

**Happy 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!**

*Join us as we celebrate 25 years of service to the Mt. Diablo communities.*

### **HLAA-DV WEBSITE**

Diablo Valley Chapter now has its own website!  
You can read about local advocacy meetings, resources and assistive technology at  
<http://www.hearinglossdv.org>

### **DIABLO VALLEY CHAPTER MEETINGS**

**1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m.**  
(except July and August).

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**  
**April 1, 2009 at 7:00 p.m.**

*Communicating in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

Richard Procnier, a FCC licensed ham radio  
operator for 50+ years and his daughter, Nancy  
Procnier, a member of the Cal Poly Alumni  
Board and small business owner, will cover the  
history that led us to the digital information age.  
Their presentation will include a text messaging  
demonstration with iPhones, an internet-  
connected multimedia smartphone and a  
discussion of the latest social networking  
utilities, including Twitter and Facebook.

### **OUR NEWSLETTER NEEDS A NAME!**

PLEASE SEND IN YOUR SUGGESTIONS

*Diablo Valley News*  
*Diablo Valley Journal*  
*Diablo Valley Ear Canal*  
*Diablo Valley Ear Waves*  
*Diablo Valley Ear Connection*  
*The 3<sup>rd</sup> Ear*  
*Hear, Hear!*  
*Soundbite*

The winning entry will be announced at the June picnic!  
Contact your newsletter editors no later than May 1<sup>st</sup>.  
[info@hearinglossdv.org](mailto:info@hearinglossdv.org)



### **THE RESULTS ARE IN!**

Approximately 200 men, women and children plus  
at least a dozen friendly dogs attended Northern  
California's 2008 **Walk4Hearing** Walkathon near  
the Golden Gate Bridge. Total funds raised were  
**\$46,540.50** and of that amount Diablo Valley  
Chapter raised \$4,332.00. Our share came to  
**\$3,359.20!**

Thank you to all who donated and participated in  
raising awareness for hearing loss!

# THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Don Senger



Last month we talked about hearing loss being an embarrassment. I'd like to carry this topic one step further in this column.

Embarrassment - the curse upon hard of hearing people. No one likes to be embarrassed, particularly the hard of hearing person. Yet, because of the person's hearing impairment, the hard of hearing person frequently finds him or herself in embarrassing, self-conscious situations. A question is asked, a statement is made, or a comment is given and a response from you is being waited for. And you have only a faint idea of what was said. What to do?

If you are like most hard of hearing people, no doubt you will try to fake your way out. With luck, you will save face and, hopefully, no one will ridicule you about not understanding or making an inappropriate response. Doing that is not the right way to attack the problem and can not only cause embarrassment but also get you into a troublesome situation.

An example might be taking an old, inexpensive coat to the dry cleaners to have it cleaned and pressed. You tell the attendant that you want the coat cleaned and pressed, the attendant might ask something like "Somi a ko to like it?" and "Our new cuff is a bit very sail en get you like?" All mumble jumble to you and after a couple attempts to understand you give up and say *yes* to everything to avoid embarrassment, as a crowd of waiting customers builds up behind you. When you come back to pick up the coat you are presented a bill for a \$29.95 for water repellent and special soil resistant treatments. You didn't want nor need either of these, but agreed to them because you didn't understand. Sadly, you pay the bill and depart.

The lesson should have made you more cautious on future communication exchanges, yet every now and then you do it again. At home, at work, at play, there is no escaping it. Questions and comments are presented to us all the time and we try to cope with it the best we can. But faking isn't the answer.

It should be noted that there can be differing embarrassing situations. The foregoing was a situation where you simply didn't understand what

was said. There are other situations where what you think was said was not actually what was said. In this situation, you firmly believed one thing was said while in reality something else was said that might not even remotely relate to what you thought was said. For example you might think someone said "Your car is on fire!" when what they really said was "You look tired". Let's hope you didn't turn and rush to your car when they said that.

In short, the situations we are referring to are those where you didn't understand what was said but don't want to admit it and let others know. So, you answer questions you don't hear, you laugh at jokes you don't understand, and you agree with comments you don't follow, all to keep from having the spotlight on you and cause you embarrassment because you did not understand.

There is a way around these situations, but it requires patience and understanding both by you and by the person you are communicating with. First, if the other person doesn't already know, explain that you have a hearing loss and have difficulty understanding what was said. Most people are understanding and will patiently try to help you understand their questions or comments. If, after several attempts at repeating themselves you still have difficulty understanding, ask them to rephrase the question or comment, or ask for a key word that has escaped you. Once known, the rest may easily fall into place. Be sure the lighting is on your speaker's face and not behind them. Try to stay at the same head level as the other person. If

he is sitting, you sit. If standing, you stand.

