



I asked Ronnie Adler, director of the HLAA Walk4Hearing, Over the last 10 years what has been your greatest moment both as the director or as a walker?

After a long pause, she said, “There have been so many great moments that I could cry. I’ll have to get back you.”

I knew there was a story in there.

The Walk4Hearing started in 2006 with only six walks, today we are in 21 cities. Ronnie, who has a hearing loss herself and has been with the program since its inception, says she always thought, “There is a walk for almost everything, why not a walk for people with hearing loss?”

Anne Pope, from New York City and past president of the HLAA Board of Trustees, says: “Ten years ago, chapter members from four states—New York, California, Pennsylvania and Texas—plunged into putting on six HLAA Walk4Hearing events. Without any previous experience, but with the help of a seasoned consultant [Steve Leonard who is the man behind the March of Dimes Walk and other large walks], we had reached people who needed our help. The Walk raised awareness about the

causes and consequences of hearing loss and raised money to help us accomplish our mission. The Walks help us move closer to what Founder Rocky Stone urged us to do—“make hearing loss an issue of national concern.”

Diana Bender from Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, also a past president of the Board says, “I have been privileged to participate in both the Pennsylvania Walk4Hearing and the Washington DC Walk4Hearing and have watched the number of people walking as well as the funds raised each year grow by leaps and bounds.”

Making a Statement

Walks in general have shown that people are passionate about causes that impact them personally or someone they know. Walks are an urban way of organizing people who care and, in doing so, they make a public statement about an issue, usually a health concern.

Hearing loss affects one in ten Americans. And there is no vacation from hearing loss—it’s a 24/7 experience. Hearing loss is a major public health issue, third in line to heart disease and arthritis. So, hearing loss is a natural fit for a Walk.

Has the Walk4Hearing made a difference in how people view hearing loss? Ronnie says we have made a statement and have reduced the stigma associated with hearing loss.

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By Barbara Kelley

10 Years of YOU Walking from Coast to Coast

SPRING 2006 — Pilot program began with six Walk4Hearing sites—Fort Worth, Houston, Rochester and downstate New York (Westchester/New York City), Northern California, and Pennsylvania

Westchester Walk4Hearing



FALL 2006 — Pilot deemed successful and full-time staff hired to expand the Walk4Hearing

North Carolina Walk4Hearing



2007 — Added 9 walks and first year of national sponsorship



Long Beach Walk4Hearing © Marisa Sarto



“The Walk4Hearing unites everyone with hearing loss. It brings everyone together for one cause and helps you feel like you belong and you’re not alone!” — *Kim LaBrecque with her daughter Tia Shay, New England Walk4Hearing*

“Since I started participating in the Walk4Hearing five years ago, I’ve been inspired by the number of people who come show their support. When we show up in our brightly colored t-shirts, we are showing people that hearing loss affects so many of us, of all different ages and backgrounds. The Walk is such a great vehicle for spreading awareness about hearing loss and creating much needed visibility!” — *Lisa Yuan, Long Beach (CA) Walk4Hearing*



“I’ve had a hearing loss for 55 years and the Walk4Hearing has been a part of me for the last several years. Each year I see more and more people coming out. Congratulations, Walk4Hearing!” — *Ed O’Brien, Chicago Walk4Hearing, walking with Janet Tusk*

This is the tenth year of the Walk4Hearing...that means there have been 58,000 of you walking for something you believe in, whether it’s for you, for your families, or for your friends. We all set out to do something great and it worked!

Visit walk4hearing.org for information on Kickoffs and Walk4Hearing sites across the country. The first events of 2015 begin this May.

“For me, the Walk4Hearing is an event where friends from all communities—Deaf, hearing, and those with hearing loss—can come together to support a common goal.” — *Marlene Ferry (left) with granddaughter Kaiab*

Ferry, Dayton/ Cincinnati



Walk4Hearing *from page 10*

She explains how, “When I see how we have pulled in communities across the country, to the point where the Walk4Hearing is on their calendar year after year, I know we have made a difference in how people think about hearing loss. We’ve had mayors attend and also received proclamations from city councils. Gradually, we got on the radar of a lot of people and civic groups who never thought about hearing loss before.

“When I see parents of children with hearing loss ecstatic about seeing their kids meet other kids just like them, I feel it’s an experience that goes to their hearts and changes them for the better. These kids know they are not alone. I’ve seen so many children form teams, fundraise and have a blast on Walk day with their families in tow. The families bond. That’s something you can’t orchestrate, it happens in the most beautiful and natural way.”

