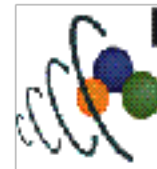


HEAR HERE



Hearing Loss
Association
of Whatcom County

Fall 2008



NUMBER 3 VOLUME 1

Char's Chat

A NEW YEAR WITH A FRESH SLATE

November is a time especially for Thanksgiving – family, friends, and for many of us appreciation for our uniquely successful HLA fellowship. Looking back at our year as Whatcom Hearing Loss Association President, I feel a real sense of pride and gratitude for all that we have done together. At the same time I am excited about our potential for 2009.

Just wait 'til you see our awesome 2009 program calendar – a response to your helpful suggestions! Next year our ability to "hear" and be fully involved will be the best yet – we shall benefit from real-time captioning each meeting. Your contributions and encouragement have spurred us on to find hearing assistance of the very best kind. We are soliciting member donations plus the support of local sponsors to help us meet our cost...which we estimate at \$120/month.

Joining us full time in 2009 is Joel Bergsbaken from the Hearing, Speech and Deafness Center here in Bellingham. He will support our leaders and all of us as an ex-officio member of our executive committee. Joel brings experience, ideas, resources, energy, and commitment to our efforts.

Let me personally thank our 2008 leaders: Kathy Mason (VP and Newsletter Editor), Joyce Mosely-Sweeney (Secretary-Treasurer), Bert Lederer (Past President) and to the many who gave us monthly support: Rita Pilkey (Refreshment Coordinator), BJ Sherwood (Hospitality/Newcomer Packets), Ruth Miller and Jean Richardson (Sunshine cards), Corky Pytel (e-mail Program Reminder), and Dorothy Morrow, Nat Vogt, Ruth Miller, and Mike Sweeney (phone team for program reminders) and Charlie Pilkey (Room Clean-up Coordinator). And that doesn't include all of you who pitched in with dish towels (!), refreshment donations, words of encouragement, HLA flyer distribution, and recruitment of new members. (Cont. page 2)

Autumn Leaves

What a spectacular fall we're having! The colors have never been more vibrant or, on clear days, the sky more piercingly blue.

This is the time of year most of us start looking back over the ups and downs of the past year. At HLA Whatcom, we see only ups.

In January and February Melanie Springer, M.A. Positive Psychology Counselor, spoke to us about getting past our problems with hearing loss and growing our own happiness.

March brought us Pam Spencer, M.A. Audiologist, with information on tinnitus and it's relationship to hearing loss. We took up so much time with questions, that she had to come back in October to finish her presentation.

In April Jerry and Joanna Olmstead, and Kendall and Donna Sherman came up from our Skagit HLA chapter. They shared their experiences as couples dealing with the hearing loss of one partner. Their humor and dedication to each other inspired us all. (Cont. page 3)

FUN PAGE!

