

News

Hear the Call Colorado gives the gift of hearing in Longmont on Saturday



Dr. Chandace Jeep fits Janice Paterson with a hearing aid on October 3, 2020. Audiologists gathered at the Longmont Hearing and Tinnitus Center to give the gift of hearing. (Cliff Grassmick/Staff Photographer)

By **KELSEY HAMMON** | khammon@prairiemountainmedia.com | Longmont Times-Call
PUBLISHED: October 3, 2020 at 6:03 p.m. | UPDATED: October 3, 2020 at 6:04 p.m

When Linda Pierce thought about the significance of getting hearing aids on Saturday, after struggling with hearing loss for roughly three years, it was almost too emotional to talk about.

“You can’t imagine,” she said choking up. “I moved into a senior building in June and haven’t heard much of what is said. It will be great to converse with my neighbors and grandkids.”

Pierce, of Evergreen, was one of 14 people Saturday who were able to get their hearing tested and be fitted for hearing aids for no cost or a low cost, based on income. The free hearing clinic was organized by the nonprofit organization Hearing the Call Colorado at the Longmont Hearing and Tinnitus Center, 195 S. Main St. The event marked the first of many clinics the nonprofit hopes to host.

Dr. D’Anne Rudden, an audiologist and owner of the Longmont Hearing and Tinnitus Center, said the coronavirus pandemic makes access to hearing care even more critical.

“Especially in this time, where we are wearing masks and there is less socializing,” Rudden said. “People are isolated, and when they don’t hear

well, they feel more isolated. This is opening the door for those people that insurance may not cover things for them, and they may not have the financial resources to pay for both hearing aids. We wanted to fill that gap.”

Rudden has owned the Longmont practice for 18 years. For the past year, she has been part of Hearing the Call, a global nonprofit based in Fort Wayne, Ind., that travels overseas to help people have access to hearing care. This year, Rudden wanted to make sure that those in her own community were also getting the help they needed. She initiated a conversation with other industry leaders about a Colorado branch and soon found out people in other audiology practices across the state were interested in helping.

Representatives from the six different audiology practices that make up Hear the Call Colorado participated in running the clinic Saturday, including audiologists from Animas Valley Audiology in Durango, Columbine Hearing Care in Littleton, Flatirons Audiology in Lafayette, McArthur Audiology in Burlington and New Leaf Hearing Clinic in Arvada. A group from Entheos Audiology Cooperative in Fort Wayne also volunteered Saturday.

One in eight people in the U.S. suffers from hearing loss, according to a news release from Entheos Audiology Cooperative. The patients helped Saturday will also continue to receive a year of complementary aftercare. Following that period, they will pay \$15 for an office visit. Rudden said they

were connected to the patients through nonprofit agencies, including the OUR Center, a nonprofit that helps provide basic needs to people; Out Boulder, an LGBTQ advocacy nonprofit, and Intercambio, a nonprofit resource center for immigrants.

Corrie Pierce, Pierce’s daughter, said she looked into the cost of hearing aids for her mother. The prices ranged from \$1,000 to \$5,000 — a cost she said is not feasible for her mom, who is low income. Corrie Pierce said they were looking into other financial options, such as grant funding, when she heard about Hearing the Call Colorado through her job working with seniors. Corrie Pierce described Saturday as a “life-changing experience” for her mom.

“Not hearing can impact so much of your overall health and well-being,” Corrie Pierce said. “Glasses are necessary to see, but society doesn’t put the same level of importance on hearing. This year has been so tough because she’s been isolated. Then, to not be able to sufficiently communicate with your family and friends; it just adds to it.”



Dr. Dusty Jessen, left, tests the hearing of Janice Paterson in the sound booth on October 3, 2020. Audiologists gathered at the Longmont Hearing and Tinnitus Center to give the gift of hearing. (Cliff Grassmick/Staff Photographer)

Pierce, who has four grandchildren (and two granddogs), said what she wanted most is to be able to hear her family and neighbors at the independent living facility in Evergreen where she is a resident.

Patients scheduled for the clinic were given an appointment time, and no walk-ins were allowed. Audiologists social distanced and wore clear plastic masks to help those who are hard of hearing read their lips.

Carmen Hernandez, of Thornton, and her daughter, Teresa Trombley, waited for an appointment Saturday under a tent.

Hernandez, whose primary language is Spanish, said she has lost 85% of her hearing. She works in a kitchen, where she said there are lots of overlapping noises. She hoped to get hearing aids Saturday so that she could hear better at work.

Trombley said she expects hearing aids to help her mom’s confidence.

“It’s going to help her at work and her everyday life,” Trombley said.

As part of its mission, Hearing the Call Colorado encourages those who receive care to give back to their communities. Rudden said that usually includes asking them to do some community service, on an honor system. Due to the pandemic and some patients having health conditions that would make volunteering a challenge, she said they hoped to inspire Saturday’s patients to do small acts of kindness, whether picking up trash in their neighborhood or reading a book to their grandchild.

The next hearing clinic has been tentatively scheduled for Dec. 5 in Arvada. Rudden hopes to see Hearing the Call Colorado grow and encouraged other audiology practices across the state to get involved. The nonprofit is funded



Dr. Dusty Jessen, right, talks to Janice Paterson about how the sound booth works. Audiologists gathered at the Longmont Hearing and Tinnitus Center to give the gift of hearing. (Cliff Grassmick/Staff Photographer)

through donations. Those interested in contributing can donate online at hearingthecall.org/colorado/. People are also encouraged to donate batteries or used hearing aids to the nonprofit. People with questions can email Colorado@hearingthecall.org. To learn about the global nonprofit, people can visit <https://hearingthecall.org/Colorado>.

“Hearing loss happens so gradually,” Rudden said. “They may not even realize, especially if they’re isolated, that their TV is louder or they’re asking for frequent repetitions and begin to isolate themselves, because they’re frustrated. This just opens up the world for them.”

As she helped patients on Saturday, Rudden said there was a particular moment she was waiting for.

“I’m looking forward to seeing the joy on someone’s face when they realize what they’ve been missing — it’s really magical,” Rudden said. “We call it a ‘hearing smile.’ It can be emotional for people, sometimes they cry, sometimes they get wide-eyed. Imagine being able to hear for the first time.”

