

HLAA Twin Cities

Hearing Loss Association of America Twin Cities Chapter January 2009



Calendar of Events

Jan, 17, 2009 – Mary Hartnett – MCDHH

Feb. 16, 2009 – Lisa McDonald, Cochlear Implants

Mar. 27-28, 2009 – State Convention in St. Cloud, **NO** March meeting at Courage Center this month

April 8, 2009 – Steak Fry

April 18, 2009– Open

May 16, 2009 – Open

June 18 - 21, 2009– National Convention

The Mission of HLAA is to open the world of communication to people with hearing loss by providing information, education, support and advocacy.

THE **NEXT MEETING** IS
January 17th at 9:30 AM
Courage Center
3915 Golden Valley Road
Golden Valley, MN 55422-4249

Everyone is welcome to attend!

- HLAA TC Website
www.hlaatc.org
- HLAA National
www.hearingloss.org
- MN Contact Information
info@hlaatc.org

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Keep the data open: March 27 and 28 – the state convention in St. Cloud. Watch for details.

Welcome 2009!

And now let us welcome the New Year -
Full of things that have never been.
-Rainer Maria Rilke

A Message from our President

Seeing Things, Hearing Things

When Yvain lost his sight, he had a lot of adjustments to make. So did we, his parents. I had imagined that what a newly blind person sees is – nothing. Blackness. Zero, Zip. Nada.

About a year into his blindness, I learned differently. One afternoon, while visiting the eye doctor, Yvain asked “Are we in a barn?” I had him repeat that several times to see if I was hearing him correctly. “A barn. A barn. See? There’s the cow-door. And there are the cows, and the pigs (‘oink-oink’), and the horse. He pointed them all out to me, each in its particular place. And with a sweet, loving smile, he reached forward to pet each of them.

I assured him we were in the doctor’s office, not a barn. He humored me, changing his words to “looks like a barn” instead of “is a barn”. But I wasn’t fooled by his acquiescence. He still thought we were in a barn.

When we returned to the waiting room we were in a barn too. Petting them again, he went on : “There’s the pig. And the cow.” When the doctor called us in, I asked him about these flights of barnyard fancy. “It’s very common,” he assured me, “for people who do not see very well to see things that are not there.” That helped set at least one of my fears to rest. As we left the doctor’s room, Yvain began again: “It looks like we’re in a barn. See, there’s the roof. And there’s the....”

Why should I be surprised at this? After all, people who don’t hear very well often hear things that are not there, too. You may agree with me that one thing worse (in the long run, at

least) than not knowing what people are saying, is knowing exactly what they are saying – and being dead wrong.

Professionals in the fields of ophthalmology and audiology are aware of these curious perceptual experiences. I am not so sure that most of those in the mental health fields are. I for one would like to know.

A few days later I was driving Yvain back to his group home. He wasn’t seeing barns and animals that day – but he was convinced I had a crate of vegetables in my car. “What’s in the crate?”, he kept asking. Was he talking about the truck in front of us? The van alongside? “No, right there,” he said, pointing under the dashboard. “I think it’s a crate of veggies.”

“Um, Yvain...” I started. He knew what explanatory nonsense I was about to give him, so he leapt to the punch.

“And it’s REAL!”

I think most of us have said the same about things we’ve “heard”.

Vicki



In case you missed it...

Synopsis of our December 20 Meeting

Guest Speaker: Rubin Latz, Rehabilitation Program Specialist, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, DEED Minnesota



Rubin has personal experience with hearing loss as well as 22 years of experience in Vocational Rehabilitation. VR serves people across the hearing loss spectrum, from mild hearing loss to profound deafness. They serve people who sign, and those who do not sign. Rehabilitation Services offers three programs: extended employment, independent living, and vocational rehabilitation. The purpose of VR is to get people into work, back to work, and to maintain their work.

VR began in 1918 as a way to help WWI veterans get back to work. A civilian program was added later.

There are three issues that VR considers in determining your eligibility for services: the

impact of your disability on your capacity to prepare for work, find work, and retain work. The number and severity of functional limitations (including communication) determines your eligibility.

Counseling and guidance to help clients determine what they need to do regarding employment is the core of vocational rehabilitation services. The aim is to reach those coming out of school at the earliest opportunity, as well as older adults of any age.

Key services are: information referral, freedom, encouragement to use the resource room, to develop your resume, to do job seeking activities on site, information referral to other appropriate programs.

What to expect when you go to VR: assessment, including health history, audiograms and ENT report that you provide to document your disability. They will then inquire about your interests and abilities. VR may provide another party to do these assessments.

