Patrick Holkins
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In 1979, Rocky Stone founded the organization as Self Help for Hard of Hearing People (SHHH).

The thinking behind the self-help philosophy for SHHH was to enhance each of us as human beings. Hearing loss was an important but secondary consideration. Once we accept responsibility for ourselves, we have to learn to love ourselves, and then, each other. —Rocky Stone

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Michael Stone is president of the board of trustees, Hearing Loss Association of America.

For advertising information, contact Christopher Sutton at csutton@hearingloss.org.
"[With] Comfort Contego she was immediately able to hear normal conversations without any difficulty."

I recently purchased the Comfort Contego for my 95 year old mother-in-law.

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Many other hearing impaired residents at the Dublin, Ohio facility were amazed at the benefits to my mother-in-law's hearing improvement. I strongly urge you to find a way to advertise to this group of elders which are often much better served with a product like your Comfort Contego than with marginally effective hearing aids.

I was able to find your incredible product only after hours of sifting through many internet sites. I am most disappointed that Audiologists and ENT physicians did not suggest this product several years ago.

Dublin, Ohio, January 11, 2008
Philip E. Hygers

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NEW!
In July 2008 I was honored to represent HLAA at the CHHA/IFHOH International Congress 2008—A Global Community of Communication. The IFHOH Congress (International Federation of Hard of Hearing People) was hosted by the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

More than 500 people from 20 countries attended and were welcomed at the Congress opening session by Lieutenant Governor Steven Point who is of aboriginal ancestry. The Congress was held on Musqueam Tribe territory during British Columbia’s 150th anniversary, and Musqueam dancers and drummers got the Congress off to an inspiring start.

Each day started off with a plenary session. These included: Johan Hammarstrom’s World Wide Flight for Hearing launched in 2003 to increase awareness of hearing loss. Johan is the first pilot with hearing loss to fly around the world; research on brain plasticity and relearning to hear with our brains; and, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Importance for Hard of Hearing People Worldwide.

The workshops were high quality and covered a range of topics that showed that the issues relating to living with hearing loss are universal.

IFHOH (www.ifhoh.org) is an international non-governmental organization representing the interests of more than 300 million hard of hearing people worldwide. Founded in 1977, it has over 45 member organizations in over 30 countries. The Hearing Loss Association of America has been active in IFHOH for many years filling the positions of president twice (Rocky Stone, our founder, and Marcia Dugan, past president of the HLAA Board of Trustees). Mark Ross, former HLAA Board member served as editor of the IFHOH News.

At the General Meeting HLAA had four delegates with voting rights based on our membership size. I am pleased to say we had all four delegate spots filled by myself and two past HLAA presidents and an HLAA state coordinator. During the meeting, Oslo, Norway was selected as the next site for the IFHOH Congress to be held in four years. Hope to see you there.

Brenda Battat is executive director of Hearing Loss Association of America. She can be reached at Battat@hearingloss.org.
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* CapTel is an acronym for Captioned Telephone.
Looking Forward

As the Hearing Loss Association of America approaches its 30th year it is appropriate to reflect on the past and look to the future. I served on the first Self Help ForHard of Hearing People Board of Trustees in 1979, so it is with humility and pride that I take up my duties as President.

I want to thank Anne Pope for her strong leadership over the past two years. Her stewardship was crucial during a fragile time and I look forward to working closely with her in the years to come.

With 31 million deaf and hard of hearing people in this country there are significant challenges that the organization will face in a fast changing world. We will face these questions? How do we grow the organization and make it the preeminent voice of hard of hearing people? How do we capitalize the organization to allow it to achieve greatness? How do we communicate with a generation that increasingly relies on technology? And, how do we extend our programs and advocacy to a wider audience?

I look forward to working with the Board of Trustees, the staff, volunteers, and our donors and sponsors to chart a course that builds on our foundations and takes advantage of its opportunities.

The future offers remarkable opportunities. The organization’s components—advocacy, education, information, support, scholarships, and our commitment to excellence and relevance to the issues of the day—are unifying characteristics. Our strategic plan focusing on the future will build on our commitments, values, themes and aspirations. We will call upon these strengths to grow our organization to ensure that it continues to be exciting, educational and relevant.

Change is coming. Together let us look forward to the promise of the coming day.

Michael Stone, Esq., was elected president of the board of trustees at the HLAA Convention this June. Michael is the son of Founder Rocky Stone and lives in Washington, D.C. He can be reached at president@hearingloss.org.

HLAA National Board of Trustees Seeks Candidates for Board

The HLAA Board of Trustees Nominating and Board Development Committee is seeking qualified individuals to serve on the Board for a three-year term beginning June 2009.

Candidates for Regional Representatives. The Committee is seeking nominations for Regional Representatives from the Northern and Southern regions. Members living in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, New York, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and the District of Columbia are eligible for nomination for the Northern region. Members living in Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona are eligible for nomination for the Western region. For details and an application form, visit www.hearingloss.org.

At-Large Candidates. At-large candidates may submit an application to the Nominating and Board Development Committee or they may be nominated upon a petition signed by at least 25 members of HLAA. Membership in HLAA is required and will be verified by the Committee. All applicants will be considered. At-large candidates will be elected by the Board of Trustees.

Who is Eligible? All HLAA national members are eligible to serve on the Board. Hard of hearing individuals, parents of hard of hearing children, hearing health professionals and other interested HLAA members are encouraged to apply. For information on what is required of Board members and how to apply or recommend someone for the Board, visit our website at www.hearingloss.org.
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Growing up I did not have, nor did I seek out, hard of hearing friends. Indeed, not until just recently did I begin to think of myself as hard of hearing, even though, since age four, I have been deaf in my left ear and progressively losing hearing in my right ear.

Raised by hearing parents and surrounded by hearing peers, I could envision for myself no other existence; a “normal-hearing” world was all I knew, or cared to know. My hearing loss, as I first perceived it, was but a nagging inconvenience—a daily burden that, while inescapable, was of little consequence.

“I am a Rock…I am an Island”
However, as I passed from childhood to adolescence and my residual hearing continued to fade, I was able to sustain this farce only with great difficulty, impelled by resentment and more so, by unrelenting fear. I shunned the reality unfolding before me, preferring to struggle in silence rather than suffer openly what I considered the humiliation of dependency and the agony of exclusion. I saw my hearing loss as an enemy, and fought against it in defense of my place in the only community to which I felt I belonged.

It was a fight that, moreover, I resolved to wage alone. While I was tremendously fortunate to have the unflinching support of my family and friends, not to mention the counsel of highly-qualified hearing health professionals, there was no one to whom I could turn for the genuine empathy that only shared experience entails. No product of utter circumstance, my solitude was, in fact, adamantly self-imposed. Hopelessly in denial and yet, consumed with shame, I scorned my parents’ attempts at facilitating the hard of hearing community which, in retrospect, I so desperately needed. The mere suggestion that I might benefit from, let alone find comfort in, the companionship of other individuals with hearing loss seemed only to confirm what I feared most: that I was somehow unfit for the world in which I lived.

I Thought I Blew It!
When I walked through the doors of HLAA for the first time in October of 2004, I had no idea what to expect. In Washington, D.C., for a gap-year before starting college, I was interested in politics and, thus, dutifully enlisted as an intern in the U.S. Senate. Yet, eager for a change after a few disillusioning months on Capitol Hill, I acted on the advice of a colleague and contacted HLAA (then SHHH) about a position in the advocacy department.

