

DIABLO VALLEY NEWS

February 2010

DIABLO VALLEY CHAPTER MEETINGS

1st Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m.
(except July and August)

ALD Demo Library at 6:30 p.m.

Walnut Creek United Methodist Church
1543 Sunnyvale Avenue
Wesley Room of the Education Building
Walnut Creek, CA 94597

The meeting room and parking are at the
back of the church.

Our meetings are open to the public. Donations are
accepted. We have an assisted listening system so
you can use your t-coil and most of our meetings are
captioned.

OUR NEXT MEETING IS February 3, 2010

**Brain Health – Keep Your Brain
Happy, Healthy and Fit**
Dr. Eric Freitag

How to keep your brain happy, healthy and
fit. Topics covered will include how the brain
functions, activities that promote brain fitness
and diseases and conditions that affect brain
function.

* * *

March 3 - Tinnitus, presented by Tracy Peck,
Au.D. She is from the Hearing and Speech Center
of Northern California.

April 7 - Comfort Contego, Patrik Liljekvist from
Comfort Audio will give a presentation on Comfort
Contego, a digital wireless FM system.



*Mount Diablo on December 7, 2009, Save Mount
Diablo's 38th Anniversary. Photo taken by Scott Hein.
Used with permission.*

MEMBERSHIP REMINDER

Time to renew your HLAA membership? If so,
please send it to us rather than to HLAA.
Instead of charging chapter dues, we receive
\$10 from HLAA for each membership that is
processed through our chapter. Mail your
check to:

HLAA-DV
P.O. Box 5495
Walnut Creek, CA 94596-1495

*If you don't mail your check to us
we don't get the \$10.*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

ALD Demo Library

By Ann Thomas

Wow, the New Year came in like a lion. I have been very busy contacting manufacturers of assistive listening devices (ALDs) asking them for in kind donations. I am very pleased to inform you our ALD demonstration library is coming into fruition. We now have 23 devices. We are going to host the demonstration library ½ hour before our regular meetings. If you would like to try them, come to our meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Bellman & Symfon

Door Transmitter
Telephone Transmitter
Flash Receiver

} Bellman Visit
Value Pack \$258

Clarity

Clarity Professional C4230
Moderate hearing loss \$270

Clarity Professional XL45
Moderate to severe hearing loss \$140
Amplified outgoing speech; Duplex speakerphone

Clarity Professional C2210
Moderate to severe hearing loss \$190
Digital Clarity 3.0 technology provides intelligent amplification to make soft sounds audible while keeping loud, sudden sounds bearable; Call waiting

Clarity D613 DECT 6.0
Mild to moderate hearing loss \$90
Cordless; Loud digital answering machine; Caller ID

Clarity Amplified Neck loop CE30 \$80
Portable Telephone Amplifier \$35

Clarity Bed Shaker C2210 \$40

Ameriphone

AlertMaster AM-100 Notification System \$80
Doorbell and telephone; connects to lamp; wireless doorbell included

AlertMaster AM-6000 Notification System \$180
Doorbell and telephone; connects to lamp; wireless doorbell included. Additional transmitters are available for baby crying, motion detector, audible-warning devices within 80'.

Walker

Walker Amplified Handset W6 \$90
20db amplification

Comfort Audio

Comfort Contego, personal FM system \$971
Comfort Duett, personal listener \$170

General Technologies

Answering machine with a headset, neck loop jack \$70

Williams Sound

Motiva 360 Personal FM system \$929
Pocket Talker Ultra personal amplifier \$179
Headphone 026 behind the head \$19
Headphone 027 \$19
Neck loop 001 3.5mm Plug \$49
Conference Microphone 049 \$99

All items are manufacturer's suggested retail price.

DONATIONS:

We would like to thank the following individuals and companies for their generous donations during the month of January: Greg & Tanya Eisenman, Marilyn Fidge, Joseph & Dolores Roemmer, Bellman & Symfon, Clarity, General Technologies, and Williams Sound.



CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD

By Dr. Leslie Harrold

Lousy title for a landmark movie. I just do not believe in a lesser God, let alone lesser beings. In the movie, the heroine, decides to leave the relative safety of her world of silence to interact with the world of people who seemingly don't care. That's a tough choice, but she has the support of her classmates in a school for deaf children.

My hearing loss is not much compared too hers, but enough to truly appreciate the support I feel from the band of brothers and sisters of HLAA-DV. Just to know that I am not alone, that there are others like me. This helps make my problem seem less personal.

