



# Heard in Fort Worth

Newsletter of the Hearing Loss Association of Fort Worth

December, 2010

## CHRISTMAS PARTY

*10:00 AM - 12:00 Noon*

*Saturday, December 11*

*Gift Exchange, Food, Surprises*



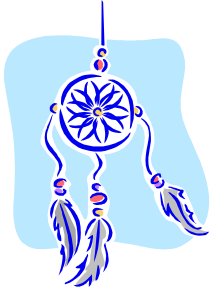
The chapter will provide a meat and cheese tray and croissants.  
You bring your favorite holiday dish to go with that.

Also bring a wrapped gift worth \$10 or less if you want to  
participate in our gift exchange.

Violist Heidi Irgens will play Christmas holiday music on her viola.  
The low tones of the viola will make pleasant listening.

And there will be more. Be sure to come, and bring others.

*Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!*



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

December is here – the end of another year. I'm recalling some things the national HLA organization has done for us. They have a series of seven DVDs on "Hearing Loss 101" and a webinar on telecoils called "Get in the Hearing Loop." HLAA participated in a stakeholders meeting with the Disability Rights office of the FCC. They are developing material for the upcoming HLAA Convention 2011, June 16-19.

The leadership attended the signing of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Video Accessibility Act at the White House, sent a letter to Secretary of Health and Human Services requesting the inclusion of hearing loss as part of the development of a standardized health risk, trained leaders from 14 states as ambassadors for our cause, assisted in 18 Walk 4 Hearing events, and presented testimony at the Boston city council hearing on hearing loops. WOW! Each and all of these will enhance your life.

As I wrap up my year in office. I want to leave you this poem/prayer that someone gave to Rocky Stone back in 1986:

### **A PRAYER FOR ONE WHO LIVES WITH SOMEONE WHO IS LOSING HEARING**

*Lord, my beloved is coping with her progressive hearing loss better than I am, and I feel so guilty.*

*It seems that as it becomes more difficult for me to communicate with her, the more frustrated I become, and I know it should be the other way around.*

*I know she takes her hearing aid off occasionally to rest her ear, and then I become upset when she doesn't know I want to talk with her.*

*Often I forget and turn my back, even though I know she needs to read my lips and see my facial expressions.*

*"You're not listening!" I scream, when it is I who have forgotten about background noises or water running or an airplane overhead.*

*I plead for forgiveness when I see the pain in her eyes when she has to repeatedly say, "I didn't hear you."*

*I know the problem is that I can't accept her increasing dependence on me, when I've depended on her for so many years.*

*So, Lord, I need your help to make me more thoughtful, considerate and supportive.*

*Help us both to explore other ways to communicate our love and concern for each other.*

*Please!*

*– An SHHHer in Buffalo*

As we end a year and start a new one, let's likewise pray we keep sharing with one another what we learn in coping methods.

As for me, I will be aiding my youngest son's adjustment back to civilian life – where his best friend will not be the rifle he had to carry while stationed in Iraq and banned from going certain places in Germany where they don't like US military people. I share this one insight he gave me when he came home from Iraq on R&R. As the plane touched down at DFW, he said he had an emotional feeling come over him, and in thinking why...it was FREEDOM. He had no restrictions on him, and had the joy of knowing he would see his family and friends again for the short two weeks here. He will again have that joy that we take for granted when he returns in April, getting out of his five years of service in the Army, ready to complete his studies and join life as we know it here in the USA. Oh! – he will also be joining *us* who have hearing loss. His time in Iraq, around the sounds of war, bombs, guns, and the other background noises, has taken some of his hearing away.

Best wishes to your and yours in the coming year.

