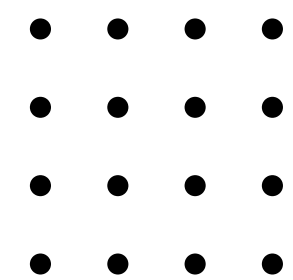


REMARKS FOR
THE MARTHA TAYLOR SARNO
ADVOCACY
AWARD 2022



As we come to the end of the 35th year since the founding of the National Aphasia Association, we feel tremendous pride for how far it has come in its accomplishments on behalf of people with aphasia, their service providers, and communities.

Its history is a remarkable story of how a dedicated group of persons with aphasia, their families, speech-language pathologists, physicians, rehabilitation teams, and colleagues brought not only health services but the services and support needed to reduce the social isolation that prevails in the aphasia community.

The idea of establishing a national association dedicated to the needs of people with aphasia began in the 1980s in a conversation I had with Dr. Don Olsen, a speech-language pathologist, who was, at that time, Director of Medical Education at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago.

A few weeks later, a group of enthusiastic colleagues met to discuss what steps were necessary to organize an aphasia association. In addition to myself and Dr. Olsen, the founding committee, which later became the Executive Board, consisted of the late Thomas Anderson, MD, Dept of Rehabilitation Medicine at the Univ of Minnesota School of Medicine; Martin Albert, MD, a neurologist at the Boston University School of Medicine; my Research Assistant, Dr. Antonia Ward, a speech-language pathologist whose father was aphasic, and Alan Bandler, a lawyer, whose wife was aphasic, managed all legal needs of the Founding Committee. Two people with aphasia were also included as representatives of the aphasia population.

Our goal of creating a national organization was loud and clear. We met regularly and enthusiastically at the Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation in New York City. In a very short time, we succeeded in defining and shaping the strategies needed to reach our goal.

Each of us felt strongly about the prospect of a national group dedicated to the needs of people with aphasia. We were engaged and excited. Our enthusiasm was evident and productive.

And in 1987, we succeeded in creating the National Aphasia Association.

The NAA has demonstrated how helpful it is for families with aphasia to connect with each other. History shows that a small group of committed people—myself included—could never have imagined it would grow and mature to be the "powerhouse" it is today.

I wish the NAA continued growth and success, and may the aphasia community stay strong and continue working together.

It is indeed a great pleasure and privilege to present, for the first time, the Martha Taylor Sarno NAA Advocacy Award. This award intends to recognize an individual with aphasia who has demonstrated the will and ability to continue being active despite the challenging limits imposed by aphasia.

I congratulate Gabby Giffords for her unremitting support of others with aphasia, made possible by her warmth, unyielding optimism, ability to deal with a tragic event, courage, and understanding, all of which have had a positive impact on the aphasia community. Her willingness to share her feelings and thoughts about the impact of aphasia on her life is invaluable.