The Clock is Ticking! Can you hear your clock ticking?

O
n February 25, after having a severe to profound hearing loss for most of my life, I received a cochlear implant at St. Paul’s Hospital in Vancouver.

Then, after six weeks of waiting for the implant to heal and settle in, I was “hooked up” to the external speech processor. And now, I can hear the clock on my desk. It is ticking!

Many people have asked me how I am progressing in my journey back to better hearing. I usually tell them that it is a slow process, that I am learning what sounds belong with what words. I also tell them that it is, as another cochlear implantee has told me, like a fine wine: my hearing will continue to improve as I practice and engage in the world of conversation. But there are two things I really want to tell them, and I will tell you.

First, I learned to be thankful to those hearing people in my life. They are my heroes. My family lives with many “rules” when speaking with me. Lighting, noise, distance, one-at-a-time and endless repeating are factors my husband and two sons have to consider when they converse with me. And during those six weeks of waiting between surgery and hook-up it was especially difficult for them to keep me in the loop.

It is easy to forget that the people in our lives have to change their habits of speaking for our sakes. Yes, we hearing impaired people do carry a loss that is likely permanent, and we are affected by that loss every moment of every day. But do we appreciate what our loved ones need to do for us? Do we thank them?

The ticking clock on my desk taught me the second thing I want to tell you. With this cochlear implant, I am now able to tune my clock out! I can listen for it and there it is, steadily ticking away. Yet, I am able to not hear it at all, and be busy with my thoughts and activity on my computer.

And this is a new challenge for me in my attitude towards people. Before my implant, I usually did not have a choice as to whether I would be part of a group discussion or not. I could only observe people speaking with each other. But now I have a choice: I can try and hear or I can simply tune people out. Just like the clock on my desk. But people are not clocks.

Of course, it is still not easy to understand everyone. However, I now have the means to learn to understand them. And while I am making progress towards improved hearing, it is important that I communicate clearly as to how well I am hearing them.

This challenge may be something all of us hard of hearing people experience when we receive new hearing aids or a listening device. Do we try to hear others, now that we have better means to do so? Do we prod our brains to focus and tune in to the new sounds around us and learn what those sounds mean? Do we let the people in our lives know that we want to join in and that we are learning to hear again?

Flo Spratt is President of CHHA – North Shore Branch www.chha-nsb.com Article reprinted from “The Mountain Ear”, CHHA North Shore Branch newsletter. Thank you to Flo’s son for this photo.

Thanks to everyone who was able to join us at the CHHA-BC Open House, on May 21, 2009. Our Open House was a great success! We were very pleased with the number of people who attended. Some members came from as far away as 100 Mile House, BC. There were also people from the Vancouver area, as well as many members and non-members from the Chilliwack area.

Everyone enjoyed the presentation by Sandra Baker, Audiologist with WIDHH. Sandra shared information with us about some of the latest in assistive listening devices. She was kept extremely busy with an endless list of questions from the people in attendance. We would like to thank Sandra Baker and WIDHH, for assisting us in this way.

We would also like to thank Sharon Davis and Sharon Perry for making sure the office looked great and for providing us with treats and refreshments.

Laurene McNaught
From the President…

This report was presented at our AGM and summarizes our activities for our 2008-2009 fiscal year.

The first part of our year with CHHA BC was focused on preparing for the CHHA National/IFHOH Congress that was held at the Sheraton Wall Hotel in Vancouver last summer. I worked closely with Janice McNamara, then Executive Director, Ruth Warick and Marilyn Dahl in planning the session while Jan looked after most of the technical aspects of things. The Resource Centre looked after the Silent Auction, recruiting items, storing and pricing the items, recruiting volunteers, etc. The Musqueam Band did an excellent job of the Opening Ceremonies along with the Parade of Flags from all the attending countries. The young adults also had their part to play which they did with much enthusiasm, welcoming the youth from other countries.