Local volunteers run the day of the Walk like it’s a big party. Judy Martin, chair of the Jacksonville, Florida Walk4Hearing, describes the scene: “Excited little kids running around; teens, seniors and in-betweens working together; gray skies or blue; walking the parks, river walks or streets; clowns, face painters or bounce

Below:
Washington DC
Walk4Hearing



houses. Add them all up in the 10 years of the HLAA Walk4Hearing and each year they equal more awareness to the general public and more funding for services and materials.”

Ronnie adds, “The excitement that our volunteers and participants bring to the Walk to make it successful is not something I can measure quantitatively. It’s priceless!”

The proceeds from the Walk4Hearing fund activities and programs at the national and local level. This year, one of the national

Left: Jacksonville Walk4Hearing
Clarke School Alliance

New England Walk4Hearing



initiatives the Walk4Hearing will help fund is the Institute of Medicine which is conducting a study that will result in recommendations about the hearing health care field, most specifically, accessible and affordable health care for adults, insurance coverage for hearing aids, ethics issues, and federal regulations for dispensing hearing aids.

Community Alliances

The Walk4Hearing is not just for HLAA Chapters and members. Schools for children with hearing loss, hospitals, universities, and other nonprofit hearing loss-related organizations, participate in the Walk

2008 — New logo and branding guidelines

Alliance program started with 16 alliances on board

SE Michigan Walk4Hearing



2009 — Hit the \$1 million goal

Reed Doughty, NFL player, named National Honorary Walk4Hearing Chair

Mike Orscheln, Phonak CEO and president, serves as the first Business Team Chair for Chicago Walk4Hearing

Reed Doughty, Honorary Chair



2010 — Record year to date for Business Team Chairs

Mike Orscheln, Phonak, Chicago; **Chris Smith**, Cochlear Americas, Colorado; **Paul Kershnik**, CaptionCall, Salt Lake City; **Rob Engelke**, CapTel Captioned Telephone, Milwaukee

Hartford Walk4Hearing



as Alliances. They raise money for their own programs but it's not all about money, it's also about the experience.

Ronnie remembers a cochlear implant surgeon with an Alliance who met a teen she implanted when the teen was just a baby. One mother who is associated with the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, an Alliance, kissed local volunteers in gratitude at the Kickoff. Everyone has a story and there's a lot of personal motivation and rewards along the way.

"The Alliances have helped the Walk to grow," says Ronnie, "They have a far reach into their communities and help bring families on board. Plus, it gives them a chance to fundraise for their own needs by associating their organization with a large national Walk4Hearing where all the marketing is done for them with few administrative hassles. It's a win-win for all."

Colorado Walk4Hearing



Corporate Support

Each Walk has local sponsors who support events that are important to the people who live there. On the national level, the Walk4Hearing enjoys generous support from companies. See the 2015 sponsors on page 14.

Some of the companies whose headquarters are in the same city as the Walk4Hearing take pride in getting involved with the Walk. Advanced Bionics in Long Beach, CapTel in Milwaukee, CaptionCall in Salt Lake City, Cochlear Americas in Denver, hi HealthInnovations in Minneapolis, MED-EL in Cary, North Carolina, and Beltone, Knowles, Phonak and Morton's Steakhouse in Chicago, all have had company teams. Their support is a boon to people with hearing loss everywhere. All our sponsors lend their support and are glad to have their logos associated with the Walk4Hearing at 21 Kickoffs and 21 Walks. And we are glad to have them.

A Memorable Day

Karen Ratner, volunteer since 2006, will participate in the special 10-year Walk4Hearing in Westchester/Rockland this year. She says, "I am looking forward to seeing old friends and meeting new ones with the common goal of raising awareness for hearing loss."



St. Louis Walk4Hearing

For Ronnie Adler, there have been many great moments in the 10-year history of the Walk4Hearing. But one memory strikes a personal note.

"My sister helped out at the 2011 New England Walk4Hearing. When she saw the children with hearing aids and cochlear implants being excited about having this chance to do something for themselves and their own hearing loss, she remembered me growing up in the Bronx in the '60s and '70s. Back then, no one talked about hearing loss, there was such a stigma, and she knew the shame I felt. She lived through it with me and was profoundly touched to see how times have changed for these children. And, I was overcome with emotion because I realized that my sister understood deeply what the Walk4Hearing meant to these families because of what I went through."

