



Living Well with Aphasia: Promoting Social Participation and Self-Advocacy

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Introduction

A recent, systematic review of 70 studies investigating the impact of stroke on social support showed that, after a stroke, survivors showed a decrease in contacts with friends, a decrease in social activities and an increase in strain within their families (Northcott, Marshall & Hilari, 2016). This is reflected in what we hear from people with aphasia (PWA) and their families at the University of South Carolina (UofSC) Aphasia Lab. To address these needs we continue to develop programs at UofSC including a variety of support groups and innovative social activities for PWA and their family members.

A nice side effect that we have found as a result of our social participation activities is that PWA and their families have asked about how they can become more involved in their communities in raising awareness about aphasia. As Stuntzner & Hartley (2015) noted, self-advocacy is an essential skill for individuals with disabilities. Luckily, we recently had the good fortune to collaborate with a leading, non-profit agency in South Carolina, Able SC, which promotes independent living and self-advocacy for adults with disabilities. This collaboration between the USC Aphasia Lab and Able SC led to a 6-week leadership and self-advocacy class designed specifically for PWA. This class focused on how PWA and their family members can be a voice for people with disabilities in their communities.

The key to all of these programs and activities at USC has been exciting collaborations with other programs within the University as well as with other agencies and businesses in our area. Our continued networking with others interested in improving social opportunities and self-advocacy for people with communication difficulties helps us to continue to assist PWA and their families to live well with aphasia.

Learning Objectives

1. Participants will describe activities that will help people with aphasia (PWA) and their family members become more socially involved in their communities.
2. Participants will explain ways that PWA can become self-advocates in their communities.
3. Participants will list ways to collaborate with other organizations and businesses to develop social and self-advocacy activities for PWA and their family members.



UofSC Graduate Students Are Always Learning from our Participants

Promoting Social Participation

The UofSC Aphasia Lab encourages social participation through a variety of activities including weekly aphasia support groups, UofSC tailgating parties, aphasia community events, monthly Lunch Bunch, drama club and family support groups.



Gamecock Tailgating



Aphasia Community Event



Lunch Bunch with Family & Friends



Rehearsing at Drama Club

Self-Advocacy in the Community

Participants at the UofSC Aphasia Lab are encouraged to be advocates for themselves and others with disabilities through leadership classes, legislative contacts, speaking to local groups/classes and serving on local and state boards/councils.



Meeting with the SC Governor as the 2018 SC Speech-Language-Hearing Association (SCSHA) Ambassador



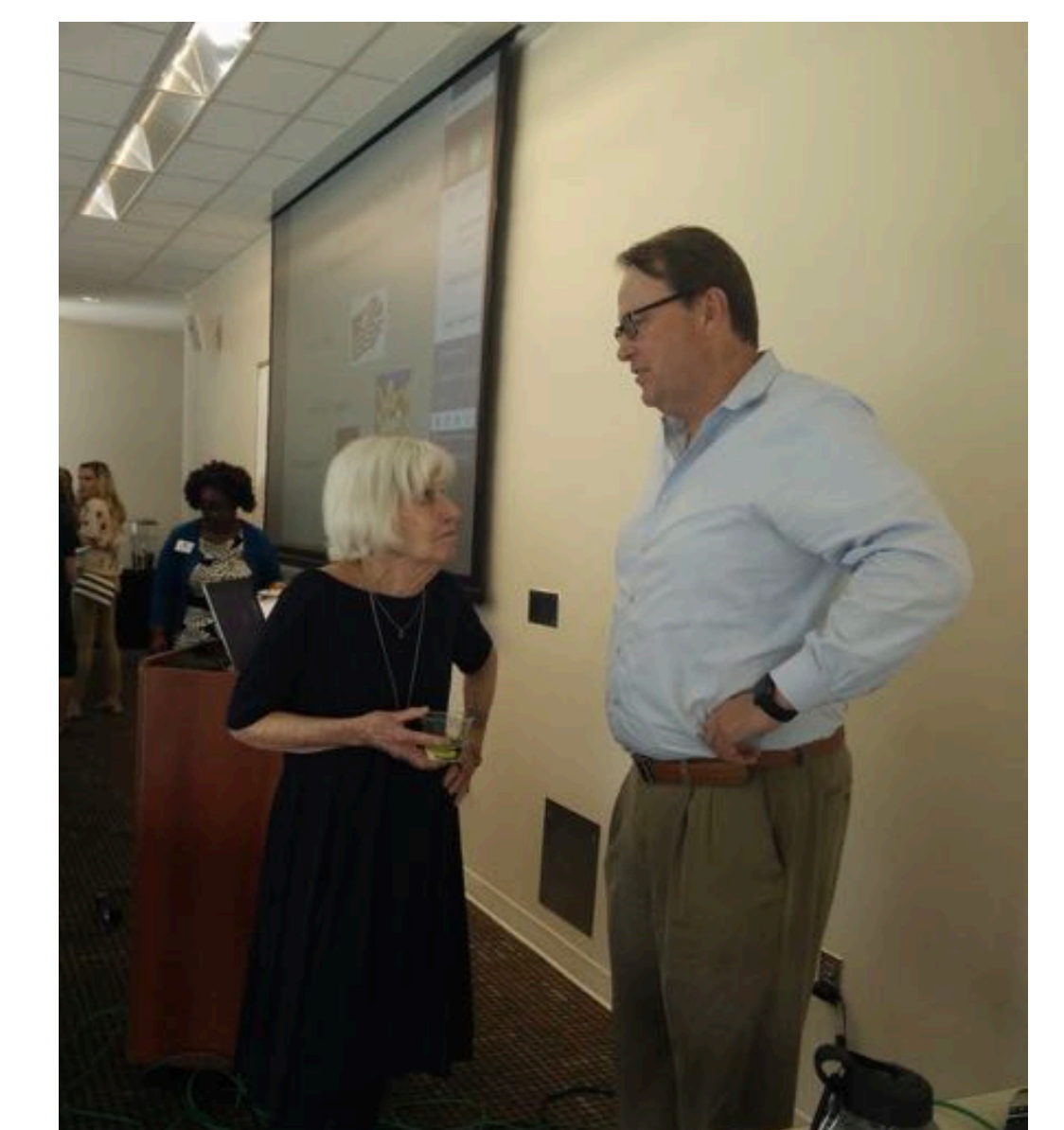
Community Leadership Academy Class of 2018 with Able SC

Building Collaborative Partner Networks

Networking with business partners, other professionals and groups leads to better connections with PWA and their families.



Corporate Partners



Research Partners



University and Clinical Partners

Future Plans

- Encourage people with aphasia and their families to take more of an independent role in developing social activities.
- Expand community education and aphasia awareness.
- Obtain funding to support an interdisciplinary family support network.
- Continue to develop local, state, national and international collaborative networks to help people live well with aphasia.

Connect with Us!

- UofSC Aphasia Lab Website: <https://web.asph.sc.edu/aphasia/>
- UofSC Aphasia Lab Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/StrokeRecoveryProject/>
- Center for the Study of Aphasia Recovery Website: <https://cstar.sc.edu/>
- Contact Dr. Leigh Ann Spell at Spell@mailbox.sc.edu or 803-777-2693



References: Northcott, S., Marshall, J. & Hilari, K. (2016). What factors predict who will have a strong social network following stroke? *Journal of Speech Language Hearing Research* 59(4), 772-83. Stuntzner, S. & Hartley, M. (2015). Balancing self-compassion with self-advocacy: A new approach for people with disabilities. *Annals of Psychotherapy & Integrative Health*, 12-28.

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