

NC Walk4Hearing A Huge Success

Follow-Up Report by Joyce Adler, co-chair

When my son and I arrived at the Walk4Hearing site in Durham early in the morning of October 3, it was quiet and peaceful with the fog and mist still in the air. David walked over to the fountain, and with the sun rising behind it, I looked and saw the future and prayed. What a beautiful sight it was to see.

This was HLA-NC's first year of putting together this kind of event. I was up at 6:00 AM and arrived at the Walk site at 7:00 AM. The day was finally here!

The volunteers began to arrive, then the tables and chairs. Everyone had a job to do. Our beautiful balloon arch was successfully made by the Bishop family. The vendors and sponsors came, and boy, I was so excited to see how many were there to show their support for people with hearing loss. Wow, here we were, raising awareness and laying the foundation for the future.

At 9:00, I looked around, dizzy with relief—we were well on our way! The walkers and teams we'd met online were there and we finally met them face to face. Walkers and families kept

coming and registering. The kids were having a blast in the bouncy castle, with Cinderella greeting them as they entered.

And suddenly it was 10:00 AM—time to walk! Michael Eury, our HLA-NC president, welcomed everyone, led the countdown, and cut the ribbon. The Walk4Hearing began with great enthusiasm from a lot of gracious people happy to be there—between 275 and 300 walkers participated!

After everyone was finished with the Walk, we had a few announcements (in the shade) and heard the now-famous speech by none other than Michael Eury, "Invisible No More." We also awarded prizes and plaques to top-earning walkers and teams.

The end result to date is 134% of our \$25,000 fundraising goal: \$34,266 as of this writing—pretty good for our first NC Walk (and we thought it was going to be tough to reach our goal). Half of this money will go to the Hearing Loss Association of America, who helped guide us through this process and provided many materials for the Walk, and the other half goes to HLA-NC and some of our



Photo by Cynthia Harmon.

associate organizations that helped raise funds for the event. [Editor's note: Photos from the NC Walk4Hearing can be found on page 4.]

Just think what we can do in the future, now that some of the kinks have been worked out and we are more knowledgeable about how to do things. Now that we've done this once and have learned from the experience, we will grow and build from this year's Walk.

JOYCE ADLER is the secretary of HLA-NC and was co-chair, with Julie Bishop, of the North Carolina Walk4Hearing.

Top Teams and Walkers

Everyone who participated in the NC Walk4Hearing was a winner in our book, but we'd like to acknowledge our Top Five Teams and Walkers who raised the most money for the event:

Top Five Teams

1. Triangle Area Hitch-Up (Holly Medlin, captain)
2. The Leadership Trust (Holly Latty-Mann, captain)
3. Ear Buds (Rose Rummel-Eury, captain)
4. Beethoven's Brigade (Julie Bishop, captain)
and a tie for fifth place between:
5. Team Turtles (Carla Laffra, captain) and
5. Stepping Up in the Mountains (Dianna Attaway, captain)

Top Five Walkers

1. Holly Latty-Mann
2. Kimberly Hoenecke
3. Julie Bishop
4. Michael Eury
5. Dianna Attaway



And our new friend Koen Laffra was acknowledged as Top Young Walker. Photo by Rose Rummel-Eury.

From My Lips to Your Ears

Editorial by Michael Eury

Do you see me in the photo on this page? You do? Are you *sure*? That's a relief! I was wondering if I was still there. You see, as a person with hearing loss, there are times when I feel absolutely *invisible*.

I feel invisible when the telephone rings, or when a small child wishes to speak with me, because both present communication challenges for someone who doesn't hear well.

I feel invisible in public buildings, when those loudspeaker announcements seem to be talking to everyone but me.

I feel invisible at parties, or in crowded restaurants, when background noise drowns out my ability to have a conversation with someone only inches away.

And I *really* feel invisible each time I buy a new pair of hearing aids, and have to do so without any support from my insurance company!

Rocky Stone, who founded the Hearing Loss Association of America 30 years ago, very famously called hearing loss an "invisible condition." What he meant was, it's usually difficult or impossible to notice that someone has hearing loss simply by looking at them.

But as my introduction illustrates, there are many factors that make those of us with hearing loss feel invisible. Some of them are beyond our control, but at least one of them is of our own making.

People with hearing loss often make ourselves invisible! We go out of our way to avoid drawing attention to ourselves, blending into the background, withdrawing from activities. We bluff our way through conversations, smiling and nodding agreeingly when we don't have a clue as to what was actually said. We grow or style our hair in a fashion to hide our hearing aids or cochlear implants.

