

WALKING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF CATHERINE KASPER

Sharing the Gift of Hearing

Dr. Tina Sheehan
Audiologist
HearCare Connection

According to Dr. Tina Sheehan of HearCare Connection, her work is about “showing people they have worth.” Her patients’ incomes are between 100% and 250% below the poverty level. She provides free hearing tests for them, and other more extensive services, on a sliding scale fee structure. When people think of hearing loss, it is usually the elderly they imagine. Many of Dr. Sheehan’s patients, however, are children, even infants. Especially for children, hearing loss can be debilitating and detrimental to their development and education.

One child came to her at age three and had no speech and language skills. His family had assumed he was shy. “It takes hearing 40 million words before a child really starts learning. That’s one reason why a parent reading to their child is so important.” To encourage this, she has a bookshelf stuffed with children’s books for all

different reading levels. Any time a child comes in, they get to leave with a book.

Dr. Sheehan recalls many of her patients, of all ages, who suffered from severe hearing problems and became withdrawn and depressed. HearCare provides these people with hearing aids, though not for free. A system was developed, by which they earn their hearing aids, which can cost several

DR. SHEEHAN’S GOAL IS TO HELP PEOPLE “LIVE THEIR LIFE AND LIVE IT ABUNDANTLY.”

thousand dollars, by volunteering at community organizations. The idea was not just to instill accountability, but more importantly, Dr. Sheehan and HearCare Connection see it as a way to encourage their patients who had been withdrawn for so long to “reconnect with people” and “show themselves they can do something.” Dr. Sheehan considers this reintroducing them to

society and, she exclaims, “life!” Many of the patients become so engaged with the new friendships and their community service through HearCare’s “Circle of Giving,” that they continue to volunteer after their required hours have been completed.

The Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ, who sponsor The St. Joseph Community Health Foundation, believe in the importance of simplicity, defined as “the quality of singleness of purpose in one’s life.” Though God’s plan for us is often difficult to decipher, it seems that Dr. Sheehan’s purpose is to allow others to find their own. She lives HearCare Connection’s vision that “No person is prevented from full participation in life due to hearing loss.” As a result, The St. Joseph Community Health Foundation has been proud to be one of the founding and continuing funders of the organization, which began in 2011. It is an honor to continue the Poor Handmaids’ legacy by supporting healthcare professionals like Dr. Sheehan, who help people “live their life and live it abundantly.”

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