



Rebuilding communication. *Transforming lives.*

ACC Connection

Volume 23 Issue 1 ♦ Spring 2020

Bringing the ACC Online in Record Time

“There is nothing like a dream to create the future.”

~Victor Hugo

**By Roberta J. Elman, Ph.D.,
CCC-SLP, BC-ANCDS
President & Founder**

All of our lives have definitely been a whirlwind since the spread of COVID-19. But the good news is that Aphasia Center of California pivoted in record time to meet the communication needs and decrease the social isolation of our members living with aphasia.

Here are just a few of the few things that we have accomplished since the shelter-in-place took effect in the Northern California Bay Area on March 17th:

- ACC staff started providing outreach by phone and/or email to all ACC members prior to the shelter-in-place restrictions. We ensured that all members were safe and understood what was happening.

- We brought the Menlo Park aphasia groups online by the second week of the shelter-in-place. This required calling and emailing to make sure that all participants

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One of the online aphasia groups with ACC SLP, Lyssa Rome

“Walk to Talk” 2020 Postponed

Due to COVID-19 restrictions beyond our control, we have postponed our June signature “Walk to Talk” event. Our most important priority is keeping ACC participants, friends, family, and staff safe and healthy. We’re hoping to hold the 18th Annual “Walk to Talk” in the fall. Did you know that the “Walk to Talk” is the ACC’s only annual fundraising event? Or that your “Walk to Talk” donations bring in more than 25% of the ACC’s annual revenue? ACC staff and volunteers have been working extra hard to keep quality programming available for people with aphasia during these very trying times. If you’re able, we hope you’ll support our efforts by making a donation in June!

Although we won’t be holding our in-person event this June, the Aphasia Center of California WILL be raising aphasia awareness for National Aphasia Awareness month! One way will be by selling aphasia attire. We hope you will consider making a purchase. We’re finalizing the details just as this newsletter is going to press. Stay tuned for an announcement about our “ACC store” on the ACC’s Facebook page and website very soon!

Facebook: www.Facebook.com/AphasiaCenterofCalifornia

Aphasia Center of California website: www.aphasiacenter.org

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Our Mission Statement: *The mission of the Aphasia Center of California is to enhance communication skills, quality of life, and overall well-being for all those affected by aphasia.*

A Lifetime of Facilitating Communication

**By Roberta J. Elman, Ph.D.,
CCC-SLP, BC-ANCDS
President & Founder**

For this issue of the ACC Connection, I had the chance to interview speech-language pathologist (SLP), Giti Cira, M.S. CCC-SLP about her life and her impressions about working at the Aphasia Center of California.

What led you to pursue a career in Speech-Language Pathology and aphasia in particular?

Growing up in a trilingual, first generation household, I've been facilitating communication from a young age, helping my parents navigate American culture and language. We moved around a lot, so I had to quickly learn how to form social connections and adapt my communication style to whomever I met. My first degree was in kinesiology, but I soon realized that physical therapy wasn't for me. My wife told me about her positive memories of speech therapy as a child, which sparked my interest in this field. To gain experience, I spent several years caring for a child who is deaf and mostly nonverbal, and she opened my eyes to the multitude of alternative ways in which a person can communicate with the world around them.

In graduate school, at California State University, East Bay, I quickly realized I had a passion for working with stroke survivors living with aphasia, and my focus switched from children to adults. It felt very natural for me to step into that role—facilitating communication in creative ways. It felt like I'd been doing that for most of my life!

What makes the Aphasia Center of California special?

The ACC challenges how we think about speech-language therapy, in the traditional sense. As a therapist at the ACC,

I have to be able to shift and adapt from week to week, because the group structure is more unpredictable than a one-on-one session (and more fun in my opinion!).

For group members, it's a place where they can safely venture out of their conversational comfort zone, feel inspired and encouraged by fellow members, and reframe how they think about communication. For a lot of folks, it's the most they'll speak all week! For other group members, it's a place to learn a useful new communication technique to use with their loved ones.

The ACC groups provide a truly rare space for people with aphasia to share their lives with others who are experiencing the same struggles and triumphs, over extended periods of time. Particularly now, with our physical locations currently closed due to the COVID-19 crisis, and all of the ACC groups moving online, I am truly touched by how everyone has rallied together to keep the momentum going and maintain these close bonds. It truly speaks to how special the ACC really is.

