

Making Hearing Loss an Issue of National Concern for 35 Years



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HLAA will celebrate its 35th anniversary this November. We will commemorate our 35 years from now until November 2015. On behalf of the Board of Trustees and the National Office Staff, I wish all our members and supporters happy holidays and a happy new year.

Jim Collins, one of America's preeminent management gurus, gives advice and insights on corporate as well as nonprofit America. He teaches how successful organizations go from being good to great. The cornerstone theory of many of his insights is the importance of establishing a **Big Hairy Audacious Goal**, or BHAG.

A daunting goal serves as a unifying focal point of effort, galvanizing people and creating team spirit as people strive toward a finish line. It has to be clear, compelling, and consistent with the organization's core mission. In the 1960s, President Kennedy challenged NASA to put a man on the moon and return him safely to Earth within the next ten years. Google's goal was to organize the world's information and make it accessible and usable to everyone. Disney's was to become the best in the world at family entertainment.

Founder Rocky Stone, like President Kennedy, Google executives, and Walt Disney, had an overarching important goal. Rocky's goal was to **make hearing loss an issue of national concern**. As we prepare to celebrate our 35th anniversary, it is a time to recommit to Rocky's vision and goal. Our anniversary is a time for HLAA to seize this opportunity and to commit to bold and far-reaching goals—especially one to *make hearing loss an issue of national concern*.

Over the past 35 years HLAA has succeeded in many things. HLAA's accomplishments for advocating on behalf of people of all ages with hearing loss are extraordinary—but we are far from being done. Our advocacy has focused on gaining access to mainstream American culture for people

with hearing loss in such areas as technology, telecommunications, hearing health care, employment, education and leadership. We are working on eradicating the stigma associated with hearing loss and raising public awareness about the need for prevention, regular hearing screenings and treatment. We are working to make hearing assistive technology accessible and affordable for all Americans with hearing loss. HLAA has been providing invaluable leadership in the area of public policy, but we intend to make our voices even louder and stronger through the implementation of the HLAA Public Policy and Advocacy Agenda. (See the agenda on hearingloss.org under Advocacy.)

As we think about our future, we know we still have much to do. We are increasing our demands on the hearing aid industry, hearing health care professionals, and technology manufacturers. We are demanding change in insurance coverage, and better hearing health care. We are the consumer voice to the FCC, FDA, and other government and policy makers. We are addressing communication technology from looping to cell phones to captioning on TV and on the Internet. We are supporting legislation to amend the Social Security Act to include Medicare coverage for hearing aids, rehabilitation and various services associated with fitting, adjusting, and using hearing aids.

Our advocacy work revolves around changing how society and industry thinks and responds to the person with hearing loss. We are leading the efforts by advocating

continued on page 45