

MAKING THINGS BETTER

Group supports those with hearing loss

The Democrat and Chronicle's problem solver, Jon Hand, occasionally profiles a group in our community that is dedicated to solving a specific problem.

Today's group is HLAA Rochester (formerly Hearing Loss Association of America Rochester Chapter Inc.): <http://www.hlaa-rochester-ny.org>.

What is the problem?

Roughly 48 million Americans have some degree of hearing loss, but the deaf population comprises only a small percentage of that population. Many of the others isolate themselves because they do not know where to turn to get help. The loss of one's hearing has many psychological issues such as loneliness, shame, isolation, depression and employment difficulties.

How is the group solving it?

HLAA Rochester is a nonprofit, volunteer organization of more than 200 members who are part of the hearing-loss community and most of whom rely on hearing aids or cochlear implants. They are distinguishable from the deaf community in that they do not consider American Sign Language as the preferred method of communication.

HLAA Rochester offers support to those who have hearing loss by helping members develop communication strategies to rely on with their families, friends and colleagues. They offer two monthly meetings (daytime and evening) where topics of interest are discussed and support is provided.

Through regular expert speakers and a nationally recognized newsletter and website, the group provides an array of suggestions and help to people in the hearing-loss community. HLAA Rochester often underwrites all or a portion of the cost of summer camps and enrichment programs for area young people with hearing loss. Since 1996, almost \$80,000 has been granted as scholarships to high school students with hearing loss who are furthering their education.

What can you do?

HLAA meetings and programs are free and open to the public. If a loved one, a friend or a colleague appears to have trouble hearing, be patient. Speak slowly and more clearly. Look at the person when you are speaking. Turn down the background noise and encourage them to investigate HLAA.

Contact

To reach HLAA by phone, (585) 266-7890. Meetings are at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 25 Westminster Road — near East Avenue — at 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. the first Tuesday of the month. *Jon Hand is the Democrat and Chronicle's problem solver watchdog reporter. He can be reached at (585) 258-2395 or JHAND@DemocratandChronicle.com.*



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Members of HLAA Rochester listen to a speaker during a regular monthly meeting.

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