

SHHH-LA

www.shhh-la.org

The Los Angeles Chapter of Self Help for the Hard of Hearing

WINTER 2005

Our first newsletter

It is with great pleasure and great pride that I write this welcome letter for our first newsletter!

SHHH-LA was founded in October 2004 by seven hard-of-hearing people and their hearing partners: Pat Widman, Alicia Fernandez and Michael Kaplan, Katherine Burns and Danny Tubbs, and Valerie and Willy Stern. I remember all of us meeting at a Black Angus in early

October and brainstorming about what we could do to make this world a better place for hard-of-hearing people like us – because making this world a better place for HOH people is the true and only mission of SHHH-LA.

This is what we came up with: We all agreed that we wanted a friendly, active group that would meet for social gatherings (what else can you do when you love to party and socialize?). But being friendly and social was just not enough. We want to reach out to as many deaf/HOH people as we can in the Los Angeles area.

It's said about 28% of the U.S. population has some sort of hearing loss (no one really knows). About 10 million people live in L. A. County, giving us about 2.8 million people in the area that live with some sort of hearing impairment. This is a huge number – and yet most local support groups remain small (some with only a handful of active members).

We'd like to reach out to people who live with hearing loss and who don't know about all the wonderful technology and help that's out there. Reaching out to these people also means reaching out to their hearing loved ones and their families. Many of us are married to hearing people or are the only HOH in our families. It is crucial to help

our hearing-better halves and families to understand our needs, and it is also crucial for us to understand theirs. The question was, how we were going to accomplish this great deed?

We chose an eclectic approach. We provide a monthly meeting with specific topics to discuss, such as, "How to cope during the holidays," or "How to overcome difficulties with being HOH at the office." Occasionally, we invite speakers to tell us about new technologies (such as loop systems or the new IP relay based phone relay service) or new breakthroughs. Each month a new topic (or speaker) is chosen by all the SHHH-LA members.

We actively recruit new members by posting on various Internet list-serves, passing out flyers, and contacting different deaf/HOH groups. We meet as often as we can for movies, dinners, parties and events. We raise funds to help spread the word. And all of this is just the beginning.

It's easy to forget that this group was founded only a few months ago. Yet, thanks to people's eagerness to get involved and their generosity, we've managed to obtain an incredible location, official non-profit status and real-time captionists for our meetings. And we've reached out to people who'd never

heard of a group like ours before.

So again, it is with great pleasure and pride that I welcome all of you to join us in our effort to make life easier for the HOH, their families and friends. Being HOH does not have to be isolating as long as you are willing to reach out and take charge. Come and join us at one of our social gatherings or show up at one of our monthly meetings. We guarantee you'll feel at home and welcome!



SHHH-LA co-founder Valerie Stern (r) poses at our first meeting with Jo Wilson, Executive Director of the HEAR Center, which donates use of their facilities for our gatherings.

[welcome]

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Valerie Stern".

Valerie Stern, MSW
SHHH-LA President



REACHING OUT / by Pat Widman

Over the years, as my hearing loss progressed, I became more and more isolated and depressed. I knew there had to be others who would understand what I was going through and would help me find my answers. But when I thought to ask, all I got were shoulder shrugs and pats on the back.

It wasn't until I finally found the people that are now the foundation of SHHH-LA that I received the support and friendship I was looking for. It has become my mission and challenge to let others know about us and I want each of you to be part of my team. I'm talking about Outreach.

Now, I know you're probably saying, "Sorry, I don't know anything about publicity or advertising, flyers or websites." Don't worry. We have people who are really good at that sort of thing. That's not what I want you to do. I want you to just Reach Out!

Tell everyone you know about SHHH-LA. Maybe you don't know others with hearing loss, but maybe your neighbor or co-worker does, and will remember you telling them about SHHH-LA. If you belong to other support groups or lists, let

them know what fun you're having with your friends at SHHH-LA. Tell your doctor, audiologist and hearing aid dispenser. I wish one of them would have told me about SHHH years ago. The more people you tell, the more people will find out they don't have to make this journey alone.

