



# APHASIA REHAB LAB NEWSLETTER

Edited By: Kayla Stalph and Casey Lee



## APHASIA LANGUAGE GROUP

Aphasia Language Group is a supportive place to practice communication, ask questions, and receive and provide feedback to others with aphasia. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Aphasia Language Group has been meeting weekly over Webex, but we are hopeful to return to in-person meetings in Fall 2022. Discussions tend to include topical current world and local events as well as highs and lows for the week. Language games are designed to increase word finding and to provide additional expressive and receptive language practice. Participants vary in aphasia severity and we accommodate all ability levels. The only way to improve your language is to use it! New members may begin any time!

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# APHASIA BOOK CLUB

We run two Aphasia Book Clubs that meet weekly to discuss a selected book for the semester. Some are reading for the first time since their stroke and use audiobooks to help. We use the assigned book as a structured way to practice language. Each week, participants read a few chapters and complete discussion questions to prepare for discussion. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been meeting via Webex (a video conferencing application). Our participants have become quite savvy with the technology during these times and we will keep one group online going forward, even when most of us return to in-person groups.

This semester in Aphasia Book Club we are reading *A Midnight Library* by Matt Haig.

This New York Times Best seller has our members hooked!

*Head over to Uconn's Aphasia Rehab Lab Website if you're interested in joining!*

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

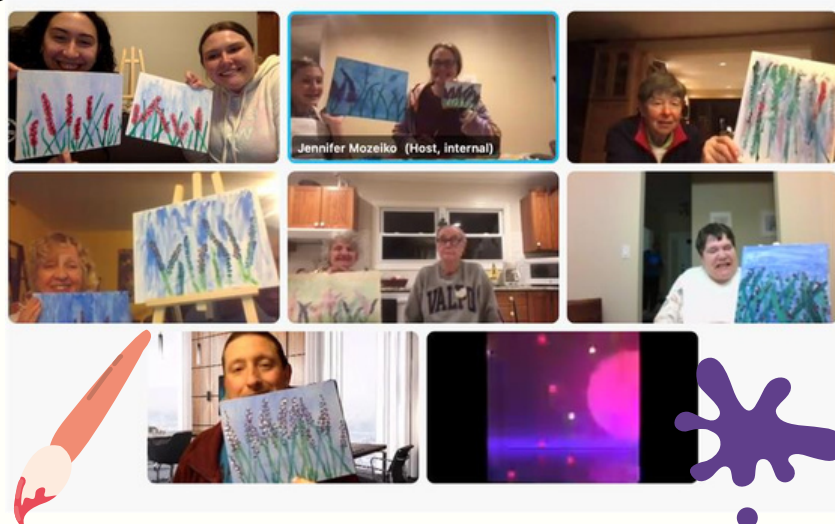


### THEATER

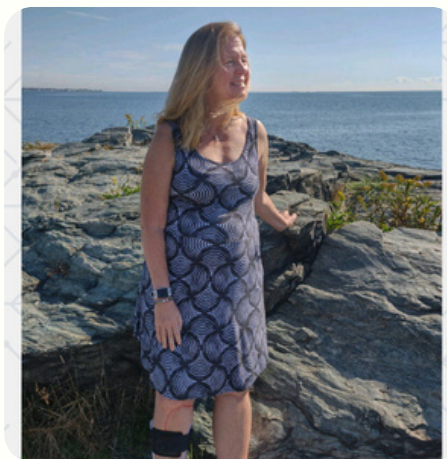
This semester, some of our Aphasia Group Theater members participated in the production of **My Pal Patsy**. Participants include Max Eaddy, Liz Hinderger, Jim Bardunias, and John Naughton, and led by first-year SLP graduate student Janet Desmarais.

### PAINTING

This semester, some of our group members participated in a paint night. Participants include Nancy Santoro, John Naughton, Karin Turek, and Jim Bardunias, and led by first-year SLP graduate students Nicole Thurz and Mariana Carcia.

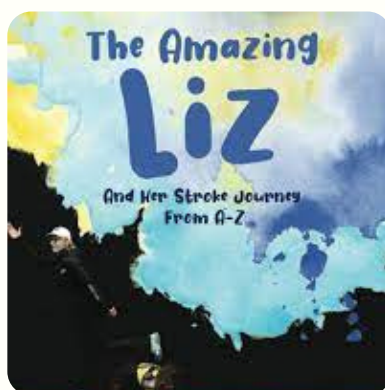


## SPOTLIGHT: ELIZABETH HINDINGER



Elizabeth Hindinger had a hemorrhagic stroke just a few days before her 42nd birthday. Elizabeth, who is right-handed, woke up with her right side paralyzed and her talking impaired. Elizabeth spent three months relearning to walk and talk following her aphasia diagnosis. Before the stroke, she had been fit and active. However, the determination and fighting spirit for her children was still “running” through her veins.

