

You're Pretty Terrific!

BY BARBARA KELLEY

You told us in a survey we conducted last December that the number one reason for being connected to HLAA is for our advocacy work. To be more specific, of those of you who responded, 69.3 percent said that our advocacy and public policy work is something that you value most. Of course, this magazine,

Hearing Life, was a close second, along with a tight race between HLAA Convention discounts and the benefits of the HLAA Chapter network.



People think of advocacy on the big scale, and that is what HLAA does for you. Some of the issues important to you that we've been working on include:

hearing-aid-compatible cellphones; captioning on TV, internet and future autonomous vehicles; Internet Protocol Captioned Telephone Service (IP CTS); airline access, and more.

There is new activity in Congress about Medicare. The number one question we get from people who need to buy hearing aids and are over the age of 65 is, "Why doesn't Medicare cover hearing aids?" HLAA has long stood for Medicare coverage. Research shows that untreated hearing loss leads to depression, isolation, anxiety, falls, and now there is a link between hearing loss and cognition. The road to getting Medicare coverage for hearing aids and services will be like a marathon, not a sprint. But you can count on HLAA being in the race early for you. And for those of you under 65, when we get this accomplished, it sets the bar for other insurance plans.

HLAA also represents you—people with hearing loss—on many coalitions and advisory boards and

committees. We have a seat at the table for you. Here are a few:

- Advisory Council, National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, National Institutes of Health
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Alliance
- FCC's Disability Advisory Committee
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Action Network
- Friends of Congressional Hearing Health Caucus
- ITEM Coalition/HAB Coalition
- Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Disability and Multicultural Coalition
- AAPD's Technology Forum
- AT&T's Advisory Panel on Access & Aging (AAPAA)
- CTIA (represents the wireless industry) Advisory Panel on Location Accuracy
- LG's Advisory Board
- Consumer Technology Association's Hearing Access Group

Words with a Lot of Promise

Advocacy doesn't just happen at the national level; you are advocates whether you know it or not. It's not always easy, but we have those courageous moments when we ask for accommodations on the job, ask for a device you need such as captioned glasses in a movie theater or a hearing loop in a public venue, or it can be something as simple as asking your doctor to face you when he or she gives you the diagnosis.

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What are some of the words and phrases you think of when you think of advocating for yourself? How about...

- Independence
- Confidence
- Person-centered approach
- Empowerment
- Equal opportunity
- Accountability
- Accessibility

All those are good words that hold a lot of promise.

Meet Others Like Yourself—Head East this June

Rochester, New York, is one of the most hearing-friendly cities in the country. If you haven't been there, it's a small, quaint city full of history and nestled in New York's wine country. It's also the site of the HLAA2019 Convention this June. If you can make the trip, the experience will deliver on all the promises the words listed above hold. This is

one gathering just for you, where you don't have to apologize for not hearing well and where each event (fun or educational) is communication accessible.

The Convention won't be back on the East Coast for a while, so come to Rochester. It can be an easy drive for lots of you. If you can't attend the entire event, the Exhibit Hall and Trade Show is open free to the public. The Research Symposium topic is *The Latest on Genetics and Hearing Loss*, and for a small fee you can attend only this seminar. Get all the details on page 14 of this issue or go to hearingloss.org.

Thank you for being part of HLAA. Stay with us, because together we get a lot accomplished. You're pretty terrific! **HL**

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GET IN THE
HEARING
LOOP

It's Time to
Get in the
Hearing Loop

Many people are not yet aware of hearing loops or other technologies that can improve communication access and public engagement or how they can enrich the lives of people with hearing loss, their families, friends, colleagues, and even communities. The Get in the Hearing Loop program is changing that...one loop, one advocate, one ADA request at a time.

Get in the Hearing Loop, a communication access program of HLAA, is dedicated to providing and promoting community education, advocacy on behalf of people with hearing loss, and consultation services to help venues of all kinds successfully implement hearing loop technology.

We dream of a world where people with hearing loss can thrive each day with communication access, full inclusion, and equal participation in all aspects of life, everywhere they go.

For more information about hearing loops and the Get in the Hearing Loop program, visit hearingloss.org/programs-events/get-hearing-loop or email GITHLinfo@hearingloss.org.