



# THE STORY OF OUR YEAR

A HEAR Wisconsin 2020 Timeline

# 2020

2020 presented unprecedented challenges to HEAR Wisconsin. In a year unlike any other, the HEAR Wisconsin team had to adapt, adjust, and re-evaluate on many levels in response to the pandemic, while trying to continue to serve people who turned to us for care.

## Chapter 1

### MOMENTUM AND OPTIMISM WERE IN THE AIR.

Looking back to January 2020, momentum and optimism were high as we expected this to be our year for growth. Our team was ready to serve the community in new and expanded ways including through the visionary creation of Wisconsin's first Mobile Audiology Clinic – a new initiative to break out of our brick-and-mortar Audiology Clinic and go directly into the community to underserved people in need of hearing healthcare services. January and February were buzzing with excitement, planned activities and potential new opportunities.

## Chapter 2

### WORLDWIDE PANDEMIC.

By March, we knew that 2020 would not be what we had hoped it would be. COVID-19 was spreading fast and the Wisconsin Governor placed a "Safer at Home" order in effect. An emergency leadership meeting was held to determine whether HEAR Wisconsin should consider closing its doors temporarily and/or begin providing extremely limited services. Viewpoints were shared and debated – ultimately, the decision was made that we could not, and should not, turn our back on those who needed our services now more than ever.



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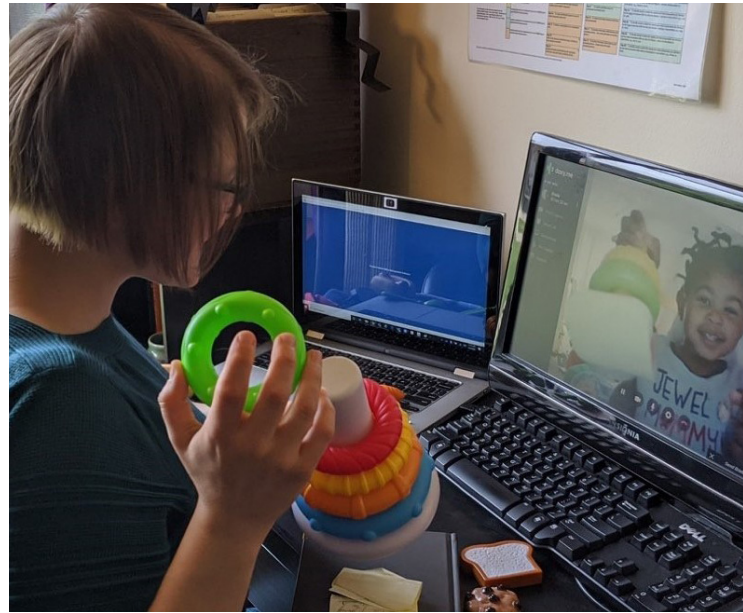
*"What if someone has a broken hearing aid and needs our help to communicate with family and friends? Now, more than ever, HEAR Wisconsin needs to remain open and provide quality hearing healthcare services. Shutting down temporarily would not be keeping in line with HEAR Wisconsin's mission nor our 95 years of continuous and consistent service to the deaf or hard of hearing community."*

*Jill Van Calster, President and CEO*

## Chapter 3

### ADAPTATIONS WERE MADE.

In-person family visits for the early intervention staff were canceled immediately, but we had an existing well-established solution already in place. For the past 16 years, ConnectHEAR had been providing TeleIntervention, an extension of our early intervention program to offer online therapy sessions to families who live in rural areas and/or don't have access to specialized therapists in their areas. A TeleGroup program was also created to provide group online sessions so children wouldn't miss out on the social skill development/classroom setting experiences they had before the pandemic. The TeleGroup sessions allowed toddlers and their families the opportunities to connect, play, sing, make art, read and learn together online. Thanks to a grant, some families also received Language Learning Play Kits. During online sessions, therapists and families use the same set of toys, so therapists could coach and demonstrate effective strategies to help with the child's language development.



