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Wed, Sep 9, 2009 **HLAGR Meeting**

Bobbi Taylor and Joyce Thorson from HARC Mercantile

“Latest Technological Trends in Assistive Devices for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing”

**Sanford Freed:** have you missed us? We have not had a program for a while. Okay, if you have a hearing coil, a T-coil, you may want to turn it on because we are looped here. How many use a T-coil regularly? Raise your hand. Have you just tried it for the first time? You had a look of amazement on your face. They are wonderful.

I think that is something that you remember very clearly your whole life. The first time you hear it through the T-coil it makes you go "wow". How many have hearing aids that don't have a T-coil? Anyone not wear a hearing aid here? Have you been told you need one? Your hearing is good? There is always one.

There are a few more people coming in. Wow. Okay, help yourself to a seat. I think we should have enough. Beautiful. Bill is passing out tickets. We will have a raffle for goodies at the end of the meeting. Someone answer your phone. It's not me.

Okay, good evening everyone. My name is Sanford Freed and I have been active with this chapter of HLAGR since about four years ago. There are a couple other people here who are involved. He is passing out tickets and each will get one; you don't need to pay for it.

I am speaking into the microphone and if you have a T-coil you will be able to hear me very clearly. There are other people in the leadership as well: Nancy Cluley and Dan just ran out. You can talk to any of us about this chapter. We want you to know more about it and get lots of benefit from it and being a person with hearing loss in the community.

This is Cheri who is typing as we speak. Rose Gelusha is our ASL interpreter. Joyce and Bobbi will present this evening. I have one other announcement. I will pass around some sheets for a community open house for a new office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services. It used to be in the Cherry Hills neighborhood but is now closer by on 44th and Kalamazoo. Katie Prins is in the back row and she is their director.

They are having a gala to mark the open house and this information is about that. Please take that home and put it on the calendar and buy tickets and raise the roof.

Okay, one of the things that we do as part of the chapter is try to help all of us who suffer with a loss of hearing to find different ways of coping. Some of the ways are behavioral, which allow us to communicate to people not to cover their mouths when they talk or have the television blaring in the background. We need to be able to say

that we need things repeated and such so we can hear better. That is the behavioral side.

There is a lot of good stuff on the technology side as well. Hearing aids are good if you can benefit from them but there is a table full of all kinds of goodies. These ladies are the experts and they will thrill us with all of this.

**Joyce:** I am Joyce. That is Bobbi. We have been with HARC for more than 25 years and have a lot of experience in this. We have been to the group before and brought basic things, the main products that all need, like a telephone wake up device and such, but tonight we brought some of the newer things. What we found at the national convention is a lot of new products.

I will start over here and work that way. There is a gentleman in Jenison who is a hearing impaired individual who struggled with his batteries. He would put them in his pocket but they got dirty or scratched. This is what he came up with. This is a battery protector. He is close by and should be a member of the group. He went out and made a product and is marketing it and trying to get people to buy this and keep it handy. If it hangs on the keychain, if your key chain is like mine, it's already full.

I will start with the most important thing that you need to have according to me. People come to us with a hearing loss or have just found out about it. They want a telephone or television listener. The most important thing is to hear the high pitched items like the smoke detector. If you live alone it's dangerous to do that. You won't hear the detector.

This is a little transmitter that you velcro to your existing smoke detector. You velcro this to it and it feels the vibration of the sound, so it won't pick up the dog or the telephone, then sends a signal to another device in the home so it triggers a flash. This flasher is attached to it and would be under the mattress or pillow. This sends a signal to your bedroom that you need to get up fast if it goes off. This system also comes with a clock that can be part of the system. You can also get one for the carbon monoxide detector.

Another company here in Michigan near Detroit has this system that is a clock and has lights down here. This is a phone transmitter. If the phone rings, this sends a trigger to the bed or such so the phone light comes on. The smoke detector transmitter also can be used. One nice thing about this is that if something goes wrong and the transmitter does not work right, the light comes on and alerts you that something is wrong. It lets you know.