Why do we do this? Sometimes, we're merely trying to be normal. Sometimes, the pressures of trying to communicate when one of our senses is pulling a vanishing act are overwhelming. And sometimes, we feel embarrassed by or ashamed of our hearing loss.

I'm guilty of all of the above. I spent years dodging or quitting relationships, activities, and jobs because it was hard for me to hear. If awards were presented for bluffing, my mantel would be buckling under their weight. And a few years ago I grew my hair long to hide my hearing aids. I was ashamed of my hearing loss, ashamed of who I had become. But when I finally came to my senses and decided to get a haircut more becoming a middle-aged man, the 45 minutes I spent in a hairdresser's chair were the most liberating moments in my life. Samson may have lost his strength after his shearing, but I was empowered by mine. As those stringy, rock star-wannabe locks were clipped and eventually swept off the floor, I realized that there was nothing to be ashamed of to have hearing loss, nothing to be embarrassed by.

As we enter the new year and its resolutions of change, I ask each of you with hearing loss to pledge to drop our self-created cloaks of invisibility. Granted, we have communication challenges to face each day, but life is much sweeter when we do our best to participate rather than take the easy route and allow it to pass us by.

We often wish that hearing aids and CIs were as commonly accepted as eyeglasses, that each public meeting room were looped, and that insurance companies would cover the costs of our hearing instruments.

These will remain mere wishes unless we make them happen. And the way to do so is to step up, take ownership of our hearing loss, support each other through fellowship, and make our voices heard. Don't be ashamed of your hearing loss. Instead, take pride in the fact that you're taking measures to do something about it!

Only *then* will we be invisible no more.

MICHAEL EURY is the president of HLA-NC and editor of this newsletter.



Photo by Cynthia Harmon.



The Hearing Loss Association of North Carolina (HLA-NC) is a State Association of the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA). Actually, HLA-NC was the first State Association sanctioned by HLAA, established in the early 1990s by forward-thinking volunteers in North Carolina to provide a voice for HLAA at the state level! HLA-NC strives to represent the interests of hard of hearing people in NC, while supporting HLAA's overall goals and encouraging local chapters in NC.

Visit our website at www.nchearingloss.org.

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Living with Hearing Loss

by Susan Wilson

My junior year in high school, my father said to me, "I don't think you are hearing well. You need to get tested." He proceeded to have someone come to the house to test my hearing. I did have a mild loss but not significant enough to warrant using a hearing aid at that time. I needed to have another test in a year. My senior year in high school, I sat in the front row to hear more easily. In Spanish class, we used headphones and the teacher spoke this foreign language to us through those. I struggled trying to make it out and felt happy to just get through that class.

Before I went to undergraduate school, I received another hearing test. This time I needed a hearing aid. I resisted that and refused to wear it all the time. Like all teenagers, I wanted to be normal and not look different or feel different than others. My father contacted the hearing-care person and he once again came to our house and really scolded me. From then on, I wore my hearing aid all the time. I began college using one hearing aid. I

don't remember exactly when I got the second one, but my hearing decreased and I started wearing two hearing aids.

I began working right out of college as a social worker. I was able to function reasonably well at that time. Then my husband and I moved back to my home state of North Carolina and I worked with the Department of Social Services. As time passed, my hearing became worse and I had to get stronger hearing aids. Also, my supervisor began bringing up my hearing loss on my yearly evaluation, saying that my hearing was the only thing holding me back from progressing on the job. I read the "handwriting on the wall." I went to Vocational Rehabilitation and received testing to determine where my other interests might lie. I was not satisfied with any of the options.

In 1985, I left my job and went to graduate school to get my Master's Degree in Counseling at a private university. My hearing decreased to a profound loss in both ears. I had no assistance in classes except other students giving me a copy of their notes. I appreciated their help but trying to read so many different handwritings proved ineffective. I read and read and read some more! I really struggled to hear anything. I received a TTY from a Quota Club, but there was no relay system at the time. I discovered that my lip-reading skills were quite proficient, but nowhere near strong enough to solve my problems.

After finishing graduate school, I faced the task of trying to find employment as a person with a profound hearing loss, a late-deafened person. I worked as a special intern with Family and Children's Services. However, I only counseled Deaf or hard of hearing people. Only a few of this population came into the agency while I worked there.

I did learn sign language through several different sources: books,

classes at a local college, and from a non-profit organization, plus getting involved with other Deaf people who used sign language. I learned more sign language from other Deaf people than I had learned in classes because I used it and practiced it. That is the most effective way to learn sign language.