When you come to meetings and activities, Reach Out to the others there. Give everyone a smile, maybe even a hug. Let each other know you're glad they came. Be the first to speak to a newcomer – remember how scary it was to walk into a room full of strangers for the first time?

The more you Reach Out to others, the more you'll get back.

If you haven't already, join our Yahoo list-serve (see article page two). Share your day-to-day experiences, questions and solutions. Personally, I think e-mail chatting is the best thing that ever happened to people with hearing loss. I look forward each day to Reaching Out to my friends, knowing I'm never alone.

Reaching Out. It's like throwing pebbles in a pond. The ripples go on forever.

OUT REACHING / by Danny Tubbs

Hello everyone, this is Danny.

I am very excited about the direction of SHHH-LA. We just started out in September, 2004, and have already grown into a nice-sized group. I've met new friends and have seen familiar faces too!

I would really like to spread the word of SHHH-LA to all of the people with hearing loss in the Los Angeles area. If we could let them know there is a bunch of us that are HOH, or have partners that are HOH, all supporting each other sharing outings and fun activities, I'm sure that they would want to be a part of it.

You may have recently seen me in various places on the web. All across California, as well as the rest of the nation, I've been promoting our meetings and events on a variety of HOH, deaf and late deafened web sites.

We've had people join our Yahoo Groups list-serve both locally, and from out of state.

I think as the news of SHHH-LA spreads throughout the HOH community here in Los Angeles, we will grow into a wonderfully large group of people who will share life with each other and support each other in many ways.

Can you hear me now?

Maybe not, but rest assured I'm out there spreading news of SHHH-LA!





UNDER DISCUSSION / by Katherine Burns

The work environment and holidays. Two potentially stressful situations for anyone. Throw in a hearing loss and normal stress can become an exercise in frustration, anger, embarrassment, and sadness.

At least our meetings give us a chance to vent. These two issues were two of the topics we discussed recently and boy, did we appreciate the chance to unload!

Everyone had something to say about some

troubling aspect of holidays and work. Of course, it all revolves around the interaction between “us” and “them.”

Each month we come up with various topics we would all like to discuss. We then post them on our list-serve and have members vote for their favorite topic. Whichever topic wins the poll gets discussed at the next meeting.

As an added bonus, the person who came up with the winning topic gets an award!

Other topics of interest we’ve yet to discuss (but will soon) include assistive technology, our interactions with the medical/health environment

and “coming out” to family and coworkers.

At our February meeting (which should take place shortly after this issue is published), we will be discussing interpersonal relationships with (hearing) significant others.

To participate in this very democratic activity, just think of an item for discussion and bring it up at the next meeting or on our list-serve (see the back cover how to join). It will be voted on and you might win a prize!



ALL THE NEWS THAT FITS

by Alicia Fernandez & Michael Kaplan

This is our first newsletter for SHHH-LA, so think of it as a work in progress, and only the beginning of what we hope to do in the future.

As you can tell by these first two pages, we’ve included articles by a few of us who founded SHHH-LA, but we’d like to involve as many other voices as we can. We started this group to reach out to others, and we want that reflected in this publication.

Some might say, “Why bother?” After all, we’re part of a national organization that has a first-rate magazine and a superb electronic newsletter, not to mention (although we’re about to) the wonderful SHHH-California newsletter edited by our own Grace T.

But there’s room for more. There’s room for you. As much as some of us post online, we think having a printed newsletter to share amongst ourselves (and our friends and families) is an essential part of the group’s social, educational and support mission.

And let’s be honest. Looking at pictures of ourselves is fun, too. This is L.A., where everybody’s a star, right?

So each issue, we’ll recap our recent activities in scrapbook style with just enough semi-embarrassing shots to keep our sense of humor. We also hope to include articles about technology, because it’s so new and so important to people like us.

But we really want to hear from you, and hear about you (no puns intended).

Have an expertise? Share it. Have a personal story? Bare it. Know someone the rest of us should learn about? Tell us about them in an e-mail and we’ll write about them. Better yet, write the story yourself.