I think immediately after the Congress, most of us who were involved took some time out of activities for a while in order to regroup and restore our energies; I certainly confess to this! Nevertheless, the Resource Centre remained active with calls, emails, and our booth at the Vancouver Health Show. We also made some changes to the CHHA brochure to reflect our current services to British Columbians. We had questions and concerns from across BC, and all inquiries were responded to or referred to appropriate resources. We have two part-time staff (Laurene and Stephanie) who work well together and helped to make some changes to the Centre. They’ve hosted several speech reading classes taught by Maggie Dodd our former CHHA BC president. The Resource Centre is a good place to hold a class with the accessible meeting room within the Centre and we hope this will continue. We would like to find accessible meeting rooms in other parts of the province so we can continue to provide these services to hard of hearing and deafened persons throughout BC. We require volunteers interested in taking the teacher training as well as updating the speech-reading program. Contact us if this interests you!

On the province-wide front, we’ve lost some branches this past year (Prince George and Port Alberni). However, the Vancouver branch has been resurrected and is lively with their meetings and activities. Between the Chilliwack branch and Resource Centre, Vancouver and North Shore, people in the Lower Mainland get lots of information on hearing loss. We were happy when members of each group volunteered for the Vancouver Health Fair. We hope to have members volunteer to help at the Hearing Health Fair coming up in May/09 hosted by WIDHH and UBC. Teamwork between the local branches allows us all to share the responsibility. If you are interested in starting a local branch or helping at the Health Fair, please let us know!

We welcomed Sharon Perry as our new Loop editor at the end of the year. Jessie Ellis finally hung up her hat and we are so thankful for her many years of devotion in editing and putting out “The Loop”. Sharon is a bundle of energy and came with many ideas for projects across the province that we could tackle from the Resource Centre. She has agreed to take on the newsletter as part of her duties. She is a much-appreciated addition to the existing team of willing volunteers and staff.

I participate in a number of committees in the province on post secondary education, community advocacy, employment services, and so on. I have resigned from the national board due to perceived conflicts of interest with the CHHA Employment program and the continued extension of the same program. Michael Currie, CHHA BC Vice President, has been appointed in my place for the remainder of the term.

So we continue in our efforts to serve our communities and to continue to advocate for changes… we’d love to have you on board!

Sincerely,

Leslee Scott

President, CHHA-BC
As an avid traveler, my journey to St. John’s, Newfoundland was a unique experience as the excitement of traveling literally across the country made me realize just how large and diverse Canada is. Upon arrival at the Sheraton Hotel, I had my first and most unexpected surprise - meeting Jess Lankshear! For the last 7 years, Jess and I have been in touch, seeing that we’re both young adults with cochlear implants (CIs). Jess was one of the few people who helped me during my first year with the CI, and almost instantaneously, we became best friends. Many would not have thought we had just met. One of the best jokes we shared was that we both have “implants!”

Throughout the conference, I met up with old companions from the Vancouver 2008 conference and met new people whom I now consider to be life-long friends. It was an inspiration in itself to see so many people, young and old, to come together united for one singular cause, to embrace their hearing losses. From my personal standpoint, I was struck by four major themes promoted – accepting one’s hearing loss, accepting ourselves for who we are, embracing technology, and most importantly, the value of having HOH friends.

The plenary presentation made by Jeremy Bennett on using our minds to reach the fullest potential was one of the meaningful discussions that left a lasting impression on me. As simple as it sounds, positive thinking does lead to positive things! Jeremy shared his story of having a rare brain disease that was incurable, which led to depression and a lack of passion for life. Fortunately for him, he was able to come out of it through the realization that this was no way to live life, that life is too short, and that whatever obstacles we are faced with, it doesn’t stop us from doing the things that we can still do. After the presentation, I distinctly recall leaving the room in tears of joy – simply because dealing with a hearing loss doesn’t mean that I can’t pursue my dreams, no matter how big or small they are.

