Spring 2025 | Speech-Language Pathology Newsletter

MISERICORDIA UNIVERSITY

Articulator

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Letter FROM THE EDITORS

Emma Maley '28 and Kayla Montemarano '28

Thank you for taking the time to read Misericordia University's annual Speech-Language Pathology Department newsletter, The Articulator! We are excited to share the remarkable accomplishments of our program, faculty, alumni, and students.

The year 2025 has been filled with prestigious achievements for our department, and we are eager to highlight them in this edition. Inside, you will find updates on our chapter of the National Student Speech-Language Hearing Association (NSSLHA), groundbreaking research presented by our dedicated faculty and students at conferences, ongoing studies and clinical pursuits by our accomplished alumni, and the innovative technology being introduced and implemented in clinical settings. We also celebrate the faculty members who make a difference in students' lives every day, the dedicated students who balance both academic and athletic pursuits, and the strong community fostered within the Speech-Language Pathology Department.

It is a true honor to be part of Misericordia University's Speech-Language Pathology Department, where unwavering support from professors, mentors, students, and alumni creates an inspiring environment.

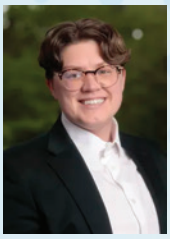


We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the undergraduate and graduate students who contributed their time and efforts in gathering information and writing articles, the professors who shared their expertise, and the entire program for continuously exceeding expectations. We hope the 2025 newsletter reflects our deep pride in Misericordia University and our department.

Thank you for your continued support and interest in our work!

Meet Misericordia's Newest Faculty Members: Kearston Healey and Melissa Alunni

By: Emma Maley '28 & Kayla Montemarano '28



Kearston Healey: A Full-Circle Journey

Kearston Healey, M.S., CCC-SLP, is no stranger to Misericordia University, having graduated in 2013 and later returning to serve as both a clinical supervisor and a professor. Their journey into speech-language pathology (SLP) was an unexpected one—initially pursuing a career in the pharmaceutical field, Kearston realized that SLP was where they truly belonged. Inspired by their aunt, a speech-language pathologist, Kearston's passion for the field grew as they saw firsthand the impact SLPs can have on individual development, both in structured therapy and through meaningful one-on-one interactions.

Kearston's path came full circle when they returned to Misericordia as a clinical supervisor and began teaching, finding deep satisfaction in guiding students to develop their skills while learning from them in return. "Seeing my students succeed in what I instructed them about was incredibly rewarding," Kearston shares. This interaction between teacher and student is what motivated Kearston to further their role as an educator.

Kearston is currently enrolled in a doctoral program at Boise State University in Educational Technology. They bring a wealth of clinical experience with them to the classroom, including work in acute care, long term care, home health, early intervention, and school-age telehealth. Kearston has treated diagnoses such as aphasia, dementia, apraxia, traumatic brain injury, and challenges in the areas of pragmatics, speech sound production and language development.

Outside the classroom, Kearston enjoys a variety of interests. They are an active member of the American Coaster Enthusiasts (ACE), where they ride, preserve, and enjoy roller coasters. Kearston also holds a green belt in Tang Soo Do and enjoys collecting records, making for a vibrant and well-rounded individual who brings much to both the SLP field and the Misericordia community.



Melissa Alunni: A Passion for Helping Others

Melissa A. Alunni, M.S., CCC-SLP, is a new full-time assistant professor and clinical supervisor at Misericordia University, with over two decades of experience in the field. Melissa's expertise spans long-term care, memory care, and rehabilitation services, focusing on cognitive communication, swallowing disorders, aphasia, and dysarthria. Her career began as a clinical instructor and grew as she moved into full-time teaching and supervising roles.

Melissa's inspiration to pursue SLP came from her mother, who encouraged her to follow her passion for helping others, despite considering other career paths like dance therapy or elementary education. Melissa's dedication to the field is evident in her 20 years of service as a licensed SLP and her collaboration with numerous faculty members on research and service projects during her time as an adjunct professor.

Known for her kindness and commitment to her students, Melissa is an invaluable asset to the Misericordia community. "The most rewarding aspect of being an SLP is the positive, often life-changing impact we can have on our patients, clients, and students," Melissa shares. Her advice for aspiring SLPs is rooted in a genuine passion for the profession: "Love what you do. Never give up. And always reflect on whether you've done all you can for your patients or students each day."

Making a Difference at Misericordia

Both Kearston and Melissa bring a wealth of knowledge, compassion, and expertise to Misericordia's SLP department. Whether through hands-on clinical supervision, research, or classroom instruction, they both focus on creating meaningful connections with students and clients alike. Their stories are a testament to the power of dedication and passion in shaping the future of the field, and we are excited to see how they continue to impact Misericordia's SLP program for years to come.

MU SLP Clinic Expands to Serve More of the Community: From PA to Belize

By: Emilia McGoldrick '27

At Misericordia University, the Speech-Language Pathology program has long been dedicated to helping those with speech, language, and cognitive challenges. Thanks to the generosity of Luzerne County's American Rescue Plan Act grant program, which provided funding for capital improvements in Passan Hall, the department has more resources than ever to extend its reach. The renovations, which have doubled the department's space from 10,000 to 20,000 square feet, not only enhance student learning but also provide more opportunities to support the community—both locally and globally.

