

Sackville Hearing Centre celebrates 20 years



Sackville Hearing Centre is located in the Vimiga Professional Centre at 294 Cobequid Road, Lower Sackville.

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PHOTOS BY JENNY GILLIS

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When Dr. Susan English-Thompson opened the doors of Sackville Hearing Centre back in 1999, she didn't have any employees — except for the days she needed to bring her infant daughter along.

She says the beginning “feels like yesterday.” She'd been living in Lower Sackville and commuting an hour to Truro, working at Willow Hearing Care, when she finally pursued her dream of opening her own practice closer to home.

“Lower Sackville felt like the perfect place because there wasn't a hearing clinic anywhere in the area,” remembers Dr. English-Thompson, owner and Managing Audiologist of Sackville Hearing Centre. “Lower Sackville was where we were sending our kids to school and raising our family, so I wanted to be working in the community.”

She leased space next to Vogue Optical on Sackville Drive, and opened the doors of Sackville

Hearing Centre on May 3, 1999. Now, it's a full two decades later, and she'll be celebrating 20 years in business with a special event on Tuesday, Sept. 24.

“It's a way for us to thank the community for supporting us,” says Dr. English-Thompson. “This is a huge milestone. Sometimes it feels surreal that it's been that long — that 1999 was 20 years ago!”

In those early days, she eventually hired a part-time secretary to work only two days a week. By the time Sackville Hearing Centre was two years old, the secretary was full-time and Dr. English-Thompson had hired another audiologist — and the business just kept growing.

“It was scary to go out on my own, especially while trying to raise a young family. You don't know if people are going to come to you,” says Dr. English-Thompson. “

But then, suddenly, it's 20 years later, you've got high-quality people on your team and you're more successful than you could ever have imagined. Our word-of-mouth business is huge.”

After a couple of different rentals and 10 years in business, it felt like the right time to purchase land and build her own space. Since Dr. English-Thompson's husband owns Sackville Chiropractic Clinic, they joined forces to

build the modern, energy-efficient VIMIGA Professional Centre on Cobequid Road.

The Light Star award winning, carbon-neutral building uses solar chimneys and collectors, in-floor radiant heat, a geothermal heat pump for heating and cooling, evacuated solar tubes for heat and domestic hot water, light shelves, high-

performance window glazing, gutter-free roofing, and LED lighting throughout!

“It was important to us that we stay in Lower Sackville,” says Dr. English-Thompson. “We wouldn't be where we are without the support of our community here.”

Today, Certified Audiologist Alyson Earle, Hearing Instrument Specialist Monica Burke and Client

Care Specialists Josée Dominick and Miranda DeBaie round out the Sackville Hearing Centre team.

“You can tell when someone is really engaged and passionate about what they do, and that's our crew,” says Dr. English-Thompson. “Everyone here loves what we do. You just can't do this for 20 years without it having a positive impact on your life.”

While Earle, Lead Certified Audiologist Lyndsay Bozec and Client Care Specialist Rachel Amirault technically work in Dr. English-Thompson's other location — Alderney Hearing Centre in downtown Dartmouth — Dr. English-Thompson says they all band together to help keep both practices running smoothly.

“I really do have the best team. They don't see it as ‘my patient’ or ‘your patient’ — they're very willing to work together and help each other out,” says Dr. English-Thompson. “We all take pride in our work, and I couldn't do this without each of them.”

While Dr. English-Thompson says she won't be at the helm of Sackville Hearing Centre forever, she hopes the business remains in its current location “for a long time yet to come.”

“We've built up a huge clientele and a good reputation. People trust us,” says Dr. English-Thompson. “As long as the people here love what they're doing, and our patients continue to trust us, we're going to take it as far as we can.”



Dr. Susan English-Thompson, owner and Managing Audiologist of Sackville Hearing Centre.

What you hear (or don't hear) affects your quality of life

When someone is experiencing hearing loss, Dr. Susan English-Thompson says they're often initially in denial and don't want to seek help — even though they may be suffering from serious feelings of isolation.

“Not being able to hear properly can negatively affect a person's quality of life because they always feel left out,” says Dr. English-Thompson, owner and Managing Audiologist of Sackville Hearing Centre. “They're afraid they're going to say something embarrassing or off-topic because they can't hear what's being said around them, so they tend to back off and stay quiet.”

