

Fall 2010



## JOYCE'S VOICE

September marks the beginning of a new year of teaching for me. I look forward to getting to know my new second graders with their boundless energy and enthusiasm for learning. As I think about teaching, I am so thankful for my programmable hearing aids with directional microphones, pocket talker and telephone amplification system. Without them I couldn't do my job very well, and I would be an ineffective teacher who would have to retire early. I wouldn't be able to hear adequately or respond effectively to my young charges, their parents or my peers. Instead of enjoying teaching, I would dread facing my job each day. I shudder to think of what life would be like without my helpful assistive listening devices.

Without assistive listening devices, I wouldn't be able to hear all the beginning words and babbling of my nine month old grandson. There are hundreds of important things I would miss hearing. I would be lost in a world of muffled voices and muted sounds.

We are lucky that there are such technologically advanced devices available to help us hear better so that we can participate in and enjoy those things that we love and be part of the hearing world. Our assistive listening devices keep us connected to the world around us.

I hope all of you HOH (Hard of Hearing) folks have assistive listening devices that work for you and make it easier to pursue the things you love or want to be a part of. If not, there are people in our HLA chapter who can help you get what you need, steer you in the right direction or at the least empathize with your frustration.

I am thankful for all who shared their talents, pastimes and hobbies at our August meeting. We saw Tom's amazing soapstone carving, Doris' delightful birdhouses and light bulb ornaments, and Glenn's lovely artwork. We heard Char's funny baseball story, and Joan's moving piano playing. After playing the beautiful first movement of Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata," Joan Baker said that without her assistive listening devices she likely wouldn't

be able to play the piano. Her music is such a gift, and the world would miss out if she couldn't play. These things feed and sooth their souls and makes them contributing and talented members of our society. We all enjoyed their admirable talents. Without your hearing devices, are there talents or gifts that you couldn't share with others? Being HOH shouldn't stop us from enjoying pursuits that make us happy. So get out there and enjoy!

## HLA Schedule

**October 16,** "How to Make the Most of Life with Hearing Loss in Our Family"

**Bert & Clay Lederer, Melanie, Matthew, Mark, and Luke Springer**

**November 13** "Do You Hear What I See?"

**Michael Bower, Trustee, Hearing Loss Association of Washington**

**December 18** Christmas Party and Potluck

## CI Group Schedule

**July 17th 11:30 AM-2:00 PM**

**Summer Pot Luck Luncheon with HLA Whatcom County**

**September 25th 9:30 AM-Noon**

**Phone with Confidence,**

**Sound and Way Beyond, Troubleshooting**

**Linda Day, Cochlear Awareness Network Manager**

**Pacific Northwest Territory**

**Cochlear Americas Corporation**

**October 23rd 9:30 AM-Noon**

**Med-El's Bridge to Better Communications**

## HELPING HANDS FOR HLA

When it comes to success, it's not what you **can't** do but what you **can** that makes the difference. We want to see what you **can** do to ensure the continued success of our HLA Whatcom chapter.

Our plans for 2011 are well under way and we are planning NOW for another wonderful year which will exceed our expectations once again. In order for those plans to become a reality they have to be supported and acted on by our wonderful volunteers. Quite a few will continue doing what they do now; others leave vacancies.

Charlene and Bert, who've been tirelessly behind and with us for nearly 7 years, will both be celebrating their 75th birthdays as 2010 draws to a close. Both have two major desires:

- 1.) to pursue personal projects/desires that have been on hold all too long (years even!)
- 2.) to begin to grow old a little more gracefully -- beyond just "wearing out!" :-)

Char is starting her long-delayed book-writing project in 2011, one that captures how we can manage our hearing loss before it manages us. It's a result of the wonders of our chapter!

Bert needs to devote more effort to his responsibilities as President of the Washington State Communications Access Project (Wash-CAP) and coordinating the Cochlear Implant Support Group which our chapter sponsors. He also needs to spend some leisure time with Claydene, daughter Melanie and his three grandsons.

After serving as an officer for three years, Joyce will be transitioning from president to vice-president and will continue to help out and serve. She also needs a break because of a very heavy work load and other community volunteer obligations.

Mike and Robert will also be stepping down from their positions as vice president and treasurer. Someone will have to fill their shoes. Could this be you?

Over the past few months, we have been dissecting all the jobs than need to be done; breaking them down to smaller components. That means we can offer you a menu of ways to volunteer depending on your time and abilities.

