

## **25 Years of ATP: Ellen Bernstein-Ellis**

“Just remember, you will learn more from the students and ATP members, than they’ll learn from you.” These are the words that Dr. Jan Avent, ATP’s pioneering founder and leader from 1996-2008, offered to me as I stepped into the director’s position in the Fall of 2009. I found her insight to be inspiring and true. I thank Dr. Avent for that sage advice and for being a remarkable and treasured mentor.

As I reflect on over a decade of service as ATP director, I stand in admiration and appreciation of the amazing lessons I’ve learned from the clinicians, the ATP members and their families, and my colleagues. All of my proudest moments and accomplishments have been collaborative endeavors.

First, hats off to the ATP clinicians. In fact, in our 25 year history, ATP has trained about 450 clinicians and even more student volunteers. Year after year, our ATP graduate clinicians have developed creative materials, established a positive, supportive, and safe therapeutic environment, and worked incredibly hard to provide effective and innovative services for our ATP members and families, whether in-person or online. They have supported a team approach and I credit my accomplishments as Director to our joint efforts. It has been one of my greatest sources of pride to see their growth in clinical skills and confidence.

I’m also proud of the sense of community that ATP offers to its members. Despite there being over 2.5 million people with aphasia in the U.S., most ATP members tell us that they are meeting other people with aphasia for the first time

co-supervised Cooperative therapy and/or Community Groups; Shelley Simrin and Jenny Rosenquist, Clinic Co-Directors who always make sure we have well-trained clinicians; Dr. Gravier who joined our faculty in 2019 and serves expertly as both a supervisor and ATP Research Director; Sophia Kanenwisher who joined us with her remarkable skill set during my leave 2018-2019, stayed on to co-direct with me, and now serves as ATP's current Director, Dr. Kashinath who provided exceptional support and leadership as chair for 7 years; and Marianna Wolff, our extraordinary ASD who has been a valued partner in both managing the daily operations and envisioning our dreams for ATP.

### **Some changes in ATP structure and programming**

In order to address the SLHS department's need to provide training to more clinicians in the program, to balance the workload of ATP clinicians compared to those in the regular clinic, and to address the growing numbers in the ATP program, we made some adjustments to the ATP programming, including incorporating the large community group that met on Wednesday afternoons into the ATP umbrella of services. In addition we:

- Doubled the number of clinicians involved in ATP each quarter/semester from 4 to 8 or more, depending on the program needs

- Added additional student orientation training to help strengthen the foundation of LPAA-focused group facilitation skills.

- Assigned clinicians to either morning or afternoon groups:

- o A.M.: ATP Activity Groups: Reading & Writing Group (30 minutes) followed by theme-based Conversation Groups (60 minutes)
- o P.M.: Cooperative Therapy (60 minutes for 8 clients); Community groups--Book Club, News Group, or Choir (90 minutes)

- Established a Graduate Student Volunteer Coordinator position to provide support and skilled communication partner training for the approximately 12-20 student volunteers who interacted with ATP members during the self-directed practice time during the lunch break or during one of the ATP groups.

- Added a collaboration with Kinesiology, originally under the leadership of SLHS graduate student Sandy Cleary, to offer an interprofessional exercise class. Dr. Gravier and her NRRL lab expanded the exercise class to a research project..

A significant change in ATP format occurred in March of 2020 when Covid disrupted ATP's full in-person program. Within two weeks, thanks to the strong collaborative efforts of Sophia Kanenwisher and Michelle Graver, we figured out a way to get our students trained and services to our ATP members by setting up communication groups on Zoom. Approximately 80% of our ATP members, most of whom had never been on a Zoom call, joined our on-line groups. Although

Cooperative therapy was not continued in the programming, we were able to transition the Aphasia Tones choir to an online format. In addition:

We developed an online orientation training for students highlighting telepractice best practices and principles within the context of facilitating LPAA-focused groups.

Under the direction of Dr. Gravier's NRRL lab, we added tech groups where ATP members were provided with training on ipads or smart phones.

Education Department, Yao trained ATP members to be puppeteers to accompany story time or to take other roles assisting the program. She presented her project outcomes at several conferences.

In 2021-

from the University of Pretoria, led by Tanya Brown MTh & Dr. Glenn Goldblum SLP in 2013 .

Recording a *Happy Birthday* music video to celebrate Dr Oliver Sacks' 80th birthday, at request of National Aphasia Association in 2013

The first aphasia choir to perform at a SRO Hayward city sponsored event in 2015 featuring Dr.

This advocacy project was presented at ASHA and CSHA conferences, the 2017 Aphasia Access Leadership conference, and has just been featured as a model advocacy project in the aphasia textbook by Dr. Brooke Hallowell, *Aphasia and other acquired neurogenic language disorders: A Guide to Clinical Excellence, 2nd edition, (2022)* San Diego: Plural Publishing. This project has received numerous awards, including the ASHA 2015 Distinguished Service Award and the CSHA 2014 Public Service Award. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EY2glnefCp4>)

In Spring of 2016, ATP began a collaboration with Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) Ranger, Richard De La O. Similar to the Yosemite project, ATP members served as the citizen experts and consulted on the development of an aphasia-friendly guide for Alcatraz. Another guide for Muir Woods is under development. To see a sample of the collaboration process, see this brief video by Dr. Jan Avent: <https://drive.google.com/a/csueastbay.edu/file/d/0B867L8IXM0BddUpjbERfUIE4UkE/view?ts=572c2192>

In Fall of 2017, I was proud to be asked to present on aphasia and skilled communication partner strategies to the annual disability training workshop sponsored by the GGNRA and attended by approximately 40 plus park rangers.

### **ATP's evolving impact**

In 2017, ATP was honored to be selected as Program of the Year by CSHA, recognizing its ongoing excellence in training students, providing community services, and raising aphasia awareness and advocacy. It was an award shared by the ATP graduate clinicians, my ATP colleagues, past and present, and most importantly, by all of the ATP members and their families who have been part of the program the past 25 years. That same year, the Miner family generously set up an endowment fund for ATP to honor Jan Avent's contributions to ATP and to support the Aphasia Tones Choir. It's been a humbling career honor to be able to support ATP clinicians with this fund.

While reflecting on ATP's many past accomplishments and achievements, perhaps the most significant is my confidence in what lays ahead for ATP. I am proud to be handing off ATP's leadership to the capable, creative, and compassionate hands of [Sophia Kanenwisher](#) and Dr. [Michelle Gravierianemenlsh\(de\)8 \(r](#)

project with social work, I see ATP's future as very bright and exciting and that's a very rewarding place to be.

**Citations:**