



**AMERICAN  
HEARING**

**RESEARCH  
FOUNDATION**

Making new discoveries possible for more than 60 years

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AHRF funds novel research to better understand and overcome hearing and balance disorders of the inner ear

The thing about human ingenuity is that you don't know where that next great idea will come from—who the next big thinker will be. Our ambition at the American Hearing Research Foundation is to make that next transformative discovery possible.

# About AHRF

- ▶ At the American Hearing Research Foundation (AHRF), we recognize the boundless potential of new ideas. That's why we focus our resources on providing seed grants for novel research to better understand and overcome hearing and balance disorders of the inner ear, funding five to ten research projects each year, with an average grant of \$20,000. We also work hard to educate the public about these life-altering conditions, which are inextricably linked to people's quality of life and their ability to meet the challenges of day-to-day living.
- ▶ Tracing our roots back to the first-ever successful operation to restore hearing, AHRF has been making new discoveries possible for more than 60 years. Founded in 1956 by Dr. George E. Shaumbaugh, Jr., our mission is to better understand why we lose hearing and balance functions and to learn all that we can about how to preserve and restore them.

# An enduring legacy

- ▶ Advancing research and knowledge to help people with hearing loss and balance disorders was the life's work of Dr. George E. Shaumbaugh, Jr. (1903-1999). The American Hearing Research Foundation is his legacy.
- ▶ In 1938, Shaumbaugh was instrumental in developing and performing a groundbreaking surgical technique called fenestration. Together with Dr. Julius Lempert (1890-1968), Shaumbaugh performed the first-ever successful operation to restore hearing, using this technique.
- ▶ Fenestration restored hearing specifically to people with otosclerosis—a condition that leads to hearing loss when spongy bone grows in the middle ear, ultimately preventing the small bone known as the stapes from vibrating. The stapes must vibrate for hearing to be possible.
- ▶ Fenestration led the way to more advanced techniques. Today, fenestration has been replaced by another class of procedures known as stapedectomies, which remove the damaged stapes bone and implant an artificial one. Once again, researchers associated with AHRF were instrumental in the development of these leading-edge procedures.

# AHRF in the making

- ▶ AHRF exists thanks to the generous donations from individuals and organizations who understand the tremendous impact that loss of hearing and balance function has on people's lives.
- ▶ In 1940, the Chicago Community Trust provided a \$10,000 grant to build and equip a laboratory at Wesley Memorial Hospital in Chicago. Later, in 1942, grants from the John and Mary R. Markle Foundation of New York kept the lab going and helped establish a temporal bone histopathology laboratory. The temporal bone is part of the skull that encloses the hearing and balance systems within the inner ear.
- ▶ More gifts, given in 1944 from grateful patients of Dr. Shaumbaugh and Dr. Eugene L. Derlacki, a prominent otolaryngologist and a co-founder of AHRF, helped them build and equip a hearing clinic at Northwestern University Medical School. This was the first clinic of its kind and proved to be the genesis of many pioneering diagnostic procedures.
- ▶ The establishment of that hearing clinic at Northwestern paved the way for the creation of the Mid West Hearing Foundation in 1956—which later became known as the American Hearing Research Foundation.
- ▶ Since those early years, AHRF has broadened its geographic scope and impact. We invite you to learn more about our 60-plus year history and accomplishments by viewing our historical timeline on our website.

# Richard G. Muench - Chairman



*“The work of AHRF is as vital today as ever. More people are struggling with hearing loss and balance disorders. And studies continue to uncover a connection between hearing loss and other serious health concerns.”*

Richard G. Muench brings seasoned expertise in finance and investment to his leadership role as Chairman of the Board of AHRF. His judicious, strategic approach to financial management, along with his proven track record in helping organizations grow and thrive, make him an invaluable asset to the foundation. Muench’s portfolio of expertise is built on years of experience in investment banking, commercial bank operations, and in the investment department of a major insurance group.

# Alan G. Micco, MD - President



*“Every time we see that AHRF-funded research was directly related to positive advancements in the understanding and treatment of hearing and balance disorders, we’re reminded of just how important our work at AHRF is.”*

A practicing surgeon-educator and leading expert in otolaryngology and neurotology, Alan G. Micco, MD, brings extensive medical knowledge and clinical experience to his roles as President of the AHRF Board and Chairman of the Research Committee. Micco is on staff at Northwestern Memorial Hospital (NMH). He also is a Professor in the departments of Otolaryngology, Neurological Surgery, and Medical Education at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, where he heads the section of Otology and Neurotology. In addition, Micco is the residency program director in the Otolaryngology Department and a Fellow of the Hugh Knowles Center.

# Mark R. Muench - Vice President



*“Over the 20-odd years I’ve served on the AHRF Board, I’ve been astounded by the technological advancements we’ve seen in the medical community’s ability to treat hearing loss and other disorders of the inner ear. But there’s still a very long way to go. And I genuinely believe that AHRF continues to have a vital role to play in advancing research so we can better help people affected by these all-too-often life-altering conditions.”*

Mark R. Muench brings apt business experience and acumen to his role as Vice President of the AHRF Board. For more than 35 years, he has been involved in the business and information technology sides of delivering quality healthcare to consumers in an evolving marketplace with shifting healthcare delivery models. Currently, he is a Vice President at Cerner Corporation, the leading U.S. supplier of healthcare information technology solutions and services. Prior to joining Cerner, he was an Associate Partner at Andersen Consulting (now Accenture). Muench holds his MBA in Finance and Financial Management Services from the University of Illinois and his BS from the University of Notre Dame.

