

HEARSAY

The Official Newsletter of Hearing Loss Association of PA

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MESSAGE FROM DIANA

In 2003, HLA-PA sponsored the first of three one day conferences designed to provide hard of hearing employees, their employers and human resource personnel with information and resources related to working with a hearing loss. In subsequent years the conference was held in Harrisburg and Pittsburgh. The conference was developed by hard of hearing professionals with the support of the PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation to provide information on assistive technology, coping and communication strategies, on-the-job accommodations and the legal protections

and issues for those working with a hearing disability. HLA-PA is happy to announce that this conference is returning to the Philadelphia area, and will be held on Friday, October 29, 2010 at the Radisson Hotel in King of Prussia. You can find more information on page 4 of this month's HearSay. This is a great opportunity to learn more about working with a hearing loss and HLA-PA invites you all to attend.

*Diana Bender,
HLA-PA State Director
Bender @hla-pa.org*

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Cell Phones and Audio Performance

As cell phone enthusiast and amateur researcher, Steve Punter writes reviews on any cell phones he can get his hands on. He does this as a hobby and does not get paid or sponsored to do this. He borrows the phones from various friends and relatives. On his website, "Steve Punter's Southern Ontario's Cell Phone Page" (<http://www.arcx.com/sites/index.htm>), he analyzes the features in each phone including audio performance.

One of the biggest differences between cell phone models is their audio quality. As a hard of hearing consumer, this quality is of extreme importance. There is no industry accepted standard for how a cell phone should sound. Some companies have a total disregard for how the phones actually sound, while other companies try very hard to produce phones with excellent aural properties. Those are the ones we want to discover!

Audio quality can actually be broken down into two very distinct facets. Sound Reproduction is the phone's ability to reproduce the audio without adding distortion or unwanted noise. The Tonal Balance is the balance of sound levels across the full range of audio frequencies. If one says that it has good tonal balance, the audio is said to be "natural sounding".

When it comes to testing audio quality of a phone, Steve suggested trying to subject the model to as many different types of voice as possible. For example, some phones might sound great on female voices, but muddy on male voices. Phone a variety of pre-recorded messages, and carry on two way conversations. As for outgoing audio, ask callers to give their opinion of the sound, but don't rely on that. Steve calls his voicemail using the test phone, and then compares the overall quality against a reference phone.

Outgoing audio tests are carried out under a variety of background conditions, ranging from quiet rooms, to noisy shopping malls, to noisy vehicles. Steve suggested doing this to see how well the phone in question copes with the background noises and how clearly the user's voice is reproduced in each situation.

I would recommend going to the website to get a more in depth analysis of any phone of interest. Steve does have a glossary of the terms he uses when he does his review, so one is not left confused as to what he is describing. Of course this website does not replace trying the phone out oneself, and consumer review reports. This particular website is created by an individual who is giving his honest opinion. I was rather impressed with the details inputted for each review. Happy cell phone shopping!

Submitted By Alice Pakhtigian

Diana Bender Outstanding HOH Community Leader

Diana Bender was selected to be the winner as the Outstanding Hard of Hearing Community Leader for Better Hearing and Speech Month!

For the first time, Hamilton Relay decided to form a new recognition award for an individual who is hard of hearing and has a strong influence within Pennsylvania during Better Hearing and Speech Month. They have previously only recognized people who are deaf. John Fetcher, the National Outreach Manager of Hamilton Relay wrote, "You are a community leader that your community members look up to and you have demonstrated a commitment to enhance the lives of those around you. You deserve the recognition after the years you have contributed in the hard of hearing community."

Marcia Finisdore and Carolyn Meyer nominated Diana Bender for this award and submitted the following summary of her leadership skills that she has demonstrated over the years.

Diana Bender has had hearing loss since early childhood but it hasn't prevented her from fulfilling her goals. She received a cochlear implant six years ago. She has a doctorate in chemistry and a successful career as a chemist, a mother, and a wife. She is a stellar volunteer.

Diana became an active member of the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) (formerly SHHH). She has served the members of HLAA in numerous roles. She was a president of the Montgomery County chapter of HLAA for 4 years.