Don't be afraid to look to others for help. A third ear can help guide you at times of need. It can be helpful if a family member or friend repeats to you that the waiter is asking whether you want a baked potato or French fries after you puzzle the waiter with your response of "Thousand Island dressing". It is much easier to understand those who are part of our daily lives than complete strangers who sometimes SEEM to speak in foreign languages.

Above all, note that your hearing loss is nothing to be ashamed of or embarrassed about. There are over 25 million people with some degree of hearing loss. You are not alone. So next time you have difficulty understanding what was said, make an extra effort to show people that while you

are not deaf, you do not hear well. However, you can hear and want to communicate with them if they will give you a little patience and understanding. With practice, communicating can become easier and enjoyable, both for you and for those you communicate with.

Instead of avoiding them, tackle your problems head-

## SIGN UP FOR HLA A ENews

Find out about what HLA A is doing for you by signing up for **ENews**. Read about human-interest stories that speak to issues of hearing loss and get your questions answered about assistive technology. **ENews** is free. Sign up today – it's easy!

1. Go to [www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org)
2. Click on ENews Sign Up
3. Enter your email address
4. Activate your subscription by clicking on the link HLA A sends you in order to confirm that you signed up.
5. You may unsubscribe at any time

### Upcoming WebChat: April 23, 2009, 4:00p.m. PST

*Moving from Hearing Aids to Cochlear Implants-How to Decide*

## GOOD NEWS FROM CELL PHONE COMPANIES!

*By Janice Schacter*

AT & T, Verizon and Motorola have websites that include listings and explanation of the M (microphone) and T (telecoil) ratings of their cell phones.

### AT & T

<http://www.wireless.att.com/about/disability-resources/hearing-aid-compatibility.jsp>

### Verizon

<http://aboutus.vzw.com/accessibility/products.html>

### Motorola

<http://www.motorola.com/accessibility>

Basic information and FAQs about hearing aid compatibility:

<http://direct.motorola.com/ens/accessibility/Hearingaid.html>

For information about the different Motorola models, including M/T ratings:

<http://direct.motorola.com/ens/accessibility/Hearingaid.html>



## JUNE PICNIC

We are still looking for ideas and suggestions on where to have our annual June picnic. So far, we have received the following suggestions: bocce ball and the Lafayette Reservoir. Please send us your ideas!

We are also seeking a few people to help coordinate the potluck event. Reply to [info@hearinglossdv.org](mailto:info@hearinglossdv.org)

## GOING DIGITAL

*By Teresa Rebman*

In the past few years, I'd noticed my hearing was getting worse. It was frustrating to say the least. I was becoming antisocial, which wasn't part of my personality. I would often complain to my husband and brother about how I felt so left out of people's conversations, especially during family get-togethers. They both begged me to check out new technologies on hearing aids. I refused to consider it because I knew it would be exhausting and time consuming to try new hearing aids. I was told that it could take up to a year for the brain to relearn sounds being processed through digital aids versus analog aids. Something I wasn't ready to do.

Last summer I was getting out of my car, dropped one of my hearing aids and it broke. I looked into getting it fixed but the manufacturer refused to repair it saying that analog aids were considered old technology. I was devastated and it took me a couple of weeks to realize that I had no choice but to get new hearing aids.

I met with my audiologist to try to find digital aids best suited for my hearing loss. The first time I put on the digital aids I felt my shoulders relax. The aids were so quiet compared to my analog aids. I didn't think I could understand anything but my audiologist told me it was quiet because of the way these new aids processed the

sounds and I had to give myself time to adjust.

People at work have been supportive but it hasn't been easy. I have heard new sounds. Some of them are *chirpy* and coworker voices have sounded like the frog's *ribbit*. It has been very strange hearing sounds that I never heard before.

It has only been since Thanksgiving that I started this process to *hear* better. I am still adjusting to the new aids but my friends and family say that I am hearing better. I would like to believe that I am, but if what I was told holds true, I look forward to next year after my brain has

## CALLING ALL WRITERS!

We are seeking YOUR stories about YOUR life, traveling, locally or abroad; making a decision that affects daily life, family life or yourself personally. Have you had an eye-opening experience relating to hearing loss that you would like to share, or tried a new technology lately? Tell us about it!

Articles should be no more than 350 words and sent in by the 12<sup>th</sup> of any month to [info@hearinglossdv.org](mailto:info@hearinglossdv.org).

