

Are We Our Own Best Advocate?

At our Monday, October 24 HLAA KY Home meeting Dr. Stacey High discussed hearing aids, features and programs. She mentioned that we as consumers need to be aware of hearing aid features and programs because it will help us to more effectively participate in our aural rehabilitation. The audiologist can't mind-read our needs and desires; we need to assist and guide the audiologist in helping us.

Thus, comes the question: **Are We Our Own Best Advocate?** Do I advocate for myself? I'm pretty good at reaching out and supporting others. I'm good at contacting the TV station when the captioning is bad. I talk to the powers that be about **A**ssistive **L**istening **D**evelopments (ALDS) at church or the movies. When I'm touring, and stop at a park, I try to remark about the captioning on the videos or the lack of them.

But, what do I do specifically for myself? Do I ask people to speak up or repeat? Do I "out myself" and tell them I have a hearing problem and need them to assist me in understanding? Do I tell the hostess at the restaurant that I need to sit facing a corner if possible? Do I tell my minister or priest that I'm sure he gave a good sermon but I couldn't understand because he didn't use the microphone or the church does not have ALDs?

HLAA is first a self-help organization. In order to understand, to communicate, I must advocate for myself. That requires me to become aware of everything I possibly can about hearing loss, hearing aids, ALDs, communication skills, **H**earing **A**ssistive **T**echnology (HAT) and assertiveness. In order to let others know my needs, I must know them myself and have some idea about possible solutions. I must seek out information and then discuss the possibilities with my audiologist, family, HLAA comrades, and friends.

Normally, in this column HLAA national discusses what they are doing on our behalf. Now is the time for us to discuss what we are doing for ourselves. Now is the time to use www.hearinglosskyhome.org and www.hearingloss.org as tools for my own education and aural health. They are my first textbooks with others to follow.