Diana has served in a volunteer capacity advocating for those with hearing loss, relentlessly devoting her time and boundless energy to achieve many goals. She has been a member of the Advisory Council of the Pennsylvania Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in the Department of Labor and Industry for six years, and served as secretary for three years. She also serves on the Pennsylvania Telecommunications Relay Board in the Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission (PUC) of which she was chairperson for three years of the 6 years she served.

During 2004-2006, Diana served on the Federal Access Board Committee that evaluated access in courtrooms across the nation.

Currently, Diana is the State Director of the Pennsylvania State Office of HLAA. She was the chairperson of the Walk4Hearing in Pennsylvania in 2009. And now she is on the Walk Steering Committee for the 2010 walk which will take place on September 25.

Additionally, Diana was elected to the Board of Trustees of the National HLAA at the meeting held in Nashville, Tennessee last June 2009.

She is now working with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation on an Employment Conference for October 29, 2010 to be held in King of Prussia, PA.

Diana does numerous workshops for civic organizations, government agencies, private enterprises, schools, hospitals and nursing homes about the impact of hearing loss on people's lives. All these efforts reflect her interest to increase the awareness of hearing loss and the way it affects hard of hearing people's daily lives.

Diana is a hard worker and does all of the above on her own time as a volunteer. She is a very thoughtful, compassionate and diplomatic person. She always has time to "listen" when someone needs her advice or help coping with hearing loss. She analyzes issues thoroughly and offers sound solutions to problems. She is a very gracious woman who makes people she works with feel positive about what they are trying to accomplish.

Her advocacy skills are top notch! For example, CapTel would not have been available to Pennsylvania residents without Diana's advocacy efforts. She got the ball rolling the minute she learned that the PUC in Pennsylvania was questioning the value of CapTel. Not only did she contact hundreds of people to write letters to the PUC but also supported a TV segment related to CapTel in which one of our HLAA-PA members was featured. The words "this will not work" and "we don't have time" are not a part of Diana's vocabulary. Pennsylvanians are truly blessed to have a leader of this caliber.

Submitted by Editor

State Office Happenings

If you see an area of interest and would like to participate, please contact our State Director, Diana Bender: bender@hla-pa.org . We need your input!

ODHH Forums: (Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing of the PA Department of Labor and Industry) CART and ALDs provided for all Forums:

March 3: Our HLA-PA representatives repeated our request that ODHH have at least one staff person who is hard of hearing. Their response: they do not have the funds for this staff person. Denise Brown did point out that she and Sharon Behun(Director of ODHH) have taken the HLAA Academy Course and believe this helps them to understand better the needs of those who are hard of hearing.

March 10: Pat Brockley, chairperson, attended the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) Advisory Board meeting in Harrisburg. This board reports to the PUC regarding Relay telephone service for those who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf/blind and have impaired speech. This affects all people who use the relay for telecommunication such as CapTel or Voice

Relay. Representatives from ATT and Hamilton Relay report to this council and we make recommendations to the PUC regarding this service. The Board meets 4 times a year, usually in Harrisburg. ATT reports that Relay calls are down about 14% from last year. This is the trend we have been seeing as people are using newer technology. Both ATT and Hamilton have new contracts in California. CapTel is hoping to open new call centers in that state. This has been a concern for us because all the captioning operators for CapTel are in Wisconsin. If Wisconsin has a storm and power outage, service could be compromised.

The 200 CapTel phone is being phased out. The new 800 CapTel will be replacing it in the near future. The PUC owns our web site, www.parelay.net. Good information there on partners and organizations to contact.

April 13: Among the issues Nancy Kingsley mentioned, were the need to have VSA's new theater captioning device provided to theaters outside of Philadelphia and the need for LED signs to be placed on buses to announce stops. Sharon Behun mentioned that ODHH attends an annual meeting of the association of senior centers, so Nancy asked her to bring

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WORKING TOGETHER

What: One Day Employment Conference for Hard of Hearing Workers, Job Seekers and Employers

Where: Radisson Valley Forge, First Avenue, King of Prussia, PA

When: Friday, October 29, 2010, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Cost: \$40 per person/\$70 for a student and parent

Information and registration forms are available at www.hla-pa.org or from HLA-PA at 1371 Cushmore Rd., Southampton, PA 18966; a request for a registration form can be made by email at conference@HLA-PA.org

**2010 Marcia Finisdore Award for Advocacy
Nominations Due October 31, 2010**

The Marcia Finisdore Award for Advocacy was established by Hearing Loss Association of Pennsylvania in 2004. This award is presented to an individual in recognition of excellence in improving communication access for hard of hearing people.

