



© Cindy Dyer

**A device can bring
you back into the
world of sound.
HLAA brings
you back to a
world of people.**

It's What We Were Born For

BY BARBARA KELLEY

How do we find the courage and the confidence to act on our own behalf? What is our path to taking the first step toward addressing hearing health, or learning about all the tools — technology, coping and communication strategies — and more? It's hard to isolate ourselves and try to figure it out all on our own. Google helps, but Google doesn't talk back to us or engage us in a way where we find strength and confidence from being with each other.

Investment in technology is through the roof. For people with hearing loss, hearing aids, cochlear implants, hearing assistive technology, aren't just gadgets, they are godsend. The human body is the interface. We all need some handholding with technology, plus mutual support to know that we aren't the only ones going through this.

A device can bring you back into the world of sound, HLAA brings you back to a world of people.

As we look for solutions to a well-defined problem (hearing loss), there is a community that longs to be with each other. It empowers us. In HLAA, you'll find people who respond with heart and enthusiasm as evidenced by these past two years during the pandemic. We found ways to stay connected and now we are slowly getting back to meeting in person in our chapters, at the Walk4Hearing and the HLAA Convention this summer.

As our Founder Rocky Stone said, "Hope flourishes in community, not isolation." That is why the concept of chapters was at our core from the early days. In 1981, Rocky wrote, "We are becoming more aware that diversity is our strength. So, as we organize chapters we must understand and accept diverse interest, points of view and lifestyles, but all these differences can be united around our belief in the basic principles of human dignity and the justice we all seek."

Rocky's words transcend time. Our shared experiences, learning, trying new technologies, getting together, builds self-esteem and confidence. The decision to help ourselves grows into the mature decision to help others. Whether you connect with us through the digital world or attend an in-person event, you are part of a community. What better basis can we have for hope? We are wired for sound, but our hearts and minds are meant to be in a community. **HL**

Barbara Kelley is executive director of the Hearing Loss Association of America. Follow her on Twitter @Bkelley_HLAA.

