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HLAA Strategic Themes

BY KEVIN H. FRANCK

In the summer 2022 issue of *Hearing Life*, I wrote about the role of a board of directors of a nonprofit organization in building a strategic plan. I expanded on the first of five themes in the strategic plan to Expand our Engagement.

This important first theme directs the organization to ensure that everyone with hearing loss is included in our advocacy. Specific areas to focus on in the next couple of years include racial diversity, age diversity, and hearing loss severity diversity. This issue of *Hearing Life* brings the age and hearing loss severity diversity to life discussing over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids. This is because OTC hearing aids are intended for people with self-perceived mild to moderate hearing loss, which is often experienced by people younger than those with a more severe hearing loss. We'll know we're successful when people from all walks of life feel better represented.

For this column, I'll focus on the other four themes which were approved in May and discussed during the HLAA 2022 Convention in Tampa, Florida. These themes, collectively, should be visible to you as HLAA works to implement processes and programs to achieve them.

Theme 2: Seize Technology Opportunities

The second theme of our strategic plan is to “seize technology opportunities.” Let's be realistic — HLAA doesn't have the market power to define technology. But we can be ready to seize opportunities that broader markets define, and both strategically and opportunistically influence others. For example, COVID forced us to get good at virtual meetings. HLAA (and others) worked to ensure captions were incorporated without a paywall. More work remains to let the user enable the function. Also, people with hearing loss understand and depend on overcoming the limitations around live audio streaming. Bluetooth and Wi-Fi, ever-evolving ubiquitous connectivity technologies, need to be pushed to standards that ensure that they are easy to connect to and fast enough to enable understanding like hearing loops do for us today. HLAA is and must continue to be part of that conversation. There's an app for everything. But that doesn't mean the apps are made by and for people who understand the user needs. For OTC hearing aids, HLAA pushed for this important demographic to be considered, and will make clear when it has and hasn't been achieved.

Theme 3: Broaden Advocacy and Influence

Our federal governing bodies have Executive Director Barbara Kelley and her staff top on their list to call for national policy initiatives like OTC hearing aids, Medicare hearing aid coverage and others. You've seen Barbara's quotes in top media outlets. How can we broaden that? By going deeper and wider, providing an infrastructure for state governments to influence public health policy and insurance advocacy, for local government, private payers, consumer technology, and media purveyors, too. HLAA has earned itself a seat at the tables of a variety of influential organizations. Now HLAA must also set the table for patient-led initiatives. On May 25, 2021, HLAA organized the Externally-Led Patient-Focused Drug Development meeting, with permission from the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA), to instruct the FDA about the gaps that remain

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despite medical device technology advancements to help define how drug progress will be measured.

Theme 4: Steward Our Financial Resources

HLAA is maturing. It's gaining positive momentum in fundraising across ever-diversifying constituencies, and this must continue to ensure that HLAA has the funds to be sustainable and viable for years to come. Developing the capabilities to foster giving is so important for HLAA to have impact, to do the work we need to do.

Theme 5: Build a Movement

In its roots, self-help and community are foundational HLAA values. HLAA Chapters have served this role since

HLAA's inception. This is where people have gathered locally and face-to-face to share experiences and connect with each other in an environment that minimizes stigma and maximizes acoustics. The bonds formed here are literally lifesaving. So, chapters will remain important. But modern society gathers in more places and types of places. Social media platforms have provided some aspects of the traditional chapter experience, and some unique experiences. HLAA must build a movement to provide additional venues to promote outreach and self-support for all the different ways that people connect with each other.

All of the five themes will be operationalized by Barbara and the staff who will apply tactics and measurable goals. I'm excited about the future of HLAA. **HL**

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HLAA Expands Online Community and Calendar



Did you know that HLAA has new, branded HLAA Groups Online Communities? In addition to joining our Facebook Official Community & Support group, we have added six special interest subgroups. They are HLAA Advocacy, HLAA GITHL—Get in the Hearing Loop, HLAA Leaders, HLAA Newsletter Editors, HLAA Tech and HLAA Veterans Across America Virtual Chapter. Through each subgroup, you will connect to a nationwide community for support and sharing of ideas. To join a group, scroll through the subgroup list and click on the group you wish to join, then click on +Join This Group.

We have a new calendar feature on the HLAA website. You can find HLAA Chapter and State meetings by clicking on the Find HLAA Chapter and State Meetings Here button. For more information about these Groups, email Carla Beyer-Smolin at cbeyer-smolin@hearingloss.org. Learn more at: <https://hlaagroups.hearingloss.org/g/HLAA>.



HLAA MISSION CIRCLE

A monthly online giving program offering convenience while supporting work for people with hearing loss.

hearingloss.org/make-an-impact