

By Barbara Kelley



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The Year in Review

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Everyone does it, from *The New Yorker*, to Facebook, even Twitter. The Year in Review seems like a natural thing to do as we head toward the end of 2016. So, let's go and have a look.

Hearing Aid Compatible Cell Phones

Did you know that more people own mobile phones on the planet than toothbrushes?¹ Or that it takes 26 hours for most people to report a lost wallet, but it takes just 68 minutes for them to report a lost phone?²

Smartphones allow people with hearing loss to be part of an interconnected community that helps bring them out of isolation. One example of HLAA's work this year is the Disability Advisory Committee of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler, Commission staff and all the commissioners were supportive of adopting new rules regarding hearing aid compatible cell phones. HLAA was intimately involved in the collaborative effort that led to the groundbreaking consensus letter signed by industry representatives. We truly appreciate the work the telecommunications industry put into drafting an agreement which shows a commitment to working toward 100 percent hearing aid accessible cell phones by 2024. HLAA will work with the wireless industry in the upcoming months on a special task force to reach the goals of the FCC Order. We know that you want to be able to put a phone to your ear and hear.

Not only with cell phones, but HLAA believes that people with hearing loss should be included at every stage of development of new products, rather than retrofitting devices later. We believe products should be designed for the human experience, whether you have a hearing loss or not.

And We Had an App for You!

Not everyone was playing *Pokémon Go* in Washington, D.C. during HLAA Convention 2016 in June; 65 percent of attendees used the Mobile Convention App to find schedules, fun things to do and most of all, to receive captioning access in 19 languages! HLAA welcomed people from 22 countries to this year's convention when we hosted the International Federation of Hard of Hearing People (IFHOH). More than 1,500 people visited the Exhibit Hall, which was brimming with the latest technology. "The Experience Room" made its debut where you could enjoy a completely hearing accessible experience in a simulated environment.

A Blueprint for Affordable and Accessible Hearing Health Care

HLAA, as the only consumer-group sponsor of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine study on hearing loss, waited anxiously for the June 2 release of the report: *Hearing Health Care for Adults: Priorities for Improving Access and Affordability*. The outcome of the study and ensuing report was the overarching theme that hearing loss is a major public health concern. The report offered 12 recommendations—a blueprint for us moving forward. HLAA will work to see that the recommendations most important to you come to reality.

On the Ground

We saw thousands of people from New England to California strolling in the Walk4Hearing as they took up the Call to Action for Communication Access

¹Mobile Marketing Association Asia ²Unisys

(#CommAccess). In *Hearing Loss Magazine* we brought you pages of human interest stories which ran deep with experiences that shaped the human spirit as well as articles on the latest technology and research. We multiplied forces with the Network of Consumer Hearing Assistive Technology Trainers (N-CHATT), who will take technology to people in their communities. Our hearing loop advocates across the country encouraged public venues to install hearing loops so people who have telecoils in their hearing aids and cochlear implants can get clear, direct sound and enjoy a show, meeting, worship service, or even hear the clerk at a checkout, bank or pharmacy counter.

We joined the newly-chartered Advisory Committee on Accessible Air Transportation. HLAA also joined *theatreWashington*, the Disability Rights Law Clinic at American University's Washington College of Law, the D.C. Arts and Access Network, and the Kennedy Center's Accessibility Office in a collaborative presentation to highlight the ways in which theaters can welcome patrons with hearing loss.

We Are All in This Together

We know that 39 million veterans have some kind of hearing-related disability. On September 27 we were part of the national launch of the Hidden Heroes Campaign and joined the resource directory on HiddenHeroes.org. The Hidden Heroes Campaign is an initiative of the Elizabeth Dole Foundation to help raise awareness for the 5.5 million military and veteran caregivers who are experiencing unique challenges and burdens related to their caregiving responsibilities. Through a partnership with HLAA and many other service organizations, the Foundation aims to inspire our nation to take action to support the military caregivers in their communities, and to encourage caregivers to identify themselves in order to better access the support they deserve. Hidden Heroes was featured on NBC's *TODAY* show with Senator Elizabeth Dole and Campaign Chairman Tom Hanks.

We value all our friends and partnerships in industry who have worked with us this year on behalf of people with hearing loss. We've enjoyed collegial debate and look forward to more in 2017.

Here's What You Did

You chose to do something about your hearing loss when you decided to get a hearing aid or cochlear implant or to try a new technology to pair with your devices. You advocated for yourself by asking for a captioned phone at work or asked your doctor to face you when instructing you on your medical condition. You supported the work of HLAA either financially or by volunteering at an HLAA chapter, Walk4Hearing, or at the HLAA Convention. We admire the work our HLAA chapters do in their local communities to create awareness and serve as the go-to resource and peer support system for those who don't hear well.

You told others about HLAA or shared your own experiences. You helped yourself then turned around and helped others. You've embodied the philosophy of Rocky Stone who founded the organization in November 1979. (Happy Anniversary!)

Even if you have been with HLAA for a short time, we hope you have come to realize two things: you are not alone with your hearing loss; and you can do something about it.

On behalf of the HLAA staff and Board of Trustees, happy holidays! We will continue to make news and bring it to you in 2017. **HLM**



HLAA—Today and in the Future

In the 37 years since it was founded, HLAA has established itself as the go-to organization for people with hearing loss. During that time we have never wavered from, or lost sight of, our mission—to open the world of communication to people with hearing loss by providing information, education, support and advocacy. We put the emphasis on *people*. We never forget that our ultimate goal is to make a difference in the lives of *people* with hearing loss.

However, all that we do and have accomplished, and all that remains to be done comes at a cost. HLAA is a self-supporting nonprofit organization. It is funded by those who share our goals, values and mission—individuals, foundations, corporations and company-sponsored events such as the HLAA Convention and the HLAA Walk4Hearing. In other words, we depend on *you* for support.

But have you ever wondered how your donations are used? In the report, *HLAA—Today and in the Future*, we let you know how your donations are put to work. The report gives you a glimpse of some of our accomplishments, but more importantly, it provides an overview of the tremendous amount of work that still needs to be done. Your continued support is critical to helping us achieve those goals. We encourage you to read *HLAA—Today and in the Future*. You can find it at bit.ly/hlaareport.

HLAA extends our deep appreciation to our incredible donors for supporting our mission!