course in Sydney, trying to master complicated linguistic concepts such as “hola”, “si” and “gracias”! In that first class we were required to introduce ourselves, saying what our background was and why we were interested in learning Spanish. Donna introduced herself as an Audiologist wanting to learn Spanish so she could set up an Audiology program in the Dominican Republic. I introduced myself as a Speech Pathologist with a desire to travel and work in Latin countries. After establishing exactly where the Dominican Republic is found in the world (it shares a

Caribbean Island with Haiti, not far from Cuba) the rest became history. Donna and I would regularly be the last ones left at the college, engrossed in conversations about overseas development work, the lack of services for children with disability in developing countries, and the role of a western health professional in a non-western country.

A few years on, during which time I had continued working in Early Intervention and traveled extensively, I received an email from Donna saying she was working in the Dominican Republic. Donna was teaching and working with a strong local team of *audio technicians* who had been established, resourced and trained through EARS. By providing affordable access to reliable hearing assessment and hearing aids, hearing loss was being diagnosed and addressed at an increasingly younger age in children. However, once these children were fitted with a hearing aid, there were limited early intervention services available to maximize the opportunities provided by aided hearing. Preschoolers had to wait until they were school age before they were able to attend a ‘school for the deaf’, and so missed out on receiving intervention and support during those crucial early childhood years.

The email from Donna asked if I was interested in working with EARS and the local rehabilitation team to set up an early intervention group for preschoolers with hearing loss. I had my ticket booked before I replied!

I arrived in the Dominican in October, 2005, speaking basic Spanish (I could order a coffee and ask where the bathroom was!). I was received with such love and support, both from Donna and the hospital team that carried me through those first few weeks of constant communication breakdown, and a feeling of being overwhelmed. Within days of arriving I was going on community visits with trained volunteers who work with children who have a disability in their home. The families of these children can often not afford the fees for a ‘special school’, and so rely on volunteers to visit to provide the child with some play and basic stimulation. These volunteers are an integral part of the rehabilitation program and visit with such an enthusiasm and commitment that brings joy to the children and families they work with.

Within the first few weeks the number of children being referred from the Audiology department to Rehabilitation increased. However, the rehabilitation staff had received very little training in communication development and intervention for children with a hearing loss. We started a series of training workshops to address this, focusing on:

- sound development and how to teach a new sound
- language development and how to use language stimulation techniques
- the importance of play in early childhood
- American sign language (the local sign in the Dominican)

Although I had conducted parent and professional training workshops as part of my work before, I encountered new and unfamiliar challenges to providing effective training in the Dominican. The Dominican style of education seems to be largely based on rote memory learning and very rule based. My class wanted to know the “rules” they had to learn and follow in order to teach a new sound or a language concept. It was difficult encouraging them to engage in role plays that required flexible problem solving of a clinical problem. If there was no rule, then there must be no solution. Another difficulty I encountered was determining how much they understood, as when I would ask if something was clear the answer was always a resounding “yes”. In the end, through many role plays, a lot of modeling, small group work and visual handouts the rehabilitation team understood the theory and practicum of how to teach new sounds. It was a more difficult process trying to encourage language development through play techniques, but I knew we had made progress when I saw one of the therapists sitting on the floor playing with a 2 year old, using lots of symbolic noises (like “brmmmmmm” for a car), instead of showing him flash cards at a table like the previous method had been. The issue of learning sign language was addressed by having weekly classes with a local sign language teacher.

Lack of appropriate resources was also an issue that initially limited the effectiveness of therapy. We worked as a team to develop resources for the children, making vocabulary activities out of old magazine pictures, using

free internet websites to access speech and language games in Spanish, using cardboard to make reinforcing games for the children and developing parent friendly information on practical language support ideas for home. We were blessed when a Speech Pathologist based in Hornsby donated money that allowed us to purchase books, puzzles, shape sorters, craft things, cause-effect toys and language based activities for the children.



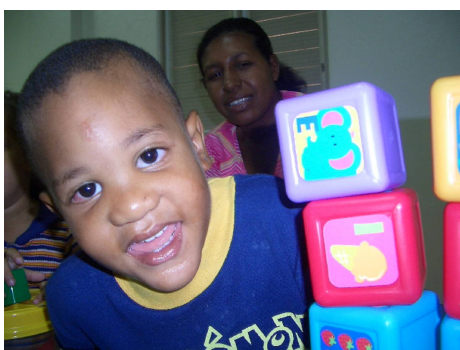
Michelle (left) with the donated resources.

