Around the world, more than 34 million children are deaf or hard of hearing. With training and technology, nearly all of them can learn to hear and talk.

More than 30 million of these children are born to parents who can hear—and most have no idea what they should do to help their children listen and speak so they can go to school, join in family events, be part of their neighborhood and community, and grow to become self-reliant adults.

With technology like hearing aids and cochlear implants, people with hearing loss can hear. With training and therapy, they can speak, read, write and gain independence.

They can catch up to their peers who can hear in school, sports and community projects. They can play the piano; sing and dance; become fully literate and get a great job; and live full, productive lives without limits.

Listening and Spoken Language makes it all possible.

For over 127 years, AG Bell has worked to ensure that every child who is deaf or hard of hearing has the opportunity to hear, talk and thrive in society. Early intervention can make all the difference.

Our focus has always been to provide professionals who enable children who are deaf and hard of hearing to speak with the tools and information that will support their success. Today, the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (AG Bell) offers professionals research symposia, access to the latest technological information and best practices, and certification to achieve the highest standards in helping children to listen, speak and excel.

But that’s not all we do.

AG Bell advocates to ensure that public policy gives children with hearing loss the same access to education, culture and workplace benefits that people without hearing loss enjoy.

We educate the general public that people who are deaf and hard of hearing can hear and talk.

And we support families who choose Listening and Spoken Language for their child with information, guidance, financial aid and emotional support.

You make it all possible. You give children the chance to live a life without limits.
Sometimes you are in the right place at the right time—and life-changing things can happen.

In 2017, AG Bell began a new chapter in its long history of changing lives around the world.

AG Bell took over the operations of a like-minded organization in Madrid, Spain, known as Fundación Oír es Clave, a family-centered practice that was founded—like AG Bell—by a family affected by hearing loss. Discovering that their baby girl couldn’t hear, this family began searching for resources to help her learn to speak because they wanted her to fully engage in their family life, to benefit from the education they could provide her and to achieve all of her dreams. But those resources were not available to them in Spain; in fact, they had to look to other countries to find the tools for their daughter to hear and talk. Luckily, they had the capacity to do just that, but they were dismayed to think of how many children in their own country would never have those opportunities, and they were inspired to establish Clave.

Focused on training and preparing professionals to work with children to develop language that would lead to literacy, Fundación Oír es Clave worked for a decade on building up skilled professionals and endeavored to affect public policy and corporate practices to improve ambient conditions so children with hearing loss could hear more easily in public places, schools and commercial locales.

Moving their operations into the umbrella of AG Bell was a logical next step for both organizations. Thus, AG Bell International was established as AG Bell’s Spanish language headquarters.

Together, AG Bell and AG Bell International not only broaden awareness of Listening and Spoken Language throughout the English- and Spanish-speaking world—representing more than two billion people—but they also reach across borders and across cultures to remove barriers and limits for people with hearing loss in 71 countries. By joining together, AG Bell and AG Bell International are preparing professionals to help millions of children who are deaf learn to hear and talk.

This past year, AG Bell and AG Bell International hosted and sponsored conferences in Europe, South America and the United States, where hundreds of professionals and parents gained knowledge, skills and training to open up the world for children with hearing loss. As we advance in our mission—Working Globally to Ensure that People who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing can Hear and Talk—we will reach far greater numbers of children, families and communities and free them to hear the wonders around them, learn to read and discuss how they see the world, and contribute their own perspectives to a world that grows ever smaller.

We thank you for joining in our mission and for giving the world to our children.

With gratitude,

Ted A. Meyer, M.D., Ph.D.
Chair, Board of Directors

Emilio Alonso-Mendoza, J.D., CFRE
Chief Executive Officer
In 2017, the assets of AG Bell were positively impacted by the acquisition of its new interests in Spain. Significant growth was experienced in investments due to a highly successful year, while prudent management was exercised over long- and short-term funds.

Designed and constructed by Alexander Graham Bell, the Volta Bureau has been the home of AG Bell since 1893. In 2017, the building was subjected to extensive review and analysis and was revalued at over $4 million. A trust established by Dr. Bell provides funding to ensure that the Volta Bureau remains a true historic site and also a dynamic center of service open to all.
We gratefully acknowledge the support of corporate sponsors, private foundations and individuals who made it possible for AG Bell to reach over one million people around the world in 2017. Your support makes positive change possible and allows AG Bell to deliver on its promises.

