



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association

North Shore Branch

Published four times a year on the 15th of March, June, September and December by CHHA – North Shore Branch, 600 West Queens Road, North Vancouver, B.C. V7N 2L3. Tel: 604-926-5222 Fax: 604-925-2286 website: www.chha-nsb.com Charitable Registration No. BN 89672 3038 RR0001

Editor: Hugh Hetherington Issue 87 December 2014

Mountain Ear



**The North Shore Branch
Board of Directors**
wishes all our members and friends
a **Happy Holiday Season and a
Healthy and Prosperous New Year**

Prez Mez

By Mike Hocevar

Thanks to all of you who made it to the Annual General Meeting where guest speaker Dr. Jeff Small gave a marvelous talk; and for re-electing the directors for another term by acclamation: **Hugh Hetherington**-treasurer, **Ruth Lapointe**-secretary, **Bill Friend**-Vice President, **Henry Romain and Caroline Wickham** as members-at-large with myself as president. One vacancy still exists.

Thanks **Lauren Cotterall** for your four years of service. We hope time factors allow you to get involved again in future. While we're at it, a big thank you to **Flo Spratt** for her continuing dedication to the branch, especially at *Sound Advice* and our guest speaker presentations at *The Summerhill* where she stepped in to provide the refreshments for our AGM. Her home baking was very much appreciated! We would also like to express our thanks to the Summer-

hill Retirement Residence for their continued support in providing us with a meeting room.

Sound Advice at the West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre continues to draw many, including several newcomers at each meeting. Thank you to those who spread the word to others who can benefit from our support services. A lot of the people we see are wanting to know about the process of buying a new hearing aid, or are presently in the process of such. Something very important that always comes up at each session—the matter of having a Telecoil, or T-Switch, in the hearing aid. Concern on our part is that some audiologists and hearing professionals don't seem to place importance on including this which really doesn't even cost extra if the right choice of hearing aid is made.

The Telecoil can make it easier for some to use the telephone, but, more importantly, it is necessary for use of the inductive loop System that we use at our meetings and that are becoming more prevalent in churches, community centres and meeting rooms. It

seems that some professionals may be thinking that with the prevalence of Bluetooth technology in cell phones and other electronic devices that a Telecoil is made obsolete. Wrong! Those going for a new hearing aid have got to be assertive and insist on having Telecoil equipped hearing aids.

While we're on Loop Systems, Hugh and I attended the recent AGM for the CHHA Vancouver branch. We were both pleased to run into **Teresa Hensing**, former North Shore Branch president there, as well. The guest speaker was **Tim Archer** from Advanced Listening Systems in Victoria. They have been prolific in advocating for and getting loop systems installed around the country. For example, all 56 branches of Van City Credit Union now have teller booths that use the loop system for those with hearing aids, and some other banks and pharmacies are also getting onboard.

The affordability of these loop systems is attractive. Many of these limited area systems or ports as they are called, can be done in the mid-hundreds of dollars which isn't a huge expense for a lot of commercial enterprises. Further, Tim's company offers a number of mini systems that can be used in one's own home, again at very affordable prices. His company motto is "Let's Loop Canada" similar to a program in place across the U.S. called "Let's Loop America" which has been gaining much headway. Did you know that 450 New York subway ticket booths have been looped and the goal is to loop all New York City taxi cabs. We will continue to follow Tim Archer's activities in Canada.

Hugh and I found this timely, as we had only the week before roughed out a project for the New Year that has been in the planning for some time. This is to survey public employers, local churches and other institutions on the North Shore to see which have been looped and to make available the information for those who haven't done so. Ted gave out a brochure which we will adapt as part of a simple package to encourage installation of these systems, known as Induction Loop systems in the trade.

The directors of the Vancouver branch are very active on a number of projects. They co-sponsored the Walk2Hear fundraiser earlier in the Fall. They reported on surpassing this year's fundraising target, and those of you in our branch who sent in a contribution are thanked. This is an important profile

event. It also generates funds earmarked by CHHA National for our Young Adult Network, which are youth members under 30 and spearheaded by Vancouver's **Rosalind Ho**, among others, who expressed her appreciation at the meeting.



