

**Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) – Chapter Meeting  
Sherman Oaks Library – Community Room  
Sherman Oaks, CA  
4/28/18**

**MEETING COMMENCES AT 10:06 A.M.**

**HEATHER LEHR:** Everybody.

If you have a T-coil, switch to T-coil.

Okay. If you have a T-coil, switch to T-coil.

Everybody, T-coil --

All right?

One, two, three, testing, can you hear me?

If you're having problems, do a thumbs-down.

One, two, three, testing -- can you hear me?

**JENNA:** I can hear you but not well.

**HEATHER LEHR:** Can you hear me on T-coil? Is it too soft?

It's not working?

**DIANA GROSS:** It's on T-coil but I'm not getting any sound.

**HEATHER LEHR:** Let me try turning it off. Hello, one, two, three.

Good morning and welcome I'm so happy to see you all here this morning.

First of all, I want to acknowledge my -- that I'm very grateful for you for rolling out of bed on a Saturday morning to be here.

Not only to help yourself, but to help others.

It takes a certain kind of person to have that kind of dedication to be here on a Saturday morning.

And I truly appreciate it.

So, thank you.

We have a lot of fun things to do today.

First of all, what we'd like to do is -- do we have any new people? People who haven't been to -- oh, yay.

We would love it if you would introduce yourself.

Tell us a little bit about your hearing loss.

And, so that we can get to know you.

I'm going to pass the mic back.

Can you pass the mic back?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Hello, nice to meet you all.

Can you hear me?

My name is -- I think I'm the only one here without any help for hearing because I'm -- an appointment at Kaiser next week because I lost some hearing so I'm going to try learn -- people with experience, what they have dealt with and problems.

You don't hear me well, right?

See, the problem that I have an accent also so a lot of people don't understand me.

And I don't know if it's because I'm speaking too low or too high.

Because people with hearing problems I realize, sometimes, speak too loudly.

So, I'm at the point where I don't know so I have to be here, so that's it.

I can hear you well, so that's a good thing.

My name is Maluce, I live in Sherman Oaks.

**HEATHER LEHR:** Welcome.

Who's next?

**STEVE:** Hello everybody my name is Steven.

I lost my hearing when I was two and a half years old I got meningitis.

And, I'd like to look more into Cochlear implant procedures, if I'm a candidate.

Happy to be here.

I'm bilingual, (speaking Spanish).

(Applause)

**TERI:** Steven just graduated from Cal State Northridge.

So impressive.

**HEATHER LEHR:** One more new person?

---

DISCLAIMER: This transcript is the product of a realtime captioning session (CART – Communication Access Realtime Translation) and is intended to provide communication access only and is not guaranteed nor intended to be strictly verbatim. This is not a certified document and is not acceptable for use in any legal matter.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

>>> Did you turn on your Telecoil? That's what the microphone is for.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** (inaudible) he wears the hearing aid, my hearing's been good and my sister invited us to come.

**DIANA GROSS:** Can we get your name again, please.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** My parents are both dead so I know a lot about hearing loss and that's it.

Thank you.

(Applause)

**DIANA GROSS:** I didn't get her name.

**HEATHER LEHR:** Can you guys see the caption if I stand sign up.

No.

Okay, I'll sit down.

Welcome new people, good to have you here.

Today we have a wonderful program for you.

And I want to give you some background.

We all know how hard it is to have hearing loss.

And, for me, one of the first parts about hearing loss is the isolation.

Is feeling lonely, is feeling like sort of cut off from everybody else.

In my story, I was eight months pregnant when I moved to L.A. because my husband got a new job and so I found myself with not knowing any people here, not having any family.

At home with a small infant, and, and with my terrible hearing loss.

I could not -- never ever every time I tried to reach out to medium about it made me nervous.

I tried to go it a community PTA meeting, everybody kept coming up on and talking to me and I didn't know what they were saying and I felt really stupid.

So, I was in a really terrible place.

And, but I was having probably the worst part about it is my son would cry and I wouldn't know.

So, I would like put his bassinet in the middle of the living room and stare at it because I didn't know when he was crying or fussing or whatever.

So, I was so very fortunate in that I was able to get a hearing dog.

This is a picture of me at my training session.

I'm the one on the right, I was a lot younger then.

And, at -- when I was learning at my handler training for my hearing dog, and that's a picture of Marina she was an amazing animal and was Anne my hearing dog for ten years.

And then she got very ill, we were -- we "retired" her but she was still my dog and she ended up living five more years after that.

So, she was a wonderful companion.

I want to say something about hearing dogs, for me and from my experience.

Not only was it great that she would alert me when the doorbell would ring shoo she would tell me when the phone was ringing that she would tell me when my son was crying -- that was all great stuff.

Her working was very helpful to me.

But I used to walk in my neighborhood with my beautiful dog and her little orange vest and people would come up to me.

And they would say, what's -- don't all dogs hear? What's a hearing dog? Is your dog deaf? Should he would ask me these crazy questions.

But it was a way for me to meet people because then I sort of had something that I could talk about and it really -- and then I met someone who was on the land use committee and then I got to get involved in that.

And then I found a mommy's group that I could join. So suddenly from being, you know, very isolated and alone and feeling very nervous, I swear my hearing dog was not just a helpful servant but also kind of like a liaison between me and hearing people.

I mean she made hearing people -- first of all they knew I was having -- they knew right away that I had a hearing issue.

And, secondly, I think she just made them feel more comfortable.

Like they could just walk up and talk to me.

---

And so anyway if any of you are dealing with issues like that, like isolation or feeling like it would be great and a help to having a hearing dog, I highly, highly recommend it.

And that's my personal story.

Okay so, today we have ... Canine Companions for Independence is a group that trains hearing dogs for people.

It's a wonderful organization that's been around since 1975.

They -- not only train hearing dogs but ... blind dogs --

**MELISSA BILLINGSLEY:** We don't.

**HEATHER LEHR:** I'm sorry, I get confused a lot.

Today our guest is Melissa Billingsley. She works with Canine Companions for Independence and I'm just going to introduce her and let her explain it.

Before I make another mistake.

**MELISSA BILLINGSLEY:** My name is Melissa Billingsley can everyone hear me?

I'm here with -- I have two dogs today.

Hearing dog Hilty is laying right here with the orange leash and the little yellow lab beside her is puppy in training let's. She is 18 months old and she's going to advanced training in two weeks.

So, I'll explain a little bit, give you a little bit history about Canine Companions for Independence and then I'll talk to you about hearing dogs.

On it was founded in 1975 it's the oldest service dog organization in the United States.

They do train -- dogs for -- well five categories now.

Hearing dogs is one category.

Service dogs for people 18 or older, disabled, in wheelchairs, or amputees or wounded warriors.

We have skilled companion which are for people 18 or under, or even our skilled companions can be dogs that need another adult to assist them in life.

And we have filled dogs that work in the courthouse, the school districts, speech departments, those are our facility dogs.

---

Our last category that we're just starting this year is service dogs for wounded Warriors, with PTSD.

So that's our fifth category that we're starting and it's just a pilot program and that started at our Santa Rosa campus.

We have six campuses in the United States.

In this area we're part of the Southwest campus which is in Oceanside. Our national campus our national headquarters are in Santa Rosa, California. We have -- we have one in Florida, New York, and Ohio.

So, we have six campuses so we try to be able to assist people throughout the United States.

One of the biggest things with our organization is we do give out the dogs free of charge.

Not only do we give the dogs free of charge as a graduate or handler, we have a lifetime of training with the dogs.