In 2017, AG Bell invested in improvements in communications—developing a new website, working with input from focus groups to tailor our communications and adjusting our style to be more welcoming, particularly to families just learning that their child is deaf or hard of hearing. Investing in innovation and adapting to our audience will also help us achieve stronger financial support in the years to come.

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Total Expenses $3,615,052

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Total Revenues $4,118,868
With your support, more than 400 families received help in 2017 on their child’s journey to Listening and Spoken Language. From their first hearing aid to their high school graduation, you helped them on their way.

AG Bell offers several types of financial aid with the support of generous foundations, funds and donors. In 2017, the Turn It Up Fund housed at AG Bell provided $4,660 to the Arts & Sciences Financial Aid Program (which supported 44 families) to provide five children with a year of music lessons. Learning to play the piano, the violin and the flute, students are not only acquiring a skill—one immensely more difficult to master with hearing loss—but they are also gaining self-awareness, poise in performance and self-discipline. We know that musical ability improves learning in general, and we hope you share our pride in their achievements.

The Parent and Infant Financial Aid Program helped 121 families as they took the initial steps toward providing their child with hearing aids, cochlear implants and therapy to develop language. The unexpectedness of their baby’s hearing loss often leaves parents at a loss as to what they need to do so that their child can grow up with all the experiences and opportunities that children with typical hearing enjoy. The support that AG Bell can provide frequently reinforces their choice to provide their child with Listening and Spoken Language and can help strengthen their commitment to persevere in the vital first years when diligence is most needed for their child’s language development.

School-Age Financial Aid can help children who need attention in a specialized environment. Katie Johnson, one of 74 parents who benefited from this program, says: “It is never easy to move and start a new school, but fourth-grader Brady has continued to flourish in his new environment. We used the AG Bell award money to purchase new [equipment] to use in the classroom and during school sporting events. His teachers have been receptive to learning about the new technology and even pass it around the room for class discussions. Brady joined the school basketball team, and the coach uses it during games and practices to help with instruction and battle the poor gymnasium acoustics. The small-school environment has allowed the students and staff to accept him and realize he’s just a regular kid! Thank you for all that you do in supporting students like Brady. Your organization is making a positive impact on so many lives.”

Preschool Financial Aid assists parents at a time when public health support wanes and before school-based support begins. Shaun Mertz described what this means for her daughter, Grace: “Our daughter was adopted from China with bilateral hearing loss. Our AG Bell grant was so helpful. Earlier in the year, our doctors had discovered that two hearing aids were better than one, so we used the grant money to purchase her second hearing aid. Since then, she has improved tremendously! She has started kindergarten, and she is doing great. Her directional awareness is better along with her overall hearing. We have also had a lot of copay expenses along with speech therapy. The expenses are so overwhelming at times. This grant has been a lifeline for us. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.”

Programs like AG Bell’s Financial Aid truly are changing lives, and families are grateful for what you make possible for their child.
When you receive the diagnosis that your baby can't hear, you are first shocked and then dismayed. It’s likely that no one in your family is deaf—in fact, you may have never met anyone who is deaf. But deafness is the most prevalent sensory birth defect. Where do you find answers to your questions?

If you are hoping that your baby will be able to listen and talk and join in all the activities in your family life—holiday fun, game nights, bedtime stories—or learn in school with friends and siblings, the place for you to turn for hope and help is AG Bell. But sometimes, you just want someone to tell you everything will be all right, and that your child can have the same great experiences their child has had. For that, you need someone close by who knows how things work where you live. That's why AG Bell established state chapters.

In 2017, state chapters grew to number 38, and we keep on growing. More than 1,200 people joined AG Bell last year, most of them through their local chapter. It was there that they learned how successful children can be with listening and spoken language. They met caring professionals who could give excellent advice and take time to explain how their child will hear and talk, and they found parents who told everyday stories of step-by-step accomplishments. And they learned that their child could grow to become an independent, self-reliant adult.

AG Bell chapters are welcoming places where professionals can learn together, parents can find help and people with hearing loss feel supported. Together, chapter members can improve educational opportunities for children with hearing loss and defend each parent’s right to choose what is best for their child and their family. Your gifts empower chapters, strengthen their ability to affect change and improve life for people living with hearing loss.

