



Hearing Loss Association of America Central Pennsylvania Chapter

Hearing Central

Volume 2, Number 1

State College, PA

February 2009

WE ARE . . . HLAA-CENTRAL PA!!

How to Reach Us

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President - Nancy Stanley Maso
Vice President - Ann Sidone
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Judith Albrecht, Sue Hanna, Jennifer Kane,
Tammy Miller

With Appreciation To

Seth Forman (Layout), Sharon Rolley (Editor),
Newsletter; Foxdale Village, Refreshments; Beth
Krupa, CART; Larry Maso, Technical Support;
Kay Tyberg, Legislative

Meeting Information

Unless otherwise noted, monthly chapter
meetings are held September through June in the
auditorium at Foxdale Village, 500 E. Marylyn
Avenue, State College. See website for driving
directions. The auditorium is equipped with an
inductive loop system, and CART is provided.
Interpreting is also available but must be
requested at least one week in advance by
contacting Ann Sidone at 814/234-5095
(Voice/TTY) or ags4@psu.edu.

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ON THE LOCAL FRONT

The officers and board members are delighted that our chapter continues to grow and to gather support from the community at large. We were very fortunate to receive another grant this year from the Centre County Community Foundation, Litke Fund. This support, and the support of so many others, serves to recognize our value to the local hearing loss community. You might ask, just what is that value? With our chapter's mission in mind, we moved forward in many directions in the past four years. Through monthly educational programs, our chapter offered people with hearing loss significant knowledge to help themselves, along with what we

hope is an increased awareness of available services and options to cope with their loss. Through persistent advocacy, we played an important role in bringing communication access to more venues in the community, e.g., the MoPix system at College 9 and the induction loops at Schwab and Boal Barn theaters. Our meetings provided both mutual support and opportunities for social networking. Realizing that our chapter is the only support group of its kind in the Central PA area, we welcomed anyone, from near and far, with an interest in hearing loss to participate in our activities.

Now let's turn our attention to you, the reader. This year the chapter anticipates a rather significant change of leadership. We definitely need people to run for president, vice president, and secretary in the coming election

in June. HLAA national specifically encourages your officers and board to find and foster new leadership within the chapter. Ann Sidone and I have served for four years. New leadership is needed to infuse renewed energy and a fresh surge of ideas into the chapter. Please think about your own skills and abilities and those of others who might be able to lead our chapter. There continue to be empty committees and no committee chairs. While it is our intent to step back as president and vice president, Ann and I will offer support to new office holders and look forward to assuming new roles in the chapter. So please nominate and volunteer, volunteer, volunteer. Thanks in advance for your consideration of this important issue.

--Nancy Stanley Maso

MONTHLY MEETING RECAP

We welcome you, your family, and friends of any age to our monthly meetings and other hearing loss-related events. *YOU DO NOT HAVE TO FACE HEARING LOSS ALONE.* There are many people and resources available to help you. Our chapter is one point of contact as you confront the physical, mental, technological, and social challenges of hearing loss.

At our November meeting, Sharon Salter, assistant director of special education services, State College Area School District, talked with us about accommodations in the workplace. She first discussed laws that protect people with disabilities, such as the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which impacts public and private businesses that receive money from the federal government, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which impacts everybody except businesses that have 15 or fewer employees, whether or not they receive federal dollars. Sharon emphasized that these laws were enacted to protect the civil rights of people with disabilities, from birth to death, and in all settings. It is up to the person with the disability to request the accommodation, and then it is up to whoever is sponsoring that program to reasonably provide it.

A discussion followed among the audience on what might be reasonable. For example, if there is no elevator in a building

where a meeting is to be held, moving the location from the second floor to the first to accommodate a person who uses a wheelchair is considered a reasonable accommodation; installing a brand-new elevator is not.

Another factor to be considered when accommodating people with disabilities in the workplace is the essential functions of the job. If answering the phone is a small fraction of the work, then a person who is having difficulty hearing phone conversations might be accommodated by allowing them to take on other responsibilities instead of answering the phone.

Particularly at the worksite, documentation is required for accommodation. Something must be written down about the functional limitations of the disability; that is, how does it impact your work and the job that you are doing? What accommodation do you need in order for your work environment to be accessible? Such documentation could be done by an OVR counselor or audiologist.

Sharon emphasized that the person with a disability has to learn to self-advocate, not just on the job, but at doctor, bank, and lawyer's offices, in restaurants, theaters, or sports arenas – most everywhere. "It's really up to you to fight for yourself," declared Sharon, "don't assume people know what you need just because you have a hearing loss . . . you have to tell them."

In December, we gathered at Foxdale for an informal social and enjoyed a performance by members of the Penn State Juggling Club and a candle and cookie exchange.

