

“His words are scarcely intelligible...”

James Parkinson, 1817



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Project Director

Texas Voice Project for Parkinson Disease

A Subsidiary of the National Parkinson Foundation

Dallas, TX



With the support of the National Parkinson Foundation, the *Texas Voice Project* is helping people with Parkinson disease revive their weakened voices and leading the way for others to follow.

Eighty-nine percent of people with Parkinson disease experience difficulty communicating. James Parkinson first described this symptom in his *Essay On The Shaking Palsy* written in 1817. Although this symptom was recognized nearly 200 years ago, it is estimated that today, only 3–4% of persons with Parkinson receive speech therapy.

The **Texas Voice Project for Parkinson Disease**, a subsidiary of the National Parkinson Foundation, began as a dream of a speech pathologist who wanted people with Parkinson to receive the speech therapy they needed and deserved. After being certified in the Lee Silverman Voice Treatment (LSVT®), Samantha Elandary couldn't help getting excited about the results her Parkinson patients were achieving. Patients whose voices were described as soft, weak and hoarse were able to produce strong, clear and intelligible speech in only four weeks of therapy. Her patients were able to continue their jobs to support their families, resume their volunteer activities within the community, and carry on meaningful conversations with family and friends.

With results as remarkable as the LSVT, it is difficult to conceive why so few people with Parkinson disease are receiving speech therapy. The challenge lies in the limited reimbursement rates by insurance companies for these services. Hospitals and rehabilitation companies cannot afford to provide quality speech services. That is why a group of Texans banded

together to create a program that would be based solely on the needs of the Parkinson patients – not on the reimbursement rates.

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In 2005 the National Parkinson Foundation became aware of the efforts in Dallas, Texas. After observing the remarkable results of the LSVT first-hand, NPF joined forces with these Texans in January 2006 and created what is now known as the Texas Voice Project for

**COMMUNICATION
SCREENING**

- Do people ask you to repeat?
- Does your voice sound hoarse, scratchy or breathy?
- Does your family say you speak too softly?
- Does your voice fatigue easily?
- Does your voice sound strong on some days, weak on others?
- Do you cough when you eat or drink?
- Do you experience drooling?

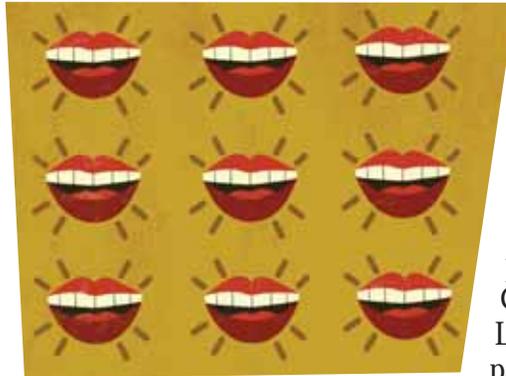
If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, a Voice Evaluation by an LSVT® certified Speech Pathologist is recommended.

Parkinson Disease, a non-profit organization created under the auspices of the National Parkinson Foundation. The Texas Voice Project is the only program of its kind in the country, and its ultimate goal is to develop a model that can be replicated by any facility that shares the common goal of improving the quality of life of people with Parkinson disease.

The program is based on the Lee Silverman Voice Treatment, which was developed in 1987 by Dr. Lorraine Ramig. The LSVT is an intensive course that teaches patients

how to use increased effort and volume when they speak. The success of the program lies in the simple focus, which is to **"THINK LOUD."** Parkinson patients must feel as though they are speaking loudly, just to be heard and understood by others. Each Parkinson patient receives a voice evaluation and, if deemed a candidate, the 4-week Lee Silverman Voice Treatment. What differentiates the Texas Voice Project from any other program in the country is that no patient is denied treatment due to lack of insurance or the means to pay for treatment. In addition, the Texas

Voice Project recognizes that since Parkinson disease is progressive, patients require ongoing support, encouragement and continuous vocal practice to maintain their improved voices. For this reason, the program provides a free maintenance program known as The LOUD Crowd™. Upon completion of the LSVT, patients are encouraged to participate in weekly speech groups,



SAMANTHA ELANDARY, PROJECT DIRECTOR, AND JOSE GARCIA-PEDROSA, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE NATIONAL PARKINSON FOUNDATION.



LOUD CROWD MEMBERS RED HOSKINS AND JOOST DEN OUDEN ROLE-PLAY THE TOUGH "JUDGES" WHO SEND PEOPLE WHO DON'T USE THEIR "LOUD" VOICES TO JAIL.



LOUD CROWD MEMBERS CHARLES KING AND JOHN STEVENS LAND IN THE SLAMMER FOR NOT USING THEIR "LOUD" VOICES DURING A TEXAS VOICE PROJECT MAINTENANCE ACTIVITY.

a singing program, an annual speech contest, a young-onset support group, and other activities that are aimed at helping the Parkinson patients maintain their ability to communicate, despite the progression of the disease. Patients who enter the



“By combining the LSVT with The LOUD Crowd, the Dallas program has helped their Parkinson patients maintain their improved voices for up to seven years.”

program are “patients for life” – not just four weeks. By combining the LSVT with The LOUD Crowd; the Dallas program has helped their Parkinson patients maintain their improved voices for up to seven years.

Funding this type of program is a challenge; however, the results of the treatment are so remarkable and life changing that the Dallas group wouldn't have it any other way. Grateful patients and local foundations, along with reimbursement from Medicare and other insurance, help to keep the program running. In addition, the Texas Voice Project has been blessed to receive rent-free facilities provided by North Dallas Physical Therapy, a Benchmark Medical Company. The program staff consists of a project director, four LSVT certified speech pathologists, a music coordinator, a patient liaison, an activities coordinator and an administrative assistant.

For more information about the Texas Voice Project or the Lee Silverman Voice Treatment, log onto www.parkinson.org and click on “NPF Programs.” You may contact the Texas Voice Project directly by calling **214-862-0101** or e-mailing contact@texasvoiceproject.org. ■

FACTS

- 95% of people with Parkinson disease experience swallowing difficulty, which can lead to life-threatening aspiration pneumonia.
- Did you know that the muscles you use for speaking are the same that you use for swallowing?
- By strengthening your speech mechanism through the Lee Silverman Voice Treatment, you are also re-coordinating your swallowing muscles, which can reduce your risk of aspiration pneumonia.



LOUD CROWD SINGING GROUP.
*PHOTO TAKEN BY STEVE REED,
DALLAS MORNING NEWS.*



SEWALL CUTLER TELLS A STORY
USING HIS “LOUD” VOICE DURING
THE TEXAS VOICE PROJECT’S
ANNUAL SPEECH CONTEST.
*PHOTO TAKEN BY STEVE REED,
DALLAS MORNING NEWS.*



MATTHEW KLINE, THE MUSIC
COORDINATOR, LEADS THE LOUD
CROWD SINGING GROUP.
*PHOTO TAKEN BY STEVE REED,
DALLAS MORNING NEWS.*