

SHHH-LA

www.shhh-la.org

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

FALL 2005



Five hundred
twenty-five thousand
six hundred minutes...

How do you measure
a year in the life
of SHHH-LA?



THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER by Valerie Stern

At the time I'm writing this, our baby girl, Aidan, has just turned six months old. When I see how much my little girl has learned and developed in such a short time, I feel such pride!

SHHH-LA is another one of my children (OK, this baby has several mommies and daddies; I'm one of those who helped give it birth), and I feel almost as proud when I see how much SHHH-LA has grown in the one short year we've been together.

The group grew from its seven founders to 63 people online and 30 members squeezed into the conference room at The Hear Center for our September meeting. Wow!

We've had parties and potlucks. We've been to movies, bowling and baseball outings. We've gathered for comedy clubs, conventions and cookouts. And we've had a great lineup of monthly meetings:

We've discussed the "holiday blues"; stressful family gatherings; the difficulties HOH people encounter at work (and how to work around them); and my personal favorite, a discussion on interpersonal relationships, HOH with a hearing partner.

While our focus is on support and discussion, we've also had some great speakers: Lorraine Fanizza of HearPros demonstrated ALDs (assisted

listening devices, for you newcomers) and home looping systems; Christine Coleman from Hope for Hearing made a fun presentation on the psychology of hearing loss; and Maisha Franklin made a dynamic introduction to GLAD and its various services. In the horrible aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, we invited Chuck Murchie, a retired Battalion Chief from San Marino to give us a few pointers on being prepared for the next big earthquake.

We've been able to provide real-time captioning at every meeting thanks to some generous

continued on page 14

09/12/05: WHAT A DAY THIS HAS BEEN

by Pat Widman

September 12th is a date that's become very important to me.

On September 12, 2004, the SHHH-LA Yahoo group site went online. As I write this, there have been about 5,000 messages posted in just over 12 months. Describing ourselves as "a chatty group" sometimes seems an understatement. When I lost my phone and Internet service for nearly two weeks, it became clear just how much I've come to depend on communicating with my SHHH-LA family. When the original seven of us met at Black Angus, I never imagined what wonderful friends I was going to make, nor would I have believed what event would happen one year later.

September 12, 2005 was the day that my new Cochlear Implant was activated. I struggle to find words to describe what that event has been like. After 25 years of diminishing hearing – to the point of near-total deafness— those first beeps coming into my left ear were a relief.

I had tried to prepare myself for the possibility of not hearing them. After all, those of us with progressive loss are used to receiving continual bad news. During the months between evaluation and activation, I had talked to and read the accounts of other implantees and tried to visualize what my own would be like. Nothing prepared me for that moment. The sounds I am hearing after the first three weeks are unbelievable. The voices I hear don't yet generally sound like what I remember, but I can understand most of what is being said and I know that will continue to improve.

Already I'm experiencing the absolute joy of having a real conversation with my four year old granddaughter, Hailey. Never did a description of how a knee was scraped sound so wonderful. Of course there is also the overwhelming noise that I'm experiencing: the toilet sounds like a dam has burst; the running water in the sink sounds like Niagara Falls; my dog's breathing

"He asked me what I was surprised to hear again or for the first time. I told him *everything* was a surprise!"

sounds like an obscene phone call; and my grandson Jack's crying is not pleasant – like fingernails on a chalk board.

But I keep reminding myself that no matter how irritating the sound, I'm "hearing" from my left side, something I haven't done in years. I am in awe of this small "thing" that sits behind my ear and sticks to my head.

What's truly a wonder are all the little sounds I'd forgotten even existed. As my struggle with hearing loss continued, I focused most on trying to understand the words of the people around me. I stopped missing the sound of the birds or the wind in the trees. Or I thought I had. It is almost shocking to suddenly be aware of the sounds of the world again.

At the group's anniversary lunch at the Black Angus, Willy asked me what I was surprised to hear again or for the first time. I told him everything was a surprise!