So, if I have any issues with my dog or any concerns, I can contact Canine Companions for Independence and they'll have me either go down to the campus if I need extra help or they'll email or call me and let me know how I can fix things or if they have big medical bills that get out of hand, they have financial assistance that will help us also.

Canine Companions is not federally funded so we get all our money from people that graciously donate money to them but we do have some big benefactors that give us money.

Our Oceanside campus is the (inaudible) campus, I'm not sure if you guys all read novels he's donated lots of money to the Oceanside campus and Charles Schulz all the royalties from the Peanuts cartoons.

Those are our two for California.

Sea World in California, Baylor and scot wealth in Texas -- but we do have big companies that giving give to tell organization.

I have been part of Canine Companions since 2011, I'm actually not a staff member, I'm a volunteer.

I'm a manager for my mom's veterinary clinic and we had a client come in with a service dog so we work with a couple of his service dogs and he passed away and me and my children went to his service funeral and they talked about how the dogs changed his life and we got to meet a whole bunch of people with puppies.

And we were driving home and my kids said we should be puppy raisers and give back to people who need help.

Being in the service industry -- we cannot keep these dogs and -- my daughter was eight, son was ten so they're 18 and 16 now so I've been it's been seven years since we've been doing this.

I live in K -- Kern county two hours north of here.

Sew we applied in 2010 to be a puppy raiser and in January, 2011 we picked up our first puppy to raise for Canine Companions for Independence.

And right now, I have one at home, a new puppy but Lotus is puppy No. 5 so we're currently on puppy No. 6.

I knew that we -- I didn't really know what a hearing dog does.

I was diagnosed with not being able to hear later in life so we'll go a story about how I came about my hearing loss.

In 2010 I applied for the California highway patrol and made it through the whole process, psych evaluation, the medical, the last part of the process was the hearing test and I failed.

And they called me and said you failed the hearing test, you know, you can't get into the academy.

And I said I can hear.

What do you mean I can't hear? So, I argued them and I they said okay we really do wanted you in the academy. So, they sent me to three different referrals I had three different MRIs down here in L.A. and all three said that I could not hear.

I'm almost completely deaf on the left and significant on the right.

So that was in 2010.

So, I skied decided okay career path of being a CHP officer wasn't a go.

Continued to work for my mom (laughing) and I still didn't want to come to grips that I couldn't hear, I didn't really fully believe that I could not hear.

---

And then finally my kids said, you know, you're yelling at us, we're arguing and we're bickering and we're not arguing.

We didn't say what you think we said.

Maybe issue get your ears tested again.

So, I did, in 2018 -- six years ago I got my first set of hearing aids so it's kind new for me.

My hearing has progressively gotten worse.

The doctors didn't know why I couldn't hear and they said it's probably from birth, looking back at a report card in elementary testing, I got a note to my mom please get your daughter's hearing tested, my mom said she didn't believe them.

I always sat in front and tried to be a good student.

After I got my hearing aids I realized I had been missing so much in life.

Not only did I feel that I was missing a lot in life, having a business and being out of town and being fairly young, people thought that I was just stuck up and rude.

That's kind of been one of the biggest things.

So, I agreed with her that having a hearing dog opens the door to meeting people.

Having the -- raising puppies, I raised -- this is my third puppy when I went to one of our volunteer puppy raising workshops and they had someone do a hearing dog demonstration and the northwest programming manager said hey Melissa I think you should apply for young hearing dogs.

And I was still hesitant about it here I'm raising puppies to give to someone in need and I thought it would be selfish of me -- defeat the purpose of raising one to give to somebody else.

After a while talking and see seeing what the dog did, I decided that I would apply to get my own hearing dog.

So, I applied that I came home that night from Oceanside, applied for my own hearing dog.

It took me, you're going to laugh, I got no priority being a puppy raiser, two and a half years to get Hilty.

The waiting list today is not that long.

---



I think the waiting list is about a year, we've got two campuses doing hearing dogs now, originally it was only Santa Rosa I graduated in 2016 with Hilty and in May of 2016, our Florida campus started doing hearing dogs also so it kind of broke the United States in -- you had a lower wait list.

So, waiting two and a half years to get her was completely worth it.

She -- she is part of my heart.

Me -- it was immediately love at first sight.

So, a funny story on this is waiting two and a half years to get her, all of the puppies I've raised from pretty mellow, like really mellow though this is kind might have high-energy one.

So, I got up to the campuses on Santa Rosa and been waiting two and a half years, so the anxiety, being up there, you live on campus two weeks, with her, to learn the dog, to learn the training before you go off and graduate and have your life with your hearing dog.

So, the dogs were in queenlets in the back and all's I heard was a ruckus, jumping around and jumping and I was like there's no way that I can take one of these wild dogs in a veterinary clinic no less and I'm pretty active and busy with my kids and doing events and doing like volunteer events and charity stuff.

There's no way I can take the crazy wild dog with me in my life.

It would be a distraction.

So, I told the trainer at lunch-time, I said I've waited two and a half years for this.

And now I don't think I can take one.

There's no way that I can take one of these dogs in my life.

I don't think it will fit with me.

He said just hang out for the day, we're going to work the dogs after lunch and see, you know, was you still feel that way in the morning, you're welcome to leave the class and go home, no hard feelings.

So, I thought about doing that.

Lunch actually made me really sick and I'm two and a half years waiting and I don't want a dog.

And went through this whole process so, let me talk to you about the process before -- so I applied online it takes about five or ten minutes to go on cci.org and apply for a hearing dog.

All the online application does is filter off people, to guide someone that needs a guide dog applies for canine pans companions, it filters that say we don't do guide dogs, here's where you should go.

We don't do diabetic work dogs.

If you qualify, okay you need a hearing dog let me send you a hard copy application so I had a 15-page hard copy application.

You fill out that application, you mail that application in.

After they review that, then they do personal interview on the phone.

You have the personal interview and then they do medical evaluation.

And after -- the doctor will fill notes out, you pass all those steps and you call for a personality interview down on campus to meet with staff and meet a dog.

And just get to know you. In that 15-page application you tell them your life style what you do, what you think a hearing dog will do for you.

A little bit about your personality so that they can match and you the dog perfectly.

After my personal interview, then you're put on about a month later, if you pass that part of the process, you put -- so that wait list could be anywhere from six months to two years.

Except for me it was two and a half years (laughing) -- so that's about the process and applying for a hearing dog.

Yes, it's a long process.

They make you jump through all these hoops to get to know you, to know that you're serious about getting a hearing dog.

Because if you're going to be getting a hearing dog for free -- each one of these dogs has \$50,000 of training invested in them and they give them for free so they're not just going to give anyone who applies easily for a dog.

I mean they're going to make you jump through hoops to get to know you and make sure you're serious about getting a hearing dog.

---

They want these dogs working at least eight to ten years because they invested a bunch of money in them.

So, after lunch we're in a little kennel area.

And we pull out dogs, there was five of us in my graduating class.

And there were seven dogs.

They always have more dogs than people because they want to match the person and the dog's personality and if one doesn't work with the other, we all rotate through all the dogs.

When they brought Hilty out into the kennel area and I was sitting down there pretty nervous because I already heard all the commotion in the background, scared about these crazy dogs, she literally ran up, put her head in my lap and looked up at me with her eyes.

And it was love at first sight.

I never believe people had they say that but I can guarantee say that when this dog with was with me, me and her had such an instant connection.

It was unbelievable.

We still have a really tight education like this dog is my heart.

Like I'd lay my life down for this dog.

I can just -- so, that was the first day.

And we rotated all the dogs, and when anyone would work Hilty I was sitting there in my chair please be bad, mess up, be crazy.

In my mind telling her to be really bad so that they match her with me.