After you have been employed for 90 days, your case will be closed. But if issues arise later in your employment, you may open another application at that time.

HAAA member Dave Lovell described his experience with VR. He first worked with the Minnesota Employment Council (MEC), which he credits with helping him find and acquire an appropriate job. Then VR stepped in and came to his work site to assess his accommodation needs and talk with his employer about them. Hearing aids and an FM listening device were provided. Interesting fact: use of hearing aids mitigates loss of income by 50% - the key

Continued on page 4

being “use”. They won’t make you wealthy, but they may bring you a step closer.

Suggestion: If you contact an agency for assistance, make sure you state up front that you have a hearing loss. You will eventually be referred to hearing loss specialists anyway, so this may save you (and the agency) some time and steps.

Rubin left copies of an article by Sam Trychin (“Information to Have With You When Applying for Vocational Rehabilitation Services”). He recommends reading it if you are considering coming to VR. (Some of the key points are also in this newsletter – see page 8.)

Additional information can be found on the website: www.mnwfc.org
Rubin can be contacted at rubin.latz@state.mn.us

Business meeting:

There was a nice turnout in spite of some pretty challenging Minnesota weather. Rubin drove all the way from Hastings to speak to us.

We had a wild time with the gift swap, with Linda Senechal as a cool Santa Claus. There were some very nice gifts, obviously coveted by a few people with higher numbers, as well as a few that will be great candidates for “re-gifting” (watch out next year!) A yummy pot luck lunch followed, though we didn’t have enough people to eat it all up. (Certain ones of us were eating tortilla pinwheels for a whole week).

So ends 2008 at HLAA. See you all next year!



The gift exchange: Bob and Yvain chose a stocking. Linda and Dennis helped inspect them.

Shhhhhhhhhhh!

by Sue Brabeck

I find it ironic that the world of a Hard of Hearing person can be incredibly noisy. I began to have an awareness of this about four years ago, when the tsunami of my Meniere's disease began to wipe out nearly all the hearing left in my one functioning ear. Rubin Latz taught me this when he came to my workplace, evaluating what changes could be made to reduce the "ambient noise". Even that term was new to me.

Rubin suggested that my cube be moved, away from a high-traffic aisle, a departmental printer, and especially from a loud neighbor who insisted on using his speaker-phone for every single telephone call. I found this suggestion puzzling, but was willing to abide by his suggestions. Luckily my management found an empty cube in a much better location. I am rather isolated from others, but I have a really peaceful (and much coveted!) work area, with a grand skyline view out a window looking due west over both St. Paul and Minneapolis.



Now fitted with a HA in my one ear (the other ear has been kaput for decades), each day I still have to struggle to reduce the noise in my life. I think the bathroom at work is the worst place for me. Flushing

toilets, running water, ladies chatting, and the ratcheting of a paper-towel dispenser all going on at once is enough to teach me to turn my HA off before I even enter the room. Oh, and those doggone hand-drying machines – it's like starting a jet engine.

At home, I have learned to turn my HA off doing certain tasks. Running the vacuum cleaner and a hair-dryer are obvious, but other sounds are bad for me as well. Loading the dishwasher is one of them – I go into "off" mode before even beginning. And woe be to the poor soul sharing the living room with me while they snap/bang/thrash every single page of the Sunday paper. For that one I simply have to leave the room. I try to catch the microwave one second before it finishes, or the BEEP!BEEP!BEEP! that results feels like someone jamming an ice pick into my ear.

Because of my tinnitus, I even have a lot of noise at night when I remove my HA. I have a constant hum, 24/7, that never abates. Although I must say that sometimes the monotony is varied when I occasionally hear an assortment of whooshes, booms, and high-pitched squeals.

"Silence" is something I will never experience again, in spite of my doctor declaring me functionally deaf. But like all of you, I try to take it one day at a time, and hope that some day in my lifetime there will be a magical (and affordable!) HA that can be programmed to turn down or off selected/unwanted sounds before they even occur, sheltering the wearer from the ear-splitting cacophony of daily life, even in our Hard of Hearing world.

Bits and Pieces

With the **Feb. 19, 2009 conversion** in TV's, if you need a decoder (and many won't need one) example if you already have cable you won't need one. But if you do, choose an HDTV that has both types of tuners so you can get both analog and digital built in captions. This is not mandated by the FCC yet, but it maybe in the future, so get the machine that handles both now.

Before **Mrs. Calvin Coolidge** was a Mrs. she was a teacher at the Clarke School for the Deaf. After marriage she became a fundraiser for the school. After serving as First Lady she and her husband moved to Northampton, MS so they could be close to the school.