Char's Chat

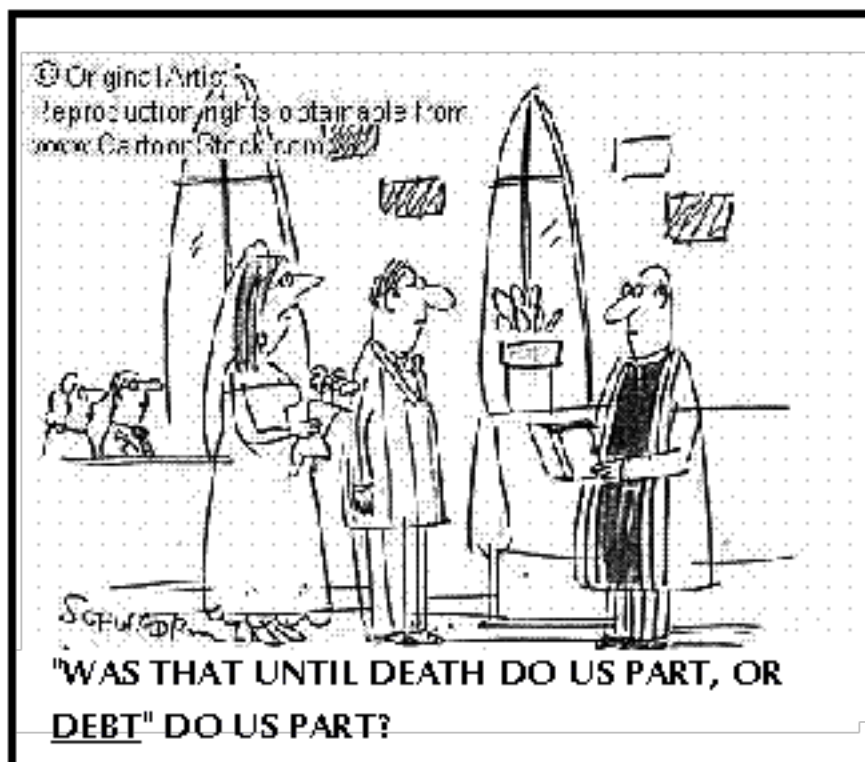
Let us welcome Joyce Sweeney as our 2009 president! We all can do that by volunteering to do the many helpful tasks that make us such a great group of friends with unbeatable spirit. Look at the 2008 thank you's I've just mentioned.

Who will give these folks a breather? Where can you help? I'll be calling on each of YOU for your support. As I continue to invest my energies heavily in our group I'll be the latest and newest member of our chapter's executive committee; and, I will still need your help. Make it easy for me and volunteer! (738-3756). Mostly all of our tasks don't call for special skills; rather, they call for a caring, friendly, and team spirit. In addition, I will truly enjoy your company on the HLA team!

As President I am exceedingly grateful to all of you; your presence has enriched our chapter and our personal lives. Together I know we can make 2009 our best year yet! I invite you now to show your continued interest and commitment by filling our vacant chapter jobs and turning in your 2009 membership dues in the next few weeks.

Here's to 2009!

Charlene MacKenzie



HUH?

I'm still looking for humorous hearing anecdotes, jokes or cartoons for this column. Got a good story? Let me know!

--Kathy

CHUCKLES

If a deaf person signs swear words, does his mother wash his hands with soap?

--Contributed by Dorothy Morrow

Not having a sense of humor is no laughing matter.

--Kathy Mason

NEXT UP

December, 20

Annual Christmas Potluck and Caroling. Join us for a celebration of this year's accomplishments, good food, and caroling with the ASAP Choir. Bring your favorite potluck dish to share: salad, veggies, potatoes, bread, dessert, chips/dips, relishes, fruit or whatever else you wish. Bert and Claydene Lederer will be providing their famous Hawaiian Kalua Pork.

Meetings are the 3rd Saturday of the month at 9:30 AM, Christ the Servant Lutheran Church, 2600 Lakeway Drive, Bellingham.

Dollar\$ & Cense

Our treasurer, Joyce Sweeney, reports that our current bank balance is

Operating Budget - \$538.62

Closed Captioning Fund - \$365.00

Total Balance - \$913.62

Thanks for your continued support!

Our May program, *Preventing Falls: How Hearing Loss Affects Balance and Equilibrium* was presented by Sylvie deRham-Tortorelli, Physical Therapist at the St. Joseph Hospital Rehabilitation Center. This information was very useful to those of us experiencing these problems or anticipating them as a possibility in the future.

In June, Joel Bergsbaken of the Hearing Speech and Deafness Center and Kathy Mason, VP of our Whatcom HLA chapter presented a program on captioning and how to make the most of it. Joel brought along a captioner and the response was so positive that we were inspired to obtain funding for captioning of all our future programs.

As always, our July Potluck was great fun and wonderful food. Special thanks to Bert & Claydene for their traditional Kalua Pig!

Earwax! That was the subject of our August program. Not a glamorous subject but we had a good turn-out for it and lots of participation. It seems the subject matter was of interest to quite a few people. Presented by Kathy Mason, our V.P.

