Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) – Chapter Meeting
Sherman Oaks Library – Community Room
Sherman Oaks, CA
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MEETING COMMENCES AT 10:07 A.M.

JENNA NELSON: Good morning, everyone. Thank you so much for coming. So we'll do chapter business at the end, just because we want to get right to the panel.

So two quick things. I can't see without my glasses.

So the one thing I want to do -- oh, I should -- I want to -- sorry, I don't have the website information. But if you're on Facebook please come find us. And we also have, what?

TERI: We have a Facebook page for the Hearing Loss Association. And we also have a group that's interactive where you can ask questions and post articles and connect with each other, and that's HLAA: Hearing Loss Association. And the website is hlaa-la.org.

JENNA NELSON: Thank you Teri.

I'm Jenna, the president of this chapter. And I see a lot of new faces which is really exciting. So welcome.

So the one thing I want to do before we get into the panel and everyone will introduce themselves quickly and then we'll get to the questions -- where's my moderator? There she is.

Who's new? [hands raised] Welcome. So do me a favor. One at a time. Please stand up and give us your name, how you found us, what is your hearing loss and what are you looking for from this chapter, meaning support, information -- sorry, one last thing. For those of you -- so if you have telecoil in your cochlear implant or hearing aid, please turn that on so you can hear us better. If you don't know what that is, find us during the break and we'll fill you in because it's very helpful.

So first-timers, you want to stand up?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm a student. My name is Lana. I'm a student at CSUN. I'm 20 years old. I'm single-sidedly deaf and I have profound hearing loss and I wear a hearing aid, and I'm looking for more information because I don't have a lot of hard of hearing friends and it would be nice to have more background when I buy hearing aids and things like that. Thank you.

JENNA NELSON: Welcome. We like our young adults. Who else?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm Hillary. I am -- I don't know where to start. I have hearing loss, bilateral, genetic, upper, I guess high-pitched voices. I have worn them for about five years and I'm looking to connect with other people here and find support.

JENNA NELSON: Thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hello, I'm Anisa and I have otosclerosis and hearing loss and I'm waiting for my hearing aid. I've been diagnosed four years ago and trying to get by without hearing aids. It's getting worse, so I think I have to face it. I'm a music and piano teacher, so it makes it extremely hard for me because I have to hear sounds every day. So I hope to get some information as well as some support. Nice to meet you all.

[Applause]

JENNA NELSON: Thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hi. My name is Robin and [indistinct] ... don't type that.

[Laughter]

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I've had hearing loss for a long time. And I was told by a neurologist that I have hearing loss and need surgery and then I went to a clinic and they said "hearing aids won't help you and we don't know what your neurologist is talking about." And then I got my hearing done at another place. It wasn't a real hearing test.

I'm getting tired of saying "what? Can you repeat that?" That's it. And somebody told me I need an audiologist close to where I live. And I didn't know hearing aids need to be adjusted and how many times. And I want to know how much batteries cost and how much to spend and how to get the audiologist to tell me what kind of hearing loss I have, and how to get a consensus. Do I have to get three more audiologists to get a consensus? Want to get two of the same diagnosis before you do something, like getting a car fixed. That's it.

JENNA NELSON: Well, welcome and thank you. And the good news is there's a wealth of information in this group. And like any -- like any doctor or anything that you have, you always want a second opinion. So unfortunately you might have different diagnoses but I would highly encourage you to see multiple people for your own edification.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm Kamaal. That's my mom [pointing]. I'm here to support her.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm Dale. I have a pretty severe hearing loss for two reasons. I am a World War II veteran and the noises were loud and I have 40 percent disability, VA. So the second reason is I'm old. I don't look it, I know. But I'm soon going to be 93 years old.

I'm having, have trouble socially in restaurants. And one of the main reasons I'm here is with telecoils and looping, I can hear well but I can't even volunteer at jobs. I worked at the airport as a volunteer four days a week, LAX. And I had to give that up because I couldn't hear a bunch of questions. So my world is, I just don't cope real well around hearing people.

Also if there's any veterans here, there's an organization -- veterans here, there's an organization through the Hearing Loss Association of America. There's a special chapter nationally for veterans. We get together on the Internet every month and planned a New York get-together in June.

JENNA NELSON: That's a new thing that I need to get more information. The Veterans Group is our virtual thing and we need more information up on the website about that.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm Tony, Sandy's husband, and I'm here to support her on the panel.

JENNA NELSON: Thank you.   Thank you to all the spouses and children and partners for your support. It means a lot to us because we know it's a burden for [overlapping voices].

Without further ado, let's jump into it. What I would say is each person, introduce yourself and mention your hearing loss. And Sandy will -- we have some questions. But we do want this to be interactive. So as the panel is answering questions, if you have your own anecdote or whatever, raise your hand and we'll give you the microphone. We want to make this fun. Without further ado, be inimitable.

TERI: I don't think I have ever been called inimitable.

I'm Teri and I represent the singles on the panel. So in my 50s I was divorced a number of years ago and navigating dating for -- oh, I've had genetic hearing loss since childhood. It basically went untreated. So I was in college when I finally got my first pair of hearing aids. I have otosclerosis, both ears. Nerve damage.

SANDY BLAKE: You wear hearing aids?

TERI: I've worn hearing aids over 30 years and investigating getting cochlear implants because I have zero word recognition on a test, it's gotten to that point. And I feel like the stupidest person in the world when they repeat words and I can't repeat them back.

SANDY BLAKE: I relate.

I'm Sandy Blake. I am happy to be the moderator of this panel. My hearing loss goes back to 2009. I lost hearing in the left ear and have tinnitus. Since then, I've been educating people to be on my right side to communicate with me. About two years ago I woke up and it was as if someone put a blanket over my head. So I went back to the House Clinic and they said you're not a candidate for a hearing aid back in 2009. But this time when I went, they said "you are a candidate for a hearing aid and you might be qualified to get a cochlear implant."

So the trauma of all of that, losing one's hearing overnight, I can't begin to describe but we muddle through. And with the support of my husband and friends and family, and thank God I found this group last April, it's been amazing.

So I have a hearing aid and a cochlear implant, and life is good. Life is good. And whatever I'm thrown, you know, I'll make it lemonade.

So I'm happy to be here and glad to see all of you.

SHARON: Hi, I'm Sharon and I'm here with my husband Jonathan. I have had hearing loss now for more than half my life.

The dates and the stories, I was first diagnosed 20 -- close to 30 years ago. And I have what's called cochlear otosclerosis and it's genetic and progressive. It started where I couldn't hear tea kettles whistling and it was subtle sounds, and I ignored it. My initial audiogram showed an unusual pattern. My father had it; he was in denial. So I grew up with that and not knowing how to navigate that relationship. So I'll be interested to hear the thoughts -- the mother, son here. We have three children, so hopefully they haven't inherited the gene. We'll find out.

