

# IMPROVING LIFE'S CONNECTIONS *across* CAMPUS

## PRECIOUS PRESERVATION

### ASP Collaborates with School of Music on Hearing Conservation Project



Denise Descouzis, a Texas resident and UT Audiology Alumni ('78), wants to make a difference in the lives of music students. She would like to see UT take hearing conservation from a back burner to the forefront of students' education. "To understand the importance of hearing protection from a young age and having no stigma attached, would be a remarkable thing to witness in all colleges and universities, especially with music students." Ms. Descouzis recently made a donation to ASP with the goal of developing a hearing conservation program at UTK's School of Music. A team from ASP worked with Ms. Descouzis and Dr. Susan Phillips, Associate Professor of Audiology from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG). Dr. Phillips has been involved in a hearing conservation program at UNCG School of Music for several years. From these meetings, it was easy to see that a program like this could be implemented at UT. Dr. Patti Johnstone notes, "ASP already has faculty with knowledge and expertise in the field of hearing conservation in the industrial realm, so we felt confident that we could apply this expertise to create a meaningful program for a student population."

The ASP team met with Dr. Jeffrey Pappas, Director of UTK's School of Music, to implement a program that targets freshman and provides compelling messages about hearing conservation throughout their undergraduate program. Each subsequent year, a new freshman class will be added to the program. The first group of freshman received hearing screens shortly after beginning school this fall. In all, 61 students were screened, and 22 demonstrated some degree of hearing loss in at least one ear. Ninety percent of the group reported that they have been playing instruments for seven years or more and participated in marching bands and/or ensembles. Almost none reported that they used hearing protection.

A group of students from UTK's College of Architecture and Design and their professor, Sarah Lowe, have also been added to the project's team. Professor Lowe's Graphic Design students have incorporated ideas from the ASP team to produce videos on noise-induced hearing loss and tinnitus as well as a social media campaign, all with the intent of increasing awareness about the dangers of noise exposure and encouraging the use of hearing protection. Ms. Descouzis has been involved in giving feedback to the Graphic Design students. The program is an excellent example of university and community collaboration to meet the goal of improving the hearing health of students.



*"The screening data confirmed that this is a group of students who need to receive compelling messages about how to protect their hearing. As musicians, they will need to rely heavily upon their hearing for many years to come. We want to teach them now how to take care of their hearing. Ultimately, we hope to affect other music students and musicians by mirroring appropriate hearing health and precautions, taking the issue seriously." -Dr. Jeffrey Pappas*