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***“We were able to transition most of our families to ConnectHEAR without interruption in their early intervention services by the end of March.”***

***Amy Peters Lalios, M.A., CCC-A, LSLC CERT. AVT,  
Director of Therapy Services***

## Chapter 4

### DEMAND FOR SERVICES INCREASED.

Throughout 2020, the Kay Eckstein Speech & Hearing Center, which consists of the Audiology Clinic and Assistive Technology Center, was inundated with calls, emails, appointments, and walk-ins. With the “Safer at Home” order in place and people no longer seeing each other in person, there was an increased demand and dependence on technology to stay in touch with loved ones, co-workers and friends.

Hearing aids and other assistive technology devices were purchased, repaired or replaced with newer technology to stay connected remotely with others. One man, taking several bus lines to get to HEAR Wisconsin (arriving 2 hours early to ensure he didn't miss his appointment) was so grateful that we had kept our doors open so he could have his hearing aid repaired. Without it, he could not have phone conversations with his family members which he desperately needed during this difficult time.



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***“People don't realize there are many assistive technology options to help them understand conversations better. I enjoy watching their faces light up when they try out new devices.”***

***Laurie Flores, Director of Technology and  
Community Outreach***

## Chapter 5

# UNCERTAINTY AND CHALLENGES STILL REMAINED IN SOME AREAS.

CommLink, an in-person American Sign Language and Spanish interpreting service, suffered the most, with 95 percent of their scheduled appointments cancelled in the spring and summer of 2020. Hospitals and clinics cancelled and/or postponed non-essential appointments and procedures; workplaces and schools shut their physical doors; classrooms and meetings went virtual; and planned special occasions and events didn't happen. It was a ripple effect that caused revenues to drop to nearly zero for CommLink for several months. The only services provided were those of an emergency nature (birth of a child or a car accident).

Adult Day Services – Community Access for the Deaf was adversely affected too. Group sessions became nonexistent overnight for several months for our Deaf clients who have a developmental disability. These clients were more isolated than ever before, with some unable to understand/use technology to stay in touch with others. The HEAR Wisconsin coordinator continued to visit them in-person when allowed to do so in their group homes or apartments. For those without additional familial support, HEAR Wisconsin was their only support system during the “Safer at Home” order.

Another challenge we faced during 2020 was our facility's aging technology infrastructure as it was not able to handle multiple virtual meetings at once for our entire team. Several early intervention team members did online therapy and group sessions from their homes while others continued working and serving clients and patients in the building. One summer day, the technology hub failed spectacularly, and no one had access to the internet. A temporary emergency solution was put in place until we had a more permanent solution. A couple months later, we upgraded to a newer technology infrastructure.

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*“CommLink is on call 24/7 for emergencies. Even through a pandemic, the need for American Sign Language interpreting exists. In the early morning hours, I received a call that several deaf individuals were involved in a car accident. Interpreters were needed at the hospital emergency room to ensure communication ease as they were being examined by doctors.”*

*Jim Hagen, Director of CommLink*



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*“We are very grateful to United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha County for providing us an emergency grant to help cover some of the technology needs for our programs.”*

*Mark Stein, Director of Strategic Initiatives*

## Chapter 6

### WE ASKED FOR HELP, AND RECEIVED IT.

As the only organization in the state that provides comprehensive services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, HEAR Wisconsin chose not to close our doors, but we did need to closely watch our financial activities. With lower revenues and higher unexpected expenses, the mantra for several long months was how do we remain “in the black”.

We asked for help from the community and they generously responded.

- Donors came through with their gifts during a Special Appeal Campaign.
- United Way provided an emergency grant and personal protection equipment throughout the year.
- Volunteers stepped in, making 1,400 see-through masks for us to use and distribute to those who needed them.
- Donors continued to support us through our virtual Corks & Kegs fundraiser and the year-end Annual Appeal Campaign.
- HEAR Wisconsin applied for and received the Paycheck Protection Program funding to help sustain us through the year.

We are so grateful for the community support and their belief in our mission.