For instance: I didn't realize that you can't open a bag of chips or cookies quietly; I didn't know that when my dog races to the kitchen in response to that noise, his nails make a clicking sound on the tile floor; and did you know that you can actually hear your stomach growl? I found out that my desk chair has a squeak that is SO annoying, that a spoon banged on a high chair tray by a 15-month-old can drive you nuts, and when I turn on the garbage disposal it sounds like the whole house is going to come down.

I've also heard what thunder sounds like again and have experienced the

continued on page 3



continued from page 2

the amazing joy of lying in bed and listening to rain on the roof. Birds really do make a wonderful song and the duet I heard at church was beautiful. I've found out that the ball makes a wonderful thump when it hits the mitt of the Little League catcher and that if someone actually connects, the aluminum bat makes a loud "bing"!

Everything makes noise. Of course, hearing loss takes us away from people but it also flattens the world around us. Sounds lose their depth and color, either disappearing from awareness or becoming noise. I had become more visually aware, but what a difference it makes to see the leaves move on a tree and hear the wind whistling through them.

Five weeks after the implant was activated, I was tested again in the dreaded booth; I scored 91 percent on word discrimination (up from 12% pre-implant) and my audiogram on pure tones shows my loss to be just mild to moderate! These scores are wonderful but they don't begin to measure the true miracle my CI is giving back to me; the world of sounds: irritating, wonderful, noisy, beautiful sounds and the people and things that make them.

But as much as my implant has improved the quality of my hearing, the founding of SHHH-LA has had an even greater impact on the quality of my life.

A few years ago, I thought things were never going to get better. I had been forced to leave my job of 23 years and the friends and activities that went with it. The only thing I knew about hearing loss was that I had it, it was getting worse, and my hearing aid wasn't helping that much. I didn't know where to go or what to do. I had no idea there were such things as captioned televisions, movies or even phones. I didn't know anything about assistive or alerting devices. While I knew there were others like myself, I had no idea where they were or how to find them.

Today, I have been strengthened and encouraged by those that I have encountered during this last year. I am sure that I wouldn't have investigated the possibility of an implant had I not met so many who had already benefited and been encouraged by my new friends to make the journey back into the world of sound. I can't wait to see what surprises await us all before September 12, 2006. SHHH

I'm ready to peer over my cubicle wall and yell "Would you please keep it down!" to the woman who sits on the other side. She's been yakking with another person for more than ten minutes, and I can't concentrate. And then there's the consultant who yells into his cell phone. I can hear every word.

Then I say to myself "What are you thinking of? Less than two weeks ago you couldn't hear them at all. Just cool it."

I am delighted how well I can hear now, but in some ways it's a conundrum, and I'm still trying to adjust to this new sensory experience.

My hearing loss started interfering with my work in the early 1990s while on an assignment at a company in the Silicon Valley where most of the consultants were from England and Ireland. One day five of us met in a small office, and I could not understand anything they were saying.

WOULD YOU PLEASE KEEP IT DOWN?

by Elizabeth Wieland

It was a series of "rumble, rumble, rumble" to me, and I had no idea what was decided. I was too embarrassed about my hearing loss and pretended that I knew what was being said. Occasionally that got me in trouble when I was supposed to produce something.

I found out that the stapes bone in my left ear was ossifying and had an operation to replace it. The operation was only partially successful and so I got my first hearing aid. It helped a bit although I started favoring my right ear and maneuvering to use that ear whenever I had a chance. I spent most of 1998 in Venezuela working on a team with English and Spanish speakers. I wanted to understand Spanish, but hearing even English was difficult not to mention the biologist who spoke English as a second language with a Scottish burr. I realized that the hearing in my right ear was diminished, and I got a small digital hearing aid for that ear when we returned to the States.

The company in Burbank where I'm now consulting has outsourced most of its Information Technology work to India. I work closely with both the "onshore" and

continued on page 15



cool purple hearing aids!