I've been wearing hearing aids since almost 30 years ago. My hearing aids became more powerful. And eventually I lost all hearing in my right ear and I got a cochlear implant three years ago which was a game changer. And I'm functioning with my left ear with hearing aids but it seem to be increasing over time. I'm very grateful for this group, for the support and learning about new technologies and ways to make our lives better.

I hope you get something out of it today because each month is different.

JONATHAN: I'm Jonathan Swerdlow, Sharon's husband, and I'm here to support her.

WENDI: I'm Wendi and I've been a member of HLAA since several years ago, ten years at least. I have two hearing aids. My hearing loss started as mild, back in elementary school and it progressed to be severe to profound. So without my hearing aids, I hear nothing. Maybe a loud boom or something.

But I am grateful that hearing aids have been working for me for a number of years. I first started wearing them back in the '80s, early '80s. And they have worked, not as well as I would like them. I would like them to be 100 percent. But they've been helpful, I think. I'm thankful for that. This is my year to get some new ones. So I'm always looking to see what's new, whatever. And I'm also grateful for a good audiologist to connect me to things and grateful for the insurance that I had that covered them each time.

I'm here on the panel today with my son Chad who has known from day one, because I had my hearing loss since before I had children. He grew up with me and my hearing loss. So I just thought it would be interesting because as I thought about being on the panel, I realized I don't think I had many in-depth conversations about it. I think I just set the stage, and we just kind of fell into it. So it will be interesting for me to even hear some of the things he has to say about it because it was my normal and it became their normal. And my other son is here as well. So it will interesting to know what I did right or wrong. Thank you.

CHAD: Well, I'm Chad. I don't really need an introduction. She took all the words from me. I'm a, I'm happy to participate in the panel, definitely want to hear everybody's stories. I'm 29 myself. So to hear people have been dealing with this longer than I've been alive is astounding to me to hear everybody's stories. I'm interested in participating and giving feedback and anything I can to provide support and enlightenment and whatever I can do. Like my mom said, this is something I experienced since birth with her. So I'm familiar with it but I would like to hear other people's experiences, how they go about it, and whatever I can do to be a better hearing person on the other end of things. So I'm excited.

SANDY BLAKE: Thank you.

I want to start this panel with a quote from Michael Simmons. He's a Brit and journalist and wrote this book in 2005. And last night I was discussing it with someone who said I think it is a good thing to start with. So listen to this.

[reading] It's an inescapable fact that living with any amount of deafness can be as arduous for the hearing as it is for the non-hearing. Most parties, especially if they live and work together, experience the loss. And both learn pretty quickly the truth in these words. Hearing damages relationships. The strain on partnerships and especially marriage relationships can be cruel. Conversation and everyday interaction which I took for granted have become subject to unfamiliar and unhealthy stress which can occur at totally unthinkable times and lead to unwanted sense of frustration which in turn leads to resentment and grudge. Ooh. Even between two hearing people, a random failure to communicate can be a significant factor, if not the significant factor when a relationship shows telltale signs of breaking down.

So we're doing this panel today because we want to be proactive, to heal relationships. Relationships even among friends can be damaged. They can also be healed.

So I would like to start the first, I would like to start by having our panelists Sharon and Jonathan, talk about growth [phonetic]. For Jonathan, the hearing person, how has being with someone who's hard of hearing changed you as a person?

JONATHAN: Well, I would say it's made me more in tune generally to be aware of people with disabilities, not just hearing but all kinds, that I was as not focused on before. That's probably the biggest thing. When I'm out and see people, I'm aware of those more.

SANDY BLAKE: And Sharon -- if anybody would like to add anything, please give me the signal and we'll get you the microphone. Sharon, we all know that hearing loss can impact relationships but what are the positive things that might come out of your hearing loss being in a relationship?

SHARON: I think when Jonathan is able to be my ears when I need a set of ears and translate things for me. For many, many years, I not only tried to slug through, I was in so much denial and shame. And so I really tried to keep everything hidden from people. And even though it was so obvious, it's like when you have kids and they think you're hiding stuff from them, they just rebreak through you. I did it for decades. And it's only been in the last few years that I finally am coming out with this and saying this is okay, we all have something. Those of us who are hard of hearing, have hearing impairment, that's what we got. But everybody else has something else.

And I think it's reinforced our partnership when I feel I'm in a situation where Jonathan is respectful and he's able to give me information in a way that spares me embarrassment. That lets me not have to say "can you repeat that," is aware of the seating in a restaurant, just a number of situations where he can be a partner and be my set of ears. He doesn't remember names of people. So we get introduced to a number of people, and I struggle to make sure I remember their names. So I tell him that and he can fill in a lot of it.

SANDY BLAKE: And Wendi, can you address that question? How has your hearing loss -- what has come out between you, with your relationship with your son?

WENDI: Like I said, I think that because it was from day one, I don't really think I evaluated that. So for me, I always kind of set my stage so that it didn't impact our direct communication.

But I don't know how it impacted him because when you can't hear something, you don't know what you don't know. So I don't know if he was trying to say something or he said things I didn't hear. I hope that I encouraged him to repeat things, you know, because what I find is sometimes people, after they said something once or twice and you don't respond, that's it for them. We may never know they said something unless they say "I've been trying to say good morning and you don't say good morning."

For us, I always, I always did things compartmentally at home, I realized. If we're listening to music, we're listening to music. If we're talking, we're talking. So we didn't have dinner with the TV going or whatever. We sat at the table and I sat in between people so I could hear and I'm looking at them and they're looking at me. So the important conversations were always in a quiet environment.

So I don't know in terms of hearing how, if I felt impacted or not. I know my older son, the teacher says "he speaks very loudly," whatever. "I can hear him."

You know, it was just that kind of, I'm not really sure if it impacted me. Maybe. Sorry.

SANDY BLAKE: Okay. I'd like to ask Teri, give you a chance -- you can't hear me? Oh, for the hearing people, I'm speaking too softly. If you can't hear me, raise your hand.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: How would you know?

SANDY BLAKE: Thank you for that. I'm looking for balance. Aren't we all looking for balance? Thank you.

Okay. Teri, I'd like to know what your biggest challenge is dating as a woman with hearing loss.

TERI: I would have to say dating as a woman period.

[Laughter]

TERI: And to throw in disability on top of that, it kind of exponentially increases that challenge. And that would be along the lines of communication and being perceived as somebody who's different. Even if I'm just meeting someone for the first time and we're at a coffee shop or something, and you read that quote from the book, how it can as be challenging for the hearing person as well as for the one with hearing loss. So imagine meeting someone for the first time and trying to get to know each other at a coffee shop and there's the background noise going on and I am doing the "what? Can you repeat yourself?" it can be high maintenance for someone used to interacting with normally hearing people.

So that would be the major challenge, would be communicating that I have a hearing loss and what that means and how they have to, right off the bat, accommodate me and my communication. So that's a very challenging way to start off any relationship, especially on a first date.

SANDY BLAKE: Thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Can I backtrack a little?

