

# “SCHON GEHÖRT?”

THE MAGAZINE FOR THROAT BREATHERS

## ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

FOR PATIENTS, INVOLVED PERSONS, PHYSICIANS AND PARTNERS  
**30 YEARS OF TRUST**



# 30 YEARS COMPANY ANNIVERSARY

Sometimes I can hardly believe how quickly everything has developed. In the early days, I still organised everything from my own home and today I manage a company with more than 260 employees. However, what feels like the blink of an eye these days called for a lot of strength and creativity. All the more reason for us to be proud of the result: 30 years of Andreas Fahl Medizintechnik-Vertrieb GmbH.

And of course, you can't be that successful all by yourself. It also takes the loyalty of our patients and the sustainable cooperation with our business partners, as well as relationships with medical professionals, for example in the hospitals or nursing homes. A big thank you also goes to the employees of this company, who have embraced my ideas of service and implement and promote them every day.

For this reason the anniversary issue of SCHON GEHÖRT? will deliberately present a different focus and structure. We would like to share some exclusive insights into our FAHL WORLD with you. Not only will patients who have received care over many years be given the opportunity to have their say, but also our employees. Various departments of the company are featured, without whose

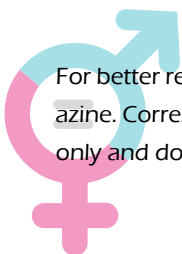


unwavering cooperation patient-oriented care would not have been possible. Also find out more about our regional offices in Berlin, Austria and Switzerland and their distinctive concepts. In short, enjoy the 360° FAHL view from 1992 to today and beyond. Not only I, but the entire Fahl company is looking forward to the next years with you, to new issues of SCHON GEHÖRT? as well as to future interesting developments.

And although it cannot be said often enough, a heartfelt THANK YOU for 30 years together.

**Yours, Andreas Fahl**

Management



For better readability, the masculine form is used for personal names and personal nouns in the SCHON GEHÖRT? customer magazine. Corresponding terms apply in principle to all genders in the sense of equal treatment. Abbreviations are for editorial reasons only and do not imply a value judgement.

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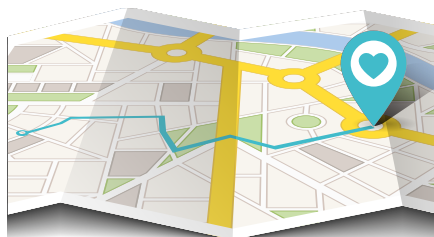
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# FAHL IN NUMBERS

Am sure you have noticed: the ever growing general trend towards up-to-date key figures? They are with us wherever we go. Be it in the commercial field, such as providing the turnover figures of a company, or one's own bank account balance. In everyday life, for instance, bold black numbers are displayed on traffic signs to regulate speed on the roads. Not to mention the distressing reports of the latest corona figures. Yet they all have one thing in common: key figures quickly highlight specific facts.

So why not use key figures to portrait the FAHL company? In our special anniversary mood, we have put various figures into perspective in an entertaining manner. This certainly inspires the imagination for one or the other issue. This makes it easier to visualise certain contexts or results. Our consultation time on the phone alone exceeds 18 hours a day - a time span in which you could listen to Mozart's Magic Flute a full six times.

Certainly, the key figures selected here represent a good overview of our company. They either reflect the average of a certain time period or report figures for particular dates.

The good thing is that it is easier to remember linked numbers. As an example, in 2021, our field staff clocked up 115 trips around the world in terms of kilometres. What a performance! The task accomplished by Jules Verne's main characters in his novel "Around the World in 80 Days" is achieved 115 times a year by our more than 80 colleagues in the field force. Congratulations!



> 260 EMPLOYEES

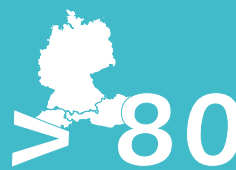


SITES

> 4,000  
different  
PRODUCTS



0,003%  
PRODUCTS  
COMPLAINED  
ABOUT in relation  
to all products sold in  
2021



> 80  
Local contact  
partners\* for you



> 8,000 qm for  
your products and  
their availability



78 videos  
on the "What?",  
"How?" and  
"Why?" simply ex-  
plained. And more  
to come!





**150,000**  
**TRACHEOSTOMY**  
**PATIENTS** have placed their  
trust in us worldwide to date.

**Since 1998** we  
train our junior staff in  
up to three different pro-  
fessions at our locations  
in Cologne and Berlin.




**115.31 TRIPS**  
**AROUND THE WORLD**  
is the distance in kilometres that  
our field force travelled for home  
visits last year.

**9 of 10**  
persons  
would **rec-**  
**ommend**  
us as a supplier of medical  
aids to other **affected**  
**persons.**



**5s**  Waiting  
time on the  
phone\*

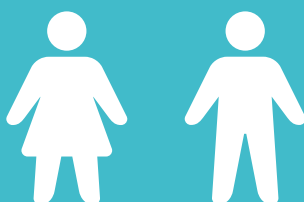
  
**98 % DELIVERY**  
**RATE\*** by Day 2 of  
placing the order

**82**  **COUNTRIES**

innovative products through **100**  
**PROTECTED PAT-**  
**ENTS & DESIGNS**



  
**30 YEARS** of  
specialist know-  
how

  
**51.1 %** **48.9 %**  
Distribution of employees



If you add up all the **telephone**  
**counselling sessions** per day,  
our service team is on the phone **18**  
**hours a day** - non-stop and  
always friendly.

# WHO ARE WE?

Especially on the occasion of milestone birthdays or anniversaries, people tend to be reflective and look back on past years. This quickly prompts the question: who are we and where do we stand today? And: how did we actually start?

Everything originated with an idea, a large portion of initiative and a you-can-do-it attitude. In the 90s, in 1992 to be precise, the FAHL company was founded in a small office in Cologne. Today, 30 years later, the company is still based in Cologne. However, we have grown significantly in comparison. What nobody may have imagined in the past is now confirmed on a daily basis - the Fahl company has meanwhile firmly established itself as an international medical aid specialist in the fields of tracheotomy and laryngectomy, in ENT medicine and other medical specialties. This success is based on high product quality, patient-oriented service ideas as well as FAHL's professionally qualified and dedicated employees.