The Youth Workshops were insightful, inspirational and full of encouragement. In Erika Breen and Sharon Tarrant’s presentation on unleashing one’s inner butterfly, many young people shared stories of bluffing (apparently a common occurrence) and frustrations with certain social aspects of life. Without going into detail, the Youth Workshops were a catalyst in the development of friendships that I doubt I would have formed had I not taken part in these workshops. Further, Chris Sutton’s workshop on Young Adults going into the workforce was particularly helpful with the fact that many employers and employees may not know how to respond to (or provide resources for) a HOH individual. As a result, the onus is on the HOH individual to address any issues that have or may come about, and such tips can be found in this book “Working with Hearing Loss: A Guide for Employees, Employers and Entrepreneurs” which can be found on the CHHA website.

Despite stumbling in on Paul and Sally Taylor’s video presentation of “Hear and Now” 45 minutes too late (my alarm failed to go off!), their story inspired me to continue my cochlear implant advocacy – it is really true that when you hear water for the first time, you really feel yourself come alive! Fortunately for me, I had the opportunity to meet with them afterwards, which was an honour in itself. Sally even took me by the hand and told me that the “possibilities are endless!” These are definitely words of inspiration to pass on to others.

Interestingly, I also bumped into Dacy Zacharias (whom I also met at the LA Cochlear Celebration Conference two months ago) at the Cochlear Information booth – literally ten minutes after I introduced myself to her, I found myself signing up to be a cochlear awareness member for Cochlear’s Awareness Network!

On the social side, the pub crawl to St. George Street was by far one of the most entertaining events of the conference. At night, St. John’s literally comes alive with locals flocking to the pubs for a quick beer or a shot of Screech! Running literally on three and a half hours of sleep each night, my adrenalin was at its all-time peak. From having my first screech (taking into consideration that I don’t handle alcohol well!) to dancing the night away, those are memories that I will cherish for many years to come.

Last but not least, the most memorable event of the conference for me was receiving the Dr. Charles Laszlo Scholarship at the Banquet dinner (which, by the way – the food was FANTABULOUS! The mussels were delicious...). It is with heartfelt gratitude to the selection committee for bestowing this great honour on me; I could not have asked for a better surprise than this! It’s time to book myself on my next flight – to Sudbury in 2010!

Monique Guterres
monique.guterres@gmail.com

Plan to attend CHHA National conferences:

- 2010 – Sudbury, ON (June 3 – 6)
- 2011 – Yellowknife, NWT
- 2012 – Ottawa
CHHA Chilliwack Bursary

The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association - Chilliwack Branch offers an annual Bursary. It is available to a qualified applicant who is graduating and going on to University, College or Trade School etc. The funds are administered by the School District. Contributions to the Bursary are received from members of the Community. All donations are tax deductible.

At the Inaugural Convocation Ceremony June 12, 2009, I had the honor of presenting a Bursary for $550.00 to our chosen recipient, a graduating student of G.W. Graham Middle-Secondary School in Chilliwack. The winner is Ceana McInnes. Ceana plans to take an LPN course at the University of the Fraser Valley starting in January 2010. During her entire School years she has been in the Hard of Hearing Program provided by the School District. Ceana was very happy to be chosen. She sent a thank you letter to Bruce Davis. Bruce has been looking after the bursary for many years. For more information on the CHHA-Chilliwack Bursary or for information on how to set up a Bursary, please contact us at the Resource Centre. The future is in the hands of the youth! Let’s help them in any way we can.

Sharon Perry, Secretary/Treasurer CHHA-Chilliwack

Visit us online

CHHA Young Adults Network
http://www.chha-yan.ca/

CHHA National
http://chha.ca/

CHHA BC
http://chha-bc.org/

CHHA National Board Appointment

Michael Currie, CHHA BC Vice President, has recently been appointed as Director on the National Board.

Michael Currie was born with a bilateral severe profound hearing loss and was outfitted with hearing aids and FM systems; he also had a teacher’s assistant and 11 years of speech therapy. He was mainstreamed in public school and then home schooled in high school. While home schooled, Michael was active with the Royal Canadian Air Cadets and accomplished the highest rank possible with numerous awards. In addition, he worked for four years part-time as a lifeguard/swimming instructor. Michael grew up refusing to accept the word “no” for an answer.