SANDY BLAKE: She wants to backtrack a little.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Is this on? Okay. I want to backtrack a little because I'm impressed Wendi had the guts to bring her children. Because I have a daughter same age as Chad, and my hearing loss was progressive. And so I went from having a little kid I could talk to for hours and hours to points where she was about seven and so on, I couldn't hear at all. And I'm now starting to realize how that affected our relationship.

But, and I think she's sort of, she's moving past rebellious stages, coming into her own, separating herself from her parents and all of that. And now she's watching me a lot. I was always open about the hearing loss but I realize also there's this gap that needs to be discovered and I thought about bringing Erica in but I want to be the first to hear it in private.

So we're talking about how the relationships affected the other person in the relationship. And if you don't mind, Wendi I want to know what Chad has to say.

WENDI: I was going with what Sandy wanted but I'd be happy to ...

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Is that okay?

SANDY BLAKE: You want to know what Chad has to say about what?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: His relationship with his mom.

WENDI: She directed it to me but I'm interested too.

SANDY BLAKE: We'll get to that.

WENDI: I hope so.

SANDY BLAKE: Thank you.

Let's go back to Jonathan. Is there anything you don't understand about our hearing loss?

JONATHAN: I don't understand all the different types of hearing loss people have. My wife described to me hers. I have a general understanding that it's progressive and getting worse, but other than that I don't know ...

SANDY BLAKE: Okay. And --

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Sandy, can I ... ? [gesturing]

SANDY BLAKE: Sure.

GARY JACOBSON: So as Sandy mentioned, the sudden hearing loss of hers, what I didn't realize until recently is how fatiguing it is for people with hearing loss to, even with a cochlear implant or hearing aid, I thought now it's great, she hears me, and I didn't know how much work it takes and how fatiguing it is especially toward the end of the day. "She could hear me this morning. Why is it now a problem," And she would get irritated, "you have to be in front of me." I said "this morning I wasn't in front of you and you could hear me." So I learned how much work this is and how hard it is. So I'm a little more patient.

[Applause]

SANDY BLAKE: Thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I have a daughter, and from the time she was little -- I don't know, five or six or before, I always told her to look at me before she talks to me, "face me or tap me on the shoulder," make sure that I have her attention because "mommy can't hear very well, mommy wears hearing aids" And it's just wonderful, she always made sure, she's 39 now and she always made sure she's looking at me or I'm looking at her so there's no repeating, there's no getting exasperated because mom didn't hear both times, you know.

And it's really easy but you have to set the stage for that. And I know the other, the hearing partner or family member has to remember that mom or dad or whoever -- and then look at the person when you're talking to them. I know [indistinct] gap, but we don't. We're on alert 24/7. And to have a hearing loss, whether you have a cochlear implant, hearing aid, or even if you have neither and you lip-read really well, it's hard work 24/7, to get up in the morning and go to work, driving and [indistinct] to the front door, we're on high alert, you know. We're constantly aware what's going on around us.

So by the time I get home from work, I'm tired. I take my cochlear implants off, and it's quiet. But to be really frank, having hearing loss, it's exhausting. "Who's staying in the morning?" [indistinct] 5:00 at night or 7:00 at night. So take that into consideration too.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I think that's important to know, is the fatigue that comes with hearing loss because I'm a college debater and that is constant hearing, and by my second debate I am, like, exhausted. A lot of times people are assholes and don't want to accommodate me and I think that carries over into real life for me. I can tell sometimes -- because I lost my hearing at 16 and I come from two hearing parents and a hearing sister. So sometimes I can tell with her if I don't hear her right away, there's frustration and I feel like I internalize that sometimes, and I don't know if a lot of people with hearing loss do and, like, "what's wrong with me? Why is it I can't communicate?"

But I think the biggest thing there is knowing we have the right to these spaces, and it's other people's responsibility to accommodate us, and if they're not that's a failure on them in communicating and to not appreciate us as entire people. So I think not internalizing, because I tried to pass this hearing for the last four years and then it got too exhausting. So just knowing we have a right to spaces, regardless of our hearing loss, is very important too.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I don't hear anyone talk about this, so I want to bring it up. I lost my hearing just like you, overnight. You know what that was like. I have two daughters, and they were just young children at the time. And I decided one day I want to take control of my deafness and learn American Sign Language. So I started taking classes. And when my daughter, my youngest daughter, got into high school they had ASL classes there and I said please take the class for me. She wanted to take Spanish but she agreed to do that, and it turned everything around. Having someone that I could communicate with without having hearing aids on and be able to chat without having to be stressed out was really nice. Unfortunately, she went to Boston and became a lawyer.

[Laughter]

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Fortunately, she's coming back next month with her family. I'm so excited.

So I took control of my deafness by learning American Sign Language, and I think anyone that wants to learn, just let me know and I'll help you out.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm really glad to hear people talking about exhaustion. I have other issues that are attributed to exhaustion but even sitting in this meeting, I'm so exhausted. I can't even finish this meeting because I feel so tired right now, and I wasn't tired when I came in. I'm wiped out right now. I can't hear half the people in the room and I'm watching that thing and it's doing a lousy job with interpreting and it's too slow. It's exhausting to keep up with it and I'm exhausted right now.

So I'm really grateful that everybody here is talking about fatigue because having fatigue throughout the day especially when you're trying to communicate or trying to listen and processing information as well as hearing it, at the end of the day, I don't talk to anybody. My day ends about 3:00 o'clock. Like this woman back here. I can't talk to anybody. And on a cell phone, it hurts my ears. I don't know if anybody has ear pain. I stopped using them. It was glued to my ear back then in 1998. I hate using cell phones because they make my ears hurt.

So I find hearing exhausting, trying it. So I'm going to take the suggestions and go seek out hearing options. If anybody else has suggestions how to deal with the fatigue associated with it, I'd like to hear suggestions.

SANDY BLAKE: Tim, if there's anything you want to contribute at any time, I'd like to open that possibility to you because you're such a great guy.

And so is our president. Do you want to say anything?

JENNA NELSON: Sure. Just a couple of things. Thank you everybody for sharing your stories. I think that they're invaluable, really.

Just a couple of things. So our captioning is live. So that's our captionist Patty up front. So she, it's realtime but it's not a perfect system because she has to hear what we are saying and then she has to type it, so there's a slight delay. So I want people to know that. there's two kinds of relay. There's just when we talk and it's a computer that's putting up the words. And then we have realtime captioning which is CART which is what she does but there's still a little delay. So please be patient because it's never a perfect system.

The other thing I wanted to say is I wish my husband could have been here actually because he's incredibly supportive and my whole family has hearing loss. And it all hit us in our 30s, my mom and me and my sister. My mom said to my husband one day -- I didn't hear this but she told me later "thank you for having so much patience with Jennifer because I know when we got together and got married, she didn't have hearing loss. You didn't sign up for this." and my husband's response was two-fold. He said "in sickness and in health. Jennifer is still Jennifer. She's the person I fell in love with and I don't care that I have to repeat myself to her if I need that. I don't really care." He said "half the stuff, I throw out as minutiae. It's not even things she needs to hear," or whatever. But he said -- and that's really what tickles my heart, is that "I married Jennifer and she's still Jennifer. Nothing's changed about her."

