

HLAA-NJ News and Views

HLAA-NJ Expands 2014 Scholarship Solicitations, Publicity, to Boost Number of Apps in Quest for the Best

By Joel Strasser, APR, Fellow PRSA, Trustee, HLA - NJ, Public Information Officer

In HLAA-NJ's "quest for the best" and on-going effort to reach more college scholarship applicants than ever before, Scholarship Chair Alice Glock has announced that additional publicity about the annual grants will be expanded directly through flyers and mailings to both high school guidance counselors and audiologists offices throughout the state of New Jersey. With anticipated higher numbers of scholarship applications, the competition is expected to tighten resulting standards for each of the four HLAA-NJ scholarships to be awarded this high school year to students seeking to continue their education. With funding made possible in part by the successful Garden State Walk4Hearing in October, four scholarships of \$1,000 each are being offered to successful candidates.

HLAA-NJ's scholarship program is designed to encourage and support young students by publicly celebrating their successes and achievements with hearing loss. Aligned with the HLAA-NJ goal to bring awareness to life challenges of hearing loss, the application requires a thoughtful essay on how hearing loss has impacted the student's life, and how its challenges have been met.

Scholarship winners will be announced in May, and an award ceremony and celebration open to all will be held on Saturday, June 7, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., location to be announced.

With the official application posted online at www.hearingloss-nj.org, and limited to online submissions by the application deadline of May 1, 2014, time is of the essence. Application success has been shown to increase with early assembly of the required documentation, including drafting the required essay. Questions concerning the application or application process are welcome and may be addressed to Alice J. Glock, HLA-NJ Scholarship Chair at aglock@optimum.net.

Web Site To Be Updated

The online Web site for HLAA-NJ will be revamped and modernized to reflect current practice and technology and content improvements, including new capabilities for communicating with social media. Individuals interested in assisting with this update may contact Dr. David Cooper at david@dcoopercommunications.com. Watch this column in future issues for information about new Web site features and other major projects of HLAA-NJ.

HLAA Files Against \$75 Fee for Caption Phones

HLAA has watched captioned telephone services become increasingly successful since their arrival on the scene in 2001. Throughout the years, it has proven to be the one service that is truly equivalent to the traditional phones many of us grew up with; pick up the phone, dial and talk directly to friends, family, co-workers, even Joe's Pizza. The FCC, instead of embracing the success of captioned telephone services, appears to be focusing primarily on the cost of providing captioned telephone services.

In response to the new rules, CaptionCall, one of the companies that provide captioned telephones, filed a Stay Request and a Motion to Vacate in the Washington, D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals, arguing the new FCC regulations violated the rights of people with hearing loss as guaranteed by the ADA. Their Stay Request was granted in part by the court on December 6, 2013, so that companies are now permitted to offer IP CTS phones for free with professional certification of hearing loss.

HLAA supports the FCC's efforts to ensure that no fraud or misuse harm the TRS fund. However, we believe this rule goes too far. The ADA is a civil rights law; no one should have to pay a special fee to

have access to their civil rights. Consumers with hearing loss who need captioned telephones should not be prevented, deterred or discouraged from receiving this essential service.

In their brief to the court, CaptionCall notes that the FCC acted when the number of users of IP CTS approached 150,000 in January 2013. With 48 million Americans with hearing loss, it would seem logical that more than 150,000 of those people would benefit from captioned phones. In addition, the FCC apparently did not dispute CaptionCall's claim that preserving the fund would have required an increase of only three one hundredths of one percent in the contribution factor for contributors to the TRS Fund.

HAAA filed a Friend of the Court Brief (amicus brief) January 14, 2014. We support CaptionCall's petition to the court requesting that the FCC's Order be vacated on two issues: 1) regarding the requirement of the minimum \$75 fee for the phone or software applications; and 2) the requirement for keeping the captions on. We argue that these rules create a barrier to people with hearing loss who could benefit from or have benefited from captioned phones. It's our understanding the court will rule on the issue sometime this summer. When that happens, we'll know just how difficult it will be for people to make a simple phone call.

Next 2014 Walk4Hearing: Hold The Date

The date for the 2014 Garden State Walk4Hearing has been set for Sunday, October 19, 2014. At this point, we ask you to mark your calendar. If you would like to participate in the event's advance planning and/or serve on the Walk committee, please contact Wayne Roorda at bigbearnj@gmail.com.

We Stand Corrected

The corrected abbreviation for our association name should be HAAA-NJ, which stands for Hearing Loss Association of America, New Jersey. We always assumed we were worthy of an extra "A", and now it's official.

Need More Info On HAAA-NJ?

For additional information about HAAA-NJ, contact Joel Strasser at jjas888@aol.com or Joel.Strasser@hearingloss-nj.org