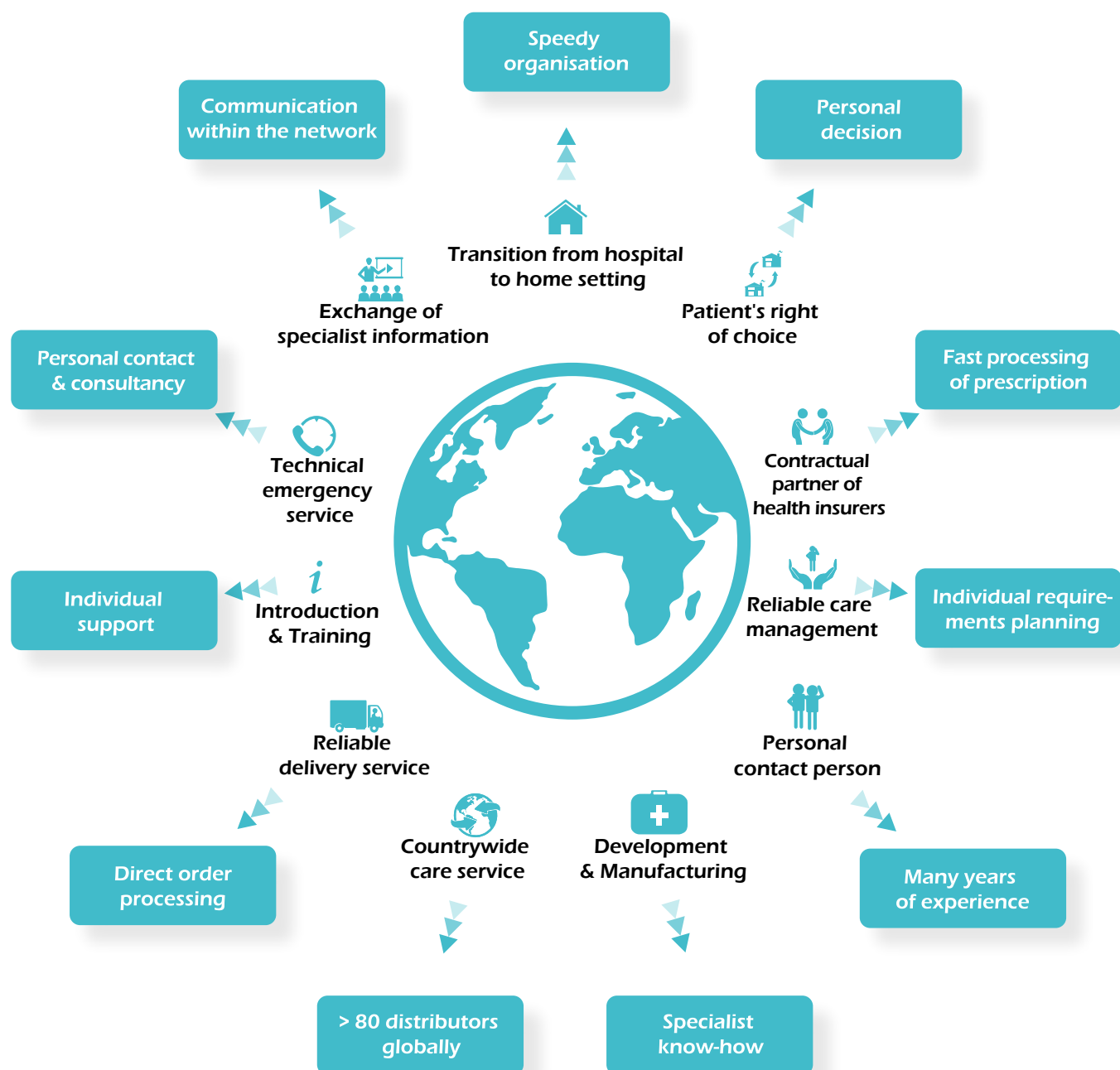
Starting from a one-man business with family support in 1992, a total of more than 260 employees at five locations today provide comprehensive care for our patients. Whether nationally or across borders - a total of well over 150,000

patients in more than 80 countries have been cared for according to their needs over the past decades. Our aim is to support the holistic rehabilitation of patients in the best possible manner to enable them to cope with everyday situations. That is the reason we serve as a reliable partner for affected patients and their relatives, but also for the nursing staff, therapists and attending physicians.

For us, being a partner means meeting our clients at eye level, taking their concerns and needs seriously and responding to them with competence. As a result, we create appropriate solutions with the aim of offering high-quality and innovative products and services for our customers.

In a close professional exchange with patients, physicians, nursing staff and speech therapists, we are always able to live up to this high standard of our professional work and the high-quality product selection for the benefit of the patients. By bringing together user input with specialist know-how, innovative product ideas, improvements or variants are constantly being developed. A case in hand is the LARYVOX® EXTRA HME: four different filter media create differences in breathing resistance which can be





used and applied depending on the situation. All product variants have the aim of ensuring the necessary heating, humidification and filtering of the respiratory air to replace the lost nasal functions in the best possible manner. Not only is the development of the previously described LARYVOX® EXTRA HME indicative of the expertise in development, but also the design and manufacture of other FAHL products. More than 100 granted patents as well as registered designs/utility models guarantee products that stand out in terms of function, form, design or colour as well as specific manufacturing processes. And things remain exciting - numerous applications have been filed

with the German Patent and Trade Mark Office for future product innovations.

Our outlook for the next decades is always linked to a sense of purpose and growth. Medical technology is currently undergoing enormous changes within a short period of time. Just consider digitisation as an example. Perhaps we cannot even imagine today what is waiting for us tomorrow. However, there is one thing we would like to promise you right now: in the future, the patient will remain to be at the centre of our daily activities, of our professional commitment and our innovative creativity.

# SPONSORSHIP AWARD

Research is an elementary part of modern medicine and provides new findings that initiate innovative treatment methods or make them possible in the first place. The sponsorship of young physicians is of utmost importance for continuity in research. That is why the FAHL company has decided to become involved in supporting young talent with a scholarship. This scholarship was awarded for the first time at the German ENT Congress 2022 in Hanover. The German Society of Otorhinolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery (DGHNO-KHC for short) Bonn offers 10 annual congress scholarships (Christian Hempel scholarship from Andreas Fahl Medizintechnik-Vertrieb GmbH) for participation at the annual meetings of the society to promote future ENT physicians.

The application deadline last year was 31 October. The winners were then announced by the DGHNO-KHC Committee.

FAHL wishes all participants continued commitment and interest in scientific research. Congratulations to the winners of the scholarships and we wish them continued success in the future.



## FOR REASONS OF SOLIDARITY

On 24 February 2022, Russia attacked the sovereign state of Ukraine. A war begins in the middle of Europe. Many injured people urgently require help and medical care. Medical aids for respiratory management in particular are needed in Ukraine.

The FAHL company responds immediately. For the third time this year, we are sending aid to the war zone in cooperation with the charities [Das kunterbunte Kinderzelt e.V.](#) and [Avenga hilft e.V.](#) Humanitarian aid out of solidarity for the population.







# PURCHASING DEPARTMENT

In purchasing, everything revolves around seven important questions with the aim of gathering complete information and thereby optimising the company's entire merchandise management processes. Because no matter which process is initiated, the WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY, HOW and WHAT FOR are of central importance. This is similar to creating your own shopping list for different shops to be fully satisfied with your purchases at the end. Only the dimensions and urgencies differ significantly. In the end, our purchasing department really does procure everything that is required. This ranges from buying products by the pallet from different manufacturers for patient care to even the smallest things like the necessary paper clips.

The actual purchasing process only plays a minor role here. As in private life, products, quality, delivery times etc. have to be compared and also checked for their sustainability. The associated upstream and downstream processes are equally important. Particularly in the context of new product additions, all individual specific data must be created in the system and checked on a regular basis.

And by the way, minimum stock levels is a magic word in purchasing. This predefined key figure describes a minimum quantity for all stocked products and must be adhered to under all circumstances. If the stock falls below this level, this triggers the purchase process. Once the goods have been ordered, the delivery dates must of course be taken into account to ensure that everything is in the right place at the right time.

Three purchasing specialists are currently employed by us to ensure that there is always enough product in stock and that our accustomed ability to deliver is assured. And then there are the additional telephone calls or urgent e-mails to speed up suppliers. Everything is aimed at ensuring that we can provide uninterrupted care for our patients. This is because the team is well aware that these are important medical aids, some of which are vital or at least noticeably improve the quality of life of the affected person.

## Bruce Gutierrez Mesa

Purchasing specialist with the magic personnel number 17. Or to put it another way, Bruce was the first trainee at FAHL, who has since been actively seeking and pursuing solutions in our company for a quarter of a century. His start was considered a great challenge by both sides. For him, it was an important step into a professional life, and from the company's side, it was the start into becoming a company that takes on trainees. The result: together they mastered this new path with flying colours. Bruce relives his experiences with the FAHL company and Andreas Fahl in person with a warm feeling. They have shaped his life to this day and been a source of satisfaction for him. Above all, it is the feeling of being a family and going through thick and thin together which gives Bruce the motivation to give his best, to contribute his personal skills and to participate in the further development of the company.







# A FANTASTIC DEVELOPMENT

**A cornerstone for the company spirit, family values and togetherness, a high level of customer loyalty and three decades of growth – a success story that began as a home office. Interview with namesake, owner and managing director Andreas Fahl.**

**SCHON GEHÖRT?:** Mr Fahl, 30 years of Fahl as a company. A long time and a superb development. If you reflect over the years, what springs to your mind first?

