



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Steven D. Rhoads

## LIU Post Ladge Speech & Hearing Center in partnership with New York State Senator Rhoads host successful Inaugural Aphasia Awareness Open House for Aphasia Awareness Month

STEVEN D. RHOADS June 30, 2023



Senator Steve Rhoads' staff, Matthew Weingartner, Aphasia Advocates, LIU Post Administrators, along with LIU Post Ladge Speech & Hearing Center staff & graduate students celebrate the ceremonial ribbon cutting of the Inaugural Aphasia Awareness Open House

On Wednesday, June 28, the LIU Post Ladge Speech and Hearing Center – the only one of its kind in the region— collaborated with New York State Senator Steve Rhoads to host a successful Inaugural Aphasia Awareness Open House. Aphasia is a disorder that affects more than 2 million people across the globe and results from damage to portions of the brain that are

responsible for language. Aphasia usually occurs suddenly, often following a stroke or head injury, but it may also develop slowly, as the result of a brain tumor or a progressive neurological disease. The disorder impairs the expression and understanding of language as well as reading and writing. The Open House welcomed people from across Long Island to learn more about Aphasia, get their questions answered, and help individuals with Aphasia get the resources they need to live a better life.

The inspiration for this Open House came from Senator Rhoads' constituent, Matthew Weingartner, a 35-year-old from Salisbury who lives with Aphasia and gets treatment from the LIU Post Aphasia Center. Matthew had a stroke on April 18, 2018, and as a result of his stroke, has been left with Aphasia. Matthew has said the only way to describe Aphasia is to imagine understanding what people are saying to you, and knowing what you want to say back to them, but not being able to get the words out. Since his stroke, Matthew has been in active recovery and has made major strides in his rehabilitation. Matthew hopes that his story will be an inspiration to all that suffer from Aphasia, as well as raise awareness for those who are unfamiliar to this little-known disease. Matthew finds value in sharing his story to raise awareness about Aphasia and to make others feel supported and seen.

Open House attendees were able to hear first-hand patient's stories about their triumphs over Aphasia and see the amazing work done by the very dedicated medical staff, program supervisors, and graduate students at LIU Post. The Open House provided a unique opportunity to observe an Aphasia support group in action as well as witness fun interactive therapy sessions like boxing and "name that tune" that help Aphasia patients re-develop their speech, motor, and social skills. Patients at the Aphasia Center come from a variety of backgrounds and work together to accomplish their goals.

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*"Passing my Senate Resolution proclaiming June as Aphasia Awareness Month throughout New York State and hosting the Aphasia Center Open House are big steps forward towards raising more awareness about Aphasia and the resources available to those suffering in silence. Aphasia is a loss of language, but not a loss of intellect. With more than 2 million individuals suffering from Aphasia, this presented a tremendous opportunity to do so much good. It was a pleasure to work with LIU Post and Matthew Weingartner in coordinating the Open House to assist those with Aphasia in securing necessary services and treatments to reach their full potential.*

*Matthew Weingartner is truly an inspirational leader who whole-heartedly spreads his positive message of hope as he shares his healing journey and helps give back to his community,” said Senator Rhoads.*

“This was a very successful first Aphasia Fair,” **said Matthew Weingartner.** He added, “We hope that this will lead to bigger and more information being spread regarding Aphasia to come in the future!”

“The Ladge Speech and Hearing Center at LIU Post is honored to play a part in promoting Aphasia Awareness. It is a cause that we hold dear and our involvement aligns with our mission to provide a superior learning and mentoring experience for our students, while offering quality patient care. We are committed to assisting each individual in achieving his or her maximum potential in functional skills for day-to-day living. Our Aphasia Center exemplifies these values and we had an amazing time at our Inaugural Aphasia Awareness Open House at the Ladge Speech and Hearing Center this past Wednesday. It was great to see the public be able to experience first-hand the services that we offer to Aphasia patients, and to see what a tight-knit community is created at the center. We hope to host more Open House events in the future where more people can learn about Aphasia and what courses of action we are taking to help our patients. Most people in America (85% of the public, in fact) are unaware of what Aphasia is. This means that individuals who receive this diagnosis, following a stroke or brain injury, and their families can often feel a sense of isolation and not know where to turn. We are thrilled to have a small role in moving Aphasia Awareness forward, shedding a light on this diagnosis, and informing people regarding treatments that are available- and very importantly that they are not alone! We look forward to a world in which Aphasia is not a word shrouded in mystery, and where those affected by it feel supported and are readily aware of treatments and professionals who are available to help them,” **said Lori M. Newman, Clinical Director/Assistant Professor Communication Sciences and Disorders Department at LIU Post.**