We don't get to pick our dog when we're up there.

The company picks the dog with the person.

So, two days we're working all these dogs.

And then the third day in the morning is pre-match day and they tell you who you got pre-matched with.

And, I got pre-matched with Hilty but the night before when we were all sitting around, our whole class, having a glass of wine and hanging out, everyone was like what dog did you like? And oh, did you have VR a dog that was favorite. And everyone said we do not want Hilty, that dog is just the wildest, craziest dog we've ever seen.

---

And I was like I've got to have that dog.

So that was -- that's kind of how our conversation went.

Wednesday we worked our dog after we got pre-matched, Thursday we worked our dog and you're in lecture all day, you're in lecture learning about dog's health, handling dogs in public, what a hearing dog does, A.D.A. laws, learning about all of that when you're in class.

Thursday night we get to take our dogs into our room and officially they're with us from that point on.

So, Thursday night we all got to go into our rooms and hang out with our dogs.

Friday morning, they asked us how did your first night with your dog go? And actually, back up a little, in the morning I was getting a shower I I'd left -- my kids were at home that first week.

And the phone -- I don't know what happened they called me like 35 times.

And I got out of the shower and she was right there and she's alerting me and alerting me and I was what is going on? We haven't really done the -- we haven't worked the phone sound but she's really working me on this phone.

I asked her what? She takes me to the phone and I saw 5 missed messages from the kids something has to be an emergency.

Someone pick up a fight with my daughter, they both my son stood up for her, so we get into class and the instructor said how did everyone's first night in class? And I said I think I broke my dog because this is pretty much what she's done from the day I -- from the time I took her into my room, laid there at my side, mellow as can be, just like this.

And I said, this wild and crazy high-energy dog just laying there.

I think maybe she's sick, something wrong with her. And he said he's never seen this dog so content ever.

So definitely it's this relationship that we have.

She is not wild and crazy at all.

So, and you can see -- I'm going on to do some sound work so you can see what she does and then she gets excited -- and she loves doing it.

So, the dogs only come equipped with five sounds from campus -- doorbell, timer, knocking on the door, and drop keys.

That's the only sound the dogs come equipped with.

They teach us how to train the dog to whatever other sound they want by giving us the CD or just telling us how to do it.

Like she was saying the baby crying that's a big one for someone younger, with younger kids.

The dogs alert you when the baby cries.

Hilty knows about 20 to 30 different sounds.

And that's pretty much just all I want her to alert me too to.

That I need every day.

There's some dog from Alaska, that their dog knows 330 sounds.

If you get your dog and you only want the five sounds that they're equipped with then that's fine.

One of the sounds that they equip us with is the name.

If someone calls my name or the kids call my name she'll alert that -- my favorite sounds that the kid likes is go get mom.

So, if I'm in the house or in the kitchen and the dog's somewhere else and they want it get me they say go get mom and she runs and takes me to whatever kid calls me.

She loves her job a lot.

She'll lay this calm but when it comes to the sounds going off, she waves her tail as happy as can be.

-- so, what has having a hearing dog done for me? Obviously, I'm not deaf, I'm just hard-of-hearing.

I'm divorcee so I have two kids home alone, sometimes they both go with my ex-husband and I can honestly say that when the kids were gone and I'm home by myself and take my hearing aids out, that it is stressful.

It's stressful if someone knocks on the door and you missed it.

If the phone rings and you missed it or if the fire alarm goes off.

I mean those are just things -- and you guys all know that it adds stress.

---

We don't consciously think about it but it affects us.

It affects our ability to relax and not worry about life.

I don't think I ever slept zillions I do now having her because I'm always paranoid that if what if someone he's breaks into the house. I mean we're in a rural area so that doesn't happen often, but not hearing makes you think if someone break in the house I have no clue.

So, having her definitely gave me a sense of security.

It's also allowed me out in public.

It says "hearing dog" so I can be out in Starbuck's or handout -- and hey she's not being rude she didn't ignore us she actually can't hear us.

So actually, people will come up and talk to me they'll get my attention now and actually not just ignore me and come up and speak to me and not think I'm stuck up and rude.

So, I'm going to do a little bit of sound work with Hilty.

So, the puppies we get the puppies at eight weeks old.

The organization breeds all the dogs so, our top five percent of the dogs in the organization are pulled back into the program and chosen and breeders.

By doing this they can breed in and out the temperaments they don't want, health issues.

The company does EKGs on all the dogs so their hearts have to be highest rating on the EKG scale.

They do x-rays on all their joints they have to have good-quality joints. So, they do a lot of medical evaluation so even if your dog as a puppy is phenomenal but there's a medical issue or the x-rays don't come completely clean, they're pulled from the program.

70 percent of the puppies in our program cross-R called change of career -- they're not outworking people so only 30 percent of our dogs in our organization go onto graduate like Hilty in our organization.

The top five percent are breeders.

My first one was chosen as a breeder, so I was lucky on that.

My second one Khalifa is a facility dog at vista united school district in San Diego working in the speech department.

My third one Tanzi is in New Mexico for a lady in a wheelchair as her successor guide dog.

The fourth one is Breeder, fifth one is leaving in two weeks to go to college and puppy No. 6 I have at home.

So, puppy No. 3 was the daughter of the first one.

Puppy No. 4 was the daughter of the first one.

Her grand media ma is my first one that I raised and the puppy that I have at home is the daughter to my fourth one, so daughter of granddaughter.

So, kind of kept that going, I don't know if that's helped me be successful in my raising because having all of them pass is really rare in our organization.

So, Lotus knows 30 commands so as a puppy we socialize them out and teach them 30 basic commands.

We don't know if she'll be a hearing dog, service dog, a facility dog.

We don't know that.

We just pretty much socialize her, teach her 30 basic commands, give her back to organization and they'll decide what category she'll go on to.

My guess is she'll probably be a hearing dog because she's pretty start and she picked up on what Hilt does and she has a little bit of higher energy, it's controllable but she's higher energy.

I'll do some sound work and then I'll open it up for questions.

**HEATHER LEHR:** You want me to do it?

**MELISSA BILLINGSLEY:** No, I'll just do right there.

Hold that.

(Beeping)

**MELISSA BILLINGSLEY:** So hopefully the puppy will stay.

**HEATHER LEHR:** Can everyone see the dog?

**MELISSA BILLINGSLEY:** I'm going to stick it here so she'll be able to jump up.

So, the first one I'm going to do is an oven timer.

I'm going to set it for about 15 seconds.

---

I mean they kind of heard me resetting that, beeping.

So, it's kind of almost cheating.

(Beeping)

**MELISSA BILLINGSLEY:** What, Hilty what?

Good girl.

Yes.

Lotus down.

Okay so the puppy was laying on her leash so she wasn't able to move.

But she does know the sound.

So, they're alerting -- is that jingle.

If I continue to ignore her and it continues to beep she'll just judge me harder and harder.

My leg ends up being bruise.

So, I use the doorbell at work.

I'm a manager and I do -- really have large and small animal hospital so I usually work in my office unless I'm working out on horses and cattle then I do leave her in the clinic.

But in the clinic if -- if all my staff is busy I have the doorbell up front and the clients will hit the doorbell and she'll alert me and take me up front so I know to help somebody.

Also, at work, when I do all the dentals on dogs and cats and I have the blood pressure monitor on them, if the monitor gets low it will beep.

And she will alert me to that monitor.

So, I know -- I mean I'm looking at the monitor usably but if it gets will he she'll alert me to it and jump up and make sure the animal's still alive.

Auto plate machine after we're cooking all her sugary -- the blend machine if I'm running blood on an animal, it takes 15 minutes to analyze it, and then it will beep.