To assure another year's abundance of personal benefits we need each and every one to help out in some way. Don't let job titles or even job descriptions scare you away! What you volunteer to do is both negotiable and flexible. No matter how big or how small, every gracious act contributes to an experience in which the whole is

greater than the sum of its parts and the personal rewards can be so great for so little effort.

Not just 2011 is at stake; perpetuation of our Whatcom HLA in the years to come requires volunteers rolling up their sleeves and pitching in. Your caring is important; your helping out will show that even more. Experience is not that necessary, whatever you do will be with the help and teamwork of our friends.

In 2011 our chapter can use you in so many ways when you say, "Here I am; where can I join our team of volunteers." Please do that! Let's find a place, a time, a task, where you will comfortably fit!

Let Charlene know today: 739-3756 or  
[charmackenzie@comcast.net](mailto:charmackenzie@comcast.net)

### HELP WANTED – 2011!

Listed below are some volunteer positions that must be filled.

President. \_\_\_\_\_

Program Team (three people) \_\_\_\_\_

Treasurer \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Drive Team \_\_\_\_\_

Publicity (Herald newspaper online, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Reminder Team (four phoning people) \_\_\_\_\_

Fund Raising team (three people) \_\_\_\_\_

Captioner scheduler and reminder \_\_\_\_\_

Copying, addressing, mailing helpers (three) \_\_\_\_\_

Kitchen Team (two head up cleanup) \_\_\_\_\_

Potluck Team \_\_\_\_\_

Potluck program (if any) \_\_\_\_\_

Potluck reservation taker (e-mail & phone) \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting room set-up/take down team \_\_\_\_\_

### **FILLED POSITIONS**

Vice president: Joyce Moseley-Sweeney

Secretary Nat Vogt

Resource Table, Kitchen supplies

Mentors/coaches: Bert, Charlene, and Joyce

Administrative Assistance: Kathy Mason

Brochure or rack cards, Newsletter, Membership records,  
Special assignments

Meeting Agenda preparer and copy maker: Nat Vogt

Refreshments: Barbara Oliver

Hospitality team: Joan Boschman, Janet

Gilda, Doris Canup

Sunshine cards: Murella DeVries

Member Directory: Wayne Godard

E-mail Meeting Reminder Corky Pytel

## **A Teachable Moment for Two Agencies**

JOHN WALDO, Civil rights advocate and counsel for Wash-CAP  
(Washington Communication Access Project)

An unfortunate incident last fall has turned into a teachable moment about hearing loss for two state agencies in Washington.

Last fall, a Tacoma police officer stopped a man driving down a busy city street with expired license tabs. Because the driver was not responding to the officer's questions and instructions, the officer realized - quite correctly - that the driver had a significant hearing loss.

After writing a ticket for the license violation, the officer then made a written request to the state Department of Licensing, asking that the driver be re-tested to determine his fitness to hold a license. The stated reason - in the officer's opinion, the inability to hear would make the man a dangerous driver, unable to hear sirens, warnings from passengers, etc. DOL complied, and required the man to pass a physical and to re-take his driving test.

The man found an advocate in Christine Seymour at the Tacoma Hearing, Speech and Deafness Center. Ms. Seymour was well aware that there is no requirement for any specific level of hearing to get a drivers' license. As the manual published by the Washington DOL specifically states, deaf drivers have just as good driver-safety records as hearing drivers, probably because we find ways to compensate for our lack of hearing, such as being much more aware of traffic behind us.

Through Ms. Seymour's persuasive advocacy, the Tacoma Police Department admitted that the officer erred in basing a re-test request on a drivers' hearing loss, and pledged that it would use this situation as a learning tool. The DOL was another story. It took the position that it cannot question the contents of a request from a police officer, and therefore, it had to require the re-examination. At that point, Ms. Seymour asked me to help.

I did two things. First, I filed a claim with the state for the money the driver had spent on the medical examination and the wages lost because of the time required. Second, I wrote a rather firm letter to the Department of Licensing. I said that while DOL may be required to believe every word a police officer says or writes, that wasn't the issue. The issue, we pointed out, was that even if the facts stated by the officer were all true, the DOL still had to determine whether those facts constituted adequate grounds to require a re-examination, but either did not make such a determination, or made a determination at variance with its own statements about driver safety and hearing loss.

Shortly thereafter, we got a letter from the DOL acknowledging that it had been wrong to accept a request for re-test based solely on an allegation that a driver cannot hear well. Hearing loss alone, as the DOL ultimately recognized, does not make a driver unsafe. Once DOL admitted error, the state promptly paid the claim for compensation.

