

PRESIDENTS ADDRESS

We have had a busy 3 months since the last issue of Hearsay. We have jointly with other charities made a submission to the department on a new emergency (999) call line that will commence next year. It is envisaged that there will be a texting from mobiles service for deaf and hard of hearing people. We also made some input to a review of the Department of Communications Sectoral plan.

We are supporting a DFI pre-budget submission. DFI highlight 4 points

- Protection of funding for disability-specific services and facilities;
- Continued improvement in access for people with disabilities to mainstream public services;
- Recognition, in terms of funding and participation in decision-making, of the role of voluntary disability organisations in achieving social inclusion for people with disabilities;
- Maintenance of adequate income, especially given the on-going extra costs imposed by a disability.

The IHHA will make our own submission with a more specific emphasis on hard of hearing access issues.

We have just made a submission to the department of the Environment who are formally reviewing Section "M" of the buildings regulation re access. The regulations focus heavily on physical access. We have drawn attention to the needs of hard of hearing people, the huge numbers of people with poor hearing, the consequences and emphasised the need for good quality e-coil loops, good signage and staff training amongst other things.

We have had many other access meetings. We achieve some of our aims at these meetings but are often frustrated with the lack of movement. We are reviewing how we go about some of these (see second last paragraph).

We have signed up as a member of the Disability Federation of Ireland. They have looked at our structures, aims, policies etc and are advising us make some changes in light of the recent Charities legislation and what you may call common practice amongst small voluntary organisations.

It is timely to revisit our aims and objectives, what skills we need and how we go about our business. We (IHHA) are going to do this over the next couple of months and I would really appreciate any input, ideas or feedback you send me.

Finally we all need to forget the gloomy times we live in and consciously engage in interactive social activities. Poor hearing is awful and it is easy to let things slip.

Keep smiling,

Michael Tighe, IHHA President

THE HIDDEN DISABILITY

A person with a visual impairment often uses a guide dog or a white stick. They are noticed and are usually offered help if need be, to cross a road for instance. A person with a leg in plaster will usually get a sympathetic reaction.

By contrast this is not the case for a deaf or hard of hearing person probably because the disability is invisible. The burden of adaption falls very heavily (and silently) on the person with hearing loss. It is a difficult and never ending process. The process is unique to each person, depending on the nature of their hearing loss and personal circumstances.

You need to understand your hearing loss, consult a good ENT (Ear Nose and Throat) specialist and audiologist. You may need to follow medical or surgical advice. You will need to revisit these people from time to time.

You will probably need a hearing aid involving several fitting and adjustment visits to your audiologist and requires much patience and tenacity.

You need to develop lip-reading skills, assertiveness in explaining your needs without apologising, planning carefully to avoid anticipated problems, learning to cope with the frustration and isolation of a hearing loss and most importantly learning to relax

The adaption process is on-going all the time unseen in the background.



Hearsay Christmas 2009

SPONSORED WALK

The 13th September was about the only bright, sunny, warm day this summer and we were lucky enough to choose it for our Sponsored Walk - even the skies were that lovely clear azure blue.

St. Ann's Park in Raheny was our venue and we all met up at the corner of Dollymount Avenue and the main sea road. The Park has everything, miles of grassland, beautiful old trees, streams and even ruins. Diana Erskine Hill who knows the park well, told us all the history of the Park and the families who lived there, where their houses were and alas are no more. It made the whole place come alive.

Having completed our circuit of the Park we all piled in to the Red Stables Café to revive our flagging spirits, catch up on old friendships and make new ones.

It was lovely to see so many participants (see picture) enjoying it all, apart from the much needed boost to our funds. A very special thank you to Diana.



Jacqueline

A BIT OF A RISK

This feels a bit risky to put down on paper so here goes. When the IHHA first started over 20 years ago the idea then was to encourage others to set up their own small support groups anywhere in the country. This after all was how the organisation was started in the first place. The only requirement simply to be hard of hearing and enthusiastic about making something new happen. The theme to have fun and enjoy having a laugh giving each other encouragement, be it with lip-reading practice, bridge, walking whatever it is that you happen to have a passion for. I am fascinated by the energy generated when one person really wants to do something new the way others immediately follow. It's true! The Art Gallery visits, the play reading groups, the visits to the theatre, hill walking in Wicklow, amblers' strolls in Dublin are prime examples of how vital and relaxing this social contact is with each other. I fear that the IHHA is getting very lost there are thousands of you out there coping well enough with hearing loss yet seem to be sitting on the fence waiting for someone else to take the lead. Look at how TESCO has gobbled up so many individual companies and small enterprises because they are bullies and greedy. For Gods sake wake up and stop making excuses. You, yes **You**. Wake Up.