In 2017, state chapters grew to number 38, and we keep on growing. More than 1,200 people joined AG Bell last year, most of them through their local chapter.
With the support of committed organizations dedicated to hearing health, AG Bell welcomed over 400 professionals to the 2017 AG Bell Listening and Spoken Language (LSL) Research Symposium in Arlington, Virginia. Following the theme of “Innovate, Integrate, Motivate: Towards Excellence in Listening and Spoken Practice,” the Symposium was designed to meet the continuing education needs of professionals working with children who are deaf or hard of hearing and use listening and spoken language. The LSL Research Symposium is the premier event for learning about current evidence-based practices that can meet the needs of the children and families we serve, and more than half of the presentations in 2017 featured new research information.
The success of millions of children with hearing loss is the result of the dedicated work of audiologists, speech-language pathologists and an array of educators.

Your support ensures that they are well-trained, know all the latest research and information in their field, and can excel in providing thousands of children with Listening and Spoken Language.

From the AG Bell Convention to its LSL Research Symposium and web-based resources, to the Knowledge Center, AG Bell provides access to outstanding training and information so these professionals are equipped and ready to serve people with hearing loss around the world.

Through the AG Bell Academy, hundreds of professionals have sought and achieved certification as Listening and Spoken Language Specialists, ensuring that they are practicing with the highest standards in their field so that children learn to speak, understand language, and read and write as well as their hearing peers.

In 2017, the Doreen Pollack Auditory-Verbal Therapy (AVT) Scholarship and the AG Bell Auditory-Verbal Education (AVEd) Scholarship paved the way for two more Listening and Spoken Language Specialists to be certified and add to the excellence of listening and spoken language practice.

AG Bell provides access to outstanding training and information so these professionals are equipped and ready to serve people with hearing loss around the world.
AG Bell’s Leadership Opportunities for Teens (LOFT) program celebrated its 21st anniversary and marked the achievement of having empowered 447 teens to speak up for themselves and others.

In 2017, AG Bell determined that the LOFT program will continue to be held in Washington, D.C., where the program can benefit from AG Bell’s relationships surrounding its headquarters, the Volta Bureau, as well as from the many leadership role models who make Washington their home. The program took place on the campus of Georgetown University, located a few blocks from the Volta Bureau, providing students with the experience of life on a college campus and access to area highlights.

Studies have shown that youth who participate in youth development and leadership experiences are more likely to do well in school, be involved in their community and positively transition from adolescence to adulthood. Teens with hearing loss benefit from this type of experiential learning, especially when it comes to team-building skills, and, as a result, show increased levels of confidence and self-acceptance as well as enhanced problem-solving, public speaking and self-advocacy skills. The LOFT program identifies and cultivates leadership skills among participants by providing a supportive and structured environment in which teens increase their confidence and understanding of their own strengths and abilities through goal-setting and activities designed to challenge them.

This past year, AG Bell recruited three LOFT graduates to serve as summer interns at the Volta Bureau. Working alongside two local university students, the LOFT interns grew in their capacity to engage with others and voice their creative ideas. All five interns lent their services to the 2017 LOFT program, discussing methods of continuing relationships beyond LOFT. AG Bell staff appreciated their commitment and their ability to advocate on behalf of young people with hearing loss. We look forward to offering the program again in 2018 and improving both the LOFT program and our continuing relationships with young adults who use listening and spoken language.

We expressly thank the sponsors of our LOFT program and Legacy donors who continue to open doors and make high achievement possible for students who are deaf and hard of hearing.
Because of long-standing legacy gifts made in endowment, AG Bell was able to offer college scholarships to 30 high-achieving students with hearing loss. Ranging from high school seniors about to embark on their college education to graduate and medical students, our scholars are highly intelligent and accomplished people whose letters of recommendation showed them to be natural leaders committed to helping others in their community and around the world.

2017 scholarship recipients are attending such prestigious universities as MIT, Stanford, Rice and Tufts, among others, with one scholar attending medical school in Israel.

The quality and capacity of scholarship applicants inspired several members of the selection committee to develop an internship program that offers college underclassmen the opportunity to work alongside professors with hearing loss in auditory research laboratories. Seven universities are involved in this project, which AG Bell supports financially and with management and recruitment efforts. The focus of this program is not simply to enhance science education, but also to assist students to persevere in their scientific studies by providing role models and mentorship with educators who understand the challenges of hearing loss in higher education, particularly in scientific fields.
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You change lives with your support of AG Bell.

Guests are always welcome at the historic Volta Bureau. Visit us and learn more!

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