

HLAA Starts With You

BY RICHARD EINHORN

HLAA exists for one reason only: to help people with hearing loss hear better. Since you're reading this magazine, that likely means you.

It's my great honor to be the new chair of the HLAA Board of Trustees and to support HLAA's staff in its job to help you. I'm serving on the Board with an extraordinary group of hearing health professionals, researchers and advocates. We come from all over the country—California and Seattle, the Midwest, Florida, Virginia, New York and New England. We include audiologists, professors, businesspeople, entrepreneurs, students, parents and researchers. As diverse as your Board is (and we're all committed to making it even more so), we share one thing in common: Each one of us is passionately committed to HLAA's mission.

Our Vision for the Future

We strongly believe that the stigma of hearing loss should wither away. We believe that effective, affordable and easy-to-use hearing devices should be available to everyone who needs them. And we believe that more people

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with hearing loss who could benefit from hearing aids use them—not just the mere 20 percent who currently do. We further believe that both educational and employment opportunities for young people with hearing loss must expand.

The HLAA Board feels strongly that hearing loss is a critically important public health issue with far-reaching consequences for individuals and society as a whole—which is why we believe that Medicare and other health insurance plans simply must cover hearing aids and other necessary equipment and services. Further, when it comes to the technology we need, we believe that a manufacturer's claims should

be understandable, verifiable and specific. And we believe that all phones and public places should always, as a matter of course, be fully hearing accessible.

Yet, we know that “believing” isn't enough. So we do much, much more.



HLAA in Action

In future columns, I'll be highlighting the specific projects the Board has in motion to make our mission a reality.

We're continually working to get HLAA's message out. We regularly apply for grants, publish articles in professional and consumer magazines, give speeches, consult with manufacturers, sit for media interviews, and meet with legislators and researchers to advocate for better hearing access. We speak at HLAA Chapters, testify everywhere—from city council meetings to meetings at the federal level—and answer numerous emails from people with hearing loss searching for advice. We're very, very busy advancing the issues that matter to you!

The Board's activities complement and support the extensive activities of the HLAA national office. To help us all hear better, HLAA Executive Director Barbara Kelley and the HLAA staff work incredibly hard to advocate on our behalf. In addition to running the many HLAA programs, they're continually meeting with representatives from government, regulatory bodies

and industry, patiently making our issues known. If it weren't for their tireless efforts, it would be much harder for us to hear on our phones and in public.

What's more, HLAA has commissioned major studies on hearing loss and proposed important bipartisan federal legislation—the Over-the-Counter Hearing Aid Act, signed August 18, 2017—which unquestionably has made hearing accessibility easier, more affordable and more convenient for all of us with hearing loss. HLAA also holds an exciting, informative and thoroughly enjoyable convention every year, produces this magazine, helps organize and coordinate your local Walk4Hearing, provides an incredibly comprehensive website of information related to hearing loss, leads many training sessions and webinars, and does even more.

It Starts With You

All this activity is extremely important to our hearing health. But the most essential component of HLAA—the one that's always been front and center right from the very first days of our organization's history—you can find simply by looking in the mirror. Back in the day, we were

Richard Einhorn Named New HLAA Board of Trustees Chair

At the HLAA2019 Convention in Rochester, New York, Richard was elected as the Board Chair. He succeeds Don Doherty.

Richard Einhorn is a composer, music producer and engineer, and a hearing technology consultant.

Voices of Light, Richard's large piece for orchestra and chorus, has been performed at major venues such as Walt Disney Concert Hall, the Washington National Cathedral, and the Sydney Opera House. A Sony Classical recording of *Voices of Light* was a classical bestseller. Richard also has produced dozens of classical music recordings, including Yo-Yo Ma's Grammy-winning Bach Cello Suites.

After experiencing sudden sensorineural hearing loss in June 2010, Richard began

fashioning unique solutions using professional and consumer technology to help him and others with hearing loss hear better. A tireless advocate for better hearing technology, Richard regularly speaks publicly about hearing loss and has written numerous articles for both consumer magazines and technical journals of audiology, medicine and engineering. For the past six years, Richard has attended the CES (the largest consumer electronics show) as a guest of the Consumer Technology Association Foundation as part of its Hearing Access Advocacy program. Richard also consults with several technology companies, both here and abroad, and has been the subject of several video documentaries about his career and hearing health advocacy.

known as SHHH, which stood for “Self Help for Hard of Hearing People.” Our founder, Rocky Stone, well understood that it was critical for each one of us to take charge of our own hearing. Today, in that same spirit, HLAA starts with you.

But what does it mean for you to “take charge” of your hearing? It means understanding what your hearing loss entails and the options available for doing something about it. Hearing is complicated—and hearing *loss* even more so. But hearing also is amazing! So, if you take the time to learn just a tiny bit about how your hearing works, you’ll be broadening your understanding of one of our most unique and fascinating capabilities while gaining practical information.

Taking charge also means talking with your hearing health professionals and getting satisfactory answers to your questions. The HLAA website can help with this. Taking charge means knowing what to do in an acoustically dicey situation so you can give yourself the best shot at hearing well. Taking charge means understanding how your hearing aids and cochlear implants work. And it means getting the most out of

them. For example, several hearing aid brands now have a rechargeable battery option so you never have to pry open that tiny little door on your hearing aid and struggle to insert a new battery—a very practical feature for anyone who physically has trouble changing batteries. Taking charge also means managing your emotional and physical resources: Hearing loss can be stressful, and it’s important to know how to keep yourself rested, fit and happy.

There’s so much more to taking charge of our hearing. In the coming months, I plan to share many tips that’ve worked for me or for other Board members. Yes, many of us on the Board have hearing loss, and like you, we can always learn from each other about how to hear better.

HLAA is gearing up for some exciting times ahead. The hearing health landscape is poised to change dramatically in the next few years. I’ll do my best in upcoming columns to keep you posted on what the HLAA Board is doing. Stay tuned! **HL**

Richard Einhorn is chair of the HLAA Board of Trustees and can be reached at chairperson@hearingloss.org.

In addition to his role as chair of the HLAA Board, he serves on the Advisory Council of the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and is a former member of the New York Board of the Grammy organization, the Recording Academy (formerly the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences).

Richard continues to compose music and currently is working on several large projects. He lives in New York City with his wife, journalist and teacher Amy Singer, and their daughter Miranda. **HL**



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Richard Einhorn at the Peabody Institute of The Johns Hopkins University.