

HEARSAY

Volume 2, No. 4 December 2003

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF ...



SHHH opens the world of communication to people with hearing loss.

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Keep up-to-date. www.pa-shhh.org

A Message from Diana

Although the vast majority of hard of hearing people can benefit from wearing hearing aids, only about 20% have actually purchased them. Included in these purchases are the many hearing aids that wind up in the drawer rather than in people's ears.

At my most recent SHHH chapter meeting, an experienced hearing aid provider discussed possible reasons to explain this puzzling fact. Some of these were: the unavailability of effective training programs to teach people how to best use their hearing aids, unrealistic expectations on the part of hard of hearing people of the benefits hearing aids provide, inappropriate design of the aids and embarrassment associated with wearing a hearing aid.

However, in the final analysis, most chapter members felt the high cost of hearing aids together with the lack of health insurance coverage was the primary reason for more hard of hearing people not wearing hearing aids.

This seems plausible, except that in other countries of the world where hearing aid costs are significantly lower, the percentage of hearing aid users increases only slightly.

(Continued on page 3)



c/o Marcia Finisdore, State Co-Director
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Look for this International Symbol of Access for Persons with Hearing Loss

Coping with Hearing Loss in a Religious Setting

by *Wayne Benson*

Much religious worship is oral. This presents a problem for those of us who are hard of hearing. In a Protestant worship service, for instance, a major component of the service is the sermon. I have been in more than one church where I simply could not follow what was said. (Sometimes you can't understand the minister, even when you can hear him, but that's another story!)

Prayers are even more difficult to catch, for usually they are offered with a bowed head, which makes lip-reading more than a tad bothersome. Many churches use sound systems, but the sound systems don't always "interface" too well with our hearing aids.

Technology Can Help

The good news is that there are solutions to these problems. Although the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) exempts religious groups, enlightened and concerned congregations can provide help for their hard of hearing people.

One way they can do this is to provide Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs). Several vendors have systems that literally plug into an existing sound system. A transmitter then broadcasts the signal to hard of hearing people equipped with individual receivers. These receivers have a jack to plug in a neckloop, silhouette, direct audio input (DAI) patch-cord or earbuds so that the worshipper can hear. Churches normally only supply earbuds or headphones. If you want to use a neckloop, silhouette or DAI patch-cord, you generally need to bring your own. Several vendors such as Williams Sound and Listen sell such devices.

Another option is to loop the worship area with an inductive loop. I first ran into a loop system in a church while in England a few years ago. I asked an usher if they had assistive listening devices. His reply was, "Do you have a telecoil?" When I

answered, "Yes," he simply said; "Turn it on." Most British churches now have loop systems in place, so as long as you have telecoils in your hearing aids, you will be able to hear. I have yet to find a church in the USA with a loop in place, but there are a few.

Another way of coping in a religious setting is to have your own Personal FM Listening System consisting of an FM transmitter and receiver. I have used my Williams sound system a number of times—either by plugging it into the church's sound system (may take an adapter), or by having my transmitter and microphone temporarily "installed" in the pulpit. Unfortunately, that doesn't help when the worship leader is elsewhere in the chancel area. In one church I found a loudspeaker in the area behind the chancel. I put my transmitter nearby with the microphone taped to the speaker. It was great!

Still another method is for the church to provide real-time captioning (CART). This can be expensive, but it can benefit all hard of hearing people whether they have hearing aids or not. In one large church, they set the screen up in one of the transepts (side seating area) so hard of hearing people could make use of it.

Are there still problems? Oh, yes! One of my pet peeves are people who do not

know how to use a microphone properly. They forget that they need to speak directly into the microphone. They seem to think that the microphone will pick up anything they say, no matter how far they are from it! Only in spy movies are microphones that sensitive!

Another problem is when churches get headsets for their ALDs that are basically incompatible with hearing aids. An easy solution is for them to enlist the help of knowledgeable hard of hearing people before they purchase an assistive system in the first place.

