

**For Immediate Release**

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**Lighthouse Foundation Provides Digital Hearing Aids to Low-Income Georgians**  
***Foundation Improves and Expands Hearing Program***

**ATLANTA (Nov.1, 2007)** – Today, the Georgia Lions Lighthouse Foundation launched a new expanded program providing low-income Georgians facing hearing loss with digital hearing aids. The program was created in partnership with the Georgia Public Service Commission, Unitron, EM-Tech and over 100 audiologist and hearing aid dispensers throughout the state. The program will provide hearing aids for up to 800 legal Georgia residents with income below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. Hearing aids will be distributed through state-licensed hearing care providers to eligible persons 21 years of age or older.

”The Lighthouse Foundation has been one of the only low-cost hearing aid solutions for Georgians on a fixed income for more than 30 years,” said Executive Director Christina Lennon. “Through this expansion, we will be able to provide Georgians in need with a higher quality hearing aid with digital technology, instead of the analog aids offered before, improving the quality of life for hundreds of people throughout the state.”

The expanded program is funded in part by a grant from the Georgia Public Service Commission as a result of provisions in HB 655. This bill, sponsored by Rep. Bob Smith (R-Watkinsville), added “other hearing technology” to the list of acceptable uses of the Telecommunications Relay Fund (TRS), which already included relay service, reading services for the blind, and distribution of telecommunications equipment. Supplemental funding is provided through small co-payments made by the hearing aid clients, private donations and other grants.

The client cost of hearing aids provided by the Lighthouse Foundation is based on a sliding scaled determined by household income. The cost to the client includes the earmold, impressions and four visits to the hearing provider. Co-payments for the program range from

\$60 to \$205 per hearing aid, making the aids some of the most affordable for Georgia residents, and the Foundation's program like few others in the country.

Ensuring broad reach and service capacity, the Lighthouse Foundation partners with audiologists and hearing aid professionals throughout the state who volunteer their time and services to Lighthouse clients. "Our hearing program will ultimately improve the accessibility of hearing aids for Georgians," said Hearing Services Director, Sharifa Peart. "Partnerships with hearing care providers throughout the state of GA allow us to have an impact in communities throughout the state."

The demand for hearing aids continues to grow, which demonstrates the critical need for programs like the Lighthouse Foundation's. According to the Hearing Aid Association of America, one in every 10 Americans – or 28 million Americans – has hearing loss. As baby boomers reach retirement age starting in 2010, this number is expected to rapidly climb and nearly double by the year 2030. Ninety-five percent of Americans with hearing loss can be successfully treated with hearing aids; however, only 22 percent of people with hearing loss – or more than 6 million individuals – currently use them.

Individuals interested in applying for the Lighthouse Foundation Hearing Aid program may apply by downloading an application at [www.lionslighthouse.org](http://www.lionslighthouse.org) or calling 404-325-3630.

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