



Rebuilding communication. [Transforming lives.](#)

ACC Connection

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Twenty Years of Transforming Lives— Looking Back and Moving Ahead

“In the midst of change, we often discover wings that we never knew we had.”

~Ekaterina Walter

By Roberta J Elman, PhD
President and Founder
Aphasia Center of California

Twenty years ago, we opened our doors as the first independent Aphasia Center in the United States. I decided to start the Aphasia Center of California (ACC) because we had found extremely positive results from a clinical research study. I never dreamed that a research study would change so many lives, including mine.

While working at a medical outpatient rehabilitation center, I was the principal investigator on a randomized controlled study to investigate the efficacy of aphasia group treatment for people with chronic aphasia. Study participants had sustained



Dr. Roberta Elman--enjoying some natural inspiration for the ACC's next 20 years!

strokes from 6 months to more than 20 years prior. We had predicted that participants would improve on measures of communication. We were less sure that we would find improvement on linguistic measures of language. This was because the treatment did not focus on specific sounds or words. Instead, the treatment concentrated on initiation and exchange of information within a communication group setting.

What we could never have imagined were the changes we saw

across language, communication, and confidence, especially outside the treatment space. Family members began to give us examples of how participants were ordering their own meals in restaurants, taking back unwanted purchases from department stores, and starting to socialize with friends. These were astonishing and unexpected results. And these results were powerful enough to convince me to leave a job and volunteer my time to create a new model of service

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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.*

Thank You to Our Generous Donors

January 2016 - July 2016
Please see page 4 for “Walk to Talk” donations

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

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Twenty Years of Transforming Lives --Looking Back and Moving Ahead

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delivery that hadn’t been tried before in the United States for people with aphasia. Speech-language pathologists Sue Ewing and Ellen Bernstein-Ellis, together with a volunteer board of directors, joined me in this effort. And on September 1, 1996, the Aphasia Center of California was born.

The last 20 years have been a whirlwind. At first, we were naïve and believed that grant funding would be easy. We had published research documenting the efficacy of the group treatment approach, but we found that a lack of awareness of aphasia became a challenging barrier to fundraising. Most foundation program officers were reluctant to fund our proposals, because they had never heard of aphasia. And they had never heard of aphasia because the word was so infrequently used in the media. We were caught in a vicious cycle. So instead of

spending hours on writing grants that were unlikely to be funded, we reached out to those who understood firsthand the impact of aphasia. And it has been YOUR donations—those of you living with aphasia and your family and friends—who have sustained the ACC over these 20 years. We would not be here without you.

We learned a lot of lessons over the last 20 years. We learned that if we kept expenses low, we could accomplish a lot with a little. **And we have!** We have provided more than 75,000 group visits at our two program sites in Oakland and Menlo Park, CA. We learned that if we shared our ideas with others by publishing and presenting our work, that the ACC’s reach and impact would be far and wide. **And it has!** With more than 100 presentations and 35 publications, including two editions of a seminal book on group

treatment, others were inspired and now there are now 15 independent Aphasia Centers in the United States, and hundreds of aphasia groups and programs meeting around the world. We learned that people with aphasia would support, motivate, and inspire one another, and in so doing, transform thousands of lives. **And lives are transformed at the ACC every day!**

I know that I have one of the best jobs in the world. I meet people who arrive at the ACC—most are frustrated, some are depressed, and many are unable to communicate. Then I see the dark cloud lift, and a person re-emerges, someone who is ready to rejoin the world. Thank you so much for your support over these past 20 years. Because it is YOUR support that has provided the gift of communication and transformed the lives of thousands of people living with aphasia.

Please buckle up, because we’re not done yet— let’s see how together, we will continue to change the world for people affected by aphasia over the next 20 years!



14th Annual Walk to Talk

An enthusiastic group of 135 people joined our 14th Annual “Walk to Talk” at Lake Merritt on June 25th to raise aphasia awareness and funds for the ACC. Together, we raised more than \$38,000 for aphasia programs and services!!

Special thanks to John Jankowski, who for the 6th year in a row, brought in the most donations! We had a host of people who raised more than \$500: Esther Akiba, Anita Cox & Family, Roberta Elman, Mark Estigoy & Family, Nancy & Peter Farber-Szekrenyi, Terry Flanagan, Andrea Ford-Roberts, David Giacomelli & Family, Mary Jane

& Rich Laufenberg, Julie & Vince Lindgren, Eric Liu, Enid Meyer & Sid Dommies, Michael Miller & Family, Len Nordson & Family, Pat Terry and Doug Olson, Kathy Ott, Tom Purbaugh & Karen Spina, Jim & Patty Santanna, Dolores Sims, Pat & George Springer, David Storm, Charlene Stovall & Friends, Philip Tien, Don & Vicki Welcome, Bill Wong & Family, Derrick & Suzanne Wong & Family, and Marcela Wong & Family. To you and the many donors who sponsored you, thank you for your generosity and efforts in supporting what we do at the Aphasia Center!

The event couldn’t take place without all of our hard working event volunteers, including our wonderful musicians, Susan Musicant, Sharon Mediary, and Jody Richardson; our extraordinary event co-coordinator, Enid Meyer; and our volunteers on event day--Sid Dommies, Sue Ewing, Tessa Fisher, Steve Fry, Mary Lew, Bill Wong, Charlotte Reimer, Krista Hart, Marian Alonso, Megan Simon, Cristine Hilsinger, Lyssa Rome, Cynthia & Matthew Byward, Annabelle Cadang, Giti Froz, Heather Campbell, Amanda Olson, Bishop Graham, Alta Brink, Audrey Cohen, and Esther Akiba. **ACC volunteers and donors make everything possible—thank you so much!**

Please acknowledge the generosity of these businesses for our 2016 “Walk to Talk” with your support:

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**A big thank you to all of our "Walk to Talk" donors!
It was a record setting event with more than
130 walkers at Lake Merritt on June 25th.
Please be sure to join us in 2017!**

Space limitations allow us to list donors who made contributions of \$50 or more.

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Do you shop at Lucky FoodMaxx or Savemart? Program Update!

Lucky, FoodMaxx, and Savemart have updated their S.H.A.R.E.S. donation program. The program is now part of eScrip. You no longer need a special card—all you need to do is register with eScrip online and then input your phone number each time you check out. It's super simple and doesn't cost a thing. Each time you buy groceries, Lucky, FoodMaxx and Savemart will donate 3% of your total grocery bill to the ACC! To register for S.H.A.R.E.S. through eScrip, go to this website: luckysupermarkets.com/shares and select the Aphasia Center of California as your charity. If you have any questions, please call us at 510-336-0112.

Help us get to 1000 "Likes"!

Did you know that you can stay up-to-date on ACC news by "liking" us on Facebook? We post at least twice a week on our Facebook page and recent posts include photographs from a Communication Training session and articles about stroke. You can directly access our page from the Facebook icon on our website: www.aphasiacenter.org Or search for "Aphasia Center of California" the next time you are on Facebook!

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