If you have a receiver and you are a person that likes to be round and about this is a wristwatch that goes off so you can see which signal is going off. It's all rechargeable. You put this on the charger at night. You can buy parts or a whole system. If you only need one part, that is all you buy. Sometimes someone just needs a pager. If you are sick and just need some water from your spouse, you can press the button and the caregiver knows that you need help without running back and forth.

The most exciting product is this. With the first two systems, they are kind of

expensive. They do a great job but are expensive and you have to buy either a smoke detector or transmitter. This is a new company called Life Tone. This is a special clock that has a microphone on top. If you have a T3 in your home it only picks up that sound. It changes the pitch to loud and low, which is what most people with hearing loss can hear. It also has a vibrator for the bed. If the power goes out, it has a battery. The cost is a lot less. The other systems cost about \$300 but this is about \$159 and you can use the existing smoke detectors. That is a really exciting addition to our product line.

We want things that are reasonably priced. Some of the originals would hear the smoke detector but also would pick up the vacuum and such. This is a good product that we have had good success with.

Also at the convention we found some .... Is everyone familiar with the PocketTalker? Hospitals use them when people don't have a hearing aid when they go into the hospital or elderly people who can't put the hearing aids in their ears. It's basically an amplifier. The difference between the ones that you can see in the cheaper ads and this one is that they have the least expensive parts in them and they sound tinny. If you want good sound you pay for good products. This is digital. You wear a neck loop or ear phone and the lights flash.

If you want to turn the volume up or change the tone of the person's voice to higher or lower, the green ball rolls across to let you know high or low frequency. The other thing that it has is that there are people who don't have a T-coil, but this has a T-switch. I have not had anyone do that before. Who wants to try it?

We have another one here that is by a different company. This is smaller and rechargeable. It also has a T-switch. So many people hate to keep buying batteries so these recharge. This is one someone can try as well. The uses are the same, but we find that this is great for the car. If you have someone in the backseat and you cannot hear them, you can use this. On the PocketTalker, it has an extension cord that you can put through. It's simple but it helps a lot of folks. Would anyone like to try this? No takers? She has one in her hearing aid. These are for people without a T-coil.

Going on, talking about T-coils, this is a clip board. There is a loop on the clip board. If you have a profession where you need to talk to people and ask questions, or if you are in school and go up to talk to the teacher, the sneaky part is that there is a loop in here and if you have the T-coil on you can hear them very well. It's a nice Christmas present. This is a bit expensive. There is another one that you can sit on the counter like when you go to the bank or into a hotel, the hearing aid would pick up the T-coil in the device. The loop is in here.

**Guest:** do you need to be in the center of the room then?

**Joyce:** you can be a bit outside of that but the best reception is in the middle. You can loop the whole room at home, or the ceiling of the basement, as long as it is around you. That is a neat way to hear the television with a T-coil without wearing something.

This is a loop pad and had a cable that goes to a transmitter like this. You put this on your chair or in the car so you can hear those in the back. You can have it on the couch or on your office chair, wherever you will be, as long as there is a transmitter to plug into. The transmitter is so small that I would not mind having it on my desk.

This is what the room loop looks like. It's like speaker wire. Don't put it up against metal or have it cross over itself. We have done a lot of rooms. We did the Senior Center in Kalamazoo.

This is a device called a loop receiver. If you go into a place that is looped and you have a hearing loss but not a T-coil you can use this and amplify things. It's different from the other one because this is only to pick up the induction part of the signal. Some of the older style ones were very big and ugly but this is small and nice. This is a neck loop with an extension on it so if you wanted to listen to a CD player or iPod this is what you would use.

This is another neck loop that you could use for your cell phone. No, this is a listen only. It has an amplifier built into it. Sometimes when you have a significant hearing loss and your T-coil is up here you have an opportunity to lose the power and we need all we can get. They put an amplifier on it so you can hear through the loop.

Then there are other types of loop products and induction products that have little hooks on them. They fit up behind the hearing aid. If you need the extra power you can hook it behind the hearing aid and you can hear it better. It's for a CD player or whatever. You just jack it in. It does not have the volume control but the hook is near the hearing aid.