In January, chapter vice president and program chair Ann Sidone presented a program on self-help. Ann began by empathizing with those of us who have hearing loss. "It's frustrating to be hard of hearing. I don't need to tell any of you that. We face obstacles in communication every day. . . [but] what are we doing about it?"

The first thing you need to do, advised Ann, is choose your battle. Then, examine the myriad factors surrounding the issue. What you eventually come to realize is that one person alone cannot take on all of these factors. To be effective, you first need to define the part you want to focus on and then gather as much information about it as you possibly can. Find out who the key players are and how

to contact them. What can I do to make them listen? Who else, or what other groups, might be working on the same problem? "This is what you do first," said Ann, "then you take action." At this point, the audience was asked to share first-person accounts of their advocacy efforts.

Next, Ann outlined how to accomplish your self-help goals: First of all, you have to acknowledge your hearing loss and let your communication needs be known. In stating your case, be assertive, not aggressive. Numbers talk; gather statistics pertinent to your cause. Know the law and what it says about the accommodation you are asking for. Be concise. Follow up. Lastly, acknowledge any successes.

"Given what we have heard from the audience this evening, we are a vibrant group," Ann concluded, "and have expertise in how to advocate, use one another, and educate one another. So resolve for 2009: I'm not going to sit around and whine about how my hearing loss affects me. I'll join with someone else and make things happen!"

Shortly before we were to meet in February, Foxdale Village requested that, because of the *Norovirus* threat, outside organizations cancel all events planned at the facility until further notice. Accordingly, the February 9 meeting, "Ask the Audiologists," was postponed until a later date.

Should you need more information on any of these presentations, please contact Ann at 814/234-5095 (Voice/TTY) or ags4@psu.edu. And be sure to watch your inbox for notices of future meetings.

AROUND THE STATE

What is GC&ACPD?

At almost three years old, the **G**overnor's **C**abinet & **A**dvisory **C**ommittee for **P**eople with **D**isabilities is a fairly new entity on the state scene. GC&ACPD serves under the Department of Public Welfare and has as its focus all Pennsylvanians living with a disability, including those who are deaf or hard of hearing. Its vision is for these Pennsylvanians to have equal access to quality services and support in their homes, workplaces, schools, and communities and equal opportunity to achieve their personal goals and dreams.

The executive director of GC&ACPD is Edward Butler, and it consists of 52 members (3 of whom represent deaf/HOH) who reside throughout Pennsylvania and meet four times a year. The

mission of the Committee is to establish recommendations for the Governor's Cabinet as well as serve as a liaison to stakeholders and advocate for the equality of individuals with disabilities. The next scheduled GC&ACPD meeting is March 26 and 27, 2009, at a location yet to be determined. The public is welcome to attend, and time is allotted for them to make any comments. The Committee also invites various state officials to speak on topics of interest.

Under the Committee's tutelage, the state is divided into regional workgroups. For example, there is a Central PA workgroup that meets at least twice a year to discuss pertinent issues about disabilities which are, in turn, reported back to the Committee. In Central PA, a chairperson is appointed and he/she oversees five counties. Although covering a large area, members who serve on a regional workgroup do their best to listen and learn about situations within their jurisdiction which might be addressed to the Committee.

It was decided that the Committee should focus on the following priorities: housing, transportation, education, voting, and employment for people with disabilities. As you can imagine, there is a great deal to cover under each of the priorities. A situation most recently brought before the Committee concerned the difficulties in communication which persons with hearing loss frequently encounter on airplanes and in airports. This issue is being publicized more strenuously because the National Association for the Deaf and other leading organizations are not getting enough people with hearing loss to write to officials or file complaints. When those affected do not protest, airline officials in turn do not feel the difficulty warrants their attention. This is where all individuals with a hearing loss need to step up to the plate and say, "We need appropriate communication under the law." The Committee becomes yet another avenue to expand support on issues such as these.

Although faced with an enormous task to include all people with disabilities in Pennsylvania, this Committee is a step in the right direction toward addressing disability issues for all of us. You may wish to visit their web site at www.dpw.state.pa.us/about/secretary/GovernorCabinet/ for more information.

--Kay Tyberg

PA Walk4Hearing™

Lace up those walking shoes, form a team, and *Walk4Hearing™* in your home state of PA! *Walk4Hearing™* is a fundraising 5K (3.2 miles) event to be held this year in SE Pennsylvania at Ridley Creek State Park on Saturday, September 26. Since its formation in 2006, *Walk4Hearing™* has raised over one million dollars for programs and services for people with hearing loss, and has grown into the largest awareness and fundraising event for the Hearing Loss Association of America. Supporters walk in the *Walk4Hearing™* for many reasons: to support a family member or loved one; to create awareness of their own hearing loss; and to support HLAA. Anyone

who wants to make a real difference for people affected by hearing loss can participate. There is no registration fee, and not every walker on a team has to raise money for the walk although most find it pretty easy to raise at least \$100.

