

HEARSAY

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The Official Newsletter of Hearing Loss Association of PA

Message from Diana

HLA-PA is hard at work on several projects – the biggest being the Pennsylvania Walk4Hearing which takes place September 26, 2009. We are encouraging all of our chapters in PA to support this project by sending at least one walk team to Ridley Creek State Park to participate in the walk. Did you know that hearing loss is a public health issue that is third in line only to heart disease and arthritis? Thirty six million people in the United States have a hearing loss, that's about one in every 10 people. We are walking to create awareness about hearing loss as well as to raise funds to continue HLAA programs

nationally, statewide and in local chapters. To learn more about the PA Walk4Hearing and register your team please read article on page or contact me by email or snail mail.

June brings with it our annual HLAA convention. Conventions provide those who volunteer to help improve the lives of hard of hearing people in PA a chance to recharge our energies, while learning about new technology and what HLAA members in other states are doing. I am looking forward to seeing many of our readers in Nashville.

*Diana Bender,
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New Clinic Helps People Get Hearing Aids!

The new slogan for CHAD, the Center on Hearing And Deafness, Inc. (CHAD) is “CARE-COMMUNICATE-CONNECT.” For many with hearing loss, being able to afford and get hearing aids is the key to their communication ability and, therefore, to connect with their families, coworkers and community members. In January of this year, CHAD began an Audiology Clinic Pilot Project. The purpose of this Clinic is to assist low-income individuals with hearing loss obtain hearing aids that may otherwise be out of reach. At this point, CHAD is not providing any audiology services in house. Instead, they are working with a generous group of hearing health providers (ENTs, Audiologists and Hearing Aid Dispensers) who have agreed to partner with this project. Currently, 10 different providers are helping out, and the number continues to grow.

CHAD is located in West Chester and has been hosting the Chester County Chapter of the Hearing Loss Association since its beginning as SHHH over ten years ago. The Clinic also has active HLA members on its Clinic Advisory Council and volunteer list.

There are many hearing health providers who already help some low-income customers with financial assistance. However, this Project is reaching out to all pockets in our community to successfully find people with the greatest needs. The Clinic assists consumers with the sometimes complicated application process, provides a general assessment of other needs and possible resources to help, and connects them with a trusted and qualified hearing health professional. These professionals may be a hearing health provider the consumer has already met with or someone more appropriate and accessible for the consumer. CHAD staff also offer follow-up support in the community.

The following are the major financial aid sources available:

A i d Source	Income Limit	% Poverty	Cost for One Aid**
Hear Now	\$17,867	170%	\$100
L i o n s AHAP	\$20,800	200%	\$250
Audient	\$26,000	250%	Between \$720 – \$1,200

**No or very-low interest loans are also available through Pennsylvania’s Assistive Technology Foundation (PATF).

If this Clinic is successful, CHAD intends to include applicants beyond Chester County and help to make hearing aids available to even more people. Call 610-918-6250 with questions or email SarahReed@chadinc.org for more information.

Submitted by: Bill Lockard, Exec Director, CHAD

Support for Hearing Aid Tax Credit

What's the one thing we all wish could happen to us when we buy our hearing aids? Well, personally, I wish it were free, but that's too idealistic. Another thought would be to have medical insurance cover it 100%, or at least get money returned for when I do pay out of pocket for it. Well, that's what the proposed Hearing Aid Tax Credit will do. This proposal will see that we do get money back into our pockets after paying an arm and a leg for hearing aids to allow us to do the best we can in life. The Hearing Aid Assistance Tax Credit Act (aka H.R. 1646) has been reintroduced to the House Committee on Ways and Means on March 19, 2009. It has 43 Representative sponsors, plus various endorsing organizations, including HLAA.

On March 28, 2009, the state of PA was fortunate and honored to have our Democratic Representative Allyson Schwartz favor us with her appearance at a brunch in Fort Washington. Her past leadership led to the creation of the PA Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) in 1992, which served as the model for the federal initiative that now provides health insurance to millions of American children. Representative Schwartz's reputation as one of the "go to" policymakers on health care reform makes her a key player in getting this Act into Congress. She has the strength and tenacity to convince the House of the necessity of H. R. 1646 to 10% of the population of United States.