## FREE ENERGIZER HEARING AID BATTERIES

Bob MacPherson of *bhNEWS*

Energizer is giving away free samples of its hearing aid batteries so users can try the new perforated pack. The tabs on the batteries have also been made wider and longer. Samples are available for sizes 10, 13, 312 and 675. To order, call 866-449-EARS or go to: <http://offers.energizer.com/perfpack>

## BACKGROUND NOISE

By Leigh Kjeldsen, Au.D.

The situation that most patients cite as their number one difficulty is hearing in the presence of background noise. In December 2008 an article appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle* titled *Clues to Aging Ears, Cocktail Party Problem*. I was excited to see this article because hearing loss is typically ignored in the media and it explains that *hearing* is not just done by the ears, but also by the brain.

The article reports on research by Robert Frisina of the University of Rochester who studies how we hear in noise. Prior research has shown that the brain doesn't just receive signals from the ears, but it also talks back to the ears. The signals from the brain allow the auditory system to tune out the background noise and focus effectively on speech. Frisina's work shows as we age, our brain's ability to block out background noise declines. In fact, our ability begins to drop off in our late 30's and is the worst in people over 62.

With hearing loss and age related decline in ability to hear in background noise, we need all the tools available to us. There are high tech and low tech solutions.

As explained in the article we hear best when both ears are hearing the words at the same time. Therefore, two hearing

aids should work better than one for most people. Moreover, new hearing aid technology with directional microphones has been proven to help people hear better in background noise than old technology. Finally, for those who are really struggling, there are FM systems allowing the speaker's voice to transmit to their partner's hearing aids bypassing unwanted noise.

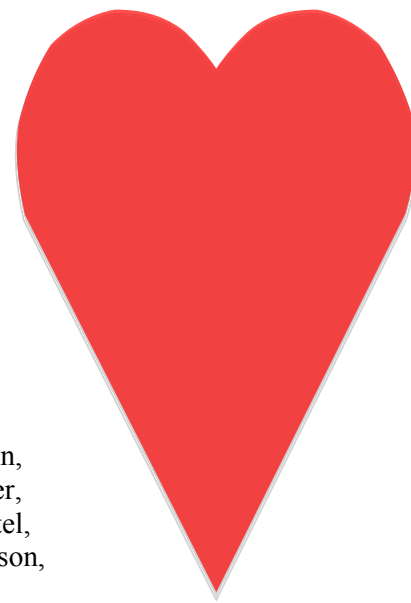
Low tech solutions are also essential for success. Look at the speaker to read lips and get additional cues. Tell people you have a hearing loss and ask them to get your attention before speaking. Try to go to restaurants during off peak hours and ask to be seated in a quiet location. Look for restaurants with good acoustics and share your favorites with your friends at HLAA.

By using high tech and low tech solutions for hearing we can optimize our communication ability to stay connected in this noisy world.

## DONORS

We would like to thank the following people for donations in March:

Gwen Atil,  
Marilyn Finn,  
Cindy Jagger,  
Doug Hachtel,  
Joanne Hanson,  
Laura Karr



## DEAF ACTORS

**Law & Order: Criminal Intent**  
Tuesday, April 3, 2009 9:00 p.m.

**Law & Order:** Criminal Intent is featuring an episode called *The Silencer*, starring a talent-heavy cast of deaf actors, including: Deanne Bray, Alexandria Wailes, Garrett Zuercher, Darren Frazier, Hillary Baack, Willy Conley, and Raymond Luczak. Adding to the excitement, NBC broke history by hiring the most deaf extras (35) for a network TV episode.

## CONVENTION 2009

June 18- 21

Nashville, Tennessee



Mark your calendar and come celebrate HLAA's 30<sup>th</sup> birthday! We'll be shaking things up at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center in Nashville, Tennessee.

For more information about the convention's workshop schedule, registration, individual tickets, and more, visit

<http://www.hearingloss.org/convention>

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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](http://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.

\$25

\$50

\$75

\$100

Other \_\_\_\_\_ no amount too small

Total enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to

**HLAA-DV**

**P.O. Box 5495**

**Walnut Creek, CA 94596-9998**

We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit. Your dues and donations may be tax deductible.

## HearingLossNation

### *The social network for young and hard of hearing*

HearingLossNation is a non-profit 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 94596-9998

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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. HLAA opens the world of communication to people with hearing loss through information, education, support and advocacy. The National support network includes the Washington D.C. area office, 14 state organizations, and 200 local chapters. Our clear, straightforward message has changed the lives of thousands of people. 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](http://www.hearingloss.org)

HLAA-CALIFORNIA: [www.hearinglossca.org](http://www.hearinglossca.org)

Captioned movies by zip code: [www.fomdi.com](http://www.fomdi.com)

California Telephone Access Program, free amplified telephones and the California Relay Service: [www.ddtp.com](http://www.ddtp.com)