

# <sup>4</sup>HearingLoss

News and reviews

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July 10, 2005

## 'Gift of sound' feted by Baystate

Some four dozen people, thankful hearing-loss patients and their families, celebrated "the gift of sound" at the second annual reunion of cochlear implant patients yesterday at Baystate Medical Center's Chestnut Conference Center.



"(It's) a social event for my patients who have received cochlear implants and their family members," said Dr. Theodore P. Mason of Ear, Nose and Throat Associates of Springfield, who performed the first cochlear implant at Baystate in April 2003.

Until then, the surgical procedure was available only to those patients willing to travel to Boston or Worcester.

The cochlear implant involves an array of electrodes surgically placed along the length of the snail-shell-shaped cochlea in the inner ear, with wires connecting them to a small electronic device implanted under the skin behind ear.

An external unit that includes a microphone, speech processor and transmitter beams control signals to the implant. The implanted receiver/stimulator converts signals from the speech processor into electrical impulses and delivers them to the electrodes.

"I am very pleased that we have this opportunity and that the program is growing," Mason said of the reunion.

"We have children and adults - we have all ages. We've implanted 1-year-olds to 90-year-olds with very successful results."

Since the beginning of the program, Mason and audiologist Jeanne M. Coburn have done some 50 implants, he said.

Sally Lowell, 80, of Agawam was one of those who came yesterday to share stories and celebrate the new lease on life afforded them by cochlear implants.

"I was a director of a choir in Agawam for 29 years before I retired. And I was the first patient of Dr. Mason," Lowell said.

"It was just a wonderful experience. I was very fortunate. He is a wonderful doctor and a wonderful person. Before the operation, I had gone to the point where I couldn't hear a thing, and now music has come back to my life."

By Alex Peshkov, The Republican

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