Please don’t be shy. Most of us aren’t writers, but a couple of us *are* editors. So if you need a rewrite, we’ll help. And while we don’t pay, our deadlines are usually pretty casual.

Lastly this newsletter is a work of love. Eventually we hope to have it pay for itself – well, pay for *part* of itself – but right now it’s all a volunteer effort. If there are mistakes, let us know. If something bothers you, let us know that, too. Our aim is to be fun, informative and supportive. We’ll do our best to live up to that.

SEEING^{the} LIGHT:

In the days of silent films, every movie was captioned. But since then, the world of movies and movie palaces had been all but closed to deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers.

In the late 1990s, all that changed when Tripod Caption Films (now InSight Cinema) and MoPix began to release captioned movies using competing technologies (see below). But each system had drawbacks. InSight's open-caption screenings are often scheduled at inconvenient times, and only a few prints of each title are available nationwide. MoPix's Rear Window Captioning System doesn't require special prints or force hearing patrons to view captions. But the use of reflective viewers is awkward at best, and often infuriating when the viewers start to sag under their own weight.

Now a third system, introduced just last year, offers the potential for the best of both worlds. DTS

Access uses some of the same projection-booth technology as Rear Window, but instead of putting captions on a LED reader in the back of the theater, a projector throws them directly onto the screen.

There are no special prints, and no special viewers needed. While early test screenings had a few glitches (burned out bulbs, broken gear), the DTS system gives Deaf and HOH viewers a valuable new option. This is especially true for those of us in the Los Angeles area: Of the approximately 55 theaters in the U.S. currently equipped to show DTS Access movies, seven are local, including screens in Glendale, Van Nuys, Westwood and Granada Hills.

To get more information about DTS and captioning options, we spoke with **Mike Archer**, director of the Cinema Division for DTS, known primarily for providing high-quality digital audio systems for theaters and homes.

Can you give us a little history about DTS Access?

DTS-CSS [Cinema Subtitling System] was initially rolled-out in the UK when the UK Film Council began access trials a few years ago. They wanted to determine the most efficient and effective way of delivering captions to deaf patrons while providing the best movie-going experience for the en-

tire audience. The DTS-CSS system emerged as the most effective over the course of the 12-month trial. Since its debut, there are now over 100 equipped screens in the UK.

The CSS program was introduced in the US in early 2004, and there are now more than 50 installations here. Support from film distributors has been very positive, with more than 70 CSS open-captioned releases in 2004 and commitments for many more films in 2005.



What has the feedback been like?

The positive feedback from deaf and hard-of-hearing patrons is

helping to spread the word. More theater

owners are becoming aware of the need for the technology and the flexibility the system offers. Given the success of the CSS screenings to date for film distributors, exhibitors and caption viewers, I am hopeful we'll see a proliferation of the technology throughout the US and internationally in the coming years.

How does this system compare with other technologies?

Many people are surprised to learn that DTS technology is also used for Rear Window Captions. The DTS-CSS utilizes a CD-ROM, containing both captions (which are projected directly onto the screen) and audio description tracks for the blind and visually impaired, which is synchronized with a standard film print.

It all began in the 1990s: While developing Rear Window, the Media Access Group at PBS station WGBH in Boston approached DTS to provide a solution to the issue of synchronizing captions to the film's audio track. DTS had patented a system in which sound is played back separately from the film via a CD-ROM that is synchronized to the film through a timecode. DTS saw how this system could be adapted: Rear Window captions could be synchronized to the film via the same DTS timecode.

How the Three Primary Movie Caption Systems Compare:

DTS

First Use 2003

Type Open Caption/Projection

Screens in SoCal Seven

Why We Love It

On-screen captions are easy to read

Why We Hate It

Annoying light leaks bother some

Welcome to Rear Window.
Please adjust your reflectors.

Theater Attitudes

Mixed. \$8K-\$12K cost to install per theater buys a lot of popcorn

MoPix

First Use 1997

Type Closed Caption, via panels

Screens in SoCal Eleven

Why We Love It

Available at every showing, all week

Why We Hate It

Readers are often broken or scratched

Theater Attitudes

Thumbs up. Hearing viewers don't see captions, don't complain.