*Fannae Shields (Fannae.Shields@utdallas.edu)*

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of Fort Worth**

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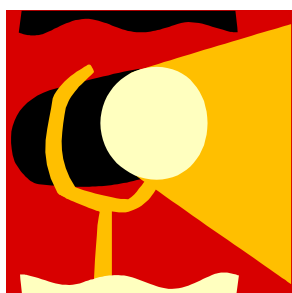
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## Spotlight on our Members:

### Teresa Alcorn

Teresa Alcorn is a former member who works for the General Services Administration of the federal government. Last year, when an airplane crashed into the IRS building in Austin, Teresa was assigned to a special Urgent IRS Lease Replacement Team. They had to find new emergency office space for the IRS in a hurry and move them in. The team had great success, and on December 1, Teresa and other members of her team will receive a GSA Excellence Award. Congratulations!

Teresa's son Grant is serving in the US Army in Afghanistan, and has already won a medal.

She moved her parents here from Oklahoma two years ago so she could care for them. They are both leading an active life here now.

## Welcome, Guests:

**Mike McGee** Mike is chairman of the board of the Sertoma Club of Downtown Fort Worth. He spoke for a few minutes on the work of his club to prevent hearing loss among children through program called SafeEars. They work in six different Fort Worth elementary schools.

**Ashley Hersey and Tiffany Ho** (students at UNT)

**Kathy D'Eletto**

**Mary Carem**

## SPONSORS

In the printed version of this newsletter we have advertisements from the following sponsors not shown in this e-newsletter.

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## ANTHONY HEARING AIDS

*Specializing in Difficult Hearing Aid Fittings*

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Audiologist

Kim Miller, MS, CCC-A, FAAA

Audiologist

901 Hemphill Fort Worth, Texas 76104

817/338-HEAR (4327)

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# “Over Exposed Ears: Protect Your Hearing”

*At our November chapter meeting, we learned about protecting your hearing from noise-induced hearing loss. It was presented by Helen Morrison (PhD, CCC-A) and Tracy Burger (MS, CCC/SLP, MS, CCC/A) of TCU's Miller Speech and Hearing Center. Here is a summary report based on their presentation.*

**Noise-Induced Hearing Loss (or NIHL)** simply means too much exposure to noise can cause hearing loss. A recent study shows that *U. S. teens (ages 12 - 19) have a 31% increase in hearing loss* over the previous study. One in five teens (6.5 million) has a hearing loss – a huge increase. These are high frequency hearing losses, indicating that they are caused by too much noise. I-Pods and MP3 players are considered among the probable causes with this age group.

**NIHL comes from both LOUDNESS and the DURATION of the sound**, that is, how long the person is exposed to the loud sounds. It damages the cilia ("hair cells") in the cochlea in the inner ear. This results in high frequency hearing loss (loss of hearing consonants and other high sounds, making speech comprehension difficult or impossible). This damage cannot be repaired. Duration of noise can be great with rock concerts, jet plane engines, jack hammers, boom box car stereos, model airplanes, leaf blowers, chain saws, snowmobiles, personal stereo devices (i-Pods, MP3 players, etc.), sports events (NASCAR races, gunfire, etc.), video arcades and video games, farm equipment, factories, fireworks, and other loud, lasting sounds.

*An indicator of too much sound for too long is temporary pain or ringing in the ears after the exposure.*

## Prevention and Protection

People who already have a hearing loss need to protect the hearing they have and not make it worse.

*Here are some suggestions.* Use hearing protection (ear plugs, ear "muff" headsets). Limit the amount of TIME of exposure. Follow the 60% rule: Set i-Pod or MP3 player volume at 60% of maximum output, and use it for no more than 60 minutes at a time. Read the product label for maximum output and frequency response. Learn how to use the control settings. Match the technology to your hearing aids or cochlear implant processors. Use them with t-coils and neck loops. Use noise-canceling headsets. Turn down the volume of sounds whenever possible. Move further away from it. Consider getting and using a sound level meter (from Radio Shack and other outlets). Have your hearing checked by an audiologist. Keep a hearing journal and record information on difficult hearing situations. Discuss these with your audiologist.

