



# Susan urges others to share gift of sound

By ANGELA THOMPSON

SUSAN Young was just five when her hearing began to deteriorate. By her early 20s it was all but gone and, although she had hearing aids fitted to both ears and learned to lip-read, she spent the next two decades avoiding social situations, the telephone and many opportunities.

"I was bluffing my way through life," Mrs Young said.

"You lip-read only about one in 10 words, so (you) use key words to work out where the conversation is going.

"You might make a comment that is totally irrelevant and after a while you just stop doing that.

"Some things look the same when you're lip-reading, for example, I was doing home support and one of the ladies asked me to make a banana and onion sandwich. (She meant) banana and honey."

Ms Young, of Kiama, is among more than 3.5 million Australians affected by hearing loss.

Her life turned around four years ago, when she received her first cochlear implant - and later a second implant, becoming NSW's 22nd bilateral cochlear recipient.

She has gone on to found the Illawarra Cochlear Implant Support Group, taken up dancing and completed a university

## HEARING AWARENESS WEEK

A FREE Noisy Lunch will be held at the Wollongong Master Builders Club tomorrow, where people with hearing loss can trial a new, world's smallest hearing aid to see how it filters out noise in a social setting. Phone Hearing Life on 1300 134 097 for more details and to register.

A Hearing Awareness Expo will be held at Wiseman Park Bowling Club on Thursday, with free audio screenings, demonstrations of hearing devices, educational talks and social networking opportunities. The expo goes from 1pm to 5pm and admission is free.

degree, then a masters, in Population Health.

This week, which is Hearing Awareness Week, she is encouraging others to seek solutions that could change their life.

"Technology is at a stage where so much can be done," she said. "Not everyone is eligible for a cochlear implant, but definitely the hearing aids these days are much more advanced than they were 10 years ago. Be assessed and go from there."



**Fan of technology:** The sound of the sea ranks as Susan Young's favourite sound since cochlear implants restored her sense of hearing four years ago.

Picture: DAVE TEASE