

HEARSAY

The Official Newsletter of Hearing Loss Association of PA

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HLA-PA Employment Conference

The Hearing Loss Association of Pennsylvania is proud to again sponsor a one-day conference for hard of hearing employees, job seekers and employers entitled "Working Together." It will take place at the Radisson Valley Forge Hotel in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania on Friday, October 29, 2010 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The cost is only \$40.00 per person or \$70.00 for a student and a parent.

The workshops will address on-the-job accommodations, legal rights, issues related to working with a disability and how the Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) serves its hard of hearing consumers. In addition there will be an exhibit hall which will provide more information on assistive equipment and hearing resources. CART (Real Time Captioning) will be provided along with ASL

interpreters and assisted listening devices for every session.

This is a conference to bring together hard of hearing people who are now employed or those seeking employment, human resources personnel, rehabilitation counselors and placement services staff. This is a unique conference that was developed by the HLA-PA and PA OVR and we expect an excellent turnout, both with regard to attendees as well as prominent speakers and numerous vendors. For more information and a registration form, contact Marianne Lock at 1371 Cushmore Road, Southampton, Pennsylvania 18966 or at lock@hla-pa.org. The fee for attending the conference includes a welcome coffee/tea and full buffet lunch for all attendees. The deadline for registration is October 22, 2010.

If you are interested in exhibiting at the conference, please contact Alan Kutner at Kutner@hla-pa.org.

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How I Use Chocolate To Educate People about My Hearing Loss

Some people try to avoid public speaking especially if they have a hearing loss. Let's face it, having hearing loss is not one of those tools that make public speaking easier. Public speaking is a challenge for people who do not have hearing loss. And it is even a bigger challenge for those who are "hearing challenged." I have not done much public speaking. Well, that all quickly changed when I found out my job required me to do monthly briefings. I must confess that I went into panic mode, but then I knew that I had to snap out of it and do something about it.

So, I decided to be "hearing loss pro-active." I planned what I could plan. I selected my favorite conference room which was hearing loss friendly which meant that the table was shaped like a "U" so that I can not only see everybody's face, but that people sit closer to me which makes it easier for me to hear them.

Well, guess what? My favorite conference room was not available on the day of my briefing and I could not reschedule. So, not only was I forced to use a different conference room, but it was a conference room that I never used before. I did not have a good feeling about this. I went to check out this room and became upset when I saw the straight long table in this large room. The room is definitely not a "hearing loss friendly" set up. So, I decided to talk to my supervisor, and I almost had a panic attack during the discussion. Thank goodness my supervisor is a very calm, rationale person. We were thinking about some type of seating strategy so that people would not sit so far away from me. Most people like to sit in the back or far away from the speaker. It is almost like church in that the back pews fill up before the front pews do. Anyhow, I decided to ask people to sit close to me so that I can hear them. But then I thought about how can I encourage people to do this? I decided to give them some type of reward like candy.

So, on the day of my briefing I told employees as they entered the room that if they wanted candy they would have to sit close to me. We laughed about it. Not only did they sit close to me, but they enjoyed the candy, too. Even when I have my briefing in my favorite conference room, I still bring candy so that they don't forget to sit close to me..

Visit Linda's blog at:

<http://hearinglosshumor99.wordpress.com/2010/07/05/hello-world/#comments> Linda Rusinko, Hazelton

The Joy of Hearing Loss Humor and Dating

There is a new show on television called, Romantically Challenged, which is about a single mom's transition into dating. I only watched the first show, but it uses humor to illustrate the challenges of dating today. Humor is a great way to deal with the anxiety and uncertainty, and I would strongly recommend that people with hearing loss use humor appropriately on dates. What I love about humor is that it helps break the ice so that you and your date can relax a little more. Humor shows that you are acknowledging you acknowledge your hearing loss but in a fun positive manner.