We also have this style induction loop for the cell phone. Not all of the phones have it, but you have to be careful when you buy a cell phone to see what kind of connections that they have. This neck loop has an adapter for it and you use that for a telephone or a CD player or radio. It looks like this one but this is only for the 3.5 jack items, like music and such. This is for the cell phone and music.

One of the coolest items that I like is this. How many have a cell phone? How many cell phones vibrate? How many can hear the phone in the middle of the night? This has a button on it that detects the cell phone. It's like an extension ringer. At night when you use the cell phone you change the button to the cell phone detect and set the cell phone on vibrate and strap it to the band on the back. You have to plug it in to the electricity to make it work. Hear that?

You can also plug your vibrator in so not only does it make a loud sound but it would shake the bed. Some people have jobs where they are on call at night but they don't wake up because they don't know anyone is calling them. So this is great for a person in the situation.

I will do just two more. This is one of the newest phones that we have. If you ever come to our store, we have so many phones that it's hard to meet all the needs. Our

biggest complaint is that there are so many features on them that many people just want something simple. This is a new phone that came out by Clarity that is portable. It has a big caller ID but also has big buttons. They are very easy to push and it's very simple. You can use it like a caller ID and then call people back. We have another model of this that has an answering machine with it. We just got this in about two weeks ago. The price is just \$79.

**Sanford Freed:** do the telephones in the store have M and T ratings like cell phones?  
Joyce: all the phones in the store are hearing aid compatible. We have a tape playing with a man and woman's voice so you can test which is clearer to you. Our showroom is the largest in the nation so we have lots of people come to just test things. We can handle about 20 people at a time. We also have another room to test things.

The other new telephone we have is this one. If you know our company, we have had these kinds of phones for a long time. This is a 50 decibel gain and has a speaker phone. Can you hear it back there? That is just the speaker phone part set at about 30db. You can also change the tone. The other unique feature is that if you have trouble with it or it does not amplify right, the button on the phone gets you right through to Clarity and they trouble shoot for you. The person who will answer the phone knows what the phone is about.

It also has a jack on the side so if you want it to flash at night, you can put a receiver in another room to hear it.

**Bobbi:** Everyone hear me now? I will go on with phones now. Sanford Freed asked about the rating on the phones in the showroom. Did they have the M and T ratings? Those phones don't apply to land lines. There is a new standard for land lines that the companies are voluntarily abiding by. But for years all the phones have been hearing aid compatible. There are a couple of cell phones that are also compatible. I am still feeding back. Is that too loud? Clarity makes a cell phone that is sold "unlocked", or without a SIM card in it.

**Guest:** Is there any microphone or amplification on up there? That would make the feedback.

**Bobbi:** Okay, is that better? What if I come this way? We hope it was just that one spot. Clarity phone is simple and is made for people who want something very easy. It has big buttons and it has big buttons for controls and an extra large caller ID display. You have to get your own service company.

The phone also has a flashlight built into the bottom of it. It's the only truly amplified cell phone that goes to 30db. It's kind of pricey at \$230, but it does work with T-coils. We also sell the Jitterbug phone. It's very easy. The service is from Jitterbug and the phone is \$99 and the service is cheaper per month. It has a soft rim that makes a good seal around your ear. It asks questions and does not leave you to figure it out. It has a dial tone and if you hit 0 you get an operator. We started to carry this for those that

wanted something simple.

We do have a list of cell phones that are M-4 and T-4 rated. If you are interested in buying a cell phone like that, we have the information on the back table. One of the most asked for items is a business solution. We have a couple things. This is for someone who does not wear a hearing aid or maybe has an in the ear CIC but you can wear the headphones with this. There is a connection so you can connect it to the telephone headset jack.

There is a volume control inline that will get you .... I don't know how much amplification, but there is some volume control there. If you just need something to raise the volume on the phone at work, and it has a jack like this, you can use this. If you need amplification you can use this one. You can use it with either the headphone or headset. This has 50db amplification.

