



CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION
A SAMHSA Funded Drug-Free Community Coalition
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December 2, 2009 – Living with hearing loss

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Last June after school let out, I took a plane to Nashville, Tennessee. After waking up the next morning, and eating breakfast, I soon found myself surrounded by a large group of friendly, vibrant people. I attended many workshops on topics such as job searching, social networking, and even cell phone applications. My nights were filled with karaoke, line dancing, and going to the Grand Ole Opry. By the time I went home, my brain was packed with information, and my luggage was packed with promotional materials and brochures, including two decks of cards. It was one of the most fun, insightful, and inspiring experiences I had ever had. It was the Hearing Loss Association of America’s national yearly conference.

In 1979, a successful man named Rocky Stone was not content to enjoy his success and instead founded an organization called Self Help for Hard of Hearing, or SHHH, to help other people with hearing loss. Today, the Hearing Loss Association of America, or HLAA, as it was renamed, is the nation’s leading organization for hard of hearing people in terms of advocacy and self-help. HLAA strives to help anyone who is deaf or hard of hearing realize their full potential. It works on local, state, and national levels.

HLAA’s main goals are to advocate for accommodations, installing a sense of pride and community in the population that has hearing loss, and increasing awareness of hearing loss in the general population. Getting involved in HLAA is very easy and rewarding. You can go to a local chapter meeting, become a member of HLAA, become a board member at the local, state, or national level, or all of the above! Additionally, the most important advocate for you and your hearing loss is you, and whoever you educate. The first thing you should do is attend your local chapter’s meetings. If there is no chapter in your area, start one.

Hearing loss is often called an “invisible disability”, and for good reason. Even though hearing aids and cochlear implants can be visible, hearing loss is often overlooked as a disability. Also, hearing aids can be made almost invisible, or they, along with cochlear implants could be covered by hair. In any case, a person with a hearing loss is usually not given the same amount of accommodation as a person with a physical disability or someone who is blind. Additionally, some people have a stigma that deafness only affects people who are old, or that deaf people are slow and not intelligent. The reality is that hearing loss affects all age groups and walks of life, and that people with a hearing loss are just as intelligent as people without a hearing loss.

For more information, go to the HLAA website at www.hearingloss.org.

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