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The Prescott and Sandy Seckel and Valerie West Fluency Scholarship

Gabe and Sheryl Hunter's son Logan began stuttering at age three, becoming one of the approximately 3 million Americans who stutter. Although Logan still deals with the condition, he is excelling academically as a second-grader and gaining confidence in many areas of his young life due in large part to the support of his family and services received through the Communication Sciences & Disorders (CSD) Speech/Language & Hearing Clinic at USF. In gratitude for all the support, the Hunters have established a scholarship fund at USF to help other children as well as adults who struggle with speech challenges.

The Prescott and Sandy Seckel and Valerie West Fluency Scholarship Fund was established in 2010 by Gabe and Sheryl Hunter in honor of their parents who have shown an unwavering dedication to their children and grandchildren. The Seckel-West Fluency Scholarship Fund will help support graduate students in the College of Behavioral and Community Sciences’ department of communications sciences and disorders who are specializing in fluency issues, specifically stuttering, and their research dedicated to the discovery of the cause, improved treatments and potentially a cure.

The Hunters chose USF for establishing this fund because their family has greatly benefited from the services of the USF CSD clinic, because of the quality of the clinic's leadership, and because the university is located in their community. USF also hosts the annual Youth Day for the National Stuttering Association of which Sheryl serves on the board and works as the co-chairman of family programs for 25 youth chapters nationwide.

Added to the timeliness of this scholarship is the recent release of the movie The King's Speech starring Colin Firth as King George VI, a real-life British king who dealt with stuttering, but unexpectedly rose to the throne and worked with a speech therapist to prepare for a key address. The movie, and Colin Firth's appearance on The Late Show with David Letterman to talk about the movie, helps bring an awareness to stuttering that is appreciated by the Hunters.

As quoted in the St. Petersburg Times, Sheryl Hunter says “hearing him [Firth] say stuttering has nothing to do with intelligence, and knowing people who watch Letterman heard that, is really significant to us. It would be naïve to think that a significant speech impediment doesn't make relationships, employment, public situations and maintaining confidence in the world more difficult, as is made evident in The King's Speech.”

For more information about The Prescott and Sandy Seckel and Valerie West Fluency Scholarship Fund or the USF Speech/Language & Hearing Clinic and its many services available to the community, contact Theresa Chisolm at (813) 974-9826 or chisolm@usf.edu.