*We are here because of you.*

## Chapter 7

### “IF YOU BUILD (DREAM) IT, THEY WILL COME!”

After months of intense planning in 2019, January 2020 was the kickoff month to begin a special fundraising campaign for HEAR Wisconsin’s newest initiative, a state-of-the-art and one-of-a-kind Mobile Audiology Clinic (MAC). HEAR Wisconsin researched the viability of an audiology clinic on wheels and developed a business plan to present to its Board of Directors and funders who, in turn, demonstrated enthusiastic support for the new initiative. While the pandemic slowed down the fundraising efforts, it didn’t stop it, and HEAR Wisconsin didn’t give up. By fall 2020, we had reached 75% of our campaign goal and forged a partnership with LDV Speciality Vehicles. LDV, a custom-build vehicle specialist, located in Burlington, Wisconsin, was contracted to build MAC which will hit the road in the summer of 2021.

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*“We were amazed and humbled by funders’ excitement and strong support for this new initiative. We could not have made this a reality without them.”*

*Jill Van Calster, President and CEO*

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*“See-through mask requests poured in from all over the country. HEAR Wisconsin distributed the masks in Wisconsin and 18 other states to families, speech language pathologists, firemen, teachers, and many others.”*

*Caty Bulgrin, Director of Operations*



## Chapter 8

### DEDICATION AND COMPASSION PREVAILED.

With the combined dedication and compassion of our staff, Board of Directors, funders, donors, and volunteers, HEAR Wisconsin was able to remain nimble and adapt its programs to continue to meet our clients' needs in every way possible, by whatever means necessary, to stay afloat and stay true to our mission.

## Chapter 9

### IMPACTING LIVES - A SUCCESS STORY.

Early last year, Breanna, mom of 2-year-old Brielle who has a moderately-severe hearing loss, was very worried about Brielle's language development. She was not hitting the developmental milestones as her hearing peers were. Breanna turned to HEAR Wisconsin for help. After a few months of in-person, then TeleIntervention services, Brielle is now thriving. Shortly after Brielle began receiving services, Breanna said "we've seen huge progress with her... she's saying more words now... two-word phrases... I look at you [HEAR Wisconsin] like a family friend... very supportive and very hands-on." With communication in place, she is now bonding more closely with her daughter.

## Chapter 10

### LOOKING AT WHAT'S AHEAD FOR 2021.

While it was hard at times to look more than one month ahead, HEAR Wisconsin adapted and discovered new ideas, new ways of doing things, new ways of staying in touch and delivering services to our clients.

2020 brought extraordinary challenges – yet it has been truly inspiring to the HEAR Wisconsin team to see that the compassion, generosity and commitment for HEAR Wisconsin's mission remained strong among the Board of Directors and supporters like **YOU!**

Because of your support, the HEAR Wisconsin team has come out stronger, tougher and reenergized with a mission-driven determination to serve everyone who needs help. While the pandemic isn't over yet, we are getting back to a new normal and proud to be Wisconsin's premier provider of services to the deaf and hard of hearing community.

*We are here because of you.*



*"We've seen huge progress with her... she's saying more words now... two-word phrases... I look at you [HEAR Wisconsin] like a family friend... very supportive and very hands-on."*

*Breanna, mom of Brielle*

# HEAR WISCONSIN PROGRAMS

HEAR Wisconsin is a nonprofit organization that helps babies, children, and adults with hearing loss by eliminating communication barriers through personalized services, technology and education.

## KELLOGG CHILD & FAMILY PROGRAM

Connects families to experienced professionals who can help their children develop language, communication and social skills so they can perform at levels consistent with their peers when they enter school.

## KAY ECKSTEIN SPEECH & HEARING CENTER

Connects individuals and businesses to audiologists and technology experts for audiology services, hearing aid fittings, and specialized equipment consultations for home, work or other environments.