The New Third Option for Movie Captions

While CSS open captions and Rear Window closed captions are different file formats, the data can be reformatted from one version to the other which offers film distributors a significant cost savings and allows them to make their films

accessible to caption viewers in both open and closed systems. You'll find links to accessible theaters, current and upcoming open-captioned releases, newsletters and frequently asked questions. Plans are in the works to make it more interactive: We want to help caption-viewing moviegoers more

technology generally require give and take. When viewing etched captions on film, it is quite noticeable that the text jitters on the screen. This is inherent in the process. In addition, because of the placement of captions on the bottom of the

Many people are surprised to learn that DTS technology is also used for Rear Window Captions

accessible to caption viewers in both open and closed systems.

So you've on both sides of the open- vs. closed-caption debate.

As you know, the deaf community — as well as the exhibition community — are split in their preferences for open vs. closed captions. DTS technology is able to provide a solution for both. We're very supportive of Rear Window, WGBH, and our customers who use the Rear Window system. I certainly can't predict whether open or closed captions will emerge as an ultimate standard. New technologies are being introduced each year, but to date only CSS and Rear Window are being used with any widespread regularity (aside from laser-etched, open-captioned prints).

Can DTS help bring sizable numbers of deaf and HOH viewers back to the theater-going experience?

I know there is a strong desire for more accessible theaters and more captioned films. I believe that once there are more convenient accessible locations with more frequent captioned screenings, more deaf movie fans will begin going to the cinema again. We at DTS hope to make that a reality and CSS provides the flexibility to do just that.

We've added a special Access section to the DTS website (www.dtsonline.com/cinema/

easily find accessible screens and showtimes.

How big an audience do you see for this technology?

With over 28 million deaf and hard-of-hearing in the US alone, there is certainly an audience and a need for technology to make films accessible. In addition to deaf and hard-of-hearing moviegoers, DTS-CSS open captions can be used for the millions of school children learning to read, those learning English as a second language and others struggling with literacy issues.

CSS also offers access solutions for the blind and visually impaired through provision of audio description. Of course, another primary use is for subtitling. DTS discs can hold up to 40 languages to facilitate different subtitles for different shows. Essentially, this means that a single inventory of prints can easily be used with the appropriate DTS disc to provide subtitles in any required language. For instance, a theater could show a Spanish subtitled screening in the morning and with a simple switch of a CD-ROM disc, play English captions in the afternoon.

We've notice some ambient light spillage whenever a caption is on screen, particularly in night scenes. Why is that?

Unfortunately, advancements in

screen, it's difficult to properly focus both the captions and the picture. And the etched text has a tendency to disappear in light scenes.

We've eliminated all of those issues with the CSS system. However, we occasionally have minimal light leakage during very dark scenes. We continue to work to reduce this affect even though our system has been in use for over two years with very few negative comments about that.

What can we do to encourage more captioning?

Direct feedback and involvement from deaf and hard-of-hearing moviegoers is the most valuable resource toward proliferating this technology. We encourage caption viewers who have used the system and those who simply want more information to contact us at DTS and provide us with feedback or questions. Consumers should feel free to e-mail us at dtsaccess@dtsonline.com. We look forward to working with the deaf community to bring open

captions via DTS Access to local theaters around the country.



InSight Cinema

First Use 1993

Type Open Captions, via on-screen titles

Screens in SoCal
Four - six

Why We Love It

There's never a worry about technical glitches.

Why We Hate It

Not enough prints, not enough screenings

Theater Attitudes

Mixed. Scheduling special prints and special screenings takes work, but no new equipment to buy.

Holiday Fun :)

'Tis the season to be jolly!



The lit tree, the giant-screen high-def TV playing "It's a Wonderful Life" (with captions, of course), the tables full of food, and the rowdy crowd.

This must be the first SHHH-LA Holiday Party! Katherine and Danny opened their home and hearts to all of us. We couldn't be happier.

