

Media Release

Pro soccer player with hearing loss supports project work in Malawi

Stäfa (Switzerland), January 10, 2018 – Sonova Holding AG, the world’s leading provider of hearing solutions, has invited German Bundesliga youth team player and Sonova brand ambassador Simon Ollert to visit the Hear the World Foundation’s aid project in Malawi. Simon Ollert, who himself is affected by profound hearing loss, will be meeting children with hearing loss, along with their parents, at an event which they will be able to compare notes and have fun playing soccer. The aim is to help children with hearing loss make progress in their personal development and encourage them to have the self-confidence to follow their own path in life

The Hear the World Foundation, a Sonova Group initiative, has been active in Malawi since 2011. The Foundation’s long-term, sustainable project has become an essential part of healthcare provision in the country as a whole and is part of Sonova’s vision: to create a world in which everyone can enjoy the delights of hearing and live a life without limitations.

Simon Ollert will be visiting the ABC Hearing Clinic in Lilongwe, Malawi’s capital, on January 10 and 11. Officially opening its doors in 2013, the institution was the very first in the country to offer services for people with hearing loss; the clinic’s audiological equipment has been financed through years of unstinting development aid from the Hear the World Foundation. Thanks to the commitment of volunteers (e.g. fundraising campaigns and work placements by Sonova staff), the clinic receives support from medical experts and the training program for local hearing care professionals has been given a major boost.

“I am really hoping to use my own story to show the children at the aid project in Malawi just how much you can achieve despite hearing loss. I want to fill the boys and girls with enthusiasm, build their self-confidence and encourage them to believe in their own abilities. These are exactly the aims I have been pursuing with my international soccer camp for children with hearing loss, which I organize in cooperation with Sonova brand Phonak,” explains Simon Ollert. The 20-year-old is the only professional soccer player with profound hearing loss in the German-speaking countries, and has played for several German Bundesliga teams including FC Ingolstadt and SpVgg Unterhaching.

The participation of representatives from the Swiss and German embassies has brought the visit some VIP backing. The diplomats will be briefed on progress at the Hear the World Foundation’s aid project, including on a fundraising scheme to purchase a new mobile “audio trailer” designed to provide patients in remote corners of the country with audiological care.

Sharing experiences and keeping in touch

The children and their parents can look forward to a varied schedule of activities and an opportunity to quiz Simon Ollert on his life as a professional soccer player: the event will begin with a surprise for the children and a screening of the award-winning film about Simon's story.

Fletcher Chisalipo, an audiologist at the ABC Hearing Clinic, will be available to answer questions or queries participants may have about any aspect of hearing loss and audiological care. Making contact early and staying in touch with parents is essential to the project's work. "If children can't hear, they can't learn to speak either, so they won't go to school," explains Chisalipo. "Providing an early diagnosis and audiological care sets the children on the right track for the future."

Trials training with soccer professionals

For the children, the high point of the meeting with Simon Ollert will be sharing a training session with players from first division soccer side Civil Sporting Club before playing a match. The club is supporting the visit as part of its youth development program and is looking forward to welcoming everyone taking part – not to mention their celebrity German guest.

"Simon Ollert's visit is an extremely valuable contribution to the Hear the World Foundation's project work, promoting interaction between children, parents and project staff beyond the day-to-day running of the clinic. Simon Ollert's story encourages the children to believe in themselves while also providing an impressive example of how the Sonova Group is realizing its vision: using innovative hearing solutions to help people live a life without limitations," says Arnd Kaldowski, COO and designated CEO of Sonova.

About the Hear the World Foundation

By supporting the charitable Hear the World Foundation, Sonova is campaigning for equal opportunities and a better quality of life for people with hearing loss. As a leading manufacturer of hearing care solutions, Sonova fosters social responsibility and contributes towards a world where everyone has the chance to enjoy good hearing. For instance, the Hear the World Foundation supports disadvantaged people with hearing loss around the world and gets involved in prevention. It focuses particularly on projects for children with hearing loss, to enable them to develop at the appropriate rate for their age. More than 100 famous ambassadors, including celebrities such as Cindy Crawford, Plácido Domingo, Annie Lennox and Sting, champion the Hear the World Foundation.

www.hear-the-world.com

About the ABC Hearing Clinic

The ABC Hearing Clinic and its associated training center in Lilongwe, Malawi's capital, was officially opened in 2013. It was the very first institution in the country to offer services for people with hearing loss and was founded with the aim of providing the Malawian population with audiological care that could then be continued by local hearing care professionals, thanks to a targeted training and support scheme. To reach patients in even the remotest corners of Malawi, a team from the clinic makes regular trips up and down the country with an audio trailer kitted out with two acoustic cabins. The ABC Hearing Clinic has all the modern equipment required for precise diagnosis of hearing loss and expert fitting of hearing aids, and otoplastic earmolds can be manufactured directly in its own laboratory. The clinic reached a further milestone in 2017 with the establishment of a neonatal screening program.

<https://de-de.facebook.com/ABChearingclinic/>

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About Sonova

Sonova, headquartered in Stäfa, Switzerland, is the leading provider of innovative hearing care solutions. The Group operates through its core business brands Phonak, Unitron, Hansaton, Advanced Bionics and AudioNova. Sonova offers its customers one of the most comprehensive product portfolios in the industry – from hearing instruments to cochlear implants to wireless communication solutions.

Pursuing a unique vertically integrated business strategy, the Group operates through three core businesses – hearing instruments, retail and cochlear implants – along the entire value chain of the hearing care market. The Group's sales and distribution network, the widest in the industry, comprises over 50 own wholesale companies and more than 100 independent distributors. This is complemented by Sonova's retail business, which offers professional audiological services through a network of more than 3,300 locations in twelve key markets.

Founded in 1947, the Group has a workforce of over 14,000 dedicated employees and generated sales of CHF 2.4 billion in the financial year 2016/17 as well as a net profit of CHF 356 million. Across all businesses, and by supporting the Hear the World Foundation, Sonova pursues its vision of a world where everyone enjoys the delight of hearing and therefore lives a life without limitations.

For more information please visit www.sonova.com and www.hear-the-world.com.

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