My name is Amanda Ourso and I was born and raised in Louisiana. Music and singing have always been a very important part of my life. When it came time to apply to college and decide on a major - I knew I wanted to do something related to music, but to use it in a way to help children. My mother, who is a teacher, told me about the speech pathologists at her school and how you can integrate music therapy into speech therapy.

At Louisiana State University, in one of my classes in communication sciences and disorders, an audiologist at a local hospital came to speak to our class and offered the opportunity to observe her in clinic. I still had no idea what audiology was really like so I took a chance and just went to see. After one morning of observing, I switched to audiology. I had finally found what I was supposed to do.

Currently I am in my second year of pursuing my Doctorate of Audiology from the LSU Health Sciences Center in New Orleans. As an audiologist, I will be tasked with the prevention, identification, diagnosis, and treatment of hearing, balance, and other auditory disorders. Because of my music background, audiology was the perfect field because it requires understanding of acoustics, pitch, and loudness.

One way I plan to make a difference as a pediatric audiologist is by working with children receiving cochlear implants. I have also taken an American Sign Language course so I can try to be more inclusive of children and parents in the Deaf community. These implants may even be used by children receiving chemotherapy and other cancer treatments that can damage hearing.

I find these aspects in the field of audiology profoundly rewarding, but even more so for me personally in the pediatric population. I hope one day to work at a children's hospital so I can be constantly involved in helping children with hearing loss. Seeing a child's face light up when they hear sound for the first time and knowing I can be a part of that experience is just one of the many reasons I've chosen to pursue pediatric audiology. I am thankful to the National Association of Junior Auxiliaries for their support in my education and future goals - I will never forget how NAJA supported me on my journey to making a difference in the lives of children with hearing loss.

-Shirley Hamilton, Scholarship Committee

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**NAJA Long Range Planning**

Happy New Year wonderful ladies of Junior Auxiliary. We at the National level have been creating a long term strategy for the organization through Ad Hoc Committees. These committees are looking three to five years in the future to determine what changes are needed for NAJA to continue to thrive and evolve with the changing times. The Ad Hoc Committees are:

1. Constitution – reviewing the Constitution and NAJA Handbook for changes
2. Finance – analyzing NAJA's financial stability and how we can generate funds outside of member dues
3. Technology – reviewing current technology platforms, database updates, and moving more items to digital formats
4. Chapter Development and Chapter Support – creating a NAJA expansion plan, evaluating Chapter support resources, and online training
5. Membership – researching additional resources for recruitment, provisional training, and re-engagement of Associate and Life members
6. Branding and Marketing – social media options, Service Attire policy, and Logo Review

This is by no means a holistic list of everything the Ad Hoc Committees are discussing, but it gives you an idea of what areas we are looking at for the future. In an effort to ensure we are listening to you, our members, I would welcome any and all suggestions you might have in these areas we are focusing on. If you have suggestions on what you would like to see change or ways to improve NAJA I would love to hear from you! Please email me your ideas at Najaapresident@gmail.com and use the subject line NAJA Long Range Planning by Monday, January 28, 2019.

-Leslie James, NAJA President

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**Spotlight on Recipient**

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-Shirley Hamilton, Scholarship Committee

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**NAJA Foundation Grant Opportunities**

From our NAJA prayers, we ask “GRANT us clear vision, true judgement with great daring as we seek to right the wrong….” One way that your NAJA Foundation seeks to support your efforts to right the wrong, is by offering grants to our Chapters. The NAJA Foundation offers several different types of to assist Chapters struggling with financial challenges to meet their overall mission. While we always have many applications for Annual Education Conference grants, there are surprisingly few applications for grants designed to support service projects. Service is the heart of what we do and the Foundation would like to encourage you to research more about the National Service Project and National Focus Project grants. Keep the following in mind:

**Giving** – The NAJA Foundation grants are one of many ways in which the Foundation gives back to the Association members and their communities by awarding grants to support certain Chapter projects, attendance at AEC and new Chapter growth.

**Resources – Foundation grants offer financial resources to Chapters who need assistance with Child Welfare and National Focus Projects.**

**Application** – The application process has been expedited and can be completed online. Follow this link for more information http://www.najanet.org/grants/

**Need** – Chapters applying must have a demonstrated need for financial assistance. Chapters who have more than one year of reserves in savings generally do not meet the financial need threshold.

**Tell Us** – Chapters applying should be sure to include details about why the grant is needed and how receiving will make a difference for the Chapter and those they serve.

The Foundation is able to award grants to Chapters through the generous giving of our Annual Fund donors. For more information about the NAJA Foundation and Annual Fund giving please visit our website at http://www.najanet.org/naja-foundation/.

-Leslie Vaughn, Foundation Trustee

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**Wishing you a Happy New Year!**