She'll tell me that it peeps and I go and ask her what? She takes me is to that sound.

So, at work she does work a lot, at work.



If my mom and my other employees are in doing surgery and they need me my mom will yell my name, she's right there she alerts me and takes me to my mom.

So, she does work pretty hard at the office and she works hard at home.

So, the doorbell for here is the work-doorbell.

(Doorbell ringing)

**MELISSA BILLINGSLEY:** What? Good girl.

(Applause)

**MELISSA BILLINGSLEY:** She works for kibble.

Just like we work for a paycheck.

It is an important thing in our organization to not let our dogs get out of condition and fat.

If she's working really hard and I'm giving her a lot of Kibble, her dinner is reduced.

Her ideal weight is 52 pounds and I think she's 51.8 pounds.

Being at the vet clinic I know how important it is to keep her in shape.

If our dogs are three to five pounds overweight we're told to make them lose weight.

If we're reevaluating three months later and our dog is still overweight they'll take the dog back and put them in fat camp.

If your dog is still overweight after all that, there has been a handful of them taken away from you because the welfare of the dog is important.

Even show she's my hearing dog I do not technically hear them.

At any time, Candice can take them away from me I just can't give her to somebody else, I can't sell her to somebody else; I have to maintain this dog's health and well-being for the life of the dog.

So, two sounds there.

The one that she does the most is my phone for the alarm in the morning.

So, ta-da.

This one over here.

(Alarm sounding)

**MELISSA BILLINGSLEY:** What?

---

Good girl.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Show you where it is.

**MELISSA BILLINGSLEY:** Lotus, stay, down, Lotus down.

Good girl.

So, those are basic ones.

All of the sound work they do is they hear the sound, they alert you.

When you ask them what? They take you to the sound.

The only sound work that's different is the fire alarm.

So, if the fire alarm rings or is going off, you don't want your dog taking you into the smoke where the smoke is or the fire alarm is.

So, when the fire alarm goes off, they lay down.

So, they'll alert you and then when you ask them what, they will lay down.

So, I'll put that on.

(Smoke detector sound)

**MELISSA BILLINGSLEY:** Okay, what?

And then she lays down instead of jumping up to my phone.

(Applause)

**MELISSA BILLINGSLEY:** Sit.

So those are just some of the sounds that Hilty knows.

You guys have any other questions?

**HEATHER LEHR:** Can you pass the mic.

**STEVE:** What do you do when other people want to come up and pet dogs. Do you let them or you don't?

**MELISSA BILLINGSLEY:** I don't have the loop.

Okay so when people want to -- I just have to read it on there.

So, when I'm out in public, if you see on Hilty's jacketed it says "please do not pet I'm working" you're going to laugh when I say this, the worse people about pathetic her are adults.

Most children will always ask to pet without just going up and grabbing her.

The biggest issues I've had are adults that just go up and pet her or grab her.

She's so bonded and connected to me, when we're out in public and if someone goes and reaches for her she literally will move away from them.

She does not seek out attention.

Whereas the puppy she wants people to pet her, she doesn't know that, as the puppies if we're out together with my kids, I will low Loo people to pet the puppy, only to socialize her.

She has to be in a sit position so should a that she's used to everybody coming up to her.

That's just for her training.

When I'm out with Hilty I do not usually allow people to pet her.

Because it's a distraction the reason why we say do not pet a working dog is if you come up and pet her, and you call my name, she's still a dog.

I mean yeah, she wants to pay attention because you called my name and that's her job to alert me.

But somebody else cent pathetic petting her they've distracted her, so that sounds sound is gone unless someone else continues to repeat it and -- she wants to work and she doesn't like to be distracted so for her she usually will move away.

If we're in line and someone reaches for her, she'll move away and she usually doesn't make eye contact with people.

That's just her.

So, we have please do not pet I'm working.

If someone companies up and grabs her and started pathetic her, then I'll tell them please don't pet her she's working.

Sometimes I am snappy and rude about it.

I guess it depends on me also, if someone comes up to me and I'm standing in line, and I say oh can I pet your dog? And they ask me and sometimes I will.

I mean I don't say no.

My two rules of never allowing her or puppy being pet is grocery stores or restaurants.

Grocery store or restaurant I don't ever lieu Loo them to pet them.

That's my pet peeve, I don't want dog hair over.

---

I want the health and welfare of other people, it would be rude to do it so I just don't allow it.

It's not a written thing or law saying not to allow them to that's just my pet peeve.

I don't allow people to pet them at a restaurant or -- these guys get bathed every two -- toenailed nails cut every week, so I want them to be clean so if I'm out and about I don't want people to go she has a smelly dog or discriminating if my dog is Giri or gross.

I want them to be -- and she sleeps with me so yes, I do brush her because you've seen the floors usually of places? You go to a restaurant, and they're dirt other and your dog gets in bed with you it's kind of gross.

On she gets vacuumed in the morning and she loves it and I brush her at night. That's just what I do with her.

So, it's also bonding I mean she loves it and it's our bonding time.

So -- that is a big deal.

**HEATHER LEHR:** Other questions?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Actually, I have two questions.

One of them is I read that with the hearing dogs you cannot have any other pets in the house.

**MELISSA BILLINGSLEY:** That is false.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Okay and my other question is even with the A.D.A. laws and things like that, I -- have you had issues where people simply said -- (inaudible) entry into places because you can't --

**MELISSA BILLINGSLEY:** So, first question, answer to the first question in our organization you can't have your own pets.

You can't -- you do not have to give away your dogs to get a hearing dog.

I think you're only allowed to have three other dogs and your working dog in the house.

So --

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Cats?

**MELISSA BILLINGSLEY:** Yeah cats don't matter.

I have five horses, four cats, one dropout that my friend raised that was a service dog but she was sick got medical relief and she's too expensive for them. My dog's a vet, I have the dog.

So that answers that first one.

Don't think that you can't apply for one because you have animals.

Apply.

The second thing A.D.A., right now, there's so many people are buying the fake vest online.

And putting them on their pet dog.

And believe me I love animals, I mean I've been raised with animals my entire life.

A pet dog has no business being out in public, because what it does it is it affects us who have a real working dog.

She's been attacked twice by fake service dogs.

In vests.

These dogs have no aggression in them, it is bred out.

If a dog comes to attack her she'll lay down or go whined me so I will protect her.

I've had a pit dog twice -- yeah, it sucks but I'll lay my life down for this dog.

So yes, I love animals but if a dog's going to attack my dog I'm going to kick did.

**HEATHER LEHR:** When I got my dog, my hearing dog, I was living in an apartment.

And, when I told my landlord that I was going -- I had applied for a hearing dog, she was like, no way, no dog that it says you can't have a dog.

So, I had to go -- they helped me -- I went to the San Francisco hearing dog group which actually doesn't exist anymore.

So, I called them and they helped me draft a letter to the landlord to explain that that was not acceptable and that I needed to have that hearing dog.

So, we resolved it that way.

And, actually, once I had the dog, the landlord was perfectly fine with it.

Because, you know, like these dogs are highly trained, they don't bark, they don't bother about people.

---

And so, after like two more years later, the landlord's like I'm just really happy to have that dog in our environment.

**MELISSA BILLINGSLEY:** So, the A.D.A. does protect us.

Having the dog.

They can't discriminate me coming into any public buildings -- a church, a church doesn't follow A.D.A. laws so a church can say you're not welcome with your service dog.

I've never had any discrimination about going in any -- anywhere -- hotels, lying with her.

I haven't had any issues.

I mean a lot of it is behavior, also.