***Protect your hearing. Two ears are all you get.***

## Noise at Work: Harmful to Hearing *and Heart*

*The full article is at <http://www.healthyhearing.com/articles/47630-noise-at-work-harmful>*

*Monday, November 8, 2010*

High noise levels can damage our hearing. That's an undisputable fact because it is based on scientific evidence. Now imagine a noisy work environment with factory equipment and other heavy machinery blaring at full blast, day after day. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, approximately 30 million Americans are occupationally exposed to harmful noise at work. And now a just-released study shows that high-level noise in a workplace endangers not only the hearing, but also the heart.

### The noise at work / heart connection

The study, recently published in *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, an international peer-reviewed journal, says that **years spent in a persistently noisy workplace double an employee's chances of developing serious heart disease.**

Researchers based this finding on an examination of a database of more than 6,000 employees aged 20 and older who were surveyed about lifestyle, occupation and health. The participants were grouped according to those who endured loud noise at work (meaning it was difficult to talk at a normal volume) for at least three months and those who did not experience loud noise. The study found that 21 percent of mostly male employees were exposed to noisy workplaces. They were two to three times more likely to have heart disease than workers who did not experience noise exposure.

Those who endured loud noise were also more likely to smoke and weigh more than workers who experienced quieter environments. But noise emerged as a risk factor for heart disease even when controlling for those other risk factors. The study's authors believe that noise exerts the same kind of stress on the body as sudden strong emotion or physical exertion, triggering the release of chemicals that constrict blood flow through the arteries.

# Fort Worth P.D. reaches out to deaf/HH community

By Andrea Lucia, CBS 11 News

November 13, 2010

FORT WORTH – Christopher Ferrell only wanted to communicate with the police officer who pulled him over for speeding. But, when Ferrell didn't respond to commands, the officer jerked him out of his car and slammed him against its back window.

The officer seemed oblivious to Ferrell's message – that he was deaf. Ferrell ended up with a broken nose that night in November of 2007 and, later, a \$50,000 settlement from the City of Fort Worth.

"We have a lot of problems with the police department not communicating with deaf people," said Norma Castillo, through an interpreter. An advocate from the Deaf Action Center, Castillo said the deaf are often intimidated by police. "They look at them as having discrimination," she said. The Fort Worth Police Department is trying to change that perception.

On Saturday, it held its first ever community forum for the deaf and hard of hearing, trying to promote education on each side. "We know there are areas of improvement," said Chief Jeffrey Halstead.

Officers are now being taught to read a person's body language for signs indicating they might not be able to hear. They're also learning to use basic sign language during emergencies.

Seventeen-year-old Cathy Ayala is happy for the opportunity to learn from police as well, so she knows how to avoid any confusion. "I think it's really worth it that we came. I do," she said, through an interpreter.

## Dallas County exoneration shows changes needed to deal fairly with the deaf, lawyers say

By JENNIFER EMILY / The Dallas Morning News

October 2, 2010

There's no doubt Stephen Matthew Brodie's deafness contributed to his wrongful conviction nearly two decades ago for the sexual assault of a 5-year-old Richardson girl. He was finally exonerated this week – becoming the nation's first deaf exoneree – after a judge heard about a plethora of missteps by Richardson police and declared him innocent.

But in many ways not much has changed among police and prosecutors since Brodie was falsely convicted. The Dallas County district attorney's office, which asked a judge to release Brodie, still has no policy to deal with deaf defendants but acknowledged Friday that Brodie's case has made authorities realize they need one.

## Deaf owner and a former executive of video relay services company plead guilty to defrauding FCC

Department of Justice Office of Public Affairs

October 28, 2010

WASHINGTON – John T.C. Yeh, the owner of Viable Communications Inc., and his brother, Joseph Yeh, the former vice president for corporate strategy and second in charge for Viable, pleaded guilty today to engaging in a conspiracy to defraud the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Video Relay Service (VRS) program.