After the 2 months of training and resource development, we turned our attention towards developing an effective framework for the early intervention group, which we named “Los Girasoles” (or “The Sunflowers”). We decided on a philosophy of play based intervention within a capacity building framework, which would involve child and parent education. We aimed to adopt a total communication approach with a focus on stimulating all areas of early childhood development.

It was decided that the format for “Los Girasoles” would be a weekly 2 hour session with a maximum of 10 children. The parent classes were to be led by the Audiology department, who would provide education on hearing loss, hearing aid management and how to support early childhood learning at home. While this was happening the children were to attend the intervention group with two rehabilitation staff and one sign language teacher. The parents would join the children in the group for the final 30 minutes for a parent and child group time, providing a supported environment for positive parent / child interaction and giving the parents the opportunity to see what their child had been learning in group that day. The next important consideration we had to make was what cost would be involved for the

families accessing the program. In consultation with the accounts department the cost agreed on was the equivalent of AUS\$ 8.59 per week. This figure was to cover the input from the Audiology team, Rehabilitation team and the sign language teacher.

The orientation day for "Los Girasoles" saw 8 families attend, each with a preschooler who had a moderate to profound hearing loss and was fitted with a hearing aid. There was a buzz in the room and a happy energy as the children and parents met with each other, met the teachers and had the chance to play some fun games.



"Los Girasoles" has now been running since February 2006. Families and teachers report that in this small time they have seen progress in all of the children from coping with separation anxiety, to playing interactively with other children, to learning and using their first words. Families are also more aware of how to care for their child's hearing aid and how to help their child at home. Importantly, parents now have a network of compassionate support from other parents in the group. Unfortunately however, not all of our original 8 families were able to commit to the program, as although AUS \$8.59 a week does not sound like much to us, it is often too much to families living in Los Alcarizos, Dominican Republic. We are seeking sponsorship to assist in the cost of therapy for these children so they are able to have the opportunity to reach for the stars.

A new intake for the start of next term will see more preschoolers and their families start "Los Girasoles", creating a stronger program and wider community for preschoolers and families living with hearing loss.

Michelle England
Speech Pathologist

Email addresses

It would help us save significant funds in postage if we could email out the newsletter. If you are happy to receive the newsletter via email please email Judith Francis, the editor, at j.r.francis@bigpond.com. Many thanks.

Volunteers Wanted... Find a job that's right for you!

Administration/ Promotion

This is our biggest area of need within Australia. We need to be able to communicate better and in order to do that we need volunteers.

We are still blessed to have Jim Bambery assisting us. But there is a need for someone who can assist with some of the tasks such as record keeping and consolidating our membership details.

Hearing Aid Technicians

With all circuit board components now sourced and purchased for the production of around 200 solar powered body level hearing aid, we require volunteers with soldering skills to solder 'insert by hand' components in to the circuit board.

We also require technicians willing to travel and teach in many of our current projects. So if you are planning a holiday abroad, why not volunteer a week or two in another country? It is a great way to get to know another culture.

Solicitor

The EARS Inc constitution needs to be fully reviewed by an appropriately qualified legal representative; with any amendments from previous board meetings and AGM's officially adopted, written up and presented.

Audiologists/Audiometrists

As usual there are dozens of locations requiring an Audiologist/Audiometrist to support them in their hearing clinic or mould making facility. Further on-site training is vital, to ensure the skills of those already trained are maintained and improved upon. This is particularly important when diagnosing hearing loss in children.

To register interest as a volunteer please contact Judith Francis on 07 5502 9540 or at j.r.francis@bigpond.com.

EARS Inc – Membership

MY DETAILS:

Title: _____ Name: _____

Address: _____

State: _____ Postcode _____

Ph: () _____

Fax: () _____

Email: _____

- I would like to receive regular newsletters.
- I would like to be a prayer supporter.
- I would like to be a financial supporter of EARS Inc.
- I would like to support Donna Carkeet in the DR on a monthly basis.

I PREFER TO GIVE BY:

cheque / money order
(please make payable to EARS Inc. or Ears Inc. Overseas Aid fund for tax deductible donations)

I will arrange for direct debit with my bank. Please provide me with the EARS Inc. account details.

Please debit my credit card:
(Note: this is not for tax deductible donations, please contact EARS Inc. if you would like to make a tax deductible donation)

Bankcard / MasterCard / Visa

Card Number:

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Expiry Date on the card: ____/____

Signature: _____

This payment / authorisation is for:

- A single gift of \$ _____
- A monthly payment of \$ _____