So I know that it is, everybody handles these things differently but I would implore the partners in the room to try to remember that we didn't sign up for hearing loss. It sucks, and something I addressed with the panel last year was depression because it's easy to go into a hole of depression. Instead of being the life of the party, suddenly it's like "don't talk to me because I'm scared I'm not going to be able to hear you."

So I implore the partners and children to -- I know it's difficult for both parties, but everybody has something. The older you get, especially when things have been so -- having empathy is just really, we are thankful for. We're struggling within ourselves.

SANDY BLAKE: Thank you so much.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: As we're talking mostly about relationships or one is hearing and one isn't, I'm currently in a relationship where we both have hearing loss. Steven had since in his early childhood. It's frustrating because at times, he doesn't hear me and I don't hear him.   I'm trying to get his attention. Yeah. So we have, to we had to learn to accommodate each other and, you know, develop tricks for dealing with the hearing world. But dealing with both of us having hearing loss, it's a whole other game.

And also Teri, think of it as a filter, a "jerk filter" when you're dating. You don't want the guys that don't have tolerance for hearing loss.

SANDY BLAKE: I think Dale wants to speak.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I just wanted to mention something quite simple as far as hearing loss that we often forget about, and that is just getting near to the person. At the airport, I was working with a lady. She was saying she had to yell at her brother across the room, when I heard this yelling all the time. It's stupid. Just get close.

[Laughter]

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I mean closeness is good in restaurants and other places. Just, it kind of, if you just get close in stores and everything, often it will solve the problem if you just get close. Audiologists and people, specialists in hearing, they often forget to mention that, "just get close."

My life and career, I was in a position in California, and, I'm a member of Kaiser and the VA. But as a professional person, I made formal complaints against medical doctors for not understanding hearing problems. And my dentist is really stupid when it comes, he keeps talking off to the side of me. And don't hesitate to complain about professional people not understanding.

SANDY BLAKE: Thank you Dale. I think one of the things, as hard of hearing people, that we need to develop, is a sort of assertiveness training. You don't have to be rude, but as Lana was saying, we have the right to spaces as well. Our disability, for many of us, is invisible. Invisible. And sometimes we just, we have to be gentle with ourselves but we have to learn how to advocate for ourselves also.

I'd like to bring up this topic of dependence and independence. I'm wondering Chad, do you recognize when your mom does not understand a conversation in a group? Are you aware of when she's challenged?

CHAD: So for me, for me, in recent years, I definitely can understand, and I try my best to take charge if I know she didn't hear something. I'll be the one to repeat it to her. I don't wait for someone else to repeat it at this point. I make sure she knows what's going on, because I'll be the one to hear it. I don't remember how well of a job I did at that when I was younger but I definitely now make sure that -- and I can recognize if she didn't hear something by her responses and things like that. So I'm more aware of looking for that.

I really don't recall when I was younger how well of a job I did at that, so I would potentially have to ask her about that. But definitely now I look for that and want to make sure it's as easy as possible, especially if there's background noise or somebody isn't speaking at a loud enough tone or volume, even if we're at a show or something like that. We were at a -- was it a show? Yeah. We were at a show not too long ago and the people had really thick accents and saying stuff quickly and there was no captioning. So I hopped on my phone and started to do my own captioning while they were talking because I knew she wanted to hear what was going on and it hurt me to know she wanted to hear what was going on more than I did. It's times like that where I wish I could hand over my hearing to her because -- it's like stuff I take for granted, hearing stuff that I take for granted. I know she would love to hear those things.

WENDI: Let me say, I will say that -- it's okay, baby.

In terms of what he's been able to do, not just the speech captioning -- he does that and I was able to get a lot out of it because he can type fast. But even when he was younger, in our house, if I didn't hear, he figured out to flip the lights to get my attention. Or if they're coming in the house what used to be a problem, I felt like people were sneaking up on me, and like somebody was there. I didn't hear and he would take the initiative to [gesturing] "Mom," before they get near me, he would do this. So I know "oh, somebody's in the house," just the stomping or flipping one of the lights.

Even when my bedroom door is closed and I'm not going to hear a knock, I can remember little index cards sliding under the door. That's him. So thoughtful and helpful. "Mom, I'm leaving." But index cards sliding under the door because I don't hear knocking.

Just so you know, you did a fantastic job.

He's creative and so helpful. Just a lot of little things.   It's flooding my mind now as you wonder whether you did a good job. You did a wonderful job. Thank you so much.

SANDY BLAKE: Chad, I want to thank you for being so vulnerable, and this is a room where it's safe. I mean we're all crying because we're human and we're exhausted, and we get to help each other. That's what's important.

Time for some humor. Teri.

TERI: Dating has a lot of humor in it.

SANDY BLAKE: When is the best time in the process when you're getting to know someone to communicate about your disability?

TERI: Well, I mean I think nowadays -- I used to try to hide it and slide by until a certain point but now I think it's better to be up front from the beginning. I'm not going to put it in my dating profile, "you want to date a deaf girl?" But I thought about it. Uh, I do try to, at the beginning, try to keep up with the typing and messaging until, like, until I determine whether this is somebody I want to get to know better. And they're usually trying to get me to talk on the phone, and I'm like "no, I'm not ready for that." And if I want to meet them, I say, by the way, it's difficult to talk on the phone. I can use my captioning but I would rather meet in person the first time just to see. It's easier for me face-to-face.

SANDY BLAKE: Sharon, I'd like to ask you what is one of the more annoying things your partner does in regard to your hearing loss?

SHARON: How much time do we have?

[Laughter]

SANDY BLAKE: We only got a minute.

SHARON: I think what I want to say in a way it's like what a lot of people said. And God bless you, I think Tony hit the nail on the head in terms of being a partner and having that understanding of the night being different than the day.

This disease -- and because we all have different manifestations of it, affect us differently. Why can I hear at a Starbucks if I'm in the right position and the light is good but not in the car which is totally quiet and I have a kid in the back seat. I don't know. But that's my reality, I don't try not to hear. I try to hear but I never try not to hear.

I think it takes a lot for the partner to just really realize this is 24/7, it doesn't go away. It's an invisible disease. And it's interesting, the word invisible, I was thinking of people who can't see. If you're with someone who can't see I don't think any of us would forget to help them get to their car so they don't run into an obstacle. But we have hearing loss and it's invisible. Because I hear fairly well in a number of situations, especially in this looped room, thanks to Tim and the people that put this together -- I walk outside and my comprehension goes from maybe 90 to 20 like this if the traffic is going by.

So I think, I think the most important thing is for my partner to just remember this doesn't go away. It's 24/7. It's exhausting the night after an entire day of trying to understand people and understand the world, going to the market -- any of these things that we take for granted when you have your hearing. For us, it's magnified so much more.