Surprisingly, many hard of hearing worshippers do not take advantage of the systems that churches do provide. This may be out of ignorance or vanity or because the system provided does not meet their needs. At one church I visited, I asked for an ALD. I was told the system had been neglected "because no one ever asked for it!"

Another problem are ushers who are not knowledgeable about the devices their churches have and do not know how to take care of them (e.g. dead batteries).

Ministers Can Be Hard of Hearing Too

What about when the worship leader is hard of hearing? When I got my first hearing aid, my dispenser told me about a minister client, who upon using his hearing aids for the first time in the pulpit spoke so softly his congregation could not hear him. Since he could now hear himself preaching, he assumed that he was talking loud enough for the congregation. Not so!

(Continued on page 4)

Full or Half Day Workshops

available through PA-SHHH include:

- **Employment**
- **Coping Strategies**
- **Public Policy**
- **Accessibility/ADA**
- **Speechreading**
- **Hearing Loss 101**

Contact: Marcia Finisdore (finisdore@pa-shhh.org) or
Diana Bender (bender@pa-shhh.org)

PA's Hearing Discovery Center the Model for Israeli Center

by *Gerry Rusher*

The Hearing Discovery Center in Darby, PA recently hosted two distinguished Israeli visitors, Dr. Jerry Reichstein and colleague Gabe Bloom. Dr. Reichstein is setting up Israel's first accessibility center with assistive technology for hard of hearing people. He is modeling his efforts on the Hearing Discovery Center, which has been in operation since June, 1991. Seeing the Center and learning more about its operation was the prime reason for Dr. Reichstein's visit.

Dr. Reichstein, a retired audiologist, is chairman of BEKOL, the organization for hard of hearing and late-deafened people in Israel. BEKOL, founded in 1997, is patterned after Self Help for Hard of Hearing People (SHHH) in America.

BEKOL advocates for the rights and needs of hard of hearing people. Their aim is to make Israeli public places accessible to all people with hearing loss. Two of

their projects are increasing the number of captioned TV programs and working toward having assistive technology available in theaters, museums and other public places.

So far, the two major Israeli TV networks now caption about 25 percent of their programs. BEKOL is working to increase that percentage.

Like SHHH does here in America, BEKOL is also busy setting up self-help groups for hard of hearing people throughout Israel. To further help their hard of hearing people, BEKOL offers courses in aural rehabilitation, speech reading and computer competence.

The Hearing Discovery Center is located at the Friendship Circle Senior Center in Darby. Office hours are from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday to Friday. If you would like to learn more about the center or to volunteer your time there, contact the coordinator, Claire Carroll, at 610-237-6222 ext. 28.

A Message from Diana

(Continued from page 1)

In an attempt to address the cost issue, Dr. Mead Killion, a professor at Northwestern University and a hearing aid researcher, submitted a citizen's petition to the FDA to allow hearing aids to be sold over the counter like the reading glasses commonly available in drugstores. He argued that ready availability plus a significant reduction in cost would encourage much wider use of hearing aids.

Whether such approval would encourage or discourage people from wearing hearing aids in the long term remains to be seen, since people who are disappointed by over the counter hearing aids might never try to get appropriately fitted ones from a licensed provider.

It seems that the first step toward helping people with hearing loss is to find out the real reasons why so few of them wear hearing aids. PA-SHHH workshops on hearing loss always stress that being fitted with hearing aids is the first step hard of hearing people should take in coping with their hearing losses. What is it that stops you from wearing hearing aids? We'd like to know.

Diana Bender

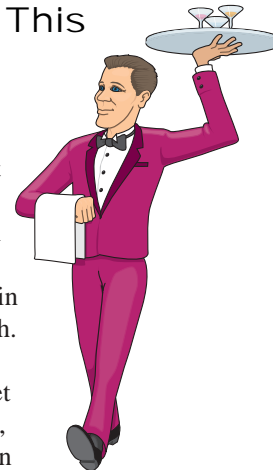
PA-SHHH State Co-Director

Bulk Copies of *HearSay* for Distribution

In the future, if you would like to receive bulk copies of *HearSay* to distribute in hospitals, audiologists offices, seniors homes, etc., please email Marcia (finisdore@pa-shhh.org) by January 15 and let her know how many copies of the March issue you could profitably use.