The criteria for selection are:

- A positive vision for the hard of hearing community and a continuing commitment to leadership.
- A demonstrated record of advocacy work for the rights and needs of hard of hearing people in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Nominations should include a written statement about the nominee and why this individual deserves the award. Please include contact information for yourself, as well as for the nominee.

Nominations should be sent to:
Ms. Iris Boshes, Director
Deaf Hearing Communication Centre
630 Fairview Road, Suite 100
Swarthmore, PA 19081

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up the need for assistive listening devices and captioning.

VETERANS: important information on CapTel

Option#1: All veterans can apply for a Federal CapTel phone through the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) through a VA audiologist. (No domestic toll charges)

Option#2: All veterans can apply for a CapTel phone through their State program.

Independence Starts Here (ISH): Our new initiative is gaining momentum!

March 30: Len Neely, Electronic Marketing Manager for the Philly Fun Guide, mentioned that the ISH Group Page has ranked in the top 10 of the most popular group pages on the Philly Fund Guide web site. Michael Norris noted that the theatres calculated that they have saved approximately \$35,000.00 because they share the accessibility



**Walk4Hearing
Let's Get Stepping PA!!**

Walk4Hearing PA Kick-Off Party
When: Saturday August 8, 2010
Breakfast served from 10am – 12pm
Where: Independence Visitor's Center, 6th and Market Street, Philadelphia
FREE for everyone – families and friends!

PA Walk4Hearing
When: Saturday September 25, 2010
Where: Ridley Creek State Park, PA

More information:
www.walk4hearing.org

HearSay Subscription

If you would like to receive your own copy of **HearSay**, the official newsletter of HLA-PA, please fill in this form and mail it to the address below. A **HearSay** subscription is free; however, HLA-PA is a not-for-profit organization run exclusively by volunteers and we are grateful for any donations.

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

E-MAIL : _____

Enclosed is my contribution of \$ _____ to support HearSay. Donations are tax deductible.

Make donations payable to HLA-PA and mail to:

**Marcia Finisdore
HLA-PA
4 State Road, #109
Media, PA 19063**

I would like to remain anonymous

I cannot contribute, but would like to receive HearSay.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!!

Assist the HLA-PA State Director by serving on the Advisory Council or one of its committees. The Council meets periodically in Carlisle but committees conduct most of their business by e-mail and occasionally meet in various parts of the state. If you think you would like to serve on the council or any of its committees, please contact one of the state leaders listed here:

State Director:

Diana Bender (bender@hla-pa.org)

Communication:

Donna Penman , Chair (penman@hla-pa.org)

Pam Reiher, (reiher@hla-pa.org)

Donna Schumacher (schumacher@hla-pa.org)

Beth Ann Rejonis (rejonis@hla-pa.org)

Advocacy:

Nancy Kingsley, Chair (kingsley@hla-pa.org))

Government Affairs:

Steve Schultz, Chair (schultz@hla-pa.org)

equipment needed for open captioning and audio description.

The email discount program for HLA-PA members is up and running. The next project: to list these accessible events in the major newspapers daily and in the weekend section- to target those who do not have computers.

April 24: Advisory Council meeting: Diana Bender gave a detailed report of the HLA Board of Trustees meeting in Bethesda. She presented the state budget for 2010 with projected costs and income through the end of the year. Debra Cannon gave a progress report on the PA Walk4Hearing in September. The Walk Committee and others are actively seeking sponsors now as well as addressing the team alliance contracts. Please let Debra know if you are interested in helping with this: cannon@hla-pa.org.

May 12: Forum: A Workshop for parents and caregivers for deaf or hard of hearing children. HLA-PA members will attend to express the viewpoint of those who are hard of hearing. A staff member from the Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing will attend as well. Others represent the deaf community.

Telephone Contacts

For HLA-PA Activities or Other Information, feel free to call:

Barb Beard, (Central PA) - 717-497-0208
Ronnie Adler, (Eastern PA) - 610-644-3154

HLA-PA Donors

A Special Thanks to those who help make it possible.

Gail Grayson

Esther Behr Ryan

Claire Fitzgerald

James Johnson

Anonymous