

Wed, Mar 14, 2007

HLAGR: ALDs Presentation by HARC

Nancy Cluley: We have a great crowd tonight. Welcome. I almost hate to interrupt the talk. This is a great crowd. We wondered if we would get a good turnout, but we did. We try to plan for the future and wonder if people are interested. I don't know what drew you here but we have a couple things planned.

Marilyn Knol will talk about the Walk 4 Hearing on May 5. The rest of the evening will be on assistive technology. For those who have not come before, there is a loop system in the room. Flip the switch on the T-coil in your hearing aid and you will hear it. Flip the switch. That is one benefit here. That will also be in the new Metropolitan Hospital.

The mainstay tonight is HARC. Ron Slager and Bobbi Taylor are here to share with us. They will show and demonstrate the technology. I will hand it over to Marilyn right now.

Marilyn: Good evening. Thank you for coming. What a great turnout. How many of you received a green invitation from us? A couple? We will make sure all of you have one. We have a lot coming up. Sanford Freed will hand these out. The national organization is HLAA and this is the second year for the Walk 4 Hearing. This is the first year for Grand Rapids. We had to be accepted for the walk site and lots of people have stepped up to help out.

The card tells you that we will have a kickoff this time next week. The card explains that the kickoff will give more information about the walk teams. I have plenty of these folders and we will hand these out before HARC starts.

There is a lot of wonderful information in the folder. How many are members of the national organization? I want to acknowledge and thank you for being a member. One of the benefits is the magazine that comes out once a month. You may want to share these with a friend. Feel free to take one for a friend. There is one in the folder but take one if you would like to share. We want to make sure that everyone who wants one gets one.

The walk is May 5. You don't have to walk; you can come and be a cheerleader. You don't have to walk; we just want you to participate with us. The goal is that more people, in the Grand Rapids area, know about HLAA. We also want to raise funds. We will give more information about what we will do with the funds. We have already collected \$15,000. A special thank you to HARC for being a supporting sponsor. All the primary sponsors will be recognized at the kickoff.

Guest: Is the Hunger Walk the same day?

Marilyn: Yes, that one is at 10:00, and our walk starts at 9:00. You may be able to make both if you walk fast! I will take a few minutes to pass out a folder; more magazines will be on the table. Any other questions?

Chris Jacques: we have been able to raise funds for the group for the past 3 years to pay the expenses of this chapter. All of our speakers have volunteered to stand up and speak. We have been looking at trying to develop new programs but in order to do that we need some funding so the walk will help out.

First, a portion of the funds will go to the national organization. It is the political arm that can really help us out in Washington DC as well as at the state level. The state and local organizations work on things too. Maybe we will have people at the national level in the future. It's important that the national organization exists because if they don't we don't have the resources for you.

One program is that we want to put together an assistance fund. Assistive technology is expensive and we want to be able to help out with the need. We also want to help with new technologies. One new technology is called aural rehabilitation. It's like speech lessons on CDs. It's a neat technology but it costs money to buy the CDs to present to people. Maybe that will become part of our assistive fund as well. We would also like to address the three major groups with hearing loss challenges: the seniors, the working, and the children.

About 33% of our seniors—classified as anyone over 65—have significant hearing loss. In the working group and children's group about 10% have hearing loss. When you look at the whole spectrum, even though the senior group has three times more, they represent about 50% of the people with hearing loss and there is another 50% for which we have done nothing. We want to offer support to all groups. We target industry to get them interested. Anyone working for a large or small organization knows that they don't have a clue about hearing loss. We need to make them understand to help the employees.

When you have hearing loss and you are in a corporation, productivity goes up when you can hear. It worked for me. We don't know how much money we will bring in but rest assured that we will have great ideas to help a lot larger group.

Now it's time for Bobbi Taylor.

Bobbi: That was very good. Am I loud enough? I am Bobbi Taylor and work for HARC. It's in Portage, just a jaunt down US131 from here. As I said we are down 131 from Grand Rapids. We have a showroom with all the ALDs (Assistive Listening Devices) for you to try out. But we came to you tonight. A lot of you have seen the products that have been around for a long time. I brought mostly new technology tonight.

We have flyers on the back table. There are 6 pages of our most popular items and inside is a map, coupons and other items. The coupon works over the phone or internet or in person.

