



## From the Executive Director's Desk

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For almost 20 years in my role as director of public policy I have written to you on another page of this magazine—the National Update page—where I kept you up to date with HLAA advocacy efforts. Now in my new position as executive director I have space on this page to write to you on any subject I choose.

First, I want to thank you for your e-mails, cards, and phone calls congratulating me on becoming the executive director of Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA). Leading this organization in times of economic downturn, shifting hearing loss demographics, emerging technologies, and corporate mergers is going to be a challenge, but I am ready and with your help believe we can achieve our mission.

I want to take this opportunity to spell out my vision for the Hearing Loss Association of America. I will work to:

- reach all people with hearing loss who seek to improve their ability to communicate;
- advocate for a society increasingly accessible to people with hearing loss;
- increase the general public's awareness of HLAA as the "go to" consumer organization to assist people with hearing loss and their families with information on technology, legal rights, and communication help;
- eradicate the stigma of using hearing aids and other assistive technology;
- build a stronger network of HLAA chapters to provide peer mentoring support for people with hearing loss and support state organizations to create system change;
- develop sufficient financial resources to support the HLAA mission and program activities; and
- recruit a strong Board of Trustees and staff with knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for the future health of the organization.

This organization has never been so needed. The number of people with hearing loss in this country is 31 million and now we are told there are 58,000 returning troops from Iraq and Afghanistan with hearing loss. However, because there is still a stigma associated with hearing loss, only a small percentage of people with hearing loss are going to seek help. HLAA is committed to eradicating the stigma and changing perceptions about using hearing aids and other devices.

We cannot do it alone. We have to collaborate with our fellow consumer groups, hearing health professionals, and manufacturers like never before to bring the benefits of hearing technology to all those who need it.

In this issue we introduce a new "guest corner" where HLAA corporate members talk to our readers about trends in their field. We value organizations and corporations that support us, collaborate with us and believe in the work we are trying to do. We thought you would like to know who they are and hear what they have to say. Welcome our first guest in this issue—Arlene Pietranton, executive director of ASHA. ■■■■

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