

Continuing to Build Awareness with New Audiences



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There are 48 million people with hearing loss in the country, but HLAA helps one person at a time live successfully with his or her hearing loss.

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We want people to know about HLAA and find us when they are looking for information and support. We are definitely making progress in educating people who have a hearing loss and their families about the programs, tools and resources HLAA can provide to them. We've also raised public awareness about hearing loss through our Walk4Hearing, our website, HLAA Chapter outreach, and media exposure.

However we want to reach beyond the person who has hearing loss.

At the end of 2014, I had meetings with industry leaders, manufacturers, trade associations, health care providers, hearing health care groups, and employers to discuss how hearing loss is impacting their businesses, their employees and customers. It was interesting that at times they seemed surprised about the numbers of people with hearing loss, the implications for their businesses, and how current and potential customers might be impacted.

The bad news is that some companies not in the business of hearing health care have said that hearing loss is too complicated to tackle and they don't know where to start. The good news is that all of them are interested in knowing more about HLAA and how our chapters and state organizations can help them.

HLAA's Get in the Hearing Loop program is a good example of how educating businesses as well as churches, libraries, theaters, and city councils about induction loops also provides us with an opportunity to educate them about how providing accessible venues for people with hearing loss is in their best business interests. They become aware of HLAA as a source of support and information. This is the first step in a relationship. We need to stay involved with them and provide them with more information and how we can *benefit them*.

Many HLAA Chapters are having success talking with hearing health care professionals in their communities about how we can support their patients. At the national level, we are engaging in constructive discussions with the American Academy of Audiology, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, International Hearing Society, and AG Bell on ways we can work together to better meet people's needs. In these conversations we are not just talking about how their involvement supports HLAA and our chapters, but how our support can provide them benefit in improving their practice and relationships with their patients.

Engaging employers is another important way for us to increase awareness and address the business interests of employers related to providing communication accessible workplaces. Employees and employers are confused and often unsure about the best way to provide accessible workplaces. There is much we can do as chapters and individual HLAA members to help employers understand these issues and ultimately increase their profitability. We have two resources on our website: The January/February 2014 issue of *Hearing Loss Magazine* on employment. You can read the entire issue online at hearingloss.org>Hearing Loss Magazine>Previous Issues. Our Employment Toolkit is online at hearingloss.org>Hearing Help>Workplace. At the HLAA Convention 2015 this June we will have a symposium titled *Employment Issues for People with Hearing Loss*.

We know that helping people communicate better, hear better, and live successfully with hearing loss is something we are all committed to achieving. But helping businesses and employers understand the positive return on investment they can get from better understanding of these issues and responding to them is a great way to increase awareness of HLAA and our work. Please join me in talking with businesses about how working with HLAA can help their business bottom line. **HLM**