Following high school, Michael went to university in Front Royal, Virginia, to complete a Bachelors of Arts in Philosophy. During his first year of university, he lost the use of his left ear and then the use of his right ear the following year. After graduation, he returned home to Alberta to enroll in the Cochlear Implant Program and went in for surgery on April 2001.

Currently Michael uses the cochlear implant quite successfully! He has accomplished much already in his career, working in the fields of real estate appraising, garden centre management, helping persons with disabilities in the workforce, and landscaping. Michael currently is working at Accenture to provide computer support at Powerex; he lives in Vancouver.

Michael has been involved with the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association since 2001 and the Bionic Ear Association since 2006.

Interesting to note: Michael and Curtis are roommates and both work for Accenture. We wish you success!

Michael Currie & Curtis Les

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**Cochlear Celebration 2009**

**Passion.** The March 26-29 Cochlear Celebration in Los Angeles was truly driven by the force of passion – not only for cochlear implants, but also for the lives of those changed through this remarkable piece of technology. Upon arrival, I found myself looking out for others who had a cochlear implant – something that I don't think I have ever experienced before. It was amazing to see how many people were walking around, showing off their cochlear implants and having lively conversations. At the opening ceremony, Chris Smith, the president of Cochlear Americas introduced Jim Patrick, the chief engineer who created the first cochlear implant. Jim chronicled his journey with Graeme Clarke in the search for a device that would help others hear using electrical stimulation. With literally no funding, support or encouragement from the Australian Federal government, Graeme Clarke was able to overcome stigmatization from those who believed he could not achieve this feat. Clarke faced doubts from both the academic and surgical fields who claimed that electrical stimulation to help others hear was not a possibility. Just hearing the struggles endured by the cochlear implant surgical team made me realize that they had won half the battle for all hard of hearing people.

During the conference, I attended various sessions, but the most prominent of them all was the vast discussion on bilateral cochlear implants. Nearly 80% of the people that I met at the conference had bilateral implants – both young and old. I admit that I felt very jealous not to have the second implant simply because many of them noticed a significant increase in clarity and localization! Mark Doshier, a member of the Cochlear Americas team chronicled his journey with bilateral CIs, and he stated it perfectly by saying that: "two ears are better than one ear!" Mark's story made me realize that life starts now, and that we should embrace whatever resource is out there to give us the full potential to live life to its fullest – and that by having bilateral CIs, he feels more relaxed than ever (I didn't realize just how much energy I put into listening until he said this!). However, on the flip side, one of the five Graeme Clarke Scholarship award winners mentioned that she liked her second implant and then after a while, she didn’t like it because the recognition of sound became dull. Fortunately, after the plateau sound began to sound clearer – a strong indication of the brain’s remarkable plasticity to adjust despite a person’s age (I met another woman who received her second implant at the age of 49!).

Dr. Richard Tyler, Dr. Nancy Young and Dr. B. Robert Peters presented various studies and qualitative/quantitative analyses on the effect of having a unilateral CI versus bilateral CIs. While there were slightly different opinions, the consensus was that the "younger the better". To expand, the idea is that the younger a CI recipient is the better chance that individual has of attaining the ‘head shadow’ effect, where sound travelling from various directions may experience a slight delay in reaching your CI (and therefore, to the brain) as it still has to ‘reach’ the microphone on the CI. With a second implant, the head shadow effect was shown to have been significantly reduced. In addition, all research shows that the risk for experiencing dizziness is the same risk experienced for the first implant – dizziness continues to be a challenging area of research. Among all the information disseminated, Dr. B. Robert Peters struck a chord with the audience by saying that it was possible for an adult to reach a higher speech understanding level, provided that rehabilitation is part of the program.