For more information on this walk event, check out the *Walk4Hearing™* website at <http://hlaa.convio.net/site/PageServer?pagename=FAQs> or contact Sharon Rolley (sar1@psu.edu), who has volunteered to serve on the state organizing committee and drum up support from our area. It's a fun and rewarding thing to do!

Hearing Aid Tax Credit Brunch

If you'd like to update your knowledge of the Hearing Aid Tax Credit, read on and consider attending this event, co-sponsored by HLA-PA and AGB Association for the Deaf/HOH, PA Chapter:

You and Your Family are Invited to Join

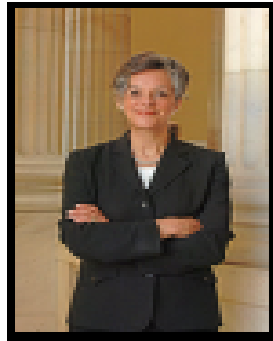


**Hearing Loss
Association
of Pennsylvania**

&

Alexander Graham Bell
ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL
ASSOCIATION FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING
Pennsylvania Chapter

At a Brunch with



Representative
Allyson Schwartz
(D-PA)

Congressional Update & Discussion of
The Hearing Aid Tax Credit

When: Saturday, March 28, 2009

10:00 AM — Coffee and Brunch

10:30 AM — Program

Where: Holiday Inn – Fort Washington

432 Pennsylvania Ave.

Fort Washington, PA 19034

RSVP: To Register Yourself and Your Guests... ..

Call : (717) 233-6844 (Specify number of Adults & Children)

Email : BStewart-PHHA@comcast.net

[Mark "Hearing Aid Brunch" on email subject line, and indicate number of adults and children in your group.]

Admission is Free!

— CART and ASL interpretation available —



Breakfast sponsored by Hearing Industries Association
with support from Advanced Hearing Systems and the International Hearing Society



KEEP ON KEEPING ON . . . ACCESS & ADVOCACY

If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when? --Hillel

College 9, located on Carnegie Drive, State College, continues to show first-run, rear-window captioned (MoPix) movies regularly and to advertise this accommodation in the local paper--thank you! In appreciation of their service to the local deaf/HOH community, our chapter is donating to the theater an updated rear-window reflector device with a rounded shape to better fit the cup-holder.

For the past few months, several chapter members have experienced a noticeable lag in closed captioning on Comcast WTAJ Channel 10, a CBS affiliate based in Altoona. We have written to the cable company, the station, and the national broadcaster; however, nothing constructive has been done by any of these contacts, and the audio-to-CC lag is still very apparent on this channel.

Despite numerous letters about communication access written to officials involved in the soon-to-be-built Cinema Centers multiplex in downtown State College, chapter advocates remain frustrated by their response. One of the officials, Gina DiSanto, recently related to us that as the project moves forward they "will look into all of the ADA issues at the theatre." Although encouraging, this reply was not as concrete as we had hoped for, given the depth and breadth of our previous correspondence to them.

We who are keeping on can always use more warm bodies to help with access efforts. Please call 814/234-5095 (Voice/TTY) or email hlaa-centralpa@hotmail.com for contact information or to let us know of any other issues that might need attention.

WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

In our October issue we reported that chapter board member and audiologist Judith Albrecht funded the newly installed induction loop system in Schwab Auditorium but have since learned that it was her late aunt, Grace Albrecht, who provided monies for this project, as well as funding the loop installation at the Boal Barn Theatre. We apologize for this oversight, and stand corrected.

As a means to attract more children and youth to our chapter, board member Jennifer Kane, who is the parent of teenager with hearing loss, wrote with the approval of chapter officers and the State College Area School District, a letter to parents of deaf and hard of hearing children in the school district about the benefits of involvement in HLAACentral PA. She personally invited parents to attend our next meeting, with or without their child, and see if it might be a good thing for their family.

The Centre County Women's Resource Center in State College has installed a new TTY for use in answering telephone inquiries and hotline calls at the shelter. Prior to hook-up, chapter member Sharon Rolley gave a demonstration to the center's educational team

on how to use the TTY and spoke of her experiences as a long-time TTY user. Later on, Sharon placed a TTY call to the center, which allowed shelter personnel to try the device and become familiar with it before full implementation on the first of March. The new TTY number at the shelter is 814/272-0660.

