

Health Care Hero Volunteer Organization - CHEAR

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In 1999, Dr. Barry Strasnick, professor and chairman of the department of Otolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery at Eastern Virginia Medical School, and Congressman Randy Forbes, R-Chesapeake, authored legislation that mandated that newborns be tested for hearing before they leave the hospital.

This legislation led to the founding of the nonprofit organization CHEAR - the Coalition for Hearing Education and Research - for children and adults, whose mission is to "foster and provide support for all necessary resources so that all citizens of Hampton Roads can obtain comprehensive and high-quality services for disorders of the ear, hearing and balance systems regardless of age, race or socioeconomic situation."

"Our goal is to try and enhance the education and social and development opportunities for all people affected with hearing and balance disorders," Strasnick said.

CHEAR is working with EVMS and Old Dominion University and partnering with community agencies such as the Lions Club and Kiwanis to provide additional resources in the community.

"Some of our accomplishments are the development of a preschool for hearing-impaired children on the campus of ODU, last year," Strasnick said.

The organization services children and adults through EVMS. Services include diagnosis of hearing and balance loss, treating with hearing aids, cochlear implants or surgical intervention as necessary.

CHEAR's next focus is to raise funds at an event on Feb. 27 at the Norfolk Waterside Marriott and to work on new projects.

"First, to enhance the clinical and diagnostic capabilities at EVMS," Strasnick said. "Second, to develop a mobile hearing van that will go to various schools and nursing homes to screen for hearing loss and balance disorders. Third, to develop a donor hearing aid bank. And the fourth program is to enhance the preschool at ODU.

"We're still a young fledging organization," he said. "Hopefully this will give us the opportunity to raise public awareness and to eradicate and remove this disease." nib

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