From left to right, Sharon Perry, Myrtle Bennett, Hugh Hetherington, Sharon Davis, Nora McKellin, Ruth Warwick, Rosalind Ho, Marilyn Dahl, Robert Corbeil, Jennifer Diggins and Mike Hocevar

Our past couple of National Conventions have formulated a half dozen committees for renewal and creating a blueprint for activities in the next few years, notwithstanding that branches like ours are autonomous in our activity programs. Some preliminary plans have emerged from this process and in October we met with CHHA National president **Myrtle Barrett** from Newfoundland & Labrador Chapter with staff members **Robert Corbeil**, National Executive Director and **Jennifer Diggins**, National Resource Development Officer and other BC CHHA representatives pictured above.

CHHA—North Shore Branch Programs are funded in part by Municipal Community Grants from the City and District of North Vancouver and the District of West Vancouver.

Hearing Aid Battery Recycling

Bring your used hearing aid batteries to our meetings and we will take care of recycling them for you

Rising Postage Costs

If you are receiving a printed version of this newsletter by mail and would be willing to receive it by email instead, Please send an email to chha_nsb@telus.net with Newsletter on the subject line and we will add your email address to our email list, Thank You!

Jennifer mentioned that as she was flying in from a stopover in Calgary coming out from Ottawa, that she overheard the woman seated next to her describing all about CHHA to a passenger across the aisle wearing a hearing aid. She was talking about our North Shore Branch and our *Sound Advice* program in particular. It turned out later that it was one of our retired board members, **Karen Hunter** who was the speaker in this regard. Lisa thought it was just such a small world for her to have overheard this on the way to meeting with us!

So what did we learn at the feedback session with them? A major focus is to look at a name change for the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, with an accompanying new logo. We along with other BC representatives hashed out some thoughts, not totally convinced at this point. CHHA is looking for a more popular profile and expansion of the age groups as predominantly we seem to be an over-60 membership, since about a third of people reaching retirement age suffer poor hearing. But the demographics appear to indicate that due to modern environmental noise and use of personal devices like cell phones and personal music devices, using cheap earbuds and so on, that a much younger profile of persons with hearing loss is setting to emerge. So CHHA wants to beef up our appeal to bring them into the membership to continue to educate and inform on the issues.

My own personal opinion is that if response to such name changes and logos meets positive approval to a number of target groups, even though the style might not be to our own personal liking, then perhaps we go with it for the good of the organization's future.

So speaking of membership, Hugh noted recently that a few memberships still need to be renewed as the September 30th date for such has passed with not everyone doing so—if you have overlooked your renewal notice, please send in a cheque. If your 2014-15 membership has not yet been renewed, you will have a received a reminder notice along with this newsletter. \$40 covers the \$10 for our branch and the \$30 National membership fee. Please note that membership in the Provincial Chapter of CHHA is included with the National membership.

I also want to share some follow-up from Provincial Chapter's big forum in the Spring at Vancouver Public Library on the High Cost of Hearing Aids in British Columbia, in which our branch participated in

organizing. Provincial president **Marilyn Dahl** and **Charles Laszlo**, Founding President of CHHA, recently met in Victoria with the new BC government Seniors Advocate **Isobel Mackenzie** to share the findings.

Marilyn reports a very positive and empathetic reception, particularly as Ms. Mackenzie has a strong background in Seniors' Care and witnessed first hand the issues of hearing loss. She recognizes the requirement for hearing aids is so important. She indicated that her priorities as the Senior Advocate is hearing, vision and dental.

Ms. Mackenzie said that perhaps any possible future government provided subsidies might have a chance by income level qualification rather than across the board. Note that such a plan hasn't been formulated and has no validity or estimated date right now. But at least communication lines have been initiated. Next up is that Marilyn and I are planning an information meeting with the NDP's health critic, **Judy Darcy**.

Another positive note is that a new branch is being initiated in Abbotsford and some renewal activity is starting for reviving the Victoria branch again. We wish the folks involved the very best and pledge our support anytime, along with the Provincial Chapter's expected necessary support for success.

Looking ahead, a reminder that anyone interested in Speech Reading classes at Vancouver Community College King Edward Campus in January should get in touch with them, and for those suffering from Tinnitus there is a Vancouver self help group that meets the first Wednesday each month. Let us know if you need more details.