For our September program, Richard Vanderway, of the Whatcom County Museum, and Sue Hodges, City of Bellingham ADA Coordinator, brought us up to date on hearing accessibility in Bellingham. We gave them a few suggestions of areas that need improvement.

Besides looking back over the past year, our chapter leadership has been looking forward. This month, November, Dean Olson of the Washington State Hearing Loss Association Board, will be talking with us about things we can do to make our holidays and travel go more smoothly. Dean has presented programs to us before and is back by popular demand.

December, of course, is our annual holiday potluck and caroling with Christ the Servant Lutheran Church A.S.A.P. choir, something we always enjoy.

Next year's programs are in the works and promise to be every bit as informative and entertaining as in the past.

Hearing Loss and Hearing Help: A Quick Guide for Consumers

by Richard Carmen, Au.D.

An estimated 28 million Americans experience hearing loss; worldwide, the disability afflicts 250 million people. Untreated hearing loss has been shown to lead to physical, social, emotional, and psychological problems significant enough to interfere with personal well-being, contentment in marriage, employment effectiveness, adaptability to new tasks, and overall enjoyment of life.

The High Cost of Not Treating Hearing Loss

The National Council on the Aging (NCOA) conducted a study, commissioned by the Hearing Industries Association, of more than 2000 hard-of-hearing adults and about 1700 of their family members. In its report, NCOA concluded that untreated hearing loss was associated with increased anger, frustration, paranoia, insecurity, instability, nervousness, tension, anxiety, irritability, discontentment, depression, and fear. The study also found that, in comparison with people who have sought help for their hearing loss, those with untreated loss were more likely to be self-critical, feel a sense of inferiority, suffer from social phobias, and be perceived by others as confused, disoriented, or unable to concentrate.

The physical implications of untreated hearing loss result from a phenomenon known as auditory deprivation. When a person has a hearing loss and goes only half-way--electing to use one hearing aid when two are recommended--the portion of the person's brain that processes sound receives less stimulation on the unaided side, i.e., is auditorily deprived, than it would if the person wore two hearing aids. This reduced stimulation of the auditory portion of the brain can accelerate decline in speech recognition in the unaided ear. Researchers

(Cont. page 4)

discovered auditory deprivation by studying a substantial number of subjects who had at least a moderate degree of hearing loss in both ears. In some cases, this diminished speech recognition was reversed when the person began wearing the second hearing aid.

The social implications of untreated hearing loss are numerous and often profound. These include more stressful marriages and damage to other important relationships; impaired job performance; misperceptions by others who mistake the effects of hearing loss for mental deterioration, confusion, aloofness, etc.; and social isolation when hearing loss makes normal conversation difficult or impossible.

Be an Educated Consumer

Consumer education is an integral component of adjusting successfully to hearing aids and overcoming hearing loss. You can find a great amount of information on the topic in books and magazines and on the Internet. Some hearing healthcare practitioners even offer classes where you and your family are welcome to discuss personal issues with other clients and their families.

However you educate yourself, it is essential that your expectations not exceed what hearing aids can provide. You need to understand that hearing aids do not restore lost hearing. And, while today's advanced amplification can provide valuable help, no matter what hearing aids you wear, you will not hear the way you did when you were 18 years old and had normal hearing.

A few days ago I walked along the edge of the lake and was treated to the crunch and rustle of leaves with each step I made. The acoustics of this season are different and all sounds, no matter how hushed, are as crisp as autumn air.

- Eric Sloane



you did when you were 18 years old and had normal hearing. Unrealistic expectations are the number one cause of dissatisfaction with and rejection of hearing aids. Here are some things to keep in mind: While hearing aids may improve your ability to hear in noise, they cannot eliminate background noise.