Any interaction between law enforcement and a person with a hearing loss can be difficult and sometimes down-right dangerous - our inability to hear and therefore comply with an officer's commands or questions can be interpreted as hostility and resistance. Fortunately, though, this interaction ultimately had a happy ending, and will, we hope, bring about some lasting changes in at least one police department and one agency.

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### **WHY I DO IT**

Kathy Mason

Several years ago, I was working for a hearing instrument specialist when I found I had a significant hearing loss and got my first hearing aids. Around that time I learned about a new group that was forming in Whatcom County for those with hearing loss. It was called Self Help for the Hard of Hearing (SHH). Since I wanted to be well-informed about local resources that might be of help to our patients, I attended the first meeting and have been a member ever since. That group is now called the Whatcom County chapter of the Hearing Loss Association of America.

Attending the monthly meetings, I found that not only was I learning more about hearing loss, but I also had things to offer the group. I became more involved, serving one year as treasurer and one as vice president. Over the years I've given my time, talents, and energy to doing the things that would contribute to the continued success of HLA.

I produce the newsletter, design printed materials, do research, and maintain a record of attendees, members and supporters. I planned and conducted a silent auction and taken the first steps to presenting a seminar on hearing loss to the medical professionals in our community.

Why do I do it? Because I believe in the valuable service HLA provides to our community. Selfishly, it makes me feel good and boosts my self-esteem to know that I can help improve the quality of life for others live with hearing loss. If you have an empty spot in your life, no matter how small, I encourage you to join me in volunteering to help keep HLA strong and healthy and getting some of that good feeling for yourself. It takes a lot of work when only a few step up, but the load can be greatly lightened when spread around into smaller pieces and everyone has a piece of the action. 3

## **New Cochlear Implant Could Improve Outcomes for Patients**

Augusta, GA. – More electrodes and a thinner, more flexible wire inserted further into the inner ear could improve conventional cochlear implants, a team of Medical College of Georgia and Georgia Institute of Technology researchers say.

The snail-shaped cochlea is difficult to access, particularly considering the multiple components involved in a cochlear implant, said Dr. Brian McKinnon, assistant professor of neurotology/otology in the Department of Otolaryngology in the MCG School of Medicine. Those components include of an external microphone, speech processor and transmitter and an internal group of electrodes arranged on a thin wire that stimulate the auditory nerve.

"The wire in traditional implants is fragile and thin and may buckle," he said. "We try to get it as far into the center of the cochlea, where the nerves are bundled, as possible – the idea being that the more electrodes on the nerves, the better the sound."

Because they buckle, physicians typically can't optimally insert the wire, and electrodes can, in some cases, injure the cochlea, he said.

The new device, called the thin film array, pairs 12 electrodes on a thinner, more flexible wire. The wire's thinness has, so far, allowed surgeons to place more electrodes into the cochlea than they could with a conventional electrode. With more electrodes than standard models, the implant improves the quality of sound.

The array was developed in the Biosystems Interface Laboratory at the Georgia Institute of Technology by Assistant Professor Pamela Bhatti, a biomedical engineer, and Georgia Tech student Jessica Falcone. McKinnon and Dr. Kenneth Iverson, a third-year otolaryngology resident, tested it on cadaver models

"This device could mean could mean a several-fold improvement of the sound's resolution," Iverson said. "For the patient, it would be like the difference between hearing a Bach concerto played by a music box versus a quartet."

McKinnon compared the improvement to adding more fingers and more notes to a piano performance.

There are other benefits too.

"Because the thinner wire means less trauma to the ear, it could also mean more preservation of residual hearing for patients," Iverson said.

## **GO NAT!**

On September 24-26 Nat Vogt will be participating in the Susan Komen Breast Cancer Foundation 60 mile Cancer walk. Together with her daughter Leslie and granddaughter Cassie, "Team Nat" has raised \$9350.00 that will go toward helping find a cure for breast cancer. "I want to thank everyone that has helped support me and our team. I will do my best on the walk and will give a report at the October meeting. Wish me luck!"



**GOOD LUCK & BRAVO!**

## **Diabetes and Hearing Loss**

*William Luxford, MD, Otolaryngologist  
House Ear Clinic, Los Angeles CA*

Patients with diabetes are more than twice as likely as those without the disease to have hearing loss, according to a recent National Institutes of Health (NIH) study. Overall, more than 40 percent of people with diabetes in the study had some degree of hearing loss.

