

Albuquerque Speech Language and Hearing Center & September Gala Event

By Marie Cimarusti



The Team at ASLHC

In a recent conversation I had with Barry Abel of Corrales, he spoke of the Albuquerque Speech Language and Hearing Center, a nonprofit organization where he has served as a volunteer for the last 20 years. I'd like to share information about this special organization with our readers.

ASLHC is a place people can go to for help with hearing loss, hearing aids, speech therapy, and pediatric audiology. From the website: "Since 1953, the mission for Albuquerque Speech Language Hearing Center has stayed the same - to provide high quality care to everyone in the community regardless of their financial ability to pay for services." Reiterating, Barry said, "ASLHC treats all comers, with any level of insurance or ability to pay (or not)."

Regarding the history of the organization, it was Mary Pfeister – an Albuquerque woman with severe hearing loss – who founded the New Mexico Hearing Society in 1953 upon

realizing that there was no treatment resource for the deaf in this state. Originally, the Society offered free hearing screenings and education on detection and prevention of hearing loss. Free lip-reading classes were available, too. In 1956, a preschool was opened for children who were deaf or hard of hearing. As the need grew, Mary also opened the door to adults needing services. Maryann Moyer took over as Director in 1966 and the name of the full-scale communication diagnostic and treatment center was changed to Albuquerque Speech Language and Hearing Center. In 2005, the treatment center moved to its present location on Montgomery Blvd. near Eubank Blvd.

The team of professionals, staff, board members, and volunteers is led by: Cynthia Valdez, Director of Operations; Stephanie Sanchez, Audiology Director; Bethany Theus, Speech Language Pathology Director; and Amber Chavez Baker, President of the Board of Directors. Describing the dedication of all the

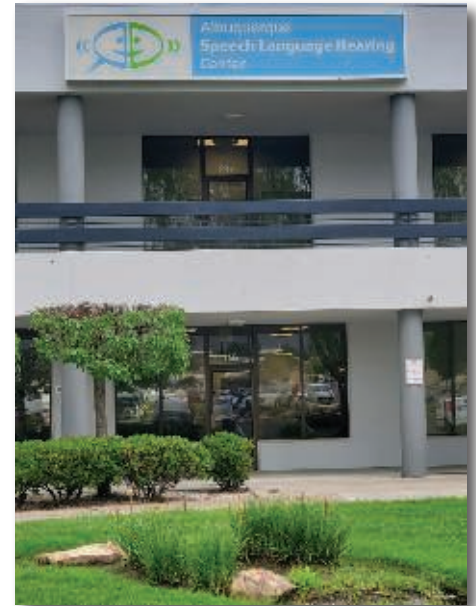
people who work there, Barry said, "As a nonprofit, ASLHC tries to pay about average salaries for our city but it doesn't pay top salaries because of trying to keep costs low in order to treat as many people as possible. The Center is about actually treating hearing and speech/language disorders and challenges, so the clinicians here really get to do medical work rather than mostly looking to just sell hearing aids to people."

Barry has served as president of the board a number of times since 2010 and is now Past President. He said, "It's a small and informal board - they are really terrific and super-dedicated people." In addition to being active on the board, Barry and his wife, Holly, are audiology patients at ASLHC. There is another board member and her brother who have been patients at the Center for more than 50 years. Several other board members have children who have developmental speech challenges. "So," Barry said, "everyone involved with the Center is very dedicated."

With funding coming from grants, donor contributions, and through services provided to private-pay patients, I asked Barry whether the pandemic had affected the Center. He said, "ASLHC survived with the help of a couple of PPP loans. Grants from United Way, Anderson Charitable Trust, and others helped and continue to help a lot." The annual Gala fundraiser, that had to be canceled in 2020 and 2021, will be back this year. It will be held on September 17, 2022, at the Hotel Albuquerque at Old Town. Barry said, "The evening will include dinner, a silent auction plus a live auction for two or three bigger prizes. The hearing aid manufacturers contribute hearing aids to the Center for the event and we also accept other donations."



Kid-friendly therapy room



Through its many services – treatment at the center, free speech and hearing screenings at elementary schools and health fairs, as well as presentations about the prevention, detection and treatment of communication disorders – the Albuquerque Speech Language and Hearing Center is working hard to live up to its mission statement: *To improve quality of life in the areas of hearing and speech-language pathology for persons of all ages and income levels.*



*Ariel Krieger,
Hearing Instrument Specialist,
testing Barry Abel.*

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 9500 Montgomery Blvd NE, Suite 215
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ASLHC Gala
 Saturday, Sept. 17, 2022

For more info, please go to page one on the website.