State-of-the-Art Renovations Benefit Students and the Community

The new Speech-Language and Hearing Center features a redesigned layout with 10 fully equipped clinical rooms, each with advanced Video Audio Learning Tool (VALT) systems for real-time session analysis. This high-tech addition allows students and clinicians to review and improve their work in an interactive and detailed manner. The clinic also boasts specialized centers, including those for literacy, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), adult communication and cognitive disorders, and pediatric feeding disorders. These renovations allow treatment of a broader range of speech, language, and cognitive challenges.

Supporting Community Outreach through Research and Programming

The clinic's renovation also supports innovative community programs. The BRAIN Lab, led by Assistant Professor Chitrali Mamlekar, will continue to offer the SLP-CONNECT program for individuals with aphasia, dementia, and their caregivers. This program will now take place in a space designed to replicate real-life environments, like living rooms and kitchens, to foster more effective assistance. The addition of a caregiver-focused area will also ensure that families have a place to receive guidance and support.

"We're excited to expand our research and community outreach," says Mamlekar. "The new space has given us the opportunity to enhance our programs and involve more students in the process, which strengthens our ability to help those in need."

Kathleen Scaler Scott, a Professor in the SLP program, shared her enthusiasm about the expanded Literacy Adventures Lab. This new space will provide comprehensive reading and writing services for all ages, with special areas designed for early literacy skills, reluctant readers, and evidence-based interventions.

"We're looking forward to offering more summer literacy programs and online support for remote clients," Scott said. "The renovations have truly made it possible to grow our reach in literacy support, while providing unique experiences for our student clinicians. We are extremely grateful to our generous donors, and we couldn't be more excited about the opportunities ahead."

Global Impact: Bringing Care to Belize

While the renovations have greatly enhanced local services, the MU SLP program's impact stretches beyond Pennsylvania. In January 2025, students and faculty made their third trip to Belize to provide multidisciplinary evaluations and treatment recommendations to both children and adults. The country, which lacks speech-language pathologists, greatly benefits from the expertise offered by the MU team.

This international outreach is just one example of how the program's commitment to service extends to global communities in need. Whether it's through local community-based programs, research, or international volunteerism, the MU Speech-Language Pathology Department is making a lasting impact on lives both near and far.

Looking Ahead

As the clinic continues to grow and evolve with the new space and technological innovations, it will serve as a vital resource for both the community and students alike. With an expanded range of services, specialized labs, and outreach programs, the department is more prepared than ever to address the needs of individuals with speech, language, and cognitive disorders. Whether in Luzerne County or Belize, the MU SLP program is committed to improving lives through hands-on care, cutting-edge research, and global outreach.

The renovations in Passan Hall have paved the way for a future where MU students, faculty, and staff can continue to change the world—one client at a time.



Bridging Communication: A Phenomenal ASL Learning Experience

By: Theresa Jacopetti, M.S., CCC-SLP, Clinical Supervisor

In a world where communication is key, learning American Sign Language (ASL) opens doors to inclusivity, connection, and deeper understanding. The recent ASL event at Misericordia University was nothing short of extraordinary, offering participants an engaging and interactive experience that left a lasting impact.

Hosted by the Misericordia Sign Language Club, the event brought ASL to life with dynamic visuals, practical exercises, and insightful discussions. Participants not only learned essential ASL signs but also gained a deeper appreciation for the language and culture of the Deaf community.

One of the standout moments was the introduction of the cough sign, a practical and meaningful tool that many attendees found immediately applicable to their work and daily interactions. The event also emphasized the importance of basic ASL knowledge, covering essential vocabulary such as medical terms, common phrases, and everyday communication skills.

The dedication and leadership of SLP undergraduate and graduate students Sara Lombardi, Kara Thourot, Ava Rockey, Amanda Prinzi, Emma Schaedler, and Emilia McGoldrick were evident throughout, ensuring a smooth, impactful, and engaging experience for all. Their hard work—from conceptualization in the fall to execution in the spring—was truly commendable. Special appreciation goes to Club Advisor Erin Roberts and Healthcare-Telepractice Committee Member Theresa Jacopetti, whose support and collaboration played a vital role in the event's success.

As we reflect on this inspiring event, we are reminded of the power of language in building bridges. Whether you are a healthcare professional, educator, or simply someone eager to learn, ASL is a tool that fosters inclusivity and meaningful connections. Let's continue to support and spread awareness of ASL, making communication accessible for all!

Advocating for Change: PSHA's Role in Speech-Language Pathology Advocacy

By: Theresa Jacopetti, M.S., CCC-SLP, Clinical Supervisor

What happens when passionate professionals come together to advocate for their field? Meaningful change. As a dedicated member of the Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association (PSHA), I have the privilege of contributing to critical advocacy efforts that shape the future of speech-language pathology and audiology in Pennsylvania and beyond.

A Network for Change

Through PSHA, I serve as Pennsylvania's State Advocate for Reimbursement (STAR), a role that allows me to work alongside professionals across all 50 states. This position is part of ASHA's broader State-Based Advocacy Networks, which also include State Education Advocacy Leaders (SEALs) and State Advocates for Medicare Policy (StAMPs). Together, these networks drive advocacy efforts related to funding, service delivery, reimbursement, and policy changes that impact our profession.