A week later, I was in Bethesda for an interview with Brenda Battat and Terry Portis. Aware of my rather severe hearing loss, Brenda inquired whether it had been my habit to request assistive listening devices and other accommodations in high school. Answering truthfully, I confessed that neither had I sought such services, nor did I feel I truly

continued on page 12
Among a community of individuals who shared in my frustrations and understood my fears, I summoned the courage, at last, to cast off the silly façade and make peace with a reality I had for so long denied.
needed them, opting instead simply to ride out whatever difficulties I encountered.

Brenda, as those who know her could easily predict, was not pleased. Empowering hard of hearing Americans to help themselves, she reminded me, is what this organization is all about. Flushed with embarrassment at my gaffe, I quickly stumbled to recover. “I just blew the interview,” I said to myself.

Fortunately, Brenda agreed to give me a chance because I was willing to work for free. Thus began one of the most fulfilling and transformative chapters of my young life. Over the course of the next seven months, I learned a great deal about hearing loss, about the issues hard of hearing people face, and about myself.

Among a community of individuals who shared in my frustrations and understood my fears, I summoned the courage, at last, to cast off the silly façade and make peace with a reality I had for so long denied. To my immeasurable relief, I was no longer caught between seemingly conflicting worlds, but was distinctly and delightfully at home. HLAA was my sanctuary, and I cherished each and every day I worked (and continue to work!) on its behalf.

Looking back upon my experience growing up with hearing loss, I am startled both by all that which has changed and by all that which remains the same. It’s okay to ask for help—the first of many invaluable lessons that I would learn at HLAA, and also the one that I seem most prone to forget. Though I am, as I write, more at ease with my hearing loss and its demands than ever before, not a day goes by that I don’t catch myself, in a moment of anger or confusion, reverting to old habits.

I suspect such will always be the case. I now realize the need for community does not ebb and flow, but is just as persistent as my hearing loss. I am grateful that I will always be able to draw strength from my friends at HLAA.

A Network of Young Adults Who Are Hard of Hearing

I returned to Bethesda to the HLAA national office this summer with the intent of spearheading an outreach effort aimed at attracting younger generations of Americans with hearing loss to HLAA. Toward that end, in the past weeks I’ve begun to lay the foundation for an interactive social website through which hard of hearing individuals will be able to network, seek support, and organize events. There is no reason why any American with hearing loss should feel cut off from a community that, in fact, numbers in the tens of millions. Though I was lucky enough to find HLAA, countless others have not been so fortunate. It is our responsibility to reach out to them by whatever means we have at our disposal.

Patrick Holkins was born and raised in Kansas City, Missouri and is an incoming senior at Harvard College, where he is majoring in Government. In his spare time, he plays rugby for the Harvard Rugby Football Club, listens to jazz and the blues, fuels his obsession with the upcoming U.S. Presidential election, and tries his luck at the odd crossword puzzle. Patrick plans to take a year or two off after college to work and travel before applying to law or graduate school. He has been hard of hearing since a bout with bacterial meningitis in 1989. He has also been diagnosed with Meniere’s Syndrome, which causes periodic fluctuations in his residual hearing.
Have you contacted the office of disability services at Harvard where you attend? If so, what accommodations do you use in the classroom or in other settings?

Yes, I’m registered with the University Disability Coordinator, as it’s called at Harvard; though, admittedly, it took more than two years for me to recognize that I needed their services. Since last fall, I’ve received note-taking accommodations in all my lectures in addition to using my FM system whenever helpful. Since I continue to struggle with fluctuations in my residual hearing, I hope to arrange real-time captioning through the CART program for my classes next year.

You play rugby. How do you manage with your hearing loss on the field?

Just as in the classroom, I’ve started to seek out accommodations on the rugby pitch to ensure that I perform my best. For one, I generally rely on one or two of my teammates to keep me informed of all team calls so that I don’t miss or confuse an assignment. As a forward, moreover, one of my responsibilities includes occasionally jumping or lifting in line-outs (the rugby equivalent of an in-bounds play).

Nevertheless, like other team sports, rugby demands constant communication, both in order to conduct a precise attack and to structure an effective defense. While I cannot expect to hear a call for support from across the field, I simply do my best to pay attention to the ever-evolving conditions on the pitch, and anticipate that call before it comes.

From your experience, what advice would you give any student with hearing loss in their search for a college?

In light of my own experience, the best advice I can give to hard of hearing students is to know your hearing loss and actively pursue the accommodations necessary to your success. As you conduct your college search, make sure to inquire into the existing services for deaf and hard of hearing individuals, both in the classroom and in general. Keep in mind that access to these services is essential; you should not have to settle for anything less than you need.

If your dorm were burning and you could only grab one thing to take with you, what would it be? (This is assuming your friends are safe.)

It would be my passport. I love to travel, and passports seem to take forever to replace.
Hearing Aid Fitting: Getting It Right
(And, is that all there is?)

By Mark Ross
Almost anyone can experience sound when a hearing aid is turned on. Mark Ross talks about the goal of fitting a hearing aid and getting past the initial success of sound coming into the ear.

Hearing aid dispensers are occasionally thought of as “miracle workers.” As soon as the hearing aid is turned on, some people who haven’t heard well for years are suddenly able to hear again. The difference can be dramatic and the user may volubly express his or her gratitude and pleasure.

Dispensers love to get this reaction, and who wouldn’t? It helps to validate their efforts on behalf of the person with a hearing loss. Without dashing too much cold water on this reaction, however, we should realize that for some people with a long-standing hearing loss, any enhancement—from a speaking tube to the latest digital hearing aid—may initially evoke such a reaction; all it takes is for previously unheard or poorly heard speech to become clearly audible.

I won’t minimize this initial response to amplification, but the essential question remains: We should be asking not if the person is getting “some” benefit from a hearing aid (any piece of junk can provide some degree of improvement in certain situations), but whether the person is getting the maximum amount of auditory assistance reasonably possible with a hearing aid. That should be the goal in fitting a hearing aid.

The First Step: Knowing the Auditory Self

The first step in achieving this is to ensure that amplified speech sounds are delivered into the residual (dynamic) hearing range. This objective is the same, regardless of the size, appearance, cost, or complexity of the hearing aid. If speech sounds are not as clearly audible as possible, then everything else that follows will be compromised to some extent. The dynamic range extends from a person’s threshold of hearing to the loudness level where sounds become uncomfortably loud.

For example, the dynamic range of someone with a threshold of 50 dB at 1,000 Hz and a loudness tolerance level of 90 dB at that frequency would be 40 dB. Any sounds softer than 50 dB would not be heard, and any sounds louder than 90 dB would not be tolerable. All the “bells and whistles” of modern hearing aids, many very helpful for some people in some situations, ultimately depend upon this very basic dimension in hearing aid fitting.

Packaging the amplified sounds into this area is not always easy to do, since hearing aid loudness tolerance thresholds will often vary at different frequencies, while the level of the input speech signals are always changing. Under these conditions, getting the signal packaged just right for all types of hearing loss is not easy to do. As a prerequisite, however, it is clear that a dispenser must know both the person’s thresholds of hearing and loudness tolerance. Just knowing the hearing thresholds is not enough.

It is also necessary to be aware of the prospective hearing aid user’s loudness discomfort levels, since this determines where the maximum output level of the hearing aid should be set.

Loudness Tolerance Levels

One of the first things audiology graduate students learn in their hearing aid classes is to ensure that a hearing aid does not deliver sounds that exceed a user’s tolerance levels. If it does, and this happens often enough, it will invariably lead to dissatisfaction and/or rejection of the hearing aid. Regrettably, this type of situation is not an infrequent occurrence.