For me, it's like I don't particularly think about having a physical problem, when I am at a meeting. I do sort of observe that we are all here together, studying some developments and assistive listening devices about a shared experience. We are all looking in the same direction. I have, just like you, taken things from the meetings or our newsletter and applied them to the day-to-day living in the hearing world. And that's a good thing.

Anyway, this is a sort of a valentine scribble, but like any Valentine I've ever written, from the heart.

NEW HEARING AID

Seems an elderly man had serious hearing problems for a number of years.

He went to the Hearing Aids Specialist and the Specialist was able to have him fitted for a set of hearing aids that allowed the man to hear 100%.

The elderly man went back in a month to the specialist and the specialist said, "Your hearing is perfect. Your family must be really pleased that you can hear again."

To which the man said, "Oh, I haven't told my family yet. I just sit around and listen to the conversations. I've changed my will three times!"

ALZHEIMER'S AND HEARING LOSS

By Leigh Kjeldsen, Au.D.

Recently a woman brought her father into my office for a hearing test. She reported that he had been having memory problems and the family wanted to know if his communication difficulties were from cognitive decline or hearing loss.

She said his doctor had given him some memory games to do on the computer that involved listening to and recalling words, but they hadn't helped much. The hearing test I did that day showed a moderate level of loss. This patient had been prescribed these memory tasks to complete, but he couldn't properly hear the stimulus, so of course he hadn't shown improvement.

Study after study in the past 20 years has shown that people with Alzheimer's disease have a greater incidence of hearing loss than those in the general population. The studies show a correlation, but there is no proof of causation at this time.

Here are some interesting facts regarding Alzheimer's and hearing loss. A significant risk factor for developing Alzheimer's disease is depression. One by-product of untreated hearing loss is depression. There are millions of Americans who should be wearing hearing aids, but are not, creating a large pool of people at higher risk for depression and therefore at higher risk for Alzheimer's.

A recommended lifestyle change to prevent Alzheimer's is mental stimulation. Hearing and processing what is happening in the world around us stimulates many areas in the brain. Staying connected with family and friends and avoiding social isolation is also very stimulating.

I know that most readers of this newsletter have already accepted their hearing loss and are wearing hearing aids or using other assistive devices, but we all know at least one person with hearing loss who isn't using amplification. This article has a few facts we can use to persuade these people to take care of themselves and live a healthier life.

ADA: KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

By Ann Thomas

People with a hearing loss are covered under the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). What is the ADA? The ADA is a civil rights law enacted on January 23, 1990 to prohibit discrimination solely on the basis of disability in employment, public services, and accommodations. Some of the areas this federal law applies to are: employment, public services, public accommodations and services operated by private entities and telecommunications. Businesses and organizations that serve the public include: restaurants, hotels, taxis and shuttles, grocery and department stores; hospitals, medical offices, theaters, health clubs, parks and zoos.

How does this affect you? This will be an ongoing column. This issue will be about the work place.

Employers with **15** or more employees cannot discriminate against people with disabilities and they must make reasonable accommodations to the known physical or mental limitations of a qualified applicant or employee, unless such accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the employer. Reasonable accommodations include such actions as making worksites accessible, modifying existing equipment, providing new devices, modifying work schedules, restructuring jobs, and providing readers or interpreters.

In general, the applicant or employee with a disability is responsible for letting the employer know that an accommodation is needed to participate in the application process, to perform essential job functions, or to receive equal benefits and privileges of employment. Employers are not required to provide accommodations if they are not aware of the need.

An accommodation request does not have to be in writing. However, the EEOC suggests that individuals with disabilities might find it useful to document accommodation requests in the event there is a dispute about whether or when they requested accommodation. One way to document an accommodation request is to make a written request.

The ADA does not include specific guidelines or forms for requesting reasonable accommodation. However, some employers have developed in-house forms. If so, employees should use the employer's forms for requesting accommodation. Otherwise, individuals with disabilities can use any method that is effective. The ADA does not require specific language or format. The following information provides an example of an accommodation request letter.