Lora Miele, one of Elizabeth’s closest friends, helped out in any way she could after Elizabeth's stroke. She was so inspired by her friend’s perseverance. In 2015, Lora ran the Boston Marathon for the first time and saw racing bibs and signs reading “Tedy's Team.” After the race finished, Lora learned Tedy's Team was created to raise awareness about stroke symptoms and recovery and to fund research.

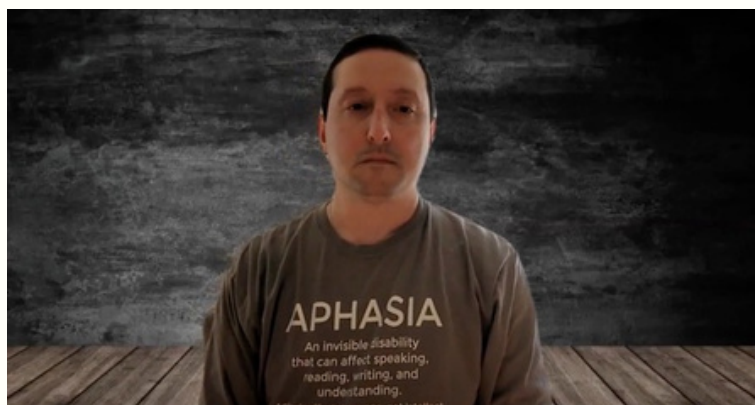


In 2021, Lora published a book called ***The Amazing Liz and Her Stroke Journey From A-Z*** which focuses on Elizabeth’s story as well as aphasia and stroke. All proceeds go to Tedy’s Team. In the future, Elizabeth hopes to travel the Northeast and eventually the United States, giving motivational speeches about being a stroke survivor and sharing her book with people.

***Liz's book can be purchased on Amazon***



## SPOTLIGHT: JAMES BARDUNIAS



### 1. Where are you from and what year did you have your stroke?

My name is James Bardunias, though, I prefer Jim. I live with my wife, Christa, of 20 years, in Lisbon, Connecticut. I am really lucky to have such a great person in my life. I am from New York, out on Long Island. I went to college in Pennsylvania. And now, I live in Connecticut. I had an AVM. I had to look it up, it stands for Arteriovenous malformation. I just had my four-year stroke “anniversary” on February 7th.

### 3. What have you gained from participating in both groups?

I’ve been attending both aphasia groups for about 3-4 semesters. I learn a lot of strategies through the language group. I have developed many friendships. I have read many books in my life and this has been a wonderful group.

### 4. Do you have any advice for someone with aphasia?

Join a group at a college, institute, or organization like Aphasia Recovery Connection (or all three!). They can be amazing for your acceptance of your limitations or lack thereof! They are run by helpful volunteers and some are run by employees. Whatever the need, you can always fit in!

### 5. Do you recommend any resources to practice language?

Practice with your spouse (boy-girl friend), your kids, and/or your caretaker. I have a long list of exercises I do every day, as your long-term health is important to language. I am also a member of several aphasia groups and each has its benefits. Aphasia is really tough on your psyche, it's demoralizing, and it's isolating. The camaraderie I feel when I attend keeps me coming back. I don't know what I am going to do when the pandemic is over. Every time you can talk...do it! One thing to leave you with is a quote by a “famous” person, “Therapy helps me to speak, to use my arm, and to take steps. I cannot speak eloquently, I cannot throw a ball, and I cannot run... BUT, I WILL!” - James Bardunias.

# RESOURCES FOR PEOPLE WITH APHASIA AND CAREGIVERS

1.) [Lingraphica's TalkPath Therapy](#) is a free app that provides daily speech, language, and cognitive practice to those with aphasia.

Available for free on the Apple and Android App Store



2.) [Lingraphica's TalkPath News](#) is a free app that puts current news into aphasia friendly language. These news articles can be read aloud and highlighted. Test your reading comprehension at the end of each article with a quiz, as well!

Available for free on the Apple and Android App Store



3.) [Lingraphica's Caregiver Support Group Finder](#) provides a great community for caregivers. If you're struggling to communicate or feeling overwhelmed by the number of responsibilities that have fallen onto you, consider joining a support group. Aphasia doesn't just affect that one person. It touches the lives of everyone around them. You are not alone.



4.) [The Faces of Aphasia Blog](#) was written by and for people with aphasia and their caregivers. Read to learn about their experiences and strategies for coping with the new lives they now live.

Communicate with fellow blog readers in the comments section or submit your own story!



# IN MEMORY OF OUR FRIENDS

BY, JENNIFER MOZEIKO

These past few years have been difficult, and we have lost some long-time members of our groups. Many of you became friends with these individuals and I know you will miss them as much as I will.