So we immediately volunteered them to host the Super Bowl Party.

No good deed goes unpunished.

Bachelor KENNY gets a cookie kit. Party at his house!

Some guests are just crazier than others. Clockwise from top left: RUSSEL, KARA, WILLY, BETTE ANN and VAL work it. RAY demonstrates how to use his new napkin holder. Discussion followed.



Friends, food and fun...

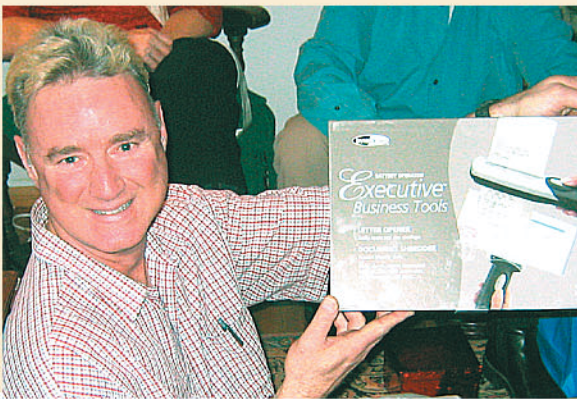
Gift Goofs

CARLOS, happily caffeinated into the new year.
MARK shows some love for his snowmen candleholders.
DIANE uses her cool loop to chat with **GRACE**.
CHLOÉ gets a dartboard, everyone ducks.



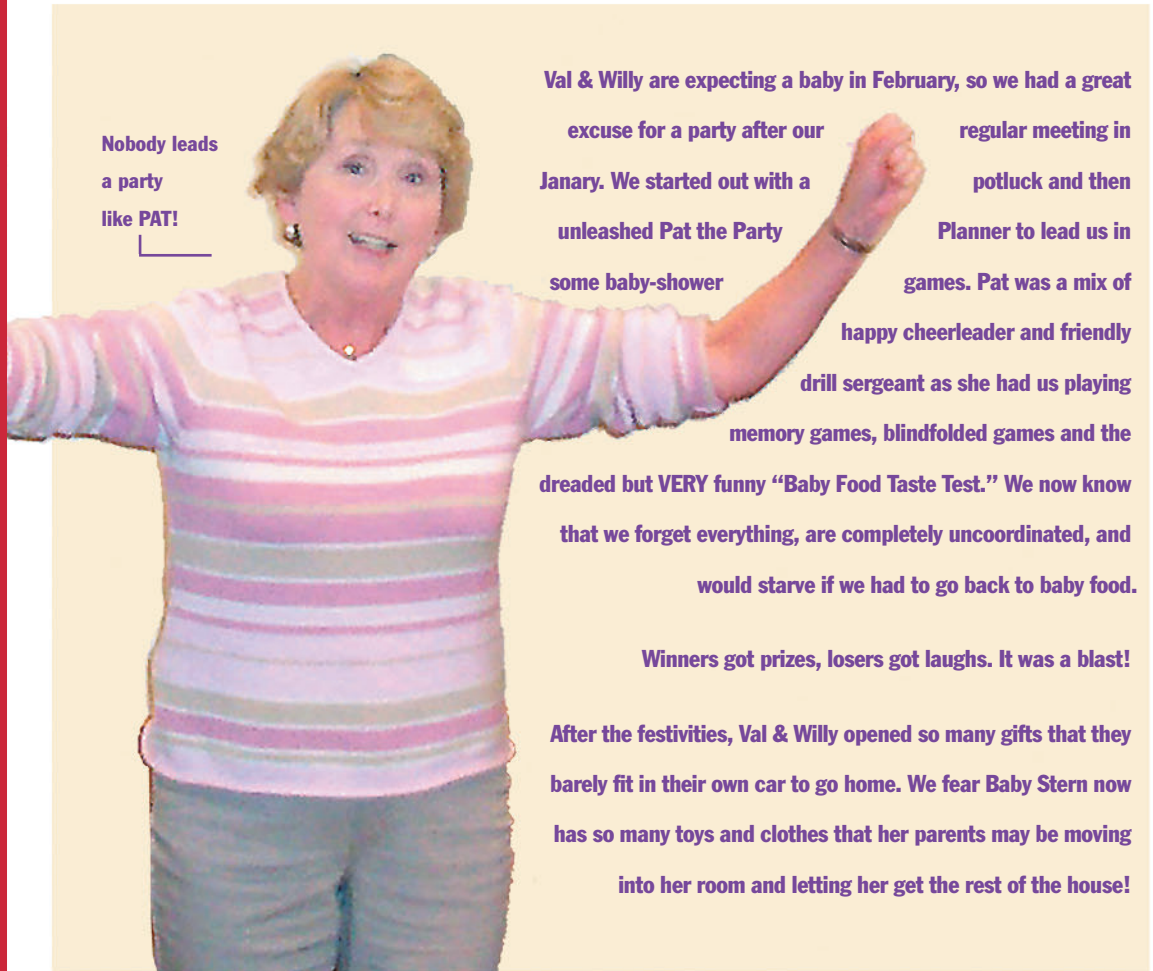
'Tis better to give (a White Elephant Gift) than to receive. Really.