But, you have rights, the A.D.A., you have rights so everywhere you go, that dog can go with you.

They cannot discriminate, they'll be fine.

Even the fake service dogs that attack the real dogs, I had to press charges to someone's dog that attacks her.

If I'm walking on the road and someone's walking her pet dog and the dog attacks her it's a \$2,500 fine.

If she got attacked I can call the police and press charges.

She's still protected.

It's pretty much she's just like us having a hearing aid she's a tool, she's a part of me so she's protected also, it goes both ways, A.D.A. backs us up so we have rights to go everywhere.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** I was wondering if that's the reason why you train only female dogs? No male because of the aggression?

You train female, right? They seem to be all female.

**MELISSA BILLINGSLEY:** In our organization, the dog dogs that graduate, the highest success graduating dogs in our organization are the lab, golden retriever mixed males that are neutered, actually.

So, it's not a preference of male or female, I have chosen to only puppy raise female pure-bred Labs only because the first one I did was a female pure-bred lab and she passed.

And so, I just continued to stay on that same path because if it's not broken, why change it?

I like raising the pure-bred labs, in California, the pure-breds have to stay intact.

So that means we don't spay or neuter them, the organization will do that.

Once they get turned in, so when she goes back for training in two weeks, they evaluate her, and in the first two months of her evaluation, and the x-rays and the EKG and training, that's where they decide hey this dog is the top of our class, we're going to use her for breeding.

Only 5 percent are chosen for breeders, the rest are spade or neutered were SOP working at a vet clinic it would be mean to have a pure-bred male lab every day at a vet clinic with dogs this heat.

You would pretty much have to discipline them all the time and it's not fair to them republican so I just chose to do females, that's just me.

Most people who puppy raise will take whatever.

But all of them are spade or neutered when they go out.

After two weeks of advanced training are spade or neutered.

Only five percent of the dogs are pulled back into the breeding program.

**DIANA GROSS:** Just going back to the alerts, the bad timer does the dog alert you until you turn the alarm off or until you actually get out of bed?

**MELISSA BILLINGSLEY:** She just alerts me until I turn it off.

So yeah if I hit snooze, and then go back to sleep, she's not going to keep alerting me.

For her morning -- she likes to sleep.

We both do.

On when she wakes me up in the morning, I actually give her like joint supplement, chew treat.

Which is really tasty.

So, when she hears the morning alarm she's like yeah, I'm getting a tasty treat.

---

Same thing with the fire alarm, they told us on the fire alarms to make sure we're using a good-quality treat because you want that sound -- a few the of the sounds that you really need, you want them to really alert you to.

So, for me waking up in the morning and a fire alarm she gets really good treats for that.

If I hit snooze she goes right back to bed, believe me.

**JENNA:** So, you said that on so these dogs are bred because I know some of the other training companies, they go to like shelters or what have you.

So, the 70 percent that are -- that don't go through the program, what happens to those dogs?

**MELISSA BILLINGSLEY:** As a puppy raiser so the 70 percent that don't make it, they can be released for anything, like I said, the first evaluation, that first month is all medical.

So, they can be released for medical reasons.

And then a lot of them are released for separation anxiety.

You have to understand that we've had these puppies from eight weeks to 20 months at our side and now we're giving back to an organization and they get put in kennels and they've been sleeping in crates.

So, we have -- let me back up if we don't think they'll fit into our four or five categories, we'll do an ABC transfer.

So right now, we've been giving a lot we do give some of the guide dogs to the blind, guide dogs of America, cedar alert dogs, the MSA, the bomb-sniffing dogs that you see at Emmy awards and Grammys.

We will do an agency transfer and give them away.

One of my grand puppies is the Sacramento bomb-sniffing canine dog. So, agency transfers to police department, if they don't think they'll fit as an agency transfer, we have fit right to get them back.

If we don't want the dog, someone that's been in the dog's life as puppy raising we can submit that name and say if the dog is released, I'm not keeping the dog, my brother would like this dog.



Keeping -- for \$500 we don't have a wait list anymore, because our waiting list was five or six years to get a release dog.

Even our release dogs are higher trained than most people's therapy dogs prospect we don't use shelter dogs because you don't have that background and the company retains ownership.

So, I know that there's people -- people do use it, rescue dogs to save them.

But, they're still a huge there's still a huge liability on how well that dog is going to be out in public.

**JENNA:** I guess my question was what happens to the dogs? Are they given back -- I mean I understand what you're saying about giving them off to these other agencies but they don't go back -- I just heard they go back -- they get put in shelters. So, I just I'm just curious.

**MELISSA BILLINGSLEY:** No.

Yeah, these -- like I said, we don't even have a wait list anymore.

Because people were raid waiting five or six years to get a dropout.

Our dropouts, mean Lotus knows 30 commands she is pure-bred lab to me she's a little bit higher energy than my previous ones.

This dog is so obedient, I mean our dogs always have good homes.

There's -- (laughing).

Everyone that knows me at the vet clinic even my family members, my mom's been waiting for a dropout.

My brother wants one, my sister wants one.

I probably have 20 people at the vet clinic that would love for me to have one fail so they can be adopted.

Luckily for me they've all passed.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** I have two questions.

The breed, is it always lab, golden tree? Another a combination or pure bred?

**MELISSA BILLINGSLEY:** Pure gold be, pure lab or a mix between to the, and no chocolate.

We don't do chocolate labs.

I'll explain why.

---

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** My second question is what is her relationship with your children?

**MELISSA BILLINGSLEY:** The dog's?

Okay.

Two very good questions.

So, our organization does pure golden retrievers, pure Labradors and a mix.

Hilty is 20 percent pit bull percent golden retriever.

Lotus is pure bred lab.

We don't use chocolate labs because they're too high energy and too distractible.

So, you would think I mean our hearing dogs are our highest energy dogs in our organization.

They have to be high-energy -- Lotus, sit.

Lotus, down.

They have to be high-energy and food-driven.

Because if they're sound-asleep and they hear the sound, sound work has to be at the top of their list.

Sound work equals Kibble equals learning.

You're sound asleep -- they're playing, sound, alert, Kibble so we want a high energy dog in the hearing department.

Our hearing dogs are high-energy.

The chocolate labs are high-energy but they're too distractible.

So, if you're walking and there's kids running and playing they're going to focus on that.

They tried back in the day to use chocolate but that's one of the reasons.

Second question how do my kids interact with the dogs? So, I graduated with Hilty in January, 2016.

My son is -- 18 in July, during that time he was diagnosed as severe bipolar depression.

And he's also gay.

So, he was getting picked on at school.

And he was suicidal.

---

Two weeks after I graduated with her, I had to go visit him at mental hospital and he hadn't even really known Hilty and we were sitting in the room at the table and he walked in and just had a complete meltdown because he was there.

Hilty who's my dog, having had her that long, literally got up and jumped in his lap and just leaned against him and stayed against him.

She wasn't trained to do that, I mean dogs know that.

So, the relationship with Hilty, when Matt has -- he's been really good now when he's on his meds and we got him table.

But when he has meltdowns or anxiety, she will go and lay against him, lay on top of him.

So, their relationship is phenomenal, I don't break that.

I guess terribly she is my dog and I can prevent her from doing that.

But I can see how she has picked up -- when he needs that, extra attention and extra love, I let her do it.

So -- his attitude has been way different having her.

With the dogs, main with the puppies -- the kids know that the puppies aren't ours.

So, we kind of all have the philosophy that they're not our dogs.

One of the most important questions or biggest questions that question we get is how do you take this cute eight-week old puppy and give it back knowing that you've poured your heart and soul into this dog and it's not your dog.

