

# Promoting Awareness, Then and Now



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“We are changing the way the world thinks about hearing loss, and changing the way people with hearing loss think about themselves.”

—Rocky Stone, Founder

**T**he HAAA Walk4Hearing featured on our cover is an annual event that this year will take place in 21 cities across the country with thousands of walkers creating immeasurable amounts of awareness about hearing loss.

We are making progress in this arena—raising public awareness about hearing loss, and helping people understand how to live successfully with their hearing loss. I thought this would be a good time to reflect on what HAAA is doing in addition to the Walk4Hearing and what we as individuals can and should be doing.

I often take a page from Founder Rocky Stone’s playbook from the early days of our organization. Then and now, his philosophy is critical to our mission. I particularly like this quote from his book *An Invisible Condition: The Human Side of Hearing Loss*:

*We are changing the way the world thinks about hearing loss, and changing the way people with hearing loss think about themselves.*

I was also inspired by what Rocky wrote in September/October 1987 when he encouraged everyone involved in the organization to do their individual part by promoting awareness—the self-help way.

Rocky wrote:

*So often people ask me, ‘What are you (Rocky) doing to change the attitudes of hearing people about people with hearing loss?’ Or, ‘What is SHHH [now HAAA] doing to develop greater awareness of the problem of hearing loss among our hearing associates?’*

*It’s time to change the question to ‘What are **we** doing in those areas?’ We are all, every one of us who has a hearing loss, personally liable for educating the public.*

*What do you think would happen if each and every one of us wrote a letter to our local newspapers and radio/TV stations, telling them about SHHH and its many accomplishments in our scant eight-year history? Would we celebrate our birthday with a national roar—and, a surge of new members? Maybe.*

*Or, what if each one of us pledged to introduce just one other person to SHHH during this month. Unrealistic? Why should it be? A little effort from each one of us can add up to a quantum leap in doing what we do best—helping people.*

*In choosing the self-help way, we have made a choice.*

*We have decided not just to live, but to live fully. We are engaged in activities which further our own development and which enable us to provide more to others. Choice and conscious endeavor.*

*Listen to Thoreau: ‘I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavor.’*

*We are becoming, becoming and becoming. If you have not yet made this choice, now is the time.*

## Fast Forward to 2014

I could not have said it better—but let me add to his thoughts. Today, because of the Internet, social media, and more instantaneous communications than we had in 1987 when Rocky wrote those words, we can really step up our awareness activities. HAAA hopes to be able to launch a more aggressive marketing and communications plan but, in the meantime, let’s work together **today** to increase public awareness.

In an attempt to increase our presence on social media sites, we are actively tracking our statistics on our website, on Facebook, and on Twitter. Staff are increasing news postings to these sites and routinely publishing important information.

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## Promoting Awareness *continued from page 6*

Did you know that HLAA's website—[www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org)—is visited by more than a half million people each year with 77 percent of those visits from new visitors? And we have more than 100,000 visitors who use our website repeatedly.

Last year, our Walk4Hearing website—[www.walk4hearing.org](http://www.walk4hearing.org)—had more than 189,000 visits. We are not currently able to track how many visitors go to all of the HLAA Chapters' websites, but I am confident there are thousands.

How can we all work together to drive even more traffic to our website? We want to increase our Facebook presence for all the Chapters and the Walk sites. Have you "Liked" our page or that of your Chapter? What about the pages of the 21 Walks? We have about 4,500 Twitter followers? Are you one? Have you re-tweeted some important information about HLAA to your followers?

If social media is not your thing, have you ever considered writing an article for a magazine or your local newspaper? If you are not a good writer, use the writing of others. Take your *Hearing Loss Magazine*, after you have read it cover to cover, and leave it at your doctor's office, audiologist, or the place where you go to get your hair done or your barber shop.

Take your chapter newsletter and drop it off at the local coffee shop and other places. Everyone loves to read when they are in waiting rooms or waiting for their favorite barber or hairdresser. I take my copy to my nail salon and every time I go back, I look for the last issue that I had left there, and it is almost always gone. I notice other old magazines are still there—but not *Hearing Loss Magazine*!

HLAA will continue to work aggressively to increase public awareness about hearing loss and the many ways we are helping people to live successfully with hearing loss. Be part of our efforts. Let's be sure we are reaching the 48 million people in this country who have a hearing loss. There are tools and resources we can provide to them as well as educate their families and friends and those in the community about the implications of hearing loss and why it should be prevented, tested, and treated.

If you would like to talk about what you are doing to raise public awareness either through an HLAA Chapter, the Walk4Hearing, or as an individual, join me on my blog at <http://hlaaexecutivedirectorblogspot.com/>. **HLM**

*Anna Gilmore Hall is the executive director of HLAA. She can be reached at [agilmorehall@hearingloss.org](mailto:agilmorehall@hearingloss.org).*



## Thank You!

HLAA would like to extend our deep appreciation to our incredible donors for supporting our mission—to open the world of communication to people with hearing loss by providing information, education, support and advocacy.

HLAA is a self-supporting nonprofit organization. Our support comes from individuals, foundations and corporations who share our goals, values and mission.

Your support makes a difference in the lives of consumers with hearing loss—and our combined efforts can make our voices heard from town hall to the corridors of Washington, D.C.

Your support makes our voices heard—all 48 million of them—thank you.



July/Aug 1980



Sept/Oct 1990



July/Aug 1996



Sept/Oct 2003



Sept/Oct 2011



May/June 2014

## The Evolution of *Hearing Loss Magazine*

Have you noticed this issue is spiffed up a bit? You will recognize it as your familiar *Hearing Loss Magazine* but with a fresh look as we move toward our 35th anniversary. There are also elements that tie the magazine more closely to our social media and website.

Over the years, our award-winning magazine has been redesigned only five times. The magazine has also had various names. The first issue was titled *Shhh—A journal about hearing loss published by Self Help for Hard of Hearing People, Inc.* It was published in July/Aug 1980, eight months after the organization was founded.

We don't execute change often or cavalierly. However, when we feel the time is right, we do it with thoughtful deliberation in regard to branding and concern for you—our members—who have come to depend on the look and feel as well as the trustworthy content of your magazine. —*Barbara Kelley, Editor-in-Chief*