ARMAND shows off his executive business tools, then loses them. Darn that gift thief!
PAT nabs a white elephant as her White Elephant gift. What are the odds?
KATHERINE laughs at the monkey on Michael's back. No comment.



...It sure FEELS like family

*Baby Shower



Nobody leads
a party
like PAT!

Val & Willy are expecting a baby in February, so we had a great excuse for a party after our regular meeting in January. We started out with a potluck and then unleashed Pat the Party Planner to lead us in some baby-shower games. Pat was a mix of happy cheerleader and friendly drill sergeant as she had us playing memory games, blindfolded games and the dreaded but VERY funny "Baby Food Taste Test." We now know that we forget everything, are completely uncoordinated, and would starve if we had to go back to baby food.

Winners got prizes, losers got laughs. It was a blast!

After the festivities, Val & Willy opened so many gifts that they barely fit in their own car to go home. We fear Baby Stern now has so many toys and clothes that her parents may be moving into her room and letting her get the rest of the house!

Doing the smile thing...



CATHY



MARY



GEORGIA



MOSES

SHIRLEY and PAULINE
came late, obviously after
knocking over a baby store.
They were loaded down with gifts!

It's a shower of gifts for baby Stern!



What does baby food really taste like?



We couldn't tell our strained string
beans from our minced
spaghetti. It was all guck to
us. The Baby Food Taste Test
made big babies of us all.
Alicia, Danny, Willy and Grace
grimace for the camera. The
rest of us grimaced off-camera.

These are not hostages, they just look that way.



Question: How many cotton balls can you get into the bowl. Answer: Hardly any!





SANDY gets into that Superbowl mood!

Super Sunday

Sit, eat, drink, watch TV. Repeat. Sit, eat, drink...



The whole gang piles into Dan and Katherine's newly furnished living room for the big football game. Counter-clockwise from foreground: VAL, WILLY, CARLOS, KENNY, DONNY, ARMAND and DANNY



Pat's date was a real babe. We all drooled over him. Grandson JACK gets our vote for favorite guest!



The best part of the game is hanging out and just talking. Just ask SUSAN.



This is the photo of a real football fan. Study it. He was the only one at the party. Go KENNY!



KATHERINE smiles and ponders the wisdom of having the only big-screen TV in our group.

The game was tight, so is our group. Touchdown!

There were no wardrobe malfunctions. Just diet ones.



