



## ***MESSAGE FROM THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR***

This year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Virginia Lion's Hearing Foundation. The foundation was established in conjunction with the University of Virginia Health System and the Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery. The purpose of this collaboration was to foster and support programs to address hearing loss and treatments for hearing loss. Needless to say, the foundation has been successful in this endeavor on many fronts. The mission of the foundation covers education, research, medical care, and outreach programs.

Current and former members of the foundation, and indeed, Lion members throughout the commonwealth of Virginia, should be proud of the Foundation. The foundation has supported a noise-awareness education program for grade-school children, and foundation volunteers have spent countless hours in the preparation and delivery of presentations in elementary schools throughout the commonwealth. Other educational success stories include support of the VLHF Temporal Bone Dissection Lab at the University of Virginia. In this teaching facility, physicians who treat ear problems have received instruction on ear surgical procedures. These physicians have been able to learn new surgical procedures or refine their surgical skills in a laboratory setting, and this translates to better outcomes for the patients of these physicians.

Support from the foundation has fostered continued research in hearing disorders. Dr. Jeffery Corwin has been investigating the possibility of recovering or regenerating the hearing organ in the inner ear. Laboratory equipment for his lab has been purchased by the VLHF. He has also had students working and learning in his lab, supported by a special educational fellowship program through the foundation. Dr. Roger Ruth has had support from the VLHF, as well as the LCIF, on investigations of noise-related hearing loss in patients being treated in intensive-care units of the hospital. Research on hearing loss related to bacterial meningitis has been investigated in an animal model, and this project has received support from the VLHF as well. In all of these research projects, national presentations and publications have indicated the tremendous support from the VLHF.

Care of patients with hearing disorders has also been assisted by the VLHF and Lions Clubs throughout the commonwealth. Individual Lions Clubs have contributed directly for the provision of hearing aids to needy individuals. In this special program, patients are able to obtain a high quality hearing aid that they might not otherwise be able to afford. Also, the Cochlear Implant Program at the University of Virginia has received support from the VLHF for several years. A cochlear implant is an electrical device that is placed into a patient's hearing organ and the cochlear implant is often able restore the ability to "hear" sound in patients who are otherwise very hard of hearing. Because of the high cost of a single cochlear implant, the VLHF is not able to purchase a cochlear implant for a needy individual, but the VLHF is able to provide salary support for the Cochlear Implant Program. This enables the Cochlear Implant Program to provide rehabilitation services to deaf or hard of hearing patients who are able to receive a cochlear implant.

The VLHF has supported programs that reach across the commonwealth and even beyond. The RAM project in Wise County, Virginia, has been supported by Lions Clubs and the VLHF for several years. The services provided by the Lions' Sight and Hearing Vans, volunteers, and medical personnel have increased in scope and volume since the project was initiated. Additionally, the VLHF has supported, in a small but meaningful way, Project Ear, a charitable program providing ear care for needy patients in the Dominican Republic. This project allows direct medical care from volunteer physicians from the University of Virginia to patients in the Dominican Republic, but more importantly is directed towards the education and training of Dominican Republic physicians to provide quality medical care for ear and hearing problems on an independent basis.

I am very proud of the Virginia Lions Hearing Foundation, and look forward to the next 25 years of productive collaboration. I cannot thank enough the individual Lions who have supported the foundation over the years. It is truly a worthwhile endeavor.

George T. Hashisaki, MD  
Medical Director  
VLHF