



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association

North Shore Branch

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Editor: Hugh Hetherington

Issue 64 March 2009

Mountain Ear

President's Message



Normally, in this space we have a short article by our President, Flo Spratt. Many of our members and readers will know that Flo has had a severe to profound hearing loss for over 40 years. In the last few years, her hearing has arrived at the point where hearing aids are no longer as helpful as they once were. As a consequence

she has been on the cochlear implant waiting list for some time. At this writing, she has just received a date for her surgery to take place this week (Feb. 25). Flo has asked me to let you know, that with the next issue of Mountain Ear, she will be giving you a report on her progress in this space.

For this issue Flo was intending to do a short article on the Hearing Assistance Logo and what it means. I will attempt to take over here by proxy and give you some information on the use of the symbol. The symbol shown here is an international symbol and is generally used to denote that some form of hearing assistance is available at the location where it is posted. In many parts of the world it is a well-recognized symbol and is displayed in many locations, such as businesses, churches, cinemas, community centres, etc. where hearing assistance systems are installed.

Generally, the symbol would be displayed to identifying the existence of an induction loop, infrared or FM system. It could also mean the staff at a particular location have undergone special training in communicating with hard of hearing or Deaf people. For hearing aid users, the system of choice would be an induction loop system since this does not require the person to have or borrow to use any special equipment other than a telecoil equipped hearing aid.

In Europe and Australia, induction loop systems have been widely employed for many years and most hearing aid users and audiologists are aware of the importance of having telecoil-equipped hearing aids.

Unfortunately, in North America, loop systems have remained a secret to a large majority of hearing aid wearers. In fact, even though many of the modern hearing aids have telecoils, their use has not been adequately explained to the user. As a consequence, loop systems are not commonly installed and where they are, they are often poorly utilized.

Over the last few years there have been initiatives to make loop systems more widely available. One that has been spearheaded by the David Myers organization in the U.S.A. is called "Let's Loop America". Also, on the North Shore, your CHHA Branch has been pro-active in getting loop systems installed in a number of venues, such as, churches and community centres. This includes the new West Vancouver Community Centre which we anticipate will be a model of hearing accessibility with the installation of

(Continued on page 2)

loop systems in a number of the rooms and including the front lawn gathering place in the front of the building.

What we want for you, the hearing aid wearer, is to be informed about the benefits of having a telecoil included in your hearing aids. Firstly, this can be used for the telephone, and this is especially important if the hearing loss is severe or profound. Many of the modern digital hearing aids can be programmed to automatically switch to the telephone program when the telephone receiver is held to the hearing aid. The secondary use with induction loop systems is equally important. This gives you the ability to hear clear sound without the annoyance of background noises. Our CHHA meetings and our Sound Advice workshops are always equipped with loop systems. Next time you visit your audiologist be sure to discuss your need for a telecoil in your hearing aid. Even if you don't use it often, you will be glad you have it when the opportunity does arise.

Til next time, when Flo's message returns to this space.

Hugh Hetherington, Editor.

February 2009 Meeting

Provincial Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Report by: Teresa Hemsing

On Monday, February 16th, our regular meeting was held at the Summerhill in North Vancouver. Our guest speaker for the evening was Paige Thombs, Liaison Worker for the Provincial Deaf Access Office.

Paige gave an overview of the Provincial Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing: Victory Hill Residential Program (for students attending the B.C. School for the Deaf), Services for Family and Community Development, Youth in Transition Program (YTP, for hearing-impaired young people transitioning from the teenage to young adult years), Consultative Services, and the Deaf Access Office.

Despite having only the term "Deaf" in its name, the Deaf Access Office (DAO) helps the hard of hear-

ing, in addition to the deaf and deaf-blind, access services, regardless of whether or not the service is a government service. It does not matter how old the client is or their degree of hearing loss. Also, parents of deaf, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing children can use the DAO to help their child access services.

Currently, Paige is the Deaf Access Office (DAO), since she is the sole staff member. Her office is located in Burnaby but she provides services province-wide and travels to different communities. Currently, her clients are mostly from the deaf community and are primarily sign-language users. She has been at the DAO for two years, and previously, she worked at the Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (WIDHH) in Vancouver.

Paige explained how the Deaf Access Office works. The client contacts the DAO to discuss any barriers they may have encountered while trying to access services. Together, the client and DAO determine what the client needs in order to access the services. Then the DAO will approach the service provider and educate them about the needs of the hearing-impaired community. Examples of services include ICBC, the police, applying for social assistance (disability, EI), school system, hospitals, doctors' offices, courts, 911, and many more!

Next, Paige made an interesting statement to us: **Deaf and hard of hearing people are entitled BY LAW to have government services made accessible to them.** Both federal and provincial government services must be made accessible. There is some difference in how the law is stated federally versus provincially. Page stated that hard of hearing people should not be afraid to stand up for our rights. Each one of us needs to be a strong self-advocate, even if it is exhausting. If a hard of hearing person asks someone, like a doctor, to repeat, and if that other person refuses and says, "It doesn't matter" or "It's not important": in reply, the hard of hearing person should say "Please repeat it and let me decide if it's important or not". What great advice!

An audience member mentioned her personal experience in a hotel fire. She was not able to hear alarms and was not alerted to escape by the hotel staff. She wondered if hotels should have devices

(Continued on page 3)

like strobe lights to alert hard of hearing guests. Paige replied that the US has the American Disabilities Act (ADA), so hotels in the US have to have strobe lights and wheelchair ramps, amongst other things to help the disabled. She also mentioned that Member of Parliament Peter Julian is working on a Canadian national disabilities act with other MPs. However, it would be at least two years before the act would pass. Money would also be made available to businesses to help them install devices to help the disabled. However, this proposed act might be difficult to pass because it would be put through Parliament as a private member's bill, compounded with the fact that Peter Julian does not belong to the political party in power.

The DAO gives talks to service providers and educates them on the needs of hearing impaired people. The DAO also helps clients (mostly deaf) fill out forms and may refer clients to other agencies (e.g., WBP, WIDHH). Paige mentioned that the Well-Being Program (WBP) is offered by Vancouver Coastal Health and provides mental health services to deaf and hard of hearing people who may be experiencing isolation and depression and need someone to talk to.

The DAO does not provide the following: legal advice; counseling or emotional therapy; funding with technology or hearing aids; help with job searches or skills; or have decisions made by other agencies overturned. On the subject of funding, Paige stated that BC is one of the few provinces that do not have funding for hearing aids for seniors. She mentioned that the WIDHH has a Lend-An-Aid program, where one can borrow hearing aids. There is no time limit to the borrowing period. One does have to buy the ear molds, which cost approximately \$140. Unfortunately there is a wait list of about six months.

The DAO works with other agencies servicing the hard of hearing, like CHHA and CHS (Canadian Hearing Society). The DAO is often contacted by other agencies like BC Housing and the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance who want to learn how to be more accessible and accommodating to the hard of hearing.

An audience member asked if schools are considered service providers, and wondered what services could be offered to a student with a mild hearing loss.

Paige replied that schools are service providers and that the student should get an audiogram and be provided with an IEP (Individual Education Plan), even if he or she has a mild loss.

Paige provided copies of a BC government brochure "Provincial Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing". Thank you very much Paige, for a very informative and empowering presentation!

Paige Thombs can be reached at:

The Deaf Access Office

Burnaby

TTY: 604-660-0508

Voice: 604-775-1364

Email: paige.thombs@gov.bc.ca

Fax: 604-660-1859

Videophone: Call or email to set up a videophone time.

You can also visit the DAO website at:

<http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/psdhh/programs.htm>

Effective Coping Strategies

My Mom Won't Wear Her Hearing Aids

by Neil Bauman, Ph.D.

A concerned (and frustrated) daughter wrote "I'm hoping that you can help me. My mother is 63 and has significant hearing loss which was diagnosed about 20 years ago. She bought hearing aids about 2 years ago and has never, ever used them.

She is not in denial about her hearing loss. Her excuse is simply, 'If I wear my hearing aids, I'll hear all of the things that I don't normally hear and it will drive me crazy.'

The worst part is that when my mother doesn't hear everything someone says she will simply fill in her own blanks--which creates arguments and disagreements amongst her family and friends. She will always interpret what she missed in the most negative way, and then gets her feelings hurt over something no one said to her. This is unbelievably frustrating. I am tired of repeating myself and talking too loud, and also being the arbitrator in arguments that I know stem 99% of the time because my mother didn't hear what she thought she heard. How can I convince her that hearing the good things

(Continued on page 4)

in life is far more important than being bothered by occasional noise?"

Some people just aren't ready to wear hearing aids when someone pressures them to get them. Actually, this happens a lot! The time to get hearing aids is when you are ready to wear them, not when someone says you need them. (Yes, the person DOES need them--but it is just wasted money if they then never wear them.)

Your mother has a valid point when she says, "If I wear the hearing aids, I will be able to hear all of the things that I don't normally hear and it will drive me crazy."

Your mom hasn't heard many of these background sounds for a number of years, and thus hearing them all at once is nerve-wracking to say the least.

The solution to this is that your mom has to SLOWLY learn to wear her hearing aids--first in quiet surroundings so there are no other noises to blast her ears. In such quiet surroundings, she should converse with one person. When she is comfortable doing that, then she can slowly graduate to noisier places and do the same. Over time her brain will adjust to the extra noise, but this takes up to 3 months--so don't hurry the process.

Like your mom, I don't hear everything someone says--whether I wear my hearing aids or not. You see, hearing aids aren't perfect. Thus, if your expectation is that she will hear everything, you and she will be sadly disappointed. If both of you go with the expectation that in quiet surroundings she will hear quite a bit more than she does now, then you have the right expectations. In noisy situations, all bets are off unless she also uses assistive listening devices. You explain how your mom, when she misses something, "simply fills in her own blanks--which creates arguments and disagreements among her family and friends."

Don't be too hard on your mom. When we (hard of hearing people) miss words, we naturally try to fill in the blanks--sometimes we fill them in with the right words, and sometimes with the wrong words. Unfortunately, if we miss a key word, what we think we hear is likely totally "off the wall". Problems arise when we insist that what we thought we heard is what you said. Part of adjusting to being hard of hearing is realizing that what we think we hear is often not what was actually said. Thus, we need to be

flexible to others telling us what really was said when they realize we are off track.

I understand your frustration about repeating yourself. However, look at it this way. If you have to repeat yourself, this just shows that you are not doing the right things so that your mom can hear and understand you the first time.

Use me for an example. If you are going to talk to me and I don't have my hearing aids on, you are going to have to get close (and by close I mean almost nose to nose, not talking to me from across a room). Furthermore, you need to have adequate light on your face and you must be facing me so I can speechread you. Also, you need to speak clearly and maybe a bit more slowly. If you don't do these things EVERY time, you will just have to repeat yourself (and get frustrated in the process).

Thus, when talking to a hard of hearing person, you need to meet THEIR communication needs BEFORE you start talking.

You ask, "How can I convince my mom that hearing the good things in life is far more important than being bothered by occasional noise?"

I think you have the wrong idea about what you call "occasional noise". To you, there are foreground sounds (like the person you are talking to) and background sounds (environmental sounds, etc. that you ignore).

When you are hard of hearing, there is no such thing as foreground and background sounds--they are ALL in the foreground so are annoying and loud--and trying to hear someone through them at times is nigh to being impossible.

That is why wearing hearing aids in quiet places with ONE person talking and being no more than 6 or so feet apart is the ideal. Under those conditions, wearing hearing aids really helps. However, when you add in noise and distance, hearing aids rapidly become less and less helpful. When it is too noisy, wearing hearing aids can actually make things worse, not better. This is why hearing aids are not the whole answer. In order to successfully live with a hearing loss, you need to do four things (AFTER you have accepted and adjusted emotionally and psychologically to your hearing loss). These four things are not optional--they are all EQUALLY important.

(Continued on page 5)

They are:

1. Get and wear (when appropriate) properly fitted hearing aids.
2. Supplement the hearing aids with assistive listening devices when noise and distance interfere.
3. Learn to speechread (lip reading was the older term)
- 4.. Learn and practice the myriads of proper hearing loss coping skills such as get close, face the person, have adequate light on your face, cut out background noise, etc..

If your mom will do all four of these things, she will understand ever so much more (and you will not be so frustrated either).

However, you need to remember that communication is a two-way street, thus BOTH you AND your mom have to do your respective parts. Your mom has to do the above 4 things, and you have to accommodate her hearing needs (basically point 4 above). When you both do this, you'll both be much happier and communication will be ever so much easier!

For more information on communicating with hard of hearing people get the short easy-to-read book "Talking With Hard of Hearing People--Here's How to Do It Right, Eh! This booklet is available at all of our North Shore Branch meetings free of charge.

Excerpted from Dr. Neil Bauman's November 2008 E-Zine and reprinted with permission. Dr. Neil is a Hearing Loss Coping Skills Expert and has a website at: www.hearinglosshelp.com.

