

# Foundation has area resident hearing again

Beltone comes to the aid of Carrollton man

BY ERIN MCSWAIN  
THE TIMES-GEORGIAN

Leo Payment suffers from diabetes, has undergone a quadruple heart bypass and has survived two strokes.

He also has severe hearing loss, and was desperate to hear his loved ones again, especially his granddaughter who speaks softly.

But the 64-year-old Carrollton resident has no financial means to purchase new hearing aids. So he wrote an emotional letter to the Beltone Hearing Care Foundation to request them.

On Friday, Payment was selected and fitted for new hearing aids provided by the foundation.

“He has developed this loss over his entire life,” said Pat Allison, a licensed hearing instrument specialist. “With these hearing aids we will be able to program them, through a computer, to his exact needs. We have to adjust them over a period of time because if we were to set it at the exact degree that he needs, it would shock-startle him.”

Allison said that when a person has a hearing loss, the brain misses out on certain sounds and it will forget how to understand speech. Once it gets to a certain point, hearing aids would be useless and nothing could be done.

“I have three grandchildren,” said Payment. “It is so difficult to understand them even though they talk clearly.”

Allison said that Payment’s type of hearing loss is quite common. He said that to many people it seems to be a joke, but those with severe hearing loss can develop family and marriage problems.

“He can hear low frequencies but certain high voices, like some women and children, he can’t hear,” said Allison. “He can hear the words but some he can’t differentiate like ‘late’ and ‘lake.’ With these hearing aids, he will be able to hear the difference between them.”

Allison took Payment through the steps on how to put them on. Using a computer, Allison turned on the hearing aids and Payment



Photos by Melanie Boyd/Times-Georgian

Pat Allison shows Leo Payment how to place his hearing aid inside his left ear.



Pat Allison fits a hearing aid into Leo Payment’s ear.

was able to pick up sounds his brain could not. Payment could hear the rainfall outside the window, the crumpling of paper, and keys jingling.

“I am most excited to hear my grandchildren speak,” said Payment. “My granddaughter speaks so softly and I can hardly ever hear her. I constantly had to tell her to speak up because I could never hear her.”

Allison said the difficult thing about a hearing loss is that it happens slowly over a period of time. Many people who experience it do not notice it.

“Payment has the most common hearing loss, but unfortunately the toughest to treat,” said Allison. “He is always going to

misunderstand words but with the hearing aids, we will be able to stop that nerve damage process and that is why we offer the lifetime care so it will never get worse from this point on.”

Allison said that only about four people in the Atlanta area were selected by the Beltone foundation for new hearing aids.

“This is all new to me,” said Payment. “It feels so good to hear everything going on now, and I never thought that this would happen. I am very happy to have been selected by the foundation for these hearing aids. My grandchildren do not know about me getting these new hearing aids so it will be a great surprise for them.”