

**APRIL 29, 2016**

*This is a weekly report from the HLAA national office in Bethesda, Maryland. Please also sign up for the [HLAA e-News](#) where even more news is published.*

## **WALK4HEARING**

### **We Want You to Step Up for People with Hearing Loss and Communication Access!**

The 2016 [Walk4Hearing](#) is about to get underway. The theme for this year is "Step Up for People with Hearing Loss and Communication Access!" With this we are issuing a Call to Action for people to step up and advocate for better communication access for themselves.

There are many ways people with hearing loss can improve their access to communication. You just need to know how and what to ask for. We have prepared a [list of suggestions](#) to help get you get started. We have also developed a [Communication Tips Card](#) that you can share with your family, friends, and co-workers to help others understand how to better communicate with you.

Taking a few simple steps can go a long way toward creating awareness, reducing the stigma of hearing loss, and ultimately improving your quality of life.

More information on the HLAA Walk4Hearing can be found at [walk4hearing.org](#) or by contacting Ronnie Adler, director of Walk4Hearing, at [radler@hearingloss.org](mailto:radler@hearingloss.org).

**We want to SEE you in action!** Post a picture of yourself taking action on [Facebook](#) or Twitter [@Walk4hearing](#) using [#CommAccess](#). Don't have a Facebook or Twitter account but still want to share your photo, ideas and success stories? No worries – send them to [CalltoActionWalks@hearingloss.org](mailto:CalltoActionWalks@hearingloss.org) with "Call to Action" in the subject line.

Step Up for People with Hearing Loss and Communication Access!

Read the full press release on the HLAA website [here](#).

A condensed version of the press release was also [issued over BusinessWire](#), where it is distributed to thousands of media outlets nationwide.



## ADVOCACY

### **HLAA Accepted for Advisory Committee on Accessible Air Transportation**

HLAA has been selected to be a member of the Department of Transportation (DOT) Advisory Committee on Accessible Air Transportation (ACCESS Advisory Committee). The ACCESS Advisory Committee was established to negotiate and develop proposed amendments to the DOT's disability regulation on three issues, one of which is whether to require accessible in-flight entertainment (IFE) and strengthen accessibility requirements for other in-flight communications.

### **HLAA Promotes Theater Access**

HLAA joined theatreWashington, the Disability Rights Law Clinic at American University's Washington College of Law, the D.C. Arts and Access Network, and the Kennedy Center's Accessibility Office in a collaborative presentation to highlight the ways in which theaters can welcome patrons with hearing loss.

Lise Hamlin, director of public policy, joined Betty Siegel of the Kennedy Center's award-winning Accessibility Office, and Patrick Kinser, one of the students working on the project for the Disability Rights Law Clinic. The presentation reviewed practical inclusive strategies, and provided perspectives within the cultural access community for an audience of D.C. area theater staff.

### **FCC Adopts Real-Time Text Proposed Rulemaking**

On April 28, 2016 the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) approved a proposal to utilize real-time text (RTT) to ensure that people with disabilities, who rely on text to communicate, have accessible and effective telephone access. As communications networks migrate to IP-based environments, this technology would allow Americans who are deaf, have a hearing loss, are speech disabled, or are deaf-blind to use the same wireless communications devices as their friends, relatives and colleagues, and more seamlessly integrate into tomorrow's communications networks, instead of relying on a TTY.

For more information, see the [FCC news release](#).

### **HLAA Sends Comments to EEOC**

HLAA joined 10 other consumer organizations in commending the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) for creating new rules to ensure that the federal government removes barriers and disincentives to truly become a model employer of individuals with disabilities. We also provided comments to strengthen those proposed rules. Among other recommendations, HLAA supported including a section in the rules



that ensured applicants and employees may request reasonable accommodations in order to meet medical qualification standards for positions which legitimately require medical testing as a condition of employment. This would ensure that applicants and employees would be allowed to use their own hearing aid and/or cochlear implant when facing hearing acuity testing. We also supported the creation of a centralized reasonable accommodations fund within each federal agency to ensure that accommodations are provided when requested.

## CHAPTERS

### **HLAA Welcomes New Chapter!**

HLAA is thrilled to announce its newest chapter, located in Columbia, South Carolina. The HLAA Midlands Chapter held their inaugural meeting on Saturday, April 23, 2016 at the Still Hopes Retirement Community. The meeting was a resounding success, primarily due to the tireless efforts of chapter founder and president Dave Bitters and Peter Balsamo of the Lexington, South Carolina [Sertoma](#) Club. Assistance and resources for people with hearing loss and their families were provided at the meeting. The information, education, support, and advocacy will help members and their families learn more about living with hearing loss.

If you have ideas and suggestions on how to better educate the community about hearing health issues, Dave would love to hear from you. You can contact him at [dabitters@gmail.com](mailto:dabitters@gmail.com).

Welcome HLAA Midlands Chapter!

## PASSING

### **We Remember Dr. John Niparko**

It is with great sadness that we learn that former HLAA Board of Trustee member, [John Niparko, M.D.](#), passed away on April 25, 2016. He had leukemia. Dr. Niparko served on the HLAA Board of Trustees from 1994-1999, during his tenure at Johns Hopkins Hospital. He was a renowned physician who pioneered research of cochlear implants and launched [The Listening Center](#) at Johns Hopkins. He served twice as interim chair of the department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery. Many HLAA members knew him as their cochlear implant surgeon. Most recently, he served as professor and chair of the University of Southern California Tina and Rick Caruso Department of Otolaryngology, Keck School of Medicine.

Dr. Niparko also wrote a medical column for *Hearing Loss Magazine* (then called the *SHHH Journal*) bringing credibility to the magazine's medical coverage of issues



pertaining to hearing health care. He was generous with his time and expertise whenever HLAA needed anything, even being filmed for [the HLAA video series on hearing loss](#).

Our Board of Trustees as well as people everywhere benefited from the caring professionalism of Dr. Niparko.

## **HLAA STAFF**

Tim Maier has joined the staff of HLAA as the Hearing Assistive Technology Education and Training Coordinator. In this role, Tim's primary responsibility will be coordinating our [N-CHATT](#) (Network of Consumer Hearing Assistive Technology Trainers) train-the-trainer program. Welcome Tim!