So I think it's, this is all the time, try to remember that this is all the time, that we're doing the best we can. And it's just exhausting. Our brains are, you know, are pliable but at a certain point we all need to sort of take it easy and allow our loved ones to give the support we need. And I don't know what you did Wendi, but boy you did a good job.

It's a wonderful support you give your mom. And it's just, as my kids get older, I find they're more [indistinct] true to things than they were as teenagers. And it's a beautiful thing to have to invisible sense, source of support, whether it's flipping the light or whatever. All those things matter and help us psychologically and spiritually and help us hear.

SANDY BLAKE: Beautiful. On that note, unless there's anything else that anybody wanted to say, I think we're ready to take a break. We will break until about 11:15 and then we'll have our regular chapter business meeting and you're all welcome to stay and participate. And Jennifer wants to say something because there's been a change apparently?

TIM BROWNING: Hi, everyone. Actually we have another 30 minutes. We have about 10 to 15 minutes of chapter business. But obviously this is a very engaging conversation and very popular. So we'll come back at about 11:15 and about another half hour to continue our panel and then we'll have some chapter business toward the end.

SANDY BLAKE: Oh, we're not done with the panel?

TIM BROWNING: No. We're not done. Sorry, guys.

SANDY BLAKE: That's okay.

TIM BROWNING: We're breaking now.

SANDY BLAKE: Until ...?

TIM BROWNING: 11:15-ish or so.

SANDY BLAKE: Okay. Thank you.

MEETING BREAKS AT 11:05 A.M.; MEETING RESUMES AT 11:22 A.M.

JENNA NELSON: Please take your seats, please.

Before we continue our panel, real quickly, if you can look at my assistant Tim, very handsome. So those, basically -- Teri is doing a good impression.

So as you know, attending these meetings are great. We're here to support you. But because we bring coffee and have various marketing materials, and we have a scholarship fund that we're putting together for a young student with hearing loss, we ask, if you feel -- there's no pressure but if you have -- if you feel like this meeting was worth even $2, we would appreciate a donation.

The kitty jars are separate. So if you feel like giving to the scholarship fund, give to the scholarship fund. If you want to give to the chapter itself, please do. We would really appreciate it. Normally we pass it around but since we have two, we'll leave it on the counter. But please if you feel like this was worth two bucks or more, we greatly appreciate it.

And now Sandy is going to -- who's doing a fabulous job as moderator, is going to continue.

[Applause]

SANDY BLAKE: Please. No applause. I do it out of love. And really, you're doing it all. So -- would you hold this for a second?

So next topic. Anybody want to talk about resentment? Anyone. Talk about how easy it is to slip into resentment when an expectation is not met? Sharon.

SHARON: How much time do we have?

[Laughter]

SHARON: Uh, so really --

SANDY BLAKE: Really close and slow.

SHARON: Okay. Expectations not met, so that could mean a number of things. With reference to my partner's not sort of doing his duty as a surrogate listener, or whenever, I guess the one thing I want to say is my resentment levels have declined as I became more of an advocate for myself.

So I think what I really want to say is going from being the victim -- and yes, it sucks no matter what, but going from I need to depend on somebody to make introductions or to tell me people's names or to hear for me, to be my surrogate, I think I found as I got bolder at being up front with my hearing loss, I have found recently -- I found that what has been helpful for me is to say to people I have hearing loss. I have been really uncomfortable personally being hearing impaired because it makes me like feel there's something wrong with us. There's nothing wrong with us. We just don't hear or don't hear well or in certain situations.

So I find the more I'm able to say "I have hearing loss. Can you A, B, or C", I find that's putting me in the driver's seat and my resentment levels have gone down because I find that it puts some of the responsibility on the other party to then change how they communicate.

My husband is wonderful and well-intentioned. He also has a lot of things in his head and can be forgetful. I have already been there done that, been angry and resentful. I'm dealing with some health challenges and getting daily medical treatments. And despite the fact that my doctor has gone through a lot of years of training and is a very intelligent woman, I tell her each time "you need to face me" but she keeps facing her computer when talking to me. She was recently getting over a cold and so wearing a mask. So it was impossible to hear and impossible for him to hear.

But for the most part, the more I educate people, the more it puts the onus on them. Because by the third time, she'll remember "oh, yeah. She has hearing loss. It's my job to do something differently." I want to answer it from a positive, trying to minimize that by putting it on somebody else, and that's been very helpful.

GARY JACOBSON: So to address this, I, it would be helpful, the people with hearing loss, also sometimes you need to be patient with us, that we forget. I think I mentioned that earlier. But so when I, like I mentioned earlier, Sandy hears me at one point if I stand one place. Another time, she doesn't hear me. Rather than getting resentful with us, it helps us if you remember we're not perfect. And I want to support her as much as any spouse does, but there are times I forget. There are times I'm in another room and I call out to her and then I realize to walk closer. Or I call out to her and I forget, "where are you?"

So again, we're trying, most of us. At least I can speak for myself. I'm trying. I would imagine there are other partners and friends that are trying but forget. So it would help to release resentment if you realize we're not perfect either, "they forgot again" or "come over here." That would help.

[Applause]

SANDY BLAKE: I think the part you left out about that and recently shared with me is that I do so well, since I have a cochlear implant, with all my rehab and podcasts and Audible books and my 92 percent word recognition, that he forgets. He forgets because I'm an actress and I do so well. So when he says "honey, I forget," I go "yeah. I know. I know." I wish I could forget but I can't.

So, and Kamaal. Kamaal would like to share.

KAMAAL: I think Sharon mentioned it. You, say, tell people, instead of saying you're hearing impaired, you have hearing loss. For me, my mom says I grew up with my whole life. I think maybe when I was in high school, she told us she became officially legally deaf, and it changed my perspective of it. And I say that to say I think for the -- the hearing? I don't know.

SANDY BLAKE: The hearing.

KAMAAL: Okay. For the hearing, I think it would be helpful for us if you kind of -- I don't know, like, what's on the other side but just say "I'm deaf" and then you kind of establish it where our expectations -- and, like, we understand now, it brings it more, somebody mentioned it. It's invisible, and it makes it more visible and it's easier for me to be conscious of it. It really changed how I dealt with it when she said that. She actually can't hear, and only through this device can she hear me. And I think since then, I've been a lot more attuned and alert and stuff like that.

SANDY BLAKE: There's something about a diagnosis that makes it legitimate and makes it okay to say "it's out on the table." Thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: As far as self-advocacy goes, this is a room full of very understanding hearing people because I was [indistinct] agency and I made -- I had made the team aware that I was hard of hearing and I said "please do not approach me or speak to me on my right side. I will not respond to you." And when they continually didn't respect that, I said to one person "I need you to stop doing this. We're having a communication problem." And another person stepped in and told me I was being too aggressive about my disability and making it about me when it wasn't about that. And I had people say "oh, you're so smart, I forget that you're hearing impaired."

And there's a lot -- I think that for me, that's been the hardest part of self-advocacy, is the backlash; people just really don't accept you for who you are. That comes with surrounding yourself with good people.

