

# Hearing aid business owner says she likes to help people

WEST BOYLSTON — Living with hearing loss can be mildly annoying or it can have a significant impact on one's life. Annette Norris, owner, founder, and hearing instrument specialist at Hearing Your Way, has established a new business to help those with hearing impairments.

Hearing Your Way, is at 26 West Boylston St., in the United Bank plaza.

Regular hours will be Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

"This was a great location," Ms. Norris said. "It's right on a main street. My hope is that through word of mouth and direct mailings, we can let people know we are here."

Hearing problems are fairly common. The National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders reports that about 15 percent of American adults – 37.5 million – report some trouble hearing.

The risk increases with age. The Institute says 8.5 percent of adults ages 55 to 64 have disabling hearing loss, and that increases to 25 percent for those 65 to 74, and 50 percent for those over 75.

Ms. Norris suggested having a hearing test every few years, ideally beginning at age 55, but definitely after age 65.

"People wait an average of seven years to come in, after noticing some sort of hearing loss," she said. "If you do it every few years, you can stay on top of it, and then see any differences right away."

Ms. Norris has nine years of experience in helping people hear well. She and her husband, Paul, have four daughters, and she was home with her girls when they were young.

"Once the youngest was in high school, I decided to go back into the workforce," she said. I knew an audiologist that was a good friend and still is, and started to work with her.

The Doctor who founded New England Hearing Instruments in Shrewsbury, hired Ms. Norris to help at the reception desk.

"I found I was good with the patient's," Ms. Norris said. "The doctor saw I liked the technology and



Hearing instrument specialist and owner of Hearing Your Way, Annette Norris, displays a model of the workings of the ear at the reception for Hearing Your Way, in West Boylston. Paul Connors Photo

problem solving aspect, so she asked if I would like to become a hearing instrument specialist.” Such specialists must pass a national exam, and complete a two year training and apprenticeship. Ms. Norris completed her training at New England Hearing.

After a few years, however, New England Hearing Instruments was sold, and Ms. Norris said the new company was more focused on the selling aspect than made her comfortable.

“I’d get in front of a patient and was told to sell to them,” she said. “ I enjoyed the helping aspect. If I could give hearing aids for free, and make a living at it, I would.”

Ms. Norris decided it was time to strike out on her own, and offer quality hearing services at reasonable prices. Her hearing aids average \$1,750 a pair, she said.

The process for obtaining hearing aids is relatively simple. Patients may bring their own test results to Hearing Your Way, and Ms. Norris can use that information to fit them with a hearing aid. If a patient has not had a test, Ms. Norris can do that as well.

“I always make sure there is no ear wax,” she said. “I tell them to ask their doctors if they checked for ear wax. It can cause distortions, and lead to trouble with discriminating sounds.”

Ms. Norris has her patients use the hearing aids for 30 days, and has them come back in at the two-week mark.

“Hearing happens in the brain,” she said. “We connect on the opposite sides, so the right ear helps the left side of the brain, and vice versa. The brain needs time to adjust.”

This also means, Ms. Norris said, that satisfactory hearing helps with other health issues, such as dementia and Alzheimer’s disease, along with improving a patient’s overall quality of life.

Along with regular hearing tests, Ms. Norris confirmed another important way to keep one’s hearing healthy is not to put anything in your ears – not cotton swabs, or keys, or bobby pins.

“If you get a little cut, you can introduce infection or bacteria,” she said. **Please call Annette Norris at 774-327-3451 to schedule an appointment and Save Money, Hear Better.**



[Hearingyourway.com](http://Hearingyourway.com)