So, the way I explain it is I love my children, I want I'm going to raise them for 18 years, I'm going to send them off to college, I want them to be successful and have their own life and do well.

I get the puppies at eight weeks old I have them for 18 months and I pour my heart and soul into them.

Teach them the commands, love them with my entire heart, send them to advanced training in college, hope that they're successful and do good.

And they're going to change someone's life.

That's how I can look at doing it.

My kids have the same philosophy.

---

So, Hilty is my working dog but she loves them both equally.

My daughter will actually take Hilty -- we have a cart because my daughter mountain bike rides and I road bike ride and we get a cart and we'll take her for fun.

My daughter will go to Starbuck's and get a Frappuccino, so we have a good relationship with the dogs.

**HEATHER LEHR:** We need to -- I know this is super interesting.

And Melissa said she would hang out for a little while at the coffee break so you can come up and ask her and meet her dogs.

**MELISSA BILLINGSLEY:** You can pet them.

**HEATHER LEHR:** We do need to give our fabulous captioner a break and it is time for us to have -- everyone have a little break but please join me in thanking Melissa for being here.

(Applause)

**HEATHER LEHR:** And now she has to drive two hours back so that's a very big commitment and we truly, truly appreciate it.

Thank you.

(Applause)

**HEATHER LEHR:** So, we'll take a 15-minute break and then we'll come back for the rest of our program.

**MEETING BREAKS AT 11:07 A.M.; MEETING RESUMES AT 11:33 A.M.**

**JENNA:** Can you hear me?

I think we're ready to reconvene here, folks.

Have a seat.

I hope everyone is well-fed and well-watered.

So, we're going to move onto the next point of business.

But before we do that, we just wanted to thank Melissa who's over getting coffee right now.

---

We got you a gift certificate to Starbuck's.

So, we really appreciate --

**MELISSA BILLINGSLEY:** My favorite (laughing).

**JENNA:** We appreciate your time and energy.

I know it's a long drive out here but I think you actually got some serious -- you got some serious potential clients in here. A lot of people came up.

I learned so much and it's just -- it's a fabulous organization.

So, thank you so much.

And when you're done I'll give this to you so, thank you.

(Applause)

**HEATHER LEHR:** Okay, so for those of you who are new, we have a little award that we do at every meeting.

I don't know if you're familiar with sign language, but in sign language, if you want to say the word "wow" you do W-O, W (signing "wow"). So, we have our very own WOW award for people who have helped out or gone above and beyond the general membership.

So, our first WOW award goes to an impersonating super spy Gary Bond who has been -- though he's a new member, he came early today to help us set up and is learning how to set up the loop for us.

So, we really appreciate that extra effort for someone who's brand new.

(Applause)

**HEATHER LEHR:** You want to stand up and say something, Gary?

Do you want to stand up and say something?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** I want to thank you and actually express gratitude for the organization and all the people that support the organization.

It gives me something to look forward each month to be able to attend these meetings.

This is the second time I've attended this meeting.

And I'll be checking whatever I can to formally join the organization and stay active to z that I can be of service to the organization.

Thank you.

---

**HEATHER LEHR:** Okay.

So, our second WOW award and this is a theme.

As you all know that your Steering Committee works very hard to bring you this programming and the various entertainment, like the Christmas party and all the things that we do.

And it is a lot of work to set up the room and get everything ready.

And we really appreciate Gary for coming early to help us out.

And if any of you are available early in the morning or after the meeting to help us set up and tear down, I can't tell you how much even one extra person, what a difference it makes to us because then it allows us to not have to get here at the crack of dawn.

And we enjoy that time because then we get to talk and get to know you all a little bit better.

So, the second WOW award goes to marry Alexandru who was an awesome greeter at this meeting, she's also been involved in HLAA but she's new to our chapter and she's been very helpful in setting up in the couple times she's come.

So, Marie, thank you.

(Applause)

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** I'm supposed to say something?

**HEATHER LEHR:** You can if you want, you don't have to.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** I did nothing, I'll come earlier next time.

It's only fair I live right in the neighborhood.

**HEATHER LEHR:** I'm glad.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Great meeting you.

**HEATHER LEHR:** Thanks.

(Applause)

**HEATHER LEHR:** All right now we have to get onto our chapter business.

And the first thing is I'd like to introduce Diane.

Diane Gross our fabulous Walk4Hearing chair person.

For those of you who are new and don't know the Walk4Hearing is our biggest fair it raises amount for National, national organization which is headquartered in

---

Bethesda Maryland right next to Washington D.C. and for all the money that we raise we get a percentage for our chapter.

For example, last year our chapter got \$4,500 for the Walk4Hearing.

So, it's a substantial chunk for our budget.

It's in Long Beach, on June -- I'm sorry, I forgot --

**DIANA GROSS:** Ninth I'll get on into that.

**HEATHER LEHR:** I'll let Diane get into that it's an awful lot of fun and we have our very own group, we call ourselves the HLAA Los Angeles Star and as we all walk together question -- meet together we help man the t-shirt table, your families are welcome.

The kids love it, they have like sometimes they have a bounce house, they have things that make it fun for the kids.

And, I'm going to let Diane tell you more about it.

Thank you, Tim.,

**DIANA GROSS:** Thank you.

Good morning.

Before I get started, a couple of things.

First, I want to apologize in the meeting announcement I absolutely forgot to ask you to bring food for the refreshments.

So that's why we have such a thin table over here today.

I will be sure to remember that in the future.

And, also, I have notes here but because of my eyesight I'm using a superpowered magnifier to get through it what I can't remember in my head.

So please be patient with me.

And when it comes time to questions, Teri is going to be the spotter for me because I can see your bodies but your faces are kind of blurred into this little mask.

Okay let me get over to the right page.

As Heather said, the Walk4Hearing is June 9th, that's a Saturday, it's in Long Beach Marina Green Park which is a beautiful setting.

It's the walk group takes us past the Queen Mary, the aquarium, the lighthouse, the Harbor it's just a very nice walk to take.

---

DISCLAIMER: This transcript is the product of a realtime captioning session (CART – Communication Access Realtime Translation) and is intended to provide communication access only and is not guaranteed nor intended to be strictly verbatim. This is not a certified document and is not acceptable for use in any legal matter.

And the way the room is set up is if you can't take the whole 5K, the first leg of it takes you around the Queen Mary and then back to the starting point so you can stop then if you want.

I forgot to ask Heather to put up a picture of the main team -- the main Walk4Hearing website that has all the address and time information on it.

**HEATHER LEHR:** This one?

**DIANA GROSS:** All of this information that I will be giving you I'll be putting up on our email, Facebook, website later so you can reference it there.

But, if you go to Walk4Hearing.org, click on "find a walk" then scroll down to Long Beach June 9th, press the button for register and info all of the details about where to go and what time we'll show up.

And it starts, actually it starts -- registration at 9:00, the walk, itself, at 10:00, more or less.

There are a lot of speeches so whenever they're done.

Okay.

The purpose of the walk is to raise funds, both for the chapter and the national organization.

It supports the programs that we all do to make -- provide -- I'm going to quote the mission statement "information, advocacy, education and support for people with hearing loss, for people without hearing loss to know what it involves" and it supports our programs, national programs.

The money is split 60-40 between both national and our chapter.

Change the page.

Sorry for the crinkle crunch.

Heather can you go over to the other slide with the picture.

**HEATHER LEHR:** This is the slide that has the -- our L.A. Stars sign-up sheet.

**DIANA GROSS:** Okay there are two separate pages on the website to be aware of.

The said one I told you about which the main page for the walk itself is.