Don't Miss This Banquet!

Come and show your support for the work PA-SHHH is doing on behalf of all hard of hearing people in the Commonwealth.



PA-SHHH Banquet
Saturday, April 24,
2004 at 12:00 noon
The Valley Forge Park Ballroom
Scanticon Hotel and Conference Center
(Radisson Valley Forge Complex)
1160 First Avenue
King of Prussia, PA

Tickets are only \$25 each.

Here's your chance to socialize with other SHHH members, bid on exciting raffle items and support both PA-SHHH and the national office.



For more information, or to make a raffle donation, email Carolyn Meyer at JMeyerHart@aol.com with subject: "SHHH Banquet" or write Marcia Finisdore at *HearSay's* return address.

Watch for more details in the March *HearSay*.

Telephone Contacts

To talk to someone about SHHH activities, or for further information, feel free to phone:

- Wayne Benson, Western PA
412-661-4724
- Neil Bauman, Central PA
717-993-8555
- Marianne Lock, Eastern PA
215-357-3702
- Ronnie Adler, Eastern PA
610-265-1432

PA-SHHH Launches Email List

by *Neil Bauman*

The PA-SHHH Advisory Council recently launched an email list for the purpose of discussing issues and disseminating information related to hearing loss in Pennsylvania.

“This list can be a great way of keeping everyone informed of events related to hearing loss anywhere in PA,” says moderator Neil Bauman. “If anyone needs a quick answer to a question, there is bound to be someone on the list who knows the answer.”

Although primarily for PA-SHHH members, anyone is welcome to join. This list is not for social chit-chat, so please keep all posts related to hearing loss in some way.

Coping with Hearing Loss in a Religious Setting

(Continued from page 2)

One of the problems I encounter has to do with any type of interaction with the worshippers. A common practice is for parishioners to verbalize their prayer requests, which I would note and incorporate in the prayers of the people. However, I no longer can hear such requests! My solution was to have an elder take the requests and make notes of them. He then gave these notes to me.

One last comment: as a minister, I have a “bully pulpit.” From it, I let people know something about hearing loss and how they can deal with it!

(Editor’s note: Wayne Benson is a retired Presbyterian minister and a member of the PA-SHHH Advisory Council.)

Mission of HearSay

The mission of *HearSay* is to educate and inform people about activities and issues concerning hearing loss in Pennsylvania.

Joining is easy. Just send a blank email to:

pa-shhh-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

You will receive an email from Yahoo groups asking you to confirm your request to join the PA-SHHH list. Either click on the link provided or reply to the email to join.

If you click on the link you will be taken to a Yahoo groups web page. Either click on the “join the group” or “join the mailing list.” I suggest you click on “join the group” as you will then have access to other member benefits such as being able to search the archives for information in previous posts.

If you find this list is not for you, unsubscribing is just as easy—simply send a blank email to:

pa-shhh-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com

and you will be taken off the list after you confirm your request.

SHHH Chapters in PA

There are a number of SHHH chapters scattered throughout PA (listed below). You are most welcome to attend any of their meetings. The name in brackets following each chapter name is the city where the chapter meets

Established Chapters:

Adams Hanover chapter (New Oxford)
 Bucks County chapter (Bensalem)
 Chester County (ChesCo) chapter (West Chester)
 Delaware County (DelHOH) chapter (Upland)
 Generation X (GenX) chapter (Swarthmore)
 Grove City chapter (Grove City)
 Harrisburg chapter (Harrisburg)
 Lebhoh chapter (Cornwall)
 Montco chapter (Lafayette Hill)
 Philadelphia Center City chapter (Philadelphia)
 Philadelphia Chapter #1 (Elkins Park)
 Pittsburgh chapter #1 (Pittsburgh)

Deadline for Submissions

We are always interested in receiving any news, articles or information of interest to hard-of-hearing people in PA. The deadline for submissions for the March issue of *HearSay* is January 15, 2004. Email your submissions to either:

- Neil Bauman, Editor (editor@pa-shhh.org) or,
- Gerry Rusher, Assistant Editor (rusher@pa-shhh.org) or,
- Mail them to Neil Bauman, HearSay Editor, 49 Piston Court, Stewartstown, PA 17363.

