On September 22, 2016, 70 people gathered to celebrate AHRF’s rich history of supporting research that examines how we hear, why we lose hearing, and how it might be restored. The organization’s 60th Anniversary event took place at the International Museum of Surgical Science on Chicago’s Lake Shore Drive, just miles from Northwestern University and its School of Medicine to which our founders were affiliated. To entertain guests, an original film was shown that documented an otosclerosis surgery, a fenestration operation, and a surgical procedure called stapedectomy performed by AHRF founder, Dr. George Shambaugh. Dr. Shambaugh’s son, David Shambaugh, was an honored guest; he recounted some of the history of AHRF and his family’s relationship to it. Attendees included AHRF board and research committee members, invited guests, local audiologists and otolaryngologists as well as key donors. Speakers included Chairman Richard Muench, Research Committee Chairman Dr. Alan Micco, and longtime Executive Director Bill Lederer who is now a board member.

Remarks from Honored Guest David Shambaugh

David Shambaugh, son of AHRF founders Dr. and Mrs. George E. Shambaugh, Jr., was an honored guest at the 60th Anniversary event. He commented on AHRF’s beginnings, and offered an inspiring challenge for future researchers. Shambaugh is Professor of Political Science and International Affairs, and founding Director of the China Policy Program in the Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University. Below are excerpts:

“My father and mother would be most pleased and proud of what the AHRF has grown into from its origins in 1956 as the Mid-West Hearing Foundation (by the way, my mother was very instrumental in getting the foundation off the ground, fundraising, and conceived and produced the 1976 documentary “Deafness: the Invisible Divider” which aired across the country on public television.)” (Continued on the next page)
Shambaugh Remarks (Continued)

Of course, I also wish to recall the instrumental roles of Drs. Gene Derlacki, Wiley Harrison and Jack Clemis. Also critical to recognize was the leadership given by Bill Lederer as Executive Director.

“As a young boy in the 1950s-60s, I remember my father going from our home—first in Hinsdale and then 75 miles out in Sandwich—back into the city on Saturdays and even Sundays to what he described as the ‘tissue culture lab.’ When he came home, I asked him what he had been doing. ‘I was playing with monkeys,’ he replied! It’s where he dissected the inner ears of monkeys and made much progress on diagnosing and treating otosclerosis, otospongiosis, and repairing nerves in the inner ear. Later, in the 1970s, he used the lab to explore the linkage between food allergies and hearing loss. It was also then and there that he became convinced that if the nutrient zinc could be useful to strengthening the optic nerve, it could similarly strengthen nerves in the inner ear—thus helping to treat Meniere’s Disease.

“As some of you may recall, he thus became a great advocate that everyone should take large doses of zinc! As so often in his medical career, the ‘Establishment’ saw him as a maverick, a kook, and refused to support his findings and advocacy. But—as with the stapedectomy, fenestration operation, and discovering the linkages between food allergies and hearing loss—he soldiered on and ultimately was proven correct.

“What some people call a maverick or a ‘kook,’ others would recognize as being ‘before their time.’ It is this pioneering and independent spirit that he felt was critical in science, in medicine, and in life more generally. Only those willing to take risks, challenge the conventional wisdom, and follow hunches (albeit validated through empirical research and testing) will become leaders in their fields.

“My father is no longer with us—having passed away at the age of 96 in 1999 (and seeing patients until two months beforehand!)—but I know this is what he would have said tonight as encouragement to the Foundation and its grant recipients.”

Looking Ahead

The Foundation’s Research Committee met in October, 2016, to review grant applications. Based on the Committee’s recommendations, the American Hearing Research Foundation will award eight grants in 2017 for a total of $201,000. Grantees have been notified, and you can watch our website (and the next newsletter issue) for summaries of their projects. Topics include vestibular migraines, cochlear implants, and noise-induced inner ear hair cell loss.
AHRF Cited on the Today Show

In his November 21, 2016, “Rossin Report” the Today Show’s Jeff Rossin reported that “movies in some theaters may be loud enough to damage your hearing.”

He added, “According to the American Research Hearing Foundation, movies among other common noises can contribute to premature hearing reduction.” Rossin interviewed audiologist Kit Frank from NYU Langone Medical Center, who stated, “If you’re over 100 [decibels] for minutes at a time, you could be in that range where you’re reaching the state of permanent hearing reduction.”

A Viewer’s Response. Jennifer Holcombe wrote to the Foundation about a related concern. “My thoughts are in reference to unsafe ‘sound levels’ not in movie theaters but in daycare and preschools. Currently there is no sound level criteria for safe levels around babies and small children. I found that in a room for one-year-olds… the music was blasted; the staff said it was because they didn’t want outside noises to wake the children. I measured decibels spiking into the 90’s on a regular basis and told them so to no avail. Directors, teachers, staff and parents all need to download a free decibel app and be a good steward and check sound levels at these care centers. This needs to become part of our standard care nationally.”

More about Noise Induced Hearing Loss

Noise induced hearing loss is a permanent hearing impairment resulting from prolonged exposure to high levels of noise. One in 10 Americans has a hearing loss that affects his or her ability to understand normal speech. Excessive noise exposure is the most common cause of hearing loss. The “noise” that causes noise induced hearing loss depends on intensity (measured in decibels), and duration (how long you’re exposed to it).