# David J. Wuertz, CFA - Treasurer



*“Every year, AHRF funds more than \$200,000 in early-stage research grants. On a grand financial scale, that may not sound like a lot. But in terms of hope and the potential for bringing us closer to breakthrough discoveries to help people with hearing and balance disorders, the possibilities are countless.”*

David J. Wuertz serves as Treasurer of the AHRF Board, bringing to the position more than 25 years' experience in developing investment strategies and financial plans for a wide range of clients. He has successfully built, analyzed, and managed investment portfolios for dozens of not-for-profits, corporations, trusts, and individuals. Credentialed by the CFA Institute as a Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA), Wuertz holds an MBA in Finance from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University and a BA in Philosophy from the University of Notre Dame . Currently a Vice President and Investment Officer at Associated Bank, a top-50 publicly traded U.S. bank holding company, Wuertz also has worked in financial planning at the Feldman Securities Group and Northern Trust Global Investments.

# Lawrence A. Hable - Secretary



*"I've spent the last five decades working with people who feel the profound effects of hearing loss on their lives. By providing grants to early-stage researchers determined to better understand why we lose our hearing and discover ways to restore it, AHRF is making a much-needed investment in the well-being of future generations."*

Lawrence A. Hable's extensive career working with people with hearing loss enables him to bring an important perspective and empathy to his role as AHRF Board Secretary. A Certified Hearing Aid Dispenser, Hable currently is General Manager for Sonus in Chicago. In addition, he mentors others preparing to enter the field in his role as Co-Supervisor for graduate students in Audiology at Northwestern University. He also is an Adjunct Instructor in the Marketing Department at Triton College in River Grove and Evanston, Illinois. Hable is a member of the National Hearing Aid Society and the Illinois Hearing Aid Society. He frequently lectures and consults on hearing-related topics.

# Joan Wincentsen - Director



*“AHRF honors its time-tested legacy of fueling hope and determination in the advancement of scientific knowledge to overcome hearing and balance disorders of the inner ear. The need to better understand and address these conditions has not gone away. And our commitment to the cause remains steadfast.”*

Joan Wincentsen brings tremendous determination to her role as Executive Director of AHRF. She recognizes the meaningful contributions the Foundation has made over the last 60-plus years and is driven to help AHRF build on that heritage. Wincentsen has more than a decade's worth of experience in nonprofit management and administration through her work with the association management firm, Apex Management & Special Events, Inc.

Earlier in her career, Wincentsen worked for 20 years in communication project management—including time as a communications consultant with the compensation and benefits consulting firm, Hewitt Associates—and as a freelance writer. Her well-honed skills in fundraising, budget management, program development, and marketing all are great contributors to the strength and success of AHRF and its mission. A lifelong Illinoisan, Joan earned her MA from Northwestern University in English and her BA in Mathematics and English Literature from the University of St. Francis.



Grants we  
offer:

AHRF  
Discovery  
Grants

**About the grant**

- AHRF typically funds five to six Discovery Grants for studies that investigate various aspects of hearing and balance disorders related to the inner ear. Grants may be up to \$50,000 for one year of research. Priority is given to investigators early in their careers who need seed funds to generate results and data that can be used to support applications for larger grants (i.e., NIH grants) in the future. Special consideration is given to studies that address Meniere's disease or the causes of sudden hearing loss.

**Research topics**

- Proposals should relate to the hearing or balance functions of the ear. Both basic and clinical studies may be proposed that investigate aspects of the auditory and vestibular systems, including but not limited to genetics, neurotology, anatomy, auditory processing, molecular and cellular biology, therapeutic studies, and investigations of current or experimental devices (i.e., cochlear implants).

Grants we  
offer:

Georgia  
Birtman  
Grant

### About the grant

- Periodically, AHRF gives one special grant, named after Georgia Birtman, a Chicago school teacher who generously donated \$2.1 million to AHRF in 1991. This grant is not given every year. In the years in which it is given, a top-scoring Discovery Grant applicant is invited to apply for an additional \$25,000, bringing the total grant award to \$75,000.

Grants we  
offer:

Bernard  
and Lottie  
Drazin  
Memorial  
Grants

#### About the grant

- AHRF offers up to five \$1,000 awards to otolaryngology residents to support research projects during their residency. To be eligible, residents must be from the Chicago programs (Northwestern, Loyola, University of Illinois, University of Chicago, and Rush) or schools represented by members of our Board or Research Committee (Washington University, St. Louis, MO; University of Miami, FL; or Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, TX).

Your gift to AHRF fuels hope for new discoveries and cures. No amount is too small. Every dollar you give helps fund scientific research at universities and hospitals throughout the United States to better understand and overcome hearing and balance disorders of the inner ear—conditions that affect millions of Americans. We deeply appreciate your giving. It makes progress possible.



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