



# TWO

# THE SWAN

## Two Contestants on Fox Television's "The Swan" Reality Show Receive Hearing Treatments at the House Clinic

and had never told anyone about it. Perhaps because she'd had a difficult upbringing that led to low self-esteem, Lorraine didn't seek treatment for her hearing loss, nor did she try to learn sign language or lip-reading. She'd simply relied on visual cues or repetition to guess what people were saying. "Because Lorraine had never received treatment for her mild to moderate sensorineural hearing loss, I predicted that the benefits she'd receive from directional hearing aids in both ears would be significant and might present a real life change for her," said William H. Slattery, III, M.D.

On the day of Lorraine's second visit to the House Clinic, she began to cry as soon as her custom-fitted, Widex Senso Diva digital hearing aids were in place. "This is a very emotional moment for me because I can hear what everyone in the room is saying, and for years I've been asking people to repeat things for me over and over again – allowing them to assume I'm stupid because I don't always give the appropriate response to their questions," said Lorraine. "This will make a huge

**P**roducers of "The Swan" on FOX brought two of the television program's contestants to the renowned House Clinic to seek treatment for their hearing loss as part of their overall transformations. After undergoing comprehensive hearing tests,

contestants Lorraine Norus and Gina Davis consulted with ear specialist William H. Slattery III, M.D., who determined that both women would receive significant benefits from digital hearing aids. Clinical audiologist Melinda Switzer, Au.D. (Doctor of Audiology), researched different types of hearing aids to determine which ones would best target each patient's specific needs. She then fitted each woman with state-of-the-art hearing aids that delivered a greater level and quality of sound than either had experienced in years.

Lorraine Norus visited the House Clinic for the first time in early November 2004. Although her final "Swan" episode, which aired on November 29, 2004, did not highlight her hearing loss treatment as a major aspect of her transformation, it was a dramatic change for her. As Lorraine explained to Dr. Slattery and audiologist Melinda Switzer during her first visit, she'd lost her hearing over time

# SWANS

## Spread Their Wings

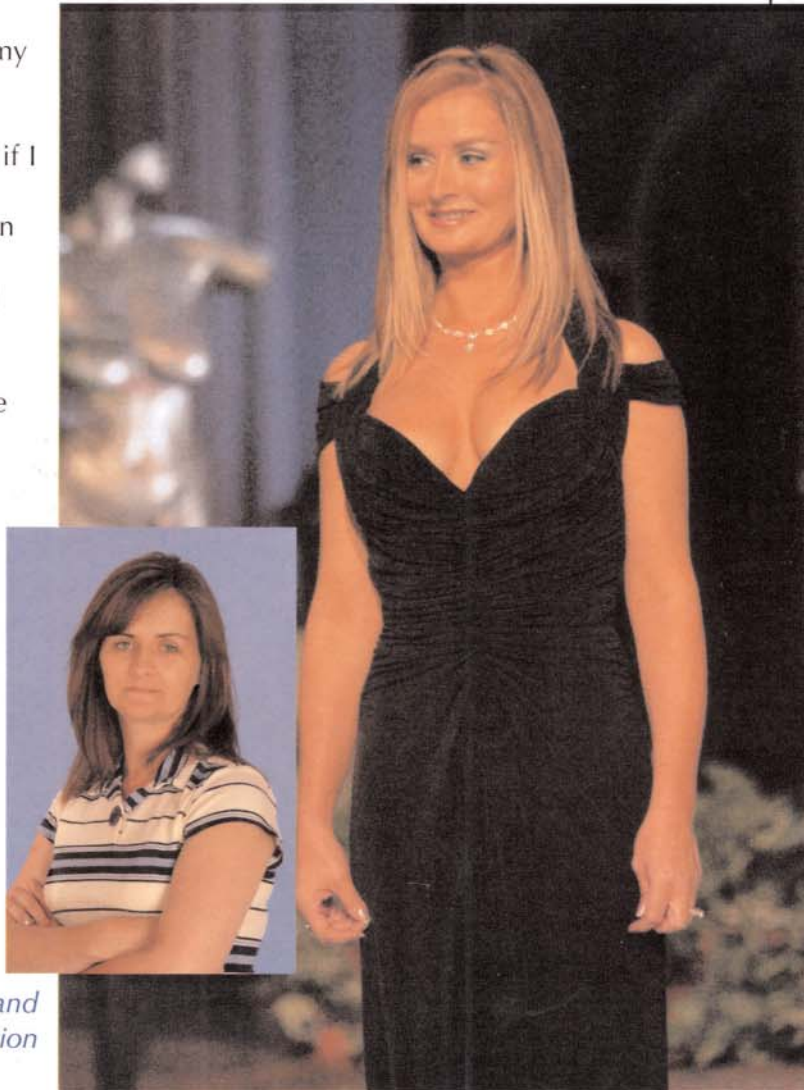
difference in my self-esteem and in how I interact with people."