Diana



Hearsay Christmas 2009

OPEN SESAME

I have just achieved a Diploma in Literature and Creative Writing with the Open University. It has been two years of study which was made very easy and enjoyable by the OU's attitude to disability and to deaf and hard of hearing students in particular. All my work, except for my final piece, and my two face-to-face tutorials, was done online. Nine of the eleven assignments over the two years were submitted online and the final two in each year were posted. I received transcripts of all the audio CDs involved in the course and the visuals, like film excerpts, were subtitled and transcripts were also sent for those.

I was dreading the tutorials but, in fact, they were great. I have not taken part in a large group discussion (over 15 people) since my hearing went in 1985, and thanks to the provision of personal note-takers, I was able to take an active part. The first morning I entered the tutorial I was put sitting in front of a laptop. Two note takers sat at their laptop beside me and every word that was spoken at the tutorial was transferred simultaneously onto my screen and I could respond to everything in real time. The tutor also was very aware and spoke clearly facing me at all times. It was such a pleasure to be able to discuss with fellow writers. In fact the group became so aware during the course of the day that, in the canteen afterwards, they put me sitting at the head of the table where I could see their faces and everyone tried very hard not to cut in so I could follow the conversation more easily.

I want to say to anyone who is nervous about getting back to study, try the OU way. But do let them know in plenty of time, in fact when you first apply, about your disability. They have a booklet and an application form for special equipment loans and preparation for tutorials, for receiving transcripts etc.

I am taking a short course this year, for a rest, but I hope to continue. I would love to obtain an Honours Degree in Literature eventually.

Marie O'Meara

DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT

It has been suggested that on the whole, Irish people will suffer from a hearing loss for up to 15 years before seeking help. Although one in six people suffer hearing difficulties, many people still do not look for help or other options.

People generally will get their sight tested after three years of having difficulties, but this does not happen with the hard of hearing.

If you ignore your hearing loss, it can put a great strain on what hearing you have and cause even further damage, reducing your hearing ability even more. This of course can cause great stress which is unnecessary

Recent research indicates that up to half of the people suffering from a hearing loss are working. More and more younger people are now suffering hearing damage.

The hearing can be damaged by excessive noise level in the work place and special protectors should be worn to avoid damage. Also the noise levels at concerts and discos is normally well above the level that can damage the hearing. This is self inflicted and frequent visits to such places can cause damage that cannot be rectified. Even sporting events such as football or hurley, where there are very large crowds cheering and shouting can create extreme levels of noise.

Ignoring a hearing loss can have far reaching effects on your quality of life. It can reduce social interaction and can generate a lack of confidence and depression.

David



Hearsay Christmas 2009

HEARING LOOPS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2009



An audio frequency induction loop system (AFILS) is an inexpensive, efficient and universal system to enable people wearing hearing aids or cochlear implants to hear in public situations.

Hearing Loops, the first international conference on audio frequency induction loops (AFILS) for people with hearing loss - with participants from Austria, Australia, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Kuwait, Netherlands, Russia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and USA - passed the following resolution at Zurich University of Applied Sciences at Winterthur / Switzerland on September 27, 2009.

We recommend that

- 1) Hearing aid manufacturers, manufacturers of cochlear implants, physicians, audiologists and hearing instrument specialists shall communicate the benefits of hearing aid / cochlear implant telecoil receivers for phone listening and assistive listening and educate people who are hard of hearing accordingly.
- 2) Venues and service points where sound is broadcast shall offer assistive listening, such as induction loop systems designed to the IEC 60118-4:2006 standard, that broadcast sound directly to hearing aids and cochlear implants, enabling them to serve as customized, wireless loudspeakers (without the need for extra equipment).

The resolution reflects concerns that many hearing aids are sold without a telecoil facility and that many locations are either not looped or the loop is of poor quality.