One recent survey indicates that about 40 percent of hearing aid users are dissatisfied with their “comfort with loud sounds,” and that about 20 percent of them complain that some input sounds are actually “painfully loud.” In order to preclude these situations, a dispenser must determine the person’s loudness discomfort levels, and then program the hearing aid so that the maximum output does not exceed these tolerance levels. If this is done correctly, even the loudest input sounds should not cause discomfort.

This is not a revolutionary or onerous demand; as a concept it has been with us for many years. Indeed, the “best practices” recommendations outlined by both the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) and the American Academy of Audiology (AAA) include this provision (e.g., determining frequency specific loudness discomfort thresholds).

So, then, in practice how do hearing aid dispensers determine the output limits of the hearing aids that they fit to people? They are well aware of the necessity of keeping the hearing aid output below a person’s tolerance level, but instead of measuring loudness discomfort levels themselves, many depend upon the hearing aid manufacturer to do it for them via the proprietary hearing aid fitting program. With this, all the audiologist needs to do is enter the prospective hearing aid user’s hearing thresholds into the program.

Predicting Your Loudness Discomfort Level

Based on the questionable premise that loudness discomfort levels can invariably be predicted from thresholds (not true), the program then displays the recommended output limits for the specific hearing aid being fitted. These appear on the computer monitor and seem to be a demonstratively “scientific” way of determining the appropriate hearing aid output limits for a particular hearing aid user.

Since 70 percent of hearing aids are fit using a manufacturer’s computer program, the validity of this practice does need to be examined. Two nationally recognized authorities continued on page 16
on hearing aid fitting (Ruth Bentler and Gus Mueller) recently did just this; indeed, it was their study, their latest on this topic in a 14-year span, which inspired this article.

What they did was enter the same hearing loss into the hearing aid selection program of six different hearing aid manufacturers using six different hearing aids. The recommended output limits should be the same, or very close, for all the hearing aids. Instead, what they found was that these levels varied as much as 15 dB at different frequencies. There is no way of knowing which one, if any, is correct. Can this degree of output variation be a problem? The researchers thought so. In practical terms, this means that some hearing aid wearers would experience loudness discomfort on various occasions with some aids, while other users would not be receiving as much amplified sound as they were capable of benefiting from. Either situation should be avoided.

**Hearing Aid Output**

What, then, does it take to get the hearing aid output right, e.g., achieve an optimum relationship between a person’s loudness tolerance level and the maximum output of a hearing aid? The answer is, in brief, for a dispenser to first directly measure the client’s frequency specific loudness discomfort levels during the pre-fitting process, use this information (as well as hearing thresholds) to set the appropriate maximum output on the selected hearing aid, and then finally to verify the actual fit during the post-fitting process via real-ear measures. (Real-ear measures are currently the state-of-the-art method of determining the actual sound pressure levels at the eardrum.)

However, only about 20 to 30 percent of hearing aid dispensers now follow these guidelines. It’s not as if these were simply “academic” requirements with little or no saliency in real life. On the contrary, getting the hearing aid output just right has been shown clinically to be a key factor in a successful hearing aid fitting.

So why, then, don’t more hearing aid dispensers follow these procedures? A number of reasons are usually invoked, from time constraints, simple inertia (the “rut” is a comfortable place to be), to the belief that it is not necessary. These dispensers would justify their clinical practices by stating that their clients “do just fine” and that there was therefore no need to follow the time-consuming ASHA and AAA guidelines. For them, the computer display of the manufacturer’s selection program appears to offer the necessary objectivity.

**Getting the hearing aid output just right has been shown clinically to be a key factor in a successful hearing aid fitting.**

As we have seen, however, manufacturers will often differ in what they recommend (for both maximum output and frequency response) for hearing aid users with exactly the same hearing loss. In my opinion, it is equally problematical for a dispenser to depend primarily on a person’s subjective reactions (While “how does that sound?” may be a necessary question, and the most frequently asked one during a hearing aid selection, it should not serve as the only basis for a hearing aid recommendation.)

**Where to Purchase Hearing Aids**

In fact, I can’t help but wonder why a hearing aid dispenser is necessary at all if the most common fitting recommendations are based solely on a manufacturer’s program, with little or no real-ear post-fitting verification taking place. In such instances, I can well understand a prospective hearing aid user shopping for hearing aids on the Internet or from mail order where they can be purchased much less expensively. As it happens, these outlets now represent an increasing percentage of total hearing aid sales and, given the current cost structure of modern hearing aids, it is likely that this “distance” purchasing will continue to increase in the future.

Some Internet sites offer “online” hearing testing, and an earmold impression kit with which a person can make their own ear impressions (with the help of a family member or friend). Presently, studies show that the results obtained with online testing and home-based ear impressions do not compare favorably with those obtained in a hearing center, these are areas in which technical improvements occur rapidly. Projecting not too far in the future, it may soon be possible to accurately measure one’s hearing thresholds via the Internet, and combined with the growth of open-canal fittings which do not require ear impressions, ear molds too are becoming less and less necessary. Under these conditions, where would this then leave the professional hearing aid dispenser?

**The Cost of Hearing Aids**

The high retail cost of hearing aids is generally rationalized by invoking the time it takes to evaluate the hearing loss, fit the aids, and then provide the necessary follow-up services to ensure a successful fitting. When this is done according to best professional standards—which implies including only those aids with necessary special features—the high cost of hearing aids may well be justified.

The hearing sense is just too important to treat casually. We know that appropriately-fit hearing aids can have an enormous impact on one’s quality of life. And, of course, beyond hearing aids, many people with hearing loss have many needs and questions that relate to the hearing
loss that require addressing. All this takes time and the professional does need to be recompensed for his or her services. It is when this high level of service is not provided to the prospective hearing user that one can question the cost/benefit value of the clinic-centered service delivery model.

The Future: The Entire Package From Device to Follow-Up Support

My own feeling is that what is going to “sell” hearing aids in the future is not the product itself—excellent hearing aids are available from many sources—but the total “management” package offered by the professional hearing dispenser. In this package, the device itself will be ancillary to the expertise and total range of services offered by hearing aid dispensers.

My own hope is that these services would include a post-fitting, family centered, group hearing aid program. I fully agree that hearing aids are a vital tool for reducing the impact of a hearing loss, but still the focus of the professional-client relationship has to be the hearing problems experienced by their clients and not just the hearing aids.

Mark Ross, Ph.D., is an audiologist and associate at the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (RERC) at Gallaudet University. He and his wife, Helen, live in Storrs, Connecticut. To find more Dr. Ross articles on technology for consumers, go to: www.pa-shhh.org and www.hearingresearch.org

This article is supported in part by GRANT #H133E030006 from the U.S. Department of Education, NIDRR, to Gallaudet University. The opinions expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Education.

Mark Ross and Anne Pope, past president of HLAA

Mark Ross is Awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Hearing Loss Association of America

June 12, 2008, Reno, Nevada: Mark Ross received the Hearing Loss Association of America’s (HLAA) Lifetime Achievement Award during the Opening Session of HLAA’s annual convention. Barbara Kelley, HLAA deputy executive director, said she had a surprise for someone in the audience who deserved an award so much that one had been created. She called a surprised Mark Ross to the stage for a Lifetime Achievement Award as the crowd gave him a standing ovation and the big screen showed the great photo of him that will appear on the January/February 2009 cover of Hearing Loss Magazine.

Barbara Kelley talked about his first entry into the field of hearing loss as a patient and how he has become an aggressive advocate of aural rehabilitation, contributing in so many ways as both an audiologist and consumer. Dr. Ross has also been honored previously with the board of trustees Rocky Stone Humanitarian Award and has served as vice president for policy on the HLAA (then SHHH) Board of Trustees.

