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TELL ME WHO YOU HEAR: Judith Koza Facilitates Transgender Voice Adaptation

Elkins Park, Pa. - Claire swears she can tell a person's nationality by her choice of clothing. Don says he can guess a person's age by counting the wrinkles around his eyes. Ann insists she's able to spot a friend's mood by how he walks into a room. Andrew is confident that, even if he only hears a voice on the telephone, he'll be able to identify whether the caller is a man or a woman.

Judith Koza would contend that without hearing a person speak, appearance and history are only two-thirds of the total package.

Koza, a certified speech-language pathologist with extensive experience in treating voice disorders, is the facilitator of *Raise Your Voice*, a support group that addresses transgender voice and communication skills. The group, which meets monthly at the Speech-Language Institute (SLI) of Salus University in Elkins Park, Pa. offers members of the transgender community the opportunity to practice techniques that assist in the development of a gender non-conforming voice.

"A voice that doesn't sound as if it belongs to the speaker creates dissonance," Koza explained. "If a listener feels that something is "off," this question can impact whether the speaker is comfortably perceived and accepted as male or female. Without the right tone or cadence, any individual, but particularly a transgender person, risks the possibility of a negative societal reaction."

Raise Your Voice addresses voice issues within the format of a support group, which allows participants to feel less alone, isolated or judged. As the client progresses through a series of exercises and enactments, he or she gains a sense of empowerment and control—personal strengths that, in turn, improve coping skills and solidify adjustment.

"As another in a series of challenges on the way to becoming one's true self, achieving the authentic voice helps to complete the total gender transition," continued Koza, who in addition to her position as a clinical educator at SLI, also maintains a private practice in Mt. Holly, N.J. Due to the freedom of private practice, Koza now enjoys the professional option to embrace challenges—both individual and within groups—that are specifically dear to her heart. "For instance, as the facilitator for SLI's *Raise Your*

Voice, I encourage relationship building within a group format. Every one of the group's participants is working toward the same goal," she said. "And, because of this shared dynamic, trust in one's own ability develops, as do friendships, and there is nothing like the support of a friend to encourage a *Raise Your Voice* participant to view vocal identity as attainable."

For further information on *Raise Your Voice* or other voice services, contact Judith Koza at jkoza@salus.edu or Ashley Jefferson at ajefferson@salus.edu.

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About Salus University

Salus University, founded as the Pennsylvania College of Optometry in 1919, today is a diversified, globally recognized professional academic center of learning that offers a wide range of degree programs in the professions of Optometry, Audiology, Physician Assistant, Blindness and Low Vision Studies, Biomedicine, Occupational Therapy and Speech-Language Pathology. Salus operates six clinical facilities in Philadelphia and Montgomery counties that provide highly specialized vision, hearing and balance, and speech-language pathology services. The University has more than 1,200 students and more than 14,000 alumni worldwide. For more information, please visit www.salus.edu.