

# **Stroke Support Group: An ASPIRE! Mentorship Project in a Rural Setting**

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# Overview of Learning Outcomes

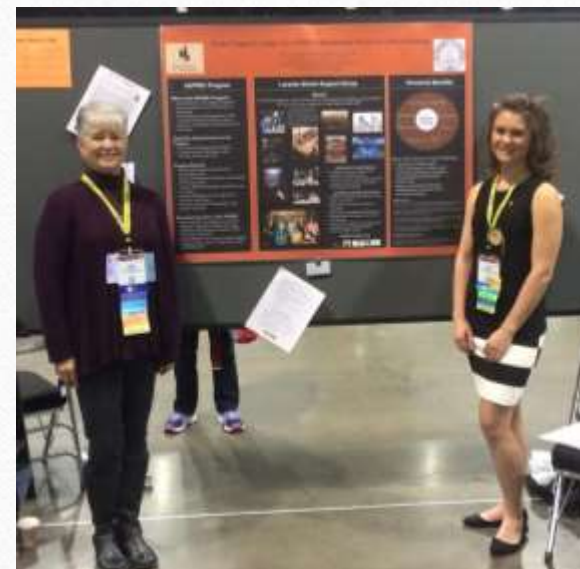
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- Explain the purpose of the *ASPIRE!* program at the University of Wyoming
- Highlight the Laramie Stroke Support Group
- Emphasize the importance of the support group model in a rural setting





# The ASPIRE! Program



# What is the *ASPIRE!* Program?

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- Mentorship Program with faculty in the department of Communication Disorders
- Builds professional and practical knowledge and skills
- Tailored to individual interests in the field

# Eligibility for ASPIRE!

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- Full time undergrad
- Communication Disorders major
- 3.0 GPA
- ACT Score of 23, completed Math 1400 “B” grade or equivalent
- Send in Transcripts
- Write a 300 word statement about past achievements and current/anticipated involvement



# Benefits

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- Annual Scholarship for each year of involvement
- 1 funded regional or national conference
- Professional Experience
- NSSLHA National Membership
- Personal connections with faculty and pertinent issues in the field

# My Experience with ASPIRE!

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- Began Fall 2013
- Fall 2013-Spring 2014
  - Worked on a research project with Dr. Douglas Petersen in collaboration with an older student in the program
  - Introduced me to research lab/experience
  - 2015 presentation at College of Health Sciences Research Day
- Fall 2014 - Present
  - Working with Ms. Lynda Coyle as a co-facilitator of the Laramie's Stroke Support Group
  - Help with publicity, organize meaningful meeting agendas, co-facilitate the group
  - Presented a similar presentation at the national American Speech-Language and Hearing Association annual conference in November 2015
  - 2016 presentation at College of Health Sciences Research Day

# Laramie Stroke Support Group

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# Contributions to the Laramie Community

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- Permanent artwork collection in College of Health Sciences
- “Pay it forward” philosophy through education about stroke and other neurological disorders
- Open environment for those affected by stroke/neurological disorders (individuals and caregivers) to discuss pertinent topics

# Activities and Special Events

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- EMS/Fire Department Education and stroke awareness
- Physical/Social Activities Music Therapist
- Medication management (Pharmacy)
- Summertime Barbeque-In-the-Park
- Art Therapy
- Serves UW academic community for potential research participants
- Summer Stroke Camp
- Monthly “Check-In”



# Game Night

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# Music Therapy



# Stroke Camp

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# Artwork by Stacy Gupton

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The entire collection can be viewed  
in the second floor of the Health  
Sciences building

“Decision”(2006), Stacy Gupton



# AgrAbility



From the video, "AgrAbility: It's About Hope!"

## RANCHING AND FARMING AND DISABILITY

### ARTIST STACY GUPTON - HER REFLECTION

*I am honored to contribute my original paintings to this poster. Art has always been a passion of mine. Since my stroke, it has also been my outlet—a way for me to deal with the aftermath of what happened to me. I prefer not to refer to myself as a disabled artist. Yes, I have a disability, but it does not define who I am or what I can do. I describe myself as a writer and artist, a comedian of words, an artist, a caregiver and as a side note, a stroke survivor.*

*If I could offer words of advice to people who experience a life-altering illness or injury, it would be this — a changed existence can still be rewarding. I won't be and my life with a disability is easy. It can be damned hard at times. You need to see high and keep your focus on what's important. Never say never. Get up, dust yourself off, and keep going.*