We have a lot of different kinds of clocks. Tons of them. A lot of you are familiar with the one with the sonic boom vibrator on it. A lot of people like the analog clock rather than the hands. This one lights up blue. It vibrates or has a loud alarm.

We have travel alarms that are here. You can put it under your pillow when you travel or put it on the bedside table. It closes up and stays out of the way when not in use. This is very popular and it's a strong vibration so you don't miss a wake up call.

This one has a flashing light and has a magnet on the back so you can put it on your refrigerator. This one is handy as a kitchen timer. We also have watches with vibrating alarms on them. They all have a couple different alarms, as well as countdown timers. You can get pink, stainless steel or black or even camouflage. We have 10-12 different clocks that we sell that range in price from \$24 to \$75. There are many in between these ranges. We have clock radios, big and little displays, clocks with lights built in. There are many things that can help you wake up.

We also sell maintenance supplies for hearing aids. These are little socks, or “sweat bands”, for the hearing aid to keep the moisture out. If you mow the grass or shovel the snow, anywhere there is moisture to potentially contact the hearing aid, you can use these. People buy them for children, people in sports, and they are also good for wind noise. They come in different sizes and colors.

This is a new product that serves the same purpose. This is made of spandex and they have clips on them. You can clip the hearing aids to your shirt or coat and not lose it. There is a nice one for infants with a covered clip on it so it's safe and they keep the hearing aid safe and protected.

This is the hearing aid care kit. We put together a kit to maintain the hearing aid. This is great for teachers and caregivers. This is a dry dock. It's a place to put the hearing aid to take the humidity out. It takes the moisture out of them overnight. It's also great for the beach or at gym class. It's very visible so they don't get lost. It's all you need to maintain the hearing aid in one pouch.

If you have moisture problems you need to maintain your hearing aids so you don't have expensive repairs. If you spend a lot for the hearing aid, you don't want them in the repair shop. This removes moisture from the hearing aid. It plugs into the electricity; the hearing aid goes in overnight and the UV lamp kills the bacteria. It sanitizes while it takes the moisture out. If you have wax build up, it dries it up and you can shake or brush it out.

When they first came out we thought, right. This one is \$99 but it works and, if it

saves even one repair, it's worth it. Spring is coming. Those are the mainstays of the hearing aid maintenance line. We also have all types of sanitizers and such as well. They are in the catalog.

How many can hear the smoke detector without your hearing aid in? Not many. This is a portable smoke detector with a strobe on it. It's ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) approved and will wake you up. You hang it on the wall in the bedroom and when the strobe goes on it wakes you up. It's \$165. We also have one that has a battery and a transmitter on it. You can put multiples in the house and when the smoke detectors go off it sends it to the strobe. The advantage is that the smoke detectors are all around the house and don't need to wait until the smoke goes into the bedroom.

There is also a carbon monoxide detector. You can have a lot of alerts for different sounds: doorbell, baby cry, sound monitors, etc. This one is very versatile. The most important is the smoke detector because it's the best way to make sure you are safe. This one with a detector and strobe is \$285. With the vibrator, it's \$265. You can always add more smoke detectors to this base unit for about \$100 each.

Telephones. I only have three tonight. Clarity is one of the biggest makers. The new one is a digital called the Clarity Professional. The best thing is the way they process noise. If you amplify the noise on a regular phone line the signal is not as clear. These phones take the signal, put it through the computer chip and clean out the noise for a nice crisp signal with more clarity. They are all 50 decibels which is as loud as they go. The most we had before was 40db. This one is \$189. You can usually find them on sale; without caller ID they are about \$169.

This one is cordless. Both have extra loud rings. The cordless also has a battery back-up feature. If the power goes out you can still use the phone. With these the base does not go dead. You cannot recharge the handset with the power out, but you can still use it.

There are tone controls here too. This one has a 3 position tone control for high, low and middle frequency. This one does not. It assumes you have a high hearing loss. It makes the adjustment for the hearing loss. It's all part of the volume control. If you have a low frequency hearing loss this one won't work well for you.

This one is a cordless phone with an answering machine and a speaker phone. There is one on the base and one on the handset. If you like the speaker phone, you will like this one. This one is 40db. It too is specifically for high frequency hearing loss. It makes the adjustment as the volume goes up. It slows the message that plays for you on the answering machine. It also has other talking features. If you turn it on, it repeats the number you pressed; it has caller ID. Radio Shack carries the Clarity phones as well. The ones they sell are good for mild to moderate loss. If you have more than that, you won't find one over the counter. There is a huge difference between 30db and 50db. You can control the clarity of the phone with us. The ones

from Best Buy go to 18db.

