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**A Record-Setting Year for the Starkey Hearing Foundation**

*Foundation ahead of schedule to fit one million hearing aids this decade*

MINNEAPOLIS (February 19, 2013) – The Starkey Hearing Foundation expanded its efforts to record levels in 2012. Fitting more than 131,000 hearing aids to people in need, the foundation surpassed its Clinton Global Initiative commitment of fitting 100,000 hearing aids annually. At this rate, it is 25 percent ahead of schedule for fitting one million people this decade.

Hearing missions are the primary way Starkey Hearing Foundation realizes its goal: *So the World May Hear*. This past year, the foundation’s team of audiologists and staff conducted international and domestic hearing missions in 65 cities across 25 countries. The foundation changed lives with the gift of hearing in nine new countries in 2012, including Ethiopia, Lebanon, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, China, Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria and Liberia — expanding its reach to more than 100 countries.

Most recently, the team fit more than 100 people, including nearly 50 children, with customized, free hearing devices at two missions in New Orleans on February 1 and 2, leading up to the professional football championship game. Starkey was joined by celebrity and professional athlete volunteers, including country music superstar Garth Brooks, American Idol winner Jordin Sparks and NFL players Craig Stevens of the Tennessee Titans, Greg Jennings from the Green Bay Packers, Kyle Rudolph from the Minnesota Vikings and Brian de la Puente from the New Orleans Saints.

“The Starkey Hearing Foundation has done a tremendous job impacting lives, and as an athlete and role model, I try to do the same,” said Jennings. “Starkey is one of the best charities I know that is trying to impact lives on a daily basis, not just once or twice a year.”

Celebrity and professional athlete volunteers commonly assist at the foundation’s missions where they witness the life-changing impact of this cause and support recipients as they are fitted with their new hearing aids, receive audio testing, counseling and instruction on how to care for their new devices, all courtesy of Starkey Hearing Foundation.

Says Sparks, who also attended a mission in Rwanda in 2011, “It was a lot of hard work, but it was really rewarding. It’s amazing to see the foundation’s reach is so much further than just here in the United States.” Sparks hopes to attend another mission in the future and says, “I’ll always be a fan of the Starkey Foundation.”

The Starkey Hearing Foundation looks forward to making an even bigger impact in 2013. Missions are being planned for Mexico, Haiti, South Africa, Tanzania, Cambodia, Papua New Guinea, India, Ethiopia, Malaysia, China, Uganda, Rwanda and the Philippines.

The foundation changes lives through more than just missions. This past year it launched the *Listen Carefully* teaching guide to nearly 500,000 students to educate them about hearing protection and care. The foundation also provided more than 8,500 digital hearing aids to Americans in need through *Hear Now*, a domestic program to help those in need, and recycled more than 45,000 used hearing aids.

The foundation’s largest fundraiser, The *So the World May Hear* Awards Gala, also set a new record in 2012, raising more than $7.6 million to support its work around the world.

“The team is excited for the new opportunities and adventures 2013 will bring,” said Bill Austin, founder of Starkey Hearing Foundation. “We are passionate about making a difference in people’s lives here and around the world by showing them that we care. Watching somebody light up as they hear for the first time is an incredible experience, and sharing that moment is something you never forget.”

According to Starkey Hearing Foundation, hearing loss is pervasive, affecting 34 million Americans — about one in ten. Yet, with the help of a hearing device, hearing loss can often be corrected, giving an individual the opportunity to better connect with their family, the community and the world around them.

More information about the foundation’s work can be found at Starkey Hearing Foundation’s [website](http://www.starkeyhearingfoundation.org), as well as via Starkey Hearing Foundation’s [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/StarkeyHearing) and [Twitter](http://twitter.com/starkeycares) pages.

***About Starkey Hearing Foundation***

Starkey Hearing Foundation uses hearing as a vehicle to reflect caring and improve the lives of individuals, families and communities around the world, by helping them reach their full potential. Hearing loss affects one in 10 Americans, and 63 million children worldwide, yet many do not have access to the hearing devices that can help them. Starkey Hearing Foundation fits and gives more than 100,000 hearing aids annually, and as a member of President Clinton’s Global Initiative, it has pledged to fit one million hearing aids this decade. In addition to giving the gift of hearing through worldwide hearing missions, Starkey Hearing Foundation promotes hearing health awareness and education through the Listen Carefully initiative and provides hearing instruments to low-income Americans through the Hear Now program. For more information on Starkey Hearing Foundation, visit www.starkeyhearingfoundation.org.

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