Canadian Audiologist
The Official Publication of the Canadian Academy of Audiology

Todd and the Clothes Dryer

Published July 8th, 2024

Erin Picou, AuD., PhD, CCC-A

I know that this sounds like the title of a kid's book – Todd and the Clothes Dryer – but when I think of Dr. Todd Ricketts, I think of a clothes dryer – like the kind that dries clothes in garages or laundry rooms of many suburban American houses. Why a clothes dryer and not a hearing aid, you might be wondering? When I was a very recent PhD graduate and a very newly appointed faculty member, my husband and I needed to move from one Nashville home to another. Because Todd has a big heart, strong arms, and a kind spirit, he volunteered to help us move. I will never forget the experience of loading boxes into a moving truck, turning around, and seeing Dr. Todd Ricketts carrying my clothes dryer out of the front door of my old house. Growing tired of waiting for the dolly to be available, he'd wrapped his two long arms around the dryer, carried it out of the house, and eventually onto the moving truck. He even navigated a few stairs down from the front porch and then up the ramp onto the moving truck. This image of Todd Ricketts, single-handedly carrying a clothes dryer out of the goodness of his heart, is a nice memory and reflects some of my favorite things about Todd.

He never lets the lack of tools, resources, or even natural physics get in the way of accomplishing a task. As evidenced by the other stories in this issue, Todd has a long history of carrying heavy loads on behalf of students, colleagues, peers, patients, departments, institutions, national organizations, and international organizations. Don't know if directional microphones affect speech intelligibility? No problem – Todd will systematically evaluate them and distill the findings so they're clinically useful. Need to have graduate programs that train speech-language pathologists and audiologists? No problem – Todd will direct those programs and lead them to be continually ranked #1 in US News and World Report. Don't have the willpower to keep going because PhD training is difficult? No problem – Todd will support, mentor, and get your needed help. Want to run a triathlon as a lab, but you're afraid you'll be the only one participating? That is no problem. Todd will join and convince Ben Hornsby to do so as well.

That moving day garnered him the nickname the "Manimal" in my family. Although it was meant to reflect his ridiculous strength, I think it works professionally, too. No challenge is too big, no person is too junior, and no job is too challenging to receive help from the Manimal. I will be forever grateful this Manimal came into my life, not only because he occasionally moves dryers but because he continues to be a fantastic mentor, colleague, and friend. I am also grateful for his contributions to the field, which are no less herculean than dryer moving, but are decidedly more intellectual.