My Role as PSHA STAR

Since joining the PSHA Healthcare Committee in March 2023, I have actively participated in advocacy initiatives. I attend monthly meetings with other STARs, collaborating with ASHA leaders to address reimbursement, preauthorization, and value-based care concerns. Our team closely monitors legislative developments, meets with insurance executives, and partners with PT and OT professionals to advocate for fair policies.

Building a Stronger Advocacy Framework

The PSHA Healthcare Committee, originally formed in 2021, merged with the Telepractice Committee in January 2023 due to overlapping legislative issues, particularly those stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by private practitioners, we established the Private Practice Subcommittee in February 2024. This subcommittee officially convened for the first time on May 20, 2024, and is dedicated to tackling pressing concerns such as reimbursement and insurance barriers.

Taking Action

Our work at PSHA is more than just discussions—we take action. We conduct member surveys to gather critical data, draft letters to private insurance companies and Medicaid, and advocate for legislative changes that support our field. By working collaboratively with key stakeholders, we strive to improve access to quality speech-language pathology services for those who need them most.



Through my role as PSHA STAR, I am committed to keeping our community informed and engaged. I regularly contribute to the Keystater newsletter, providing updates on advocacy efforts and emerging issues affecting our profession. Advocacy is a continuous journey, and with the collective efforts of PSHA and ASHA, we can drive meaningful improvements in speech-language pathology across Pennsylvania.

Stay tuned for more updates, and thank you for supporting the important work of PSHA!

Balancing Books and Sports: How Misericordia's SLP Student-Athletes Excel in the Classroom and on the Field

By: Erica Scheinberg '26

Being a successful college student takes more than just hard work and intelligence—it requires time management, dedication, and the ability to juggle multiple commitments. For student-athletes, this balancing act becomes even more challenging but equally rewarding. At Misericordia University, our graduate Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) students are mastering this balance, and their success on their teams and in the classroom.

Maddie Morrow, a first-year graduate SLP student, is a prime example. She's been competing with the cross-country and track and field teams since the start of her collegiate career. For Maddie, practices are a much-needed "break" from the demands of her rigorous academic schedule, allowing her to disconnect and remain present in the moment. Balancing a caseload of clients, challenging coursework, and daily practices, Maddie has developed an efficient routine to stay organized and manage her time effectively.

"I create a routine and stick to it to prevent myself from getting stressed," says Maddie. "I always look ahead to see what work I can get done before a busy Saturday meet."

Maddie isn't the only first-year graduate student excelling in both academics and athletics. Bella Davis and Olivia Olley, also first-year graduate students, recently earned bronze medals at the UCA College Nationals and were crowned International Cheer Union World Cup Champions in January 2025. Additionally, Stephen Rowley, a standout on the cross-country and track teams, was named the 2024 Scholar-Athlete of the Year and ranks 49th in Misericordia's cross-country history.

These student-athletes are shining examples of how time-management skills and a passion for both academics and sports can lead to success. At Misericordia University, we're proud of our students who demonstrate excellence in every aspect of their lives.



Exploring Virtual Reality:

UNVEILING NEW FRONTIERS FOR RESEARCH AND THERAPY

By: Margaret Koester '28

Imagine stepping into a virtual world where your speech is tested in everyday settings—chatting with a friend at a café, answering questions during a high-stakes job interview, or navigating a crowded social event. This is exactly what Dr. Glen Tellis and Dr. Scaler Scott's research teams are exploring with the use of Virtual Reality (VR) in studying the physiologic responses of people who stutter and clutter.

Using advanced technology, these teams are analyzing how individuals react to various speech scenarios. By monitoring the autonomic nervous system—tracking heart rate, skin conductance, and other indicators of emotional response—researchers aim to compare how people who stutter or clutter react to stress in different situations. For instance, how does the casual atmosphere of a conversation with a friend compare to the pressure of a formal job interview? Do more stressful situations lead to more or fewer speech disfluencies, and how do these responses differ between people who stutter and those who clutter?

The VR technology itself holds exciting potential beyond just data collection. The system's flexible features—like adjusting stress levels with distracting noises or changing the virtual avatar's facial expressions—are being explored for their therapeutic applications. For example, these customizable elements could be used in therapy to help desensitize clients to stress and increase the generalization of speech skills learned in therapy to real-world situations. Speech-language pathology graduate students Alyssa Robinson and Caroline Wesp have already seen the benefits of using VR in stuttering therapy. Caroline presented on her experiences at the recent ASHA convention to a large audience of practicing speech-language pathologists, and explained how the use of VR increased motivation and functional application in many of her school-age clients.

Caroline shared, "Beyond just increasing participation, VR also creates meaningful opportunities for discussion and self-reflection. One moment that really stuck with me happened during a café simulation when my client was practicing ordering. Using a feature in the program, I had the virtual waiter walk away mid-sentence. Right away, he reacted—frustrated that she had left. That led to an important conversation: would he respond the same way in a real café? He admitted that he probably wouldn't. That moment was huge—it reinforced why we use VR in the first place. It gives clients a safe space to practice and build confidence in realistic and controlled scenarios, before taking their skills outside of the therapy room."

Looking ahead, Dr. Tellis and his team are planning to expand their research. By collecting data from typically fluent speakers in similar scenarios, they hope to better understand the differences between fluency and disfluency. There's even discussion of integrating AI-powered sentence generation into the VR system, offering clinicians a dynamic way to tailor speech tasks for patients.