If you can't remember the last time you had a hearing test,

chances are you're due for another.

“Just like you get blood pressure checked, your cholesterol checked, and your vision checked, get your hearing checked, too,” says Dr. English-Thompson. “It amazes us when we ask someone for their history and learn they're just having their first hearing test in their 70s!”

She believes in a “cradle to grave” approach where people receive a hearing test shortly after they're born and continue to get hearing tests every 5-10 years up to the age of 55 — at which point, hearing tests are scheduled for every two years.

If you work in an especially noisy environment — such as in the manufacturing, aviation or automotive industries — Dr. English-Thompson says you should be especially vigilant about checking your hearing to see if

it's being negatively impacted and always use hearing protection.

“It's not a matter of just ‘Oh, I can hear OK’ or ‘I can hear most things,’” says Dr. English-Thompson. “Your ear health is tied to your brain health. Research shows that untreated hearing loss — even if it's very mild — can have a serious impact on brain function.

Even if you're confident you're not having any trouble hearing, Dr. English-Thompson says it's important to go for a hearing test anyway. The results are kept on file, providing a “baseline” of your hearing at any given point — which becomes helpful down the road, as your hearing changes.

You don't need a doctor's referral to come to Sackville Hearing Centre. Dr. English-Thompson says anyone can self-refer and schedule themselves an appointment, during which you'll get a full assessment to find out what's happening with your hearing.

If a patient is experiencing hearing loss, the team at Sackville Hearing Centre can outfit them with comfortable devices to enhance their hearing and provide counseling and techniques on how to best deal with the loss. Dr. English-Thompson says most patients “can't believe the difference” it makes to their quality of life — especially when it comes to interactions with family and friends.

“They're happy to be engaged in conversations and be a part of everything. All of these brain connections that were once compromised because of their hearing loss are being activated again,” says Dr. English-Thompson. “We know there's a relationship between hearing loss and cognitive decline and dementia. Now that people are living longer than ever,

we want to make sure they're living longer well.”

'We're focused on people, not products'

Dr. Susan English-Thompson says sometimes the assumption is that a hearing aid is simply popped inside a person's ear and switched on, but it's a much more involved process.

“It's not like going in for glasses, getting a prescription, picking up your new frames and maybe needing the nosepiece tweaked,” explains Dr. English-Thompson, owner and Managing Audiologist of Sackville Hearing Centre.

“We're putting miniaturized, high-end electronics in your ears and working with your auditory system to see how it reacts — and if you haven't heard correctly in five or more years, you'll need a qualified professional to walk you through it. You need an audiologist to be your partner in the process.”

She says hearing aid technology has “changed so much” in recent years and continues to get better all the time. Sackville Hearing Centre relies on products from five of the world's top hearing aid manufacturers to provide patients with a wide variety of options at different price points.

Hearing Healthcare Providers work with each patient to find the best device for their unique needs, and Sackville Hearing Centre's online testimonials include rave reviews from patients who appreciate they're “never pressured” into purchasing the most expensive models.

“The big thing is to trust your audiologist because they've got your best interest at heart,” says Dr. English-Thompson. “We offer aural rehabilitation classes twice a year so our clients can learn even more ways to effectively manage their hearing loss to maximize their quality of life and maintain their dignity. It's very important to us that our patients feel comfortable.”

While some patients are “skeptical and a little scared” about the decision to get hearing aids, Dr. English-Thompson says “nothing is more moving” than walking them through the process of restoring their hearing.

“They start to cry sometimes because they can't believe how much better their hearing is, and they're quite aware of how much they were missing out on before,” says Dr. English-Thompson. “You can never get a better pay-off than that. It's very emotional for us, too.”



The Sackville Hearing Centre team is comprised of **Miranda DeBaie**, Client Care Specialist (back row, from left); **Josee Dominick**, Client Care Specialist; **Monica Burke**, Hearing Instrument Specialist; **Alyson Earle**, Certified Audiologist (front row, from left) and **Dr. Susan English-Thompson**, Audiologist.

How often should your hearing be tested?

- When you're born (before you leave the hospital)
- When you're five years old (typically done during elementary school registration)
- Every 5-10 years after that, until the age of 55
- When you're 55 or older, you should have your hearing tested at least every two years

To schedule a hearing test, please call Sackville Hearing Centre at (902) 865-4455.