Michael

VIBRATIONS

Drumming has always interested me. Perhaps because I have such a bad hearing loss, the vibrations go a long way to help me enjoy it. I was therefore delighted when I came across a group of African drummers at the Festival of World Culture in Dun Laoghaire. The gathering group around them was invited to join in and sing or dance or beat time with them. It was really great fun and very relaxing.

I picked up a leaflet after the show and discovered that they were holding a class in Dublin for West African drumming. I needed no further invitation and immediately signed up for their beginner's class for six weeks for the princely sum of €80.

I am three-quarters through the course now and am enjoying it very much. All the drums are supplied by the organisers. Once again, it is so easy to follow and a hearing loss is no problem. I must admit I do not get all the instruction but I can follow the beats very easily. The classes are every Monday in the Liberties. If anyone is interested contact Paul McElhatton at 085 1325667 or email paul@afroire.com.

Ken



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FESTIVAL OF WORLD CULTURES

Every year in August Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council holds a Festival of World Cultures. It doesn't matter where you are or if you have a hearing loss or not, it is a truly wonderful event. It attracts nearly a quarter of a million people along over the week-end.

There are stages set up all over the town and you can drift from one to another and enjoy many other fringe events as well. Most of the events are free and many are just outstanding. The ideal thing for the hard of hearing is that because of the different languages it does not seem to matter in the least if you can't hear properly.

There is music and dancing and drumming and choirs and every conceivable type of entertainment from overseas. It is really very good.

Even if you live down the country, it is well worth a trip up to Dun Laoghaire to join in the fun. I do not think you would be disappointed. Watch out for this extraordinary event in August next year.

Ken



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VOLUME CONTROL

According to recent research it is unbelievable the number of young people who are putting their hearing at risk by having the volume of their iPod or MP3 players turned up much too loud. The results found that 40% of those quizzed had the volume level at 81 decibels – apparently this is the equivalent of having some lunatic yelling right into your ear for an hour or more.

Public transport does not help either as people tend to increase the volume even more to drown out the noise around them.

Audiologist Keith Ross is concerned at these findings, "These results are simply an indication of the damage that is currently being done to the hearing of the nation.

It happens gradually, so a person listening to loud music will not know that they are doing damage. The well-being of our youth is at stake here".

You have been warned!

Jacquie



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NICE THINGS

If you read your newspapers or watch the news on television you will quickly see how many disasters and terrible things are happening all the time. Reporters seem to revel in the awful things that happen.

For me then it was just lovely when something nice happened. It was simple enough when you think about it. Diana was making dinner and ran out of milk and I volunteered to go down to the local Tesco and get a litre. Everything went according to plan until I got to the self check-out and found that I had absolutely no money at all. I had emptied all my pockets on to the dressing table and now had nothing with which to pay.

I went over to the information desk and told them my predicament and they rang through to a supervisor who quickly said I had to have money to pay and they did not give credit (not even for 95 cents)

I left the milk behind and as I walked out I saw the pub where I frequently had lunch. The manager heard my predicament and went over to the till and extracted ten Euros with a smile. "Here, this will help you out" he said with a smile. There was no hassle and no arrangement to pay it back. It was just a friendly gesture to someone who was in a spot.

I went back to Tesco for the milk and was able to tell them there was someone who really cared about their customers if they didn't.

Ken



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IT'S CHRISTMAS TIME AGAIN

So let's try to forget all the gloom and doom in the newspapers and on television news bulletins over the holiday. All of us here at Hearsay would like to wish you a Happy Christmas and a Wonderful New Year.



ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Have you ever worried that your memory is slipping and are afraid you will end up with Alzheimer's disease. This is an awful thing and is a bit like a living death. I know many people who have had it and I wouldn't wish it on anyone. The short term memory goes and it is impossible to remember things that have just happened. People with Alzheimer's cannot even be allowed out on their own because they might not find there way home again and may not even remember their address.

In the book *The Brain that Changes Itself* by Norman Doidge, 47% of all people who reach the age of 65 will get Alzheimer's. That is a very sobering thought. However, he does not just accept this as a blind fact; he suggests that there are ways in which we can help to avoid getting it in the first place.

Briefly he suggests that we keep the brain active. The important thing however, is not to keep doing the things we have always done. Neuronal stem cells die off but with an enriched environment, they can increase. For example it is no use keeping on working and doing the same thing all the time. The brain needs new outlets and channels. Taking up things we never did before, like learning a musical instrument, playing board games or learning a new language for example are excellent and can lower the risk and stimulate the growth of new stem cells.