It's 50db above the "normal." No one knows what "normal" is. There are no standards of what is normal. When one manufacturer says it's 50db and the other says the same, you don't know where they start it.

Ron: with this.... The gain with hearing aids is 60db for normal. 50db gained there would be 110. But you don't get 110db out of the phones. We consider the baseline as 40db so an added 50db would be 90db.

Bobbi: A lot of people come and want to know about cell phones and what they can do to hear better on the cell phone. Most of what we have for cell phones are used with the T-coil on the hearing aid. We have a few amplifiers that will increase the volume but they are not loud and are cumbersome. If you have a T-coil we have other things for you to try. This is a neck loop that is also a hands free headset. The microphone is here and the volume control goes up 30db. This plugs into the hands free jack on the phone. It's assumed that you have the standard phone jack. You can find adapters at Best Buy or your hearing aid provider that will allow you to use this.

It gets both ears, instead of the standard one, and you can use both your hearing aids, in addition to the volume control. This is \$119. This is something relatively new. It's monaural or binaural. The microphone is here and it's hands free. You can use the T-coil with the cell phone. One version is \$49, and the one sided version is \$39. It comes with the adapter. This is a 3.5mm plug and you can use it on the iPod or CD player so you have an induction (t-coil) for the music.

Then there is Bluetooth. This is a Beetle. It's made by the same people so it has the same induction hook. If you have a cell phone with Bluetooth on it, it lets them "talk" to each other. You put this over your ear and hook this to your belt....This is the microphone. When your cell phone rings, the Bluetooth signals to the Beetle and you talk. You push the button to disconnect again. It's the convenience you might not have otherwise. Most stick in your ear so you can't use the hearing aid.

This one recharges overnight like the cell phone. Or if you travel you plug it into the USB port and recharge that way. This is the latest thing in the cell phone technology for people with hearing loss. The price on this is \$109 for monaural; \$119 for the binaural.

Television. This is an infrared television listening system. It plugs into the back of the television and this is the receiver. You put this in the ear; you control the volume here so the rest of those watching are not blasted out. You can make one louder than the other and it adjusts to the hearing loss. There is also one with a neck loop so you don't need to take your hearing aids out anymore. This is \$189 and \$199 for the neck loop.

You could also loop your room. We sell room loops as well. This is the mega loop.

It comes with connectors to connect the audio source. You don't have to tear up the carpet; you can put in around the baseboard. You can loop an area or the whole room. You can also hang the wire in the ceiling. If you have the basement area where you can get under the floor, you can do that. You cannot loop two rooms next to each other because they spill over to each other.

This is another style. You have two choices. There are some differences to them; this one has controls on the front. Both come with a microphone to pick up the sounds from the environment. They are sold without installation. We assume you will do that yourself.

This is a wireless amplifier. It's also a personal PA system. You turn the volume up and it's your own amplifier. We put this together with a loop for small meeting rooms without an amplification system. You can put it away each time so you can take it with you. The input goes from the microphone to the amplifier to the loop. The people without T-coils can also use it.

Guest: I know the first ones you showed can be used in the movie theater....Which one can be used?

Bobbi: you need to know which system they use. If they don't have something there, you cannot make it work. They all need a system, most movie theaters use..... Infrared is one but it has 2 frequencies. Most of the theaters and venues are on the 95 frequency. Now they are moving to a 200 range frequency. You can also get them in stereo. You have to know what the theater is using.

It also may use an FM system. It's just the technology. A lot of the places, like the auditoriums, may have an FM system.

Guest: when I go the ballet there is no system in the rooms for meetings before the ballet. If I brought the box to the meeting room....?

Bobbi: you need to give them this. It also comes with a corded microphone. If it's a small meeting and you can pass the microphone.....If you can get the speaker to use the microphone, right.....There are probably better things to use than that.

This is one. Traditionally I would bring an FM system. It's like this but the transmitter you give to the speaker and you use the neck loop or such and when they talk you hear them through the device. You just give them this. If there is only one person, that is fine. This is a new one. It's made in Sweden. It's a secure system. It's like Bluetooth. It's a radio frequency. If you have a meeting where confidentiality is an issue, it's perfect because no one can hear it. This is a different type of frequency and signal and only the receivers paired up can receive it.