John Yeh, 63, and Joseph Yeh, 65, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit mail fraud. The defendants are alleged to have submitted a total of approximately \$55 million in VRS claims to the FCC. In pleading guilty, John and Joseph Yeh admitted that beginning in approximately fall 2007, they conspired with others to pay individuals to make fraudulent VRS phone calls using Viable's VRS service. According to the pleas, John and Joseph Yeh paid two other men (also indicted), who then would pay others to make the fraudulent phone calls using Viable's VRS service. Viable then submitted the fraudulent call minutes to the FCC and was paid approximately \$390 per hour for all VRS calls that Viable processed.

# Deaf man to head FCC's Disability Rights Office

Federal Communications Commission news release

November 16, 2010

Washington, DC -- Gregory Hlibok, currently an attorney in the Disability Rights Office (DRO) in the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, has been named to head that office.

"Greg will be heading up the Disability Rights Office at a crucial time, as the FCC ramps up to implement the most significant disability law in two decades," said FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski. "Greg possesses extensive knowledge in the field of telecommunications access for people with disabilities as well as the leadership qualities necessary to lead the office. He will be the first head of DRO who has a disability. Under his direction, the office will work to ensure that people with disabilities can share fully in the economic and social benefits of emerging 21st century technologies."

Greg has been instrumental on a wide array of disability matters in DRO since 2001. At the FCC, he has taken the lead in several key rulemaking proceedings on telecommunications access for people with disabilities, including new initiatives on the National Broadband Plan.

In addition to its new duties in implementing the new Act, the Disability Rights Office has responsibility for a variety of disability-related telecommunications matters, including telecommunications relay service (TRS), access to telecommunications equipment and services by persons with disabilities, access to emergency information, and closed captioning. DRO also provides expert advice and assistance to other Bureaus and Offices, consumers, and industry, in order to support the Commission's goal of increasing the accessibility of communications services and technologies for persons with disabilities.

## Project aims to improve quality of live news captioning

WGBH, Nuance Communications news release [edited]

November 9, 2010

Variations in the quality and accuracy of real-time captioning have long been a concern to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Captioned news in particular can be a lifeline to viewers who cannot hear well enough to follow program audio, a lifeline only as strong as the captioning is accurate. Live, or real-time, captions are most often produced by specially trained court reporters, called stenocaptioners, who use a phonetic keyboard attached to a computerized dictionary to translate spoken words into text in a matter of a few seconds. National consumer advocacy organizations have petitioned the FCC to consider adding a standard of caption quality to existing mandates for quantity of captioning on television.

WGBH (Boston public television) and Nuance Communications are working together on a project to improve the quality of live captioning. The project is to develop a prototype system to automatically assess accuracy of real-time captions for live news programming. The system will identify and weigh the impact of different kinds of errors in closed captions. The project is funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

### Hearing Loss Association – Fort Worth 2011 Annual Fees

(Make checks payable to: **Hearing Loss Association of Fort Worth**)

Name: _____	Individual	Couple/Family
Address: _____	City: _____	Zip: _____
Email address: _____		
Annual Chapter Participant Fee - \$10 individual / \$15 couple or family		\$ _____
Newsletter subscriber <b>only</b> (not participating in meetings) - \$5		\$ _____
HLAA National Dues - \$35 individual / \$45 couple or family (If not already a member)		\$ _____
Donation – local chapter or National Office (circle one)		\$ _____
		<b>TOTAL \$ _____</b>

**Saturday, December 11:**

## **CHRISTMAS PARTY**

**10:00 AM - 12:00 Noon**  
**Gift Exchange, Food, Surprises**

**The chapter will provide a meat  
and cheese tray and croissants.  
Bring your favorite holiday dish.**

**Also bring a wrapped gift worth \$10 or less if  
you want to participate in our gift exchange.**

*We use listening devices and live captioning  
for communication accessibility at our meetings.*

*2500 Lipscomb Street Fort Worth, TX 76110*



## **Hearing Loss Association**

**of America**

**Fort Worth Chapter**

meets on the second Saturday

of each month at the

Goodrich Center for the Deaf

and Hard of Hearing

2500 Lipscomb Street

Fort Worth, Texas 76110

Telephone 817-926-5305

for further information.