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2011 — New York City and Chicago had more than 1,000 walkers

First National Business Chair: **Mike Orscheln**, CEO and president, Phonak

Business Team Chairs: **Gordon Walker**, Knowles Electronics, Chicago; **Chris Smith**, Cochlear Americas, Colorado; **Paul Kershnik**, CaptionCall, Salt Lake City; **Rob Engelke**, CapTel Captioned Telephone, Milwaukee; **Gerhard Roehrlein**, Advanced Bionics, Long Beach, CA

2012 — **Chris Artinian**, CEO of Morton's, named HCAA national spokesperson and heads a team in Chicago

Business Team Chairs: **Gerhard Roehrlein**, Advanced Bionics, Long Beach, CA; **Richard Collette**, MED-EL, Cary, NC

Chicago Walk4Hearing



2013 — More than 10,000 walkers across the nation

NYC Walk4Hearing hit more than 2,000 walkers



NYC Walk4Hearing

In 2011, Washington DC Walk4Hearing was the last Walk of the year and the 100th Walk

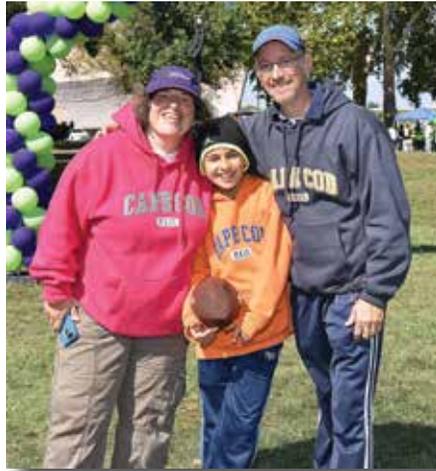
Walk4Hearing *from page 13*

Ronnie concludes, “Everyone has a story to tell. It’s because of your experiences and mine that we are still walking after all these years. Thank you!” **HLM**

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Barbara Kelley is deputy executive director of HAAA and editor-in-chief of Hearing Loss Magazine. Email her at bkelly@hearingloss.org.



Ronnie Adler, director of the HAAA Walk4Hearing with her son, Chase, and her husband, Mitch, at the Pennsylvania Walk4Hearing.



Above: Hudson Valley Walk4Hearing
Right: Chattanooga Walk4Hearing



2014 — **Katherine Pawlowski** serves as the first Walk4Hearing Ambassador “Why I Walk” coloring book released

Business Team Chair: **Rodney Schutt**, Widex, New York City

164 Walks since 2006

Pennsylvania Walk4Hearing hit more than 2,000 walkers



Right: Katherine Pawlowski, Walk4Hearing Ambassador

2015 — HAAA Celebrates 10 years of the Walk4Hearing

New Walk! San Diego

Cool backpack incentives for people who raise \$500 or more

National Business Chair: **Rob Engelke**, CapTel Captioned Telephone, Milwaukee, WI.

Business Team Chairs: **Ray Graham**, MED-EL, Cary, NC; **Lisa Tseng, M.D.**, hi HealthInnovations, Minneapolis, MN



Walk4Hearing Thanks its 2015 National Sponsors

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Hear now. And always

See what they say



Joey G's Gang

By Joe Garin



On June 7, 2013, the Garin family had forever changed.

Little Joey joined our world on June 7, 2013, and broadened our horizons more than any one event ever could. Mom (Katia), Dad (Joseph), and big sister (Victoria) were all so excited about bringing this little man home. While at the hospital, Joey failed multiple newborn hearing screenings. We were told over and over by staff not to be concerned, this is normal and likely a build-up of fluid in his ears and recommended that we followed up at Yale-New Haven Hospital in a couple of months. Two months later, we went to Yale as advised for another newborn hearing screening, which Joey once again was unresponsive and did not pass. After two auditory brainstem response exams, our fears were realized—Joey was born with profound hearing loss in both ears.

We Decided to Give Joey the Gift of Sound

After extensive research, careful deliberation and discussions with other families in the hearing loss community, we decided to pursue the cochlear implant authorization program at New York University (NYU) in anticipation of Thomas Roland, M.D., implanting our son when the time had come. This began a more than six-month journey toward having him implanted with bilateral cochlear implants. Before he could be considered for cochlear

implants, Joey needed to wear hearing aids for a few months. But between the molds not fitting well and that terrible whistling sound they made, and Joey pulling them out of his ear at any chance possible, the aids were certainly causing more headaches than good. After months of travelling down to the lower east side of Manhattan from our home in Fairfield, Connecticut (a drive that took one and a half hours on a good day) in order to meet with the NYU audiologists, the authorization was complete and Joey was, in fact compliant with necessary requirements to be bilaterally implanted.