It comes with this style and this one. You get both or the neck loop. You choose what you want. Whether you want it in the ear or around the neck. This is a slick unit. If you are in an area with this system, you can change channels. You can be in the same room and they won't communicate if you change them. This is \$799 with the head

phone set. With the neck loop it's \$871. It's not much more than the FM systems, which are around \$700. It's also tax deductible.

Guest: do you know about that? Anything you buy you adds up the whole year. It's 7.5% of the gross; anything over that is a medical deduction.

Bobbi: This is great because it comes with one of each. For one-on-one situations this is perfect. Another system has a listener and a talker. These are the microphones. If you play cards or are out for dinner with multiple people, it comes with three talkers. Those who are talking wear these around the neck and they are paired to the listener. They don't spill over and no one can "hear" the conversation. It goes 150 feet in transmission distance. If you have three people to listen to, you can either use ear phones that cancel the noise with filters in high fidelity, or you can get a neck loop. It all comes in a case and they are rechargeable. This is \$999. This is called companion mikes.

Guest: this is good for people when they go to the bars. I would love that!

Bobbi: It's great for in the car. If you take a trip and you cannot hear the conversation, you hand them this and you take the listener. People in the back seat or people in the bar. I need to remember that. I like that.

You can do it simpler than this. This is the Pocketalker. It has a volume control, comes with headphones or a neck loop, and a varying number of microphones. If you can't use hearing aids or you can't afford a hearing aid, or it's out being fixed, these are good reasons for a Pocketalker. We sell them to nursing homes and hospitals. If you have a hearing aid and it's not doing what you would like it to do, and you have a T-coil, you can do a Pocketalker with a neck loop for an extra boost.

Those same kinds of situations with the companion mikes, like riding in the car and you want to hear the person next to you and you cannot turn around all the them, you pull the mike off and put it on the extension cord. Someone back there as one.

Guest: I go to a retreat and they have no mike system. I explained to the retreat director and I taped my mike to the lectern. The first time I took it the others said it was so good to see me laugh because I got the jokes. I could hear them.

Bobbi: sometimes places are just too noisy. Give them the microphone. This one is a handheld one. Say you are at a party or the bar you take it and put the microphone on it and you point at those you talk to. You get very directional. It's like interviewing them. It also has a stand on it. If people are in your office and you cannot hear them, you can point it at them.

This is the length of the Pocketalker. It's meant to be handheld in close proximity. The extension cord is 12 feet long. If you use it for television listening you can put the mike by the television and not sit right on top of the television.

This is by far the most popular item we sell.

Guest: would you be better off with a T-coil that is wireless? There is a little box that you can set anywhere in the room. You don't need all the wires all the time.

Bobbi: That is an FM system. One is a transmitter and one a receiver. You can do that with an FM system. There are little microphones that help do that if the mike on the transmitter is not good. This is a conference mike. You can plug it into the Pocketalker. The range on this is like a donut around. It picks up the sound 360 degrees around it. It picks up all those around the table. It's designed not to pick up noise from above so if there is a noisy heating system you don't hear it. The cost of this one is \$70.

Guest: The portable t-coil that is wireless; can that be used on the phone?

Bobbi: it's hard to do that. Some phones have jacks on them. This phone and most of the Clarity phones have a jack on them. How does that work? You plug the neck loop into the phone directly. You don't have to have anything else with it.

There is also a Teletalker that you can use with the Pocketalker or anything with the plug in microphone on it. It's like an inline amplifier. It has to be used with a corded phone. The cord goes into the feed on the Pocketalker. You can raise the volume on the phone as high as the Pocketalker goes. We don't see this much because the phones can go higher.

Guest: I can set it on the table in the room and hear things from all over. I think it's about \$1000. Instead of buying all the little things, wouldn't you be better off with this?

Bobbi: yes, if it fits the budget.

This is the same type of thing. It's MyLink. They have done a lot of neat things with FM systems. The receiver goes on the behind the ear hearing aid and you don't need to do anything else. You turn on the FM receiver and you don't have to do anything else. Those run around \$3000 for two ears and a transmitter. This is the neck loop receiver and transmitter. You can put it on the table and pick up everything around. The mike changes from interview style to pick up sounds around you or you can give it to the speaker at the front of room and you can hear what they say.

Guest: I was going to a conference where I knew I would not hear so I bought one and used it. I could hear it all.