## COMMLINK INTERPRETING SERVICES

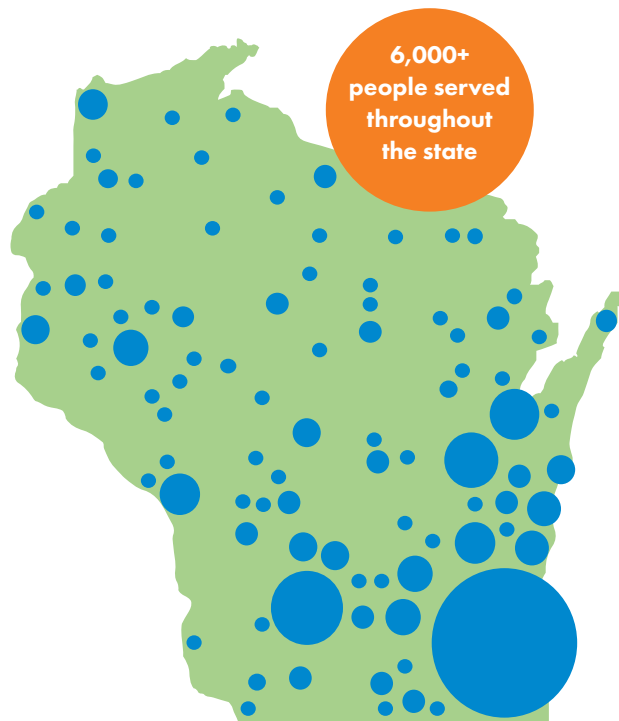
Connects businesses and individuals to licensed American Sign Language and Spanish interpreters to ensure accurate communication for individuals. Interpreting services are available for medical appointments, business meetings, legal proceedings, emergencies and everyday events.

## ADULT DAY SERVICES - COMMUNITY ACCESS FOR THE DEAF

Addresses the special needs of adults with developmental disabilities who also have hearing loss and helps these individuals improve their independent living, communication, vocational and social skills through small group activities, individual services, and community integration.

## HISTORY

HEAR Wisconsin, because of supporters like you, grew from a small humble support group in 1926 to a robust organization providing comprehensive services for people of all ages with all degrees of hearing loss or deafness. Incorporated in 1944 as Milwaukee Hearing Society, HEAR Wisconsin continues to connect people to needed services and resources throughout Wisconsin.



## HEAR Wisconsin 2020 Board of Directors

### BOARD OFFICERS

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**A United Way  
partner for 74 Years**

# KAY ECKSTEIN SPEECH &

# HEARING CENTER

AUDIOLOGY CLINIC

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY CENTER



## OUR IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

**1,614** audiology appointments were provided

**1,798** clients in Assistive Technology Center were served

### Accomplishments

- Saw patients of all ages and abilities
- Added a second audiologist to meet increased demand for services



# KELLOGG CHILD & FAMILY PROGRAM

## OUR IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

**3,617** hours of early intervention services were provided

**554** individual TeleIntervention sessions held

**88%** of kids met or exceeded expectations for increasing their communication skills

**98%** of parents reported an increase in their parenting confidence and skills after just six months of services of intervention

### Accomplishments

- Transition to all TeleIntervention without interruption in service by end of March 2020
- 2 speech-language pathologists joined the team



# COMMLINK INTERPRETING SERVICES



## OUR IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

**104** businesses served

**3,275** total hours interpreted

**1,196** total interpreting jobs completed

### Accomplishment

- Pilot program established for Spanish interpreting

# ADULT DAY SERVICES

COMMUNITY ACCESS  
FOR THE DEAF

## OUR IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

1,560 hours of direct service provided

20 clients served

5 adults received job skills training and  
supportive employment

### Accomplishments

- Formed a Deaf bowling league
- 4 clients won first place in their Special Olympics basketball competition
- Created ongoing Deaf Bingo and ASL games on Zoom to stay in touch