**Fahl:** It's all been so long ago. Time simply flies. It has now been 30 years after all. Incredible. Sometimes it seems like yesterday that I decided to take the plunge into self-employment. You can't really imagine what it was like. My living room was both an office and store room at the same time. Products were all over the place, orderly of course, but it was far from being a cosy home. In 1992, this was indeed still possible, but today, what with all the rules and regulations, this approach would not be realistic.

**SCHON GEHÖRT?:** Really? A start-up in your own living room? How did the FAHL story go from there?

**Fahl:** In the beginning it was a lot of work. I was my own sales force to start with. But what does sales force imply? Before I could provide care for patients I had to do a lot of groundwork. First I looked for products and suppliers. Then I created a catalogue and the instructions for use. Afterwards I met with the health insurers and agreed on reimbursement contracts. It's true, I rang the insurers and asked for an appointment, presented my case and concluded contracts. So simple! These days, I wouldn't get further than reception (laughs). Once reimbursability was assured, I was able to care for my first patient here in Cologne after two months, on 01 September 1992 to be precise. Then I started touring through Germany. From north to south and from east to west. Some days were really long, 18 to 20 hours per day were not uncommon. When I came home from my tours, the initial care kits for the next day had to be packed. In 1992 I





as you can see - we continue to operate very successfully these days. Then it must be the good spirit (laughs). The new building has made many things much easier. The number of employees increased considerably, new departments were founded and consolidated into the organisation. Of course, we also had to create technical solutions to overcome the problem of rising data traffic. In the early days everything was done on paper. These days we try to operate as digitised as possible. Such changes are simply a part of progress.

**SCHON GEHÖRT?:** Change is a very good keyword. Unfortunately, the road to success always includes setbacks. How did you handle these in the past?

finally moved into my first offices in Cologne Rath. The first employees then provided me with some relief. This allowed us to grow at several levels. In 1996 we again relocated to larger premises. From house number 592 to 702 Rösrather Straße here in Cologne. The nice thing is that many employees are still working at FAHL today and have therefore been with the company right from the very beginning. That really thrills me, what a great team.

**SCHON GEHÖRT?:** A meteoric development of the FAHL company, especially in the first few years. Of which successes are you particularly proud of?

**Fahl:** Another milestone, which also marked a turning point in the company's history, was the inauguration and relocation to the company's own building in 2002. It symbolised the transition from a small business to a medium-sized business. I am not a superstitious person, but when we laid the foundation stone of the building, we placed a time capsule in one of the foundation stones. And what was in it? Certainly things that bear a relation to this company, such as tracheostomy tubes or a self-painted portrait of my son. This capsule or the foundation stone should be home to a good spirit. And

**Fahl:** Even as a little boy I learned that when one door closes, another door opens. You know, I'm the sixth of seven children, and doors were slamming open and shut all the time. In 30 years, circumstances do indeed arise which can be defined as setbacks. It is simply a matter of attitude. Looking back, I can say that everything has turned out well. Above all, our customers, the people affected, are the best role models for me and my source of motivation. Those who continue to make their lives worth living despite serious illness, for example after a laryngectomy, have truly mastered a great task. Compared to this, I perceive my entrepreneurial challenges as being anything but unsolvable.

**SCHON GEHÖRT?:** An attitude to life which is very positive. Growth also means taking on responsibility, for example for one's own employees. How do you handle this topic?

**Fahl:** Especially in the beginning, this was a topic that was completely new to me. Every decision I took had an impact on my own employees. But unfortunately the story doesn't stop there. Every employee also has a family, for whom I bear additional responsibility in the



broadest sense. And indeed, this has already caused me occasional sleepless nights. Fortunately, everything has always worked out fine so far. However, the last few months with corona have added a completely new dimension. In particular, the uncertainty of what might happen and what the medical guidelines would be was difficult to plan for. However, we also managed to cope admirably with this situation. Whereas many companies announced short-time work, we found other solutions. Fortunately, it looks like the corona situation is easing.

**SCHON GEHÖRT?:** Patients often proudly mention that they have even been cared for by you in person or know you personally. How does that make you feel?



**Fahl:** Interaction with patients is the reason why I founded this company in the first place. Even during my training, I looked for contact with affected people. I always found this exchange of communication very inspiring. This is also the reason why I value the cooperation with patients and laryngeal associations so much and enjoy inviting them to visit my company. Recently I attended a 40th anniversary celebration of one of the associations. I had already been invited to the founding ceremony of this association. I often take the time for this personal exchange with those affected and the associations. These people give me the necessary motivation to keep going day after day. Unfortunately, I no longer have the time to make home visits, for example to provide instructions for the initial care kit, but perhaps it may be a good time to intensify contact.

**SCHON GEHÖRT?:** Many employees have been with us from the beginning. Yes, even the first trainee is still a member of the FAHL team. How do you think this has come about?

**Fahl:** It was always enormously important to me to maintain the corporate culture of the early days, or to be more precise, the family atmosphere. Slightly exaggerated: we are one family! The employees all know each other and also help each other across team boundaries. We have also refrained from having large structures or hierarchies. I am available to all my employees. Everyone knows where my office is. And if we do have a problem, I take the time and we find a solution together. Of course, you can't do a side-by-side comparison of today's organisation with



the early days. There is obviously a difference between discussing issues among five employees and being the contact person for more than 260 employees. And that is without taking the international context into consideration. Time is a resource that becomes more limited as the company keeps growing. This can quickly give the impression of appearing distant. That is not my intention and I will work on it.

**SCHON GEHÖRT?:** Family business was also a keyword. How does this compare with our competitors?

**Fahl:** Good question, we have always been a family business, and of that I am proud. All I can say today on the subject is that we are still one of the few family-owned companies in Germany operating in the tracheostomy



care sector with our own production facilities. This offers clear advantages. As owner of the company and when required, I can take decisions quickly and also implement them. Patients and customers are our priority and at the centre of everything we do. This is also the reason why the product portfolio is so comprehensive. We wish to satisfy the needs of our customers. Both with our service as well as our products. If there is an unmet demand, then I am personally committed to closing this product gap. This loop is important to me personally. So now we come back to my source of motivation, as mentioned before: the patients themselves. Profit is not the main driver here. Of course, we also have to act economically sound, but as I said, we do not have to consider any interests other than those of our customers. And, of course, we comply with the directives and regulations that apply to today's medical technology.

**SCHON GEHÖRT?:** Therefore, at the end, let's have a quick look into the future. There are major developments in medical technology in particular, the keyword being MDR. How do you predict the industry will evolve? And what role will the Fahl company play?

**Fahl:** I hope a major role (laughs). Over the past 30 years, we have proven that we have built a name for ourselves in tracheostoma care in Germany, and also across borders. I made the start. But I wouldn't be where I am today if I could not have relied on my team. And for that I extremely grateful. With this team, we will also make it through the next 30 years. The MDR and its implementation in specific is a big task in which we invest considerable energy. The cost-benefit factor of our products in particular is put to the test. But we will also continue to develop in other areas. The pandemic has shown us the way. To meet the challenges of the future, we must also upgrade our efforts in the digital field over the next few years. We have already taken the first step with the new website. A step in the right direction. In short: I look forward to the coming years. We are well positioned, have qualified employees, a solution-oriented service and loyal customers. Keep up the good work !



