

HLA-NJ News and Views

A Monthly Column from The Hearing Loss Association of NJ

By Peter Yerkes, Trustee, HLA-NJ

David Myers to Deliver Keynote at HLAA Convention in Providence, R.I. June 21-June 24, 2012

HLAA Announces Convention Keynote Speaker

Providence, R.I. is the place to be this June for everyone who has hearing loss or who is committed to helping people with the “invisible disability.” From Thursday, June 21, to Sunday, June 24, the Hearing Loss Association of America will host its annual event: Convention 2012. Hundreds of people from across the country will gather in a historic colonial city to learn about the latest technologies to help people with hearing loss, to make new friends and renew old friendship and to have fun in an environment where all events are fully accessible to people with hearing loss.

After a productive day of lectures, workshops and visiting the demonstration center, enjoy a magic show and see WaterFire, a nighttime display which lights the banks of the night with a hundred bonfires just above the surface of Providence’s three rivers. Walk through neighborhoods of elegant colonial buildings, and explore Providence’s “Little Italy,” where restaurants offer everything from up-scale dining inspired by top chefs in Italy to some of the best cannoli in the country.

For many members of the Hearing Loss Association of New Jersey, the HLAA annual convention is not to be missed. I asked some of them to explain why:

Learn - HLA-NJ member Joleen Marsillo notes that for people who live with hearing loss, “It’s easy to think we know it all.” But, she says, “Every time I attend, there is something new. Sometimes just one ‘discovery’ makes the whole trip worthwhile.” The 2012 convention offers a research symposium with top-flight professionals from Johns Hopkins University. They will discuss the latest research on topics such as hearing in noise, music perception, and hearing and aging.

Throughout the weekend, from Thursday through Saturday, small group workshops will explore topics that affect everyone with hearing loss, whether they use cochlear implants, hearing aids or assistive technology such as FM. There will be special tracks for advocacy, and for relationships and communication. Subjects range from large area listening systems, Medicare and insurance issues, and bringing CART to your community to improving communication with family and friends. An exhibit hall offers a valuable opportunity to get hands-on experience with new technologies, such as captioned telephones, new technologies for hearing in noise and assistive listening devices.

Former HLA-NJ president Arlene Romoff says that knowledge gained in the workshops can be “literally life-changing.” Of HLAA conventions, she says, “That’s where I tracked the progress of cochlear implants, and knew that eventually I would need them.”

To HLA-NJ member Pat Dobbs, “The demo center [exhibit hall] is wonderful because everything is right there in front of you, rather than having to look at pictures. It’s easier to figure out what’s right for you.”

Meet New People, Renew Old Friendships - In the supportive convention atmosphere, where it’s OK not to hear well, it’s easy to strike up new relationships. HLA-NJ member Carol Granaldi says, “Some of us have been attending the conventions since they began back in the 1980’s. The HLAA conventions are truly a great place to get ‘charged up’ with educational workshops, social events and sightseeing places we’d not been to before. We all like to talk shop by sharing stories about our listening equipment.” Rosemarie Kasper offers this: “At a convention a while back, I knew the president of the Australia hearing association, Libby Harricks, would be attending. As I had a couple of friends there, I hoped that somehow I could meet her. While looking at exhibits, guess who appeared next to me? Yes, Libby herself, and we became very good friends until she passed away a couple of years later.”

Registration Is Easy - Just go to www.hearingloss.org to register online, or download a printed form for mailing. At the Web site, you can see the full schedule for the convention; learn how to use the mobile convention app available this year to download information to your smartphone or iPad. You also can find out about scholarships for the convention. The host hotel is the Westin

Providence, One Exchange Street, in downtown Providence. All events are at the Rhode Island Convention Center, connected by a sky bridge to the hotel. At the Web site, you also can take out a membership in HLAA, which entitles you to the group's bimonthly magazine Hearing Loss.

See You In Providence - Pat Dobbs sums up the advantages of attending: "It's wonderful meeting people that truly understand the challenges of hearing because they have those same challenges. It is a place to learn about different solutions and get different ideas. It's a place of compassion and understanding. Plus it's FUN!"

To learn more about HLA-NJ, please contact Arlene Romoff at info@hearingloss-nj.org. We also invite you to attend one of our local chapter meetings in Bergen, Monmouth/Ocean or Middlesex County, and our newest Morris County chapter. Dates, places and times for chapter meetings are available at www.hearingloss-nj.org.