Wallingford Evening chapter (Wallingford)
 Westmoreland chapter (Mt. Pleasant)

New Chapters Forming

Erie
 Reading
 Scranton
 State College

If you want more information about any of these chapters you can either find it on-line at <http://www.pa-shhh.org>, then click on the Chapters link (top left) or contact one of the state chapter coordinators: Marianne (215) 357-3702, email: Lock@pa-shhh.org; or Ronnie (610) 265-1432, email: Adler@pa-shhh.org.

Away? Let Us Know

With each issue of *HearSay*, a number of copies are returned because people are temporarily away. Please let Marcia (finisdore@pa-shhh.org) know if you are going to be away for an extended period. This will save us a bundle in postage. Thanks.

Zach—Furry Ears That Work

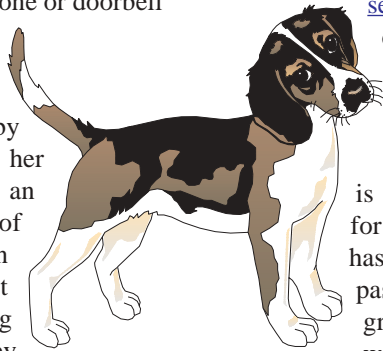
by *Alice Pakhtigian*

What's a dog doing vacationing in Disney World Florida? I'm not talking about Pluto or Brutus, but a real live dog named Zach.

Actually, Zach wasn't on vacation. He was working at Disney World. No, he's not one of Disney's new characters. He's a "Hearing Dog" working for Eileen. You see, Eileen is hard of hearing and Zach is her furry ears.

Eileen took Zach with her while she and her family vacationed in Florida. His job is to let Eileen know if people call her name (he only responds if people call her by her first name), if the phone or doorbell rings or if the smoke alarm goes off.

Zach is always by Eileen's side. This gives her greater confidence and an "overwhelming feeling of unconditional love." When people see Zach's bright orange vest with "Hearing Dog" emblazoned on it, they know Eileen can't hear.



This allows Eileen to feel more comfortable talking with people. Hard of hearing people often feel isolated and uncomfortable in crowds and groups because they can't understand much of what is said. However, as Eileen explains, "having a Hearing Dog makes you feel wonderful." A Hearing Dog is often a great conversation starter too!

Jody also has a Hearing Dog. Her only regret is that she didn't apply for a Hearing Dog sooner. "It is amazing how many benefits I have gained since being

partnered with my dog," Jody enthuses. "He is priceless to me. I can't imagine being without him!"

There are very few restrictions when taking Hearing Dogs into public places. Legally, small, privately-owned businesses do not have to accept the dogs, however, usually they give them free access.

There are numerous organizations around the country that train "Hearing Dogs" including several right here in Pennsylvania. The most complete listing of service dog (including Hearing Dogs) organizations is at www.wolfpacks.com/serviced.htm. If you scroll down to PA, you will find seven PA organizations that train service dogs.

Christy Hill's web site is another great resource for Hearing Dogs—but it has not been updated in the past year. She has a lot of great information on her web site at <http://home.att.net/~care4k9/Service.html>.

Scholarships for Hard of Hearing Students

Now is a good time to begin collecting information on scholarships for the fall term. The SHHH national web site is a great resource of scholarships for hard of hearing students. Go to: http://www.hearingloss.org/html/scholarships_for_college.HTM.

There are many other scholarships available than what are listed on the SHHH web site. Use Google (www.google.com) to search for them (or any other search engine). Just type in "scholarships" and "hard of hearing" and you will get information on numerous other scholarships for hard of hearing students.

