

Toni Vourantonis

Toni Vourantonis spent her early childhood struggling in the isolation of deafness. After receiving a cochlear implant at 16 her world opened up. Now 24 she hopes the changes to her life speak volumes for others living in silence.



I was born without a thyroid gland. It's a rare condition that causes me to be deaf. When I was a baby, I'd imitate people speaking, so no one had a clue that I couldn't hear. By the time I was two, it seemed I had some kind of an intellectual delay, so my parents sent me to a string of professional, until one of them realised what the problem was.

At preschool I realised I was different. There was a deaf unit that I attended, but there was only a handful of us and hundreds of other kids. We ate and played separately from the rest.

When I moved to a mainstream school in Year 3 I was the only deaf student there. I didn't cope very well, but I got used to it. I made friends and managed to do well in primary school as well as high school.

I knew about cochlear implants, but I wasn't keen. I'd seen photos of the scar people end up with, and heard a story about someone who'd experienced paralysis of the face. Plus, at the time, I was quite happy with my hearing aids.

When I was a bit older, my hearing started going downhill. I spiralled into depression in my teenage years and fell behind in my studies. My audiologist asked me to think about getting an implant.

I had my first implant at 16. The procedure took about four hours. I was in hospital for two days after reacting badly to the anaesthetic.

The implant took some getting used to. When it was first switched on, I felt as I was in a computer game. I picked up things I'd never heard before, such as the water filtration system on our fish tank. I was finally able to hear my own voice. I had six months of rehabilitation to get used to it.

Back at school, things were much better. I was able to pick up what my friends were saying and they started calling me the bionic woman. I also remember my first long phone conversation, with my auntie - I've never felt so proud.

Having my second implant wasn't as scary. I decided to do it about two years ago, when the hearing in my other ear deteriorated. Having it switched on was exciting because I got an upgrade to a new speech processor. I'm now able to turn the volume up or down, and also cut out background noise.

I always knew I wanted to work around people. Now I implement programs for people with disabilities for Northcott Disability Services.

Being able to hear has changed lots of things for me. I'm more confident now. But I still have some limitations; I can't wear my speech processor when I'm swimming, in the shower or on theme park rides. And it's hard to know what I can hear compared with someone who's not deaf. All I know is what I hear and how I respond.

Being given the gift to hear my loved ones brings a smile to my face every day. I'm deeply grateful to the people out there who work hard to give deaf people opportunities. If I'd never had the implant, I wouldn't be the person I am today.

RHIANNON SAWYER

World's most advanced telephone hearing test now available in 11 languages

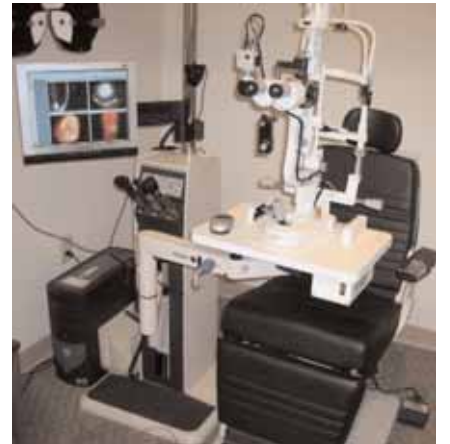
The Chairman of Australian Hearing, Kathryn Greiner AO, is launching a service that enables Australians to check their hearing over the telephone in 11 languages.

Based on extensive research, Telscreen was developed by the National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL) in conjunction with Australian Hearing and is the most advanced telephone hearing service in the world.