And it's nice to see and hear hearing people that are open to this identity. Unfortunately, I found not everyone is and there's a huge stereotype that really ignorant people have that people with hearing loss are not smart and I go up against that so much as a political science student, just assumptions made about my intelligence when people see my hearing aid or if I don't hear someone.   I get that I'm "not smart" and I'm "rude." Those are the two biggest assumptions people make about my character before they even know me.

SANDY BLAKE: Thank you for bringing up that topic, learning how to advocate and coming across rude and uninterested people. You know, it's part of the deal. I wish it weren't but it is. Skill. Patience. Practice. Thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I just wanted to share first of all, two things. When it comes to what we expect or need for others to accommodate us, last year we had a rap session at Georgia's house, and we didn't have, you know, the captions. We didn't have the loop thing. We didn't have all the things we have today to help us communicate with each other. And it was an eye opener to me because we had a dozen people in the group with different kinds of hearing loss that had to be accommodated and I realized how difficult it was. I had to slow down when I'm talking, look people in the eye, things that in my daily life I don't have to do because people accommodate me. And I was kind of mad at myself when I realized how much I failed with the group, and I hopefully will get better at that. So I just want to point that out, that I know for me to realize it's two ways.

When it comes to resentment, I have to be honest here. I get really angry when people use my hearing loss to their own advantage, you know, and I have to say my husband's not here so I can say this. But he'll say something and I get really mad at him for saying that and he'll want to backtrack. As most people say, "I really said this or that." He says, "I said this and you didn't hear me" and then I get mad because I know I heard him and he's using my hearing loss to his advantage. That sometimes happens in relationships, when people will do something, whatever, and so that's perhaps when I began to be resentful, when I know that people -- so anyway, I just wanted to share that with you.

SANDY BLAKE: Thank you Florence. I'm glad you got that off your chest.

Wendi and then John.

WENDI: I can't see your name.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Lana.

WENDI: Lana, welcome, and I'm so glad you found this group. But I do understand what you're saying because -- and what Sandy said too because sometimes because it's invisible, what Sharon mentioned, and if you are articulate and smart, people can just quickly forget. They really do. And if you are doing okay and it seems like you're making your way, then people do forget, or they think "she's doing fine. You're a part of this and seem to be on top of things," and it's because it's invisible. So you're not, you know, walking around with a cane, not in a wheelchair. So it's easy for people to forget.

And people can think you're rude. I've had that. Because they're saying something behind me, I never knew what they had said, and somebody else tells me "somebody said you were stuck up," and I'm "really? Why?" They say "they say good morning to you and you never say good morning." I'm like "really?" And I don't know how long that was going on. "They said something funny and you didn't laugh." "You heard everything but the punchline," that kind of thing.

So it does kind of, it kind of changes who you are to some extent because you can't be all that you want to be. I would love to respond quickly but I don't always because it takes time to process and sometimes I don't hear everything.

But I will say too as it relates to advocating and getting what you need, we have to be vigilant. Patience is good but you have to be vigilant and keep repeating it and you might want to open every single session with "I have to remind everybody again, it's this side or no side" or whatever.

And then we have had -- my dear friend Kat is here wearing her button. Kat, show them your big yellow button. And it says "face me."

We've also been giving out these cards. Sometimes when we make things official, like my son said, I told my son I'm legally deaf. It resonated with him a little differently.

So maybe the chapter can give you some of these tip cards for how hearing people can better communicate and how hard of hearing people can better communicate, and dropping those cards around so people go "oh, this is not just her, not just Lana who wants what Lana wants. This is a reality for a lot of people, and this is official." So hopefully we can get her some cards. And you're in the right place.

SANDY BLAKE: Thank you. I'd also like to add, try to hold onto your sense of humor. Try. Try to hold onto your sense of humor. It's not always easy.

JENNA NELSON: I agree 100 percent. You got to laugh because otherwise, you're going to cry.

[Laughter]

JENNA NELSON: I want to say two things. One is there's such a stigma with hearing loss because we think of it as that's what happens when you get older. So I'm encouraged by the young people in this room to change that stigma and help people understand 48 million people in the U.S. have hearing loss and the vast majority of those people are under 50. So show your hearing aids. I should be showing my cochlear implant, and I have. I went to work the other day with my hair up which I haven't done in a long time. I bit the bullet and it felt good and empowering to not hide this.

The other thing I was going to say, and this is something I taught myself, and I think it's a good tip. When you look up definitions for hearing loss, you see: hearing impaired and hard of hearing and small d deaf. So there's big D deaf, which means you use sign language. We are small d deaf.   What I tell people, for those of you who were not born with hearing loss, if somebody came up to you and said "I have hearing loss" you wouldn't really know what that means. I had never heard about hearing loss until it came into my family.

What people do understand is deafness. They get that. So what I tell people -- it's not true because I hear well with my implant -- but what I tell the doctor and the dentist, I say "I'm deaf, I can't hear you, but I read lips. So face me." there's something about telling people that. They understand. They get deafness. And my doctor and dentist always forget, but I remind them, and it's a game changer.

So if you tell people that you speak to, tell people you're around, tell your professionals "I'm deaf. I can't hear you, but I read lips," they get it. It clicks for them. So that's something I started to do and it was a game changer because suddenly now even my dentist takes down his mask so that I can read his lips. So it really is something I want to pass on to any of you who are struggling with people whom you tell them once and they ignore you, right? So that's it.

SANDY BLAKE: Thank you, Jenna.

I remember at a rap session last year, Malik shared that when you're at the airport, it's best if you go from the beginning right up to the ticket counter and say "I am deaf." Don't use anything smaller than that because they don't get it, but they get deaf. And they'll put it on your boarding pass, and then sometimes you'll even get early boarding on Southwest. I remember Gary Jacobson gave me that tip last year and I was so grateful. I went up to the gate and said "I'm deaf." And he said "wait right over there. You'll go on first." It's true. It's true.

Okay. I want to wrap it up here because -- is there anything that anybody would like to share that maybe we haven't discussed? Yes, Kamaal.

KAMAAL: I was speaking with Sharon about this and hopefully, I'll try not to cry. But I, people tell me I speak well and I communicate well, and I know a lot of that is from working with my mom and talking with her all the time. I think in fifth grade she wanted to put me in a speech therapy class. I had never been so mad. I didn't think I needed it. But I also didn't think about why she wanted me to be in it, because I wasn't doing a great job of articulating things clearly for her. But now when I go out at work or dating or anything like that, I am engaging, I look people in the eye and I speak clearly. And most of that is because of her. And so I appreciate it. It makes me feel like I am more in tune with people with other disabilities. It's easier to think about anything from someone else's perspective when you've dealt with someone whom you always have to be in their shoes. Whatever group or whatever's going on, I'm very conscious of it, and a lot of that is because of her.