If you have a T-coil and want something with induction, this has a neck loop. This is also used for cell phones and other phones but with this cord it has the telephone headset jack on it.

If you have a Plantronics inline amplifier that is common for business, this plugs into that. If you need more amplification we have something that gets you 40db. If you want to use the T-coil at the business, this is a good one. Both run about \$160.

While we are still on phones I want to cover Bluetooth. Joyce talked about the 2.5m headset jack. If you don't have that you probably have Bluetooth. It's the Maxi. This is the neck loop; you pair it to the phone and you answer the phone like someone with the headset. When the call comes in, you answer it without touching the phone. When you are done, you touch the button and it hangs it up. This is the simplest one we have. It does not do music. If you have an MP3 player on the phone that is a different protocol than music and it won't pick that up. It only picks up the voice.

This is the Bluehook. This one has the silhouette ear hooks that go behind the hearing aids. If you need more power, you use this. This is the receiver and you clip this to your collar. You answer and hang up the call here. This is amplified to 30db as well. This only does the voice as well, not the music.

This is a Beetle and is made by NoiseFree. It does both voice and music. If you have an iPhone or something with music in it, this picks up both. The receiver clips to your collar and the controls are all on here. This one gives you choices. There is a neck loop here. If you want to listen to music you probably want it for both ears and in stereo. That is one option. If you are driving and want to use your cell phone while you drive it also comes with one ear hook. You can have one hearing aid on the T-coil and the other not. It's not very safe to drive with both ears hooked to the T-coil. This is a very versatile unit.

This is our newest one. We just got this. This is the Bluetooth receiver with a neck loop. In addition to the volume control it also has a tone control so you can change the

frequency. If you cannot use the neck loop it also has an earphone.

It also has a microphone built into it. When you are not on the phone it picks on the sounds around you so you can use it as a one-on-one communicator. It also has a microphone on a very long cord. With an amplifier it should be versatile. With this little device you get Bluetooth for the cell phone and a personal amplifier that picks up room sounds. This is interesting and we have not played with it a lot. This is about \$129-139 which makes it in the range of one amplifier or Bluetooth. This is Alinear. There are some fliers with the product information on it in the back.

This is something we got by mistake. It's a Bluetooth adapter. This plugs into the USB port and it takes the sound from the computer and amplifies it. We did not know what we were ordering with this.

This is a Bluetooth hub. If you wanted to have Bluetooth in your office or at home, you plug this into the phone and it enables any phone. You can use it with any Bluetooth receiver. You can wander within 33 feet of the phone and be totally hands free. This is a Jabra hub.

I don't know if you have a Bluetooth streamer for the hearing aid but that is the big thing now. Connectivity. It's a little device that hangs around the neck and has Bluetooth receivers in it. They send the sound to the hearing aid. PhoneAc and most of the major manufacturers make this. What do you pair this to and how do you use it at home? You can turn your home phone into a Bluetooth home and use the streamer to answer the phone anywhere in the house. All you do is push the button on the streamer that sends the sound to the hearing aid. There are a lot of sophisticated things with hearing aids now.

Others are scrambling to use it all. The last thing is for television listening. We talked about induction looping but not everyone wants to do that for television viewing. We have three different products with us. This is the new one from Williams Sound. This is infrared. There is a transmitter that sits on top of the television and sends the signal to a receiver. There is an option of two different receivers. This goes into the ear and hangs under the chin so you can listen to the television without disturbing others.

If you have a hearing aid with a T-coil you can use the one with a F-loop. You can turn the sound up as high as you need it. These are relatively inexpensive at \$139-149. This is one we found at one of the shows. This one right now has a neck loop attached to it. It's the same principle. It does not go in the ears but goes around the neck and lays on the shoulders. It's lightweight and comfortable and picks up the infrared signal. It also has a line-in for another source, like for an airplane jack or iPod. It has a lot of different uses.

If you don't want a neck loop it comes with these cute little earphones. They plug in here and you put them in your ears while this hangs around the neck. If you would rather have another induction device, you can plug in silhouettes to your hearing aid. This has a balance control on it so if one ear hears better than the other you can make

one side louder. All of these do it.