The future of VR in speech therapy and research is incredibly exciting. With new features being developed, the technology is paving the way for more innovative research studies and individualized, effective treatment. As researchers continue to explore its full potential, we can expect even more groundbreaking discoveries and methods to enhance therapy sessions for people with communication challenges. In the coming years, VR could become an essential part of speech therapy and research—an invaluable tool for researchers and clinicians, and a source of empowerment for clients.

Making Waves in Speech-Language Pathology:

MISERICORDIA STUDENTS AND FACULTY SHINE AT THREE PRESTIGIOUS CONFERENCES

By: Sarah Hardy '26

Misericordia University's Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) department is making a global impact, with students and faculty presenting groundbreaking research at three major conferences this year. From fluency disorders in Italy to vocal health in Arizona and aphasia interventions in North Carolina, these scholars are at the forefront of advancing speech-language pathology through research and collaboration.

Fluency Research on an International Stage

In October 2024, seven graduate SLP students traveled to Italy to present at the prestigious International Conference on Stuttering and Cluttering. This event brought together international researchers, professionals, and individuals who stutter and/or clutter under the theme, "Expectations and needs of people who stutter and clutter: How researchers and clinicians answer the call." First-year graduate student Alyssa Robinson reflected on the experience: "Getting to present our work and hear perspectives from other speech-language pathologists was rewarding and very insightful." The Misericordia delegation,



representing both the Fluency Team and Fluency Plus Team, presented five posters. Both students and faculty expressed gratitude to Dr. Glen Tellis and Dr. Kathleen Scaler Scott for facilitating this invaluable learning experience, which connected them with the global fluency disorders community.

Advancing Voice Therapy at the Fall Voice Conference

Meanwhile, in Phoenix, Arizona, another group of Misericordia researchers made their mark at the Fall Voice Conference, a multidisciplinary gathering focused on vocal health and voice disorders. Faculty member Dr. Cari Tellis, alongside students Stephanie Maines and Ally Long, presented three posters highlighting innovative approaches to voice therapy. This conference fosters collaboration between clinicians and researchers to enhance voice disorder treatments. "Sharing our research with professionals from various backgrounds was both inspiring and educational," said presenter Stephanie Maines. "We're helping to shape the future of voice care."

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Exploring Aphasia Interventions at the Clinical Aphasiology Conference

Dr. Chitrali Mamlekar represented Misericordia at the Clinical Aphasiology Conference (CAC), an intimate gathering of approximately 125 experts dedicated to advancing the treatment of acquired neurologic communication disorders. Held on the Big Island of Hawaii, CAC provides a unique setting for open dialogue and cutting-edge research presentations. Dr. Mamlekar's research, "Two People, One Journey: AAC Intervention and Communication Partner Training for Primary Progressive Aphasia," was conducted in collaboration with Dr. Aimee Dietz (Georgia State University) and Dr. Rhonna Shatz (University of Cincinnati). The study explores the feasibility and effectiveness of an adapted augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) intervention paired with communication partner training (CPT) for individuals with primary progressive aphasia (PPA) and their spouses. Early findings suggest that AAC enhances spoken language production, while CPT improves communication strategies within partnerships.

A Growing Legacy of Excellence

Through their participation in these three prestigious conferences, Misericordia's SLP students and faculty continue to lead in research, education, and clinical practice. Their work not only enhances their own professional development but also contributes to the broader field of speech-language pathology, helping to shape future treatments and interventions for individuals with communication disorders.

With each presentation, Misericordia University strengthens its reputation as a powerhouse in SLP research, proving that its students and faculty are ready to make a difference—on both national and international stages.

MU SLP Alumni Paving the Way in Research and Clinical Practice

By: Erica Scheinberg '26

At Misericordia University, the foundation for a career in speech-language pathology extends beyond classroom learning. It includes research, clinical experience, and a passion for making a difference. Two MU SLP alumni, Lisa Giuffre and D'Manda Price, are making significant strides in both the research and clinical fields, blending their academic training with real-world applications to impact the world of speech and swallowing disorders.



Lisa Giuffre: Advancing Research in Cluttering

Lisa Giuffre, a 2021 undergraduate and 2022 master's graduate, has always had a passion for research. During her time at MU, she worked closely with Dr. Scaler Scott to explore the impact of cluttering on individuals and their families. This culminated in her master's thesis, "The Impact of Cluttering on the Lives of Children, Adults, and Caregivers," which examined the social, educational, and occupational challenges faced by those affected by cluttering. Lisa's hard work and dedication paid off when her thesis was published in the American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, a prestigious peer-reviewed journal.

The road to publication wasn't easy, but Lisa's persistence paid off. "Revisions can feel daunting, but take them one step at a time," she advises. "If one journal isn't the right fit, keep trying." Lisa's research continues to thrive, as she collaborates with Dr. Scott on additional projects. Beyond research, Lisa works as a speech-language pathologist at a special education school in New Jersey, helping autistic high school students develop functional life and community-based skills. She also runs Language Enriched Story Time programs at local libraries and recently earned a second master's degree in autism spectrum disorders.

Reflecting on her time at Misericordia, Lisa credits the faculty and mentors for shaping her career path. "The support I received was invaluable," she says. "I would go back in a heartbeat."



