



**North Carolina Self Help For
Hard of Hearing People, Inc.**

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests:

My name is Joan Black and I am speaking today on behalf of North Carolina Self Help for Hard of Hearing People, Inc.

The Theme of the 2005 White House Conference on Aging was “The Booming Dynamics of Aging: From Awareness to Action”; with one theme of advocacy to overcome **social isolation**. Though not included in the national recommendations – we believe hearing loss seriously exaggerates this problem. According to a study by The National Council on the Aging (NCOA) www.ncoa.org untreated hearing loss has serious emotional and social consequences for older persons. Among seniors hearing loss is the third most prevalent, but treatable, disabling condition www.hearingloss.org

Recommendations by NC-SHHH to overcome **social isolation**:

1. Almost by definition, the aging population falls under accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the North Carolina (Building Code) Accessibility Codes. These codes should be an integral part of all state required/mandated inspections licensing agreements and facility operating procedures. For example: improvements in listening situations will increase the ability to

communicate and it will also increase the safety of those with hearing loss in the environment.

2. Hearing loss is a medical issue and should be an important part of senior's insurance for medical coverage – i.e., for hearing aids, cochlear implants and other assistive hearing devices.

3. Education of the public (from government officials to consumers) on hearing loss is a vital key to quality of life in our later years. Although NC-SHHH has been advocating for 'hearing accessibility' for years, we need your help to include supportive 'hearing loss' wording in legislative action that provide information and entry to an array of senior services and activities.

For those adults coming of age – 60 as shown on the cover of Newsweek – they will be looking at livability and senior-friendliness of communities with listening demands greater and more varied than for those of past generations. The definition of what it means to be an older adult has changed!

Thank You,

Joan P. Black
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November 16, 2005