This is so different from everything else that we thought it was great. All are rechargeable. That is also \$139. That is made by Serene Innovations. Then we get to this, which is brand new and the Cadillac. It's Senheiser. That is synonymous the quality. Infrared comes in frequencies. The old is 95Hz which is susceptible to interference. They have gone to 2.3 and 2.8mGh. What do you use in the home though? The new ones don't work with the new HDTVs and such. What do you do when you go to the theater because they are dark? If you want to take your own receiver to the theater, you need both. That is what this does. There is a button on the back so you can change it back and forth.

This also has microphones built on the sides. A lot of times when you plug this into the transmitter all you hear is the television. If people are having conversations around you, you cannot hear them. Someone is saying can't you hear me? If you use this you can hear both. You get the best of both worlds. If you don't want to hear what they are saying, you can turn that part off. If you don't want to watch television at the time, just turn this on and you can hear what is going on as a personal amplifier.

These all turn off and on automatically. You don't have to worry about running the batteries down. This is the Cadillac at about \$290. The sound quality though is excellent. It also has tone controls on the transmitter so if you have problems on the frequencies you can change the tone.

I think that is it. Oh, there is one more. FM .... Does everyone know how it works? You have a transmitter and a receiver. It overcomes the problem of distance. When you have a personal amplifier you have a microphone on your device. You have to wait for the sound to come to you. If the people are far away, it still may not be clear. All kinds of other things may come along as well to prevent you from hearing clearly. If you are in a lecture you can give this to the person who is speaking. Some people use it around the home. Sometimes I hear people say that they sit in the den and their wives yell at them from the kitchen.

This way the receiver can attach to the T-coil or you can have a headset or ear buds attached to it. There are lots of options. This is the Williams Sound Motiva. We have had others for years that have been work horses. They have an excellent product and a five year warranty. This has 16 settings. If you are in an educational system or in another use, you have 16 channels to choose from so you can avoid interference.

This other one is like a PocketTalker. You can turn the microphone on or off and it's very versatile. It's particularly good in school where the teacher has a transmitter and the child has the receiver. This one also can plug into other audio sources. If you have a program going where someone is playing a video you can plug it into the transmitter. In your home that becomes a television listener. The FM is very versatile and does a lot of things. They are a lot more expensive though than a personal listener. The personal listener is \$250 and these are about \$700-800. You need to weigh the benefit to costs.

**Guest:** can you use it with both hearing aids and cochlear implants?

**Bobbi:** Yes. This is a bit different. This is a digital communication system. It's similar to Bluetooth where the system is paired with something else. This encrypts the signal so no one can overhear the signal. This is a big deal in a court room or board meetings where you don't want anyone to overhear anything that is going on in the room. That encryption is good to have. But it's also great sound for individuals.

There is a screen on here that shows the level of the volume. It can be set in the middle of the table and turned into a conference microphone, or it can be changed to an omni-directional microphone.

There is a microphone built into the receiver as well so you can zoom it in. If you talk one on one to someone, you point this at them and you get the voice. This is the neck loop and it also comes with headphones and earphones. This is the Contago. With the neck loop the retail is \$971.

This is called the HearItAll because it hears it all. This is the receiver with a built in receiver. This is the transmitter. This is a digital communication system, not an FM transmission. The transmitter has a zoom microphone or it can be used as a conference microphone. You can give it to another person as well so you can hear them.

This is also a Bluetooth receiver that you can pair with your cell phone. You use it just like the others with the neck loop and telecoils. It's also a television listening device that goes from the television to the base. It picks up the sound from the television and sends it to the base. It can also be plugged into the phone and make calls. It takes the sound and receives it and turns it into sound. So you can do many things with this. It can also be a personal listener. That is why they call it HearItAll. This is \$599. That is less than the FM system. When you think about what you are getting this becomes very reasonable.

Anyone have questions?

