

By Brenda Battat



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From the Executive Director's Desk

Our Grassroots Organization

HLAA was founded as a grassroots organization to create a network of chapters where self-help could thrive. Today, our nationwide chapter network stretches the reach of the national office, implementing federal laws locally and getting laws passed that improve accessibility and services for people with hearing loss in the states.

Our chapters work on a variety of things from getting hearing aid insurance coverage in the states, to hospital access programs, to getting assistive devices installed in public facilities, to outreach and advocating for captioning wherever they see a need. They have the pulse of what is going on locally and their focus is always to advocate for hearing-friendly environments and improved state and local services for people with hearing loss. The combination of the national office pushing at the federal level and the chapters and state organizations pushing at the state level is very powerful and makes HLAA a force to be reckoned with.

Advocating for better conditions for people with hearing loss is definitely an HLAA focus. But we are no less committed to the personal aspect—to reaching out to individuals who are trying to cope with hearing loss and don't know where to find help. This is where the rubber meets the road and where chapters come into play. Getting together with other people in different stages of coping is reassuring. Chapter meetings are a non-threatening environment in which to observe and learn. It's a place where you feel understood and where you can pick up communication and technology tips to use at home, on the job and in everyday life. It's a place where there are no stupid questions and where you can feel less isolated and left out. Ultimately it's a place to pull ourselves up by the bootstraps, increase self-esteem and feel more positive about life.

In March 2010, HLAA was delighted to bring Elizabeth LeBarron on board as a new staff person to focus on supporting our chapters and state organizations. She brings a wealth of experience in working with chapters and will bring a fresh look at how we can all work together as a united organization to further our mission. See for yourself what our chapters around the country are doing through their stories on page 27 and welcome Elizabeth. No chapter near you? Are you interested in starting one? Let Elizabeth know. To view our chapter network go to www.hearingloss.org/chapters/index.asp. ■■■

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