- No matter what hearing aids you wear, you will not hear and understand everything. Not even people with "normal" hearing can do that!
- You should not purchase hearing aids based on the good experience of a friend, because what works well for one person may not for another. By the same token, because one person had a bad experience with hearing aids doesn't mean you will.
- Very few primary-care physicians refer their patients for hearing tests, so don't expect your family doctor to be much help if you feel you have a hearing loss. If you are told "just live with it," this is well-meant but misguided advice. You need to seek help from a professional trained to diagnose and treat hearing loss.
- If you do get hearing aids, use them in as many environments as possible. That will help you understand their limitations as well as their benefits. Discuss these limitations with your hearing care professional.
- Generally, instruments with more sophisticated technology such as analog programmable or digital circuitry will perform better in noise. But discuss your listening needs with your practitioner so you can be fitted with the technology most appropriate for you.
- There is such a wide range of products now that almost any technology is available in an affordable price. For example, even 100% digital hearing aids come in low, middle, and high-range price categories.

Study Examines Prevalence of Hearing Loss in the U.S.

2008-08-31 14:00:00

Chicago Hearing loss may be more prevalent in American adults than previously reported, according to a study in the July 28 issue of *Archives of Internal Medicine*, one of the *JAMA/Archives* journals.

Hearing impairment is known to be highly common and is considered to be a societal problem. Although national estimates of hearing loss are lacking, the incidence of this condition in the U.S. is predicted to have risen significantly because of the aging population and growing use of personal listening devices.

Yuri Agrawal, M.D., of Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, and colleagues evaluated data from a large national survey, including hearing tests, administered to 5,742 Americans age 20 to 69 from 1999 to 2004. Researchers assessed hearing loss of 25 decibels or higher at speech frequencies and at high frequencies. Demographic characteristics and known risk factors for hearing loss (smoking, noise exposure and cardiovascular risks) were also noted. From 2003 to 2004, 16.1 percent (an estimated 29 million) of American adults had speech frequency hearing loss in one or both ears. Thirty-one percent of participants (equivalent to an estimated 55 million Americans) had high-frequency hearing loss, the authors write. Hearing loss, especially at high frequency, was found in participants age 20 to 29 (8.5 percent prevalence) and in those age 30 to 39 (17 percent prevalence). Men were 5.5 times more likely than women to have hearing loss. Black participants were 70 percent less likely to have loss of hearing than white participants with white and Mexican American men having the highest occurrence of high-frequency hearing loss and hearing loss in both ears. Increases in hearing loss prevalence occurred earlier among participants with smoking, noise exposure and cardiovascular risks, the authors write.

The results of our study suggest that prevention (through risk factor reduction) and screening must begin at least in young adulthood and that efforts should be intensified among white and Mexican American men, the authors conclude. Hearing loss reduces health-related quality of life and access to health care. Reducing the incidence of hearing loss through prevention and management programs may produce public health benefits, they note.

MAIL-ORDER HEARING AIDS FOUND LACKING

A Michigan State University study suggests that when it comes to low-price, over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids, consumers are likely to get what they pay for. In an article published in the June 2008 issue of the *American Journal of Audiology*, Susanna Love Callaway, an international student from Denmark, and Jerry Punch, PhD, her professor in the MSU Department of Communicative Sciences and Disorders, reported that the eight devices priced at below \$100 were "electro-acoustically inadequate to meet the needs of the hearing impaired." They also found that these products "had high equivalent input noise levels and potentially posed a residual hearing safety hazard."

The study, which was funded by the Oticon Foundation, was designed to determine if 11 hearing devices had the flexibility to provide adequate gain and output for three common hearing loss configurations. The article found that the three more expensive (\$100-\$500) devices examined "met gain and output targets to a greater extent than did low-range devices." The authors said that the mid-range OTC hearing devices "are arguably a good solution for the cost-conscious consumer who cannot afford professional audiologic rehabilitation, especially if considered an interim step in the rehabilitation process." The authors advised that hearing-impaired persons should use great caution when purchasing OTC hearing aids. -Oct. 2008 • Vol. 61 • No. 10 The Hearing Journal Online Information for Consumers. Reprinted with the permission of The Hearing Journal and its publisher, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins