

Hear Ye, Hear Ye

How to Become an Advocate for Legislation that Affects YOU!

—by Joan Haber

Civic engagement is at the very root of a democratic society such as ours. In order to be enticed to become engaged in the political process, two things usually occur:

1. *A person believes in an issue strongly enough to take action*
2. *That person becomes convinced that their action can influence the outcome*

The person who meets these two criteria often times becomes an advocate and gets involved in local, state or federal legislative issues. The dictionary defines advocacy as: The act of pleading or arguing in favor of something, such as a cause, idea or policy; active support of one's ideas or of another.

Where to Begin?

Know what the issue is. Hone in on the issue, break it down and examine it from all sides. What needs to be done? Is the issue local, statewide or federal? Educate yourself on the topic and understand who the people and entities are that have

authority over the issue. Understand how the political system works, when the important meetings are held that discuss your issue, when the votes will be taken, and how to contact the legislator that wields power over the situation.

How to find the contact information for your elected officials

Florida State Government: Begin at www.myflorida.com – on this home page, in the lower right-hand corner there is a box labeled “Find Your Legislator.” Enter your zip code. The resulting page shows you links to the State Senator representing your district, the Florida House which shows the Representatives for your district and the member of the US Congressional Representative in Washington DC that represents your district.

The website for the Florida Senate is: www.flSenate.gov

The website for the Florida House of Representatives is: www.myfloridahouse.gov

To find the United States Senators (2) that represent Florida, you can search from the home page at www.senate.gov

To reach Governor Charlie Crist, go to his website at: www.flgov.com/contact_governor

As you browse through many of these websites, you will notice the opportunity to sign up for alert subscriptions, so that you will be noti-

**Florida Walk4Hearing
Sat., March 21, 2009**



**Kanapaha / Veterans
Memorial Park
7400 S.W. 41st Place
Gainesville, Florida**

**For Information
on this 5K
Walk4Hearing, contact**

**Lynn Rousseau
HLAFlorida@aol.com
352-331-9808
Judy Martin
judy40@bellsouth.net
904-778-2265**

**OR CONTACT YOUR
TEAM CAPTAIN**

**Kickoff Luncheon
Saturday, January 24, 2009
at the Gainesville Golf and
Country Club
7300 S.W. 35th Way
Gainesville**

**Hearing Loss
Professionals!
See our offer
on page 2**

fied of upcoming events, calls for action and legislative tracking. Try subscribing to a few of these to see if the information that is sent to you is pertinent to your cause or interest. Another way for you to find out

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MEETINGS

- Feb. 7, 2009 Jacksonville
 June 6, 2009 The Villages



Hear Ye, Hear Ye is published every other month: Jan., Mar., May, Jul. Sept. & Nov. Dead-line is approx. the 15th of the prior month.

Advertising Rates

- Full Page \$800.00
- Half Page \$450.00
- Quarter Page \$225.00
- Eighth Page \$115.00

Our circulation is 3,100 mailed to 1,100 HLAA members in Florida, 850 audiologists, 950 hearing aid specialists, and 200 distributed.

Send news items, photos, ads or checks to:
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2009 HLAA CONVENTION

NASHVILLE, TN

JUNE 18 - 21

WWW.HEARINGLOSS.ORG/CONVENTION/

Attention Hearing Loss Professionals

Join the Hearing Loss Association of America. Annual dues are \$60 and here are your professional benefits:

- Opportunity to be listed in a searchable Hearing Health Care Directory on the HLAA website – **brand new!**
- Opportunity to earn AAA CEUs at the annual HLAA convention
- Opportunity to serve as a professional advisor to an HLAA chapter in your town
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- Free Gift Vouchers for copies of *Hearing Loss Magazine* to give to your clients
- Chance to participate in HLAA message boards and be a featured guest
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The American Academy of Hearing Loss Support Specialists™ (The Academy) is an on-line self-paced, distance-educational program administered by the Hearing Loss Association of America. This program establishes a set of core knowledge and understanding for individuals who work with, or wish to work with, people affected by hearing loss. Through the Academy, HLAA intends to build accurate, foundational knowledge; increase understanding; improve services; and enhance the professionalism and effectiveness of the many people in diverse professions who provide support services to people with hearing loss and their families.

