

Stuttering no longer obstacle for Dinwiddie County woman

Training gives 33-year-old new outlook on speaking

Dinwiddie resident Shannon Taylor of McKenney wasn't surprised by release of a groundbreaking study published in this month's *New England Journal of Medicine*, which revealed a link between genetics and stuttering.

Stuttering runs across generations in her family and, she too, has the condition. Like many of the three million people across the United States who stutter, Taylor's speech condition eroded her confidence and served as a constant barrier during school, at work and in social settings.

That all changed for Taylor in 2009 after participating in an intensive stuttering treatment program at the Hollins Communications Research Institute (HCRI) in Roanoke.

She spent 100 hours over 12 days retraining faulty speech muscle behaviors that cause stuttering with new muscle activities that generate fluent speech.

For the first time in her life, Taylor was able to control her stuttering and speak fluently.

"When I graduated from college a little more than a year ago, I knew I needed to make fluency a priority in my life if I was going to achieve my full potential," she said. Taylor was employed by DuPont while she attended college and wanted to position herself upon graduation for greater



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responsibility with the company. She researched different stuttering therapy programs and enrolled in HCRI's stuttering treatment because "the therapy is designed to work in the real world – and that's exactly what I needed."

Taylor, 33, is the daughter of Thomas & Linda Hawk of Wilsons. She's a 2008 graduate of Strayer University, where she graduated Summa Cum Laude.

Her parents are well-known for their two family-owned & operated businesses--Triple T Auctions (Tack, Tools, & Things) and Tom's

Painting & Contracting.

It didn't take long for Taylor's newly acquired speech skills to begin opening doors of opportunity. When she returned from therapy to her job as an administrative assistant at the DuPont Spruance site, she was approached by management to serve as co-chair of the Spruance Women's Network.

"The new role I played required me to speak in front of management and staff on a regular basis. I would have never been able to do that before going through HCRI stuttering treatment.

"Now I consider public speaking opportunities a chance to put my fluency skills to the test and help make a difference in the lives of others," Taylor explained. "Learning to speak fluently whenever and wherever I choose has changed my life. HCRI's stuttering therapy was hard work and it takes daily practice. Yet, it has made a remarkable difference in what I can do every day," she said.

Taylor is engaged in one additional volunteer initiative that is close to her heart – helping other people who stutter. Upon completion of her stuttering therapy in 2009, she organized a fluency practice group for HCRI therapy participants across the U. S.

For her leadership and dedication to volunteerism, Taylor has been nominated to receive the Chesterfield Public Education Foundation's Bravo! Award. The award recognizes people who have made remarkable contributions to their professions and communities.