Bring your **Holiday Cards** the picture part only and check there are no pictures inside of your loved ones to the next meeting and give them to Mary Andresen, as she recycles them into very attractive gift tags.

Just when you thought you were doing everything correctly, eating right and exercising, a new thought has come up. **Golfers** who use titanium clubs risk damaging their hearing. The risk is so great that doctors advise their patients to wear ear plugs when they tee off. What brought this about was a 55 yr. old Brit man who played 3 times a week for 18 months. Full story - <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-1105093/Golfers-warned-deaf-sonic-boom-created-modern-clubs.html>

Captioned Video and entire Script below video "President elect Obama's **weekly address**" <http://change.gov/>

Check it out:

Overstream is an extremely easy way to add captions to streaming video - any videos on youtube.com can have captions added with minimal amount of time.

<http://www.overstream.net/index.php>

Visit the website of **Kathryn Bakke**, speaker, pianist and hearing loss consultant in St. Paul.

<http://www.kathrynbakke.com/index.html>

Free adaptive technology classes are being offered starting in Jan. 2009 at the downtown Mpls. library. Anyone with any type of disability, interested in tech classes should contact Jennifer Nelson, 612-630-6469, jnelson@hclib.org

Remember the **Steak Fry** on April 8. This is a major fundraiser for our group, so pick up some tickets from Bob and sell them to friends and family. A great meal at a reasonable price for a good cause.

Thanks, Angie!



Angie hard at work at the December meeting.....



What is it, Dave?



Questions, questions....



Jodi worked the cookie table!



Past 'n present Prez' at the podium

Assessing Hearing Loss Problems at Work

Taken from the article that appeared in the January/February 2003 issue of Hearing Loss by Sam Trychin

Editor's Note: This entire article was shared with the group by Rubin Latz at the December meeting. Some highlights of the article are summarized here.

Categories for which people with a hearing loss may seek assistance from Vocational Rehabilitation.

1. Mobility – If the hearing loss is due to Meniere's Disease, neuromas or some other physical condition; balance, dizziness, coordination or other problems may be present. Other mobility problems are carrying on a conversation while walking, driving or otherwise moving. The movement limits the ability to see the speaker's face and consequently understand what is being said.
2. Speaking – The person who is hard of hearing may have distorted speech, may speak too loudly or too softly (can't hear their own voice). The person may need speech therapy to learn to adjust the volume of their voice.
3. Hearing – All levels of hearing loss produce communication problems. The communication requirements of the job must be evaluated with the person's hearing difficulty. Is there a periodic staff meeting, are training sessions required?
4. Seeing – If vision is poor, the hard of hearing person will understand less. If the light is too bright or too dim, the person who depends upon speechreading will have problems understanding what is said.
5. Cognitive Processing – People who are hard of hearing often need more time to absorb and retain spoken information because they spend so much time and energy determining if they have understood what someone is saying. People who

talk fast are often misunderstood.

6. Personal care – Ability to use hearing aids and assistive listening devices and to troubleshoot them when problems arise requires training and practice.
7. Self-Direction – Many people who are hard of hearing have become dependent on family, friends and coworkers to find out what is being said. Greater independence can result through learning coping strategies. Many people who are hard of hearing are underachievers because they are not aware of the equipment and strategies that can help them function at a higher level.
8. Interpersonal skills – Some problems associated with hearing loss are social withdrawal (may be seen as unfriendly), pretending to understand when they didn't, and/or blaming others for not speaking clearly.
9. Work Tolerance – Constant visual attention results in fatigue. Frequent breaks can make the person who is hard of hearing more effective.
10. Work skills – Most people who are hard of hearing are competent at their jobs, but the problem is understanding what others are saying to them. Mistakes result. They are less able to advance in their jobs due to the inability to get more training as training materials are rarely captioned and they have difficulty hearing in a classroom setting.

If you see yourself in these typical problems, Vocational Rehabilitation may be able to help you develop coping skills and work with both you and your employer to overcome the difficulties.

There are many solid economic reasons for accommodating the needs of people who are hard of hearing on the job.

Vocational Rehab is not just for obtaining a new job or skill, but for coping with the one you have.



Accessible Entertainment

Note: Due to space limitations in this newsletter, we are usually not able to list all entertainment events every month which are accessible to hard of hearing people. If you are interested in receiving a complete list every month, please ask that your name be added to the email directory from VSA Arts Minnesota. To receive this list by email each month, send an email to jon@vsaartsmn.org. Please specify if you want to receive the Captioned shows, Audio Described shows, ASL-Interpreted shows, or the combined list.