**Matt Palmer** had been part of our aphasia groups for nearly twenty years. He had very few words to work with but managed to communicate well by drawing and gesturing. His catch phrase was, "Smile, you can do it!", inspiring group members and students with his positivity and determination. Matt took part in several aphasia treatment studies at UConn, he loved NASCAR, and was a huge fan of the UConn Women's Basketball team.



**Bill Curtin**, a retired UConn English professor was a consistent participant in the aphasia book club. Dr. Curtin usually was reading several other books at the same time. His contributions elevated our discussions.

We will remember **Richard "Dick" Marshall** best for his laugh. When he was a part of the group it was always a celebration. Dick was also an artist, making frames out of reclaimed wood. It was when he spoke of his family, his children and his grandchildren, and times at the beach that his eyes really shone. We are certain that they are missing him terribly. His family asked for donations to Aphasia Programming at UConn in lieu of flowers in memorial. We are so grateful for this sponsorship that will fund events and technology for individuals who need help with financing.



# RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH, LANGUAGE, AND HEARING SCIENCES

## Language and Cognitive Disorders

Starting this summer: PhD student, Amanda Wadams, is conducting a **treatment study** to improve language in people **with aphasia**. We are tweaking a language treatment we know works to see if there is a greater improvement on conversational skills. Participation in the study will help speech therapists provide better treatment for people with aphasia. This is also an opportunity to receive FREE treatment! If you are interested, contact **Amanda Wadams** by phone at **(908) 448-6740** or by email at **amanda.wadams@uconn.edu**. (UConn IRB Protocol H10-124 Approved February 24, 2022)

## Analyzing Communication Environments

In the Aphasia Rehab Lab, we are doing a study testing the use of small recording devices to better understand the communication environment of people **with and without aphasia**. The device automatically counts the number of words used and how many communicative exchanges you made with others. We can send you the devices by mail and we provide a stamped envelope for easy return as well. Need to live with just one other person and cannot have any neurological deficits (like Alzheimer's or Parkinson's). If you are interested please email us for more information: **aphasia@uconn.edu**. Volunteers will be paid \$85 upon completion of the study. (UConn IRB Protocol H10-124 Approved February 24, 2022)

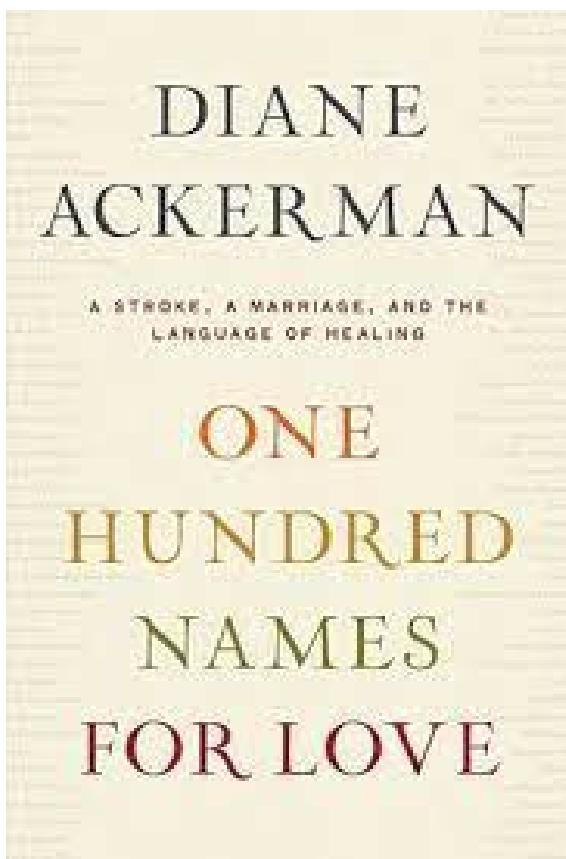
## Language and Brain Lab

At the Language and Brain Lab, we are currently studying how the right and left hemispheres of the brain work together to understand language. We hope our results will help us understand how to best help people with language recovery after stroke. We so appreciate all our research participants—they are our partners in science!

We are looking for adults **with and without aphasia** who are interested in participating in our research! If you are eligible for our studies, you may complete research sessions in our lab at UConn Storrs. These sessions may include a hearing test, paper and pencil assessments, and listening tasks on the computer. For participants without aphasia, sessions may also involve MRI scans and transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS), a non-invasive brain stimulation technique.

Studies pay \$15-30 per hour. For more information about the studies we are recruiting for right now, please call our lab at **860-486-0931**, email us at **uconnmyerslab@gmail.com**, or visit our website at **<http://myerslab.uconn.edu>** to fill out a brief survey.

**GIVE THIS BOOK A READ!**



"This book has done what no other has for me in recent years: it has renewed my faith in the redemptive power of love, the need to give and get it unstintingly, to hold nothing back, settle for nothing less, because when flesh and being and even life fall away, love endures. This book is proof." — Abraham Verghese, New York Times Book Review