

# Hearing is difficult without aids and CART

*By Jim Kelly, staff*  
(Argyle Today, Nov. 2007)

WESTSIDE REGIONAL LIBRARY - A group of hearing impaired citizens mostly from the Westside and as far away as Callahan meets monthly at the West Regional library on Chaffee Rd. The small group, approximately 35 members meets to discuss ways that they can help each other according to founder Judy Martin. But they also hope others who do hear well will hear their message. According to Martin more than 32 million Americans suffer some degree of hearing loss. She says that is more than one of ten people, of that large number, less than one million use American Sign Language leaving the majority looking frantically for ways to understand the words being said around them. "Most of us need assistive listening devices or CART, an acronym for Communication Access Real time Translation," said Martin, "But the hearing world thinks we can all sign or hearing aids and cochlear implants will solve the problem for us."



Hearing Loss Association of Jacksonville

That is far from the truth according to group members. On this night at least one member who is profoundly deaf is in the room along with others whose hearing has dwindled over the years from noise abuse - on the job - in the military or working in noisy factories before ear protection was a common practice. Martin's group, The Hearing Loss Association of Jacksonville, has a lot to offer hearing impaired people but they are not getting the word out to those who could use their support in education and introduction to new aids. Martin says the association really wants to increase their attendance and attract younger hard of hearing members. "We know they are out there," said Martin, "We just need to tell them we are here. We offer extremely good speakers each month. Last month Dr .David Hawkins from Mayo Clinic spoke about Managing your hearing loss."

Other groups bring examples and information about hearing aid improvements and audiologists talk about cochlear implants and emergency services available. This October meeting brings CART Translation experts Cindee Deen and Theresea Taylor to demonstrate their capability to handle a stressful occupation such as a complete translation of all spoken words and environmental sounds; more about their business in an accompanying story. The members present at this last meeting of the year (they do not meet in November or December) were eager to introduce themselves to the others present and to get their message to someone with access to the press.

As Martin asked them to stand, each one summarized their experience. Of the recent hearing loss sufferers each reported being the last to realize they couldn't hear very well most had been in denial for a number of years. This brought stress and angry words into their family relationships.

Tom Logue is in the category of being the last to know he couldn't hear well. "It was such a gradual decline that I didn't notice or didn't want to notice," said Tom, "Once I finally realized, my family said "no kidding" and we started looking for some help. We saw an ad in the newspaper and came to these informative meetings which have helped a lot."

Waldo Romero bought hearing aids at Wal-Mart after years of exposure on the flight line in the Navy working on twin engine banshee jets. Then he went to work at Lockheed Aircraft and continued to punish his inner ear. He says hearing aids sometimes help but are far from great.

Romero's wife Verona comes to the meetings to support her husband; she said she tries to understand what he is going through, but really can't do much more than sympathize with his plight. "At least now we are less cross with each other when communication is difficult," said Verona. She is however still cross with the government for blaming continued hearing loss on her husband's choice of hearing aids rather than the more likely damage caused by roaring Navy Jets.

Virgil Rogers was also in the Navy and he worked on Submarines. "It was like being locked in a tin can while someone banging on it with 100 spoons," said Virgil referring to the chipping hammers banging on the side of the sub during shipyard work. "It really rattles your head" according to Virgil who like so many others started with one hearing aid in one ear to begin with and then had to get an aid for the other ear a few years later.

Paige Taylor was born deaf and has had difficulty communicating because she has never heard the words. Nevertheless, her enthusiasm for being here in this supportive group is quite clear.

Melissa Trauthwein has been hard of hearing from near birth or just after. She can communicate orally or use signed English. She credits being placed in Main-stream schools and having to fight to understand and to communicate, as the catalyst to speaking well today. Melissa has worked full time for 10 years and credits Vocational Rehab for recently helping her get accommodations with her current employer. "I am free of denial and very involved with this group," said Melissa. "Judy is my mentor and this group means a lot to me."

Hilee Gouchnour is unhappy with her hearing loss because she was trained to be a nurse. But now she cannot understand her patients and one callous Doctor told her to go home and learn to live with it. She has tinnitus (noise in the ears) and because she and her mother are allergic to antibiotics, neither can stop an ear infection from doing grave damage to their ear drums.

Terry Carver suffers a bad hearing loss. She takes it as it is, and feels lucky to have found this group.

Jim, Hilee's husband comes to the meetings to support her.

"We need family support," said Judy Martin when it was her turn to speak; "I was driven to tears in my first meeting watching the people who attended react upon finding others who could understand the trauma of hearing loss." She received her first hearing aid at age 17; in her 30s she received a second hearing aid and two years ago received a cochlear implant. She uses that in addition to one hearing aid. Today Judy is founder of the Jacksonville group and vice-president of the state board.

Martin offers this bit of history about her organization: "The Hearing Loss Association of America is dedicated to providing people with hearing loss and their families, friends and co-workers with the education and support they need to function in the hearing world." Founded in 1979 by Howard E. (Rocky) Stone, a retired CIA officer, the HLAA mission is a simple one - *to reduce the impact of hearing loss on a person's daily life.*

The state Hearing loss Association will hold a Walk4Hearing in Safety Harbor, near Tampa on April 12, 2008 with all proceeds going to the state and national Hearing Loss Associations.

"Our walk sponsors will receive extensive recognition for their support at our entire walk related events, in our communications, on our website, printed materials, event T-shirt, and, of course, at the walk itself." The deadline for having your name and/or logo on the printed materials is Friday, January 25, 2008.

For more information on the walk, the January local meeting or the Association, call Judy Martin at e-mail [judy40@bellsouth.net](mailto:judy40@bellsouth.net) or contact her at 904-778-2265.