On-Line Special

For a limited time only, the Hearing Loss Association of America is extending a special sale on its ground-breaking on-line education program. Enroll in the Academy for \$175, a savings of \$125. Don't delay. This special won't last long.

www.hearingloss.org/academy/index.asp

New officers and member for HLA-Florida

The Hearing Loss Association of Florida welcomes Judy Martin, Jacksonville, as the new president and Melissa Trauthwein, also Jacksonville, as Vice-president for the 2008-2009 term. They were elected at the October 4 Board of Trustees meeting in Fort Pierce. Kay Shaffer, Plant City, was elected as a new member of the Board. Retaining their offices were Flo Innes, Sarasota, appointed for one term as Treasurer and Nancy Day, Gainesville, re-elected for a second term as Secretary.

Please join me in congratulating Judy, Melissa, Kay, Flo and Nancy, as we work together to represent the Hearing Loss Association of America's members in Florida and all citizens of the state with hearing loss,

Lynn Rousseau, Imm. Past President

*** Hear Better ***

No Batteries • No Headwear

Sound (TV, people) goes directly into your hearing aids or cochlear implants containing telecoils.

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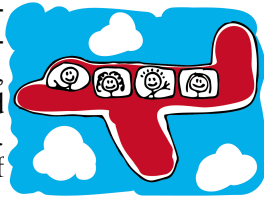


The Treasure Coast Chapter of the HLA in Port St. Lucie, hosted the recent Florida Board of Trustees meeting in Fort Pierce. Cheryl Nolte, President, welcomed the members to Indian River State College. Members socialized the night before the meeting at dinner. In photo left, is Cheryl Nolte seated with Pam Innis, on right, who assisted with a presentation. In the photo lower right, is Josephine Reinhardt, Vice-president and Secretary of the local chapter shown welcoming Mim Dunn and Jean McHugh, Indian River County Advisors of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services. Lower left is Bill Nolte who, on another day, presented the Ambassador award on behalf of the Treasure Coast Chapter, to Charles T. "Chris" Christopher (on right), Emergency Preparedness Coordinator for St. Lucie County who spoke at two of their meetings.



Continental Airlines Board Member

Because of my participation as a past speaker for SATH (Society for Accessible Travel and Hospitality), Continental Airlines invited me to participate on the Consumers with Disabilities Advisory Board. I was invited to Houston, Texas, October 6 - 8 along with twelve others with various disabilities. We all worked to discuss ways to make air travel easier for everyone. The advisory board learned how the airline operates; from reservations, boarding, in-flight to connection issues and last, but not least, communication with deaf, hard of hearing and blind customers. The advisory board consisted of individuals from Washington, Colorado, Ohio, Texas, Florida among others. In all, the Continental staff were very accommodating to our needs and listened intently to what can be changed for a better travel experience. Another meeting is being planned for March to discuss the positive changes being implemented within Continental airlines.



--Lynn Rousseau

Identifying yourself at the airport

(A discussion was held recently on the HLAA Leader's List about travelers with hearing loss. Here was one suggestion from Dana Mulvany.)

I had a thought about an option for passengers with hearing loss who are particularly concerned about being left out of the loop:

Consider printing up a half-sheet paper with a color picture of your face that would be given to airline personnel at the gate. The paper could say:

DEAF PASSENGER
Please personally notify this deaf person, _____(name), of ANY announcements related to Flight _____.
Please return this paper when it is no longer needed.

The same paper could be given to the personnel on the airplane, but the seat number could be added first. Or, a separate paper could be prepared just for each leg of the flight if there is more than one flight segment.

The color picture would help identify you to people who have not yet seen you, and the paper might also have more of an impact on emphasizing the importance of doing this requested accommodation. Any additional instructions could be written onto the paper as needed.

(Even if one is not completely deaf in normal situations, one may be functionally deaf in noisy situations

such as an airport terminal or airplane, and saying that one is *deaf* may be more effective than saying one is *hard of hearing*.)

If one doesn't have a color printer, a black-and-white printer could be used instead.

People sometimes seem to pay more attention to something that is written than to something that is spoken. They can **get** the impact of the disability more readily if one provides information in writing rather than via talking, as if people who speak can't be deaf.

Airline complaints made easy

The Hearing Loss Association of America is working for you. In recent meetings with the US Department of Transportation (DOT), HLAA learned that DOT is not receiving enough complaints from people with hearing loss. **DOT needs to see your complaints.** They cannot know what problems we face unless they hear from us. Complaints can be filed directly with DOT using their form found on the web:

<http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/forms/382form.pdf>. Or take the [HLAA airline complaint form](#) with you next time you fly. Using the information you include on our form, HLAA will help you file your complaint. For more information, contact: [Lise Hamlin](#).

Send your president to Nashville!

Convention registration is open for the 2009 Nashville convention. It promises to be the best yet as we join together to celebrate HLAA's 30th Birthday from June 18 to 21, 2009.

To celebrate this special 30th birthday, we are asking chapters to send their Presidents to be a delegate from the chapter. For those chapters that operate by Committee, we would like to see your Committee Chairperson attend. To help make this possible we are offering a special rate for Chapter presidents and Committee chairpersons. Along with this special rate, we are asking the chapters to consider approving chapter treasury funds to help your chapter delegate come. Many chapters have funds from the Walk4Hearing and this would be an appropriate use of some of those funds. For those who do not have money in the chapter treasury, it is recommended and urged that you consider raising the funds by holding bake sales, garage sales and similar types of fundraising.

The special registration rate for Chapter President-Committee Chairpersons is \$119. This price includes all convention activities except for the Birthday Celebration and Dinner. Tickets for this event may be purchased separately at \$65 per person.

Please don't Google! Don't Yahoo either! Do a GoodSearch instead

HLA-Florida can earn a penny each time you do an internet search if you use **www.GoodSearch.com** as your search engine instead of one of the other search services. Goodsearch is actually Yahoo-powered and they donate half of their advertising revenue, about a penny per search, to the charities its users designate. Use it just as you would any search engine, get the same high quality results you would get from a Yahoo search, and watch the donations to HLA-Florida add up! Just go to **www.GoodSearch.com** and enter Hearing Loss Association of Florida as the charity you want to support. By the time you receive this issue of *Hear Ye, Hear Ye*, we'll be registered with them.

Also, if you shop on line at Amazon, 1-800-Flowers, Best Buy, Macy's, Target, Barnes and Noble, Circuit City, Nordstrom, Wal-Mart, eBay, or many other stores, you can actually get even more donations for the chapter by using GoodShop. At this new online shopping mall, up to 37% of each purchase you make could be donated to HLA-Florida. Hundreds of stores are participating.

It's the same procedure: you just go to **www.GoodShop.com** and enter Hearing Loss Association of Florida as your charity of choice, then follow the link to your favorite online store and shop 'til you drop. The holidays are coming and if you do a little or a lot of online shopping, what a gift that will be for our organization.

HLA-Florida is also registered with other Internet sites that make donations to the chapter such as Microsoft's "Search and Give." Plans are being made to register with eBAYGivingWorks, so more about both programs in the next issue.

Meanwhile, please try **GoodSearch** and **GoodShop** for a painless way to give to the Hearing Loss Association of Florida.

--Judy G. Martin

Thanks to Steve Frazier, Albuquerque, NM, of the Yahoo HLA Newsletter Editors list for the heads up on this idea.

New software helps improve cochlear implant tuning process

by Jill Pease

(This past summer I was fortunate to be able to participate in a study at UF/Gainesville where I go for the mapping of my cochlear implant (CI). Mapping, or programming, is a tedious but important part of helping those who use CIs to hear the very best they can. During the testing, as I listened to voice sounds rather than the usual mechanical beeps, it became clear (to the computer, anyway) that I had a more difficult time understanding the consonants b, p, f, and v. The software analyzed and adjusted my program accordingly. I

came away from this study with better understanding of speech in my daily life and happy to know that improvement was on the way for CI users as well as possibly for those who wear digital hearing aids. -- Judy G. Martin)

Cochlear implants provide a sense of sound to people who are profoundly deaf, dramatic results for patients who may have been unable to hear for many years or even in a lifetime. But the process of fine-tuning the device for a patient's optimal hearing could be more efficient and accurate, University of Florida researchers say.

With the help of a new grant, UF investigators and research partners at Audigence Inc. can now test the cochlear implant optimization software program they jointly developed with a group of 120 implant recipients and hearing aid users.



Alice Holmes, Ph.D.

UF investigators, led by Alice Holmes, Ph.D., received a \$78,000 grant from Audigence and a matching grant from UF's Florida High Tech Corridor Council, bringing the total award to \$156,000.

In a pilot study of the optimization software, UF researchers found that the new software program resulted in improved performance in all outcome measures, including speech perception and the ability to hear

over background noise. Seventeen of the 20 cochlear implant recipients who participated in the research preferred to continue using the new optimized programming over traditional cochlear implant settings. Holmes presented the research findings at the 2008 Institute for the Academy of Rehabilitative Audiology Sept. 12 in Portland, Ore.

A cochlear implant is a small electronic device that is surgically placed under the skin behind the ear. It works by converting sound waves into electronic impulses that are sent to the brain. After surgery, patients are evaluated by an audiologist to "fit" the cochlear implant processor by manipulating implant settings and asking the patient if the changes help him or her understand speech better. The process often takes multiple clinic visits and several months to complete.

"This traditional approach for cochlear implant device tuning has several pitfalls," said Holmes, a professor of audiology in the department of communicative disorders at the College of Public Health and Health Professions. "First, there are several million combinations of device parameters making it impossible to evaluate a patient's performance for every possible combination. This method also relies on the patient's subjective judgment, which is typically variable and inconsistent and may not reflect the best device settings for their speech recognition."

The new software program, known as Clarujust, is the first standard analytical approach to tuning cochlear implants. The program tests the patient's hearing using actual speech sounds, not the tones used in the tradi-

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Chapter News

Naples

The first meeting of the season for the Naples Ears chapter of HLAA, will be Wednesday, Nov. 12, 10:30 a.m. to noon at the Naples Regional Library, 650 Central Avenue, Naples. It will be a "jam session" to start the year off. On Friday, Dec. 5, we will have our annual Christmas/Holiday potluck at another location. Friday, Jan. 9, 2009, we will be participating in the annual Vision and Hearing Fair at the Golden Gate Community Center, Golden Gate Parkway, Naples from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. This event is sponsored by Collier County Library. The location will be much larger than previous years. We were running out of space last year so the affair was very cozy.

CART is provided at all of our meeting which include professional presentations, round-table discussions, members' solutions to problems, demonstrations of various assistive devices, cochlear implants, and coping strategies.

www.naples.net/presents/napleears/

Lois Smith, Co-President

(Lois writes that she and husband Jim have moved to Lehigh Acres, a distance of about 45 miles from Naples. Nevertheless, they will continue to commute to meetings until at least June 2009. You may contact Lois by email (lojims@embarqmail.com) if you'd like to have her new postal mailing address).

Sarasota

The Hearing Loss Association of Sarasota (HLAS) and Communication Access, Inc. (CAI) provided captioning for the Manatee Players' production of *Steel Magnolias* in Bradenton, FL. The joint effort of Frank Stocco, member of HLAS and Tess Crowder of CAI took many hours of transcribing and editing the script into a format that could be projected onto the theatre's large screen. Tess attended rehearsals and scrolled the dialogue during the actual performance so that audience could understand what the actors were saying onstage. She also provided CART service for several announcements before the show and during intermission.

HLAS members who saw the performance said that if it were not for captioning, they would have understood very little that was being said. During the intermission, the audience was polled to see how many people were using the captions and it was determined that a dozen or more were. There was a 50/50 raffle to benefit the new Manatee Players theatre and many looked at the captions to see the winning number!



We hope that with the support of the theatre and the hearing loss community in our area, more shows will be captioned in the future. www.hlas.org

LaVonne Stocco, Treasurer, HLAS

Jacksonville

The Jacksonville chapter continues to meet on the third Tuesday of every month at the West Regional Library. We have a speaker at all meetings with CART being provided by volunteer Theresea Taylor, of the Caption Company, Inc, Jacksonville.