Elizabeth

Hand-Holding the Future of Captions?

With most television shows closed-captioned, and more and more movies available with captions, the new frontier for hearing-impaired audiences is live theater.

Generally, this has meant either a signed performance, as in Project D.A.T.E. (which doesn't help, of course, if you're not fluent in ASL), or a screen near the stage with typed captions, which require sitting in a specific area of the theater (the technology used for the upcoming performance of *The Drowsy Chaperone* at the Ahmanson Theatre that some of us will be attending).

A third option is I-Caption, a wireless, hand-held unit that displays dialogue, lyrics and sound effects, in real time, from any seat in the theater. I-Caption made its national debut in Deaf West's production of *Big River* on Broadway, and is currently available for Broadway's *Wicked*, *Mamma Mia!* and *Hairspray*, as well as several touring companies,

The system is the brainchild of Sound Associates, Inc., a leading supplier of sound equipment to theaters around the country. "Using assistive technology, our goal is to make every performance available to all theater lovers," said T. Richard Fitzgerald, the company's CEO. The firm has a long history of working to accommodate hearing-impaired audiences; they won a Tony Award in 1980 for introducing the Infrared Listening System to Broadway theaters.

I-Caption works by preloading a Dell Axim PDA with a PowerPoint presentation featuring all the dialogue in a series of individual slides. The slides are cued through wireless signals sent through the same computerized system that runs the theater's lights and sound. Locally, the I-Caption debuted with the traveling company of *Big River*.



I-Caption CEO T. Richard Fitzgerald shows off his firm's hand-held device outside *Wicked's* New York theater.

The system has played to mixed reviews since its premiere. On the plus side, it allows captioning at every performance, and lets viewers sit anywhere in the theater. On the down side, you need to hold a PDA throughout the performance, and constantly shift your eyes from the hand-held to the stage. In addition, the system relies on pre-set time intervals for many of the captions, so text won't always match with the live dialogue on stage.

And, of course, the system can't accommodate ad-libs and other moments where the cast of a show go "off book."

That's one reason the Center Theatre Group chose to use "traditional" captioning for one performance of *The Drowsy Chaperone*, according to Jeremy Green, Marketing Events Manager for the Ahmanson. "We had I-Caption at the Ahmanson for *Big River* when it was touring with the show, and the feedback was not positive."

Green admits the Ahmanson can't afford live captioning often; *The Drowsy Chaperone* is only the second production they've captioned (not counting *Big River*). The reason: It can cost thousands of dollars.

First, the script and sound effects need to be input. Then a real-time captionist needs to see the show to familiarize themselves with the material. Finally, during each performance, a captionist must match each line of text to the performers (who might pause or race through a speech), and to overwrite pre-loaded text for ad-libs or botched lines.

Imperfect or not, it's a good sign that more captions are coming to live theater — and more options for HOH arts lovers are coming now and in the future. SHHH



The I-Caption hand-held device (above), shown full size. Each image holds a few lines of dialogue. Wireless signals keyed to the show's lighting cues keep the dialogue synched up.



WHAT TO DO BEFORE THE BIG ONE HITS

by Valerie Stern

With Hurricane Katrina and its horrible aftermath fresh in our minds, SHHH-LA invited retired San Marino Fire Department Battalion Chief Chuck Murchie to speak at our September meeting. Highly qualified, he gave us an in depth presentation on how to prepare ourselves in case of earthquake.

Everyone needs to prepare for an earthquake or other disaster. But deaf and HOH individuals need to make additional preparations. While earthquakes are unpredictable, we know California sits on hundreds of potentially deadly faults. Face it — sooner or later, another big one will shake our world.

Below are some guidelines on getting ready. Generally, we should all be self-sufficient in our homes for a period of at least three days, perhaps as long as a week, without any services (water, electricity, natural gas, phones) or emergency help. It takes a little planning and diligence, but in the event of an emergency, you'll be glad you did.