Date of letter
Your name
Your address
Employer's name
Employer's address

Dear (e.g. Supervisor, Manager, Human Resources, Personnel):

Content to consider in body of letter:

- Identify yourself as a person with a disability.
- State that you are requesting accommodations under the ADA (or the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 if you are a federal employee).
- Identify your specific problematic job tasks.
- Identify your accommodation ideas.
- Request your employer's accommodation. Ideas.
- Refer to attached medical documentation if appropriate.
- Ask that your employer respond to your request in a reasonable amount of time.

Sincerely,
Your signature
Your printed name
cc: to appropriate individuals

* You may want to attach medical information to your letter to help establish that you are a person with a disability and to document the need for accommodation.

Employment accommodation information reprinted with permission from: Job Accommodation Network (JAN)
www.jan.wvu.edu

GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR TELECOIL

By Dr. Brad Smith

The telecoil or induction coil is an important hearing aid feature that has been shown to improve the overall benefit and satisfaction a person receives from their hearing aids. Unlike hearing aid microphones (which respond to acoustic signals traveling through the air), telecoils are sensitive to sources of magnetic energy such as hearing aid compatible telephones and induction loop assistive listening devices/systems.

As the name would imply, telecoils can improve speech understanding on the telephone while wearing a hearing aid. Moreover, telecoils (i.e. induction coils) provide a convenient, economical means of connecting hearing aids with a vast array of assistive listening devices (ALDs) such as wireless transmitters for television, personal FM systems, and induction loop systems (e.g., neckloops, theaters, churches, living spaces, etc). This is an important consideration because these assistive devices can offer speech understanding that is far superior to that which can be obtained with hearing aids alone in certain listening situations.

While the telecoil itself is not a new innovation, there have been some new developments to the telecoil over the past several years. Programmable telecoils are probably one of the more important of such developments. A common issue with telecoils is that they can be somewhat unpredictable in terms of the volume and frequency response they provide for an individual patient, potentially causing insufficient volume, poor sound quality and poor clarity.

There are a myriad of factors that account for the unpredictability of the telecoil response such as:

1. the characteristics of the telecoil itself (e.g., telecoil strength, physical position in the aid, manufacturer's fitting algorithm),

2. varying output characteristics from the devices that might be used with the telecoil (e.g., telephones, ALDs, loop systems), and
3. the fact that individual ears vary anatomically.

The primary advantage of a programmable telecoil is that it enables the practitioner to custom tune the telecoil's response to the individual's hearing profile and account for some of these variables. With appropriate adjustments of the tones and the volume provided through the telecoil, it is possible to improve both sound quality and speech clarity when listening through the telecoil. Real ear measurements are an essential clinical tool for fitting hearing aids and can also be very useful for fine-tuning programmable telecoils. We know that real ear measurements are valuable in that they allow the practitioner to visualize how a hearing aid is amplifying sound. The measurement is conducted by placing a tiny probe microphone near the eardrum while the hearing aid is worn. Sounds (typically speech) are then presented and the resulting output from the hearing aid is measured and displayed on a graph. This output can be readily compared to an empirically verified prescription which is based on the individual's hearing profile. Using this data, adjustments to the hearing aids can then be reliably made to ensure that the widest possible range of speech sounds are audible.

....telecoils (i.e. induction coils) provide a convenient, economical means of connecting hearing aids with a vast array of assistive listening devices.

A programmable telecoil can be tuned in a manner similar to that described above. In this scenario, the person would typically listen to their cell phone, the office phone, an ALD, or an in-office loop system while in their telecoil program. The telecoil response can then be visualized and adjusted in real time while the patient listens to a phone call or live speech presented through the ALD with the aim of optimizing audibility, speech clarity, and comfort.

This process may require some follow up tuning largely due to inherent differences across phones and induction loop based ALDs. Still, real ear

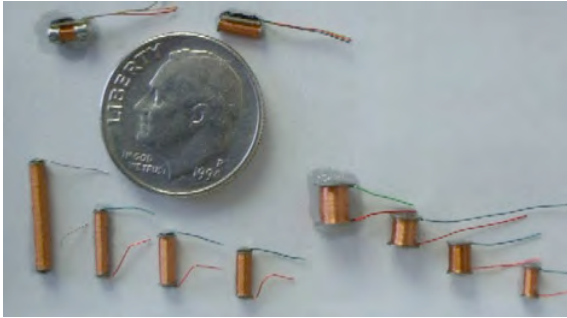
COMMUNICATION CORNER

By Lisa Roeder, MS, CCC-SLP

measurements are clinically useful because they provide us with a very good starting point for optimizing the telecoil response and a means of objectively measuring and tracking the adjustments that are made to the telecoil.