Interestingly, at the conference, I discovered the upcoming Cochlear ‘do-it-yourself’ rehabilitation CD program called *Sound and Way Beyond*. It's a great way to practice your hearing – I tried it at the Expo information session and had no problems with the short words and sentences, but when it came to the music feature, I ran into difficulties. This indicated that my music listening skills needs more work! *Sound and Way Beyond* was developed by Dr. Qian-Jie Fu, a House Ear Institute researcher (whom I also had the opportunity to chat with), and the program follows the concept that “computer assisted speech training programs, when used in the recommended way, may improve speech recognition performance for cochlear implant recipients" (Fu, 2007). For Cochlear Users (i.e. Nucleus), it costs $99 (available through the Cochlear website, www.cochlear.com) – however, if you decide to get another Cochlear Corporation implant, it comes with the package. It is also available to other cochlear implant users (such as Advanced Bionics) for $290.

In addition to the *Sound and Way Beyond* discovery, I learned that Canada is missing out on vast plethora of resources available in the US. An example would be knowledge of telecoil mixing. In the 7 years that I’ve been using my CI, I had never heard the term ‘telecoil mixing’! In a nutshell, it allows a CI user to talk on the phone while being able to hear your voice. Using only the telecoil feature on the CI doesn't allow you to hear your voice very well. Whereas, the telecoil mixing feature involves the combination of the microphone and the telecoil features (and should show up on your processor as MT). As soon as I discovered this – I made the appointment to see my audiologist and got it changed immediately! It has worked wonders for me on the phone and I am more relaxed than ever. There are other technological resources as well – one would be the HATIS system, which can be obtained through WIDHH and www.cochlear.com.

![Cochlear Celebration 2009](https://www.cochlear.com)

Another key piece of information I learned was of the Dry and Store Company (www.dryandstore.com) that sells dry-aids specifically for CIs! Along with the storage box, it comes with small desiccant brick-like packages (about the size of my thumb) – where it holds a chemical substance that absorbs and holds water. The small brick-like packages resemble packets found in electronic equipment boxes, and can last up to 2 months without being replaced. If travelling, all you have to do is take the brick, put it in a small Tupperware box and off you go. However, at home it is ideal to use the storage box. The storage box distributes gentle circulating warm air to ‘improve moisture removal’ and ultraviolet light to sanitize the CI (or HA, if you still wear one).

Last, but not least was my discovery of the Sprint Cap-Tel program ([https://www.sprintcaptive.com/index.asp](https://www.sprintcaptive.com/index.asp)). Unfortunately, this program is not available in Canada as it is federally funded by the government in the US. With Cap-Tel, Sprint provides the user with a blackberry where the CI

*(cont’d on page 6)*
(cont’d from page 5)

customer could email a service provider to call the person they desire to call. Cap-Tel can be likened to a voice-carry over (VCO) program. The CI user can have a verbal discussion with the person on the other end while the service provider plugs in the information being said on the blackberry (the stuff that people talk about on the receiving end). In other words, it's like having your own portable Skype where the receiving end can hear you – AND the best thing about it is that you don't have to worry about a TTY operator speaking in a funny voice to a potential employer (although that hasn't happened to me).

Canada might have something similar to this, but it isn't as widely used as Cap-Tel is in the US. To conclude this lengthy article, all I can say is that I am somewhat envious of our American counterparts! They have more access to resources than we do, they don't have to fight as hard for a CI as we do, and lastly, they take advantage of every resource provided by the government, insurance companies and more. It's time to take actions in our hands and demonstrate passion for our CIs to the government.

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**Hard of hearing group hopes to get its message out**

The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association wants their people to be recognized, just like handicapped people, blind people, even deaf people.

Hearing disabilities are often considered invisible disabilities as most hard of hearing people are oralists getting by with hearing aids, speech reading and assistive technology to aid communication.

The Hard of Hearing Association wants to change that. “So many other groups are recognized: Handicapped people have their sign, blind people have their white cane, and even deaf people are recognized with their sign language. But hard of hearing people fall into a different category,” said Laurene McNaught, administrator for the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, BC branch, located in Chilliwack.

The hard of hearing symbol – a profile of an ear with a wide diagonal line running from the bottom left to the top right – is an international symbol that’s been around for years.

“But it’s just not recognized in the way that other symbols are, because hard of hearing is a disability that people don’t see, it’s not visible,” said McNaught.