I remember that when I was started dating my boyfriend, I told him that I need to sit in the seat that had the least amount of background noise so that I could understand what he is saying. I smiled when I told him that he was cute and I did not want to miss anything he was telling me. We both laughed. It was a good way to break the ice! Now he always let me pick the seat when we eat at a restaurant. And yes, there are times when it is very noisy and the seating arrangement does not help. So, then I tell him that he will have to speak a little louder since he has a soft voice. I joke that I would like to get closer to him, but the table is in the way! And then we both chuckle! After we both laughed, I feel more relieved, and I am sure that he feels more relieved too.

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Humor is the key to feeling relax so that we can not only enjoy ourselves but so that our date can enjoy himself or herself.

Linda Rusinko, Hazelton

Firefighter Hearing Loss Lawsuit Results in Damages Verdict

A Philadelphia jury has awarded a firefighter \$100,000 in a hearing loss lawsuit filed over the design of sirens used by the city's emergency response vehicles. The case is one of several hundred similar lawsuits involving hearing damage for firefighters caused by Q-Sirens, made by Federal Signal Corp.

More than 600 firefighter hearing loss lawsuits in Pennsylvania state court are coordinated as a mass tort in the Philadelphia against Federal Signal. The product liability lawsuits allege that the Q-Sirens were negligently designed and unreasonably dangerous, because they emit an intense noise that can cause permanent hearing damage for firefighters over time.

After four days of deliberation, a Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas jury ruled in favor of firefighter Edward Smyl on Tuesday, in the first case to go to trial in the state. Smyl claimed to suffer hearing loss after working for the Philadelphia Fire Department between 1975 and 2007.

The jury found Federal Signal to be guilty of negligence and awarded \$100,000 in damages, but disagreed with strict liability charges also filed by the plaintiff. According to a report in *The Legal Intelligencer*, the award will be capped at \$75,000 under an agreement reached between the parties that kept the case in state court.

Federal Signal announced in a press release on Wednesday that it intends to appeal the verdict. The company says that the ruling against strict liability charges proves that the

sirens were not defectively designed, and the award of damages on a negligence theory should be reversed.

In similar lawsuits over hearing loss among firefighters filed against Federal Signal throughout the United States, the company has been successful in defending many of the cases. A lawsuit filed by New York firefighters was dismissed, and the decision was upheld on appeal last summer. In addition, voluntary dismissals have been obtained for cases filed in Maryland, New Jersey and Missouri. However, the company reports that litigation is ongoing in Philadelphia and Chicago.

Nancy Kingsley, HLA-PA Advocacy Chairperson

SEPTA and the ADA

SEPTA currently operate 53 Silverliner II cars (vintage 1964), 20 Silverliner III cars (vintage 1967) and 231 Silverliner IV cars (vintage 1974). They are in the process of buying 120 new Silverliner V cars which will replace the 73 Silverliner IIs and IIIs. It is these Silverliner Vs that will have the fully ADA-compliant visual and audio station information capability. Three of these 120 cars are still undergoing acceptance testing, while over 60 cars are currently being assembled in a factory in South Philadelphia. As soon as the first three cars complete acceptance testing we hope to start seeing additional cars coming on property each month. Beginning in September 2010, these trains will begin to be incorporated into Septa's revenue service. If all goes well in production, all 120 new cars equipped with visual station destination will be in service by the end of 2011. It is important to note that even after all the new Silverliner V cars arrive, SEPTA will continue to operate their existing Silverliner IV cars to supplement. The Silverliner IVs will not have a visual station display as they have not been equipped with this technology. Eventually, SEPTA will be replac-

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ing the Silverliner IV cars at which time the entire fleet of commuter rail cars will have the visual station information. The IVs and Vs will be disbursed throughout each of the commuter lines.

Carolyn Meyer

State Office Happenings

Even the blistering heat of this past summer did not prevent many of our members from attending important meetings to represent HLA-PA. Some very exciting things did “happen” throughout the state. If you see some area of interest and want to help us make the difference for those with hearing loss, please contact Diana Bender at Bender@hla-pa.org. We need your input! It is time to see some NEW faces!