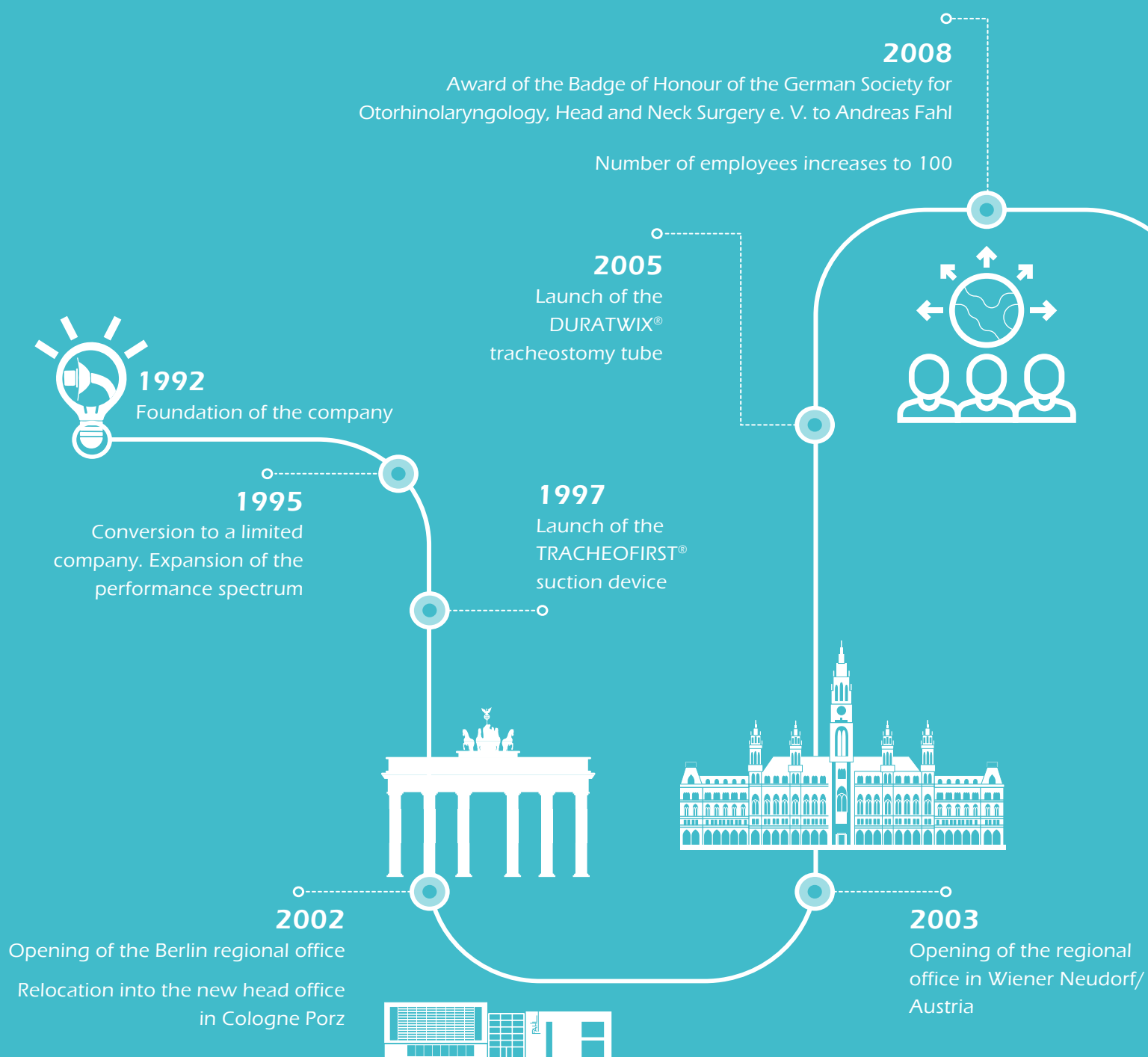
## Andreas Fahl

Owner, founder and namesake of Andreas Fahl Medizintechnik-Vertrieb GmbH. As "one of the lads" in Cologne, Andreas completed his training as a wholesale & foreign trade merchant at Hassheider Medizintechnik GmbH in 1982. It was there that the foundation for his ideas and commitment was laid. The Hassheider company was one of the first to manufacture medical devices for laryngectomised patients. As a result of working with laryngectomised patients and his desire to help them, Andreas followed this impulse in 1992 to become a self-employed entrepreneur for the benefit of those affected. Even today, he still deeply believes in personal exchange. This is why the cooperation with patients, associations and physicians is so important to him.

As the company owner, Andreas lives by the motto: selfmade and steadfast. Even on holiday he finds it difficult to relax. But with his deep passion for model railways, he gets the relaxation he needs. Meanwhile, the small gift once given to the seven-year-old under the Christmas tree has evolved into a 44 m2 miniature world. This is only put on a back burner during the fifth season of the year - the Cologne Carnival. In other words, he's one of the lads from Cologne!



# 30 YEARS OF FAHL – FROM ITS FOUNDATION UNTIL TODAY

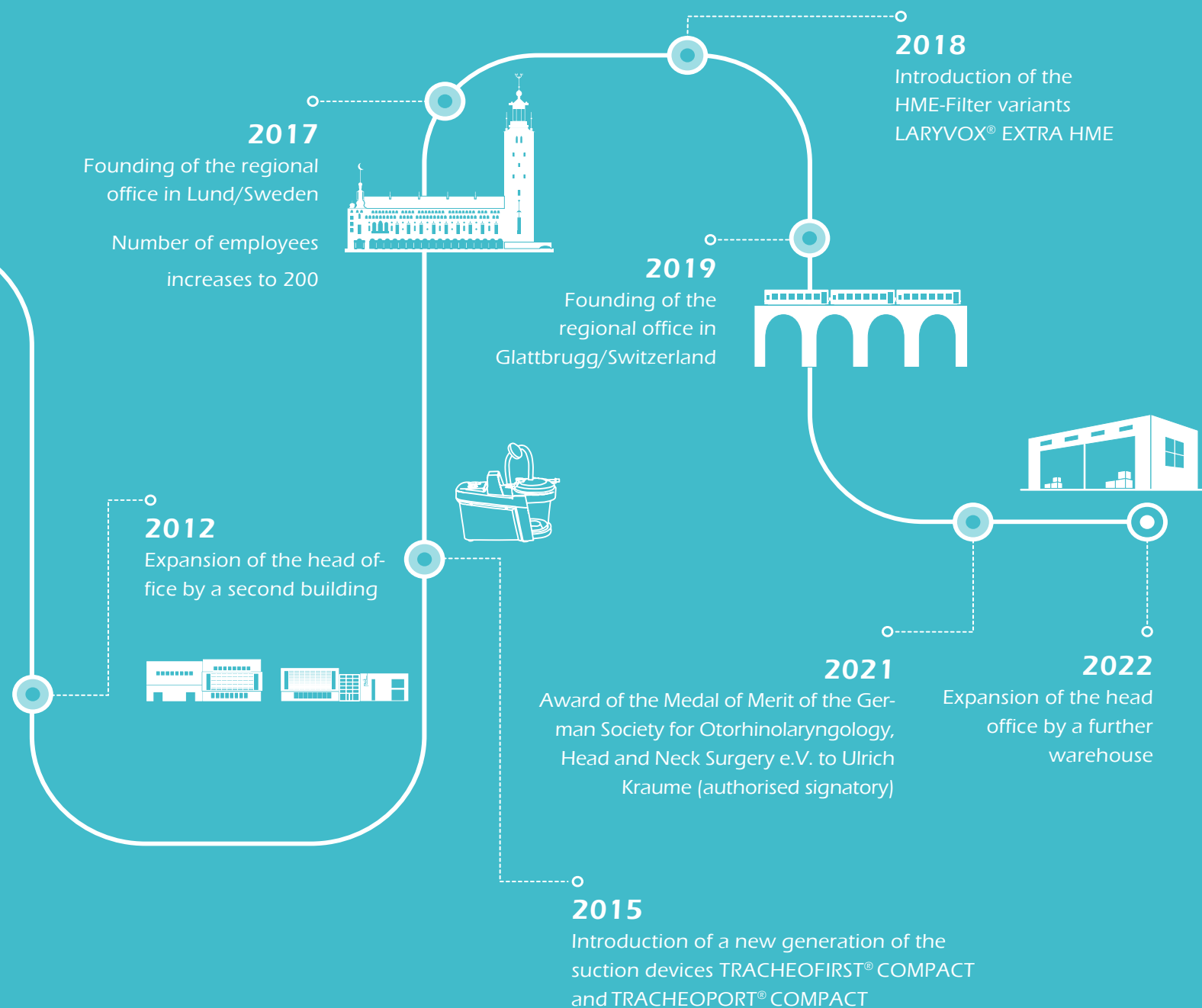




Everyone will no doubt agree - 30 years is a long time. 30 years mean: 360 months, 10,950 days or 262,800 hours. A lot has happened during this time, not only at the FAHL company. Technology in particular has developed in leaps and bounds during the three decades. We have also utilised the time to digitalise our business processes and can now quickly access all available data. Specialised departments, such as quality management or quality assurance, have been established and are being continuously developed in line with the legal framework in medical technology. Field force areas were gradually reduced in size and staffed

with several employees who regularly fill in for each other to significantly intensify contact and care for our patients.