The Hard of Hearing Association is pushing to get its symbol recognized. The non-profit organization is encouraging its members to wear their blue pins with the symbol, and to educate the community on what the symbol stands for. “This symbol can be a really good tool if we can get people to recognize it,” said McNaught.

If you see someone wearing the blue pin with the hard of hearing symbol:

- Face the person you are speaking to
- Speak clearly and not too fast
- Cut out background noise, if possible
- If you are not understood, rephrase, rather than repeat
- And if necessary, write your message.

*Article originally appeared in The Chilliwack Progress, published on Nov. 21, 2008*

By Katie Robinson; Reprinted with permission

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**Turner Syndrome Society of Canada**

On a cool Saturday morning in late April, I found myself in front of 30 to 40 people from the Turner Syndrome Society of Canada (www.http://www.turnersyndrome.ca/).

Now, you may ask – what exactly is Turner syndrome and how does it relate to being hard of hearing? Turner syndrome is a genetic disorder that affects primarily females, as they were born with either one X chromosome or an X chromosome with an incomplete second X chromosome. Overall, hearing loss affects some of the women who have Turner syndrome, who typically wear hearing aids. Varying degrees of hearing damage is linked with Turner Syndrome where many of the women have limited hearing, or are just beginning to realize that their hearing is deteriorating.

Despite running low on energy (literally!) after finishing my Honours Thesis defence only a few days ago, I discussed social adaptations to having a hearing loss. In essence, I covered as many experiences from my life – chronicling typical blunders (i.e. confusion), adjusting to the social environment as a child, teenager, and adult.

Overall, the main message to all the women attending was that hearing loss is a personal experience – no one ever really goes through the same experience as another person with a hearing loss.

*By Monique Guterres*
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Luke’s goal in going on the Race was to prove that DEAF PEOPLE CAN DO ANYTHING!!! Check it out at: [www.cbs.com/primetime/amazing_race/video/?season=14](http://www.cbs.com/primetime/amazing_race/video/?season=14) It’s truly an amazing story!

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**Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you respond to it. Our attitude toward life determines life’s attitude towards us.**
Scott’s Random Ramblings and Amusing Musings!

On The Nature Of Communication.....

Whenever there’s a one-on-one conversation between two people, there is a flow of information exchanged between the two (e.g., sender and receiver = speaker vs. listener). Now, in order for there to be true understanding (e.g. communication), there’s usually sophisticated mental processing in the brain. So this means that there’s a slight delay while the listener is acquiring the spoken words and trying to understand the message.

Sometimes, the message needs to be repeated twice. This will more likely happen when the message contains multiple thoughts or, is particularly complex. Even a simple message will need repeating when there’s noise. The listener is so focused on processing the meaning of the first part of the message; that he’ll completely miss the latter half of the sentence. Meanwhile, the speaker continues to speak at her usual clip, while assuming that her message is being heard.

The other mental process that listeners tend to do is to personalize the message (e.g., anthropomorphize). Listeners automatically internalize and overlay personal meaning onto the message, based upon his or her own personal experiences. We relate the message to what we already know about the situation, interpret the meaning and arrive at understanding – at least in our eyes! But are the mental concepts between the speaker and the listener congruent? Not very likely. That’s why jokes sometimes fall flat. The joke needs to be so skilled in his description of the scenario, that there’s no risk of misunderstanding. “Hey! I’ve got a new Newfie joke to tell....” So right away, we mentally picture some hapless fisherman wearing a yellow sou’wester hat.

Being a born “Synthesizer”, helps somewhat. Simply being able to take disparate thoughts, sentence fragments and phonemes, and integrate all these processes so that it makes sense, is a phenomenal feat of mental prestidigitation. Sometimes though, the message gets lost in translation and becomes non-sensical. Remember that game of “Chinese Whispers” that we played as kids in kindergarten? We’d all sit in a circle and the teacher would whisper something into the first kid’s ear, and around the room it goes. Finally, the last kid is asked to repeat out loud what he’d just heard – which most likely isn’t anything remotely related to the original message. So, the better you are in generalizing, the more successful you’ll be at screwing up!