The main team, our own HLAA L.A. Stars has its own page it shows the team members and how much we've raised for our team.

---



If you want to get to that page, directly, it created a shortcut website name to make it easier because, otherwise, you have to go through about eight steps to get there.

So, if you can't read it up on that site, it's [bit.ly/HLAA-laW](https://bit.ly/HLAA-laW).

So that will take you directly to our team page where you can sign up or donate.

I, right now, I think last time I looked at this page last night we had -- I had raised \$366 which some of that, I think half of that came in the first 24 hours after I sent a letter to family and friends.

And, so I want to tell you how I did that.

Basically, I sent five paragraphs in a very short email talking about why I walked, what the organization means to me, what the funds will do.

And, asked if they would help out the cause.

I think I had a slight advantage in that I told them that as team Captain I had to set a good example for my crew.

So please let me do what that.

So, if you were to send out a similar letter you could say my team Captain raised this much money I want to catch up with her or surpass her.

So please help me do that.

And after coming in at the bottom of our list.

So right now, this is what we have raised so far, it's \$730, which I think is great.

We can do more.

I'm aiming hoping we can get to our minimum which is 2,000 by the time the walk starts.

So, the other thing that you got to do is kind of cajole, I'm going to send my email out again just in a couple of weeks just to remind people.

You can sign up to make donations on the Walk site.

You can write a check, if you want to do that now I'd be happy to accept it.

Or you can donate cash.

And both the checks and the cash will be converted and given to the Walk treasurer in time for the walk.

And it will be added to our team tally.

---

For raising money, if you as an individual raise \$100 or donate \$100 and I forgot to bring it, you'll get a Walk Team t-shirt it. Says "Walk4Hearing" in the past it's been white, it's been green, it's been purple so, you will be given that onsite and you only get one t-shirt.

So, it's not like if you raise \$300, you get three t-shirts.

I also wanted to point out Gary, who has raised, Gary Jacobson who has raised over \$1,000 for the walk, the overall walk.

And I think you're among the top fundraisers right now.

So, yay Gary.

I've got a couple more things to go through.

We are looking for volunteers on walk day. In the past that has involved registration desk, it has involved handing out the t-shirts, hanging out at the tables where the raffle prizes or the snack food is.

There's a table that's going to have all kinds of literature related to HLAA.

So right now, I don't know how -- what kind of volunteers we will actually need because that comes from Ronnie Adler who organizes the walks overall and she'll be sending out a list of exactly what she needs.

Sometime next month.

But in the meantime, if you are interested in helping out, I have a sign-up sheet here.

That I'm going to pass around.

Where you can add your name and, please, pretend you're lack in elementary school and trying to impress your teacher with your best printing.

So that I can easily read it.

The one thing we'd like to try to do now is set up carpools for the people who are -- to set up carpools for people who would like to go but don't want to make the drive to Long Beach themselves.

So, again, you can provide your name and your city and your email, I'll see if I can match you with somebody else who lives in your area.

And once that's done, it's up to you guys to organize your own carpools, please don't look to me to do it.

---

Okay.

I think that's about it.

The other thing that they were looking for were walk companies, organizations to do sponsorship and provide raffle prizes.

And I think I'm going to turn this over to Gary to talk a little bit about that much.

Before I do -- one thing I did was the manager at the California Pizza Kitchen near my house has a cousin who's a Cochlear implant and when I went in there the other night I took a packet with Walk information.

And, gave it to him and I was contacted yesterday by their -- they have a manager of fundraising.

So, I had an initial email from her about setting up some kind of fundraiser, either for the walk or for our chapter.

I will know more next week and I'll pass it along, whatever comes up.

Oh, one more thing.

We have a pile of Walk4Hearing brochures that tells you -- I didn't even get a chance to look at them.

It tells you about the walk, the date, the time, what you need to do.

So please take one of those, if you can.

And if you have any questions, see me after the meeting.

Thank you.

**TERI:** There's a flier that they can put up.

**DIANA GROSS:** Oh yeah, this is this is a flier, let's say if you have you have a neighborhood restaurant that you go to a lot, which I do or if you have a favorite store, ask them if they'd be willing to post them in the mirror -- in the mirror -- in the window so that their patrons can see it.

If you want -- is there any contact information on there?

**TERI:** The website's on here, the sponsors -- the location, all of the information.

Also, this is great like what Diane did with the restaurants, we're always open to more sponsors for the event, itself.

Or raffle prize sponsors so if you know any stores or businesses, that would donate a raffle prize.

---

**DIANA GROSS:** Yeah that's good too.

But also, if you want to put an email address on this flier, use -- and again I'll have this in the information I send out.

Use info@HLAA.org.

**HEATHER LEHR:** Thank you Diane, she's done a lot of work for us and we really appreciate it.

**DIANA GROSS:** Does anybody have any questions?

**LIZ:** The one other thing that she didn't mention is that if you raise \$500 at prize this year is our bank which is a really cool thing that enables you to store power and charge your phone if you're a long way from an electrical outlet.

But you have to show up on the day of the walk in order to pick up prizes.

**TERI:** Thank you.

**HEATHER LEHR:** Okay, great, thank you very much.

Very quickly, I know I didn't see you guys last month.

The reason why I wasn't here was because I was at the HLAA California Board of Trustees meeting.

And, that group organization talks about everything that's happening in California, among all of the chapters.

Tries to coordinate our fundraising and our advocacy and our outreach.

It was a very long meeting, like nine hours at a holiday inn.

But anyway, I did want to let you know that there were two things that I thought were important for the membership.

The first is the newsletter.

I know there's been a lot of consternation about the HLAA California newsletter.

You all know that our beautiful Liz is the editor of it and there's been some talk about possibly not having a printed newsletter any longer and only having something that's available online.

The issue is that, right now, the newsletter does not pay for itself.

The printing costs are very high.

And it's sort of draining the budget.

What we did decide at the trustees that they would continue printing the newsletter for -- until through the end of the year.

And then after that we'd reassess whether or not it was a viable -- if anyone has any interest in helping out with selling advertising or helping the newsletter financially or has any experience with that type of marketing, sales type of -- and wants to volunteer, HLAA California Board of Trustees would appreciate your help.

The second thing that -- there's a lot of things we talked about, I'm only talking about what matters to the chapter.

There is a California academy of audiology convention.

It meets every year, one in Northern California and next year in Southern California.

And they are meeting in September in Anaheim this year and they want us at HLAA Los Angeles, Long Beach, Mission conveniently owe, there will be four groups and I they want us although man a booth at the exhibit hall.

The reason why it's important is I know we've talked this the frustration with audiologists that don't know much about our organization.

We feel that they should be with this referral to HLAA, a lot of audiologists don't seem to help us in that way.

Our help, their patients know about the organization and the help we can give them.

A lot of the people who are at the convention are very young audiologists, they're brand new they're just out of school they're on their first job so the Board of Trustees, they pay for the booth and then they're paying for some knickknacks to hand out, promotional materials.

And they just want some of us to show up and be at the booth and talk to people and try to get the word out to these younger people, you know, you need to direct your patients towards our organization for their health and welfare.

So, I said that we would do it (laughing).

And I'm hoping that when we get close to the time I'll ask for volunteers.

And I'm definitely going to be there.

I just think it's super worthwhile for us.

---

**DIANA GROSS:** Heather I missed which conference would we be helping at?

**HEATHER LEHR:** It's the California academy of audiology.

**DIANA GROSS:** City?

**HEATHER LEHR:** It's in Anaheim, Anaheim.

So, moving right along.

We did, the Steering Committee did vote in a new budget.