In retrospect, we can say that we always look to the future and continue to develop sustainably at all levels. A current topic is the MDR, which we are implementing and putting into practice with full effort and commitment. And as in the past, we are aligning our company with the realities in a determined and visionary manner. This way, we will also be able to maintain and safeguard the supplies that are important and necessary for you in the future.





# ON THE ROAD FOR YOU

Coming home safely and finding one's way back into everyday life. This is certainly the wish of every patient who has received a serious diagnosis from the physician in the hospital. Many diseases that require a tracheostomy for different reasons pose great challenges for the person affected. One's life changes from one day to the next and quite often affects very different aspects of personal everyday life.

Fortunately, our health care system has created a protective umbrella or safety net for this noticeable turning point in life: the provision of HOME CARE.

For example, the Federal Association of Medical Technology in Germany defines home care as the provision of patients with medical aids and dressings which require instructions by trained specialist staff, at a quality comparable to that of hospital care.

Anyone who now thinks that we are dealing with a relatively new concept is very much mistaken. Our Managing Director Andreas Fahl himself started his professional career more than 30 years ago in precisely this area of HOME CARE. Backed up by a wealth of know-how through his training, he went directly to hospitals all over Germany as well as to many patients in their private home environment. His travels took him from north to south, from west to east - sometimes even on the same day. The amazingly free motorways of the 80s made it possible.

Of course, planning appointments was also very different from the way it is today. Instead of a mobile phone and voicemail, this consisted of an answering machine at home, possibly already fitted with a remote access function. Wow! Nonetheless, returning a call could sometimes take a little longer. But that was fine as nothing else was expected. Numerous new business relationships were established in the 90s, especially in the field of ENT. The objective was to also establish the existing HOME CARE system in the new federal states.

For Andreas Fahl, the founding of his own company in 1992 was the logical consequence of his successful cooperation with hospitals, physicians, nursing staff, therapists and, above all, the affected patients.

Today, in its anniversary year, Andreas Fahl Medizintechnik-Vertrieb GmbH is internation-

ally established as a successful manufacturing company. The provision of home care for tracheostomised and laryngectomised patients is offered nationwide in Germany as well as in Austria and Switzerland.

But much has changed since 1992! Today, Andreas Fahl boasts the active support from a field force of 80 employees. All colleagues possess specialist know-how in ENT, have experience in anaesthesia or intensive care or offer similar expertise. They all have one thing in common: their professional interest is focused specifically on tracheostoma care. What's behind it all?

### Rene, why did you deliberately specialise in tracheostoma care as a career? What is the special challenge of your job?

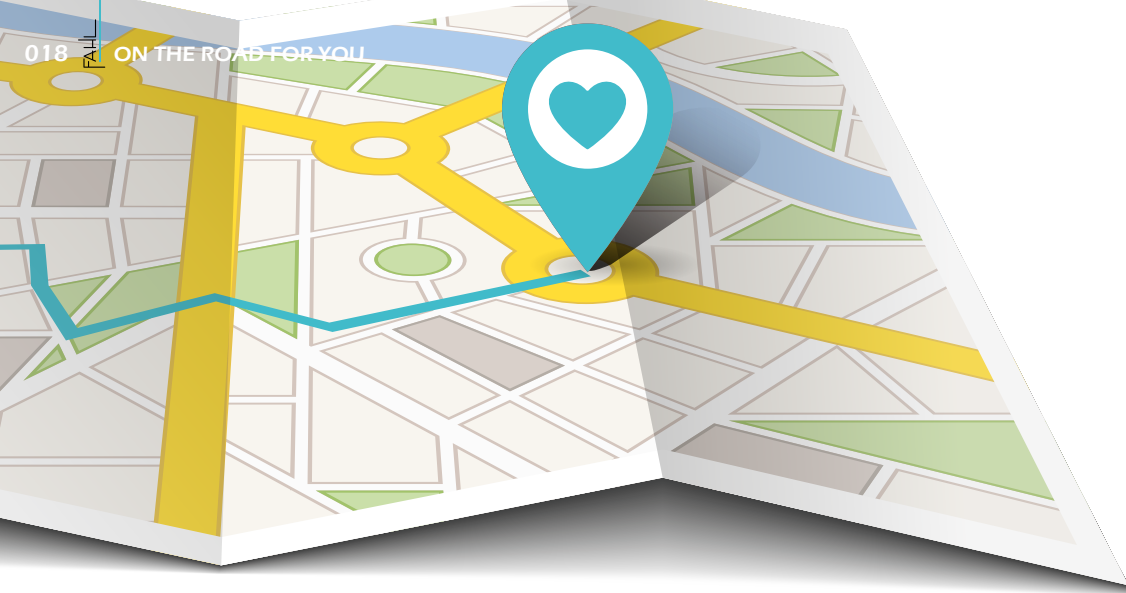


**Rene Blaschke**  
Team East

"Before joining FAHL, I had already worked for about 13 years in the field of intensive care in different departments. I was always fascinated by the interdisciplinary cooperation with a dedicated speech therapist. Together we tried to provide a suitable individual tracheostomy

tube selection based on the indication and taking into account the current ventilation situation. During this period I was able to gain a lot of valuable experience. If a change of cannula improves the patient's situation, then success proves me right. And that is a tremendous feeling. That is why I gladly accept the challenge every day to identify problems in discussions with patients, relatives and clinical staff and to find individual solutions for them. I want the patients to feel that I care about their best possible care."

One must be conscious of the fact that every day more than 80 colleagues in Germany, Austria and Switzerland set out in the morning to provide expert support to tracheotomised and/or laryngectomised patients at their homes. This can include training relatives, presenting special new products to physicians in hospitals or practices, or discussing the next steps in the patient's rehabilitation with therapists and customising the supply of medical aids accordingly. One can well imagine that in times of almost constant accessibility, there is a lot to consider and coordinate.



**Niklas, you took up your first job with us in the field force, in the middle of the pandemic. How was your start and what experiences did you make?**

"The beginning was very exciting, as I came from regular shift work in nursing. Unfortunately, the contact restrictions imposed

due to corona did not allow for many appointments and tasks at the beginning. Nonetheless, my colleagues and supervisors provided me with super onboarding. Appointments in hospitals, intensive care communities or at the home now have to be planned, coordinated and sometimes spontaneously rescheduled on a daily basis. And in between, taking phone calls, checking and answering e-mails. One certainly needs to be well organised.

But for me, it's definitely just the right thing. There is actually no typical day in the field, as each day is varied and exciting. That's why I enjoy my work, and that's the most important thing for me!"

This certainly leaves no doubt that, as a home care employee, you have to be spontaneous and able to organise yourself well. But sometimes even the best planning is of little use. And everything turns out differently than you think...