By visiting his website you can sign up to receive his monthly E-Zine free of charge. It is always filled with many useful articles on hearing loss.

Raising a severely/profoundly Hard of Hearing child to adulthood

By Rosalie Williams.

As a young mother, it can be quite a shock when you discover that your child has a hearing loss. This happened to me many years ago when my then young son was enrolled in daycare. The possibility was first brought to my attention by the daycare staff when they reported to me that they had difficulty getting my son's attention when calling out his name. They found that they had to be directly in front of him or gently touch him to get his attention. I followed up

on their advice to have him tested for speech and hearing loss only to find out the devastating news, ... "Your son has a severe/profound bilateral hearing loss". He was three years old.

Getting him fitted with bilateral hearing aids was a challenge for us both as we had endless professional appointments, operations to drain liquid, numerous ear infections, many, many tests, and audiograms.

Our problems were further compounded by his many challenges in the public school system. These were largely due to ignorance as at the time I was told he could attend public school. His hearing loss was not considered severe enough to attend a deaf/hearing loss facility. I was also not keen to institutionalize him on a weekly basis.

Although I took it upon myself to attend many seminars and lectures to try to educate myself with hearing loss, at the time there was not much available that would help me understand hearing loss and the subsequent problems associated with it. I was, however, grateful there was help over the years from the Oral Centre for Deaf Children. There were a very limited number of classes for the hearing impaired and in the public school system he was singled out and made to feel 'different'.

My experience in the hearing loss industry, working with seniors and volunteering for the Canadian Hard of Hearing – North Shore branch has enabled me to help my son in his daily struggles and to help others at the same time. I have seen changes over the years but not as many as I'd like. It has been 28 years now and I am still learning. I have found that a hearing impaired person has to deal with many challenges and frustrations that hearing people don't have to face. It is my hope that the hearing public can be made more aware of the difficulties that have to be faced by the hearing impaired on a daily basis.

So many years have passed and there have been many trials and tribulations up to the present day. My son is now a young man of over 30 years old. He lives on his own and has a part-time job. Like many hard of hearing persons having to coexist in the hearing world he would prefer not to have to deal with the hearing public. It is obvious to me that much work is needed to educate the hearing public in hearing loss issues and communication strategies. As a member of CHHA, I am happy I can help contribute to these goals.

Managing Your Hearing Loss

Presented By
The Canadian Hard of Hearing
Association
North Shore Branch
At the West Vancouver Seniors'
Activity Centre
695—21st Street
West Vancouver

Mondays and Wednesdays
April 20, 2009 to May 13, 2009
9:30 AM to 12:00 Noon



The Course will Cover:
 Hearing Loss Basics
 Hearing Aid Technology
 Assistive Devices
 Coping Strategies
 Assertiveness Training
 Introductory course in
 Speechreading

For Registration Contact:
West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre
604-925-7280
Course Fee \$36.75
Text Book Included



All opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association or CHHA – North Shore Branch.

April Meeting

Monday, April 20, 2009 7:00 PM
At the Summerhill
135 West 15th Street, North Vancouver
A North Shore Branch
Special Presentation
Invite family members and friends
To come along and learn how
Hearing loss affects us all

Sound Advice

Presented by:
The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
North Shore Branch
The group meets on the first Friday of each
month from 10:00 AM to 12 Noon
 (Holidays excepted) at the West Vancouver
 Seniors' Activity Centre's Learning Studio,
 695 21st Street in West Vancouver.
(No Meeting in July and August)

When we meet, we discuss topics and issues
 dealing with hearing loss.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Bring a friend, a family member,
 they are welcome too.

Subjects to be addressed will include:

Technology; Coping Strategies;

Improving Relationships;

Improving Hearing Environments

For Information call: 604-926-5222

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 couver and the District of West Vancouver.



CANADIAN HARD OF HEARING ASSOCIATION
NORTH SHORE BRANCH
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Prov. _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone: _____

Please mail application to:

CHHA—North Shore Branch
 Attention: Treasurer
 600 West Queens Road
 North Vancouver, B.C.
 V7N 2L3

Cheque enclosed

Money Order Enclosed

Charitable Registration No.
 BN 89672 3038 RR0001

I wish to support the aims of CHHA and the North Shore Branch and enclose my \$35.00 annual membership fee. (National \$25.00, Branch \$10.00). Membership is paid annually from 1 October to 30 September.