Dr. Ross, in his turn at the microphone, said he was completely overwhelmed, “maybe for the first time at loss for words.” He said that the most gratifying time of his life has been since retirement and all the work he has been able to do in the field, including writing for Hearing Loss Magazine.

Coming in January 2009

In celebration of Dr. Ross’ award, he will appear on the January/February 2009 cover of Hearing Loss Magazine. And, we have asked him to answer the most frequently-asked question of his entire career as an audiologist. Can you guess what that might be?
Imagine a future—actually, imagine the present in Britain, much of Scandinavia, and now West Michigan and other parts of the United States—where hearing aids have doubled their functionality, by serving as customized, wireless loudspeakers for the broadcast of television, public address system, and telephone sound.

Picture two worlds, and ask—which one you would prefer? And, which do you suppose most of America’s 31.5 million people with hearing loss would prefer?

World One offers assistive listening that is hearing aid incompatible. It requires you, and those who are less open about their hearing loss, to take the initiative when entering public venues to locate and check out special equipment, to remove your hearing aids, to wear either ear buds that have been in others’ ears or a conspicuous headset, and then afterwards, to replace the hearing aids and return the assistive unit.

World Two offers assistive listening that is hearing aid compatible. It requires nothing more than pushing a hearing aid button, whereupon it becomes an in-the-ear loudspeaker that broadcasts sound customized for your own ears.

World One describes most of the United States.

World Two describes 21st century Britain, Denmark (a world center for hearing technology), and increasingly Australia. “The whole of the church is served by a hearing loop,” declared the first sentence of Westminster Abbey’s program for the 50th anniversary celebration of the Queen’s coronation. “Users should turn their hearing aids to the setting marked ‘T’.”

Each time I have done this in cathedrals, churches, and auditoriums during the month I spend in Britain each year, I am delighted with the convenience and clarity of this user-friendly assistive listening, thanks to the magnetic signal transmitted from a surrounding hidden wire (a “hearing loop”) to my hearing aid telecoils. I activate my telecoils and instantly the speaker’s voice comes to me not from some distant loudspeaker but seemingly from the center of my head. It’s an extension of the same technology that enables our landline phones and increasingly cell phones, thanks partly to effective Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) advocacy efforts, to communicate magnetically via our hearing aid telecoils.

Moreover, this hearing-aid-compatible assistive listening is now appearing in countless transient locations, including the back seats of all London taxis and at designated ticket windows, bank teller stations, post office counters, and pharmacy stations. Tens of thousands of such venues are served either by small area loops or by countertop loop boxes.

On one memorable occasion, I sat in the main departure lounge of London’s Gatwick Airport, awaiting updates on my delayed transatlantic flight. Alas, the announcements were a verbal fog. But knowing that this was the UK, I turned on my telecoils and was delighted to hear crystal clear announcements. Much as Wi-Fi was transmitting information to my laptop, the hearing loop was wirelessly transmitting information to my hearing aids, transforming them into in-the-ear loudspeakers.

Back here in World One, I wondered; might hearing-aid-compatible assistive listening work where I live, in Holland, Michigan, and in places beyond?

Looping West Michigan
I started at home, by connecting a small loop amplifier to my TV audio output. Then I ran a thin wire out from the amplifier, around my TV room seating, and back to the amplifier. (I stapled the loop wire to the ceiling studs in the basement beneath.) Voila! My TV now broadcasts to me via my hearing aids. My previous TV listening system, which was hearing aid incompatible, required removing my hearing aids and plugging my ears with a headset. Now I can enjoy the TV loop and still hear the phone ring or my wife talking, thanks to my hearing aids’ mic + telecoil (M + T) setting.

With that gratifying result, I next launched, with community support, an initiative (described at hearingloop.org) to introduce hearing loops to institutions serving the nearly 100,000 people living in my community and its adjacent village and townships. A half
dozen years later, nearly all the major worship centers (some six dozen) are looped, as are college auditoriums, high school performing arts centers, senior citizen facilities, library auditoriums, and city government auditoriums.

The human consequence was quickly apparent in my own congregation, which went from one person who had used the former hearing aid incompatible assistive listening to ten people using the hearing-aid-compatible loop system. The one former user of the old system said, “The experience of actually hearing such clear sounds was thrilling and hard to describe. One has to experience the improvement. It seemed overwhelming.” (As with other assistive listening systems, people without suitable hearing aids can use a portable receiver and headset, though these units rarely get used.)

Thanks to media publicity and word-of-mouth, hearing loops are now spreading rapidly throughout West Michigan, including Muskegon, Grand Haven, Spring Lake, and St. Joseph, where American Academy of Audiology leader Gyl Kasewurm, AuD, has spearheaded a local initiative. As Kasewurm’s support illustrates, the West Michigan success story is due partly to supportive audiologists. In the several years immediately after our local initiative, our community’s largest audiology practice was equipping nearly 100 percent of its patients with telecoils. As its former owner, Jerry Owens, AuD, explained, “Never in my audiology career has something so simple helped so many people at so little cost.”

Todd Billin, the CEO of Ascom, a large West Michigan audio firm, explained what persuaded his company to switch to installing hearing loops instead of hearing aid incompatible systems; “When individuals with hearing loss had a chance to experience the hearing loops or talk to someone who had, the demand for both hearing aids with telecoils and loop systems increased dramatically. After installing our first loop system and seeing the reaction from the individuals with hearing loss, we immediately shifted our sales focus to loop systems.”

As of this writing, hearing loops in Grand Rapids and its environs provide assistive listening in some eighty worship facilities, as well as in dozens of other venues, including the city’s symphony hall and throughout its new convention center. As of mid-2008, the two million passengers a year traveling through the city’s regional airport can hear announcements broadcast by hearing loops throughout both concourses and in all gate areas. Without detracting from equally important visual information displays, this pioneering American airport installation enables people with hearing loss to hear and to gain access to the detailed information that sometimes accompanies explanations of flight delays and boarding procedures.

The net result has been a huge increase in people who benefit from assistive listening when compared with the former hearing aid incompatible technology. A manager at my city’s seven-screen theater complex told me that their hearing aid incompatible units were checked out no more than about once per month per theater. The former president of Hearing Loss Association—Michigan reported that after her city’s large public auditorium installed a hearing aid incompatible assistive listening system, she was the first person to use it—one year later. (They unwrapped a receiver and headset, just for her.)

The Rochester (NY) HLA Chapter appreciates this reality: “Many people do not extend themselves to identify their need, collect personal receivers ahead of time, or wear rather noticeable headsets. Such receivers are always required for FM and infrared systems.”

**Alternative Wireless Assistive Listening Systems**

The fundamental point of my advocacy is not to promote hearing loops, but rather to promote affordable, user-friendly, assistive listening that doubles hearing aid functionality, by enabling them to serve as wireless loudspeakers. Better Hearing Institute director Sergei Kochkin has the same vision: The way to increase adoption of hearing aids, he argues, is to increase their utility. Double their functionality—with simply-operated “miniaturized internal wireless receivers in every hearing aid”—and word-of-mouth advertising will promote hearing aids, and the stigma of hearing instruments will decline.

Might some future alternative technology even better serve this purpose? If so, bring it on. To be widely applicable, such technology will, however, need to be:

- **Inexpensive.** (Unlike the $3,000 FM boots which I could have purchased to accompany my $6,000 hearing aids, telecoils are essentially free and most of us already have them for phone use.)
- **Miniaturized** (and thus able to fit in most hearing aids, including in-the-ear aids).
- **Low power** (so as not to drain batteries).
- **Wide range** (and thus workable in auditoriums).
- **Cochlear implant compatible** (which hearing loops are, thanks to the inclusion of telecoils in 21st century cochlear implants).
- **Inconspicuous** (and thus comfortably used by people who are reluctant to wear visible headsets).