May 30: Employment Conference Meeting at OVR (Office of Vocational Rehabilitation) in Norristown: Alan Kutner, Marcia Finisdore, Donna Penman, Diana Bender, Marianne Lock, and Carolyn Meyer met with Mike Wakefield and other staff to finalize details for October 29, 2010. We need some volunteers to help on the day of the event. If you are interested contact Meyer@hla-pa.org

June 3: Marianne Lock and Debra Cannon represent HLAA at the Bucks County Senior Health Expo at the Delaware Valley College in Doylestown, Pa. HLA-PA provided funds for the booth.

June 4: At the ACDHH (Advisory Council for the Deaf and HOH) meeting, Nancy Kingsley was elected Chairperson of the council and Russ Green was elected Vice-chair. Congratulations Nancy and Russ!!! It's been a really long time since we've had an HLAA member who was chair of this group, so this is wonderful news. Nancy said that the terms of 3 ACDHH members, including 1 HLAA member (Teresa Nellans) will expire in July, so the committee is looking for 3 people to replace them. Please consider applying as we need more HLAA members on this committee. ACDHH is a committee in which all the state agencies have representa-

tives, so it's a great place to make contacts with state government people and bring up issues we might have. ACDHH meets 4 times a year for an all-day meeting. Recently, meetings have all been in Harrisburg. ACDHH is the committee which was established to work together with ODHH to serve people with a hearing loss in PA. If you are not able to apply yourself, please try to think of HLAA chapter members you know who might be good candidates. The election will be held in September, so we need to have people submit their applications soon. Please let Nancy know if you are interested. Kingsley@hla-pa.org

June 9: Diana Bender and Carolyn Meyer presented a PowerPoint program at Salus University: “Our Audiologist Wish list---Things We Wish Our Audiologist Had Told Us”. The audience was comprised of second and third year audiology doctoral candidates and some professors in the College as well. The head of the Student Council had 2 requests. First, that Diana and Carolyn give an explanation of their own hearing loss history because students do not get that experience in the classroom. The second request was that they describe what they felt, as HOH patients, were the issues audiologists “should have addressed” over the years to help them cope with their own hearing loss. It was a most productive session with a follow-up inquiry by professors for more information. This is what we want HLAA to be: an effective resource on hearing loss.

For any chapters interested in using this PowerPoint for a program for meetings, contact Meyer@hla-pa.org

Future Plans: **January 8-15, 2011, PA Farm Show.** HLAA-PA will provide the funding for a booth at the Farm Show in Harrisburg. Steve Schultz has offered to be in charge of this again. Many members volunteered to take several hour shifts at the booth last year. We

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hope to have this great response once again. Please contact Steve at Schultz@hla-pa.org for more information or to volunteer to staff the booth..

Important Notice: The Dept. of Justice recently published a notice of proposed rule making regarding movie captioning and is seeking comments over the next 6 months. You may have already commented on the last proposed rule making issued in 2008. The new notice provides interesting reading on their thinking after the recent movie captioning decision in the 9th Circuit and summarizes comments which have been submitted on the issue. HLAA is also mentioned. Here's the URL:

http://www.ada.gov/anprm2010/movie_captions_anprm_2010.htm It appears that we will truly see extensive movie captioning in local theatres within the next 2 years. Finally!!

Submitted by Carolyn Meyer: meyer@hla-pa.org

About HLAA

Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA), formerly Self Help for Hard of Hearing People, Inc., which was founded in 1979, is a non-profit consumer self-help organization. HLAA opens the world of communication to people with hearing loss by providing information, education, support and advocacy.

The primary purpose of all HLAA members is to educate ourselves, our families, friends, co-workers, teachers, hearing health care providers, industry, government, and others about hearing loss.

HLAA has members and chapters in all 50 states. To find the chapter closest to you and to learn about membership benefits, contact the HLAA National Office:

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7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 1200
Bethesda, MD 20814

Phone: (301) 657-2248 (Voice)
(301) 657-2249 (TTY)
(310) 913-9413 (FAX)

Email: info@hearingloss.org
Website: www.hearingloss.org

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!!

Assist the HLA-PA State Director by serving on the Advisory Council or one of its committees. The Council meets periodically 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:

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HLA-PA Donors

A special thanks to those who help make it possible.

Susan Streib

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