One thing I mentioned to Sharon is that I think, especially for I guess people that have children, as a child of someone who's hard of hearing, you know, you can tell them these things that make it easier for you, but I think it can land a little differently. And just as a change of pace almost, if you say -- a lot of these things I'm asking you to do for me aren't just helpful for me, but a lot of it is, if you practice it with people who can hear, these communications things, it goes a long way. So it's helpful for you, and a lot of times if they're having a hard time adjusting to it or getting it, it will hit a different way and maybe they'll be more receptive to it and try to practice it more.

[Applause]

SANDY BLAKE: Thank you for sharing.

Yes? I can't see your name. Do you pronounce that Joely?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Joely.

So I know the original question was about, I know the original question was about resentment. So one thing that I wanted to bring up was self-resentment. I know we're all talking about how we're getting frustrated when "my friend does this" or co-workers do this, but I think in the end I was most frustrated at myself. So I'm here because I do want to learn to advocate for myself more, and I know that I don't do that close to enough. Even with my friends, I didn't tell them about this meeting. These are my best friends and I didn't think to tell them about it. I know they would have come if I told them.

And I'm always in these situations where I know in my head I should speak up and say I'm deaf and tell them to repeat themselves more and explain what hearing loss is or what my particular hearing loss is, but then I don't. And I definitely just, in my mind I'm just like "okay, why don't I speak up for myself." And I think it's relatable. Like, I feel that resentment toward myself. I'm working on it ...

SANDY BLAKE: Thank you. I really appreciate your honesty. And you know, it's a process. It's really a process. So good for you. And practice, not procrastinate.

Anybody can tell I've been on a 12-step program?

[Laughter]

TERI: I was going to say the same thing. It is a process. And I want to acknowledge you and the young people here for starting so early and being here now.

[Applause]

TERI: It helps if we get to the point where we can speak up for ourselves. So good job.

Two things. On the subject of resentment, I've noticed myself lately having to deal -- and I appreciate that my friends or cousins are well-meaning. But if we're in a group and somebody says something to me, they will take it on themselves to say "you have to speak up because she can't hear." That pisses me off because that takes all the power away from me and it's disempowering. I see a lot of heads nodding. That's something I try to communicate to them, it makes me feel like a five-year-old and it's up to me when to tell people and how to tell people what my hearing loss is.

And a funny story. I have gone out a few times with an energetic, younger man and I was, we had a birthday party last week, and it was at a jazz club and we were dancing and he had a few too many drinks, and he's flinging me around the room, dancing, and does something with my head and I could feel my hearing aid about to fall -- so I had to go like "calm down." I won't be able to hear you if my hearing aid gets thrown on the ground and gets crunched.

SANDY BLAKE: That must have been awkward.

Georgia, did you want to say something? And then this is the end of our panel rap. We'll wrap up the panel and get on with business.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I just want to emphasize to these young people and everybody else that self-advocacy, it's 24/7. It's a habit that just, remember, do it, don't be ashamed. Speak up. Tell people that you're deaf. It's a habit. It took me a long time to feel comfortable telling people I'm deaf. And I've been hard of hearing since I was a baby, and it took me many years to accept myself as a person who's deaf. So I think my life would have been a lot easier if I told people up front I'm deaf rather than trying to pretend that I can hear.

SANDY BLAKE: Acceptance of the cards that have been dealt to us.

One more contribution over here. I thought I was going to wrap it up. He has something to say, and then that's it.

CHAD: I want to thank everybody for sharing. Being hearing, you just -- if you go throughout the day without encountering someone who's hard of hearing, you forget about these things. You don't remember what it's like to not hear. I put myself in the situation when I'm with my mom, but when I'm not with her, it's not on my mind. So with you guys sharing these stories, it will resonate with me a longer time. I'm going to think about it on a day-to-day basis, whereas if not, I wouldn't think about it. So I want to thank everybody for sharing and encourage your friends who are hearing to come here as well because it helps us learn how to help you, not that you need help but -- in the way -- it helps us.

[Applause]

CHAD: It helps us support you guys. Thank you. It's good to hear from -- my mom is the only person I know who's hard of hearing. So to hear others' experiences, it puts things in perspective for me. So I encourage people to bring hearing friends here as well and keep sharing.

[Applause]

SANDY BLAKE: Thank you. Thank you.

Okay. This is the last one.

[Laughter]

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Sorry. I want to say something fast. I struggle with hearing loss. I don't feel like I earned or am entitled to say "deaf" and I don't like to say "loss" or "hard."

I just want to thank Chad and Kamaal. I have a daughter who's 17 months old. And after I had my baby, my hearing loss got worse and I really struggled with thinking she wouldn't be able to hear me or I wouldn't be able to communicate with her. And then my hearing loss would get progressively worse until I am not able to hear anymore.

But I try to think maybe there's a positive element to all of this. So meeting all of you guys has reinforced that for me, especially the children, because I think you guys are very articulate. And I can tell a lot of -- I'm not that old but a lot of younger people mumble, really do not enunciate their words, and it's very frustrating for me. So to think that you guys have been taught to communicate because of your mom, I think this is like a very positive side effect of having something challenging like having a hearing loss.

Also, like you were saying, a sense of humor and having a good perspective, even though things might be more challenging, that can be a positive aspect of this that maybe people, you know, I struggle -- again, I don't want people to feel bad for me or people to -- I don't want to feel like I'm less than. I don't like "loss" and "hard" and I don't know what to say. But I do think it's different and experiencing things differently is not always a bad thing. It gives us empathy and patience and other benefits that maybe some people don't have the ability or time to get to. But yeah I just want to say thank you for sharing your experiences.

[Applause]

TERI: I want to add one more positive thought.

[Laughter]

TERI: Really quick. We listen deeply. That's all I wanted to say.

WENDI: One more. I'm just kidding.

SANDY BLAKE: There's a gift in the situation. It's up to us.

CHAD: I just wanted to share a funny thing before we leave.

SANDY BLAKE: There's a gift in our situation, and it's up to us to find it and share it and not be dragged down by it.

Thank you to my panel.

[Applause]

SANDY BLAKE: Thank you to all of you. I'm handing it over to Jenna.

JENNA NELSON: Thank you. You did a fabulous job.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Really.

[Applause]

JENNA NELSON: Take one and pass it down. This is a $5 Starbucks gift card for participating. Thank you for sharing your stories. We really appreciate it.

We'll get to chapter business really quickly because we got to get out of here.

So Wendi, did you want to give a brief update about the Walk 4 Hearing? Because we have so many new people. Maybe you can tell people what it is a little bit. We are pressed for time, but just tell them what it is and what's going on.

WENDI: Okay. So we have an annual Walk 4 Hearing. It's actually a national event that takes place all across the country. Our national organization is in Bethesda. We have walks in various states. Several chapters come together. Ours is the Long Beach Walk. This year 2019, it's June 8th. And what happens is as many people as we can get together, we combine the L.A. chapter with the Long Beach chapter and the Orange County chapter and Lakewood and maybe Simi Valley. But we form teams, and the team for the Los Angeles chapter is the L.A. Stars. That's us.

Woo-hoo.

