

# A Nearly 30-Year Friendship Rooted in HLAA

*Dynamic duo met at an HLAA event, now working to empower all people with hearing loss*

BY MEREDITH RESNICK

**I**t was a meeting 28 years ago at the HLAA New York City Chapter, where Ronnie Armel Adler and Lise Hamlin first met. The two were young professionals with hearing loss, eager to meet others they could relate to. They traveled together — often with other young adults from HLAA — to events and conventions, and quickly became close. The two were working in Manhattan and attending HLAA events for support, and fun.

“HLAA was the first place I met other people with hearing loss. Developing friendships with people who understand what it means to live with hearing loss is huge,” says Lise Hamlin, now HLAA’s director of public policy. “Social butterfly” is the phrase Lise uses to describe Ronnie, who she says was always the one organizing and bringing the group together. “Ronnie knew how to organize great young adult parties. HLAA was the one place I felt comfortable socializing.”

Ronnie volunteered at various HLAA Chapters and at the HLAA New York State Association, eventually

moved to Pennsylvania, and started organizing Walk4Hearing events there in 2006. She says about her friendship with Lise, “Our interests were very different, but we always came together on the tremendous passion we had for HLAA. We both just loved the sense of community! All those years ago, we talked about what a dream it would be to both work at the national level for the organization.”

Lise was doing state advocacy work in New York City for another hearing loss organization, and always knew she wanted to make a bigger impact. “We both wanted to land at HLAA. It was the only place where we had a platform to really impact the lives of people across the country with hearing loss, many had no idea about access or being part of a community of people with hearing loss. It was, and still is, an oasis in a hearing world,” says Lise.

Ronnie was eventually hired by HLAA at the national level as senior manager of Walk4Hearing. Walks are now held in 20 cities across the nation, reaching thousands of people and raising funds for



*Lise (second from left above), served as a bridesmaid when Ronnie married Mitch Adler on April 2, 2000, in Westbury, NY.*



other HLAA programs. Lise followed Ronnie two years later beginning her advocacy work at HLAA's national office, alongside her friend.

Ronnie says she loves organizing the Walks, which take HLAA's community of support on the road. "I meet all kinds of people — parents, children, professionals, students. Seeing people come to Walk4Hearing and feeling a connection and community for the first time, is so gratifying. It becomes a new sense of belonging for them," Ronnie explains.

Lise has marked a few big policy wins in the last year, including the opening of the over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aid market, which HLAA worked on with others for years, and a new bill increasing the accessibility of video and technology. She says her most memorable moment was having a front row seat at the White House for the signing of the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 by President Barack Obama.

Lise calls this her dream job. She sees many barriers that still need to be broken down for people with hearing loss, and accessibility is a personal issue for her. She finds the continual quest to make things better for people with hearing loss, and other disabilities, more than a job: it's her mission in life.

Ronnie is now planning the 2023 Walk4Hearing events, raising money and awareness for hearing loss across the U.S. Both agree that coming together with a friend both on personal and professional levels, is amazing. Knowing that you both understand the history of the organization and working every day to make things better for all people with hearing loss, is even better! **HL**



Ronnie and Lise at  
HLAA Convention  
2022 in Tampa



**Ronnie and Lise's story embodies the HLAA community of empowerment that has changed so many lives over the years. The connection they share, their commitment to the cause over decades, is what HLAA is all about.**

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