In closing, our sincere condolences to **Dr. Glen Grigg** our oft guest speaker at past AGM's, for the loss his wife **Andrea Gauthier**, a Branch member and past director, who recently succumbed to cancer. We have received a number of donations in her memory, thank you for these. And best wishes to director **Caroline Wickham** who is dealing with current medical issues.

Our best wishes go to all of you for the upcoming special season and New Year's, on behalf of the board of directors! -----**Mike Hocevar**

2014 Annual General Meeting

Report by Mike Hocevar

The CHHA - North Shore Branch's 2014 AGM was held on September 17th at the Summerhill in North Vancouver. It was attended by 21 members and 6 guests. Following the AGM, our guest speaker, Jeff Small, Ph.D., Associate Professor at the UBC Department of Audiology and Speech Sciences spoke on the topic "Challenges and Strategies in Understanding Speech." A summary of Dr. Small's presentation follows here.

His presentation was designed to provide us with strategies to optimize our hearing experience. He examined what's involved with understanding spoken language, the challenges in speech understanding and to recognize different ways to optimize our hearing experience. In any given listening situation a whole host of factors influence whether we understand the sound we hear—or want to hear. This can be in the external environment or it could be an internal physical factor which restricts our ability to hear properly.

Jeff noted that he is not an audiologist, but a professor and researcher specializing in the aging effects on the brain. Drawing from studies and observations, Jeff pointed out that one's hearing quality has huge influences on mental health and the aging process. Understanding the processes involved in hearing is important because then the hard of hearing not only can help alleviate many difficult situations, but in fact beneficial activities can be undertaken to challenge negativity in this regard.

Jeff started out by discussing what it takes for us to hear. Sound comes into the ear, a receptor that channels sound into the cochlea which then, based on the health of that inner ear area, transmits sound energy to the brain. Our brain sorts it all out for our minds to recognize the sound and understand what we heard. The poorer the transmission and reception, the harder or slower it is for our brains to manage the confusion and make sense of what is spoken.

A host of challenges are present especially for the

Hard of Hearing. Obviously the environment that the sound is generated in is important to consider. Typically, these may be background noise, competing speech situations like a noisy room full of people, and acoustics in where the source originates. All of these can have a detrimental effect as extra noise mixing with and interfering with the desired speaker's voice. The distortion involved in the sound making it to the brain therefore may be quite confusing and requires extra energy to work it all out. This explains why a hard of hearing person can feel so exhausted after a day of listening.

Then there are factors influenced by the way a person speaks. For the English language, although we might not use all regularly, a person's lexicon or vocabulary may consist of up to about 50,000 or more words. One understands a word in the way they are familiar with how it normally sounds to them. But an assortment of complicating factors can arise. First, the English language consists of about 40 phonemes or common sounds that are regularly featured in most words. So many words can sound close or alike and have to be distinguished. Familiarity of how the word is expected to sound is compromised by being spoken quickly, or with an unfamiliar foreign accent. And of course, many people speaking at the same time can also be an issue. Other factors can be different voice volumes, pronunciations, different speed of speech delivery and often enough, snippets of speech rather than complete sentences in certain group speaking dynamics.

Jeff challenges us to recognize all of these factors, and then to consider how they can be met to hear and understand speech. Hearing aids and assistive devices are a key ingredient. They not only provide a lift for hearing, but help provide us with a safety factor and through our ability to participate in activity and interaction with others, a peace of mind. This results in less stress from the energy and anxieties involved in trying to hear what is said. Isolating ourselves as a defense mechanism or worse, to ignore dealing with reality and not positively pro-acting to help ourselves can lead to social withdrawal, low self esteem, and depression. These factors in the worst cases can lead to triggering dementia issues. This connection has been recently made in a number of recent studies.

Jeff is a strong proponent of finding ways "to chal-

lenge” our brains for sharpness and positive thinking. Attitudes such as “I am 70 years young” rather than “70 years old” is an example. Participation in activities and social interaction is good. Learning good coping strategies is important and many of these are taught and emphasized at the "Sound Advice" sessions put on by our CHHA North Shore Branch. Many people will do crossword puzzles which is quite healthy for the brain. Better yet is to push it to new challenges; maybe learning a new language, taking up dancing or taking lessons of sorts that require new thinking and memory effort. Regular reading is very beneficial. As well as increasing our vocabulary, if words are read silently, the brain puts the pronunciation context to each word which translates into one's broader reception of spoken words.

