

# Thinking About a Better Future and How We Get There is Our State of Nature

BY BARBARA KELLEY

## We all hope for something:

*I hope it won't rain for the party today.*

*I hope I get an A in my class.*

*I hope my mother doesn't have to have surgery.*

*I hope I can hear better with this new hearing aid, cochlear implant, or assistive device.*

Someone who is optimistic says, "It's going to be okay." Someone who is hopeful says, "Something can be done that's good and we can affect it. It's really in our hands."

Terry Small, in the *Brain Bulletin*, says: "Neuroscientists are investigating the science of hope. It turns out that a feeling of hopefulness changes your brain. Your brain pumps chemicals when experiencing the sensation of hope. These chemicals can block pain and accelerate healing.

"Hope, which involves belief and expectation, causes the brain to release neurochemicals, called endorphins and enkephalins, which actually mimic the effects of morphine. The result is that the brain can overcome hurdles and move to a place of recovery. In scientific terms, hope and recovery are not causally connected, but they are correlated."

Scientists found that when studying the brain activity of human subjects using MRI imaging, when people are told to think about nothing, to be silent, their brains start to imagine the future and all the good things it holds.

You could say our bodies are designed, or even wired, for hope.

This issue of *Hearing Life* takes a look at genetics and hearing loss and the hope the future will bring to families like the Battats, who share their experience dealing with generations of inherited hearing loss. Will pioneering research bring better therapies to people with inherited hearing loss? To take it one step further, might there one day be a cure for hearing loss through advances in gene therapy? We can only hope so.

This June, at the HLAA2019 Convention in Rochester, New York, our Research Symposium will be "The Latest on Genetics and Hearing Loss," where

world-renowned scientists will present the latest research on hearing loss that occurs after birth, and what can be done for families who have genetic hearing loss. We will also have two families with known genetic hearing loss talking about their experiences.

In this issue and at the upcoming HLAA Research Symposium, these magnanimous families and scientists hope to give energy to break out of ourselves and take on generous tasks which will be of benefit to all. They will share their stories and research. They will motivate us to be hopeful.

## Celebrating 40 Years of Hope

This January we kick off *Cheers to 40 Years!* as HLAA celebrates its 40-year anniversary. We held our first convention in 1984 at Stanford University where the motto was **Sharing Hope**, and there weren't nearly as many advances in science and technology that we see today. Nascent members in our organization saw first, that they weren't alone with their hearing loss; second, something could be done about it. Since 1984, science and technology have advanced, but the hopeful thinking is the same.

We will do our fair share of looking back at our 40-year history this year. There was a belief back in 1979 when we began, that people who weren't deaf, but weren't fully hearing, "hard of hearing" as Founder Rocky Stone termed them, couldn't be organized into a power to be reckoned with. Look at us today—HLAA is the go-to organization taking the lead on issues that affect consumers. That means *you*.

We certainly don't want to live or be mired in the past, but reflecting on it helps build our future. And, while we don't want to be idealistic—i.e., believing in something that is good but probably unrealistic to achieve—we want to be hopeful.

Thinking about a better future and how we can get there is our state of nature. **HL**

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