

An International Hearing

Thrive Hearing & Tinnitus owner travels to Denmark for conference

BY MICHAEL WARD

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Dr. Casie Keaton of Thrive Hearing & Tinnitus Solutions acknowledges that many tinnitus sufferers often feel like they have no hope for relief of their symptoms.

“People can be so debilitated by it and have so few resources,” she said. “The more I can raise awareness – that there are things we can do and there are people who are trained to deal with this – the better.”

The American Tinnitus Association notes, “Tinnitus is the perception of sound when no actual external noise is present. While it is commonly referred to as ‘ringing in the ears,’ tinnitus can manifest many different perceptions of sound, including buzzing, hissing, whistling, swooshing and clicking.”

Keaton first encountered tinnitus patients 10 years ago working for an ear, nose and throat facility in Charlotte, N.C., as a clinical audiologist. She specifically remembers a man in his 30s with young children, “sitting across from me pleading, ‘help me with my tinnitus.’”

After researching the condition, she later took a clinical specialist position with Neuromonics, where she trained clinicians to provide treatment and developed protocols, while also working with patients to make sure they were successful with their therapy.

“(Neuromonics) developed a treatment for tinnitus,” she acknowledged. “I helped tinnitus patients all day, every day. I saw the worst of the worst, helping them to get better. Through that, I developed a passion for it.”

Keaton noted many tinnitus patients often hear from doctors that nothing can be done to treat their condition. Thrive focuses on issues specific to a patient’s hearing through sound therapy, which can use music, nature sounds and other sounds to help ease the stress associated with tinnitus.

“It really can be a physiological response to sound,” she said of the stress response, noting for many tinnitus sufferers, the brain recognizes the noise as threatening or harmful. “(Sound therapy helps) them get to the root of that and work to counteract that.”

Knowing the need for specialty tinnitus practices, Keaton opened Thrive in November 2013 in Eads.

“I always knew I wanted to open my own practice,” she said, adding she wanted the training and experience to do it properly, which she gained at Neuromonics and in Charlotte. She earned a Bachelor of Science in communication disorders from Auburn University in 2002, a master’s degree in audiology from the University of South Alabama in 2004 and a doctorate in audiology from the University of Florida in 2007.

With her parents living in Brownsville, Keaton chose to move to the area and open in Eads so her daughter could be closer to her grandparents. Initially sharing a building with an optometrist, Thrive soon outgrew its space in Eads, leaving Keaton to look for a new location.

“Collierville was always my target,” she acknowledged. “It’s just a really good fit. I’ve always loved the community, loved the Square and wanted to be a part of that.”

Keaton moved her practice to Collierville in July at 165 N. Main St. Suite 102C inside the Magnolias on Main complex.

“It has been amazing,” she said. “I love the character and history that Collierville has. I love the authenticity of it.”

In early December, Keaton was one of three Americans, and 15 people worldwide, invited to participate in a mini seminar – “Tinnitus Challenge: Moving Forward with Person Centered Care” – presented by the Ida Institute in Skodsborg, Denmark.

Based in Denmark, the Ida Institute is a non profit organization focused on creating a better understanding of the human side of hearing loss.

“This was their first conference on tinnitus,” Keaton noted. “Our main focus was to collaborate on ideas and projects to help impact tinnitus patients worldwide.”

While she doesn’t have research published specifically regarding tinnitus, Keaton’s training protocols that she helped develop with Neuromonics have since been spread online and used by other people, leading to her becoming more well-known and helping earn an invitation to the seminar.

“It was amazing,” she said of the event. “(Knowing) there are as many passionate and caring people committed to this population, that was exciting. There are people out there every day working on a cure for tinnitus.”

Keaton is hopeful that a group project from the seminar designed to get newly diagnosed patients immediate, helpful information regarding tinnitus will soon see the light of day.

Wanting to bring another international idea to the United States, Keaton said she’s focusing her attention on becoming a hearing therapist, a counseling-based approach that is currently being used in the United Kingdom.

“My goal is to be the first U.S. hearing therapist,” she acknowledged. “It’s just (focused on) counseling. Helping patients understand their hearing loss, tinnitus and how to manage those emotions and feelings that are around those issues. In the U.S., we have nothing like that.”

Ultimately, Keaton wants to reach as many people as possible who are suffering from tinnitus and help them live more comfortable lives.

“I want patients to know there is hope, because it can be such a hopeless condition,” she said.

For more information on Thrive Hearing & Tinnitus Solutions, visit thrivehearingandtinnitus.com or call 651.3649.



Courtesy Photo

Dr. Casie Keaton of Thrive Hearing & Tinnitus Solutions.