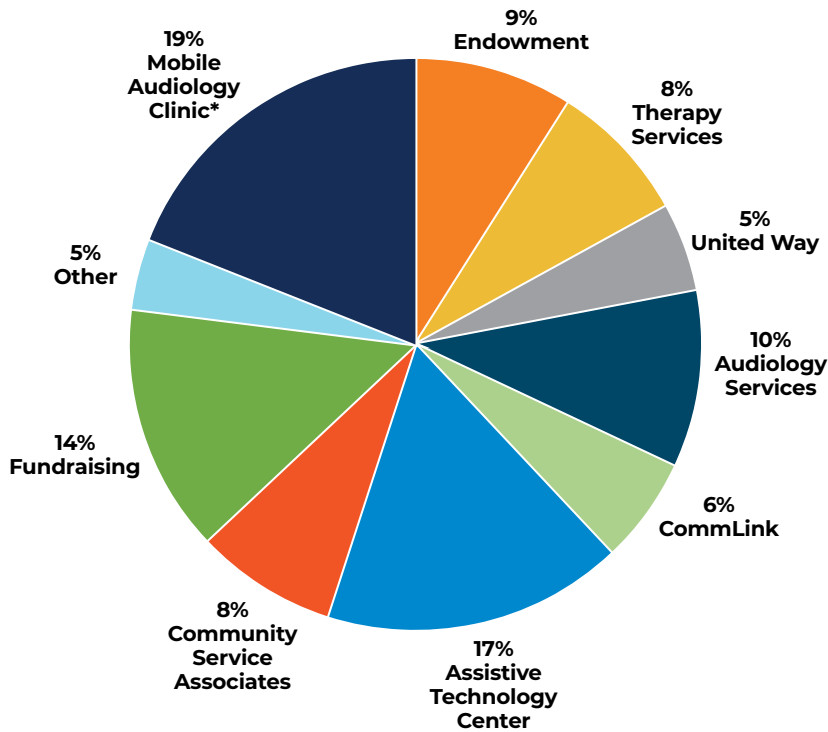


# FINANCIAL REVIEW

## STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES Year Ending December 31, 2020

### REVENUE

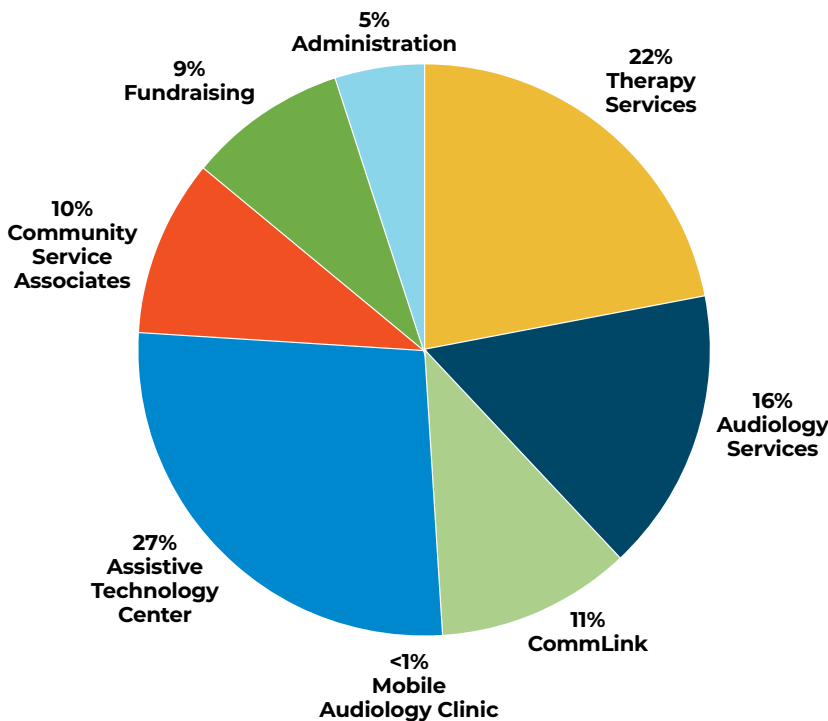
\$3,244,589



Audiology	\$311,139
CommLink	\$203,922
Community Service Associates (CSA)	\$251,089
Endowment	\$282,624
Fundraising	\$461,367
Mobile Audiology Clinic*	\$600,724
Other	\$147,709
Assistive Technology Center	\$563,717
Therapy and Education	\$249,921
United Way	\$172,377
	\$3,244,589**

### EXPENSES

\$2,457,757



Administration	\$111,431
Audiology	\$388,476
CommLink	\$278,959
Community Service Associates (CSA)	\$251,089
Fundraising	\$227,583
Mobile Audiology Clinic	\$3,417
Assistive Technology Center	\$664,787
Therapy and Education	\$532,015
	\$2,457,757

\* Special fundraising campaign to build and operate the Mobile Audiology Clinic for next two years

\*\* Total includes: Personal Paycheck Protection grant of \$220,000; Mobile Audiology Clinic's donor restricted grants/gifts of \$592,553 and pledges of \$52,500

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Accenture  
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Amazon - Smile Foundation  
Baird  
Benevity Community Impact Fund  
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