For the present, hearing loop technology meets all these criteria. Although ongoing hearing engineering will likely bring us exciting new wireless technologies, Bjørn Christ, president of ReSound USA, tells me that, “Loop systems and telecoils have a tremendous advantage over current and upcoming technologies as regards cost of provisioning. I am hard pressed to come up with competing technologies that will seriously challenge the performance/price equation of loops in even the next five years. And from a cosmetics/stigma point of view, telecoils are even finding

continued on page 20
Can We Loop America?

continued from page 19

their way into micro-BTEs (behind-the-ear aids) these days.”

Looping America

So, if hearing-aid-compatible assistive listening is sweeping the UK and West Michigan, why not all of America?

The Hearing Loss Association of America has urged “that telecoils be given the prominence they deserve as a valuable hearing aid feature that will allow the expanded use of assistive listening devices.” Moreover, HLAA has effectively advocated for kindred hearing aid compatibility for telephones. (At no additional consumer cost, hearing loops share the same telecoil that receives signals from hearing-aid-compatible phones.)

Telecoils once were said to come in 30 percent of hearing aids, but now come in half or more of hearing aids, including most of the behind-the-ear aids worn by people with the greatest need for assistive listening. With support from hearing professionals and hearing loss consumers, the Arizona legislature recently passed, and its governor signed, a bill that requires hearing professionals to explain the usefulness of telecoils to people purchasing hearing aids.

The Michigan and California Hearing Loss Associations have gone a step further, by advocating that newly installed assistive listening systems be hearing aid compatible. “In all new and extensively remodeled buildings, wherever there is a public address system, a loop should be permanently installed,” declares the California association.

Across America, from Silicon Valley, Albuquerque, and Tucson in the southwest to New York City in the east, consumer initiatives have led to countless new hearing loop installations. These include the main chamber of the U.S. House of Representatives in D.C., the Kentucky Derby Museum, the Museum of Modern Art classroom, and, thanks to the initiative of hearing advocate Janice Schacter in New York City, at Temple Emanu-el, the world’s largest Jewish house of worship, among other notable venues.

In Santa Rosa, California, audiologist Bill Diles equips nearly all his new patients—more than 1,500 so far—with home TV room loops, which come with the hearing aid purchase. When he surveyed a sample of his patients in whose homes his assistant had installed loops, he found 53 percent reporting the highest level of satisfaction with their hearing aids, compared to three percent among those without the home loop system.

Following Diles’ lead, Michigan engineer Terry Simon, who is married to an audiologist, is now training hearing professionals nationwide to strengthen their practice and service by installing hearing loops. His Wireless Hearing Solutions anticipates having 180-trained installers by the end of 2009. Additionally, a growing list of loop manufacturers and distributors are selling products to the growing American market (see “If They Build It, Will We Come?”). Also in the works are new articles promoting hearing-aid-compatible assistive listening for hearing professionals’ trade magazines.

All of this leaves many of us increasingly hopeful about the dream of World Two, a looped America. If we can mobilize consumers, hearing professionals, and audio engineers, then maybe the United States needn’t continue to lag behind other countries in providing seamless hearing aid compatibility for both telephones and assistive listening. By doubling hearing aid usefulness, we can increase the appeal of hearing aids, decrease the stigma associated with hearing loss and aids, and increase public support for Medicare, Medicaid, and insurance reimbursement. That would be a better world for us and for all Americans with hearing loss.

If They Build It, Will We Come?

Where can we buy a hearing loop, and who can install it for us? (This is the most frequently-asked question at www.hearingloop.org, the non-profit website created by David Myers.)

The growing market for hearing-aid-compatible assistive listening has been served by several manufacturers including Oval Window Audio (an American company), Ampetronic (British-made loops distributed in the United States by Assistive Audio), Phonic Ear (Danish-made and distributed by Wireless Hearing Solutions and HARC Mercantile), and Univox (Swedish-made and distributed by Pure Direct Sound, and others).

To these we can now add, as of September, 2008, two new American loop manufacturers and distributors. The British manufacturer, Contacta, has entered a strategic partnership with an experienced American loop engineer to manufacture and distribute products in the United States as Contacta, Inc. And, Premovation Audio, which has designed and installed hundreds of loop systems in West Michigan and beyond, has just begun manufacturing and distributing Loop America hearing loops. These loop entrepreneurs and their growing list of loop distributors share a common hope, that if they build it we will come.

David G. Myers, Ph.D., (www.davidmyers.org) is professor of psychology at Hope College and the author of 17 books, including A Quiet World: Living with Hearing Loss (Yale University Press). He has also created the nonprofit informational website, www.hearingloop.org.
A Letter from a Reader

I was waiting for my sister’s plane to arrive and it was exactly the time to expect it. An announcement came over the PA system, garbled and completely unintelligible because of my hearing loss. This limitation in my life is so unpleasant, and I immediately went into my inner frustration mode. I went to a security person nearby and asked what the announcement was.

He looked at me, shook his head, and said, “I don’t know. We can’t hear them either.”

Betty Onyett
HLAA Member
Paris, Ohio
Corporate Member Guest Column

Sorenson Becomes Corporate Member of the Hearing Loss Association of America

We’ve asked our new corporate member to tell us how their services are of benefit to Hearing Loss Association of America members.

Hard of hearing, deaf, late-deafened, and speech-disabled individuals can use a free 24-hour communication service, which empowers them to place text-based relay calls to any hearing individual. This free service is called Sorenson IP Relay®, or SIPRelay® All that is needed to access this new service is a PC with an Internet connection, a BlackBerry® smartphone running SIPRelay Mobile, or any device running AOL Instant Messenger™.

SIPRelay Overview
A person with hearing loss places a text-based relay call from his or her personal computer (PC) or mobile device through a Sorenson Communications Assistant (CA) to any telephone user in the United States and its territories. The CA contacts the hearing user and voices the text messages from the SIPRelay user. The CA types the hearing user’s response and sends it directly to the person with hearing loss to read. Receiving a SIPRelay call is like getting a captioned telephone call through a computer or mobile device.

SIPRelay with Voice Carry Over (VCO)
If the person with hearing loss would prefer to speak for him or herself rather than typing, he or she can choose to use SIPRelay with Voice Carry Over, or VCO, which enables the caller to connect to the CA, but use his or her own voice to speak directly to the hearing recipient. In either case, the CA types the hearing participant’s reply (thus relaying the message) to the caller with hearing loss. Text replies appear on the screen of the PC or mobile device.

SIPRelay Mobile for Blackberry
SIPRelay Mobile for BlackBerry enables individuals with hearing loss to place calls while on the go. The feature is available through a free download found at www.siprelay.com/download. Users can place wireless calls from their call history list, from their BlackBerry smartphones’ address book, or by dialing the number manually and then typing their side of the conversation on the BlackBerry smartphone’s keyboard. A Sorenson CA receives the message, contacts the hearing telephone user, and reads the caller’s message.

Sorenson is pleased to join HLAA as a professional member. More information on SIPRelay can be found by visiting http://www.siprelay.com/.

Pat Nola is president and CEO of Sorenson Communications.