Noisy work places with habitual exposure to noise over 85 decibels will cause a gradual hearing loss in a significant number of individuals, and louder noises will accelerate this damage. Non-occupational noises also can be a source of premature hearing reduction. The following peak noise decibel levels have been reported: firecracker – 180, gunshot – 167, sporting events – 127, video arcade – 110.

People differ in their sensitivity to noise. As a general rule, noise may damage your hearing if you have to shout over background noise to make yourself heard, the noise hurts your ears, it makes your ears ring, or you are slightly deaf for several hours after exposure to the noise.

For more on noise induced hearing loss, visit our website: http://american-hearing.org/disorders/noise-induced-hearing-loss/
Better Hearing Through Research

60th Anniversary Celebration

Bill Lederer, Richard Muench, Aldo Cecchin

Dr. Alan Micco

Katie Mertz and family

David Klodd and his lovely wife

Guest enjoying the 60th Anniversary event

Marvin Keeling, George Shambaugh, Larry Hable
The General Fund

Please consider making a donation so that hearing and balance disorder research can continue to be funded next year, and in years to come. Perhaps you’d like to honor someone close to you in a way that improves the lives of approximately 48 million Americans. We’ll be sure to recognize your gift.

You can donate online at http://american-hearing.org, or send a check payable to American Hearing Research Foundation in the enclosed envelope. If you make an honorary or memorial donation, be sure to fill out the section if someone should be notified.

Planned Giving

When you remember the AHRF in your will, you become part of a special group of supporters whose generosity has made possible some of the most innovative and cutting edge research projects. You can choose a specific dollar amount or a percentage of your estate.

Perhaps you would like to add AHRF as a beneficiary to a life insurance policy or retirement plan payout. That can be as simple as completing a new beneficiary form.

The plans you make today help define your legacy and ensure that your wishes are carried out.

Employee Giving Programs

The American Hearing Research Foundation is a designated charity for the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) – recognized as the largest workplace giving campaign in the world that raises more than $265 million each year – and Community Health Charities (CHC) which annually distributes more than $60 million of all public sector contributions, making it one of the campaign’s largest partners. If you’d like your employer to participate in this employee giving program, call AHRF at 630-617-5079, and we’ll help you get connected.

Shop Online and Amazon Gives

AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support AHRF every time you shop online, at no cost to you. When you shop at smile.amazon.com, Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to your favorite charitable organization.

Simply visit smile.amazon.com and select American Hearing Research Foundation (or another charity of your choice). Then when you shop on AmazonSmile, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to the charity of your choice.
run because

Through her nonprofit organization, run because, Katie Mertz is continuing the partnership she began in 2014 with The American Hearing Research Foundation, to raise support and awareness for Meniere’s disease. She’s committed to doing this one half marathon at a time, one in each state plus Washington, D.C., with 100% of the donations raised going to research for the disease.

Meniere’s is a disorder of the inner ear that affects hearing and balance and causes vertigo, tinnitus, and hearing loss. It is unpredictable and difficult to diagnose and manage. Meniere’s is also progressive. Unfortunately, the cause of Meniere’s disease is currently unknown—as is a possible cure.

While training for her first half marathon, Katie saw her mother’s life affected by worsening episodes of Meniere’s disease. “I saw the effects firsthand as she constantly feared the next episode.” That’s why Katie was inspired to create run because.

Katie finished 2016 with Race #15 in Hartford, Connecticut. To date, Katie has raised over $20,000 for Meniere’s research.

Will you support Katie and help find a cure for Meniere’s disease? Please visit http://runbecause51x50.wixsite.com/runbecause. Keep up with Katie’s progress by visiting her Facebook page at www.Facebook.com/runbecause.
Thank You to Our Donors

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- Alan and Joyce Micco

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- Geneva Harper’s Estate
- Lottie Drazin Revocable Trust
- Marylou Soelter’s Estate

Giving to the General Fund
General Funds sustain the core programs central to the Foundation’s mission. Donations to the General Fund also can be restricted to use for research into certain areas such as Meniere’s disease. There are several levels from which to choose:

- Chairman’s Circle $5,000 and above
- Research Champion $1,000 to $4,999
- Research Supporter $100 to $999
- Friends of the Foundation $99 or under

*This list reflects donations received from August 1, 2016 through December 7, 2016. These designations are based on the 2016 calendar year.

The Foundation also appreciates the support of the following organizations:

Cardinal Health Foundation
Community Health Charities

Network for Good
Tix4Cause

Executive Director Joan Wincentsen

November, 2016, the Foundation’s Board of Directors voted in Joan Wincentsen as AHRF’s Executive Director. Joan comes to AHRF with a wealth of nonprofit management experience. She noted, “I’ve seen how hearing loss can isolate individuals and affect their careers. I’m very excited to be a part of the Foundation’s mission to fund research that will make life easier for those with hearing and balance problems.” Joan can be reached directly at Joan@American-Hearing.org or (630) 617-5079.

Thank you to our Research Committee!

Chair Alan G. Micco, M.D.
Sumit Dhar, Ph.D.
Jill B. Firszt, Ph.D.

David A. Klodd, Ph.D
Nina Kraus, Ph.D.
Anna Lysakowski, Ph.D.

Christina Runge, Ph.D., CCC-A
Katherine Shim, Ph.D.