Certain memory dynamics are not necessarily lost but become slower due to the energy required for the brain to process difficult hearing. This makes it important to understand how strategies can be useful. For example, did you ever notice in a baseball game that the player on deck waiting to go to the plate, might be swinging two or three bats or have a weight placed around one? The idea being that once finally up to bat, that his bat will feel lighter and that he is in more control and fired up to hit a ball powerfully with it.

Some coping strategies to help our brains improve our hearing ability include being assertive in addressing deficient hearing environments. Perhaps moving to a quieter area, ensuring the lighting is good to see a speaker's face, taking speech reading lessons for a better advantage, instructing a speaker in the way they can be more effective in communicating with us, using an assistive listening device, and any of many other methods that you can use to improve your chances of hearing a speaker better.

Jeff dealt with many questions and comments following his talk. He was very complimentary about our organization for the work it does, and that he enjoys participating with us as he always comes away better educated from interacting with hard of hearing people. Jeff made an offer to return if we would like, to talk about effects and consequences of aging; this met with everyone's approval. We'll look forward to scheduling Jeff again for what will undoubtedly be another splendid educational session!

November Presentation

By Mike Hocevar

It was like Santa Claus with a sleigh full of goodies as **Ted Clegg** from *Assistive Listening Device Systems (ALDS)* wheeled in his cart to prepare for his presentation at our Summerhill guest speaker meeting in November. But Ted didn't bring toys; rather it was an interesting array of assistive listening devices and safety alert systems that can save your life.

The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association is a consumer education and support organization independent of the assistive hearing device industry. But we do like to from time to time, bring in speakers to share the latest technology and devices to enhance our coping with life as a hard of hearing person.

In selecting topics and speakers for our Summerhill presentations, the branch directors recently thought we should look at how to be prepared in emergency situations such as fire or earthquake scenarios. Not only would this include what advance planning and handy-grab kits should be suggested, but to learn about personal safety alert technology.

So this is where Ted was perfect. The items he showed were just a few of many that his company offers as fairly affordable, quality useful products of which most are backed by a one year minimum warranty and a 30 day money back trial.

Ted began by asking if there were some other assistive listening devices we'd like to learn more about before getting into the safety alert products. He was prepared and able to show some items related to the questions.



The first question he addressed was how to get people to speak slower and more clearly. This, Ted admitted, isn't something he can solve. It's a matter of how to train oth-

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.

ers to your needs. He did, however, advise that anytime you can get tone controls on a device in addition to volume, that it could help to make it better to hear. He also mentioned that monaural bilateral hearing can sometimes be easier than stereo for the hard of hearing person.



Similarly, the issue of a good phone came up. This is a concern often raised by the hard of hearing. About 30 different models are offered by *ALDS*. But Ted said that while many have all kinds of “bells & whistles”, most of us don’t need them and the simpler the phone, the better it is. He

suggested that corded phones are better sound-wise than cordless.

Of course, having a Telecoil or T-switch is so important and must be insisted upon in the purchase of a new hearing aid for use with your phone, other personal assistive listening devices and loop systems. Many audiologists don’t realize that even with today’s ever popular Bluetooth wireless technology in so many devices, that the Telecoil still has a place for us who are hearing challenged. Bluetooth systems are one-to-one while the Telecoil provides for easy group listening situations.

Television is a huge challenge for many of us even with hearing aids. This is perhaps the most common reason newcomers at our monthly Sound Advice sessions report why they are looking to get a hearing aid. Loud volume can affect their partners and sometimes even the neighbours. Ted showed us a couple of simple plug in transmitters for wireless headphones and stethoscope style units. These permit direct clear sound and volume control which is separate and apart from what others in the room require for compatible TV viewing.



Ted further showed for TV listening some portable FM systems and indoor mini loop systems similar to

what we use at our meetings. All are very easy to use and make all the difference. Many use the Bluetooth technology which is becoming more standard in many hearing aid products and so on. Modern TVs now have digital sound output replacing the older analogue connections. There are now TV devices with compatible digital inputs. There are also digital to analogue converters allowing older devices to be used with the modern TVs.