For Rent

Hard of hearing accessibility needs for meetings—large or small. Assistive Listening Devices available include:

- FM systems
- Infrared systems
- Audio-induction loops

Contact Walt Jensen:

jensen@pa-shhh.org

Philadelphia Chapter 1 Reaches Out

The Philadelphia Chapter 1 provides an Outreach Program to senior citizens in retirement homes and to organizations that request information about hearing loss. The purpose of the Outreach Program is to share ways to cope with hearing loss in order to live more productive lives.

The Outreach Program stresses the importance of not bluffing (pretending to hear) or hiding one's hearing loss. It encourages people to get help, and to be aware of everyday hints and devices that will help hard of hearing people relate better to each other and to hearing people.

Last, but not least, the Outreach Program encourages the groups to establish their own SHHH chapter and will provide them with assistance to get started.

Allan Weinberg

Support SHHH

One way you can make a difference to hard-of-hearing people is to remember SHHH in your will. That way your money will continue to help hard-of-hearing people long after you are gone.

HearSay is edited and produced by:

Neil Bauman

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Email: neil@hearinglosshelp.com

Website: www.hearinglosshelp.com

HearSay Subscription

If you would like to receive your own copy of *HearSay*, the official newsletter of PA-SHHH, please fill in this form and mail it to the address below. A *HearSay* subscription is free; however, PA-SHHH is a not-for-profit organization 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 and will be acknowledged in the newsletter and on the website.
- If you wish to remain anonymous, please check here.
- I cannot contribute, but I would like to receive the *HearSay*.

Make donations payable to PA-SHHH and send this form to

Marcia Finisdore, State Co-Director, PA-SHHH
8 Azalea Lane
Media, PA 19063-2240



PA-SHHH is a totally volunteer organization. We rely upon the generosity of our supporters. Each issue of *HearSay* costs just under \$800 to produce and mail.

A special thanks to those of you who help make it possible.

Luella Gibb, Virginia Grim, Au.D
Sonia Loigman, Lucille Magnusson
Margaret Maguire
Joe and Carolyn Meyer
Kevin O'Rourke, David Osborne
Joe and Cass Peronace
SHHH Philadelphia 1 Chapter
Jeffrey Swisher
Rosemary Wilson

We apologize if we have missed someone. Please contact Marcia Finisdore for such corrections.

About SHHH

Self Help for Hard of Hearing People, Inc., founded in 1979, is a non-profit consumer self-help organization. SHHH opens the world of communication to people with hearing loss by providing information, education, support and advocacy.

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

SHHH has members and chapters in all 50 states. To find the chapter closest to you, contact a member of the PA-SHHH state committee if you are in PA, or contact the SHHH National Office.

Self-Help for Hard of Hearing People
7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 1200
Bethesda, MD 20814

Phone: (301) 657-2248 (Voice)
(301) 657-2249 (TTY)
(301) 913-9413 (FAX)

Email: info@hearingloss.org
Website: www.hearingloss.org

PA-SHHH Needs You



SHHH volunteers from all over the Commonwealth assist the PA-SHHH State Director by serving on the PA-SHHH Advisory Council or one of its committees. The PA-SHHH Advisory Council meets periodically in Carlisle. Committees conduct most of their business by email but meet periodically in various parts of the state as needed. We would be delighted to have you join us. If you would like to serve on either the Advisory Council, or one of its committees, please contact one of the state leaders listed below.

State Co-Directors: **Marcia Finisdore** finisdore@pa-shhh.org
Diana Bender bender@pa-shhh.org

Membership: **Ronnie Adler** adler@pa-shhh.org
Marianne Lock lock@pa-shhh.org

Communication: **Neil Bauman** bauman@pa-shhh.org
Alice Pakhtigian pakhtigian@pa-shhh.org

Government Affairs: **Diana Bender** bender@pa-shhh.org

Development: Open—will you volunteer?

“Come and join us. You will be welcome!”