People with diabetes should ask their doctors to check their hearing. This should be routine. A hearing check can be invaluable in identifying diabetic patients with potential hearing loss giving them an opportunity to receive the treatment they need. To facilitate hearing checks, the Better Hearing Institute has designed a Quick Hearing Check to help people quickly assess if they have a hearing loss requiring a comprehensive hearing test by a hearing professional. The quick check is available online at [www.hearingcheck.org](http://www.hearingcheck.org).

The study, published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, was conducted by researchers who analyzed data from hearing tests, administered from 1999 to 2004, to 5,140 participants in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES). Its findings prompted investigators from the NIH to recommend that physicians encourage their patients with diabetes to have their hearing checked.

For years, physicians who treat people with diabetes have regularly ensured that their patients receive regular vision check-ups. This important study underscores the need for physicians now to encourage each of their patients to get their hearing checked as well. Both vision loss and hearing loss are associated with diabetes.

## FCC Takes Strong Action to Ensure Access to Mobile Phones

On August 4, 2010, the Federal Communications Commission announced they "took important steps to ensure that the latest wireless phones are hearing aid-compatible, expanding access to mobile networks and services for the 8 million Americans who use hearing aids."

A Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking seeks comments on extending the hearing aid compatibility rules to customer equipment over any type of network and offering consumers in-store testing of hearing aid compatible phones in sites beyond retail stores.

In his statement at the Commission meeting, Chairman Julius Genachowski noted, "We adopt today an unprecedented agency Statement of Policy that emphasizes to developers of new technologies the necessity of considering and planning for hearing aid compatibility at the earliest stages of the product design process. For too many years, Americans who have hearing loss have faced the uphill battle of attempting to obtain hearing aid compatibility long after essential communications devices completed their development cycle and went on the market. By turning the collective focus to the development stage, innovators and entrepreneurs can account for compatibility issues before devices are produced. This is an important change, which will result in real benefits to Americans with hearing loss."

Commissioner Michael Copps added, "Our decision will ensure that the hearing loss community has far greater access to the newest and most popular smartphones. And, I am particularly pleased that the outcome we reach today was shaped in no small measure by the input and contributions of the Hearing Loss Association of America and others from the hearing loss community. If I have learned one thing from my years of fighting for greater inclusion for persons with disabilities, it is that accessibility must be addressed at the earliest stages of both product design and agency rule-making. It is far more efficient and cost-effective to have these communities present at the creation of new products and services and new government regulations than it is to retrofit after it's discovered that something wasn't properly designed or considered."

HLAA is pleased to have been part of the process that we anticipate will result in consumer access to more mobile

phone handsets that are hearing aid compatible. We applaud the Commission for their work on these issues. We are also encouraged by the efforts of the wireless industry in their commitment to working with the community of people with hearing loss, and in their creative solutions that show their commitment to producing products that are hearing aid compatible while at the same time fostering the kind of innovation that we all want to see. We look forward to continuing our ongoing work with the wireless industry to ensure that consumers have the greatest access possible to hearing aid compatible mobile phones.

## HLAA ANNOUNCES NEW BOARD OF TRUSTEES PRESIDENT

Bethesda, MD: Peter C. Fackler of Rochester, New York, has been named president of the Board of Trustees of the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA).

Prior to his retirement, Mr. Fackler's career spanned 30 years in higher education. He is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA), has a bachelor's degree in economics from Duke University and a master's degree in business administration from the University of Michigan's Graduate School of Business. Fackler brings to the HLAA Board of Trustees experience and expertise in finance, strategic planning, and marketing and development.

Mr. Fackler has been a member of the Rochester HLAA Chapter since 2004 and is a bi-lateral cochlear implant recipient. He has served on Rochester HLAA Board of Trustees in various roles, including the finance and technology committees as well as the theater committee which successfully brought captioned live theater to Rochester. He has also served as chair of the finance committee for the HLAA New York State Association, and as chair of three Walk4Hearing events. Mr. Fackler has served on the HLAA National Board since 2006 and as treasurer from 2007 to 2010. Following the election Fackler stated, "I am humbled to be asked to serve and honored to have the opportunity. I will do my absolute best to serve you and HLAA well."

In addition to his extensive work with HLAA National and the Rochester Chapter, Mr. Fackler is a founding member of the finance (investment) committee of the Maine Health Access Foundation.