We were behind, remember, because we had -- we changed how we voted in our Steering Committee and now we're going back -- so we'll have a new election in September so the cycle has now become more normal.

But, we did vote in some new items that I'm required to let you know.

We voted in to purchase some more meeting equipment.

This screen is one of them.

So that we can have this PowerPoint presentation.

Just some other do dad dollars like that cables we need and stuff like that.

Unfortunately, we have to reprint all of our publicity materials because HLAA National changed the logo.

And, the logo is a new logo I like it a lot better, personally, and that's great but now that they changed the logo, the requirement is we need to reprint all of our publicity materials.

So, we had to create -- a line item in the budget for that.

Along that -- along with that is I don't know if any of you have artistic experience but we really do need someone to help us do mock-ups for the printers because right now I'm trying to do it and I am absolutely not an artist.

So, is there anyone here who might be willing to help me out to, you know, mock up the banner on -- does anybody have any experience with like a Dolby illustrator or Photoshop? That might know?

Okay.

So, then we're all going to swear that no one will complain to Heather about the (inaudible).

All right.

The last thing we voted in was \$1,000 college scholarship for hearing -- for students with hearing loss.

We do feel that maybe getting our organization out to college campuses will help us in the long run be in terms of bringing membership in.

So, we will -- Tim and I are working on the process and what the criteria's going to be and how people are going to apply.

But for next year -- not this year, obviously, but for next year we will have an HLAA Los Angeles college scholarship for a college student in -- who's in the Los Angeles area.

And I'm very excited about that.

Gary I'm sorry did you have anything else that you need to do add about the budget?

**GARY JACOBSON:** My problem is I don't have the budget with me.

You have it.

You never gave it back to me so I could talk about the budget.

**DIANA GROSS:** Have I copy.

**GARY JACOBSON:** But you do know about the scholarship. We have to set up a separate account for the scholarship.

Okay.

Okay so there's no change on it than the one that I've made up.

The scholarship has to be created in a and the -- it has to be earmarked only for the scholarship.

We would be very happy to accept donations for the scholarship fund.

So, what you do is write HLAA Los Angeles scholarship fund and we would put it in.

Right now, we're earmarking for one student for next year.

But if we get more money, we can provide for maybe for a second or third student.

So, we should see what happens.

Now we earmarked part of the money for the equipment but you guys talked about.

---

My problem is, I've been missing for the last four months because I was very busy.

And I think most of you know why I've been very busy.

No, I came back to (inaudible) so I'll be working with you guys starting today so I'll be have more information.

**HEATHER LEHR:** Thank you.

Thank you, Teri.

Okay, so the next item of business is usually in the past, this organization has always, instead of having a May meeting, because the May meeting always falls on the Memorial Day weekend.

We've done instead a Memorial Day barbecue.

But we've been talking to members and it sounds like a lot of people might not be around.

So, we were wondering if people still wanted to do a barbecue.

If it might not make more sense maybe to do a rap session like everyone -- we can meet at my house so we can talk about some of our issues and maybe have some mimosas or, we were trying -- maybe what we should do first is how many people are going to -- were planning to attend the May barbecue?

Okay.

How many people would rather have a rap session? Instead of the barbecue?

**DIANA GROSS:** It depends on where it is.

**HEATHER LEHR:** (laughing) okay well we were going to have the barbecue somewhere out here, right snag so what was the -- what was the location we were thinking of?

**TERI:** Lake Balboa a.

We were thinking --

**HEATHER LEHR:** I'm not from here so I'm sorry I'm a little bit --

**TERI:** We were talking about Lake Balboa but we did not get a reservation in. It may already be booked.

**HEATHER LEHR:** Okay.



**JENNA:** There is there is a park if you're all in this area there's a park right down the street, actually.

And I can look into getting a permit or we can just show up and have a party.

So, I can look into it but I don't think that not getting a permit would be a huge deal as long as we can find a shady area and what have you.

But there's literally one right here, it's right next to Trader Joe's right off of Van Nuys Boulevard so it's like five minutes from here so that's another possibility, too.

And -- unless somebody wants to open up their home to host, which we have had in years past and if that's something that you might be interested in, you don't have to answer right now but maybe get back to us if you could open your home to us.

So that's another possibility.

**HEATHER LEHR:** We can always meet at my house, I mean I'm happy to do that.

I have a big yard were the but it's in Pasadena.

So, I know that's a drive for most of you.

So, would everyone rather meet out here somewhere, is that more convenient?

No? Yes? Maybe?

**TERI:** Do a show of hands.

**HEATHER LEHR:** Okay so who would like to meet at a park for our barbecue on that Saturday in a park out here? Raise your hand.

Who would rather come to Heath's house and have a barbecue but that's in Pasadena -- raise your hand.

**TERI:** I'm fine either way.

**HEATHER LEHR:** You're fine with either way.

Okay.

So, I think what we've decided sort of here is that we will go ahead and have the barbecue.

I'm happy to talk about having it at my house and I'll talk to the Steering Committee after this is done to find out -- and we'll all let you know what's going on for that Saturday.

Here's the next item of business, our June -- our June meeting.

---

Coming up is most Steering Committee will be at the National convention which is in Minneapolis.

And so, what we need is some of you to step up and say that you will help us run the meeting while some of us are gone.

Diane has already graciously said that she will -- you're going to sponsor a rap session, right? Was it going to be at the -- here at the library.

Okay.

So, there will be a meeting, it will be sort of more of a rap session format and Diane will be running it.

But she will need help.

She will need help to set things up and to do anything.

So, if any of you are interested and we would ask you very -- talk to Diane and let her know that you could help her in June if you're going to be around for that.

Okay, now my next slide is not correct because I thought Victoria was going to be here and obviously our captioner is not Victoria.

But I want to say thank you very much Ali for being here and for captioning everything.

And I want to thank all of you as well.

And I hope to see you -- oh. I'm sorry I forgot -- thank you Jenna.

This is not my computer so I don't know how to work it.

The last thing is -- I'm going to hand this over to Jen.

Here.

**JENNA:** Where is it? Do we have the jar?

**HEATHER LEHR:** Yeah, I brought it.

**JENNA:** So, being a part of this meeting, every month is free, for everybody.

We do ask if you could bring some food to pass just because we're hungry people.

But we also asked for donations just because things need to be paid for, like captioning and coffee and meeting supplies, scholarship funds.

So, our money goes into a lot of things to go back into this meeting.

So, if you feel like you really enjoy this meeting, and it's worth \$2, of course we'll take more -- we've got a generous donation. How much was that check for?

**HEATHER LEHR:** Thirty-five.

**JENNA:** Thirty-five?

**GARY JACOBSON:** It was \$100.

**JENNA:** We got \$100 donation today from -- what's her name?

**GARY JACOBSON:** Sandra Cohen.

**JENNA:** She's an audiologist and she say she's coming here to just help -- to better help our patients.

But we're going to pass around the jar, where is it? So, if you would -- if you feel like this meeting was worth your time and it's worth a couple bucks, like I said we always take more but we really appreciate it because the money does go back into things.

I was going to say the May barbecue, wherever it is -- although we ask everybody to bring something, the chapter pays for the main course.

So, whether it's chicken or whatever, we will pay for that.

So again, these are the types of things that your donations go to.

So, thank you.

**HEATHER LEHR:** All right, great, thank you everybody.

**DIANA GROSS:** The sign-up sheets can I have them back.

**HEATHER LEHR:** Oh yes can someone give the volunteer sheets back to Diane if you see it there.

Okay, great.

And thank you all for coming.

It's so great to see you all again.

(Applause)

**MEETING ADJOURNS AT 12:09 P.M.**