

HLA-NJ News and Views

A Monthly Column from The Hearing Loss Association of NJ

By Peter Yerkes, Trustee, HLA-NJ

Hearing Loss Can Mean Social Isolation - Here's How to Fight Back

Most people with hearing loss dread social isolation. Attending events such as the Hearing Loss Association of America's convention in Washington D.C. from June 16-19, 2011, is one positive step (learn more at www.hearingloss.org). But thinking about the convention made me wonder what else can be done to maintain friendships and enjoy casual social contacts. So I did an informal poll of people likely to know – members of the Hearing Loss Association of New Jersey. Here are some of their ideas:

- Keep reaching out in ways that work for you. Rosemarie Kasper serves on several community advisory boards that provide CART captioning, and takes part in awareness days for causes such as hearing loss and autism. In addition, she says, "I invite friends over to lunch or to help on volunteer projects. Just two or three friends at a time is generally best for optimum communication, and I try to keep pad and pencil handy."
- Join with others in volunteer projects. For Marie Nordling, that meant joining a helping hands mission group organized by her church. Members crochet or knit items for people who are homeless, living in abused women's shelters or nursing homes, or homebound.
- Let people know about your "invisible disability." Carol Granaldi was invited recently to join a group of elementary school classmates at a reunion luncheon. "Before we sat down, I stood and told them I wasn't the 12-year-old with the perfect hearing I had in the 1950s." She explained she would sometimes ask people to repeat or rephrase something. "The lesson I've learned is that unless I call attention to my inability to hear well, others will dismiss me," she says. But if she explains her needs, she says, "most people are accommodating."
- Become creative. Linda Schaab had a problem at her local bakery, where she had to take a number and wait for it to be called. The problem was that the person behind the counter called numbers very quickly and moved on. So Linda took three numbers, giving her more time to react. "It works!" she reports proudly.
- Keep up with technology. A few years ago Jean Sutera moved to an adult community. It offered many clubs, but her hearing loss kept her from enjoying them. Through HLA-NJ, she learned about assistive listening devices and other options, and ultimately got a cochlear implant. She said she learned an important lesson: "Each person should not give up. They should search out the availability of devices that are right for them, that will help them to hear and understand better."
- Become active in HLA-NJ. Marie Nordling, like others, is glad she did. "You'll find a lot of useful information, and friendly people who will help you cope with your hearing loss. It has done wonders for me." The Hearing Loss Association of New Jersey has three chapters, serving Bergen, Middlesex and Ocean/Monmouth counties. Information is available from info@hearingloss-nj.org, or www.hearingloss-nj.org. To receive informative updates, ask to be put on our e-mail contact list or contact HLA-NJ President Arlene Romoff at ARomoff@aol.com.

SAVE THE DATE

August 28, 2011 - Garden State-NJ Walk4Hearing Kickoff Event – Montclair State University, Bloomfield, NJ

October 15, 2011 - Garden State-NJ Walk4Hearing. Mercer County Park West, West Windsor NJ.
Information at www.walk4hearing.org