D'Manda Price: Merging Research and Clinical Practice in Swallowing Disorders

D'Manda Price, a 2019 graduate of MU's five-year program, has always been drawn to the intersection of research and clinical practice. After gaining extensive hands-on clinical experience during her studies, D'Manda honed her skills in hospital settings, focusing on swallowing, speech, and language disorders. She currently works per diem at Jersey City Medical Center, where her ability to apply evidence-based practice in real-world settings is invaluable, particularly in the area of swallowing disorders.

In addition to her clinical work, D'Manda is pursuing a doctoral degree at NYU under Dr. Sonja Molsenter. At NYU, she conducts research in the Swallowing Research Lab, studying behavioral swallowing exercises. Her research focuses on measuring temporal and kinematic changes in patients following a six-to-eight-week protocol of swallowing exercises. D'Manda strives to bridge the gap between research and clinical practice to improve treatment approaches for swallowing disorders.

D'Manda's work underscores the importance of combining academic research with practical application. Her background in evidence-based practice, which she developed at Misericordia, has enabled her to make significant contributions to the field of swallowing disorders.

Both Lisa and D'Manda are shining examples of how the MU SLP program prepares graduates to make meaningful contributions to both research and clinical practice. Whether it's through pioneering research in cluttering or advancing treatments for swallowing disorders, these alumni are pushing the boundaries of what's possible in the world of speech-language pathology. Their work exemplifies the passion, dedication, and skill that the MU program instills in its students, and we can't wait to see where their careers take them next.

MU SLP Alums Making Their Mark in Private Practice

By: Kathleen Scaler Scott, Ph.D.

When you're passionate about your work, it doesn't go unnoticed. For three MU SLP alumni, their dedication and vision have led them to open and grow their own private practices. They've navigated the challenges of entrepreneurship, from managing a team to providing exceptional care, all while drawing from the strong foundation built in the MU SLP program.

Andrew Pheasant:
Morning Star Therapy Services

For Andrew Pheasant, '23, a dream that seemed far in the future came to life much sooner than expected. After becoming well-known for his work in early intervention in Pennsylvania, Andrew was approached by the Department of Health and Education to start his own practice. With a deep passion for supporting young children, especially in underserved areas, he took what he describes as the "calculated risk" to start Morning Star Therapy Services in Northeastern Pennsylvania, providing services from early intervention through 12th grade.

Though it was early in his career, Andrew felt prepared due to the hands-on experience he gained through MU's SLP program, which allowed him to begin seeing clients as early as his junior year. He credits this experience, especially in managing a large caseload and providing holistic care, as critical to his success in both therapy and administration. Today, Morning Star Therapy Services is thriving. The current practice includes Andrew as administrator and SLP, a special educator, and business manager Sarah Pheasant, who graduated from Misericordia with a degree in business and finance in 2024. Andrew is looking forward to expanding his current team to include physical and occupational therapists as well as additional SLPs.



Frank Nutt: Orange County Pediatric Therapy Group

For Frank Nutt, '11, starting his own practice was about creating a nurturing environment for both his clients and his staff. After working in various settings, Frank recognized the need for a practice that could blend quality therapy with a personalized, community-focused approach. He founded the Orange County Pediatric Therapy Group in New York, offering services for children in early intervention, preschool, and school-age programs, while also working closely with local childcare and early childhood learning centers.

With a team of therapists that includes SLPs, OTs, PTs, and psychologists, Frank emphasizes collaboration and individualized care. He also understands the business side of private practice—having begun his academic career as a business major and later pursuing his MBA. Frank's practice is rooted in building lasting relationships with families and the community, with a focus on the integration of therapists into daycare facilities and preschool programs.

Frank credits Misericordia's SLP program with preparing him so well that he could present himself as a confident therapist. He remarked on his solid academic foundation built through the program. This foundation helped Frank to stand out among his peers.

Rachel Moon: Remedy Speech Therapy

Rachel Moon, '19, always knew she wanted to run her own practice, but it wasn't until she gained experience in early intervention and private practice settings that she felt ready. She founded Remedy Speech Therapy in Old Town Alexandria, VA, with a mission to create a work environment where SLPs are valued and respected. Rachel's practice serves a range of populations across Northern Virginia and Maryland, with services including in-home therapy, a virtual school contract, and a clinic-based approach.

With a team of full-time and part-time SLPs, as well as administrative staff, Rachel credits the MU SLP program with giving her a solid foundation of clinical skills. She believes the program prepared her not only to be a confident clinician but also to manage a growing practice with intention and purpose. Rachel's advice to those looking to open their own practice? "The best practices are built slowly and with intention."

These MU SLP alumni are proof that with hard work, a passion for the field, and the skills learned in the program, starting a private practice is not only possible—it's a fulfilling journey. Whether in early intervention, school-based services, or multidisciplinary therapy settings, these professionals are making a significant impact on the lives of children and families, all while building successful, community-centered businesses.

Misericordia SLP Researchers Shine at the 2024 ASHA and 2025 PSHA Conventions

By: Emma Schaedler '26

Misericordia University's Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) Department continues to gain national recognition for its innovative research, with students and faculty earning prestigious honors at both the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) Convention and the Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association (PSHA) Convention. These conferences showcased the university's commitment to advancing the field through groundbreaking studies in fluency disorders, artificial intelligence, and virtual reality.