**Sanford Freed:** please use the mic.

**Guest:** Is one of this Television Ears?

**Bobbi:** That has a number of different models. We do sell them but like these better. The Williams Sound and Serene Innovations have a longer warranty and have better sound at the same price as TV Ears?

We have catalogs in the back and other fliers for products not in the catalog. Our website is HARC.Com

**Sanford Freed:** Bobbi and Joyce will leave this up for the rest of the program. There is an amazing array of things here. To put this into context, I want to tie this in to the Hearing Loss Association.

There are tons of different types of technologies that may provide an answer for your need, but at the same time you need to go to Kalamazoo or Portage to see them. There are important partners to help you as well: your spouse, your family...and your audiologist is also important. I want to point one out today. Pam Keenan from McDonald Audiology is here. It's very important to work with the audiologist to get used to your hearing aid so you can take full advantage of things like this.

I have found that in the 4-5 years that the chapter has been active there is nothing like others with a hearing loss that advocate for their own use and quality of life. That is where the chapter comes in. The hearing loss association has chapters throughout the country. In Michigan there are many: Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph, Lansing, etc. We all do things like this and programs like this to reach out and help the people with hearing loss. We want to know more about our hearing aids and maybe get out of the denial phase.

I want to ask the leadership of the chapter to stand. Bill, Nancy, Marilyn, Juli, etc. If you have any questions about what we do as a chapter, ask us. These programs only happen four times a year but please ask us.

**Marilyn:** one other thing that the HLA does for our chapter is that we are blessed by a program by the State. There is a grant for equipment that is similar to this. We have in our possession about 50-60 items like this. We can try a telephone or listening device. We have nothing to sell; we loan it to you though. Chances are you would go and see Bobbi and Joyce anyway. If you want to see this in your home, come and see me. Thanks.

**Sanford Freed:** One of the things that I want to do is promote the national chapter as well. The only magazine that is directed toward the non- audiologist with information on hearing loss is one of the products of membership. Membership is only \$35 a year. Hearingloss.Org is their website. Our website is hearinglossgrandrapids.Org What Cheri is doing will soon be on the web. Archives are also there.

On the subject of technology, how many know what the Blackberry or Research in Motion are? Dave Dougal will be online tomorrow evening on the national website talking about these products. Go to [hearingloss.org](http://hearingloss.org) to get the details. We will leave this up for a few minutes.

Please come in and browse and look. We also have to do the raffle yet. Bill will make sure you have a raffle ticket if you came in late. We are going to give away some things but they won't be like these up here.

Bill, will you be the business end of this? This is the first item. Infrasound Hi-Fi headset. I need to give credit to Kaczmariski Hearing who donated some of the items for us.

**Bill:** I will read the last three numbers off. 053. Okay, the little guy.

The next is a sonic alert clock with a bed shaker and a short cord. My guess is that you need to sleep on top of the clock.

**Bobbi:** That was a demonstrator model. It was meant to go on a display. You can buy an extra long cord for this for about \$30. The clock is okay, because it has an extra loud alarm and you can change the frequency and there is a jack that you can plug in a lamp so it flashes. The winner is 062.

The next is a telephone coupler.

**Bobbi:** that is a round strap on amplifier that works on any phone. It's T-coil compatible. There is no sound amplification without the T-coil. There are two there. 059. 057.

The universal telephone comfort pad that goes on the hearing side of the phone to block out noise. We have two. 039. 069. How about 051?

We have a couple more. Portable amplifier that goes on the hearing side of phone. You don't need hearing aids to use this. 036.

Comfort ear, another phone pad that comforts and cushions the ear. 071.

**Sanford Freed:** That was exciting. We thank Kaczmarek Hearing. The second Wednesday of December is our next meeting. We will talk about hearing loops and show you how to loop a room. If you walk into a room with the television on, boom you can hear it if you have the T-coil on. We will give away a room loop at that time.

How many received postcards announcing this event? If you did not, please sign up on the yellow sheet that went around so we can send you a postcard for the meetings. We do send them out for the programs. Anything else? We have refreshments near the wall and please come up to touch and feel the products up here.

The products up here can all be sold tonight. Thank you for coming!