Captioned movies:

Kerasotes Block E Stadium 15 – Mpls.

Captioned movies in Twin Cities

612-338-1466

www.kerasotes.com

Science Museum of MN Omni

651-221-4585

www.smm.org/info/accessibility.php

MNOCFILMES

Open/closed captioned movies in Twin Cities

<http://www.mnocfilms.org/index.html>

ALOHA

Aloha events are held on the second Saturday of each month. They are social gatherings in the homes of members of the group, usually including dinner. For information on the monthly schedule, contact the coordinator, Ellen Thibodo at ThibodoD@aol.com.

CAPTIONING AT THE GUTHRIE:

Open captioning is a general term used to describe text displayed simultaneous to live speech, dialogue or performance. As opposed to closed captioning, which requires special equipment for viewing, this open captioning can be seen by anyone via a 4-foot-wide screen placed adjacent to the stage that displays dialogue from the show in real-time. The system has gained support for its universal appeal and ability to make theatre more accessible to audience members with hearing loss.

FM receivers for hearing assistance are also available at the Level 4 Service Center. Access programs at the Guthrie are sponsored by Xcel Energy Foundation, with additional support by Allianz Life Insurance.

Reduced prices are offered by the theatres themselves or by the Access to Performing Arts Project to encourage broader participation in live arts events by people who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or of low vision. It is a joint project of VSA arts of Minnesota, the Minnesota Association of Community Theatres and the Guthrie Theater.

Happy New Ears! 10 Tips for Caring for your Hearing Gear

Here's a new year reminder on caring for that expensive hearing aid.

1. Remove your hearing aid at night and open the casing door. The biggest enemy of hearing aids is moisture and debris. Sweat and daily grime can damage some hearing aids.

Today's quality models come with a moisture resistant casing and moisture resistant wiring but even these devices should get a little air time to dry out any moisture accumulated throughout the day. By opening the casing you allow air to ventilate the interior components.

2. Consider the purchase of a hearing aid dehumidifier if you are prone to heavy sweating or in a moisture rich environment often. A hearing aid dehumidifier saves you lots of cash long-term.

3. Gently wipe clean the outer part of your hearing aid with a soft cloth. Ear wax production is a natural, beneficial process, so simply wipe your devices clean with a soft dry cloth and you're done. This will help prevent wax building up in the receiver tube.

If you tend to build up a lot of wax and it is visible in the receiver opening, you may have been provided a safe tool to use by your hearing healthcare professional. These tools are designed to gently dig out any wax that may have entered the tip. Do this with caution and follow directions given to you by your provider as pushing it too deep could potentially damage the receiver.

4. Keep hearing devices away from extreme heat and cold. Don't leave your hearing aids in the hot car while you take a cool dip or a cold

car while you sit in the hot tub or pool.

5. Don't wear ear gear while applying hair products. If you've got your hearing aids in place and decide to spritz a little spray on your hair, some of that material will end up on the microphone of the hearing aids. These mics are tiny but powerful. When clogged with hair spray, mousse, gels and other hair products, your hearing aid may not work as well as it could. Not only will the products gunk up the microphones, they will also attract debris and dirt causing even more clogage.

6. Stay out of water. Yes, there are water resistant hearing aids that'll hold up to the occasional splash in the ear, but these devices don't like getting wet. That means swimming, showers, saunas or just running through the sprinkler or the rain. Keep your instrument dry to keep it chugging along for a long time.

7. Change the tubing often. Those plastic tubes wear out. They get brittle, hard and they crack. Change these BTE tubes as needed. The point is, you paid for quality hearing and an inexpensive, thin plastic tube shouldn't degrade that quality of hearing.

8. The majority of digital hearing aids will come with microphone covers already on them. Over time they can become clogged and require replacing them. Some models will allow you to swap them out regularly. Stop by your hearing pros office so he/she can do it for you correctly.

9. Keep your hearing aids high up away from pets and kids. They are a choking hazard, and pets can chew them up quickly.

10. Finally, have your ears checked regularly. As the owner of a pricey hearing aid you want the best performance. Your hearing needs change so an annual hearing evaluation and a tweak or two on your ear gear will have you hearing your best.

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NEXT MEETING: SATURDAY, JANUARY 17, 2009

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This month's editor Linda Senechal

Meetings are held the 3rd Saturday of the month September through May at the Courage Center in Golden Valley, MN. We gather at 9:30 to socialize and the meeting starts at 10 AM. All meetings are real time captioned by Lisa Richardson and her staff of *Paradigm Captioning* (www.paradigmreporting.com). Please visit the chapter's web-site at www.hlaatc.org