

HLA-NJ News and Views

A Monthly Column from The Hearing Loss Association of NJ

By Sandy Spekman, HLA-NJ Trustee and Arlene Romoff, HLA-NJ Past President

Scholarship Applications Now Being Accepted

Words of Wisdom from Student Scholars

For the fifth year, the Hearing Loss Association of New Jersey (HLA-NJ) will be awarding scholarships for high school seniors with hearing loss. As part of the application, students must complete an essay entitled: *"How Hearing Loss Has Impacted My Life and How I have Met Those Challenges."* While looking over five years' worth of essays, some common themes emerged:

Overcoming Adversity

- Do not let hearing loss hold you back from having high aspirations
- Hearing loss motivates you to work harder, and fuels your drive to succeed
- You can become more courageous, determined, and strong-willed
- Hearing loss can make you more compassionate of others and their differences
- Students mentored younger children, using their experience with hearing loss to become role models and help others
- What some take for granted, others treasure. One student, as a result of her struggles, learned to truly appreciate the gifts she has been given

Helpful Advice

- Do not let hearing loss stand in the way of achieving success; pursue your educational goals just like everyone else
- Notetakers, FM systems and captioning are often great assets
- Ask for extra help - there's nothing wrong with needing extra help
- Constantly improve your speech
- Don't let hearing loss stop your dreams; believe in yourself
- Become the best advocate for yourself
- Show others that a disability is not an excuse for failure; it is a challenge to work harder
- Be proud of yourself for doing all you can to help yourself; do not cry about your hardships

- Instead of thinking of hearing loss as a disability, think of it as a great life challenge

Social Challenges

- Hearing loss makes it difficult to make friends and socialize with peers
- Hearing loss affects one's self-confidence; try to ignore negative comments and stay positive
- Look for friends who look beyond your hearing loss
- Students always encounter people ignorant of deafness
- One student had friends in school but not many called after school, which made her feel sad
- Students have felt embarrassed because kids would see their hearing aids and ask about them
- Students felt frustrated because kids would pick on them and make them cry

School Challenges

- Many teachers are ignorant of hearing loss
- Some teachers forget that you cannot understand a movie without captioning, even though they were reminded frequently
- Some teachers did not want to wear the microphone for the FM system
- Some teachers were very difficult to hear

Optimistic Attitudes

- We're fortunate to have modern technology, such as hearing aids, cochlear implants, and assistive devices
- You can overcome the challenges of hearing loss and achieve your goals

As you can see from the above, there are many common feelings among those with a hearing loss, and are relevant at all ages.

The *Hearing Loss Association of New Jersey (HLA-NJ)* is awarding four one-year \$1,000 scholarships for NJ high school seniors with hearing loss, who are pursuing a college degree or vocational training. Recipients must have applied to a college or vocational education program, wear hearing aids and/or cochlear implants. Financial need is not a consideration. If you know of any graduating seniors, please encourage them to apply.

These scholarships are made possible in part by funds raised by the *Garden State Walk4Hearing* event, part of a national project of the *Hearing Loss Association of America*.

Applications are available online at: www.hearingloss-nj.org or contact:

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Completed applications must be received by May 1, 2013