

# Harry the Hair Cell wants to help save your hearing

There's Jabba the Hutt, Vlad the Impaler, even Harry the Horse from "Guys and Dolls."

Will Harry the Hair Cell achieve equal fame? The Denver-based Center for Hearing, Speech and Language has rolled out the harried one to serve as its "spokes-character," teaching folks about noise-induced hearing loss and to wear hearing protection in noisy areas.

Harry, who began life as a little-known follicle, represents one hair cell in the inner ear, and talks about how loud noises make him sick. Not only that, but he'll wail about it in both English and Spanish as he tries to preserve your hearing.

The center's Harmony the mannikin has a similar function. Her job description includes visiting schools, businesses, health fairs and other events to measure the decibel level of MP3 players and teach about the impact of volume level on hearing.

## Street Talk



Bruce Goldberg

"I thought it would be a great educational tool to bring into our company," says the center's Nathan Hall. "It's a visual tool that allows you to capture their interest so you can take the next step and do the educational piece and make them aware."

Are they getting through loud and clear? "We hope so," says Jill Wayne, the center's executive director and an audiologist. "The problem with noise-induced hearing loss is even elementary-age schoolchildren are showing [its] effects. We live in a pretty noisy world. Also, kids today, everybody's got things in their ears: iPods, MP3 players, Game Boys, all the online stuff. There's a fair amount of documentation; as you move into the teenage years, it becomes [worse]."

The center has 28 employees, and an office in Colorado Springs. It offers audiology services, speech language learning therapies, and an evaluation and hearing conservation program. It tests workers in industrial manufacturing to ensure OSHA compliance. The center also screens 5,600 schoolchildren annually — for hearing, vision and language development — through its KidsScreen program, serving low-income and other kids at inner-city and parochial preschools as well as day-care centers.

The center, which dates to 1918, also has a program called RISE (Read, Imagine, Share and Explore) aimed at low-income 3- to 5-year-olds, which reaches about 230 kids annually.

You can read more about Harry at [chsl.org/harry](http://chsl.org/harry). Got a noisy workplace? Call the center at 303-322-1871.



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