

# HEARSAY

The Official Newsletter of Hearing Loss Association of PA

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## MESSAGE FROM DIANA

People often ask me, "What does the State Office *do*, anyway"? HLA-PA, the State Office of HLAA, was established in June 2001 to address issues of hard of hearing people on a state level. The office was set up with a volunteer state director, who is appointed by our national office, and an Advisory Council, made up of HLAA volunteers who live throughout the state. The Advisory Council meets periodically in person or by chat session to set the priorities and determine which issues to address. Currently the Council is made up of 11 members. Some of us serve on state advisory boards, such as the ACDHH, the Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, where we provide input for state agencies on the types of services people

with hearing loss need. Council members also work with other disability groups in outreach and advocacy efforts. In addition, HLA-PA is responsible for the PA Walk4Hearing event (next year's date has already been selected, it's September 25, 2010, so mark your calendars!). Starting with this issue, HearSay will include a section summarizing state office activities. We welcome anyone who would like to work with us. For more information on how you could join the Advisory Council, please contact me by email at [Bender@hla-pa.org](mailto:Bender@hla-pa.org) or by phone at 610-731-9387.

*Diana Bender, HLA-PA State Director*  
**[bender@hla-pa.org](mailto:bender@hla-pa.org)**

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## 2009 Walk4Hearing HLA-PA

What a success! We had a huge turn out and exceeded our goals way beyond anyone's expectations! We had beautiful weather and great food! But most of all we all had a fun and fantastic time! Everyone who attended the HLA-PA banquet last month was able to experience the walk all over again with a slide show of the photos taken by K.S.N. Images. You will find some throughout this issue. Thank you all for your hard work in creating such a splendid event. We look forward to seeing all and more of you next year!

### HLAA Annual Convention

**June 17 – 20, 2010 in Milwaukee, WI**

Don't forget to save the date and plan to join us at the 2010 HLAA Annual Convention. There will be lots of information on hearing loss, coping skills and technology, as well as a chance to meet old friends and make new ones.

HLAA is offering a discount for first-time attendees, so if you've never been to a convention, here's your chance.

Veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom are welcome to attend at no charge.

And we will again be awarding scholarships to young adults (either a young adult aged 18 – 35 with hearing loss or the parent of a child with hearing loss) to attend the convention. The research symposium will bring you the latest information on a topic of interest to many: *Hearing Aid Research and Development: What It Means for the Consumer.*

Located on Lake Michigan, Milwaukee offers a multitude of attractions: from the Milwaukee Brewers team to the many museums, mansions, breweries, and gardens, there is something for every age and interest to experience.

For more information go to <http://www.hearingloss.org/convention/index.asp>

### State Office Happenings

*Contributed by Carolyn Meyer*

The fall has been a busy time for those of us representing the state organization, HLA-PA. This column will inform you about some of the events or meetings where members of the Advisory Council and others were asked to represent HLA-PA to voice our input on issues of concern for people with hearing loss. If you see an area of interest and would like to participate, please contact Diana Bender [bender@hla-pa.org](mailto:bender@hla-pa.org).

**September 15:** Marcia Finisdore, Carolyn and Joe Meyer attended a committee meeting to launch "Independence Starts Here". As you know from last September's "Hearsay", HLA-PA is a Community Partner in promoting cultural arts programs to provide access to those with sensory disabilities.

**October 1:** Alan Kutner, Diana Bender, Carolyn and Joe Meyer attended a press conference at the Independence Visitor Center to explain to the media how the new cultural access program would function and how audiences and cultural venues would benefit from the new accessibility features (open captioning, audio description, ASL, tactile accommodations).

**November 10:** Alan Kutner, Carolyn and Joe Meyer attended a follow up meeting to evaluate the new cultural arts program. Several of our members attended a performance at the Arden Theatre for

valuable input on this. We will keep you updated on this in the next issue.

**October 7 and 8:** Nancy Kingsley and Pat Brockley attended focus group meetings in Harrisburg sponsored by the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council (PADDC). The purpose was to assess how well PADDC is serving the various disability populations and what more it could do. See article elsewhere in the newsletter about what was shared with the PADDC to be educated about the needs of hard of hearing people.

**November 18:** Joanne Tumelty, parent of a child with a hearing loss, and Diana Bender, participated in Technology Night at Children's Hospital in Philadelphia. They provided information on resources and how to advocate for your child to parents of children with a hearing loss at the HLA-PA exhibit table.

**November 30:** Marianne Lock, President of the HLA-PA Bucks County Chapter and Executive Secretary of HLA-PA, demonstrated assistive listening and alerting devices to people with visual impairment who also have a hearing loss. The program took place at the Bucks County Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Newtown, PA.

**December 3:** Deaf/Hard of Hearing Resource Fair at the Helicopter Museum in West Chester, PA. Diana Bender, Carolyn and Joe Meyer represented HLA-PA at this family-oriented event to inform interested persons of the resources available to those with hearing loss in this troubled economy and where to turn for help—and support.

### **PADDC FOCUS GROUP GETS BRIEFING ABOUT HARD OF HEARING NEEDS**

Hearing loss is often present as a component of developmental disabilities. Although by definition, such disabilities

occur before age 22, projects to make society more communication accessible for people with developmental disabilities also benefit those with adult-onset hearing impairments. The Developmental Disabilities Act is a federal law that provides funding to increase independence, productivity, and inclusion, and every state has a developmental disabilities council to promote advocacy and system changes.