**Katja, what has been the most impressive traffic jam you experienced in recent years?**

"When in the field, one of course gets stuck in occasional traffic jams, sometimes even for a long time. But my most memorable experience was on 15 July 2021.

That was on a Thursday. Actually, I had a full schedule for the day, but things worked out differently. A training session in Hagen at 10 a.m. had to be cancelled at short notice due to the flood disaster on 14 July and the hospital could no longer be reached by phone. My next appointment in Cologne was supposed to be at 12 o'clock. On the way there, my sat nav suddenly failed and the phone rang non-stop. I was unable to follow the latest traffic congestion reports either via the sat nav or the radio. I only found out about the nine kilometre traffic gridlock before Leverkusen due to the floods at the very moment I was already caught in the middle of it. At least the traffic was diverted via an exit with traffic lights... It actually took me exactly 8.5 hours until I arrived at this exit! And by the way, that was 8.5 hours without food and drink. At least the subsequent 1.5-hour drive home on top was a sort of relief. That's why the 15th of July 2021 is one of my unforgettable experiences in the field!"

Oh dear! You just have to stay cool. Said 15 July 2021 will anyway be remembered by all of us as being the day of the flood of the century.



**Memories of the past - let's not forget them and now focus on the positive experiences. Sylke, you've now been with FAHL since 2004. What do you remember with particular pleasure?**

"I have very fond memories of meeting a tracheotomised boy who is now 5 years old. At that time, his parents approached the Fahl company for advice, as the home care company which had been providing care up to then did not supply a mobile suction device, only provided a small quantity of the required medical aids and there was an overall lack of properly attending to the needs. The family felt confined to their own home and were in constant fear of not

having sufficient materials available. I was able to take over the provision of care and thus change the family's everyday situation dramatically. The assurance of suddenly receiving regular supplies was now given and the mobility of the child, and thus also of the family, was restored. Even their first holiday together was not only planned, but also made a reality.

I was deeply touched by the tangible emotion and gratitude of this family. For me, it was basically the very nature of my professional role, but the family actually perceived it as a special blessing. Looking back on 18 years in the profession, I can truly say that this is my fondest memory."

Cooperation between home care colleagues and their patients is often characterised by very long-lasting relationships. One gets to know each other and experience the ups and downs of an illness together. This creates a bond, builds trust and ultimately provides security for the person affected. And then it becomes easier to cope with the new, transformed everyday life - also for relatives and the family.



**Andreas, you are the longest-serving field force representative at FAHL - how long have you been with the company? Where have you already worked? After such a long time - are there still any surprises for you in your work? Would you make the decision to work in the field force again?**

"My first day at work for the Fahl company was on 16 March 1998. 24 years – I can hardly believe it myself. Whether one can speak of "a single area" in retrospect is perhaps questionable when one has accompanied patients from the hospitals to outpatient follow-up care almost everywhere from Hamburg to Freiburg, from Aachen to Dresden, and supported them with know-how. I guess I can say, "I've been around a lot". For me, the fascination of being a representative in the field continues to be meeting new people every day, having to take on and solve challenges in the provision of care,

acting on my own responsibility and at the same time having a team at my side. Time and again, this forms the basis that confirms my professional decision to work in the field. And of course the joy or surprise when a patient can speak again after a long period of time, just to give an example. And then I sometimes think: "I have added my share."

When one celebrates an anniversary, looking back is certainly the first thing that comes to mind. However, a look into the future should not be ignored. What could we be facing in a few years' time? Digitisation and innovations in medical technology are regularly prophesied these days. Maybe a robot nurse will soon be delivering meals in the hospital, and surgery can increasingly utilise computer-assisted minimally invasive procedures. Less pain, faster mobilisation and better long-term outcomes already make up the anticipated success stories. Whether we will need a mobile phone at all in the future or whether every room and every car will soon have a display as a constant communication option remains to be seen. Maybe home care employees could soon be making the most of the autonomous driving features of their company cars, or they might even be able to arrive quickly right on your doorstep by using an air taxi suitable for everyday use. We cannot say with certainty today what the future will bring.

What we wish for you and ourselves in the future is not a vision, but rather a commitment: we wish for you and for us to continue working closely together in a spirit of trust and to have regular personal discussions, face to face, live and in colour. Not computer-planned, not virtual, simply in the here and now and face-to-face!

We will continue to give you the security, accustomed reliability and professional support you need in tracheostoma care.



Words are rich in meanings. Sometimes you have to think outside the box to understand the meaning of a word. This month, let's take a 360-degree look at the topic:

# FRIENDSHIP

In the end, our relationships with other people are what makes our lives meaningful.

**Wilhelm von Humboldt**  
German language scholar



**30th July**  
**Day of Friend-ship**

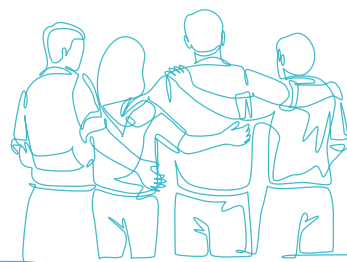


**Hugs from friends strengthen the immune system**

**F**air  
**R**especting  
**I**nspiring  
**E**mpathetic  
**N**eedful  
**D**urable  
**S**incere  
**H**elpful  
**I**ntimate  
**P**owerful



**Jasmine Smith**  
Longest friendship bracelet  
26,695 m | 30 September 2016



**Germans have on average defined 6 people as friends, of which only 3 are true or close friends.**

YouGov, N: 1436

How to find friends? Or rather: at what point does an acquaintance become a friendship? And can this kind of relationship actually develop between real people and a company? Some will answer the question with yes and others with no. The fact is that the patients introduced in the following have been cared for by FAHL for over one to two decades and we have therefore shared many mutual experiences.

From the beginning, and possibly already starting with the diagnosis or after surgery, during rehabilitation up to the regular visits - we have probably gone through "thick

and thin", so to speak. This is when we all keep our fingers crossed, when we look for and find solutions to one or the other problem and jointly enjoy the happiness when the hoped-for success finally materialises.

If one now looks back at these shared experiences over many years, then a special feeling develops - and it is not uncommon for this to be described as friendship. A friendship that has developed steadily over a long period of time, almost unnoticed. A feeling that is different here than there. Let us give our patients their say.

Always very courteous and helpful. Orders arrive quickly and the service is excellent. Keep up the good work !



**Wolfgang Bartlakowski**  
20 years of solidarity

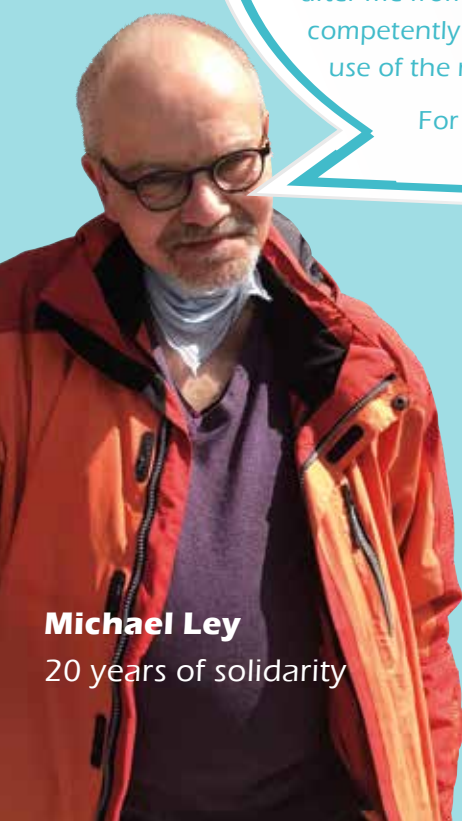
When you need them, they are there to help and advise you. I always feel understood. Deadlines have always been met – the FAHL teams are very reliable.