Interpreter Amy Hawbaker is teaching "American Sign Language, Beginner," offered through community education, March 23-May 17, 7:00-9:00 PM at the Park Forest Middle School. Register at 814/231-1062. In addition, chapter VP Ann Sidone is teaching "What Did You Say?" offered through Osher Lifelong Learning Institute in spring term, March 30-May 8. For a course catalog, call 814/238-2368.

In honor of Better Hearing and Speech Month, the Penn State Speech and Hearing Clinic has announced that it is offering free hearing screenings for Penn State faculty, staff, and retirees on Monday and Friday mornings from 9:00 AM-1:00 PM and on Wednesday afternoons from 2:00-5:00 PM during the month of May. Call the clinic at 814/865-5414 to schedule your appointment.

BETHESDA BEAT

Join a live, moderated web chat--just log onto [Dr. Brad Ingrao \(Audiologist\)](#) and discuss "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Ear Molds but Were Afraid to Ask," on March 19 at 7:00 PM (EST). Upcoming chat: April 23, Jane R. Madell, PhD, CCC A/SLP, Cert AVT, "Moving from Hearing Aids to Cochlear Implants--How to Decide."

Convention 2009 is to be held this summer in Nashville, June 18-21, at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center. The schedule-at-a-glance and the workshop schedule have been posted on the HLAA [website](#). New this year: HLAA is offering a free registration to veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom who have a hearing loss. Email [Nancy Macklin](#) at HLAA national for more information.

OTHER PERSPECTIVES

(The following excerpt was taken from HEARING LOSS HELP E-ZINE, volume 4, no. 1, February 7, 2009. <http://www.hearinglosshelp.com>. Reprinted/edited with permission of publisher.)

A man asked: "Could you provide sources or websites that rate hearing aids? I'm getting conflicting input from audiologists, ads, and hearing impaired folks. Where can I find an impartial source that rates hearing aids that address my profound needs?"

I'm not aware of any source that actually rates hearing aids--giving their pros and cons including their reliability, how well their t-coils and other features work under real-world conditions, etc. such as you would find in Consumer Reports articles. It's a great idea, but nobody is doing it.

There are a few sites that make lists of some hearing aids and may list some of their main features, but these lists do not contain any indication of how well these features work, or whether they are basically a bunch of hype. There are a couple of sites that, from their names, sound as if they do exactly this; but when you go to them, they don't. It's just a "come on" to get you to their site.

The best (and most complete) lists I have found are on the Hearing Review website. They list a number of selected features for each hearing aid so you can compare their features, etc. The listings also include a colored picture of each hearing aid listed.

Every month or two, for the past several months they have listed another class of hearing aids. So far they have listed only

behind-the-ear (BTE) hearing aids. They have broken them down into four classes—Power BTEs, Conventional BTEs, Thin/Slim Tube BTEs, and Receiver in the Ear (RITE)/Receiver in the Canal (RIC) BTE aids.

These reports are well worth perusing if you are in the market for new aids. You'll have a good understanding of what is out there and their relative features. Note: not all makes/models of hearing aids are included, but it gives you a good start. Here are the details and links to each report:

[Power BTEs](#)

(February 2009), 10 pages

[Conventional BTEs](#)

(January 2009), 21 pages

[Thin/Slim Tube BTEs](#)

(November/December 2008), 11 pages

[Receiver in the Ear \(RITE\)/Receiver in the Canal \(RIC\) BTE aids](#)

(October 2008), 11 pages

The above lists do not give prices, but if you want to get an idea of hearing aid prices, check out [Ahearingaid.com's](#) website. They [list their prices](#) for the most popular makes and models of hearing aids. This will give you an idea of the relative prices of the various hearing aid models and whether they will fit into your budget.

--Neil Bauman

BECOME A MEMBER

HLAA-Central PA July 1, 2008-June 30, 2009 dues (includes subscription to *Hearing Central* newsletter):

- \$6/year - Individual
- \$10/year - Family

Tax-deductible contribution:

- \$10 \$25 \$50 other

HLAA-Central PA is a 501(c)3 organization.

Make checks payable to HLAA-Central PA and mail with this form to:

Nancy Stanley Maso
 HLAA-Central PA Membership
 1546 Kennelworth Court
 State College PA 16801

Thank you for helping us, help you.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Please note that while membership in the national Hearing Loss Association of America organization is not required, we recommend that all who are able become members at the national level. Benefits include a subscription to *Hearing Loss Magazine* and discounts on merchandise from some vendors providing assistive technology. National membership dues support advocacy at the national, state, and local levels. To join HLAA at the national level, go to www.hearingloss.org.

HEARING CENTRAL

HLAA-Central PA Newsletter
 1546 Kennelworth Court
 State College PA 16801

Address Service Requested

*Hope to see you at the Adult Health Fair,
 Nittany Mall, on May 21. Stop by our HLAA-
 Central PA booth & register to win a prize!*