On October 7, 2009 I attended a focus group meeting in Harrisburg sponsored by the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council (PADDC), and Pat Brockley attended a second one on October 8. The purpose was to assess how well PADDC is serving the various disability populations and what more it could do. The following are the main points I made:

1. Hard of hearing needs are very different from Deaf needs. Because of these differences, a member of one of these groups cannot serve as a spokesperson for the other group.
2. When communication access is described, all the hearing loss accommodations--interpreting, CART, and assistive listening devices/systems--should be listed, because the public is often unaware of anything besides sign language interpreting.
3. Although 1/3 of senior citizens have a hearing loss, assisted living residences generally don't accommodate hearing loss very well and need to be educated in how to do so.
4. There are projects supported by PADDC that could relate to hearing loss needs but don't appear to address them. For example, there is a transportation project dealing with paratransit (special transportation for

*(Continued from page 3)*

people with disabilities), whereas people with hearing loss need LED signs to display the stops on regular transit. To ensure that hearing loss needs are included in future grants, hard of hearing advocates need to be able to provide input when requests for proposals are being developed.

5. PADDCC provided grants to two current projects that affect hearing loss. One is for VSA Arts to enable people with disabilities to attend performances; part of this is for the development of software for theaters to use to caption their shows. The other is for the Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living to produce a guide for civic groups, etc. to enable deaf and hard of hearing people to participate in public life. HLA-PA is asking PADDCC for the opportunity to provide input into the development of this guide.



*Warm up with Rocky.*



*And we're off!!!*

## **Jennifer Warsing Receives 2009 Marcia Finisdore Award for Advocacy**

On November 22, 2009, the 2009 Marcia Finisdore Award for Advocacy was presented to Jennifer Warsing of Huntingdon, PA. The award was presented by Diana Bender, State Director of Hearing Loss Association of Pennsylvania, at the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Eastern PA Hearing Loss Association Banquet in Conshohocken, PA.

The Marcia Finisdore Award for Advocacy was established in 2005 by Hearing Loss Association of Pennsylvania in order to recognize an individual who has a positive vision for the hard of hearing community and a continuing commitment to leadership, together with a demonstrated record of advocacy work for the rights and needs of hard of hearing people in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Ms. Warsing was nominated for the award by Joseph Crownover of Huntingdon, PA and excerpts of his nomination letter are given below:

“Ms. Warsing at the age of nine first emerged as an advocate for those with hearing loss on our local Easter Seals Telethon. As a child, she openly spoke about her deafness and proved that a hearing loss is in no way a disability by performing songs in sign language without being able to hear the music herself. As Ms. Warsing grew up, she continued her advocacy on behalf of those with hearing loss and continued to prove that a hearing loss in no way should affect one’s dreams or goals in life. She became the first deaf student enrolled into the interpreting program at Bloomsburg University. By doing so, Ms. Warsing proved that having a hearing loss does not contain boundaries.

As an adult, Ms. Warsing worked at a local school district with students that had hearing loss or other communication difficulties. Through her example and dedication, Ms Warsing was able to break through barriers that many professionals within their field were

not able to accomplish. She has taught numerous classes on hearing loss, sign language and communication for an entire school district during county-wide in-service days, as well as for her local intermediate unit. She has worked privately with families that have discovered their children have a hearing loss of some degree. She has helped families obtain hearing aids, assistive devices and fight battles with insurance companies. She has taken a disability for herself and turned it into an ability so she may help others.

Recently, Ms Warsing has taken her advocacy even further than her local community. Ms. Warsing is currently fighting for legislation in Pennsylvania on behalf of those with hearing loss and service animals. She has met with numerous State Representatives and Senators, and has traveled to our state capitol in order to propose an amendment to a piece of legislation on behalf of individuals using Guide, Service and Assistance Animals (editor's note: House Bill 123, currently under consideration by the PA House Judiciary Committee).

Ms Warsing is a true advocate on behalf of individuals with hearing loss and is an inspiration to all whose lives she has touched."

The Marcia Finisdore Award provides for a donation to the recipient's choice of charity. Jennifer has designated the Huntingdon County Humane Society as the recipient of the \$100 donation. As Jennifer puts it, this is her way of saying, "Thanks for your unconditional support" in working to pass legislation to protect service animals.



*Balloon twisting, face painting clowns*



*We did It!!!*



**Meet Your HLA-PA Advisory Council**

Back row (left to right) Pat Brockley, Steve Schultz, Nancy Kingsley, Alan Kutner, Debra Cunningham, Russ Green.  
 Seated (left to right) Donna Penman, Diana Bender (State director), Carolyn Meyer  
 Not pictured—Donna Schumacher, Kathy Niemeyer

**Telephone Contacts**

For HLA-PA Activities or Other Information, feel free to call:

- Teresa Nellans, (Western PA) - 412-767-9769
- Barb Beard, (Central PA) - 717-534-0820
- Ronnie Adler, (Eastern PA) - 610-644-3154

## 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: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL : \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to support HearSay. Donations are tax deductible.

**Make donations payable to HLA-PA and mail to:**

I would like to remain anonymous

**Marcia Finisdore  
HLA-PA  
4 State Road, #109  
Media, PA 19063**

I cannot contribute, but would like to receive HearSay.

## 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  
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Bethesda, MD 20814

Phone: (301) 657-2248 (Voice)  
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(310) 913-9413 (FAX)

Email: [info@hearingloss.org](mailto:info@hearingloss.org)  
Website: [www.hearingloss.org](http://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:

### State Director:

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## HLA-PA Donors

*A special thanks to those who help make it possible.*

Henry Fader  
Rebecca Shick  
Carl Amick  
Linda Bennett  
Anonymous