For information about HLAA’s Corporate Membership Program, visit our website at www.hearingloss.org, click on “Membership,” or contact Christopher T. Sutton at Csutton@hearingloss.org or 301.657.2248.
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For more information about HLAA Convention 2009, visit www.hearingloss.org or e-mail Nancy Macklin, director of events, at Nmacklin@hearingloss.org.
News in Brief from Hearing Loss Association of America

In the last issue of *Hearing Loss Magazine* we focused on one issue: the hearings held on Capitol Hill this June for the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2008. That was an historic hearing; one that we hope will result in new legislation to ensure that individuals with disabilities have access to emerging Internet Protocol-based communication and video programming technologies in the coming years.

If you went to the HLAA Convention 2008 in Reno this past June you may well have learned about some of the many other issues we’ve been working on at the national office. For those who missed that, what follows is an overview of our work on federal regulations. As always, we can’t do this alone. Our work here is supported by the members who take action locally. While it’s important for us to be on the scene in Washington, DC, regulators need to hear your comments and complaints to solidify the information we provide to them. Working together we can accomplish great things.

For more information about any of these issues, check [www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org) regularly and sign up for the online, free HLAA E-news for important updates.

Regulations and Standards

Recent court rulings often set the stage for changes in the way regulators interpret the laws. Some issues that HLAA is working on currently are:

U.S. Access Board Passenger Vessels Emergency Alarms Advisory Committee. The Access Board created a Passenger Vessel Emergency Alarms Advisory Committee to provide advice on whether current emergency alarm system designs and practices on passenger vessels meet the access needs of individuals with hearing loss; alternative designs or technologies for emergency alarm systems appropriate for use on passenger vessels that meet the access needs of individuals with hearing loss; and recommended accessibility guidelines for passenger vessels related to emergency alarm systems. HLAA has a representative to that Board who provides needed input to the Access Board.

U.S. Department of Transportation, Air Carrier Access Act Revision. The U.S. Department of Transportation is amending its Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) rules, effective May 13, 2009. The new rules apply to foreign carriers, add new provisions concerning passengers who use medical oxygen, and apply to passengers who are hard of hearing or deaf. There will be a subsequent supplemental notice of proposed rulemaking regarding captioning of entertainment on airplanes. The new rules include:

- The DOT Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) sought comments on requiring carriers to provide the same information to deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind individuals in airport terminals that they provide to other passengers, covering announcements regarding flight safety, ticketing, flight check-in, flight delays or cancellations, schedule changes, boarding, the checking and claiming of baggage, the solicitation of volunteers on oversold flights, and other announcements. However, in the final rule, DOT “determined that the costs of requiring prompt transmission of the covered information at all of the terminal areas listed in the DHH NPRM exceed the benefits. We are therefore limiting the requirement to gates, ticketing areas and customer service desks….we are adding a provision for information about baggage. This information must be transmitted to passengers who have identified themselves as having hearing or vision impairment no later than it is transmitted to the other passengers….We are retaining the self-identification requirement because we believe that requiring simultaneous visual transmission of the information along with each and every public address announcement would saddle
carriers with undue costs. In this regard, passengers with impaired hearing or vision must identify themselves to carrier personnel at the gate area or the customer service desk even if they have already done so at the ticketing area."

The rule requires that the carrier personnel notify a self-identifying passenger as close as possible to the time that the information is transmitted to the general public.

- DOT retained the rule that safety and informational audio-visual displays played on the aircraft must be captioned. However, they did not adopt a rule governing entertainment displays on the airline. A Supplemental Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (SNPRM) to call for more current and more complete information on the cost and feasibility of providing high-contrast captioning on entertainment displays is scheduled to be issued in 2009.

After four long years of study, the DOT rules have provided no significant improvement for passengers with hearing loss. HLAA attended DOT’s forum held on June 3, 2008, and expressed disappointment that simultaneous visual display of announcements was not included in the new rules. HLAA plans continued talks with the DOT to challenge the adequacy of these rules and to provide input for the upcoming supplemental notice of proposed rulemaking. Your stories and complaints sent to the U.S. Department of Transportation will support our efforts with the Department of Transportation.

**Federal Communications Commission, Consumer Advisory Committee**

HLAA has a seat on the FCC’s Consumer Advisory Committee. The mission of the Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) is to make recommendations to the Federal Communications Commission regarding consumer issues within the jurisdiction of the Commission and to facilitate the participation of consumers (including people with disabilities and underserved populations, such as Native Americans and persons living in rural areas) in proceedings before the Commission.

Currently, the CAC is focusing on the FCC’s efforts to provide a smooth transition to digital television programming set for January, 2009. In particular, the Disability Access Working Group is concerned that closed captioning is not easily accessible on digital televisions now and are requesting the FCC to take a leadership role to ensure that caption viewers are not left without access to television programming for any period of time both during the time that the DTV transition takes place and after analog channels disappear on February 17, 2009.

**U.S. Department of Justice, Notice of Proposed Rules for the American with Disabilities Act**

On May 30, 2008, Attorney General Michael B. Mukasey signed proposed regulations to revise the Department’s ADA regulations, including its ADA Standards for Accessible Design. On June 17, 2008, the proposed regulations were published in the Federal Register. Among other provisions, the proposed amendments to the regulations will:

- Provide for captioning of emergency announcements in large stadiums;
- Require assistive listening devices in public spaces where communication is integral and audio amplification is provided, and in courtrooms. The proposed rules no longer require the assembly area have fixed seating. At least 25 percent of the receivers must be hearing aid compatible and have neck loops;
- Require transient lodging guest rooms with communication features to provide permanently installed visible alarms in new construction;
- Expand the definition of auxiliary aids and services to include “video text displays and video interpreting, accessible electronic and information technology”;
- Expand the current standard to ensure that public entities provide effective communication with people with disabilities and their companions; and
- Highlight the distinction that a service animal must be a dog or other common domestic animal that is trained to perform specific tasks to assist its owner.

At publication date, HLAA was in the midst of drafting comments on these new regulations.

For more information about any of these issues, check [www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org) regularly and sign up for the online, free HLAA E-News for important updates.

Lise Hamlin is director of public policy and state development. She joined the staff in April this year after being a long-time advocate and HLAA Board member. She formerly worked at the League for the Hard of Hearing and most recently, the Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons. Lise lives in Rockville, Maryland, and can be reached at lhamlin@hearingloss.org.

**On-Line Learning for Adult Cochlear Implant Recipients Coming This October**

Cochlear Americas HOPE Program is offering free online seminars and guidance materials for adults and the professionals who serve them.

Online sessions will specifically address the rehabilitation needs of adult cochlear implant recipients. These sessions are a two-part series: *Adult Cochlear Implant Rehabilitation: What and Why*, and *Adult Cochlear Implant Rehabilitation Part II: Working with a Rehabilitation Professional*.

Both programs are appropriate for adult recipients and the professionals who serve them. The programs will be given at 8 p.m. ET and will provide real-time (CART) captioning. Sign up for all HOPE Online courses within the HOPE area of the Cochlear Americas website: [www.cochlear.com/HOPE](http://www.cochlear.com/HOPE).
Were You There?
If Not, We Missed You!

By Barbara Kelley

More than 650 people came from across the country all in the name of hearing loss and communication access. From the empowering talk by Keynote Speaker Ollie Cantos, to the technology-laden buzzing Exhibit Hall, to the rousing Bowl-erama Party, to a grand ending with the Research Symposium on “Lifelong Learning for Individuals with Hearing Loss.”

Thanks to all who came as attendees, who volunteered, who made it communication accessible, who exhibited and who sponsored events. We will let the pictures tell the story. (Thank you to Jim Montgomery for photographing the convention.) Enjoy the scenes and hope to see you in Nashville in 2009. (See page 23.)