Note: Adapt the following list based on your needs and location. Perishable supplies, including water and batteries, should be rotated every 6 months. A good tip: rotate when the clocks change in spring and fall.

Water

- One gallon per person, per day. Pets and service animal count as a person.
- The water in the tank of your toilet (but not the bowl) is drinkable. So is the water in your hot water heater.

Food

- Food supply for a week (nonperishables).
- Food for your pets or service animals.
- Non-electric can opener.

Safety Items

- Several light sticks/flashlights with batteries. Avoid flashlights if you suspect a gas leak.
- A whistle.
- Wrench for gas turn-off.

Personal Items

- First aid kit.
- Blankets.
- Battery operated radio or TV (although no hand-held TVs feature closed captions)
- Toilet paper and personal hygiene supplies
- Money and extra clothing.

Other Tips

- Keep a pair of shoes under your bed.
- Create a family earthquake plan (know the safe and danger spots in each room).

continued on page 14

Water, water everywhere? Not after a major disaster. Plan to have on hand one gallon, per person, per day, for at least three days. A week is even better.



Keep an extra week of all prescription medicine.



Have a flashlight and extra batteries. But don't use if you smell gas.

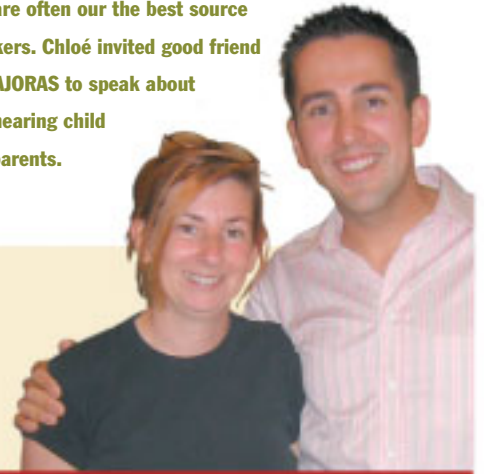


[Speakers]



We were thrilled that **JEREMY GREEN** is working to bring open captions to live theater here in LA. A group of us will be attending only the second captioned performance at the Ahmanson this December.

Friends are often our the best source for speakers. **Chloé** invited good friend **ERNIE BAJORAS** to speak about being a hearing child of Deaf parents.



We got your experts right here.



LORRAINE FANIZZA introduced us to assistive listening devices and gave a demonstration on the wonders of looping.



Hope for Hearing representative **CHRIS COLEMAN** talked about the psychology of hearing loss and coping strategies.



Retired Battalion Chief **CHUCK MURCHIE** gave us hands-on demonstrations and advice on disaster preparedness.



MARY JANE WILLIAMS from the Employment Development Dept. gave us much needed information on looking for the right job and getting it!

Our speakers were interesting and we often ran out of time — and sometimes we also ran out of space. The plan is to continue to give our members information as well as support.



Clockwise from far left: Katherine, Val, Mark, Alicia, Chloé, Shirley, Pauline, Jon, Ray, Grace, Sharene, Elizabeth, Dona, Mary, Phyllis (holding Aidan while little Jack looks on), Pat's back, proud dad Willy and Sally. Whew!

Information is knowledge. Meet and learn.



GUS, as always, pours on the charm as well as whatever is in that cup. Care for a sip?



LISA smiles and wonders how we can possibly finish all the food. (Hint: we didn't.)

Fire up the grill! Summer's here.



Above left: CHRISTINE JENKINS (l) brought her ASL video, "How to Talk to a Person Who Can't Hear." ASL user PHYLLIS promptly bought one! Above right: NANCY and GEORGIA chat and smile pretty for the camera.



RAPHAEL and WILLY talk geek talk. Host MICHAEL cuddles everyone's favorite baby, AIDAN.

[Memorial Day]

If you're not having fun, you're just not trying!



Behind **NANCY's** sweet disposition lurks the heart of a bowling powerhouse, though **DANNY** gave her a good run for her money. The rest of us argued that "winning doesn't count," rather it's drinking beer and looking good holding the ball that really matters. Yeah, they didn't believe us either.