And it is important to note, many of these devices can be used with computers and stereos. Ted also made the distinction between infrared and FM listening systems. Infrared is line of sight while FM is not limited by walls or obstructions. With FM you can move around in the home and still hear the music or TV program.

FM personal listening systems can be quite basic and affordable. They enhance listening in difficult situations. For example, the receiving unit and transmitting unit are separate. The transmitter can be held and pointed, left on a table or podium or worn by the speaker such as in a car or on public transit. The receiving unit can deliver the sound via earbuds or directly to the person's hearing aids via a neckloop and Telecoil. These can especially be beneficial when there is background noise. There are also single unit "Pockettalkers" that are less expensive and can be used in one-to-one close-up situations.

A question raised at this point was whether these systems can be used when the person has a pacemaker. In this case it is best to consult with your cardiologist. Devices worn around the neck can definitely be a problem and medical advice should always be sought.



Turning attention to the various options for personal safety, many alerting devices designed to aid hard of hearing people are available and in so many cases, really a must-have. Price-wise, again we find so many quite easy to use, install and with affordability. As to what should be obtained, Ted showed a number of them.

While we might have smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in our homes, the high frequency tone may not be possible for people with hearing loss to hear. And of course, we don't wear hearing aids when we sleep. (for those times Ted showed a portable drying and sanitizing storage box to use nightly which extends the life of a hearing aid and sanitizes against itchy ear, wet ear and so on).



Ted's company offers a number of different alerting systems to fit many different needs. Some can be used independently and can be set up to detect sounds from different sources and alert you accordingly. This can be via a personal pager, flashing lamps or strobe lights. There are also bed and wrist shakers for night time. An interesting fact is that a hard of hearing person is more likely to wake up with a flashing light than a hearing person. This may be because when one sense is diminished our other senses become more acute.

There are also systems that can be connected in with a building's alarm panel that will alert you with a pager, and it can be for multiple users in a building.

ALDS provides portable devices for travel situations. These include portable doorbell systems and devices that can detect a knock on the door. There are also

battery operated alarm clocks that can trigger a bed shaker to wake you up. There are also small travelling dehumidifier storage containers for your hearing aids.



Some hotels have telephone amplifiers that can be activated for your room, ask in advance for such. Incidentally, there are portable amplifier attachments that can be attached to almost any phone, including at your workplace.

We appreciated that Ted knew his stuff, spoken at an easy pace and clear voice--and no wonder. *ALDS* is a family business purchased by his father as a retiree, and as it grew he called upon Ted and his Australian wife to move back to the Fraser Valley to be part of it. Ted's father had hearing loss most of his life so Ted grew up knowing the issues, and in fact, says it may be that he himself is experiencing some as he is using a lot of the devices himself and that his family notices him asking for them to repeat things.

The company was founded 30 years ago by **Charles Laszlo** who invented an infrared hearing system. As an engineer, researcher and professor at UBC he sold the company and eventually Ted's father became the third owner. Under Ted and his father *ALDS* expanded the range of products that can be so useful.

The main thing you need to know for consulting with Ted, is to figure what your needs are for safety alerts. He can advise of suitable devices and set you up with a proper package for a system that will provide you with peace of mind knowing you will have enhanced your personal safety.

Recognizing that hearing aids cost us a lot of money, if you identify yourself as a member of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, *ALDS* will give you a discount off the listed price of their items which can be easily viewed online at www.alds.com or call Ted toll free 866 845-2537. While *ALDS* does not have a storefront, you can visit their warehouse in Langley. For those who have coverage from Veterans Affairs, the RCMP or WorkSafe BC it is nice to know that many of these items fall under their mandates.

There will be some of Ted's brochures available at the next Sound Advice session for those who didn't make it to the November meeting.



Social Service Grants

CHHA – North Shore Branch
acknowledges with thanks the following
Municipal Community Grants
and donations

District of North Vancouver \$1100
City of North Vancouver \$1100
District of West Vancouver \$1100

We also gratefully acknowledge a
generous donation of \$500 from the
West Vancouver Kiwanis Club.

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)

**(Next Meetings are on December 5th and
January 2nd)**

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



**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 \$40.00 annual membership fee. (National \$30.00, Branch \$10.00). Membership is paid annually from 1 October to 30 September.