Tell us a little about yourself, both personally and professionally?

I'm Texas born, but I was raised in the Bay Area. I live in Concord with my wife, Ande, and our new baby boy, Avi (10 months old!). We have a dog, Sushi, who is a sweet and shivery Pug/Chihuahua mix. We live next door to my parents and brother, and my sister and her family live close by. It takes a village!

Ande is currently in graduate school for interaction design, but for many years we both worked in the restaurant industry. I was actually a bartender in San Francisco for 10 years before I realized that speech-



ACC Speech-Language Pathologist Giti Cira

language pathology was my true calling (and not that different from slinging drinks while meeting all types of people).

I speak Farsi and French and I've lived in France a few times-- either staying with family, studying, or while teaching English at an elementary school in the South.

When I'm not changing diapers or chasing Avi around, I enjoy going to the movies, playing board games, hiking, and making terrible puns with good friends.

I also work part-time at John Muir Medical Center in Walnut Creek. I love the hospital setting for its diverse patient populations and fast-paced environment, which balances nicely with my work at the ACC. Between John Muir and the ACC, I'm in a unique position to see patients across the spectrum of their recovery. My hope is to help them realize how far they've come and how much farther they will go!

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California on Facebook!!
www.facebook.com/AphasiaCenterofCalifornia

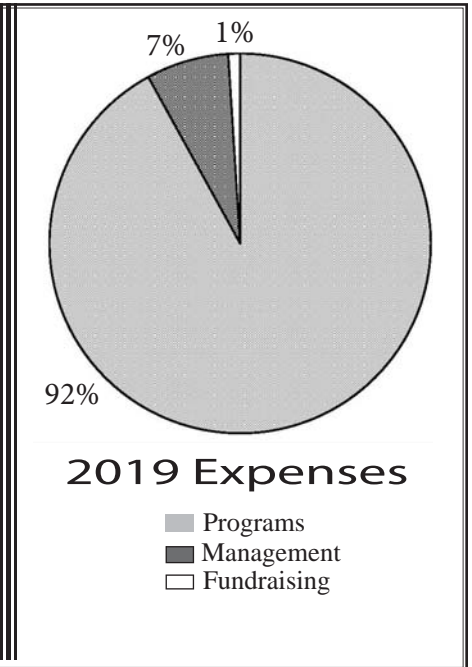
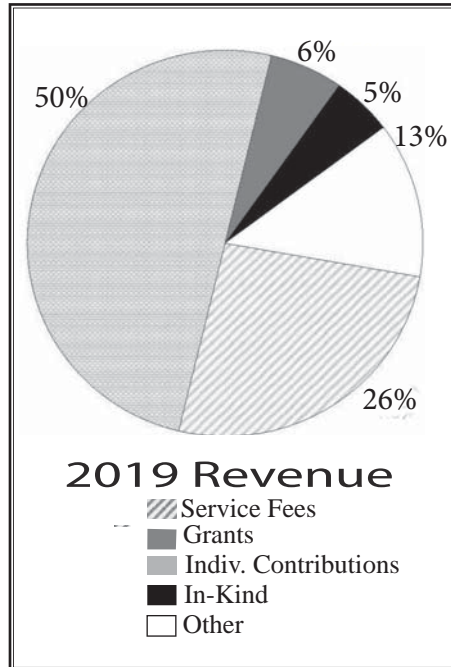
ACC 2019 Annual Report

2019 SERVICES

Group Communication Treatment Visits: 1892
 Reading & Writing Group Visits: 513
 Recreational Group Visits: 507
 Special Events Visits: 260
 Education & Training (National and International): 1320 people (13 trainings/presentations)
 Information & Referral (includes phone, mail, and e-mail): 2095
 Program Sites for Direct Services: Oakland, CA & Menlo Park, CA

ORGANIZATION & CORPORATE DONATIONS

AmazonSmile
 Bright Funds Foundation
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 Concord Mobile Home Park
 Dunkel Logistics Machinery Moving & Rigging
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 Sushi Park Restaurant, Oakland
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 Ultimate Grounds, Oakland

IN-KIND DONATIONS

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August-December 2019
If we have made any errors in this listing, please accept our apologies and contact us at (510) 336-0112.