[Applause]

WENDI: And what we do is we come out and we walk. The walk has two purposes. Or at least two. One is disability and recognition. So we want people to know who we are and what we do and what we need.

The other is to raise funds. So the fundraiser part is our chapter's largest fundraiser each year.

40 percent of what we raise, we get to keep in our chapter. In the past, let's say as a group, we raised $10,000. Then that's $4,000 for the chapter which is awesome because that takes care of our captioning and our coffee and our parties and a lot of things. So we always try to make as much money as possible.

This year, somehow I became team captain.

[Applause]

WENDI: I hope to do a good job. I need everybody's support. Again, it's June 8. So this just February, near the end.

But I would love for you to save the date of June 8. I would love everybody to think about coming out and being a part of our team and telling everybody. And we'll be posting things on Facebook. We'll be posting things on Facebook. It doesn't take very much to get signed up and to be on our team.

I usually do not ask for money quite this early. I know people are just finishing up with holidays and whatnot. It's up to you, but what I would like to suggest you do is start thinking about making a list of everybody that you think you will want to ask between now and then and generating as many names as possible. And don't be afraid to ask people because all they can say is no or maybe nothing, but at the end of the day it's how many you ask.

And the other thing is also, even if you can't walk, it's 5K. So even if you think you can't, you can still be on our team because maybe you can tell some friends of yours, and maybe they'd like to, yeah. So maybe -- anyone can be on our team. We are open. Whether you can actually walk or not, you can raise funds. It's a beautiful venue. We're right down on the beach. It's beautiful. That's Sunday morning. You'll feel inspired no matter what. And they give free food.

So I don't want to say too much more about that but the date is June 8, and we hope to really have a great turnout.

SHARON: Just to add to that, we have some save-the-date postcards and flyers and a few packets for sponsorship, for sponsorship opportunities. So if you want to take it to someone who might want to make a contribution, the information is there. And the save-the-date, if you want to grab some and you want to go see your audiologist or go to a doctor's office in the near future, you can pluck a few down in the waiting room, and maybe somebody will pick one up and decide to join us.

JENNA NELSON: Thank you Sharon for doing that. And thank you Wendi for being our team captain. For those of you who don't know Wendi, she has been with HLAA a long time and she's been very inspirational. So I think this could be the best year yet for raising funds.

Before we get to the rest of chapter business -- Tim, if you want to do that. I wanted to -- we have another new person, and she came a little bit late and didn't get to introduce herself.

If you can just tell us your name and how you found us and what your hearing loss is.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I found you on the Internet, and I can't hear anything and I can hardly read that stuff up there.

JENNA NELSON: So you need hearing aids and we'll get them for you so that you can be back in the hearing world. But we're glad you found us. What's your name?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Norma.

JENNA NELSON: Thank you. We're so glad you're here.

TIM BROWNING: I got 15 seconds.

[Laughter]

TIM BROWNING: Real quick. There's items -- in the interest of time, I would ask you guys to make sure you add your email with us.

Joely. I don't know if we have her email.

JENNA NELSON: We do.

TIM BROWNING: Okay.

If you're not sure if we have your email, as you walk out, can you give it to us? The reason is we have a monthly newsletter email. Some of the items we can't cover now we can cover in the email and have all the information, so further information about the Walk 4 Hearing, the next meeting and other information for you because we're short on time.

Just one quick reminder. Is anyone planning on going to the national convention in June, the HLAA National Convention?   The early bird deadline is I think March 2. So if you want, if you want to get a discount on registration, I think it's March 2nd. We'll be in Rochester, New York which I'm told is one of the most successful cities in the country.

So apparently [overlapping voices] they have a lot of good events there. And on their national website, they have more information about it.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: For veterans, it's free.

TIM BROWNING: That's a good point, and I think they have a lot of veteran activity there. They have a virtual chapter. And they're going to talk more about that.

So I think the other thing is I think the other thing is Memorial party -- we usually do an annual Memorial Day party around that time in May. So if anyone wants to suggest locations, at their house or something, start thinking about it and let us know.

Jennifer, is there else you wanted to bring up about the next meeting? Emergency preparedness?

JENNA NELSON: Yeah, so next month will be exciting. We have Rick Pope coming to speak about. He's from the Department on Disability. And he's coming to speak to us about how to prepare for emergencies with the fires that we had and what have you. I can't remember the exact numbers, but of all the people who perished in that last big fire, ten percent of those people were deaf or hard of hearing, did not hear how to get out, whether it was an alert on their phone or what have you.

So Rick will come and speak to us, and I'm really excited because he's a very thoughtful person and he's coda which means his parents were deaf and he's very involved in the hard of hearing community. So it will be a very important meeting and I really hope you'll be here.

TERI: March 23.

JENNA NELSON: Thank you Teri.

WENDI: This is not just for our chapter but I would like to acknowledge, because all of our chapters are interconnected, one of our founding members has gone on to become president of another chapter. She's awesome, and that's Kat. she's our previous president, and she moved to Santa Barbara and drove all the way here today but she's also become the president of the Santa Barbara chapter. And I'm happy for her.

And thank you for coming to our meeting again.

[Applause]

WENDI: We love you.

TIM BROWNING: I'll wrap the session now. I think the point -- question for you guys. It sounded like it was a really good rap session. So do you want more of these in the future? If you find it's helpful for you guys, definitely.

I think just one quick comment from me. I didn't get a chance to make any comments. I know we talked about our challenges we face. I was born with hearing loss. I have moderate to severe hearing loss. So what I focus on is you really can't control necessarily how people react to you, but you can control what's inside of you. So getting plenty of rest. I meditate quite a bit. I try to exercise and I try to control what I can control and accept the fact that there's some people out there, the way they are, whether they mean to or not, it's the way life is. So you can't really make someone do what you want them to do. But you can manage yourself.

And for many years, I struggled with that. But since I joined the chapter, learned from many of you, I learned to re-think and re-tool how I manage the external world which I don't want it to control me but I want to control it.

So I can go on all day about this but give yourself some self-compassion. If you had a bad day, a party didn't go well, don't beat yourself up about it. Learn from it and grow from it and share it.

And I'm glad all the younger people are here because you guys can hopefully see what triggered other people outside of here, and understanding. And Chad, you are fantastic for Wendi. As you get older, you'll find many more people with similar challenges and you'll go "uh-huh." There's a silver lining to all of this, and the silver lining is you can learn from this and help 48 million other people out there. So thank you guys so much for coming. And finally Patty, thank you for captioning today. Thank you.

And to cap it off, one last thing.

JENNA NELSON: Thank you Patty.

What I wanted to say is the buttons that Kat has, [overlapping voices] her wonderful husband redesigned it with a new HLAA logo, and they're at my house because I forgot them.

[Laughter]

JENNA NELSON: However I will bring them next month. And I have the old pins. They're exactly the same. They just don't have the logo on them. So if you want them, I'll grab them from my car. And then next month, I'll bring them and they have the updated logo.

Thank you so much for this wonderful meeting. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you again.

MEETING ADJOURNS AT 12:10 P.M.