

Reckoning Technology with People

BY BARBARA KELLEY

Last year I broke my toe. No big deal; however, when a body part isn't working, it's the first thing you think of in the morning and the last thing on your mind when you lay your head on the pillow at night. And, every hour in between is spent negotiating with that body part and coaxing it along, trying to figure out how to get through the day...and, **have no one notice.**

I love a metaphor, so you know where I am going with this. In no way am I comparing a broken toe to hearing loss. But, really, when you wake up, put on your hearing aids or cochlear implants and charge up the batteries, the two are similar in that we think, "How is it going to work out today?" Then we go out there and negotiate the world.

At the end of the day, we put our heads on the pillow, reflect, and sometimes it's not so good. You might think, "Oh brother, I bluffed in a meeting and gave the wrong response to a question I thought I had heard. I couldn't understand my doctor's instructions because he was looking at the computer screen instead of facing me, or I just retreated to a quiet place where I didn't have to listen, and *I'm tired.*"

than 360,000 people through personal meetings, her blog, and LoopWisconsin.org. The HLAA Get in the Hearing Loop Task Force, made up of HLAA members and volunteers, has advocated for hearing loops across the country. More than 25 people have been trained to teach people how to use hearing assistive technology as part of the Network of Consumer Assistive Technology Trainers (N-CHATT) program funded by a five-year grant.*



We are working with the wireless industry to create a task force whose goal is to ensure 100 percent hearing aid compatibility with cell phones by 2024, and we are providing expert advice to a nonprofit research company investigating captioned phone standards. We also work with the Consumer Technology Foundation to encourage companies to think about access in the design stage of products, rather than as an afterthought.

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Or, we think, "Whew! I made it. The room where we met had a loop, I went to the movies and they had captioning, I used my captioned phone to make my calls and it was so easy. It was a good day!"

But, shouldn't every day be like that? With innovation in technology, living in an age where people have an average of 37 apps on their phones and where competition has driven innovation, every day should be a good day for people with hearing loss.

HLAA is working to ensure communication access in public places. Since 2008, our HLAA Hearing Loop Advocate Juliëtte Sterkens has reached more

As recently as 20 years ago, who would have ever believed that we could hold our phone, TV and computer in the palms of our hand? We are all part of this living history where technology has transformed the way millions of people live their lives. And, for people with hearing loss, it's no different. Having hearing loss in 1979 when our organization was founded was much different from having hearing loss today.

Our Mission Is Fully Alive

We hear about all this new technology, but how do we find it, use it and figure out what works in different

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listening situations? It's one thing to get a hearing aid; it's another to live with them. We dole out advice to people about getting cochlear implants, but it's another thing to make a life-changing and personal decision.

HLAA Chapters are made up of people just like you—people who want to learn all they can about their

hearing loss, technology, tips, and for some, survival skills. Most of all, people come to an HLAA Chapter meeting because it is a place where it is okay to have a hearing loss. People come to share stories, get support, and learn about how they might stay on the job, in school, or enjoy retirement years staying involved with family and friends.

HLAA Chapters are where the mission of HLAA is fully alive: HLAA opens the world of communication to people with hearing loss through information education, support and advocacy. Our chapters are local, volunteer-led organizations that enrich a community along with other community groups such as the Lions Club, Rotary Club, and service groups. HLAA Chapters provide something that no other group in the community can do.

You will realize you can live in harmony with technology and your hearing loss. Even more, you are not alone in trying to do so. Communication—*being engaged*—is what makes life worth living. Thank you to our volunteers who work so hard to make the chapters viable. You can find an HLAA Chapter near you at hearingloss.org. **HL**

Barbara Kelley is executive director of HLAA. She can be reached at bkelly@hearingloss.org or on Twitter @Bkelley_HLAA.

**The N-CHAT program is a partnership with Gallaudet University and the American Institutes for Research, and is supported by a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR), through Gallaudet University's Deaf/Hard of Hearing Technology Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (RERC). Grant # 90RE5020.*

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