**Marianne Scheu**  
16 years of solidarity



I underwent laryngectomy 20 years ago and Mr Brüggemann was the person who looked after me from the beginning and competently instructed me in the use of the medical aids

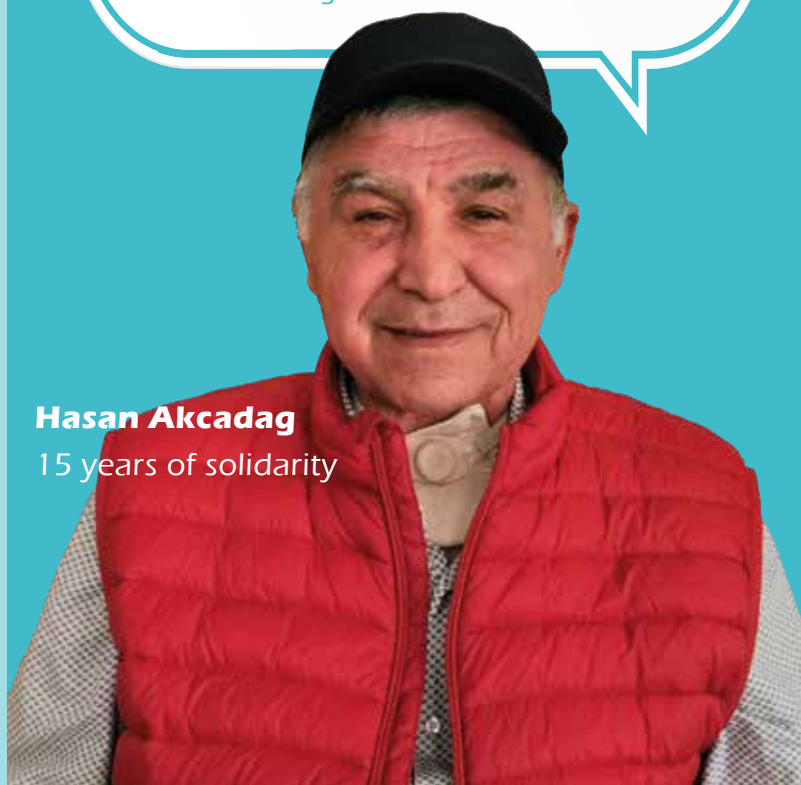
For this I thank you!



**Michael Ley**  
20 years of solidarity

The field force speaks my language, this was very important to me from the very beginning. I just want to be understood. I can rely on the FAHL company and feel that I am in good hands with them.

**Hasan Akcadag**  
15 years of solidarity





I can manage my tracheostoma independently. I look forward to the visits from the field force, they are always so friendly. I am very satisfied with FAHL.



**Marie Fischer**

16 years of solidarity

I still received my initial training personally from Mr. Fahl. In other words, aids handed over and instructed. I have now been with the FAHL company for more than 25 years. I was satisfied with the service from day one.



**Friedel Schimikowski**

25 years of solidarity

FAHL is truly uncomplicated. I am particularly pleased that the deliveries arrive on time - definitely a reliable partner.



**Marius Betz**

14 years of solidarity

Can certainly recommend. I even have a tracheostomy tube, which I can only get from FAHL. When problems arise, a solution is always found, and that makes me really happy.



**Claudia Petermaier**

16 years of solidarity



# BACK OFFICE SALES DEPARTMENT

The entire sales back office can best be described with the word **SERVICE**. And although the individual departments are divided in terms of what they do, the demands on the competence of the colleagues remain virtually the same. They are problem solvers, a source of ideas, organisational talents as well as communication professionals and much, much more in order to create individual solutions. And this happens every day, several times - for our customers, who appreciate our communication at eye level.

Our sales back office is made up of eight different teams that handle a whole range of organisational tasks with impressive know-how. To ensure that everything runs satisfactorily, the teams work hand-in-hand, because every team depends on information from another team.

Yet, there is a big difference. This due to the segmentation of the target groups. The Trade team is the contact for national and international business customers, such as hospitals and specialist retailers.

The other teams are the experts for differently affected patients, relatives as well as medical professionals and arrange everything that is necessary to ensure trouble-free care, ranging from the initial care kit to special organisational procedures with physicians and health insurance companies. A regular exchange with the field force is a matter of course in this process. This is where any special requirements are coordinated, where important questions are answered and solutions are proposed jointly. Of course, it sometimes happens that the customer's expectations are not fulfilled in certain respects. In such cases, we value your feedback so that we can react as quickly as possible and make any necessary corrections so that care can continue smoothly.

At the end of the individual processes, the Billing team settles the invoices with the health insurance companies, private patients as well as our dealers. As you can see - many teams, many different tasks and challenges that we gladly face every day, all in the interests of customer satisfaction.

## Ulrike Bittner

Ulrike has already held various positions at the FAHL company. Not only did she get to know the different business premises in Cologne, but she was also able to contribute and deepen her knowledge in different departments. In close to 20 years one learns a lot and that's how long she has been a team member in the Fahl company. Currently, the TRADE team is her department, in other words she acts as contact person for the hospitals or the specialised trade. Ulrike particularly praises the cross-team cooperation and the general willingness to help among the entire staff. Unfortunately, there is also a minor downside for Ulrike. You always keep seeing new faces that you don't (yet) know. However, getting to know other colleagues and helping them to get started in the company is also a positive challenge.







# REGIONAL OFFICE BERLIN

The shortest distance between Cologne and our capital Berlin is 477.67 km as the crow flies. Quite a distance to cover. It therefore came as no surprise that the desire to establish a branch of the FAHL company in Berlin arose early on, so as to be able to provide patient care beyond the immediate vicinity of Cologne. Today, 20 years later (exactly to be precise as Berlin also celebrates an anniversary this year), one looks back on an incredible development. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Michael Brüggemann, Manager of the Berlin office, who has been with us from the time the very first tracheostomy tube was delivered and who helped to establish the Berlin office.

The first steps towards patient care were planned in 2002, this time not in the garage, but in the basement. To reconcile the massive growth with the customary service

concept, this quickly gave rise to the idea of larger business premises. Following a short stopover in 2004 in a coach depot, the current business premises at Borsigturm in Berlin-Reinickendorf were occupied. Today, patients as well as hospitals are currently being supplied with medical aids by 32 colleagues in the office and the field, all in line with our well-known service.

In addition to the departments already mentioned which organise tracheostoma care in Berlin, the five-strong speech therapy department holds a rather special status there. Here, the focus is on the therapeutic treatment of physiological impairments within the context of a tracheostomy. Cooperation in the interdisciplinary team serves to successfully raise the standard of care for patients.

If one goes through the history of a company or a regional office, you will generally come across some curiosities. For example, a few years ago in Berlin, one of the cars in our company fleet was broken into, stolen and then sunk in one of the nearby lakes - a small nugget of criminal history at FAHL. An anecdote no doubt, but we clearly prefer our varied personal patient stories.





# REGIONAL OFFICE AUSTRIA

"Griaß di" as they say in dialect for "Hello there" in Austria when welcoming our patients and customers in the neighbouring European country since 2003. That was when the regional office was established in Vienna, or to be more precise in Wiener Neudorf. 19 years on, the branch employs a staff of exactly 19 persons. Coincidence or on purpose? And by the way, over half the staff have been with the company for more than 10 years.

the field force cars are all equipped with four-wheel drive and snow chains in the boot are standard issue. But so far no appointments had to be postponed due to black ice or snow. Conclusion: scheduling works, no matter what the season is.