For more in-depth coverage on the Convention 2008 in Reno, go to www.hearingloss.org, where you will find:

Exhibit & Program Guide
Includes every single happening and participant!

Workbook of Workshops
with Presentation Slides

Transcript of the workshop, The ADA and You, by Olegario D. Cantos, VII, Esq., special counsel to the acting attorney general for civil rights in the U.S. Department of Justice

Daily Blog of Events

More Photos!

Sponsors

Awards

Executive Director Brenda Battat gives the HLAA National Access Award to James Cross, M.D., Aetna’s national head of Medical Policy and Program Administration. Aetna was recognized for expanding access to beneficial technology for people with hearing loss. The company has taken a leadership role by amending their clinical policies to allow coverage of cochlear implants in both ears; considering Baha device prosthetics to open coverage further; and adding coverage of Baha devices for single-sided deafness.
Former Board Member Dan Simmons of Lowell, Massachusetts received the 2008 Howard E. “Rocky” Stone Award. Ahme Stone presented the award at the banquet.

Hamilton CapTel Exhibit Booth—As New York Member Marcia Dugan said, “The Exhibit Hall as always was where I spend a lot of time. The telecommunications representatives were very visible. They provided demos hourly and daily and it was a perfect opportunity to try out the phones.”

Meeting up with friends is a main attraction of an HLAA Convention.

Andy Bopp (Hearing Industries Association), Brenda Battat, and Rep. Dean Heller from Nevada

Jennifer Thorpe, Abbie Cranmer, Mike Royer, and Zak LaFratta.
And the Winner Is...Ann Pruitt!
Hearing Loss Magazine sponsored “On The Road to Reno” photo contest on best en route photo to Convention 2008. Ann Pruitt, formerly of Boulder, Colorado, and now traveling the country in her RV, wins a year’s membership in HLAA for herself or a friend.

Michael Kaplan and wife Alicia Fernandez. Michael received the Family Involvement Award.

Rep. Dean Heller (R-NV) came for a tour of the Exhibit Hall and to address attendees about his sponsorship of the Hearing Aid Tax Credit Bill. His visit was sponsored by the Hearing Industries Association (HIA). Andy Bopp from HIA presented the American flag that flew over the Capitol this July. The flag was sent to Patricia Ridley in Washington state from Rep. Heller’s office.

Phil Bongiorno from AAA presented the workshop with Lise Hamlin on advocacy for people with hearing loss.

Yaquina Head Lighthouse, near Newport, Oregon

Ann at Old Town Harbor, in Florence, Oregon. Her sign reads, “HLAA or Bust!”
Thank You for Your Support

PLATINUM LEVEL
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Research Symposium
Coffee Break

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Are you looking for mutual support and information about hearing loss? Meet people at a chapter meeting and experience educational programs, guest speakers, technology specialists, and mutual support. Hearing Loss Association of America has more than 200 chapters and 14 state organizations. For a chapter near you, go to www.hearingloss.org.

Share your good news. If you have a story you want to share about what is happening in HLAA chapters or state organizations, send it to Editor Barbara Kelley at bkelley@hearingloss.org. Items of 400 words or less should be submitted electronically in Word doc. Photos should be 300 dpi JPG format. We will do our best to publish them either in Hearing Loss Magazine or the online E-News.

"Forward" Wisconsin
The state motto of Wisconsin is "Forward" reflecting the state’s continuous drive to be a national leader. Since 1989, the Hearing Loss Association of Waukesha County is one of the leaders in chapter development. They have made resources on hearing loss available by donating five books on hearing loss to the Waukesha County Library system. They worked in conjunction with the local Lions who have the motto “We Serve.” What a perfect match: HLA Waukesha and the Waukesha Noon Lions Club.

From the Sunshine State
Sunny news on communication access. HLA Florida President Lynn Rousseau sends this message: Join me in sending many thanks and applause to Judy Martin and Joan Haber for their outstanding advocacy work on behalf of all hard of hearing and deaf travelers from all over the world that pass through Florida’s International Airport in Jacksonville, Florida.

This is just the beginning of how members of Hearing Loss Association of America in Florida and beyond can make a difference. Learn about new construction projects, envision where positive changes can be implemented and contact those in charge, then share what can make their public service and accommodations even better.

Again, thank you Judy and Joan for making the gateway to/from Jacksonville, Florida by air...a communication accessible one for all.

HLAA California: Anchors of the Pacific Coast
Congratulations to the Fresno and Napa Valley Chapters for having 100 percent of their members be members of the national HLAA organization.

From San Francisco, Marilyn Finn reports on important advocacy work: The news from Cammy Blackstone, legislative aide to Supervisor Michela Alioto-Pier, is that the San Francisco Board of Supervisors unanimously voted to pass their captioning ordinance on June 16, 2008. This ordinance will make San Francisco city and county the first in the country to mandate that all televisions in public places within San Francisco County have their captioning on when the television is on. HLA San Francisco is awaiting word on whether the Mayor will sign the ordinance. All fingers crossed!

Florida–HLA Exhibit

From Nashville, Site of HLAA Convention 2009
Betty Proctor and Sherry Koepfer from Nashville report on advocacy efforts: At each meeting of the Nashville Metro Council meetings, one of us would ask when the meetings would be captioned on public TV Channel 3. We are pleased to report that the Metro Council meetings are now closed captioned for Fiscal Year July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009. The Metropolitan Government of Nashville council meetings take place the first and third Tuesdays of every month. Consult http://www.nashville.gov/council/ for exact times and agendas.

Remembering the Great Advocate in Idaho
John Centa, founding member of the Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, Chapter passed away on June 23. John was on the SHHH (now HLAA) board of trustees and was a tireless advocate for communication access. In addition to his work on the national board, he worked at the state and local levels in
Idaho to make hearing loss a public health issue. He is known nationwide and will be missed by all. His wife, Helen, preceded him in death.

Westchester Walk4Hearing
HLA of Westchester, New York, reports great success in their newsletter with the 2007 Walk4Hearing.

Monies collected at each Walk are shared 50/50 between the local participating chapters and the HLAA National office. Chapters then select ways to fund programs in their communities. Among some of the programs funded by Westchester was a theater access program to provide captioning and sign language at Broadway shows; education and outreach brochures; health fair and expo materials for exhibiting, and more. Learn more about the Walk4Hearing at www.hearingloss.org.

HLAA Chapters and State Organizations Honored in Reno
Thanks to those across the country who work at the local and state level on behalf of hearing loss. For a complete list of award winners, go to www.hearingloss.org.

HLAA Wisconsin Conference
The Hearing Loss Association of Wisconsin State Conference is scheduled for October 2–3, 2008. The Western Wisconsin HLAA Chapter of Menomonie will host the biannual event. The keynote speaker will be David Myers, Ph.D., from Holland, Michigan, who founded the “Loop America” project now taking hold throughout the United States. Information will be posted on the Wisconsin website at: http://hlaawi.org.

From a First-Time Visitor to an HLAA Chapter
“One of the things I really appreciated was being among a group of people who are dealing with the same difficulties I face every day. I was completely relaxed unlike most group situations. See you in September!”

Ginny Shoff, Bucks County, Pennsylvania

From a Reader
“Nice interview with Executive Director Brenda Battat (author Barbara Chertok, July/August 2008 Hearing Loss Magazine). I do so like her from the interactions we had when I was doing advocacy work in the long ago. I had never donated to HLAA—for no reason other than limited disposable income—but after she became executive director, I made a small contribution. She sent me a nice note back. She knows the value of networking, for sure!”