Lorraine continued to reap the benefits of her hearing transformation once she returned home and went back to work at her job as a court clerk. "I was a little disappointed when the television program wasn't able to highlight the hearing loss aspect of my story, because hearing loss is such a major issue for relationships and quality of life," says Lorraine. "Before I got these hearing aids it took me twice as long to complete my tasks at work because I was trying to figure things out on my own with limited audio information. Since getting treatment for my hearing loss, my productivity at work is so much better! Now if I leave the house in the morning without remembering to put in my hearing aids, it can make or break my day. It is really stressful trying to perform at work without that added audio input."

Lorraine also finds that she is able to participate in more conversations than before and no longer feels left out when people are laughing at a joke. "Everyone notices the difference in me and in how I communicate. I'm more comfortable in conversations now, and I've already recommended these hearing aids to other people with hearing loss," says Lorraine.

Lorraine was happy to speak with *House Calls Magazine* about her life after the show. "We were so pampered and supported during the production of The Swan program that it wasn't easy to return to my regular routine at home and work, but getting treatment for my hearing loss has helped with the transition," Lorraine

reports. "Wearing digital aids in both ears is definitely a change for the better, and I'm glad to have the opportunity to share with your readers what I've learned from my experience. Never give up on yourself, and never sell yourself short, even if you have a problem like hearing loss. We are all special, and there is always hope and a way to get the medical care and help we need. I'm so glad I asked The Swan producers to assist me in seeking help from the House Clinic for my hearing loss."



*Lorraine Norus, before and after her transformation*



*Gina Davis, before and after her transformation*

Unlike Lorraine, Gina Davis had received support from her mother and early guidance in coping with hearing loss. She attended special school programs from kindergarten to junior high and learned to communicate through a combination of lip-reading and sign language. Nonetheless, Gina had lived with profound hearing loss all her life and was excited when producers of "The Swan" told her they'd scheduled an appointment for her at the renowned House Clinic and there was the possibility that, with appropriate treatment, she might be able to hear sound. Gina was overcome with emotion the day she received her Phonak Supero behind-the-ear (BTE) digital hearing aid and SmartLink™ FM wireless system. As soon as audiologist Melinda Switzer had fitted and tested the new aid, Gina announced she could hear even the softest sounds in the room like a producer whispering instructions to the cameraman as they prepared to film her interview for "The Swan." For the first time in her life, she could understand most of what was being said without relying on lip-reading or sign language. Then her audiologist carried the transmitter (microphone) of Gina's SmartLink system out into the hallway of the Clinic to test its effectiveness for verbal communication at a distance. Gina heard and understood every word – and burst into tears of joy. "Getting this hearing

*"I can hear my own voice, which I'd never heard before, and this helps me to improve my speech," says Gina.*

aid and FM system is definitely the most life-changing and important aspect of my transformation," Gina stated. "I just can't believe that I'm hearing so much, and I can't wait to go home and hear my son's voice." Now that the program has aired and Gina is back home, she is attending college as a full-time student. Where before she was getting poor grades and struggling as a part-time student, now she is getting top grades and is highly motivated in her courses. Not only can she hear her professors with no problem, she finds that hearing her own voice is instrumental in helping her improve her own speech. "The results with this hearing aid are even better than I'd expected," Gina tells us. "It's greatly improved my ability to hear, but what's even more striking is that I can hear my own voice, which I'd never heard before."

Gina also finds that she's not as frustrated and isolated by her hearing loss. "I want to thank Dr. Slattery, my audiologist Melinda, and the caring staff at the House Clinic for making me feel optimistic about my future. Before, I had lost hope and felt that I had no future to look forward to. Now I feel like I can spread my wings and fly." Gina's "Swan" episode aired on November 1, 2004, and she was a finalist in the December 2004 "Swan" pageant. ❖



*William H. Slattery, III, M.D. and clinical audiologist Melinda Switzer, Au.D., CCC-A*