Finally, shortly after his first birthday, and after multiple disagreements with our insurance company, my wife and I brought Joey in for the day that would change his life and ours forever (coincidentally on big sister Victoria's third birthday). The day was nerve wracking, and amongst many tears, we handed our beloved son over to the capable and loving hands of Dr. Roland.

We sat in the NYU waiting room, with our family by our side—sat there

counting the time until our baby boy was done in surgery. We were originally advised approximately three hours total for the bilateral procedure and if there was any complication at all, Dr. Roland would come talk to us first. Well, one and a half hours into the operation, he came out and wanted to have a private word with Katia and me. Our hearts fell deep into our stomachs not knowing what the next words were going to be, but a huge sigh of relief came over us when Dr. Roland shook my hand with a smile and said he was all set, that the surgery went textbook perfect and our son was being transported to the recovery room, where we can be with him momentarily. The recovery time was significantly longer, but either way, my wife and I were eventually able to bring our trooper of a son home in our arms late that night.

The very next day, this truly amazing child, after all he had been through in the last 24 hours, was back
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The Garin Family: Joey (1-1/2), Victoria (3-1/2), Katia and Joe





Joey G's Gang was an impressive force at the Walk4Hearing in New York City.

Joey's Gang *cont. from page 15*

to his smiling, laughing, fun self we had known and loved. So much so, that one day after his surgery we took him out and sat on the beach, while the waves just reached his toes, always his favorite thing to do.



Houston Walk4Hearing

The Day That Changed Joey's Young Life

A month later, we were back at NYU, for what would be the day that changed Joey's life forever, the day his implants were finally activated. We remember it like it was yesterday, sitting in the office after the audiologist ran a few last minute tests on the device, and finally said they were turning it on and for me to say something to him.

I called his name, and without delay and in typical "Joey fashion" he immediately unleashed this huge smile and laugh as if it was no big deal at all. Katia grabbed him, and held him so tight and all he could do was smile, and all we both could do was cry. This little man, so young and innocent, had already been through more adversity in

New Jersey Walk4Hearing



Milwaukee Walk4Hearing

one year than most children face in 15 years, and his reaction to it all, laughter and lots of it.

Why We Walk

The Garin family started a team last year at the New York City Walk4Hearing called "Joey G's Gang." We started this team for Joey and to help raise awareness about hearing loss. We plan to participate and support this cause each and every year. Awareness needs to be raised to a higher level, and most importantly for Joey and other children like him, to know they are not alone. Being part of the Walk4Hearing helps us and Joey know that we have the support of family, friends, loved ones, and an amazing community of people with hearing loss—one that we are proud to be a part of.

We always hear others proclaim that this experience has been the greatest thing in Joey's young life, but truth be told, he has done more for us than we could ever return to him. **HLM**

Joe Garin, was born in the Bronx, New York, is a graduate of the United States Merchant Marine Academy in 2001 and currently works in the maritime industry for a commercial tanker. In 2010 Joe and Katia were married and currently reside in Fairfield, Connecticut, with their children Victoria, Joey, and another baby boy is on the way this summer. Joe can be emailed at joegarin@yahoo.com.



Minneapolis Walk4Hearing





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It is well established that only 16-30 percent of people who could benefit from hearing aids own them. A delivery model that benefits this percentage range of Americans who need the services and devices is decidedly deficient. We support a system that provides consumers access to the full spectrum of appropriately-vetted hearing health care services and adaptive technology that meet their individual needs while also supporting a system that provides the information individuals need to make informed decisions.

The Hearing Health Care Delivery System

The Board will write a Policy Statement on readily-accessible, low-cost hearing screenings available through primary care settings as well as through hearing health care specialists (audiologists, hearing aid specialists, otolaryngologists).

Consumers should be well informed about products and have access to the full spectrum of adaptive technology based on individual needs and ability to pay including hearing aids and the full range of assistive listening devices available through multiple places (hearing health care specialists, websites, pharmacies, and other places).

There should also be insurance coverage for the range of hearing health care adaptive technology and coverage for aural rehabilitation services. **HLM**

You're Invited

Please join us at the HLAA Convention 2015 in St. Louis where we'll share a lot more about our activities. You are invited to attend the Board of Trustees and Annual Business Meeting, Thursday, June 25, 8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Margaret Wallbagen, Ph.D., is the chairperson of the HLAA Board of Trustees and lives in Mill Valley, California. She can be reached at chairperson@hearingloss.org.



Pennsylvania Walk4Hearing



Above: Rochester Walk4Hearing

Below: Long Beach Walk4Hearing
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Long Beach Walk4Hearing 2014 © Marisa Sarto