



CONTACT:

Susan Slater, Public Relations Coordinator
Columbus Speech & Hearing Center
614.261.5417 direct line
sslater@columbusspeech.org

MAKE 2010 THE YEAR YOU HELP YOUR LOVED ONE REGAIN THE GIFT OF SOUND

Helping a family member come to terms with hearing loss

Columbus, OH - December 17, 2009 - Columbus Speech & Hearing Center is urging families across America to make 2010 the year they help a loved one address hearing loss. The call to action comes in response to new data that underscores the influence family members have in getting loved ones to address hearing loss. According to a recent Better Hearing Institute survey of nearly 47,000 households, more than half (51%) of new first-time owners of hearing aids indicated that family members were a key factor influencing their purchase of a hearing aid in 2008.

According to Karen Mitchell, Au.D., director of Audiology and Hearing Aid Services at Columbus Speech & Hearing Center, "hearing loss, when left unaddressed, affects the overall well-being of an individual. Hearing loss occurs so gradually over time that most people simply are not aware of the loss or the impact that it has on their lives and the lives of their loved ones."

Hearing loss can strike at any time and at any age. And when left unaddressed, hearing loss can affect virtually every aspect of an individual's life. Numerous studies, in fact, have linked untreated hearing loss to a wide range of physical and emotional conditions, including irritability, negativism, anger, fatigue, tension, stress, depression, avoidance or withdrawal from social situations, social rejection and loneliness, reduced alertness and increased risk to personal safety, impaired memory and ability to learn new tasks, reduced job performance and earning power, and diminished psychological and overall physical health.

Hearing loss is one of the most commonly unaddressed health conditions in America today, and affects more than 34 million Americans. Six out of ten Americans with hearing loss are below retirement age. Numerous studies have linked untreated hearing loss to a wide range of physical and emotional conditions, including irritability, negativism, anger, fatigue, tension, stress, depression, avoidance or withdrawal from social situations, social rejection and loneliness, reduced alertness and increased risk to personal safety, impaired memory and ability to learn new tasks, reduced job performance and earning power, and diminished psychological and overall health.

“While some people are not aware of their hearing loss, others know a loss exists but persistently deny that intervention is needed,” says Mitchell. “People in denial ask others around them to compensate for their loss by repeating information, turning up the television, or acting as their ears, which will create the perfect environment for strained relationships. Living with someone who is not willing to get help can be painful and challenging. Helping a family member accept their hearing loss is the first step in helping them move forward and seek treatment.”

"How Hearing Loss Impacts Relationships: Motivating Your Loved One," offers practical advice on how "hearing helpers" can help their loved ones overcome denial and seek treatment for their hearing loss:

- First, understand that although you may think your efforts are loving and helpful, acting as ears for someone you love is actually counter-productive. With you to act as their ears, why would they seek treatment for their hearing loss?
- Stop repeating yourself, raising your voice, and acting as messenger. Rather, involve the entire family in your efforts to help your loved one hear independently of your help. A concerted effort can help your loved one finally admit s/he has a hearing problem.
- Explain to your loved one with hearing loss – in a calm, loving voice without condemnation – that you will no longer repeat yourselves or raise your voices. Instead, when s/he asks for information to be repeated at greater volume, you will use words like "Hearing Helper" or some other signal to alert him that he is relying on someone else to act as his ears. By doing this, you help him realize how often he has to ask for help to hear. Hopefully, the inescapable realization will finally move him to seek treatment for his hearing loss.

“Untreated hearing loss impacts an individual’s quality of life and undermines family relationships," says Mitchell. "Consider making a New Year’s resolution this year, not for yourself, but for a loved one. Help your family member regain the gift of sound in 2010, by making this resolution a reality.”

To make an appointment for your loved one, call 614.263.5452 or e-mail hearing@columbusspeech.org.

#

Columbus Speech & Hearing Center, founded in 1923, is a non-profit United Way organization serving over 10,000 people annually. Services include hearing evaluations, hearing aids, speech therapy for children and adults, occupational therapy and treatment, and vocational services for the Hard-of-Hearing, Deaf and Deaf-Blind through the Comprehensive Program for the Deaf and Ohio Deaf-Blind Outreach Program. Generous charitable giving from the community help offset the cost of the Center’s valued services for low-income families. For more information, www.columbusspeech.org.