

[Email this article](#)
[Print this article](#)
[Most popular pages](#)

[Click to send](#)
[Click to print](#)
[Today](#) | [This Week](#)

Implant, dog create blessed hear and now

Mar. 29, 2005 12:00 AM

NAME: Liz Thompson.

AGE: 53.

HOME: Glendale.

JOB: Freelance writer on disability.

THE ISSUE: When Thompson was in the fourth grade, she began to lose her hearing. The loss was moderate until she was 29. Thompson was an amateur singer and guitar player, and was losing some of her musical abilities. A doctor told her to get hearing aids. She was reluctant at first to buy the expensive devices, but finally had one ear fitted. "Until I got a hearing aid, I didn't know what I was missing," she says. "It blew me away." The first night, she heard a rainstorm outside. The sound was so amplified "I was frightened," Thompson says. She heard bacon sizzling for the first time in years. Outside, she heard cicadas and crickets. At age 42, she got a second hearing aid, and the world sounded even better. "I went, 'Wow!' "

THE MOTIVATION: Thompson's hearing continued to decline until she had about 8 percent remaining. She quit her job as a secretary and no longer used the telephone. She dropped out of her choir. At night, in the dark, she couldn't read lips to carry on a conversation with her husband, Bob. The quality of her speech declined. Life was becoming bleak.

THE CHANGE: Two things changed Thompson's life. One was a little dog named Snert. The longhaired dachshund seemed especially attuned to her needs. His first Christmas with Thompson, an electric candle fell off the windowsill and the carpet began to smolder. Snert barked frantically until Thompson arrived to snuff out the hot spot. The next time he barked that way, Thompson turned to find a pot of water ready to boil over. "He just seemed to understand that I needed him," Thompson says. With such instincts, he was the perfect candidate to become a Hearing Ear Dog through a program sponsored by the Lions Club in her home state of Ohio. After six months of training, he had learned his duties: to alert her to the doorbell, alarm clock and smoke alarm. Then, in 2002, Thompson was fitted with a cochlear implant, a device in which one part is worn behind the ear and a tiny receiver is implanted under the skin behind the ear. When the device was switched on, she says, "I hadn't heard that much clarity in my life."

THE GAIN: Thompson can talk on a telephone instead of relying on a text phone. She can understand people talking to her without having to read their lips and their body language. She plays her guitar again. She sings, though only for herself. Having her hearing restored, she says, "has relaxed me. I enjoy conversations. I'm a social person, and I can listen." When she removes the device from her ear to sleep, Snert is there as a companion and assistance dog.

THOMPSON'S TIPS: Have a hearing test from an audiologist, not a hearing-aid vendor. If you need a hearing aid, get one, she says, but you'll know when you're ready emotionally. "The best advice is to be true to yourself and your lifestyle. To hear again is a gift and a blessing."

- Barbara Yost

Email this article
Print this article
Most popular pages

Click to send
Click to print
Today | This Week