



The
Purple Heart
Magazine

November/December 2024



Camaraderie Among Combat-Wounded Veterans



Global Award-Winning Retrofit Could Help Millions, If Adopted by Hearing Industry

“It Fits the Fingertip!”

Millions of people get frustrated every day trying to insert their hearing aids, and many just give up. Now a simple, inexpensive hearing aid Retrofit provides a no-slip “groove” in the surface of the hearing aid, so the fingertip does not slip off during attempted insertion. The estimated cost? \$15 or less.

The Retrofit – called Gruv Button™ Retrofit – is a small, plastic sleeve that slides over the existing speaker, which is inserted into the ear canal. Crucially, the award-winning innovation provides the positive, no-slip interface – the groove – between the fingertip and the speaker end-surface, facilitating sufficiently deep insertion. As the developer describes it, “It Fits the Fingertip!”

The hearing aid insertion problem is pervasive and well-recognized. It is documented in a groundbreaking 2022 Hearing Industries Association-commissioned MarkeTrak survey, which revealed that 40 percent of new hearing aid users find it difficult to insert their hearing aids.

Frustration with insertion causes many to abandon their hearing care program entirely. This can lead to social isolation, cognitive decline, and other health, safety, and lifestyle related consequences. This is

Hearing Aid Retrofit

News Release

Jeffrey Szmanda

President, Each Ear, LLC

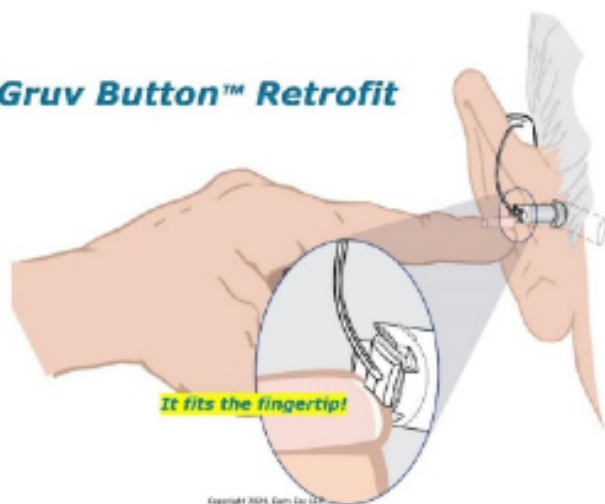
TROUBLE INSERTING THOSE HEARING AIDS? NO MORE HASSLES!

one of the industry's most widespread user-experience problems.

"This is a great example of why the hearing industry needs to 'get back to basics'," said Jeffery Szmanda, the inventor of the patented Gruv Button™ technology. "All of the industry's impressive sound processing technology is not as effective as it's intended to be, if the hearing aid speaker is not sufficiently deep in the ear canal."

The insertion issue also has medical implications: sufficiently deep insertion is necessary to a patient's ability to attain the prescribed level of amplification. Gruv Button™ technology is a vital improvement in sound therapy because it facilitates the delivery of each person's prescribed amplification.

Gruv Button™ Retrofit



2024 Global Hearing Industry Innovation Award

Gruv Button™ Retrofit, developed by Each

Ear LLC of Milwaukee, is the 2024 winner of the 5th Annual Hearing Technology Innovator Award, announced in September, in the Hearing Device Accessories category. The global award is offered by the Hearing Health & Technology Matters organization, an online resource for hearing professionals and consumers with hearing loss.

"The Innovator Awards are designed to shine a spotlight on the visionaries and companies turning groundbreaking hearing technology into tangible solutions," said Dr. Robert Traynor, a member of the 2024 Awards judging panel. "Companies like Each Ear LLC are driving the industry forward with their commitment to advancing technology and improving lives."

Dr. Aryn Amlani, president-elect of the Academy of Doctors of Audiology, who announced the Award, said that the category-winning entries offered "improved user experiences, and more patient-centered solutions. These advancements are shaping the future of hearing healthcare and enhancing patient care."

Besides this professional recognition, Gruv Button™ technology has received enthusiastic support from a wide variety of clinicians and consumers. "We need this thing!" said one Wisconsin hearing care clinician. "Great idea," said another. "Patients struggle with insertion on a daily basis." (A compendium of Testimonials is attached to this release.)

Opportunity for the Hearing Industry

“The use of Gruv Button’s™ technology – its unique and proven design, its ergonomic qualities, its flexibility, its universal application – is absolutely essential to any serious effort to solve the industry’s widespread and persistent insertion problem,” said Szmanda, the inventor and president of Each Ear. “Its symbiotic combination of features and benefits makes it unique and irreplaceable.”

The original Gruv Button™ was designed to be built into the speaker itself, during manufacture, and was first offered to the industry in 2016; however, the industry has not adopted it. “We don’t know why, and we don’t want to publicly speculate,” Szmanda said. “That’s why I developed the Retrofit – to make it easier for the industry to bring this technology to market to help millions of their end users.”

Testing of Retrofit prototypes confirms that this plastic sleeve design is now ready for production and distribution by the hearing care industry. The industry’s massive production capacity and extensive networks of retail clinics would maximize efficiency and help to keep the retail price low for consumers.

Production and distribution by hearing aid manufacturers is also appropriate because they produce their hearing aid speakers in many different shapes and sizes. It would therefore be most efficient for them to

produce the Retrofit’s plastic sleeves to fit their own speaker designs.

The developer of the Retrofit, Each Ear, does not have the capacity to produce the patented plastic sleeves in the variety and volume needed to satisfy expected demand in the marketplace. That is why involvement by the industry in production is so important.

“This new assistive device, which is both ergonomically-designed and universally-designed, can help millions and it’s ready for roll-out,” said Szmanda. “Hearing aid manufacturers can easily produce and monetize it and distribute it through their worldwide networks of hearing aid clinics. They can offer the Retrofit as a simple, inexpensive accessory to their hearing aids.”

“We designed the process of retrofitting hearing aids at the clinic to be simple and familiar,” he said. “No special training for clinic staff is needed. They’re already familiar with the concept of using plastic sleeves for other purposes.”

User frustration causes many to return their hearing aids. “The industry data I’ve seen suggest that the rate of returns-for-credit is approximately 15 percent in the private/commercial market,” Szmanda noted. “If folks weren’t so frustrated, maybe they would still be using their hearing aids.”