During her speech to about 200 people at the Holiday Inn, she explained that her passion lies in health care reform. She gave the example of Health Information Technology. She explained how costly it is when medical tests are being unnecessarily duplicated. Ms. Schwartz commented that there are 1.5 million prescription errors now, and that with possibility of e-prescribing, it will cut down on human errors. The idea of having medical records

opened electronically, and cut down on duplicated testing will save the country millions of dollars. Her goal is to "make sure insurance is meaningful".

With this in mind, having a Hearing Aid Tax Credit will definitely be in good hands with Ms. Schwartz. We hope that her passion and zeal for logically seeing how the Hearing Aid Tax Credit will tremendously help people across the country get the hearing aids they need, so they can lead fuller lives. We thank Ms. Schwartz for being a co-sponsor in this particular Act and wish her well in her endeavor. She has people in PA and across the county rooting for her and the Act.

We thank Barb Stewart and Carolyn Meyer for organizing this event and Don Groff for setting up the assistive technology for us in the room.

Hattie's Bill

Jennifer Warsing from Huntingdon County, PA is fighting for the rights of all service dogs in Pennsylvania after she and her Hearing Dog, Hattie, from Dogs for the Deaf were attacked by a loose dog. On one of those early spring days in February, Jennifer and Hattie went for peaceful, leisurely walk in their neighborhood, only to have disaster strike.

The owners of the dog that attacked Jennifer and Hattie received one of the least punishments possible: their fines were waived by the judge and the owners of the dog were only held accountable for the restitution of Hattie's shredded harness and collar. Jennifer was bitten by the dog on the leg and received multiple scratches and bruises while trying to protect herself and Hattie from the attacking dog. Jennifer says, "The punishment received is not enough. There needs to be greater protection in Pennsylvania for service animals and their users...These animals are priceless, an extended body part for those who need them....That is why I am fighting for House Bill 123....I want to see accountability and protection for all service animals in Pennsylvania...Hattie is my life, my ears, my best friend and without her, my life would literally fall apart....Without Hattie, I would be back to sleepless nights worrying about the smoke detector going off and not being able to hear it, I would be thrust back into a world of constant silence."

Due to this unfortunate incident, Jennifer is now pushing for House Bill 123. If passed, this bill would protect service dogs by holding the owners of the dog that attacked accountable by making it a misdemeanor of the second degree; as well as, making stiffer restitution on behalf of the service animal user.

If you would like to support Jennifer's endeavor of this bill, sign her petition by

logging onto <http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/house-bill-123.html>

Please feel free to pass this link on to others you know, and ask them to sign. A bill of this



nature is much needed for those with service animals in Pennsylvania.

Jennifer will be speaking about this bill several times this summer. On May 18th at 7:00 pm, she will be speaking at the Huntingdon County Pride Office. Also on May 18th at 8:00 pm, she will be speaking at the Huntingdon County Humane Society. June 8th at 6:00 pm, she will be speaking with the Lions Club of Huntingdon County and on August 11th at 11:00 am, she will be speaking with the Huntingdon County Rotary Club.

Jennifer hopes for greater awareness about service animals and their need for protection under the law. "This is for Hattie. In the end I hope to see House Bill 123 become known and adopted as Hattie's Bill, because she my inspiration."

In Memory of Allan Weinberg

The members of Philly 1 mourn the passing of our devoted Chapter President and caring friend, Allan Weinberg. He was an inspiration to us to carry forth with our lives despite our hearing loss. Our Outreach Program, "Coping

