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The New Kids on the Block

BY RICHARD EINHORN

What a wonderful HLAA2019 Convention we had in Rochester! So many terrific vendor exhibits, so many exciting workshops and panels—including that amazing Research Symposium on genetics and hearing loss.

HLAA Conventions are also a time for us to catch up with old friends and make new ones. That's true for HLAA Board of Trustees members as well. We meet three times a year—twice at HLAA's office in Bethesda and once at the convention. It's always a joy to see everyone, catch up on all the projects everyone is pursuing (these are very busy and productive people!) and talk about how we can better serve you by advocating for better hearing health care policies, better technology and better communication access.

In Rochester, two wonderful Board members—Nancy Lelewer Sonnabend and former Board Chair Margaret Wallhagen, Ph.D.—finished their terms of service. We'll all miss their intelligent insights at Board meetings. However, we'll always be in close touch with them, as well as with other former Board members, as their advice will be invaluable to us as we go forward.

Also, while in Rochester, three highly accomplished and deeply committed people were voted onto the HLAA Board of Trustees. I'd love to introduce them to you!

Larry Guterman

Larry's career is so rich and multifaceted that it's almost impossible to summarize. Originally from Canada, Larry attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard, graduating with a degree in physics. Next, he pursued a lifelong passion for film and received a master's degree from the top-rated University of Southern California School of Cinematic Arts. Steven Spielberg saw Larry's master's thesis film and hired him to direct *Goosebumps*, the flagship computer game for DreamWorks SKG.

This launched Larry's extensive and busy career in film and TV. Among other things, Larry directed many sequences for the hit animated film *Antz*, working with Gene Hackman, Sharon Stone, Christopher Walken and Woody Allen—and he has some great stories to tell about the experience. Larry also directed Warner Brothers' smash family film *Cats and Dogs*.

As he pursued his film career, Larry also was dealing with a serious progressive hearing loss that's now in the severe-to-profound range. Not one to back down in the face of challenges, Larry co-founded a tech company to tackle one of the most difficult problems those of us with hearing loss confront: hearing well during phone calls. SonicCloud's apps for smartphones and computers—which enable users to personalize the sound of phone calls and other audio to their hearing loss—have won several awards and considerable recognition for their innovations.

I first met Larry about four years ago when he was just beginning to work on SonicCloud. I was impressed by his approach and equally impressed by his passion and ability to articulate, from a personal perspective, the complex biological, social

and emotional issues surrounding hearing loss. He has the deep focus of a film director—that uncanny capacity to fully envision and then implement complicated projects with multiple simultaneous moving pieces. HLAA Board Member Shari Eberts also met Larry and proposed that he join the Board. Larry has many great ideas for how HLAA can work with the entertainment industry to improve hearing accessibility for films and television. So stay posted!

Zina Jawadi

Zina makes exceptional effort and achievement look easy. She holds a bachelor's in biology from Stanford University and a master's in bioengineering with a concentration in medical devices, also from Stanford. Zina has published on universal hearing aid insurance, was the first author of a book chapter related to the ear, has contributed to two pending review articles, and as a teaching assistant for a class in health care, wrote a 30-plus page handout describing the health care industry.

Zina also is a fantastic advocate. She served as a Board member of the HLAA California State Association from 2013 to 2019 and as its president from 2015 to 2019. During her tenure, the state association increased its cash balance by 60% and held three successful tech expos. Aside from a first-class mind and the possession of superb project management and organizational skills, Zina has a can-do personality infused with infectious enthusiasm. She has many, many friends in the HLAA community.

Zina's bilateral sensorineural hearing loss was first diagnosed when she was 3 ½ years old. She was fitted with hearing aids, began eight years of extensive speech therapy, and often used assistive listening devices when she was in school. And I nearly forgot to mention—Zina was elected to the Board at 23, which makes her our youngest Board member, ever. She brings an invaluable perspective to hearing issues, especially the challenges people with hearing loss face both in education and when seeking employment. She's also a highly skilled and experienced professional whose talents and insights will serve HLAA's Board well throughout our work.

I was first introduced to Zina back in 2014. Like everyone who's met her, I was impressed by her exceptional intelligence, her boundless energy and her easy sense of humor. We quickly became good friends. Just as quickly, I realized (as did several other Board members) that if she had the time, the HLAA Board would be lucky to have such a dynamic person on our team. Sure enough, now that she's here, Zina immediately dove headfirst into her Board responsibilities and is brimming with ideas for the future.

Roxana Rotundo

Originally from Venezuela, Roxana is a powerhouse in Latin media, both in the U.S. and internationally. Since 2007, Roxana has been CEO of the TV production company she founded, VIP 2000 TV. Her company is involved with a vast number of projects, including both original programming and Spanish translations of popular English-language TV shows. And I do mean vast: VIP 2000 TV's catalog includes Spanish-language versions of more than 300 films such as *The Hobbit*, James Bond films and many Oscar-nominated titles. Her company also has more than 3,000 hours of international TV programming.

My friend, and past HLAA New York City Chapter President Holly Cohen, first told me about this wonderfully dynamic young person named Roxana whom she met at an HLAA Convention. HLAA Board Members Katherine Bouton, Shari Eberts and Jan Blustein, M.D., Ph.D., also raved about her. And Jan proposed she join the Board of Trustees. Roxana and I finally had a chance to sit down in Rochester for a marvelous, far-ranging two-hour chat punctuated with much laughter. The time flew by as we talked about TV, movies and her terrific ideas for HLAA to reach out to the Spanish community and young adults. As I write, Roxana just received her second cochlear implant—she was first diagnosed with hearing loss 22 years ago. She's also starting production on a major new international TV series. In fact, Roxana learned the series was greenlighted during the HLAA Convention.

A prominent member of the HLAA Miami Chapter, Roxana helped Jan Blustein on the grant application needed for funding this year's Research Symposium. She's also an expert on social media and is working with Barbara Kelley and staff on some very exciting ideas for our online presence. I'm very excited that Roxana is on the Board and look forward to collaborating with her on her initiatives—as well as to many more conversations and much more laughter!

Larry, Zina and Roxana are all incredibly talented, hardworking Board members who are fully devoted to HLAA and its mission. They're joining a Board of equally talented, hardworking and devoted people seeking to help HLAA grow and expand our programs and services. As Board chair, I'm so thrilled to be working with them and with our super executive director, Barbara Kelley. We have a lot of new things in store for you. Stay tuned! **HL**

Richard Einhorn is chair of the HLAA Board of Trustees and lives in New York City. He can be reached at chairperson@hearingloss.org.