The Hard of Hearing (HoH), listener’s brain will fill in the gaps with internal conclusions or assumptions – which are sometimes erroneous or non-sensical. This changes the nature of the message and results in imperfect communication. Hence, repeating the message back is how the HoH listener validates what he thinks that he heard.

We now have a situation whereby there are two different messages between speaker and listener – each based on half-truths. Even after the speaker takes time to pause for feedback (e.g., “Understand?”), and the listener nods his head in agreement, there’s no guarantee that the same message survives the translation process. So, what makes sense to the speaker may not make any sense to the listener.

Submitted, June 13, 2009
R. Scott Secord

New hearing aid
Seems an elderly gentleman had serious hearing problems for a number of years.

He went to the doctor and the doctor was able to have him fitted for a set of hearing aids that allowed the gentleman to hear 100%. The elderly gentleman went back in a month to the doctor and the doctor said, "Your hearing is perfect. Your family must be really pleased that you can hear again."

To which the gentleman said, "Oh, I haven't told my family yet. I just sit around and listen to the conversations. I've changed my will three times!"
Born profoundly deaf and told she may never speak, Monique Guterres has never been one to stay silent. The honours criminology student grew up embracing challenges, learning to communicate orally instead of signing and attending the mainstream school system.

"My parents... wanted me to be able to communicate as fully as possible," says Guterres. "It wasn't until Grade 5 that I first remember having the feeling that I was different."

Guterres adapted to hearing aids, but she was self-conscious of her speech and demeanour. She initially declined a surgical cochlear implant. But at 17, amid peer pressure and despite doubts, she went through with it.

"For six months I hated it—I couldn’t hear anything, just waves in my head," she recalls. "Sounds were so amplified and foreign. I had to re-learn how to hear—and I still am learning how to hear, seven years later.

"It was one of the most alienating experiences of my life."

Eventually her speech improved and she was able to process what she was hearing. "The most beautiful sounds I have ever heard are the waves of the ocean," she says.

At SFU, Guterres switched from science to criminology at the suggestion of Gail Anderson, a forensic entomologist in the School of Criminology.

She was drawn to environmental criminology and plans to pursue graduate work in the field.

"Monique is a remarkable student and she is intent on doing great things," says Anderson.

Criminologists Paul and Patricia Brantingham agree. Guterres works with the pair as a research assistant in the school’s Institute for Canadian Urban Research Studies and has been instrumental in drafting a soon-to-be released report on crime in one Vancouver community.

She’ll spend part of the summer at a cultural gathering in Macau where her parents were born. Her father, a former travel agent with SFU’s Travel CUTS, has enabled her to travel widely abroad.

At home, Guterres volunteers with several community groups and is the B.C. youth director of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association. She is also creating a website to remedy a lack of Canadian information on accessing technology and peer support.

By Marianne Meadahl, Assistant Director, External SFU Public Affairs and Media Relations
Reprinted with permission

Congratulations to Monique on her acceptance into the Masters program in Criminology! Monique completed a BA Honours in Criminology and will be continuing her education at SFU in the Criminology MA program. Her research focus will be in environmental criminology.

The 2009 CHHA National Awards were announced at the Awards Banquet at the CHHA Conference in St. John’s, Newfoundland, on May 23, 2009. The winner of the Dr. Charles A. Laszlo Scholarship 2009 is Monique Guterres of Coquitlam, BC. Monique is currently enrolled in the Criminology Honours Program at Simon Fraser University. Her goal is to study Environmental Criminology, which examines the geographical patterns of crime!

Born hard of hearing, she has been wearing a cochlear implant for 7 years. In her application she wrote:

“Success isn’t measured by how many decibels you can hear, but it is what you do with the decibels that you have.”

Monique, CHHA-BC congratulates you on all your successes. You truly are an inspiration and excellent role model. We wish you continued success in your Masters studies, your work with the CHHA Young Adult Network and in your future career. Way to go!