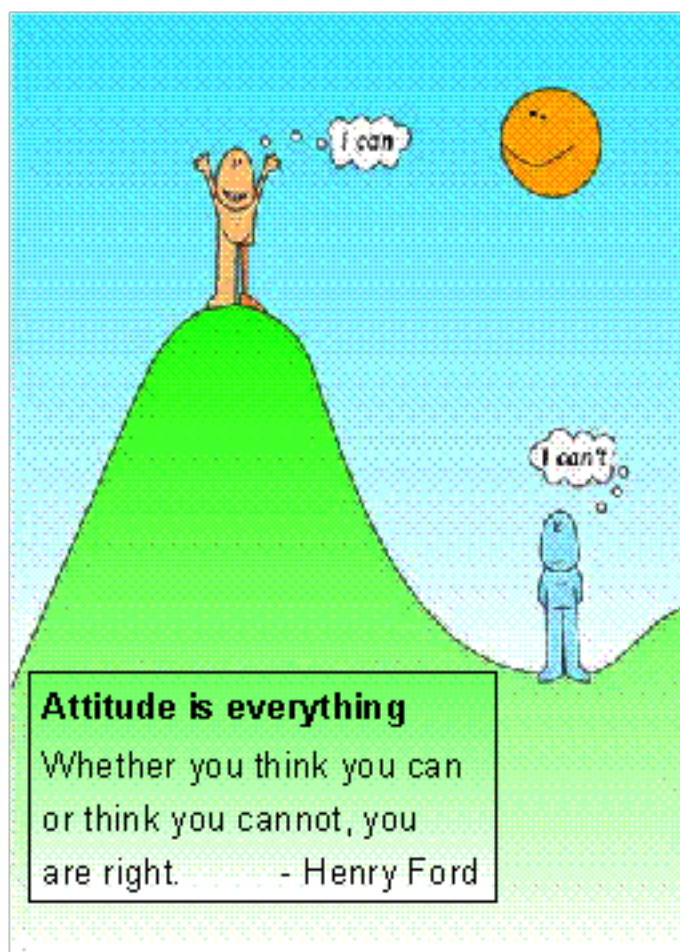
# USABLE NEWS!

## Through the Grapevine

Charlene reports that Joel Bergsbaken met with the Pickford Theater staff and they are VERY excited about being as inclusive as possible. In their current theater they have an infrared transmitter with receivers with headphones and neckloops. They can easily expand this for the new space which will have two theaters.

They are also very interested in laying the framework for an induction loop system so that receivers will not be necessary for those who have telecoil equipped hearing aids. They felt this would provide the best listening experience for the community which is their goal.

Joel also learned that many of the documentaries they show are digital format so they would be happy to schedule Open Captioned showings of those films. The many foreign films they show are subtitled so that's easy. There are other films that come in celluloid film format which would require them to rent a second copy with open captions. This would double their costs so it will take some discussion. Joel suggested that perhaps there are any film distributors that can send a digital transcript of the film. If so, it could be streamed to portable devices (iPod, iPhone, Blackberry, Android) through a wireless router. It would be easy to provide that service if it was available.



## How NOT to Startle a Hard of Hearing Person

<http://www.lifewithahearingloss.com/>

Approaching a hard of hearing person from behind without startling them can be a tricky

task! I thought I would share a few helpful tips I have on how NOT to startle a hard of hearing person:

1. If you need to approach from behind, try to walk a little heavier than you normally do without actually stomping. Many hard of hearing people are very sensitive to vibrations and movement.

2. Depending on the hard of hearing person's degree of hearing loss, it may help to make a bit of noise as you approach. Try clearing your throat, tapping your toes, or rustling papers.

3. If at all possible, try to approach from the side so they can catch your movement in the corner of their eye. Waving or gesturing to get their attention is perfectly acceptable.

4. Don't touch hard of hearing people or speak to them until you're certain they have seen you and are aware of your presence.

5. One of the most effective ways to get the attention of someone who is hearing impaired without startling them is to flip the light switch on and off.

Charlene adds: Asking a HOH person what he/she prefers in such a situation is a very good plan!

Hard of hearing people will certainly appreciate the efforts you make to get their attention so they won't be startled when you approach.

*Editor's note: This is a delightful website with real life stories from people who's lives are affected by hearing loss.*

## **Hearing Aid Battery Discount!**

*I had to make an emergency stop for batteries the other day and went to the nearest store to get them. I headed for the pharmacy section, located the batteries and noticed that the store brand was quite a bit cheaper than the national brand they carried. I grabbed a package and headed for the check-out. The checker asked if I had a store discount card; since I didn't, she told me that if I got one I would get a discount on the purchase of any products with the store's brand. So I quickly filled out a simple form, got my card and discount and now have a resource for saving on my hearing aid batteries. The store? Rite-Aid!*