Hearsay Christmas 2007

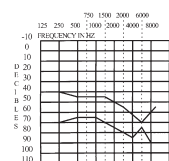
SOWING A SEED OF AN IDEA!

Chloe Goodchild is the founder of the Naked Voice Organisation set up twenty years ago to promote voice and sound as a vehicle for spirit, she works internationally. The Naked Voice practices interweave silent, spoken and sung communication skills and you don't have to be a 'singer' or 'musical'. The workshops are an invaluable tool for those with a hearing loss wishing to deepen their self-confidence and self-esteem. At a recent weekend workshop in Dublin I realized that wherever I sat somehow I could not see her face. The microphone stand was in the way. Eventually after a day and a half I plucked up the courage to ask her if we might lower the stand about half an inch. She could not have been more helpful once she knew each word she spoke was being lip-read! For more information about **Chloe Goodchild** workshops contact: Tim Chalicee:now@thenakedvoice.com or www.thenakedvoice.com

Kim Rosen, a poet from Los Angeles has just published a book called, *"Poetry Saved my Life"*. Her passion for poetry positively sparkles with each word spoken. Kim asked her audience if they could hear and see her? I asked her if she might lower her microphone about an inch so that I could read her lips. She was delighted to oblige! It worked for a while then naturally enough the mike began to move up over her mouth again. My loss but I didn't mind at least I had made a fresh start by asking at the beginning of this workshop rather than pussy footing around! Many top performers may eventually become more aware of the barrier they create when they block their mouths from view. I would like to think so.

Kim Rosen web site details are: www.kimrosen.net/connections.htm or email at kirn@kimrosen.net

Diana



Please note. Anyone who wants further information, contact the address below.

The opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of the IHHA.
The Irish Hard of Hearing Association, 35, North Frederick Street, Dublin 1.
E-mail: ihha@deafhear.ie Web Page: www.ihha.ie
Edited by Hearsay Committee.

CONNIE HEARS AGAIN!

I lost some of my hearing gradually over fourteen years and then about six years ago I practically had no hearing left. A friend of mine suggested a cochlear implant in Beaumont Hospital. I finally had my cochlear implant in September 2008. For the first six weeks after the operation I had no hearing at all. Long before the operation I had adapted to having no hearing and found going to lip-reading classes very helpful. I learnt to share my lack of hearing with others and in turn people were kind and helpful. When my speech processor was switched on the sound that came through was amazing! It sounded like "Donald Duck" in fast motion – very robotic. I laughed my head off and wondered when would it all improve.

That very night my granddaughter who is ten said that she wanted to do a test with me, she told me to close my eyes and she said to me, "Hello Connie". It was so clear – I was speechless! My son then decided to try me out and had a long sentence for me – I heard it all and it was wonderful. It took a bit of time for it to improve, but I now have 80% of electronic hearing, which I'm delighted with. After the operation I got tinnitus, dizziness etc, which all cleared up very quickly. I don't know myself now – I'm a bionic woman!

If you have very bad hearing, do go and get assessed in the Cochlear Implant Department in Beaumont Hospital, Dublin – it might be very worthwhile.

Connie



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VERY HELPFUL GADGETS

Have you ever called into DeafHear where you can buy the most amazingly helpful aids for deaf and hard of hearing people. At the last count, on their website, they had 38 items for sale. Below is a selection of these items. We can't include all of them because of lack of space, but you can view all of them on their website at www.deafhear.ie There you will find descriptions of all the items; what they do and how they can help.

- Audible / Visual Smoke / Fire Alarm.
- Bellman Response Personal amplifier.
- Bellman Visit alert System.
- Converse 1200 and 1300 Amplified Phones.
- Irish Sign Language Picture Dictionary.
- Many different types of Shake Awake Alarm Clocks.
- Minicom 6000 Series Text Phone.
- Mountcastle Silent Flashing Doorbell Alert.
- Portable Phone Amplifier.
- Tinnitus Masker.
- T Link for Mobile Phone.
- Vibrating pillow alarm.

You can contact DeafHear at:

35, North Frederick Street,
Dublin 1.

Phone: 01 8175700.

Email: info@deafhear.ie

Text Messages: 018783629

Peter