National Recognition:
ASHA Convention 2024

At the 2024 ASHA Convention in Seattle, Misericordia researchers stood out with multiple presentations, including three Visionary Sessions, a designation given to research with the potential to significantly impact the field:

- Integrating Theories of Motivation and Internal Family Systems Into Treatment (Tellis, Barone, Maines, Long) explored the integration of counseling techniques into speech-language pathology treatment.
- A Mixed-Methods Analysis of Socially Assistive Robotics in Speech-Language Pathology Sessions (Roberts, Thourot, Raub, Lombardi, Mercatili, Slusark, Maines, Rosenthal, Cimino, Alunni) examined the emerging role of robotics in therapy.
- I Can See It But Can't Get There: Impact of Other Fluency Disorders (Scaler Scott, Lambeth) investigated atypical disfluencies, bringing attention to lesser-known fluency disorders.

Misericordia also received the Meritorious Poster Award for the research project Virtual Reality Simulation of Speech Scenarios: Examining Cluttering and Stuttering Patterns and Stress Indicators (Scaler Scott, Tellis, Walkom, Schaedler, Scheinberg, Hardy, Roman,

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Robinson, Laukaitis, Donato, Aaron). This innovative study used virtual reality to analyze stress markers in individuals who stutter and clutter, providing new insights into fluency disorder therapy.

Innovating with Technology:
PSHA 2025 Convention

The momentum continued into 2025, as Misericordia researchers presented at the Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association (PSHA) Convention in Pittsburgh. Two research projects were awarded the prestigious Meritorious Poster Award:

- AI in Clinical Practice: Student Experiences and Case Studies (McCormick, Philippen, Atherton, Mosteller, Prinzi, Raub, Tellis, Healey, Cimino, Alunni, Rivera, Rosenthal, Mamlekar) explores the integration of artificial intelligence in speech therapy, demonstrating how AI-generated materials enhance therapy efficiency and client engagement.
- Virtual Reality in Speech Therapy: Transforming Treatment Through Immersive Technology (Aaron, Laukaitis, Roman, Robinson, Tellis) examines how virtual reality can create real-world therapy environments, improving the generalization of communication skills.



Shaping the Future of Speech-Language Pathology

Misericordia University's presence at both the ASHA and PSHA conventions underscores the department's dedication to pushing the boundaries of research and clinical practice. Whether leveraging cutting-edge technology or exploring new treatment methodologies, their work is making a lasting impact on the field of speech-language pathology, preparing students to be leaders in the profession.





Misericordia's NSSLHA Chapter Earns Gold Status for the Second Year in a Row

By: Erica Scheinberg '26, Margaret Koester '28 and Amanda Prinzi '28

For the second consecutive year, the National Student Speech-Language-Hearing Association (NSSLHA) chapter at Misericordia University has earned "Gold Chapter Honors" from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), a prestigious recognition that underscores the chapter's unwavering commitment to service and growth in the field of speech-language pathology.

The chapter's officers—Amanda Prinzi, Margaret Koester, Ava Laukaitis, and Abigail Mosteller—have been hard at work organizing and attending various impactful events that support their peers and give back to the community. These include a Sensory Friendly Trick or Treating event hosted at Mohegan Sun, a holiday card-making for the residents of the Meadows Rehabilitation Center, a table at the Misericordia Annual Tree Lighting, a Thanksgiving craft at McGlynn Kid's Day, a food drive at the Back Mountain Food Bank, a book drive for the Nanticoke School District, and the ARC of PA Fall Fest event, for which members attended the event as well as helped with set up and clean up. NSSLHA's upcoming events include an Autism Friendly Playtime with the Cougars for Autism Awareness Club, the ARC of PA Spring Fling Event, a donation table at the ACS Relay for Life, and our 10th Annual Benefit Concert, for which all proceeds are being donated to the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Luzerne County. CASA are community volunteers who serve as the voice of abused and neglected children in Luzerne County.

The chapter has also hosted different monthly meetings that allowed students to learn more about this amazing field and speech program. In November, representatives from each research team discussed upcoming projects, while in February, a representative from Dysphonia International spoke about her experience with spasmodic dysphonia. Other meetings featured a representative from Quantum Resource Professionals, who spoke about SLP interventions for people with developmental disabilities, and Student Advocacy Day, where members engaged in sending legislators letters in support of the Student Loan Interest Elimination Act.

In the past year, the chapter has had many fundraisers and donated to many different organizations. In the fall semester, NSSLHA held a Chick-fil-A fundraiser, through which they raised $140 for Brighter Journeys. The organization also raised $440 through a clothing fundraiser to support the 5th-year students' trip to Belize. They donated $75 to the ARC of Pennsylvania, $500 to the ASHFoundation, and raised $1,135 through last year's Benefit Concert to aid Misericordia student Madison Gross's battle against cancer.



With a strong focus on helping others and fostering connections, the Misericordia NSSLHA chapter continues to exemplify the values of service, leadership, and dedication to the field. Through these ongoing projects, the chapter is making a meaningful difference on campus and in the community.

Expanding Accessibility in Speech-Language Pathology: Misericordia's Synchronous/Asynchronous Program Thrives

By: Erica Scheinberg '26

Misericordia University's Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) online program is kicking off its second year with great success, marking continued growth and innovation in its hybrid synchronous/asynchronous formats. With more students participating in online learning, the program continues to set the standard for flexibility and inclusivity in higher education.

