

## Media Release

28<sup>th</sup> August 2001

### Sounding out the Stars

The Carter Observatory is the grateful recipient of a grant by charitable trust, The Oticon Foundation in New Zealand, enabling the installation of a high-tech hearing loop system.

“We were delighted to assist the Carter Observatory with their grant application,” said Ms Karen Pullar, Secretary to the Trustees of The Oticon Foundation in NZ. “Enabling national assets like the Carter Observatory to be fully accessible to the community is something that fits with our mission.”

Since 1991 theatres and public spaces in new and renovated buildings have been required by law to be accessible to people with hearing impairment. Many other public facilities also choose to make their facilities more accessible as funds allow.

Ms Pullar said that even the most advanced hearing aids find it difficult to manage background noise and reverberation in crowded public places. “Increasing the volume doesn’t solve the problem, but a hearing loop does,” she said. “Once the loop is installed, people with hearing aids simply switch it to the right position.”

Loops work by providing a wireless link directly between the sound source and the hearing impaired person. A microphone transmits sound to a wire loop in the ceiling which emits an electromagnetic signal. This signal is detected by the hearing aid through the ‘T’ or ‘MT’ switch and is converted back into sound minus any background noise.

“Loops are a very simple solution for all types of public places and we would encourage more organisations to consider installation of appropriate assistive listening systems, so the whole community can reach for the stars,” said Ms Pullar.

Now in its 25<sup>th</sup> year, The Oticon Foundation in New Zealand is a registered charitable trust of leading hearing aid manufacturer, Oticon New Zealand Ltd. Income generated from the sale of Oticon products is distributed through the Oticon Foundation in New Zealand to groups and organisations seeking financial support for projects that benefit people with hearing impairment. Each year this amounts to around \$100,000.

“The Oticon Foundation’s aim is to improve the lives of the estimated 400,000 hearing impaired in New Zealand through communication and knowledge,” said Ms Pullar. “It is committed to finding better solutions to hearing loss and strives to increase public awareness and understanding of hearing impairment.”

ENDS

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