with Hearing Loss”, was always a priority for him. Audiences were so receptive to his kind words as he gave them encouragement to continue with their daily lives to the best of their ability. He loved to travel all over the world and never let his own hearing loss stand in the way. We admired him for this courage. When he returned from his trips, he would lecture at the JCC Klein Branch to a most receptive audience. Allan was a school principal and language arts specialist. He had so many friends and a wonderful supportive family. We shall miss him at our chapter meetings. He always arrived looking so dapper as we struggled in through the winter nights not always looking our best! We would look at him and know that we were special to him. We shall memorialize him with a contribution to HLA-PA and by continuing his efforts at Outreach the way he wanted. We have chosen to call this the Weinberg Chapter Philly 1 Outreach Program with the hope that we, not only will reach people who have hearing loss, but will train staff with normal hearing to improve communication with people with hearing loss. Once a year we will select The Weinberg Memorial Speaker for our chapter meeting to honor his memory. One of Allan’s favorite phrases was “good food and good company, what more can you want?” Although we will no longer have our beloved Allan’s company, he will always remain in our hearts.

Submitted by Carolyn Meyer

Poor Economy is Bad for Hearing. Is Obama’s Change on the Way?

Now that America’s 44th President has been sworn in, will the relief or cure of our ailing economy be on the rise? What does the economy have to do with hearing aids? A lot, actually.

With less disposable income, there is money to spend on necessary items such as food, mortgage, utilities and gas. Hearing aids, which cost anywhere between \$1,000- 4,000

end up going to the bottom of the “must-have” lists.

The poor economy has forced healthcare consumers to think twice on costs. About 75% of adults with hearing loss cite financial constraints as a reason why they do not wear hearing aids, even though they need them. Although hearing loss is a growing health disorder in the United States, Medicare and most private insurance plans do NOT cover the cost of hearing aids. Research shows that most hearing aids currently used in this country is paid for by consumers. It’s not fair, considering how much we depend on assistive technology to keep us safe and healthy. Hearing aids increase the quality of life, and helps ensure us to stay safe, with us hearing the various fire alarms, and sounds of oncoming traffic.

According to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD), one in three U.S. adults between the ages of 65 and 75 has diminished hearing. As it happens, those are the very people who already struggle financially because they usually live on fixed incomes.

There is plenty of evidence from all areas of the country showing how the currently poor economy is forcing many seniors to cut on health care. People are not refilling prescriptions, split pills, and skip doctor’s visits. Seniors are also making do without hearing aids.

With Obama’s platform for reform in health care system, it should be interesting to see how it will relate to affordability in hearing aids. With the 111th Congress starting on January 3, 2009 – January 3, 2011, the task is to see if we can get assistance for the Hearing Aid Assistance Tax Credit – H.R. 2329/S. 1410

We, as citizens and taxpayers of the US should do our part in seeing if we can get this passed in the House and Senate. Look on this website to see what you can do (write/email a congressman, etc). To describe the bill briefly, the Hearing Aid Assistance Tax Credit Bill offers a tax credit of up to \$500 per ear per cost of hearing aids that are not covered by insurance it can be

HearSay Subscription

If you would like to receive your own copy of *HearSay*, the official newsletter of HLA-PA, please fill in this form and mail it to the address below. A *HearSay* subscription is free; however, HLA-PA is a not-for-profit organization run exclusively by volunteers and we are grateful for any donations.

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

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Enclosed is my contribution of \$_____ to support HearSay.

Donations are tax deductible.

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**In Memory of Alan Weinberg
HLA-Philly 1 Chapter
Carolyn and Joe Meyer**

About HLAA

Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA), formerly Self Help for Hard of Hearing People, Inc., which was founded in 1979, is a non-profit consumer self-help organization. HLAA opens the world of communication to people with hearing loss by providing information, education, support and advocacy.

The primary purpose of all HLAA members is to educate ourselves, our families, friends, co-workers, teachers, hearing health care providers, industry, government, and others about hearing loss.

HLAA has members and chapters in all 50 states. To find the chapter closest to you and to learn about membership benefits, contact the HLAA National Office:

Hearing Loss Association of America
7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 1200
Bethesda, MD 20814
www.hearingloss.org

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!!

Assist the HLA-PA State Director by serving on the Advisory Council or one of its committees. The Council meets periodically in Carlisle but committees conduct most of their business by e-mail and occasionally meet in various parts of the state. If you think you would like to serve on the council or any of its committees, please contact one of the state leaders listed here:

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