# Rural Areas Present Unique Challenges

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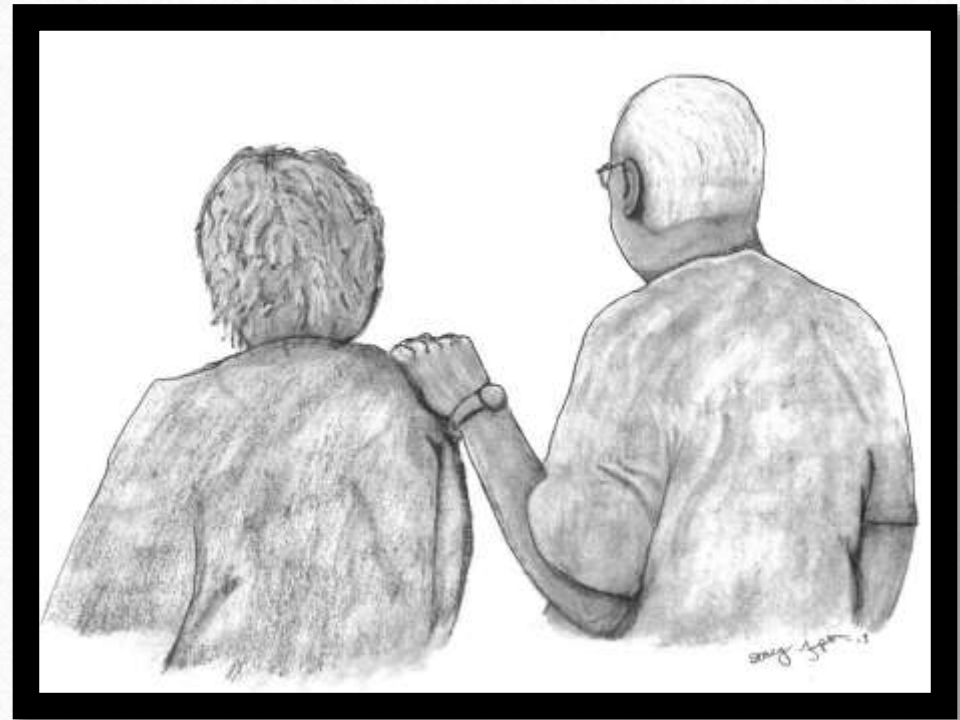
- Population <50,000 people
- Laramie, WY – Population 35,000
- Lack of:
  - Proximity to others with similar life experiences
  - Resources
  - Knowledgeable professionals



# Support Groups: Why Do People Attend ?

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“A group can be defined as “a set of people who meet ... because they share the same purpose or ideas” (MacMillan, 2014), while a “benefit” can be considered to be “a helpful or good effect” (Cambridge University Press, 2014). Group participation is associated with a number of benefits for individuals within the general population.” (Rotherham et. al, 2015.)



Stacey Gupton, (2013).



# Wheel of Perceived Benefits

- Reviewed 4 studies found at the UW Library's ComDis Dome
- Level of Evidence V and VI (qualitative and descriptive studies, primarily interviews and surveys)
- Analyzed the perceived benefits of support groups for various populations (aphasia, prostate cancer, stroke, senior centers)
- Caregiver and Client Perspectives



# Benefits



- Knowledge
  - Provided verbally and written – coping strategies and accessibility to resources
- Participation
  - Provide stimulation
  - Provide opportunities to use skills that were possessed prestroke etc.
- Unmet Need
  - General groups provided a sense of normalization, but support groups with others who have similar needs provided more benefits
- Adaptability
  - Feeling of not being in control of your own life
  - Changing relationships and abilities



# Benefits

- Empowerment
  - Confidence regardless of ability
  - Recognition of weaknesses and strengths
- Psychosocial
  - Groups such as a peer-facilitated aphasia group provided opportunities for individuals to interact with people from outside of their families.
  - Friendships formed





# Benefits

- Humor
  - Shared experiences
  - Positive, honest environment
- Communication
  - Provision of positive communication environment
  - Role of the facilitator is important
  - Improved communication pre and post joining group



# Future of Support Groups: Telehealth

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- Local and Global Issue – nearly  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the world is considered rural (Joubert et. al, 2007)
- Rural areas provide unique opportunities for access
- Viable way to provide services for isolated families/individuals

# Culminating Project – Different Strokes for Different Folks



- Another Permanent set of artwork in the HS building
- Created during a Stroke Support group meeting
- Feature in the Boomerang
- “Ribbon Cutting” May 10<sup>th</sup>



# Take Home Message

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- It is important to not only be an excellent professional, but also leader and visionary in the broader community.
- “Another clinical implication from the study is the need for SLTs to acknowledge the high level of skill often required to be a good facilitator of groups involving individuals with aphasia (Ewing, 2007). University programmes can play a role in ensuring that speech–language therapy students develop the specialised skills to facilitate the communication of and enhance the identity of individuals with aphasia in groups.” (Rotherham et. al, 2015.)

# Acknowledgements

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- I would like to acknowledge the Eppson Senior Center, the Division of Communication Disorders, the Zimmerman Family Foundation, my advisor Lynda Coyle and the members of the Laramie Stroke Support Group.

# Resources

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