Since January we've had a roster of interesting, informative speakers. We learn constantly from them and appreciate the time they have given. We are deeply indebted to Officer Gary Grant, of the Jax Sheriff's Office, *Law & Order and the Hard of Hearing*; Liz Pearson, M.S., CCC-



A, Clinical Audiologist, Jacksonville Speech and Hearing Center, *What you need to know about hearing loss*; Leslye Domingo, FRTI/TLC Coordinator, from Independent Living Resource Center, *Learning about Cap-Tel captioned telephones*; Sharon Caserta, Attorney from the Jacksonville Area Legal Aid Society, *Legal issues and rights for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing*; in May we celebrated *May is Better Hearing Month* with presentations and discussion on relationships and members' experiences; Jana Rentz, Au.D., Customer Trainer from Phonak, *Hearing aids and assistive technology*; Brandy Harvey, Cochlear Americas, Manager, CAN Network, *When Hearing Aids are Not Enough*; and finally, our own member, Tom Logue, who spoke on the Transition from Analog to Digital Television and how it may affect closed captioning. Next month, at our final meeting of year, on Tuesday, Nov. 18, we will hear from Venessa Leatherman, Coordinator for Work-Search, who will speak about, among other things, employment and access to accommodations for the work place. They want to reach out to people of all ages, from older workers to transitioning youth; those who are late deafened, hard of hearing, deaf, deaf-blind, or even those who are speech impaired.

I want to especially thank our treasurer, Bill Scheibe, for his time and support. In addition, words are not enough to thank Melissa Trauthwein, our vice-president, who takes care of refreshments, keeps our source material up-to-date. She spreads the materials out on two tables and then picks them all up again and places them in her highly-organized portable files each meeting. Her support of me generally includes helping to find speakers. Finally, last but not least, there is Theresea our CART provider. Without her we wouldn't know what was going on! She is always there, never late, always prepared and perpetually cheerful. Three cheers for you, Theresea!

www.hearinglossassociationofjax.com

Judy Martin, President

Advocate for Legislation Continued from page 1

what legislative issues affect you is to join organizations that represent the constituency affected by your topic of interest. For example, the Hearing Loss Association of America (www.hearingloss.org) sends out email alerts when laws are being discussed at the national level affecting people with hearing loss.

How to best communicate with your Legislators:

- Make sure you know something about the legislative process pertinent to the level of government you are contacting
- Contact your legislator about a particular issue BEFORE he/she takes action on it
- Use a variety of communication methods – telephone, US mail, email, fax or face-to-face visit. Use the method which YOU feel most comfortable with so that your message comes across in a confident and clear way. Do NOT use boilerplate letters which someone else has written and to which you've just signed your name. Those are the last pieces the legislator will look at if at all
- Don't worry about how perfectly you write, speak from the heart
- Be absolutely certain you spell your legislator's name correctly and use the correct address
- The first thing you should divulge is your name, local address and telephone number, so that the legislator knows that you are in his/her district. You will be given first priority. Don't make the legislator have to hunt for that information

- Deal with only one topic at a time. Focus and be brief. Organize your thoughts ahead of time
- In the subject line state the topic so they know upfront what you are writing about
- State the facts and back them up! Support your assertions with statistics and back up those statistics with citations of their source
- DO NOT attempt to give a gift of any kind to a legislator – they cannot accept it and will feel badly if their refusal insults you. This includes non-monetary gifts including food and beverage
- Tell your legislator how passage of the bill will affect you or your children or your community. Personalize the message but be concise and specific
- Be polite even if you strongly disagree with the legislator's position. Your approach could change his/her mind if you are both open and reasonable
- Do not be overly informal in an email or on the telephone, for example do not refer to the legislator by their first name
- Suggest an alternative strategy as to how the issue could be resolved in a different way, rather than how the pending bill is addressing it. Offer positive suggestions
- Thank them for listening to you and ask them to respond to you

Another way to Advocate – Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor are an effective way to influence public opinion, and the public includes your legisla-

tors! These letters reach a broad audience and can provide readers with information and insight which they do not know. Here are some tips from the National Education Association on writing effective letters:

- Keep it brief
- Get to the point
- Relate it to home
- Personalize the issue
- End with a call to action
- Be timely
- Be professional
- Identify yourself

In conclusion, I have provided you with some tools to become a more effective advocate in your community. Whether or not your candidate wins an election, you still have the right to ask the legislator who represents you to listen to your concerns and to record how you want them to vote on specific bills. First, decide what your issue is. Second, learn everything you can about the issue, the pros and cons. Band together with other people who are organized around the issue. Third, be passionate about wanting to change something regarding your issue. Fourth, have confidence that you CAN make a difference as you advocate for your cause.