Bobbi: You pretty much need to face the television with some things, but with the FM system you can walk around and still hear it.

Guest: in addition to the transmitter, it also has the telecom which is an FM transmitter that connects to the television or audio system AND to the telephone. You are listening to the television and the signal is broadcast to the MyLink or the hearing aids via the T-coil. If you hear the phone ring, when you go off hook the television is muted and the call goes through here. It works if you have the receivers. You buy the telecom and make sure the frequency is the same.

I don't remember what that cost is. The cost for the telecom is about \$450. That is a

nice solution for the car or the conference. It's another dimension. It's another way the technology is going. Hearing aids, FM and linking to Bluetooth or other types of signals. Phonak is a leading company in an integrated hearing system. We will see more of this in the next few years. It's an excellent system. You did well!

There is a version of the transmitter, Easy and Smart, that have a Bluetooth capability to it. It sends the signal to the receiver and you can use the whole system. You can control the hearing aids. There are just wonderful things you can do with the systems.

Guest: if I get to the point where I want the Smart link, I can change it? Right now I just use it in the ear so I can hear it in the telephone.

Bobbi: That is the nice thing about these. You can change and now have the behind the ear hearing aids; you can still use the same transmitter. Most are now tunable. They have what they call a wall pilot. It's a FM transmission in the room but maybe not your frequency. The wall pilot is a panel by the door that automatically sets the frequency of the hearing aid to the room. We can move from the Pocketalker to this. The versatility of this device is overwhelming.

I think the only thing I did not show is the Duet. They make the Contego unit too. It comes with head phones or ear phones or the neck loop. It looks like the MP3 player. You just clip it on here and someone thinks you are listening to tunes but you are really hearing what they are saying. It's an excellent sound to it. It's a plus people who don't have hearing aids and use a Pocketalker which is fine for talking, but in a room like this they cannot use the loop. When you put it on the T-setting it becomes an induction loop receiver. These are about \$169 and are rechargeable. It comes with the cute stand and recharges.

I think the only thing left up here is the dedicated loop receiver. In a room like this that is looped you don't need it, but if you go somewhere without a loop and there is no FM installed, you can get a loop receiver that has an induction receiver. This only picks up the loop signal.

I think that is the extent of it. Any questions?

Sanford Freed: you talked about Bluetooth and such. For someone considering hearing aid purchase now, is FM or Bluetooth more important?

Bobbi: FM is more important. It does the most good now. In the future there will be hearing aids that pick up Bluetooth but that will be a while. The range on FM is much greater; the range of Bluetooth is about 30 feet. The Bluetooth applications right now are just the phones. You can use the adapters to do that.

Guest: how much is the care kit you talked about?

Bobbi: The care kit is \$38.50.

Guest: the cell phone deal there. That is what any phone? Even the tiny ones?

Bobbi: as long as it has Bluetooth, yes. The phone is in the pocket. This is called the Beetle. This is one that works with Bluetooth.

Guest: what do you have that just plugs in?

Bobbi: this one does that. You can try it later if you would like, along with the rest of these products. Chris Jacques has some things to say yet I think.

Chris Jacques: I wanted to close and thank Bobbi and Ron for coming to show all the wonderful technology. Thank you very much. Some of the questions that I heard, would it be better to do this or that, as a person that has tried a lot of things what I found is that the most logical may not be best. I need to try a lot of things. There are differences in the technology and some things work better for you than others. That is why you have all the choices. It's nice to go to Kalamazoo to try them all. I drive them nuts when I go there.

Two other things: next month we will cover Day at the Capitol, which is May 16, and Vic Krause will lead. I really think that all of us should be there to hear about it because you may be surprised what you can do to help. Vic needs to be the Pied Piper with a lot of people following him because they listen to him more then.

We will also show the film on the kickoff next month. If you cannot make Noto's next week for free appetizers or drinks at the bar, we will give information on all the wonderful things about fund raising. I will give you one of these tonight so you can get a head start on everyone else.

Guest: there is also a documentary film on PBS called Deaf Eyes. Wednesday, March 21 at 9:00 p.m.

Chris Jacques: that's after our time at Noto's that evening for kickoff for Walk 4 Hearing. The film is at 9.

It's important for you to not only come but to bring others. I thought I was smart about hearing aids and hearing loss but when I got involved here I found out how much I don't know. I am sure that many of you feel the same way.

Come up here and try out some of this wonderful technology.