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Audible Impact: Bridging the Gap Between Students and the Professional Community

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Jana Bataineh, Hiruni Lekamge, and Sarah Panza (left to right) are helping organize the Audible Impact Gala to fundraise for their class to attend the CAA conference in Moncton this year.

Professional development doesn't just happen in the classroom or the clinic, it happens in the community. For the Western University Audiology Class of 2027, the journey toward becoming clinicians is fueled by a desire to connect with those who paved the way. This spring, we are hosting the Audible Impact Alumni Gala 2026, an evening dedicated to celebrating our roots while looking toward the future of hearing healthcare.

Members of the Western CSD student council organizing committee Hiruni Madigapala Lekamge, Sarah Panza, and Jana Bataineh, shared their insights on the vision for this student-led initiative and the essential role the audiology community plays in supporting the next generation of clinicians.

Q: What was the inspiration behind the "Audible Impact" theme for this year's gala?

Jana: What I love about the audiology community is that we are small but mighty, we look out for each other and support each other, and we are hoping that this event will help reinforce that! As we prepare to go to CAA I think this is such a great way for students to see the community in action and be like a mini precursor for what to expect at CAA. We wanted to stress the concept of IMPACT because we know how impactful it will be for our classmates to see professionals and industry leaders come to an event like this and really support them. Beyond that, the sponsorships and funds raised from this event will have an impact for generations to come as we take our learnings and connections from the CAA conference and translate it to impactful hearing healthcare that ensures Canadians are hearing at their best!

Q: The proceeds from this event are specifically designated for the CAA Conference in Moncton. Why is that conference so important for your cohort?

Jana: Attending CAA is an annual tradition for each graduating audiology class at UWO. It’s kind of like a rite of passage as we prepare to graduate and enter into the profession. It was so cool to see the energy that the second years came back with after attending CAA this past year! Their posts on LinkedIn and their established connections with industry leaders that continued well after the conference was something that I wanted our class to experience too! This year’s event is in Moncton which is a bit farther away and means it will come with a bit more expenses. We want to make sure that everyone is able to attend CAA regardless of financial need. By fundraising for our trip to Moncton, we are ensuring that financial barriers don't stand in the way of our professional growth. It’s about starting our careers with the best possible foundation and we know that being at the CAA conference is one of the best ways to do that.

Q: What can guests expect from the evening?

Sarah: We’re doing a buffet dinner, live music, and interactive games! It's a great way to break the ice between students and professionals. It’s a semi-formal event, but we’re asking everyone to wear a 'Touch of Purple' to show some Western pride. Honestly, we just want it to be a night where people can connect, have a laugh, and celebrate our amazing community!

Q: How can the broader audiology community support this initiative if they cannot attend in person?

Hiruni: I am very pleased with all the responses from the community, especially the ones who are not able to attend the event. Since this is a student-run initiative through our Student Council, we are handling all the outreach and logistics directly. We welcome any type of donation along with well wishes for our fundraising event. Please read the attached brochure for details.

Q: "What is the one thing you want guests to walk away with after the night is over?"

Sarah: I hope our guests leave with a renewed sense of pride in the Western Audiology legacy. We want them to see the passion of the Class of 2027 and feel confident that the future of hearing healthcare in Canada is in capable, enthusiastic hands.

"The theme is 'Audible Impact.' In what ways have you seen alumni make an impact on your education so far?"

Jana: I always find it so inspiring that many of our professors in our program were once in our shoes and graduated from the exact same program! It shows you where the possibilities lie. It's also so cool to see the opportunities that exist to give back to the community as clinical educators, through nonprofit work, and leaders in the industry. I have loved learning from the experiences of alumni, whether it be through an entire course, a guest lecture, a conversation at the job fair, or through shadowing, they always have a wealth of experience and knowledge and allow you to recognize how many different opportunities exist in the field and how lucky you are to be a part of this profession.

What part of the evening are you most excited about?

Hiruni: I am really looking forward to welcoming our guests and having them enjoy reconnecting with old friends and celebrating our shared legacy!

Jana: I am really looking forward to meeting new people and learning from everyone's unique perspectives and experiences in the field! The sit-down dinner really gives us a chance to sit and talk with attendees and take away gems that I anticipate carrying forward with us for the rest of our careers.

Sarah: I'm most excited to see the 'Touch of Purple' theme in action! There's something so energizing about seeing a room full of students and professionals united by Western pride.

Event At-A-Glance

- **Date:** Saturday, April 25th, 2026
- **Time:** Doors open at 5:30 p.m. | Event 6:00 – 10:00 p.m.
- **Location:** The Wave, Western University (UCC 2nd Floor)
- **Tickets:** $65 for General Admission | Group rates available
- **RSVP:** https://forms.gle/szUqsM3axFyDJbFR9 Questions? email **smadigap@uwo.ca**
- Interested in **sponsoring this event**, email jbataine@uwo.ca

The Class of 2027 would like to extend a special thank you to our current sponsors for their unwavering support of student professional development.