The most important office is that of private citizen. -- Louis D. Brandeis

(Joan Haber is a board member of the Hearing Loss Association and serves on the Florida Coordinating Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. She can be reached at joan1@comcast.net regarding this article.)

New SoftwareContinued from page 5

tional tuning process. The software program quickly analyzes the patient's speech comprehension to determine the best cochlear implant settings for a particular patient.

The idea for the optimization software came when Lee Krause, a computer engineer, received a cochlear implant in 2002.

"I realized during the tuning process that I was never going to achieve my objective of being able to better understand speech," Krause said. "Working with my audiologist, Dr. Alice Holmes, I convinced her that there had to be a better way to tune the device and that we could utilize some of the technologies that were

emerging associated with artificial intelligence to help us solve the problem."

Krause founded Audigence and worked to develop the software with Holmes; Rahul Shrivastav, Ph.D., an associate professor in the department of communication sciences and disorders in UF's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; and Purvis Bedenbaugh, a former UF professor.

The researchers' new study will focus on evaluating and refining the optimization procedure for cochlear implants and researching techniques to improve speech intelligibility for digital hearing aid users.

Some things you always wanted to know about selecting hearing aids but were afraid to ask

(A guest editorial courtesy of Steve Barber, HLA-North Carolina, whose knowledge of hearing loss knows no bounds.)

Almost all major brands now are digital and each manufacturer has a program that helps set up the **recommended** programs based on your audiogram and your choice of which programs in which you might be interested: Your choices could include hearing in a quiet situation or a noisy one, a telecoil mode, possibly one for FM, maybe one that combines mic and telecoil, or perhaps one for music. The point is, those **computer-selected** starting points are just that. You should not assume that they are the best settings for you just because a computer selected them.

For example, I was totally deaf above 1 khz, yet the computer assumed if it added enough gain to those higher frequencies, I might benefit. Instead what I got from that was **feedback** which I couldn't hear, but others could. Fortunately, my audiologist agreed to turn off that high frequency gain completely. Voila! I couldn't tell the difference in my hearing, but there never again was a **feedback** problem.

In selecting and fitting an aid, there are several factors that are very important, and choosing a particular brand isn't one of them.

Here are some points I think are important:

1) **You, and your knowledge about what you need**, and what is available: if you can't name several features of hearing aids, then my recommendation is to not buy any until you can. You could turn your hearing health completely over to a **professional** if you want, and that might work out fine. But my suggestion is, it's better if you know a little about what you want and need. You can google *Hearing Aid* and see the following

terms and learn what they are: *directional microphone, telecoil, multiple programs, volume control, remote control, open fitting, vent, Direct Audio Input (DAI), and FM*. If you search those words, you're likely to find several good sites about hearing loss including the glossary of hearing loss terms at <http://www.nchearingloss.org> which covers most of them. You may not need or benefit from all these features, but they could be the difference between helping you and not helping you. I'm sure you wouldn't buy a car without understanding at least some of the features and you wouldn't expect your car dealer to explain all the details. It's the same with the hearing aid.

2) **Your hearing health care provider:** They should have the skill, resources and willingness to work FOR you instead of just SELL to you. Do you understand their ability and willingness to try different models during the trial period? Do you understand their trial period and return policy? The trial period should be 30 days **minimum** and the restocking fee should be less than a couple hundred dollars. Speaking of providers, you can buy your aids wherever you want, but before you do, make sure you do two things: obtain a full audiological workup, not just a **hearing screening** and see an ENT rather than your primary care physician who may know little about hearing loss.

3) **Your willingness to understand and deal with the reality of hearing aids.** They can make a huge difference, but they will not give you normal hearing. There will be times and situations where you need to understand and they won't do well. You need to learn how to get the most out of them in those situations. That may mean understanding Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs), especially if your loss is more than moderate. That's what the *telecoil, Direct Audio Input and FM* features, I mentioned earlier, will do. They allow you to interface with ALDs using wired, radioed, or magnetically transmitted signals. These can be major improvements for those difficult situations, such as noisy crowds, television, church, etc.

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