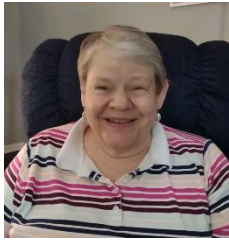


Follow the Fellows

Patti Peters, M.Ed., M.P.S., CCC-SLP



Members of the SHAV Honors Committee have created this column to introduce our membership to persons who have been instrumental in the profession and Association over the years. In this article, we highlight the career of Patti Peters, M.Ed., M.P.S., CCC-SLP, who received the honor of Fellow in 2002.

Patti started undergraduate studies at Mary Washington College (University of Mary Washington) in 1972 in a co-op program with the University of Virginia (UVA), but fully transferred to UVA after two years. She received her B.S. and M.Ed. degrees in Education – Speech-Language Pathology from UVA in 1976 and 1977, respectively. She also has a Masters of Pastoral Studies from Loyola University of New Orleans (2000). Patti began her career just days after graduation at Roanoke Valley Speech and Hearing Center (1977-1982). It was here that she learned the “importance of the person. Perfect first job in that it set my priorities straight, with tons of new experiences and support.” She worked at Rehabilitation Services of Roanoke, Inc. from 1982-1994, and after almost 13 years, she opened her private practice “primarily to have a place to complete two books [she] was working on – a HELP book and *The Source for Laryngectomy* (with Dr. Bill Dichtel, a local Laryngologist). As part of her private practice, Patti worked a flex time position in the trauma and rehab units for Carilion Health System (1995-1997). Over her career, she gained experience in the treatment of communication disorders from infants to geriatrics in a community speech and hearing clinic, a private outpatient rehabilitation clinic, and in a Level 1 acute and trauma center and rehabilitation hospital. Patti continues to run her private practice, and it has expanded to include being a Medical Advisor for the Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitation Services, Disability Determination Services. In this role, Patti reviews speech and language claims for children and adults for the Commonwealth of Virginia. She reviews communication evidence in coordination with reviewing psychologists and medical consultants. Patti is one of two SLP’s doing this work in Virginia, and at times, she and her counterpart are asked to assist other states catch up on their claims. She has filled this role since 1999. Patti admits to surprising herself that she is still doing this work after 44 years. She has also served as adjunct professor at Radford University, supervising graduate students, and presenting isolated lectures over the years. She has lectured at Longwood University and James Madison University. At Longwood, she co-taught a class on a voice book that was in development.

It is noteworthy that Patti got her Masters of Pastoral Studies in 2000, not to leave the profession of speech-language pathology, but “to help in her SLP world with end of life and ethical issues.” In one instance, her pastoral degree informed her communication with ASHA about the

consequences of maintaining absolute confidentiality that could lead to negative health outcomes for the healthcare provider. The ASHA Code of Ethics ultimately changed to include verbiage for protecting our professional community.

One of the reasons Patti started her private practice was to have the flexibility to write books. She is the published co-author of the very popular HELP series of handbooks designed to aid in the remediation of speech-language, cognitive, word finding, and auditory processing disorders. HELP Volumes 1 and 2 were published in 1980, and were followed by HELP 4, HELP 5, HELP Elementary, HELP for Word Finding, and HELP for Auditory Processing.



Therapists of a certain age are sure to have dog-eared and tattered copies of several or all the handbooks from the HELP series (see photo evidence!) as they were (and still are) a valuable resource in treatment sessions. It's not surprising that the HELP series is still in print and selling after 43 years. Games and cards were added to the HELP series, but they were eventually discontinued. As previously stated, in 1995, Patti also co-authored the book, *The Source for Laryngectomy*.

In 1994, Patti was presented the Martha Mullins-Callender award, which is given by the Communication Disorders Foundation of Virginia (CDF) to individuals who set an example for quality in the profession. Then, in 1998, she was the recipient of the DiCarlo Award for excellence in clinical achievement for the Commonwealth of Virginia. The award was given based on Patti "promoting and demonstrating great understanding of the issues and options facing laryngectomy patients and those serving to rehabilitate them, and for her book, journal articles, and oral presentations recognizing the importance of combining collaboration, compassion, advocacy, and mentoring with effective clinical procedures in the rehabilitation of the laryngectomy patient." Patti served on the SHAV Board first from 1994-1996 as Secretary. She then served as VP for Member Services from 2000-2002. In 2000, Patti was named a Friend of the Foundation of the CDF. She became a CDF Member of the Board of Trustees of the CDF in 2014 and served until 2018. Patti's husband, Phil, who is well-known by SHAV members for his conference attendance and CDF work, also became a Friend of the Foundation in 2018. Patti says that SHAV and her profession have always been a family affair. Besides Phil's attendance, her children, Sarah and Brian, grew up attending the SHAV conference most years. She says, "I can still hear them yelling at me at the auction not to buy this or that, but invariably I would come back to the room with a ton of stuff!"

Patti became a SHAV Fellow in 2002. Her award was based on her service on the Executive Board, her multiple presentations at annual conferences, her advocacy for laryngectomy patients, and the books she had co-authored. If you have ever attended one of Patti's SHAV presentations,

you would have encountered a very relaxed atmosphere, and a fun and interactive learning environment. Patti recalled there were some annual conferences in which she often presented two and sometimes three sessions on various topics. Her “passion was clinical practice, and how academic knowledge and research converted to everyday therapy. So [she] began to share what worked for [her] in [her] therapy sessions.” She noted, “presenting at SHAV was so energizing for me – sharing things I has learned or had tried, hoping that it might be beneficial to others. I tried to make my sessions down to earth, with some fun mixed in!” When asked what she is most proud of in her career, Patti stated that she has maintained the same passion for the profession that she had when she graduated. “I feel like I meet people where they are, and find out where they want to go. I help shape them if they are unrealistic” in their goals. Patti feels patient and peer contact over the years have made her a better person, and for that, she is grateful. Having happiness in her life, faith, and a grateful heart were recurring themes in Patti’s life and conversation. She finds great satisfaction in our profession as well. “Communication is such a basic thing, and speech pathologists and audiologists help people connect to their world.” Our profession; “it’s a people thing.” Patti looks for the positive and the humor in all situations.

Patti stopped taking new in-office clients when Phil retired in January 2020, however, she continues to stay quite busy as a Medical Advisor for the Virginia Dept. of Aging Rehabilitation Services. When not working on a disability case, she “spends her time irritating Phil,” the love of her life, whom she admits she “chased until he caught her!” She also has her first grandchild, Lincoln, and her grand dog, Riley, to spoil.

All Patti wanted in her career was to “practice our profession the way [she] felt it should be practiced. I wanted our profession to be fun, and it is fun. I had to find humor in situations.” Besides being fun, she wanted to be kind. Patti stated, “It was important to me to help my clients, and to support them in whatever they needed to improve or establish communication.” Her goal was not to become rich, but to enrich the lives of others. In classic Patti humor she added, “It has been amazing to have a profession where people actually PAY me to run my mouth! Doesn’t get any better than that!” She concluded with, “I look back over my career and the people I’ve met, and it’s such a gift.” Patti lives a joyful life of faith, gratitude, kindness, and humor. “Life,” she said, “has been a real adventure.”

C. Edward Vann
Chair, Honors Committee/Historian