Dr. Glen Tellis, program director, highlights the significance of this growth, stating, "This expansion underscores the program's accessibility and its ability to meet the diverse needs of learners nationwide." The department has been dedicated to creating a seamless, unified learning experience that allows both in-person and online students to thrive.

Synchronous students enjoy the real-time benefits of live classes, actively participating in discussions and receiving immediate feedback—providing an experience similar to in-person learning. "This format mirrors the dynamic experience of an in-person classroom while offering the flexibility of online learning," Dr. Tellis explains.

Meanwhile, asynchronous students benefit from the flexibility to view high-quality recorded lectures at their convenience, allowing them to balance their academic responsibilities with other life commitments. SLP online student Deirdre Clabby shares, "After many years of working with children in early intervention and preschool special education, I'm excited to start a new chapter as an SLP graduate student at Misericordia. It's incredibly inspiring to be surrounded by professors and fellow students who share the same passion of helping every child find their voice and reach their fullest potential. The flexibility of an online program allows me to continue working as an SLPA and pursue my dream of becoming an SLP." Within all of the different formats of the MU SLP program, all students experience the same high standard of education that Misericordia SLP is known for.

Looking to the future, Dr. Tellis shares his vision: "As we continue to expand, we aim to integrate even more innovative technologies and resources, ensuring that our graduates are equipped to excel in diverse clinical settings." The department's commitment to maintaining academic excellence while enhancing accessibility guarantees that all students receive a world-class education, regardless of their learning format.

This unique blend of flexibility and quality education is just one way Misericordia's SLP department is shaping the future of speech-language pathology.

Exploring New Frontiers in Speech-Language Pathology: Misericordia's Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) Students Lead the Way

By: Erica Scheinberg '26



Misericordia's Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) department is proud to highlight the exceptional research conducted by students participating in the 2025 Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF). This program offers students the chance to dive deep into research topics that spark their curiosity and contribute new insights to the field. The 2024 SURF participants—Alexandra Long, Michaela Raub, and Olivia Olley—have each explored distinct aspects of SLP, making significant strides in their respective research areas.

Innovating Diagnoses with Inducible Laryngeal Obstruction (ILO)

Under the direction of Dr. Cari Tellis, Alexandra Long's research, titled "Creating a Symptom and Severity Index for Inducible Laryngeal Obstruction (ILO)," focused on the increasing

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prevalence of ILO, a condition that has seen a significant rise since COVID-19. Despite the growing number of cases, limited research has been conducted on this condition. Alexandra's project aimed to create a symptom and severity index to streamline diagnosis and improve understanding of ILO within the SLP community. "Through SURF, I've gained invaluable skills in professional development, public speaking, time management, and collaboration with fellow professionals," she shared.

Examining Gestalt Language Processing (GLP) in SLP Education

Under the direction of Professor Erin Roberts, Michaela Raub's study, "Evaluating SLP Students' Knowledge of Gestalt Language Processing," addressed the growing interest in gestalt language processing (GLP) in SLP but highlighted a critical gap in education—many graduate programs, including those accredited by ASHA, do not provide coursework on GLP. Michaela's research sought to assess the knowledge of graduate students in this area and raise awareness of GLP as a neurodiversity-affirming approach in speech-language therapy. Michaela reflected on the impact of her work, noting, "Presenting this project allowed me to expose individuals in various professions to GLP and the steps SLPs are taking to provide neurodiversity-affirming care."

Supporting Caregivers of Aphasia Patients

Under the direction of Dr. Chitrali Mamlekar, Olivia Olley's project, "Communicating with Individuals with Aphasia: Caregiver Perspectives," focused on understanding the experiences of caregivers who support loved ones with aphasia. Olivia's work explored the emotional and practical challenges caregivers face, often outside the clinical setting. "These stories are not something that can be taught in a classroom, and getting to listen to them was an eye-opening experience," Olivia said. Her research highlights the need for greater awareness among healthcare providers to better support caregivers in their journeys. "If I can increase awareness for caregivers and their loved ones, even just one person, then I have done my job as a researcher," she added.

These three students—Alexandra, Michaela, and Olivia—are making meaningful contributions to the field of speech-language pathology with their groundbreaking research. Through SURF, students had the opportunity to work alongside faculty mentors who are leaders in their respective fields. By tackling underexplored areas, they are advancing the knowledge of ILO, GLP, and aphasia caregiver experiences. Their dedication to research has not only enriched their own education but also created lasting impacts for the profession as a whole.

Rising Star Amanda Prinzi Awarded Prestigious NSSLHA Undergraduate Scholarship

By: Margaret Koester '28

In a remarkable achievement, Amanda Prinzi, an undergraduate SLP major at Misericordia, has been honored with the National Student Speech Language Hearing Association's (NSSLHA) Undergraduate Scholarship. This accolade is a testament to her dedication and excellence in the field of speech-language pathology.

About the NSSLHA Undergraduate Scholarship

Each year, NSSLHA awards ten scholarships to its national members: six scholarships of $1,000 each to undergraduate juniors and four scholarships of $500 each to undergraduate sophomores. To be eligible, applicants must be current National NSSLHA members, enrolled as sophomores or juniors in a CSD program, and maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.25. Previous scholarship recipients are not eligible to reapply.