Finally, I found what I felt was the perfect job for me and the most exciting job I could have in my situation. I became a Hard of Hearing Specialist with the State of North Carolina Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. I work only with hard of hearing persons, assisting them to cope with their hearing loss, finding resources for hearing aids, educating and giving presentations for agencies and hard of hearing people, and, of course, providing technology and much more.

My hearing continued to deteriorate and I tried to find even stronger hearing aids. I tried the digital BTEs but could not hear as well with those as I did with my old analog aids. I realized I depended so much on lip-reading and using a sign-language interpreter. Hard of hearing people couldn't understand me easily. My voice seemed so high-pitched, and, of course, most hard of hearing people lose hearing in the high frequencies first. I often used a sign-language interpreter just to interpret what I was saying.

In 2003, after trying the new digital aids, I looked into getting a cochlear implant. My husband agreed that I should go for it. That decision certainly changed my life. The first thing other people noticed, after the CI was turned on, was that my voice volume lowered since I could hear myself better. It was such an improvement that it indeed seemed like a miracle. It was not a cure, but so much better than what I had before.

SUSAN M. WILSON leads the HLA-Greensboro chapter and is the Hard of Hearing Services Specialist with the Division of Services for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing.

Editor's note: "Living with Hearing Loss" is a new feature in this newsletter. Each installment will share a story from one of our North Carolina neighbors. All readers are encouraged to share their 500–800 word stories. Please email them to euryman@gmail.com.



Susan Wilson and her service dog, Gem, at the Walk4Hearing. Photo by Cynthia Harmon.

NC Walk4Hearing

A Photo Scrapbook



This sign at the event listed the Walk's sponsors. Photo by Cynthia Harmon.



Each walker who raised \$100 or more earned one of these T-shirts. Photo by Dianna Attaway.



Patience, folks, the Walk's about to start...! Photo by Dianna Attaway.



There was no shortage of smiles from the little ones, thanks to our special friends like this clown. Photo by Michael Eury.



Walk4Hearing co-chair Julie Bishop and her team (and family), Beethoven's Brigade. Photo by Michael Eury.



On your marks, get set... Photo by Cynthia Harmon.



... walk! Note the balloon archway, constructed by the Bishop family. Photo by Dianna Attaway.



Personalized team T-shirts made competition fun. Photo by Dianna Attaway.

Our HLA-NC Members Speak

HLA-NC Board Exposed to Nitro



Amy Dunphy of PAWS.

Nitro the labrador retriever, that is. Amy Dunphy, a trainer with Paws With A Cause® (PAWS), a national organization that trains Assistance Dogs for people with disabilities, made a presentation to the HLA-NC Board of



Nitro the Assistance Dog.

Trustees at its Nov. 7 meeting in Greensboro. PAWS customizes the type of training to match not only the individual client's needs but also his or her home environment. Supported by private donors, PAWS also provides lifetime team

support, which encourages independence. The Trustees were fascinated by Amy's presentation, and Nitro, her demonstration dog, dazzled everyone with his execution of commands, all designed to give a person with disabilities a helping hand (or paw). For more information about PAWS, visit www.pawswithacause.org or email trainer@charlottedogs.com.

From the Wake Chapter

The HLA-Wake Chapter has been busy with volunteer activities. Of course, we were out in force at the Walk4Hearing, but other things were afoot, too:

Several Wake members volunteered at Camp Woodbine, which offered a day of fun for Deaf and Hard of Hearing kids and their families. There's an online movie of camp activities at under "News" in the second column of www.nchearingloss.org.

Two Wake members were on a panel discussion of CI users for a UNC class or Speech and Hearing students.

Three Wake members presented an eldercare fair at SAS in November.

The chapter presented a framed appreciation certificate to Dr. Alison Turner, founder of our chapter.

From the Charlotte Chapter

The HLA-Charlotte Chapter held its annual Christmas gathering on Sunday, Dec. 6 at the home of Myra and John White. Attendees had the pleasure of meeting several newcomers to HLAA. Lots of good food, fellowship, and sharing!

NC Assistive Technology Expo Attracts Over 1300 Visitors

The North Carolina Assistive Technology Expo, held December 3-4, 2009 at the North Raleigh Hilton, was a two-day event designed to increase awareness and provide current information about assistive technology. According to Sonya Van Horn, Executive Director of Partnerships in Assistive Technology, the event had 582 registered participants and

over 1300 visitors to its Exhibit Hall. Its Exhibit Hall was the Expo's largest ever, with 66 exhibitors and nonprofit agencies attending. Participants rated the conference 4.336 out of 5 (excellent).