In bowling as in life, nurses do it painlessly.



No Limits Benefit at the Ice House.



PAT, HOH comic KATHY BUCKLEY and KATHERINE show off their star power.



After the show was over: BETTE ANNE, ALICIA, KATHERINE, DANNY, PAT, CHLOÉ and KENNY kick up their heels!

FYI - "No Limits" is a non-profit group that boosts the confidence of deaf children through a national theatrical arts program. Their Education Center provides courses at no cost to help both kids and their parents. Their annual benefit is a Comedy Showcase at the Ice House, headlined this year by KATHY BUCKLEY. We couldn't resist.



We cleaned out our garages and we cleaned up big time at our first ever garage sale. Like many members, MARK (l) not only donated, but came by to check out the deals. KENNY (r) donated, did some selling and through it all exuded that cool style thing. Even in 100 degree heat!



Below left: DANNY & KATHERINE not only hosted, they also sold munchies.

Below right: VAL, topless WILLY, sleepy AIDAN, ALICIA and PAT rest up.

No business like garage sale business.



The Dodgers cleaned up as we cheered on.



DIANE followed the game on her trusty radio, DONA TRUE and BETTE ANN enjoy the warm summer game.



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	R	H	E
HOUSTON	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	3	8	0
DODGERS	5	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	-	8	11	0

Our Dodger game was a good time for all, especially the Dodgers, who blasted the

Expos 8-3. There's no team like the home team.



Who was the big winner at the California state conference? Why none other than our very own Ray Louis McKeever, who walked away with the gigantic gift basket you see here, picking up two separate winning tickets at the raffle.

The state of the state of California SHHH? Stately!

SUSAN ROBERTS
author



She gave a seminar on “The Spiritual Side of Hearing Loss, stressing the positive mind-body connection.

DR. TERRY PORTIS
Exec. Dir. SHHH



The head of the national SHHH organization in Bethesda kicked off Friday night’s Welcome Reception.

NANCI LINKE-ELLIS
Founder, InSight Cinema



Nanci spoke about new technology that gives the Deaf and HOH opportunities impossible a few years ago.

GRACE TIESSEN
SHHH-CA newsletter



Our own Grace spoke on the how’s and why’s of grass-roots advocacy – proof one person CAN make a difference.



Left: Heather Whitestone McCallum, Miss America, 1994, spoke about her deafness and her recent cochlear implant. Right: Proof that we clean up nicely. Mike, Alicia, Pat, Katherine and Danny dress up for a fancy banquet.

SHHH confabs – a fab way to connect!



Keynote speaker at the 2005 National Convention was author Deborah Tannen, whose book, “You Just Don’t Understand – Men and Women in Conversation,” became a phenomenal hit. Tannen, herself a long-time member of SHHH, devoted much of her keynote — including hilarious film clips showing the different ways young boys and young girls talk with each other — to the idea that people have different perspectives on life, and that this parallels with hearing loss. Only she said it funnier.

National conference in the nation’s capital? Red, white & YOU!



Nanci Linke-Ellis organized a boat ride on the Potomac. Back row (l-r): Jeremy Mohney, Michael, Steve Ellis, Nanci, Katherine, Diane Rott and Jenny Carlson. Middle: Debbie Mohney, Pat, Nancy and Nancy’s sister, Pat. Bottom row: Alicia and flag, Molly Colum and Karen Kiel.



Left: Fashion mavens Mike, Katherine, Alicia and Nancy sport the hottest shirts at the Conference. Right: Katherine poses in front of some big white house sitting in the middle of Washington D.C. The lawns sure is nice, but the fence seems like overkill, don’t ya think?

July 4th in Washington, D.C. A hot time...Literally!

[Halloween]



This has been a year of celebrations and happy events for members personally. We've had three weddings, a birth and a cochlear implant.

