



## GAIL WHITELAW, PhD DIRECTOR, OSU SPEECH & HEARING SCIENCE CLINIC

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**Don Leach** introduced the speaker, **Gail Whitelaw, PhD.**, who is an audiologist and Director of the Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic at The Ohio State University. Don met Gail when she provided care many years ago for his hearing-impaired daughter, and since then, Gail has become a friend of the Leach family.

Gail's clinical interests are in pediatric and educational audiology, auditory processing disorders in children and adults, and tinnitus assessment and management. She is also interested in professional leadership development, supervision, and mentoring. Gail teaches a number of courses in the Department of Speech and Hearing Science, including Pediatric and Educational Audiology, Pediatric Aural Rehabilitation, and Tinnitus. She is the 4th year placement coordinator for the AuD program at Ohio State. Dr. Whitelaw is a past-President of both the American Academy of Audiology and the Ohio Academy of Audiology and the Chair of the American Board of Audiology. She is the author of a number of articles and book chapters and co-author of Hearing and Deafness. Gail earned a bachelor's degree from Bowling Green State University, a master's degree in audiology from Michigan State University and a Ph.D. from Ohio State University.

Gail's presentation focused on the topic of hearing and the quality of life. She shared a "24/7" statistic: at least 24 million Americans have untreated hearing loss, and more than 7 years is the time that the average person waits to do something about their hearing loss.

In the past, hearing loss has been considered

simply an inconvenience relating to difficulty in communicating well at work or with family. But Gail pointed out that now, we understand that there are cognitive benefits to treating hearing loss.

Gail elaborated on why we should care about hearing. Recent research indicates that the ear is a critical window to the brain. When hearing loss is left untreated, it can result in negative social consequences (e.g., withdrawing from social situations and depression) and cognitive issues (e.g., dementia), since information provided to the brain from the ear is critical.

Gail described the seminal research finding that a reduction of processing speed, working memory and executive functioning skills can happen with even a mild hearing loss. The research also looked into why people choose not to pursue amplification/hearing aids. Cost is not the issue, since the "adoption" rate for hearing aids is about the same in countries with national health insurance systems as in the U.S. So, the reason seems to be stigma about hearing loss, word of mouth that hearing aids "don't work" and a failure to see the value of communication.

Current research shows that hearing loss is the largest modifiable risk factor for developing dementia, exceeding smoking, high blood pressure, lack of exercise and social isolation. Difficulty hearing can impair brain function by keeping people socially isolated and inadequately stimulated by aural input. The harder it is for the brain to process sound, the more it has to work to understand what it hears, depleting its ability to perform other cognitive tasks. Memory is affected as well. Information that is not heard clearly impairs the brain's ability to remember it. An inadequately stimulated brain tends to atrophy.

[CLICK HERE](#) to view this meeting and all previously recorded Rotary meetings

## GREETERS

September 15  
N/A

September 22  
Michael Zieg  
Beau Taggart

September 29  
N/A

## REGISTRATION DESK

September 15  
N/A

September 22  
Andy Livingston  
Tom Westfall

September 29  
N/A

## CALENDAR

September 15 - ZOOM Meeting  
Beth Armstrong – Author of  
*Voices from the Ape House*  
Host: Michele Hoyle

September 22 - Scioto CC/ZOOM  
Mark Wagenbrenner, President  
– Wagenbrenner Development  
Host: Dave McCurdy

September 29 - ZOOM Meeting  
Paul Imhoff, Superintendent of  
Upper Arlington City Schools,  
*The Upper Arlington Schools  
Master Plan and the School Levy*  
Host: Debbie Johnson

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Submit your volunteer opportunity to [herb@herbgillen.com](mailto:herb@herbgillen.com) for inclusion in the Rotaryview Newsletter.

## SOCIAL EVENTS

Please submit your social event reminder to [herb@herbgillen.com](mailto:herb@herbgillen.com) for inclusion in the Rotaryview Newsletter.

## OUR NEXT MEETING

SEPTEMBER 15TH  
ZOOM MEETING

Upper Arlington  
Rotary  
Club



# GAIL WHITELAW, PhD

## DIRECTOR, OSU SPEECH & HEARING SCIENCE CLINIC

Gail explained how you can protect your brain by protecting your hearing. There is a new concept of “hidden hearing loss”. Exposure to noise and hearing loss can start in the highest frequencies, and affect sensory cells that impact your ability to understand speech and hear others in the midst of other noise.

Gail described some recently determined connections between hearing and “life” (cognition, etc.). One simple and surprising finding is that for older adults (ages 50-85) with hearing loss, hearing aid use corresponded to a lower rate of hospitalization rates when compared to those who did not use hearing aids. The hypothesis is that use of hearing aids help patients communicate more effectively with their physicians.

Gail also described current hearing aid and cochlear implant technology. These are not “your parents’ hearing aids”. They involve digital “smart” technology, with the ability to adjust amplification to normalize input. There are accessories such as mini-microphones which can maxi-

mize hearing in group situations (e.g., restaurants and meetings) or when riding in a car. There is also integration with other functions, such as heart rate monitors.

Finally, Gail covered actions to take when someone suspects a hearing loss. The place to start is an evaluation by an audiologist. Certain health/environmental issues may suggest the need for an evaluation, such as noise exposure, diabetes, traumatic brain injury and tinnitus. If there is a medical issue, there will be a referral to an otolaryngologist.

Recommendations to help with hearing loss include the use of hearing aids consistently, in all waking hours of the day. The brain can be retrained with the use of amplification and support from brain training programs. A strong and supportive communication partner is also crucial: it is important to face the person with hearing loss, reduce distance from the speaker, use technology such as a mini-mic, and rephrase rather than repeat. As Gail concluded: Communication is important and life-changing.

## THE MEETING



**Debbie Johnson** opened the meeting, which was held entirely via Zoom. Thanks to **Ua Chamberlain's** efforts, the meeting then went into different breakout rooms, an experience somewhat akin to sitting at a table at a pre-pandemic lunch meeting. For instance, your editor got to enjoy the company of **Don Leach**, **Molly Fontana** and **Brian Bainbridge**. It turned out that Don would have a prominent role during the rest of the meeting, but he did not brag about that in the intimate setting of the breakout room, and acted very naturally.

**Don Leach** provided the invocation and led the pledge of allegiance.

**Jim Lynch** of the Tri-Village Club was the sole visiting Rotarian, who visits so often that **Debbie Johnson** publicly implored him to just join our Club, already. The sole guest was **Jane Leach** of FutureReady, who also identifies as Don's spouse.

## NOTES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:



Debbie thanked **Jim** and **Merry Hamilton** for their generous gift of their beloved MG to the Club's recent fundraising auction. The sale raised \$23,000. The Hamiltons reminisced about 50 years of enjoyment of this automobile, and also expressed their satisfaction about the good things that will result from their gift.



Debbie conducted a “get to know you” session with **Joe Ayers**. When asked to describe something surprising about his background, Joe described his education at the University of Alabama, which was followed by a stint working in Aspen, Colorado, on ski lifts and in a hotel and restaurant. He later moved to Seattle. Joe has worked in radio, selling airtime, for many years, which he has enjoyed. The most influential people in his life have been his parents, who taught him to smile, work hard and have fun. His best family experiences include his family's annual summer trips to Cedar Grove Lodge in northern Ontario. On the top of his bucket list is a trip to the Austrian Alps with his daughters.