

You Say it Best

BY BARBARA KELLEY

You know I love this organization. It's more than that, the word "love" isn't descriptive enough, it's an expression. In my 30 years here I include myself in the thousands of people who learn all they can about a circumstance, make decisions about what to do about it, and then turn around and help others. Each one of you has a personal story of your hearing loss journey and what HLAA means to you. Some of you even talk about love. However you say it, you say it best.

We are pleased to bring you this issue where we focus on young adults with hearing loss. Hearing loss doesn't discriminate on age or any other qualifiers. We know HLAA is made up of people of all ages, but we can learn and be inspired by stories of the younger generation.

The Stories

Zina Jawadi was born and raised in Silicon Valley, California. She has prelingual bilateral hearing loss, underwent eight years of intensive speech therapy as a child, and wears hearing aids. I first met Zina when she was in high school and attended her first HLAA Convention. The experience catapulted her to find out more, come to greater awareness, which led her to become more involved with HLAA and people with hearing loss. Since 2015, she has served as president of the HLAA California State Association. Zina is most passionate about the science of hearing loss as well as advocacy, both of which she has ardently pursued since her early teenage years. She recently earned a bachelor's degree in biology from Stanford University and is working on a master's degree in bioengineering, also at Stanford.

Zina shares her story:

"Although I was born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area, I discovered HLAA while interning at the former House Ear Institute (now known as House Research Institute) in Los Angeles in the summer of 2012, between my sophomore and junior years in high school. I instantly fell in love with HLAA and its members and was wholeheartedly embraced by one of its legendary leaders, Grace Tiessen. Since then, whether locally, at the state level, or nationally, HLAA has given me boundless support and opportunities. Simply,



Barbara Kelley and Zina Jawadi at HLAA2018 Convention this past June. Zina gave an ebullient introduction of guest star and singer Mandy Harvey at HLAA2018.

HLAA is my second family and primary community. For decades, HLAA has done more for people with hearing loss than any other organization."

More from the Older Generation

Now, leaping to a generation older than Zina's, here are two of our members who share their stories.

Dr. Jonathan Taylor from New York City, says:

"I first became aware of my hearing loss in 1992. Over the course of the past 26 years, my mild hearing loss has progressed to severe. Fortunately, there have been many changes in technology and in public accommodations during that time which have helped offset the effects of my hearing loss. My awareness of these improvements has expanded rapidly in the last two years, as a direct result of my joining HLAA.

At the HLAA2018 Convention this past June, people of all ages gathered to learn how to live better with hearing loss. You might not remember all the names and faces, but you will remember the stories people told you and how they listened when you told yours.

“While attending chapter meetings, I have learned about devices that allow me to converse with my wife in noisy restaurants and to stream audio from aircraft movies and TV shows directly to my hearing aids. My ability to enjoy movies and live theater is a direct result of HLAA’s advocacy for the installation of hearing loops in many theaters and concert halls, as well as its advocacy for captioned performances of Broadway shows, and captioning devices at most New York City movie houses. HLAA has also become an important part of my life as a source of support. At meetings, I have made friends who share the challenges of hearing loss.”

Next, we hear from Dr. Richard Proconier, from Danville, California, who writes as someone who embraces technology even though, as he says, he is in his “ninth decade.” He realizes he is rather unique being of the older generation but was raised on technology, having graduated from MIT and serving in the United States Air Force Research Center firing rockets and explosives, and then later earning a doctorate in space physics at the University College London.

Richard says:

“Life has been changed over the past several decades for folks like I am who are comfortable with technology. It is dramatic. I have a nearly profound hearing loss that might have been caused by my military service, so the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs lists me as an 85 percent disabled veteran and they supply the latest hearing aids, which are connected and digitally processed, to search for speech in noise from multiple microphones. This feature enables me to communicate one-on-one with visual input and knowing the person or subject. My hearing aids can be remotely connected to my iPhone, which has made great strides in processing digital music and sound, unavailable a decade ago, allowing me to briefly communicate by voice alone. If the sounds are outside of my comfort range, I can easily mute with one touch at either ear.

“I communicate monthly with ten old friends or cousins around the world using Skype, which includes video, voice, and captions (still improving and requires some expertise in typing). FaceTime has also become available in the last decade. If I want entertainment, it is at its best. I have captioning on my Apple TV and can select any movie, including old masterpieces and Academy Award winners by voice alone and pay just a modest price automatically by Apple Pay, which also works at Starbucks and places not requiring hearing for communication. I use many text messages and videos daily. All these services are very recent. All of this would have been impossible 20 years ago.”

At the HLAA2018 Convention this past June, people of all ages gathered to learn how to live better with hearing loss. You might not remember all the names and faces, but you will remember the stories people told you and how they listened when you told yours. More than that, you felt the bond; the bond that says, “I am not alone—there are others like I am and there is something I can do about my hearing loss.”

I know not everyone has the opportunity to attend an HLAA Convention, but there are many ways to connect with HLAA and the people who understand what it’s like not to hear well. Find an HLAA Chapter near you, tune into one of our free webinars, check out our new website (and sign up for the free online *Hearing Life e-News*), join HLAA for only \$35 a year and receive this magazine, full of not only information, but inspiration. And, if you want some fun, find a Walk4Hearing near you this fall. It’s all on our website at hearingloss.org.

At the end of the day, it’s your hearing journey no matter what your age. Tell others about HLAA and let them know we are here for them. **HL**

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