We hope the future continues bright for all our members and their loved ones. But it will be hard to beat this year!

On the left: Our latest newlyweds CARLOS and PILAR, doing what they enjoy most, being together. Ain't love grand?

Would we miss a chance to look silly? Naaah.



BETTE ANNE pulls a Martha but looks better in stripes. MICHAEL and ALICIA express their true selves. Cute KAT(herine) and his purpleness Danny strike a pose. AIDAN's look does giraffes one better.



Back row: Aidan, racquetball Willy, Grace, kitty Katherine, too-weird-to-be-named Danny, Armand, newlyweds Carlos & Pilar, good witch Pat, and Jon. Bottom row: demon spawn Alicia, angelic Michael, cyclist babe Val, Chloé and Elizabeth.

THE GIFT OF SHHH-LA

When I was twenty, with big plans ahead,
I got some startling news instead:
I had sensorineural hearing loss;
My condition had no known cure or cause.

I asked what the ringing was in my head;
"It's called tinnitus" is all they said.
Again I got no explanation,
(Not even the correct pronunciation.)
I went home that day without a cure,
Only a hearing aid brochure
(Whose cover art didn't placate me:
A 90-year-old smiling back at me!)

Sixteen years have since passed on;
Three pairs of aids and savings gone.
I've been through every stage of coping,
From anger and grief to always hoping
Somehow a miracle would occur...
A magical or holistic cure.
But nothing ever turned around,
Nor made the tinnitus quiet down.

Eventually my hope diminished.
I stopped believing I could be fixed.
I no longer knew which way to turn;
Acceptance was still mine to learn.
And just when I thought I 'd lost my way,
I came across SHHH-LA.

Here I've found solace past unknown,
Discovering I'm not alone,
That others share a common plight
Of losing what's a given birthright.
The message board is heaven-sent -
A place to ask, announce or vent.

It could be sad or frightening,
Or funny or enlightening.
I might discuss burning my hair
Trying to hear the kettle blare,
Or use the board simply to rant,



Or learn about cochlear implants,
Or read that someone else didn't know
He was listening to Spanish radio!

I can list those things I've come to hate
And know that others will relate...
Like strangers making conversation,
People who lack enunciation,
The dreaded test at the House Clinic,
Questions besides "paper or plastic?",
Any kind of social gathering,
Loud sounds that cause my head to ring.

Some messages so touch my heart:
A new CI and a new start;
Those newly purchased hearing aids
Worn in brightly colored shades!
And meeting monthly is a blessing,
Enjoying food and just connecting!

So I guess what I really want to say,
As I get to know SHHH-LA,
Is that I'm proud to be a part
Of a group possessing so much heart.
The spirit and diversity
Makes me see so easily
People nowhere less than perfect;
People in whom I see no defect.
And this is why this group is key
To my own personal journey...
'Cause what I see in all of you,
I can start to see in myself too.

So, though this life I didn't select
(So many things I didn't expect!),
I know with this group's sustenance
I'm on my way to self-acceptance.

by Lisa Yuan

A year in the life of SHHH-LA

continued from page 1

members, but also thanks to some great fundraising efforts: family and friends drive; group garage sale; Cafe Press online retail store; and the Macy's Community Shopping Day.

All of this is good. But what's even better is what some of you are saying:

- "Thanks to this group, I feel less lonely and I am more able to face the world, and admit my deafness."
- "Thanks to this group, I was able to find a great audiologist and a new pair of hearing aids with which I hear much better."
- "This group is so awesome, it feels like family."

When I hear this, it makes me realize how important our group is, and how much what we do counts in



people's lives. At first, SHHH-LA was just an idea, a dream a few of us had. In just a year, it has grown into a place where HOH can find true support, understanding and information.

Yet, it is just the beginning. Many interesting projects are on the way, including an online restaurant survey to let members share whether or not particular restaurants provide a nice environment for HOH patrons. Another possibility is an art expo related to cutting edge design for hearing aids. And, we should not forget advocacy and outreach, members seeking out friends and strangers alike, inviting them to talk about hearing loss and join our growing support family.