Amanda's Journey to Excellence

Amanda's passion for speech-language pathology has been evident throughout her academic career. Her commitment to academic excellence, combined with her active involvement in community outreach programs, has distinguished her among her peers. Amanda is a presenter and research assistant for the Communication in Healthcare and Assistive Technology (CHAT) Lab. Under the mentorship of Dr. Chitrali Mamlekar, she is working on the newly established SLP-CONNECT program, a communication group for individuals with aphasia and dementia, among other group projects. Amanda is currently the President of MU's NSSLHA Chapter and has organized and attended many community and advocacy events. Amanda's professors commend her for her unwavering dedication and her innate ability to connect with individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Looking Ahead

With this scholarship, Amanda plans to advance her research on speech disorders, particularly focusing on individuals with aphasia, and continue advocating for those facing communication challenges. She believes that this recognition will open new avenues for her to contribute to the CSD community in meaningful ways. Amanda shared, "Words cannot fully express how thankful I am to receive the NSSLHA Undergraduate Scholarship. This scholarship is a reminder of the amazing support I have from



my professors, peers, and the entire NSSLHA community ever since I enrolled in Misericordia. This recognition fuels my passion even more to help those who face communication challenges. I am truly excited to keep learning, growing, and making a difference."

Amanda's achievement not only brings pride to our institution but also inspires fellow students to pursue excellence and make a difference in the lives of others. We congratulate Amanda on this well-deserved honor and look forward to her future contributions to the field.

Letter from the Chair

GLEN TELLIS, PH.D.
PROFESSOR AND DEPARTMENT CHAIR



Welcome to the 16th edition of our department's newsletter! Once again, our student editors have assembled an outstanding publication highlighting the remarkable achievements, research, and advancements within our program. In our 22nd year, our commitment to academic excellence and innovation remains steadfast.

Our student-athletes excel both academically and athletically, showcasing impressive dedication. From cross-country runners to national cheerleading champions, these students exemplify the balance of rigorous academic and athletic pursuits. Their ability to manage demanding schedules while achieving success on multiple fronts is truly commendable. We are also proud to celebrate the continued excellence of our National Student Speech-Language Hearing Association (NSSLHA) chapter, which has earned Gold Status for the second consecutive year. Their dedication to service, leadership, and community engagement underscores the values we uphold as a department. Our students in the Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) program have made significant contributions to the field, addressing critical gaps in diagnosis, therapy approaches, and caregiver support.

Our faculty and students continue to lead groundbreaking research in speech-language pathology. At the 2024 American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) Convention, multiple research projects from our department were recognized as Visionary Sessions, highlighting their potential to advance the field. At both ASHA and the Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association (PSHA) Conventions, faculty and student research projects were honored with the designation of meritorious poster. Our research on virtual reality applications in speech therapy has provided new insights into fluency disorders, opening doors to innovative therapeutic interventions. Additionally, our students and faculty presented five research projects at the International Conference on Stuttering and Cluttering in Italy, three research projects at the Fall Voice Conference in Phoenix, and a research project in the area of aphasia in Hawaii, further demonstrating our department's global impact and academic excellence. This success would not have been possible without the generous support of individual donors who contributed to the SLP Connect Program and the SLP Service Program, as well as grants from organizations such as the Appleseed-Mental Health Fund of the Luzerne Foundation, Fidelity Bank, M&T Bank, Memco Realty, and Weis Markets.

The Speech-Language and Hearing Center continues to expand its services and resources, thanks to state-of-the-art renovations in Passan Hall. These enhancements have doubled our clinical space and introduced cutting-edge technologies, such as virtual reality tools for stuttering therapy, innovative programs to support those with challenges with literacy, dementia, and/or aphasia and their loved ones, and socially assistive robotics for autism interventions. Beyond our local impact, our program has expanded internationally, bringing essential speech-language treatment to underserved communities in Belize.

We welcome two new faculty members, Kearston Healey and Melissa Alunni, whose experience and dedication will further strengthen our department. Their backgrounds in clinical practice and research will provide invaluable insights to our students and enhance our program's academic offerings.

The continued success of our department is made possible by the dedication of our students, faculty, and alumni, as well as the support from our generous donors and research partners. I invite you to explore this edition of our newsletter and visit our department website at www.misericordia.edu/slp to learn more about our initiatives. Thank you for your unwavering support, and we look forward to another year of achievement and innovation.

Glen Tellis, Ph.D.
Professor and Department Chair

Thank you

WE WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE FOLLOWING FOR PROVIDING GRANTS TO THE SLP DEPARTMENT:

Mr. & Mrs. Gary S. Gobrecht

Mrs. Maria Kidron Kushner '13

Appleseed-Mental Health Fund of the Luzerne Foundation

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WE EXTEND OUR GRATITUDE TO THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR GENEROUS EITC CONTRIBUTIONS IN SUPPORT OF THE SPEECH-LANGUAGE AND HEARING CENTER:

Fidelity Bank

John J. and Marjorie M. Passan Foundation

M&T Bank

Memco Realty

Weis Markets, Inc.

We thank all who donated to the SLP CONNECT program, which serves individuals with dementia, aphasia, and other cognitive challenges, along with their caregivers.

We would like to thank all who donated to the Service Trip to Belize, enabling our students to engage in interprofessional service delivery to an underserved country.

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- Send a check made out to: Misericordia University, by mail to Development Office, SLP Student Fund, 301 Lake Street, Dallas, PA 18612.
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