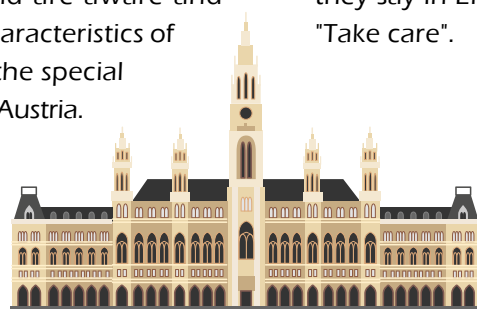
Particular to Austria, some patients are cared for by an ENT physician or by colleagues from Fahl Germany across borders. None of which poses a problem. "We get along very well with the jovial Rhineland mentality from the headquarters in Cologne and are pretty much on the same wavelength," says Andreas Lettner, briefly summarising the cooperation between Austria and Cologne or the colleagues in the field from Team South. And this we can happily confirm!

And customer satisfaction also reflects the so-called Austrian cheerful approach. During the corona pandemic, permanent intensive contact was deliberately maintained with the different patient groups. This now pays dividends. Nevertheless,

The field force is split into three areas (West, South, East) and different greetings are commonplace depending on where you are. This is something that branch manager Andreas Lettner pointed out to us in the interview: working together in the different regions of the Alpine country immediately becomes much easier when you can speak the local dialect and are aware and take into account the special characteristics of the region. And these include the special weather conditions prevailing in Austria.

As a rule, and particularly in winter, one should keep an eye on the weather forecast, especially if you intend to cross a mountain pass to reach a patient. Fortunately,

Andreas is already looking forward to the next meetings in a real life situation. A face-to-face exchange is definitely more gratifying. In this sense when saying goodbye, it is "Pfiat Gott" in Austria and "Maach et joot" in Cologne, or as they say in English "Take care".



# REGIONAL OFFICE SWITZERLAND

**In a representative survey, Konso, Institut für Konsumenten- & Sozialanalysen AG, found that the Swiss describe themselves as being reserved, tidy and friendly.**

In conversation with our Switzerland expert and field representative Andreas Faller, these results could be confirmed absolutely. And he is certainly capable of making this comparison. Andreas is originally from Austria and thus quickly recognises and experiences the character traits and differences. "In Austria, people tend to be more tough and hearty, whereas in Switzerland, people are more reserved and openly friendly," is how Andreas sums up the differences.

The regional office in Switzerland is still relatively young, the office was opened in 2019 and is currently staffed with four employees. The major challenge is the diversity of languages in Switzerland. German, English, Italian and French - all these languages are represented in a single country. Of

course, these national languages are mastered by our staff to be able to ensure optimal tracheostoma care in all cantons.

Logistics is yet another challenge. As Switzerland is not part of the EU, customs keep a very close eye on what is being shipped, and this can sometimes lead to longer delivery times. But not to worry, the patients or the customers, such as the hospitals, don't notice these processes. The required



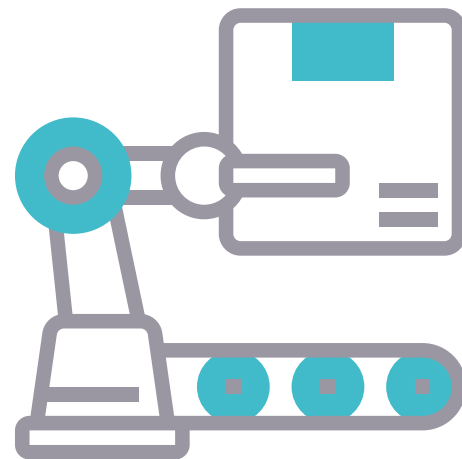
medical devices are either shipped directly from within Switzerland or we already take this delay in logistics at the border into account when planning the delivery time.

But woe to anyone who wishes to make a quick trip to a patient appointment. Always observe the speed limit in Switzerland; if you drive too fast, your beloved car may even be confiscated by the police and auctioned off. So it's better to take your foot off the accelerator and arrive safely.

By the way: Andreas describes the cooperation between Switzerland and Cologne as informal - we feel the same way and look forward to the joint further development of this young regional office.



# PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT



Sometimes production is a colourful place indeed. Admittedly, the coloured LARYVOX® MY EXTRA HMEs are assembled there, and with almost 530 colour combinations available, they offer an impressively wide range of choice.

Not only are the LARYVOX® MY EXTRA HMEs assembled in-house here, but also the different standard LARYVOX® EXTRA HMEs. And if someone orders the emergency button (REF 90290) or the emergency patch for neck breathers (REF 90291), they will receive a small greeting from production and hold a product "Made in Germany" in their hands.



And "Made in Germany" means quality that has been lived for years at every level of production. As a consequence, our products are always assembled and packaged with care. Nonetheless, a high degree of flexibility is just as important here. For example, when a special order upsets the daily schedule. But what does a day in production actually look like?

The day regularly begins in the morning with a review of the production orders and their discussion. Priorities

are set, capacities are checked and the plan for the day is drawn up. At this point, a special mention must also be made with regard to the great diversity of tasks in production. One thing is for sure, production, assembly and having all production processes under control are things that work particularly well on a team basis and have worked extremely well for us for decades. This deserves a special thank you!

## Thorsten Berkele

To tell the truth, Thorsten is sometimes referred to as MacGyver in the company. He acts in the same spirit. And now and then you can hear: "Berkele will get it done". Not surprising, as he has been creating uncomplicated solutions of various kinds for the Fahl company since 1999. The production department or, in the broadest sense, the warehouse, is the perfect setting for his work. His willingness to help is one of his greatest virtues. The resulting recognition from other colleagues fuels him with the necessary motivation to achieve great things every day. He appreciates the collegial atmosphere of cooperation that has not been lost despite the steady growth of the company. For him, Fahl represents stability, which has been increasingly proven over the years. While there was still slight uncertainty when he joined, this has now - today - disappeared entirely. And that is a good thing!





# DIGITAL RELAUNCH

The website - the first impression of a company on the Internet and the focal point of all online activities. If one looks at the digital development of the last few years and then looks ahead into the future, one realises that this is a recurring process and a never-ending project. For our anniversary, we decided to relaunch the website with a new design, improved technology and even more content.

And anyone who believes that this merely means that a few new photos have been taken or texts have been written is very much mistaken. Such projects have an enormous lead time. To give an idea - we started the project in 2020. In various workshops with staff from the different departments, we identified the individual needs and specific requirements and integrated these into the new website. Specifically, the views of individual users, such as physicians or affected persons, and their specific preferences on the Internet were taken into account.

Our new homepage can finally be unveiled: a project that is about to enter its second round and which is constantly evolving. So stop by regularly and have a browse. Many areas are new, for example the newly established blog. There you can find our pooled knowledge about laryngectomy, tracheostomy as well as rehabilitation. You will find answers to the WHAT?, HOW? and WHY? about the various aspects of care. The content has been optimised for your terminal device such as a mobile phone or the desktop version and is displayed correctly. Fast, clearly structured and informative.



Enter the new world of FAHL and be inspired. You already know the address: [www.fahl.com](http://www.fahl.com)



# NEXT SCHON GEHÖRT?

Especially at the end of the year, tradition comes into its own: the home is decorated for Christmas, presents are bought, roast turkey and all the trimmings are prepared and enjoyed. Last-minute visits to friends in the old year are on the agenda, New Year's resolutions are made and those who live in a carnival region start thinking about their costumes for the fifth season of the year. All are traditions - some have been around for generations, others are of our own invention and have a very special meaning. And as the saying goes: traditions must be upheld.

But before we say our traditional goodbyes to you this year, there is also a new issue of **SCHON GEHÖRT?** on this very topic. And as is custom, you are welcome to be a part of the issue. Tell us about the traditions you cherish, or any extraordinary traditions you have encountered and where. We will then share your story with our readers at the beginning of December. We look forward to hearing from you!



Our German customer magazine is popular and well received by patients, relatives and interested parties. Do you have any suggestions or feedback for us? Then write to us at: [redaktion@fahl.de](mailto:redaktion@fahl.de)

## Disclaimer

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A piece of FAHL history from our archive. Since the company was founded 30 years ago, communicative exchange has always been a top priority.



Schon gehört

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