And make no mistake, this is a second family to me. Between all the meetings and events and get-togethers, we have come to know each other better and feel comfortable with one another. Every SHHH-LA gathering, every time when communication was not the issue, was a haven for us to relax and kick back, to be who we really are, and enjoy life the way it should always be.

I would like to thank all of you who have worked so hard for this to happen. I believe the reasons why SHHH-LA has been so successful are our unity and dedication. Thank you for being so amazing and let's keep the good work going for another exciting year!

Valerie Stern, MSW
SHHH-LA President

WHAT TO DO BEFORE THE BIG ONE HIT'S

continued from page 5

- Conduct practice drills.
- Decide on a location where your family may reunite if separated.
- Keep a list of emergency numbers.
- Find a shelter close to home (make sure it welcomes pets if you have any).
- Install safety latches in your kitchen.
- Keep extra prescriptions (for at least 10 days).
- If you have a service animal, they may become scared and confused. Make sure your animal's license is current and they carry a microchip implant.
- If you have pets, set up a plan on how to care for them. You might not be able to take them with you to the emergency shelter.
- If you are mobility impaired, plan several exit routes from your home. SHHH

Former San Marino Battalion Chief Chuck Murchie demonstrates how to turn off a home's gas meter – a crucial step after a major earthquake. For more tips on emergency preparations for Deaf and HOH, see page 15.



Special Disaster Tips for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

Maintaining communication is especially critical during an earthquake or other crisis. You need to be able to communicate with emergency personnel, friends and family and receive news about the disaster. Here are some special tips, beyond the ordinary advice:

Storing Your Hearing Aids

- Make sure you always store your hearing aids or CI in the same, strategically located spot. That way, you'll be able to find them when you need them during or after an emergency. Here's a tip: Attach the container for your aids to the night stand or bed post with Velcro or a piece of string. Replacing or repairing damaged or missing hearing aids may be impossible immediately after a major disaster.
- If you can, store an extra hearing aid with your emergency supplies.

Batteries

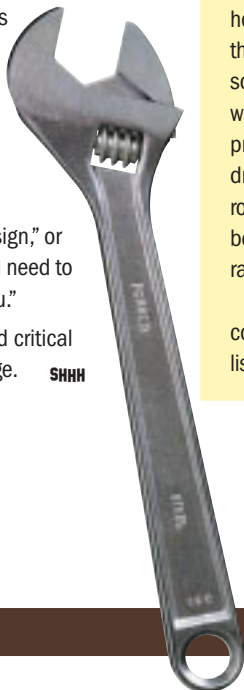
- Keep an extra supply of batteries on hand and in your "Go Kit." Rotate them regularly.
- Maintain TTY batteries according to your manual.

Smoke Alarms

- Install audible and visual smoke alarms. At least one smoke alarm should be battery operated.

Communication

- Plan how you can communicate with emergency personnel without your hearing aids or CI, if necessary. Here's a tip: Store pens, pencils and paper or small notebooks with your emergency supplies. Also, consider carrying cards with pre-printed messages, such as, "If you make announcements, please write or sign," or "Please look at me when you talk. I need to see your mouth to understand you."
- Ask a neighbor to share news and critical information after any power outage. SHHH



WOULD YOU PLEASE KEEP IT DOWN?

continued from page 3

"offshore" consultants, and I've run into the same problem again. I could not understand most of my coworkers. To compound the problem, most of them have large mustaches, and I could not fill in the blanks by looking at their lips. Teleconference calls with the offshore team in India were a nightmare.

A few months ago I read an article in the Pasadena Star News about hearing aids, and a box in the article mentioned SHHH. I was stunned to find out that a chapter met in Pasadena where I live. Now why didn't my audiologist tell me about this? I started to attend the monthly meetings and did a "180" as far as my attitude about my hearing loss.