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Bringing the ACC Online in Record Time

Continued from page 1

were able to download and use the online computer application. ACC staff provided individualized tech support to those who needed a little extra help getting online with a success rate of 100%!

•Next we brought all of the Oakland program site aphasia groups online--half of the groups one week and the other half the following week. This required emails, telephone calls, and individualized tech support to more ACC participants and family members than we ever could have imagined!

•Since that time we have successfully provided 12 weekly online aphasia groups, serving more than 75 people living with aphasia in the

Bay Area. And we continue to provide individualized tech support whenever needed!

•In addition, our reach is extending well beyond Northern California. In April, I was a panel member during a Town Hall meeting on the topic of virtual aphasia programming. I shared what we have learned at the ACC with hundreds of interested speech-language pathologists from throughout the United States and beyond.

The ACC remains committed to meeting the needs of people living with aphasia. We're showing what it means to stay #AphasiaStrong!

Thank you for your continued support and for being part of the Aphasia Center community. Everything we are achieving is because of YOU!

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Aphasia Center News

New Charitable Donation Opportunity for 2020!

Some good news: As part of the recent CARES Act that was signed into law, you will be able to deduct up to \$300 on your 2020 federal tax return for making charitable donations, even if you don't itemize. Plus, if you file as "married-filing-jointly," you can get an above-the-line tax deduction of up to \$600 for charitable donations in 2020!

"Aphasia-Friendly" Emergency Kit Checklists

COVID-19 has brought home the need to stay safe and healthy. Do you have an emergency kit in case of a disaster? Do you have aphasia or know someone with aphasia who needs to create an emergency kit? The Aphasia Center of California (ACC) developed "aphasia-friendly" emergency kit checklists, based on FEMA recommendations. These checklists include photographs and simplified text. There are two different versions. They were developed based on input from participants at the ACC. Thanks, too, to speech-language pathologists Anne Carney, Dr. Roberta Elman, Lyssa Rome and Lauren Scheiner for their

contributions! You can download these checklists at no cost from the ACC's website: www.aphasiacenter.org Please share these checklists with friends and family members!

Smile When You Buy at Amazon!

Whenever you make purchases at Amazon, start off at AmazonSmile.com instead of Amazon.com. Amazon will actually donate 0.5% of the price of each purchase to the Aphasia Center of California! And there's NO COST to you. If you already have an account at Amazon.com, just log into AmazonSmile.com with the same login information you normally use. The first time you login, you will be asked for the name of an organization you want to support. Please choose the Aphasia Center of California. Thanks so much for your support!

Credit Card Donations Are Easy to Make!

Did you know that you can make a donation with your credit card to the Aphasia Center? It's easy to do! Just go to the Aphasia Center of California "Donate" button on the home page of our website: www.aphasiacenter.org. You can make a one-time donation or a monthly,

quarterly, or annual recurring donation. All donations help us make a dramatic difference in the lives of those affected by aphasia.

Great News! The Aphasia Center Accepts Vehicle Donations

The Aphasia Center of California has teamed up with Donate For Charity, a company that specializes in processing vehicle donations for nonprofit organizations. Donate For Charity arranges for vehicle pickup, handles all the DMV issues, sells the vehicle at auction, and distributes the net proceeds to Aphasia Center of California. So if it's time to replace an older car, or if you have a boat and trailer that are just taking up space in the garage, consider making a donation. You'll avoid the headache of selling a used vehicle, help the Aphasia Center of California fund its ongoing efforts, and receive a tax deduction. When you're ready to donate, or if you have relatives or friends who wish to donate, simply call Donate For Charity toll-free at (866) 392-4483 or donate online at www.aphasiacenter.org. We hope you'll take advantage of this opportunity and help us expand our commitment to improving the quality of life for all those affected by aphasia.

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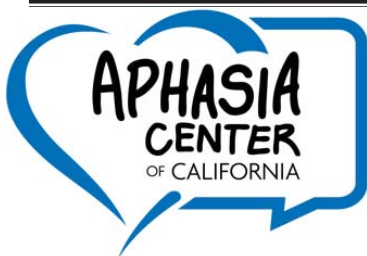
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