Bill Graham, Chicago

A View on HLAA Convention 2008
“From the view as we flew over the Sierra Nevada Mountains to land at the Reno Airport to the departure in fair weather under clear blue skies, the HLAA Convention in Reno was one of the best I have ever attended and I have attended most.”

Marcia Dugan, Penn Yan, New York
**Abby Gets a Cochlear Implant**—Maureen Cassidy Riski has penned the story of Abby Hound and how she gets a cochlear implant. This children's book, illustrated by Susie Dupree, walks a child through the process of getting a CI. One colorful spread shows animals in the audiology clinic waiting room with the words, “The waiting room was busy! Abby waited her turn. Abby played with her favorite stuffed animal, Mr. Dinosaur.” To order, go to [www.Abbygetsacochlearimplant.com](http://www.Abbygetsacochlearimplant.com).

**The Consumer Handbook on Tinnitus** by Richard S. Tyler, Ph.D., is a book which readers can sit down with the feeling of one-on-one conversation with world-class experts on tinnitus. Tinnitus and reactions people have is complex, but this book explains these challenges in simple terms supported by drawings. See an excerpt from the book at [www.hearingproblems.com](http://www.hearingproblems.com).

**No Place Else**—Penny Allen, a member from Washington, sent us this lead on a new book written by Wes Brosman, HLAA member. Penny comments, “It is a wonderful book—unbelievably poignant and one of those page turners. It is not an instruction book on hearing loss, but it is about his growing up with hearing loss and the poverty he endured during his childhood. He and his family were cotton pickers in California in the 30s. The book is not long, and it will haunt you for a long time afterwards.” For information, visit [www.viewoftherockies.com/NoPlaceElse.html](http://www.viewoftherockies.com/NoPlaceElse.html).

**Day by Day: The Chronicles of a Hard of Hearing Reporter** by HLAA Member Liz Thompson is just released. Despite hurdles of hearing loss and Multiple Sclerosis, Liz always expressed her determination to enjoy the best life had to offer. Her astonishing exuberance might have gone unnoticed if she hadn’t accepted a new position as a reporter/columnist in 1998 for the *Suburban News Publications (SNP)*. *Day by Day: The Chronicles of a Hard of Hearing Reporter* presents a marvelous blend of her experiences and best SNP columns that illustrate how she created her remarkable outlook. For more information go to [http://gypress.gallaudet.edu/bookpage/DBDbookpage.html](http://gypress.gallaudet.edu/bookpage/DBDbookpage.html).

**Demystifying Hearing Assistance Technology: A Guide for Service Providers and Consumers**—Author Cheryl Davis focuses on the access needs of individuals who are hard of hearing or deaf who rely on aural/oral and/or print communication and not sign language. It covers information on hearing aids, audiograms, cochlear implants and other auditory implantable devices, communication access, assistive listening devices, speech-to-text accommodations, alerting devices, and telecommunication options. In addition, there is an extensive resource section with additional information on the topics covered. Much of the information is a compilation of the trainings the author has developed over the years around communication access options.

The book is available at no cost to download from [http://www.wou.edu/~davisc/Demystifying.pdf](http://www.wou.edu/~davisc/Demystifying.pdf) or from the PEPNet Dissemination Center (item # 1221) at [http://pdcorder.pepnet.org/order/download_result.aspx](http://pdcorder.pepnet.org/order/download_result.aspx).
Marjorie and Betty know the power of giving.

"The Hearing Loss Association of America educated us, gave us support, and provided us with the advocacy for access we needed to empower ourselves to live with our hearing loss. That’s why it’s important to give to the generation that comes after us. And that’s why a gift to the Hearing Loss Association of America is so important."

The Hearing Loss Association of America has many gift options available to help us be the nation’s most efficient organization for people with hearing loss. Consider joining a special group like Marjorie and Betty did to ensure HLAA is able to continue its work for years to come.

For information about ways to help HLAA, visit our website at www.hearingloss.org, or call 301.657.2248.

The Hearing Loss Association of America educated us, gave us support, and provided us with the advocacy for access we needed to empower ourselves to live with our hearing loss. That’s why it’s important to give to the generation that comes after us. And that’s why a gift to the Hearing Loss Association of America is so important.

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Opinions expressed in articles appearing in *Hearing Loss Magazine* are those of the author. Mention of goods or services in advertisements does not mean Hearing Loss Association of America endorsement, nor should exclusion suggest disapproval.

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**Combined Federal Campaign**

**Designate Hearing Loss Association of America #11376**

CFC is the world’s largest and most successful annual workplace charity campaign, with more than 300 CFC campaigns throughout the country and internationally to help to raise millions of dollars each year. Pledges made by Federal civilian, postal and military donors during the campaign season (September 1 to December 15) support eligible non-profit organizations that provide health and human service benefits throughout the world.
Once in a great while, something comes along in life that changes one forever. Quite a while ago I sat with my only daughter while her first child was born. I was there to experience a new life coming into the world.

This blessed miracle was Sam. His mother, exhausted from the birth, held him lovingly and said, “You’re Sam and I am Susanne!” And that’s how it was from the beginning, a team. Already entering the world into a broken home, Sam was to encounter quite a different life from that of children born into the comfort and peace of a home which holds both the mother’s and father’s love. Sam’s life was good, but different.

The first few months I reveled in the fact that Susanne and Sam lived with me. The bond that was made between Sam and me was formed in those early months. He learned early on that hearing loss made it difficult to communicate with me.

A few years later, I lived with Sam and his mom. This is when he learned that the television normally had words running along the bottom in the form of captioning. He must have been studying the words and their corresponding sounds because when he started school he could read at a higher grade level than the grade he was in. Reading remains one of the loves of his life. I believe that the captioning was a big factor in his ability and love of reading.

During this time Sam became strongly aware that I was always having trouble hearing. He would repeat whatever I couldn’t understand… and repeat until I got it! His patience was amazing. It still is.

Sam is high energy, and Susanne very wisely has found projects and activities to keep Sam busy and occupied, as well as entertained. Among many other activities, Sam joined scouting. The Boy Scouts of America is a wonderful organization because it builds character, trust, and leadership. Scouts by virtue of the merit badge requirements are introduced to different facets of life. This enables scouts to experience activities that he otherwise would not know. This helps boys learn something that might be critical in deciding a career or making choices.

The Highest Scouting Rank

As Sam approached his Eagle rank he had to think about what project he wanted to do to attain the rank. It wasn’t long until the idea of helping hard of hearing people caught his interest.

I have been a member of HLAA since 1990 and was involved with the hospital communication access/advocacy project. I discussed this with Sam and showed him how it would be not only a great project for the Eagle rank but would also help people who are hard of hearing in his own community.

Sam decided this was the project to earn his rank, create awareness for hearing loss, and help others. He sought out the local HLAA Chapter under the guidance of Ginny Clark-Wright, Arizona state coordinator for HLAA, and received the approval and support of the Phoenix HLAA Chapter. Then he submitted his decision to his scout leaders and received all the approvals necessary to proceed with the project.

After all the requirements were met for this project, he set out to speak to as many hospitals and doctors as would take the time to hear him. This involved visiting four hospitals and six doctors or dentists, representing 87 hours of service.

On December 4, 2007, Scout Troop 603 conducted a special ceremony at Desert Hills Presbyterian Church in Carefree, Arizona, where Sam received the coveted Eagle Scout rank. Sam, now 16, is indeed an ambassador for hearing loss. 

Thelma Martin is a proud grandmother and an HLAA member from Hurst, Texas.
“Even though he’s deaf, I wouldn’t be surprised if he grows up to be a professional musician!”

—Melissa Li, mother of Brandyn, implanted at 16 months

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