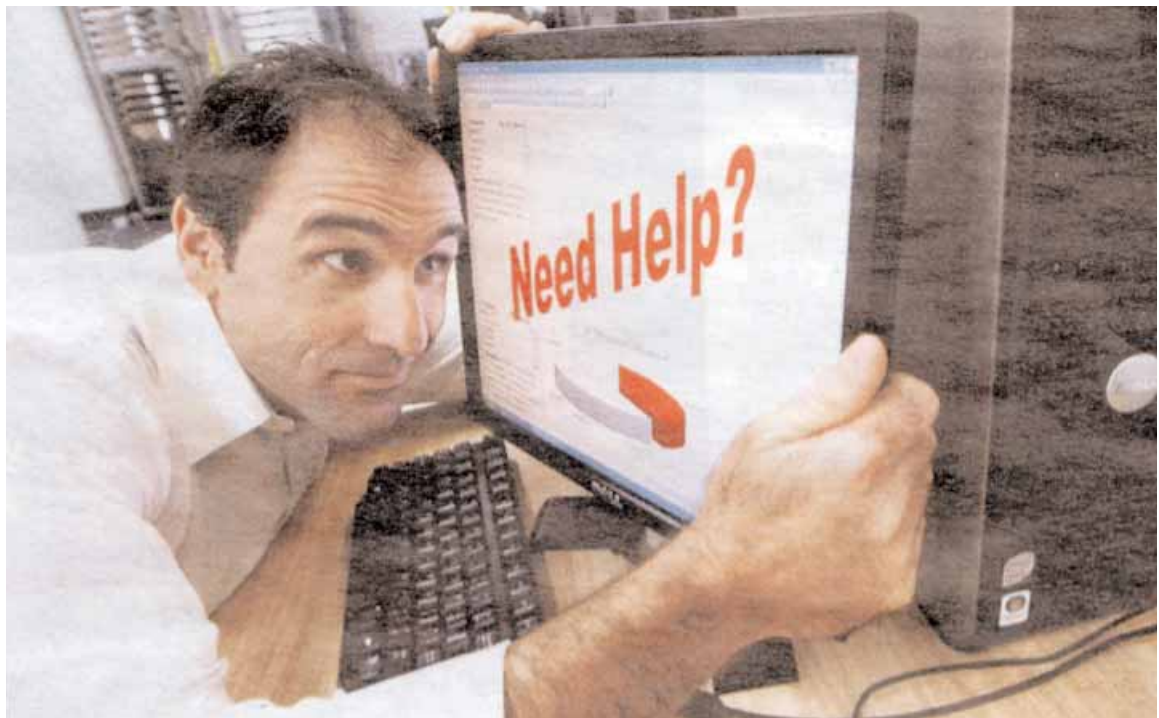
Already available in English,

Mandarin and Cantonese, Telscreen™ in Italian, Arabic, Greek, Vietnamese, Turkish, Macedonian, Serbian and Spanish languages will enable even more Australians to check their hearing over the phone.

There is an opportunity to film and interview Professor Harvey Dillon and senior representatives from a variety of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community groups will also be at the launch.



Course to quash computer concerns



Cyber age: Zacharias Kondaxis will help residents learn about computers

LIVERPOOL Library will soon host computer training courses designed to help ordinary people improve their IT knowledge.

Zacharias Kondaxis, of Matrix Institute of Technology, which is on the top floor of the library, said the courses would help local people of all ages and walks of life to get some computer skills.

The one-day course will start this month and will offer training in Word, Excel, Power Point, desktop publishing, web design and in using the internet and email at a cost of \$99.

"There are very few computer courses for professional people available at all", Mr Kondaxis said. "Most courses are either for young people or seniors or people in the IT industry and most of those are very

expensive. This is the perfect course for office workers, who want to gain some more skills in a particular computing field they're not familiar with or fill out their knowledge in a program that they already use.

"Matrix IT is quite a unique facility because we are located in a library. That makes us very accessible to all residents and creates quite a relaxed environment.

"Also we have a policy of not cancelling any classes due to insufficient numbers, so people know if they sign up they will definitely be trained. These days we're all expected to be able to use computers well for almost any sort of office job but some people are still struggling and don't know where to go for help".

Details: matrixit.com.au or 9821 9457

Article from Liverpool City Champion

The Mythological Greek Table in Melbourne

The HFC Centre participates in Melbourne's Food and Wine Festival, organized at the "Greek Deli and Taverna" restaurant in cooperation with the Hellenic Museum, the HFC and Tyrrell's Wines. Prof. A. Tamis and the Director of the Hellenic Museum & HFC's Centre Vicki Yiannoulatos will present the history and culture of Greek cuisine.

March 18, 2010. More: www.greekdeli.com.au