Dr. Smith is Director of Audiology at the Hearing Group of NM, 1121 4th St NW, Suite 1D, Albuquerque, NM 87102

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PICTURED: Various sizes of telecoils used in hearing aids pictured with a dime to show their actual size.

To learn more about telecoils and loops, read the Loop New Mexico brochure available at <http://hlaabq.homestead.com/LoopNM.html>



CALLING ALL WRITERS!

We are seeking YOUR stories about what interests you about hearing loss. Have you had an eye-opening experience or tried a new technology lately? Tell us all about it!

All submitted articles will be edited for availability of space, accuracy and style. Articles should be no more than 350 words and single-spaced after periods. Articles are due by the 5th of the month and email to HLAADV@hearinglossdv.org.

As I begin to write my first official column for the HLAA-DV newsletter, I have to admit I'm nervous. I'm not sure why, because I love to write. In fact, I find it therapeutic. I have to think it might be the topic of hearing loss that makes me nervous. This also doesn't make sense to me because I *have* a hearing loss and *have had* one since I was a young child. Possibly it's the idea of me introducing myself as a person with a hearing loss that has my stomach fluttering.

I'm totally fine with my hearing loss – internally. But, it's only been the past few years that I have begun to identify myself that way to my friends and extended family. I got my first hearing aid about three years ago, but haven't really given it a chance to work for me (that's another article).

Growing up with a mild-moderate hearing loss in one ear only became significant to me as an adult, when I began learning about speech and language development and all the communication nuances that accompany typical development.

Being a shy child, my social development was altered by my tendencies to withdraw from noisy situations, prefer dyads or small groups, nod my head in acknowledgement of hearing something I truly didn't hear in its entirety, laugh at a joke I really didn't hear completely, etc. I thought most of my social insecurities stemmed from my reaction to being a *preacher's kid*. I realize now, it likely grew from not having access to all speech sounds in my environment. This led me to *filling in the blanks* based upon my own experiences which quite often didn't jive with what the speaker was communicating. It resulted in awkward situations with my peers.

As an adult aware of these ingrained behavioral responses to *not hearing so great*, I began 2010 by embracing my hearing loss and sharing that experience with you.



HLAA-DV MONTHLY BOARD OF TRUSTEE MEETINGS

HLAA-DV BOT meets the 2nd Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. in the Bride's Room at the Walnut Creek United Methodist Church. We encourage members to attend.

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Membership includes national, state and local Diablo Valley Chapter memberships, *Hearing Loss Magazine*, *The Hearing Loss Californian* and *Diablo Valley Chapter* newsletters. For international and corporate rates, please visit www.hearingloss.org.

- \$20 Student \$35 Individual
 \$45 Couple \$60 Professional

Please send the Diablo Valley Chapter newsletter by:

- E-mail US mail None

Chapter Donations: Please donate! We need your help. Your donation can help us better serve our community.

- \$100 \$75 \$50 \$25 \$10

Other _____ no amount too small

Total enclosed \$ _____

Make checks payable to
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We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Your dues and donations may be tax deductible.



HearingLossNation

The social network for young and hard of hearing

HearingLossNation is a nonprofit online community designed specifically for hard of hearing (HOH) individuals between the ages of 18 and 35.

<http://hearinglossnation.ning.com>
<http://hearinglossnation.ning.com/video>



Hearing Loss Association

of America

Diablo Valley Chapter

P. O. Box 5495
Walnut Creek, CA 94596-1495

Please send all correspondence to our P.O. Box

HLAA-DV WEBSITE

Diablo Valley Chapter has its own website! Check back often for updates about local advocacy, meetings, resources and assistive technology at www.hearinglossdv.org

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HEARING LOSS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

The Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) is the nation's foremost membership and advocacy organization for people with hearing loss. The National support network includes the Washington D.C. area office, 14 state organizations, and 200 local chapters. Hearing loss is a daily challenge you can overcome. You do not have to hide your hearing loss. You do not have to face hearing loss alone.

RESOURCES

HLAA: www.hearingloss.org

HLACA: www.hearinglossca.org

HLAA-DV: www.hearinglossdv.org

Captioned movies:

www.captionfish.com

www.fomdi.com

California Telephone Access Program and the California Relay Service: www.ddtp.com

Q & A in the workplace: www.eecoc.gov/facts/deafness