**JULIE and her
21-month-old daughter
LYLA were among the
guests from
SHHH-Santa Monica**

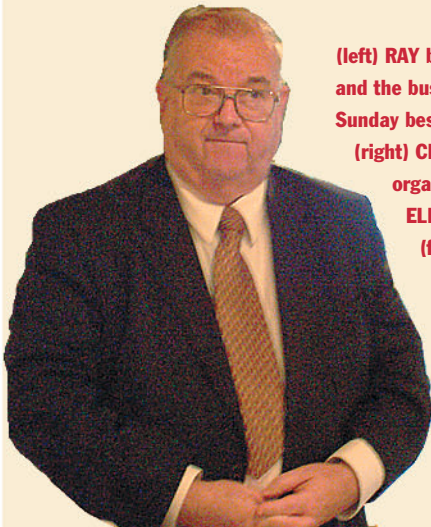
Tea Time

Two SHHH chapters. One Santa Monica tea room. Yum.



Well it was a perfect day to be inside — rainy outside, but cozy and warm in the private tea room at the Tudor House in Santa Monica in early December, 2004. A bunch of us met with a group of Santa Monica SHHH-ers, and folks from two other chapters showed up as well. It was the first joint activity for the chapters involved, but chances are it won't not the last.

Among those who sampled the scones, mini-eclairs, finger sandwiches and really good tea were (clockwise from far left) PAT and GRACE of SHHH-LA; JULIE & LYLA, PHIL and his wife, SHERMAN and ANN from SHHH-SM, and DOUG from Orange County.



(left) RAY braved the weather and the bus while wearing his Sunday best.

(right) CHRIS, event organizer Nanci Linke-Ellis and Charlotte (from the House Ear Institute) focus intently as people introduce themselves and share their stories.





SHHH-LA Newsletter
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ASSOCIATED WITH THIS NATIONAL
 NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION



SHHH-LA meets at 10am on the fourth Saturday of every month at the HEAR Center in Old Town Pasadena, 301 East Del Mar Avenue



GETTING INVOLVED WITH SHHH-LA

There are a lot of ways you can get involved with SHHH-LA, and almost as many ways for us to get involved with you. What follows is just a sample of what we have to offer:

Check out our website

At press time, there wasn't much content on our website, www.shhh-la.org, but expect that to change soon. There will be transcripts of past meetings, announcements of future events, PDF copies of our newsletter and other publications, profiles of members, and links to dozens of useful sources of information.

Join the Yahoo "list-serve"

A "list-serve" is an automated mailing list that broadcasts e-mails to everyone subscribed. (For the geeks among us, the term is based on LISTSERV, one of the first mailing list programs, dating back to 1986.) To join our Yahoo list-serve, you first need to register your e-mail address with Yahoo Groups. Go to the Yahoo home page, click on "Groups" and enter "SHHH-LA" in the search field. Follow the on-screen prompts, and you should be good to go.

The list-serve is the main way our members communicate with each other. And since using the phone is so problematic for many of us, our Yahoo list-serve acts as a sort of "party line" telephone. If the constant barrage of messages is too much, you can elect to receive a "digest" version with the day's posts in a single e-mail. Just click "Edit My Membership" on the main Yahoo Group page.

Attend our monthly meetings

We meet at 10am, on the fourth Saturday of every month, at the HEAR Center in Old Town Pasadena (301 E. Del Mar). The HEAR Center (pictured above) is a great facility with a large meeting room and full kitchen facilities. We have a real-time captionist at every meeting, so everyone present can follow the conversation. Each meeting features a topic that we can all discuss, or a speaker we can all learn from. And every meeting features a bite to eat.

Upcoming meetings include:

February 26th – Scheduled topic: Interpersonal relationships between HOH and hearing couples.

March 26th – Scheduled speaker: Lorraine Fanizza on Loop/T-Coil Technology, a new process to wire your home, office or car to feed sound directly to hearing aids and cochlear implants.

Donate

There are no fees to be a member of SHHH-LA or to attend our meetings. However, we count on the generous support of our friends, family, community and yes, our members, to help fund our operations. We need money to pay captionists, buy projection equipment (to display the captions), to print and distribute this newsletter, to host our website, and to begin our outreach efforts.

All contributions are fully tax-deductible for income tax purposes. We suggest a minimum donation of \$25/year, but all contributions – even a few dollars – will be appreciated.



**Self Help for Hard of Hearing People
 Los Angeles Chapter**
 www.shhh-la.org

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Return Service Requested