I told the people at work that I could not do teleconferences and that email was my preferred method of working out issues. The most important action I took was to go to a new audiologist based upon a recommendation from a SHHH-LA member. I now have new behind the ear aids in translucent purple. Thanks to the members of SHHH-LA, I want the best aids I could afford. I want people to see them and know that I am hard of hearing.

The programming of my aids took about two hours, and when my audiologist said "We're on the air", I could not believe it. I could hear him so clearly. It shocked me to hear my own voice when I replied. It was so loud. I was not prepared for all the sounds I could hear as I drove home that afternoon. My car has a lot of road noise. It was hard to concentrate on driving because of all the sounds in the car. What's that rattle?

My husband and I enjoy baroque and contemporary music, but it was very tiring to listen for any length of time. I know that I missed



a lot of the nuances. It was really frustrating. One of the programs on my new aids is for music, and the sound is now gloriously rich. I really listened to some Bach violin concertos this last weekend as I worked in our vegetable garden with the music coming out of the kitchen window. I can hardly wait to go to a concert at the Disney or Zipper concert halls.

I love working in the gardens around our house and plant to attract hummingbirds. When I refill their feeders, the birds hover and display about two feet above me letting out a loud "peek" defending their territory. Last weekend, I heard a loud whirring sound and realized it was the hummingbird's wings beating as it was displaying.

Now that I have stereo hearing, I finally located the wren that lives in our yard because I could pinpoint its chirp. It's taking me longer to do my yard work because I'm stopping to watch the birds. I stood motionless for five minutes watching a Townsend's warbler take a bath in the drip last Saturday and listening to the splashing of the water.

I can now hear Venus and Luna, our "astro kitties", purr even when I'm standing up and they are rubbing my ankles when I come home from work. Until I got my new BTE aids, I could only feel their little motors running when they climbed onto my lap. Now they sound like small electric lawn mowers.

I had no idea what I was missing in all aspects of my life. For now, I'm going to keep my mouth shut about the noise at work and take some time to listen to the new sounds. SHHH



SHHH-LA Newsletter
VOLUME 1 NO 2
FALL 2005

STEERING COMMITTEE

Valerie Stern,
President

Katherine Burns
Alicia Fernandez
Michael Kaplan
Chloé Parent
Willy Stern
Danny Tubbs
Pat Widman

Captionist

Sharene Ramirez

SHHH-LA is a registered
501(c)3 non-profit
organization

NEWSLETTER STAFF

EDITOR

Michael Kaplan
BLUE SKY CREATIVE

DESIGN

Alicia Fernandez
BLUE SKY CREATIVE

CONTRIBUTORS

Katherine Burns
Valerie Stern
Willy Stern
Danny Tubbs
Pat Widman
Elizabeth Wieland
Lisa Yuan

For editorial or advertising
inquiries please contact:

Michael Kaplan
Blue Sky Creative
311 East Palm Avenue
Monrovia, CA 91016
626 256-4115
info@blueskycreative.com

ASSOCIATED WITH THIS NATIONAL
NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION



SHOP THE SHHH-LA STORE

www.cafepress.com/shhh_la

Shop for the coolest shirts, jackets, mousepads, bags,
coffee mugs and other gear. All proceeds benefit SHHH-LA.
New designs coming in 2006!



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

We are nearly ready to unveil our new website, www.shhh-la.org, with an array of new features and information. When fully implemented in the coming months, 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:

December 10th In lieu of our regular meeting, our annual SHHH-LA Holiday Party, featuring a "Secret Santa" gift exchange and other highlights.

January 28th, 2006 - Open Discussion and support group.

February 25th, 2006 - Special Hands-On Technology Review. Discussion of CapTel and assistive devices.

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. We suggest a minimum donation of \$25/year, but all contributions – including sales from our store (above) – are appreciated.



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

c/o Valerie Stern
1828 Camden Ave., #201
Los Angeles, CA 90025

Return Service Requested

