

Santa Barbara startup set to tackle preventable hearing loss.

New outreach program to offer free hearing care services.

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Noise damage is a major cause of hearing loss, particularly in young people, yet is completely preventable. In a move set to tackle the problem, Santa Barbara Hearing Care, the practice of licensed audiologist Donna Gilmartin, M.S., CCC-A, is to join forces with a startup company focused on hearing conservation, to become Otojoy LLC. The new venture aims to educate Santa Barbara residents about the risks to hearing from noise and water exposure, whilst offering practical solutions that enable people to continue to enjoy activities such as clubbing, attending concerts, swimming and surfing without the associated risks of acquiring life-changing hearing loss.

Otojoy will operate from the current premises of Santa Barbara Hearing Care within the Santa Barbara Yoga Center, with Ms. Gilmartin and staff continuing to provide the same high-quality audiology and hearing aid dispensing services their existing customers have come to expect, whilst the business expands to further develop its focus on community outreach and hearing protection.

A longstanding advocate of hearing conservation, Ms. Gilmartin said “Many people continue to take unnecessary risks with their hearing because disposable earplugs are often uncomfortable, ill-fitting and cause sound distortion, so I’m excited to finally be able to offer a range of earplugs that people are actually happy to wear.”

According to Otojoy spokesman Shamon Walker, education is critical: “Few people are aware that a single episode of noise exposure at levels as low as 85dB – equivalent to those reached by heavy city traffic - can cause permanent hearing damage. If your ears are ringing after a night out, it’s a clear warning sign that damage has already occurred. We want to get that message out to younger people, so they can take steps to protect their hearing before it’s too late.”

The practice already provides free hearing screenings and hearing aid trials. From October 2012, Otojoy will also offer free seminars on hearing loss, the newest technologies in hearing aids, and hearing conservation at the Santa Barbara Family YMCA, where trained staff will be on-hand to perform free hearing tests, to provide information on the Otojoy range of innovative hearing protection products, and to offer help and advice to anyone already experiencing hearing difficulties.

To address the needs of local people with hearing loss, Otojoy is partnering with Phonak, world leader in hearing aid technology, to bring their pioneering sound processing techniques to Santa Barbara. Phonak products are the only hearing aids to offer “ZoomTechnology”, proven to deliver noticeably clearer speech in background noise – one of the most challenging listening situations for anyone with a hearing loss.

Donna Gilmartin, an experienced audiologist and graduate of UCSB, previously worked with the prestigious St. Vincent’s Hospital in Sydney, Australia, the House Ear Clinic in Los Angeles and the Santa Cruz Medical Foundation, and set up a respected private practice in San Diego before establishing Santa Barbara Hearing Care in 2011.

Otojoy earplugs are custom-made to fit the wearer's ear perfectly, offering outstanding performance without compromising on comfort or sound quality. The range also includes specific products for musicians, clubbers, swimmers and surfers.

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Free hearing screenings at the Santa Barbara Family YMCA:

Wednesday, October 3rd, 2012, 12:30 PM – 4:30 PM

Wednesday, October 10th, 2012, 12:30 PM – 4:30 PM

Wednesday, October 17th, 2012, 12:30 PM – 4:30 PM

Wednesday, October 24th, 2012, 2:00 PM – 4:30 PM

Outreach seminar at the Santa Barbara Family YMCA:

Wednesday, October 24th, 2012, 12:30 PM – 2:00 PM

Booth at the Santa Barbara Senior Expo:

Wednesday, October 10th, 2012, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Shamon Walker

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Product Information: http://www.otojoy.com/advance_sale

High-Resolution photos:

<http://www.otojoy.com/media/pr1.jpg> (Donna Gilmartin, Audiologist, M.S., CCC-A)

<http://www.otojoy.com/media/pr2.jpg> (Donna Gilmartin with a client explaining new hearing technology)

