

# A View From 36,000 Feet

BY BARBARA KELLEY

There are a limited number of things you can do on an airplane flight. In my case I usually toggle between thinking and reading. At the time of this writing, I am on a plane returning from trips to Los Angeles and Albuquerque. I am thinking about you, so I will digress from my usual and do some writing.

In Los Angeles, I attended the Mobile World Congress in partnership with CTIA as a guest panelist at CTIA's Accessibility Outreach Initiative Forum, to represent you—people with hearing loss—who simply want to talk and hear on your smartphones. But, it's not always that simple when you have a hearing loss. We all worry whether or not the cell phone is hearing aid compatible,



if the surroundings are quiet and the connection is good. Will the phone work well with telecoils?

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has given their imprimatur for a wireless industry and consumer-led task force to figure out how to get to 100 percent hearing aid compatibility by 2022.

This is the topic of what Kara Graves, director of regulatory affairs at CTIA, and I talked about to industry and accessibility leaders. The task force will begin its work in 2019 and will involve the wireless and hearing aid industries, consumers (HLAA), engineers, and policy makers. HLAA will be there to ensure that phones support telecoils to allow for induction technology as well as keep the door open for innovation. See [hearingloss.org](http://hearingloss.org) for a media release on the task force ([hearingloss.org/hac-task-force-announces-administrator-search](http://hearingloss.org/hac-task-force-announces-administrator-search)) and for further updates.

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## What Is 5G All About?

The big splash at the Mobile World Congress was 5G, and it's coming soon. The next generation of wireless—5G—will offer faster speeds, near real-time



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responsiveness and the ability to connect more devices. Why is this important to people with hearing loss? The FCC says a device is accessible if it meets the following requirements: 1) accessible, in that a person with a disability must be able to input information and receive information; 2) useable, people must be able to learn about and operate the features of the product or service effectively; and, 3) compatible, meaning that where accessibility is not readily achievable, a product or service must be made compatible with peripheral devices or specialized equipment.

The future is here and even our imaginations can't envision what is to come.

### On the Ground

Although important, my journey wasn't all about technology. I was able to visit two HLAA Chapters along the way. I met with Los Angeles Chapter Members Heather Lehr, Tim Browning and Florence Baker to learn about what is important to their members and their work in the community. Then, I went on to the HLAA Albuquerque Chapter, where Chapter President Mary Clark and chapter members held their first meeting of the season with a room full of people, including some new faces, and some members from the Sante Fe Chapter. In September, I also had the opportunity to visit the HLAA New York City Chapter.

The common thread among all our chapters is they are fulfilling the HLAA mission of opening the world of communication to people with hearing loss through information, education, support and advocacy. They are forces for change in their communities. They provide critical peer-to-peer support. They make their communities better by advocating for hearing loops and creating awareness about hearing loss. But even after all these years, it still remains the self-help aspect of wanting to learn all they can about hearing loss, talking to each other, sharing stories, and finding hope and practical help, and in turn, helping others who come through the door.

### Your Hearing Journey

And finally, on my ride home, I read the September/October issue of *Hearing Life*. At the time of this writing it was hot off the press. Our magazine is inspiring and chock full of information that you can use along your journey, whether it's technology help, finding an HLAA Chapter, getting involved in the Walk4Hearing, or enjoying a shared personal story that makes you realize you are not the only one feeling the way you do. The ads are for those products and services you might not find advertised elsewhere, even with the internet.

Pass this gem of a publication along to a friend or family member. Give someone a gift membership in HLAA, magazine included, this year for the holidays. They will thank you a million times over.

HLAA and all it encompasses can be your roadmap. Hopefully it leads you to living well with your hearing loss.

### Thank You

I owe a year-end thank you to our constituents, donors, corporate sponsors, volunteers in HLAA Chapters and the Walk4Hearing, presenters for our free monthly webinars and at the HLAA Convention, and those who provide technology for communication access. On behalf of our national staff and the HLAA Board of Trustees, have a wonderful holiday season.

The year 2019 will bring lots of news, including the 40-year celebration of our organization, founded by Rocky Stone in November 1979. Whether you just found HLAA or have been with us for many years, you are part of this 40-year journey. **HL**

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