The 20th anniversary of the NC AT Expo is coming in 2010 and special events are planned to mark the occasion. The next Expo will be held November 18-19, 2010. For information, visit www.pat.org.

UNCG Adult Cochlear Implant Rehab Group

The Adult Cochlear Implant Rehab Group at the UNCG Speech and Hearing Clinic welcomes new patients! The group meets at the UNCG Speech and Hearing Clinic, 3rd Floor Ferguson Building, at the corner of Spring Garden and Highland Ave., on Wednesdays at 4 PM. Medicare now covers this service. Contact: Lyn Mankoff at 336-334-5939.

HLA-NC Board Meeting Feb. 6

The HLA-NC Board of Trustees will meet on Saturday, Feb. 6, 2010 at 10:00 AM at Heritage Greens in Greensboro, NC. HLAA members interested in statewide matters are invited to attend. Directions can be found on our site: www.nchearingloss.org.

HLA-NC members, we value your personal stories about hearing loss issues. Send contributions of 300 words maximum to the editor at eurymen@gmail.com.

Local HLA Chapters in NC

While the Internet provides a wealth of information for people with hearing loss, nothing can compare to the camaraderie of group meetings! HLA-NC hopes to grow into all regions of the Tarheel State where there is demand. If you're interested in a chapter developing in your community, or if you wish to be involved, contact Toni Barrient, HLA Chapter Coordinator, at tbarrient@hearingloss.org.

All chapters welcome newcomers. Please note that meeting times and locations are subject to change; first-timers and non-regulars should contact their local chapter to verify this info.

BLUE RIDGE CHAPTER

Serving: Morganton, and Burke, Catawba, Caldwell, Alexander, Cleveland, Lincoln, and McDowell Counties

Meets: 2nd Monday of every other month (Feb., Apr., June, Aug., Oct., Dec.), 10:00 to 11:00 AM

Location: Phifer Wellness Center, Morganton, NC

Contact: Wayne Giese at waynester@msn.com

CAPE FEAR CHAPTER

Serving: Wilmington, Southport, Hampstead, Carolina Beach, and Wrightsville Beach

Meets: 2nd Wednesday of each month, 11:00 AM

Location: New Hanover County Senior Center, 2222 S. College Rd., Wilmington, NC

Contact: Alice Worthington at 919-799-0753 (voice); or Barbara Shaver at 919-452-0906 (TTY)

CHARLOTTE CHAPTER

Serving: Mecklenburg County, but also has members from Gaston, Cabarrus, Union, and Stanly Counties

Meets: 3rd Tuesday of every other month (see www.nhearingloss.org for scheduled meetings), social 6:30–7:00 PM, meeting 7:00–8:30 PM

Location: Conference room of the Charlotte Regional Resource Center for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing, 5501 Executive Center Dr., Charlotte, NC

Contact: Myra White at myra@carolina.rr.com; or call Ivy Williams, Hard of Hearing Specialist with the Charlotte Regional Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, at 704-568-8558 (voice) or 704-568-8505 (TTY)

DURHAM CHAPTER

Serving: Durham, but also Chapel Hill, Hillsborough, Raleigh, and Roxboro

Meets: 4th Saturday of each month, 10:30 AM

Location: St. Paul United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall, 2700 North Roxboro Road, Durham, NC

Contact: Wayne Benson at awbenson32@gmail.com

GREENSBORO CHAPTER

Serving: Greensboro, Guilford County, and Central North Carolina

Meets: 2nd Monday of each month, 7:00 PM

Location: Earth Fare, 2965 Battleground Ave., Greensboro, NC

Contact: Susan Wilson at 336-681-2056 or susan.wilson@ncdhs.gov

WAKE CHAPTER

Serving: Raleigh, but also Apex, Cary, Knightdale, Wake Forest, Garner, and other outlying areas of Wake County

Meets: 3rd Thursday of each month, 7:00 PM

Location: Duke Raleigh Hospital, 3400 Wake Forest Road, Raleigh, NC

Contact: Janet McGettrick at 919-469-0924 (voice); or Steve Barber at steve.barber@earthlink.net

WINSTON-SALEM CHAPTER

Serving: Winston-Salem and Central North Carolina

Meets: 2nd Thursday of each month, 6:45 PM

Location: The Enrichment Center, 1006 South Marshall St., Winston-Salem, NC

Contact: Bill Crowley at wmcrowley748@bellsouth.net; or Bill Shugart at 336-768-1177