

Scholarship for Michigan Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Speech Impaired High School Seniors

The Brian McCartney Memorial Scholarship is sponsored by the Michigan Association for Deaf, Hearing, and Speech Services (MADHS). The scholarships are for deaf, hard of hearing, or speech impaired high school seniors that are planning post-secondary education or training. Two scholarships are awarded annually. An application for the scholarship may be obtained from MADHS by calling 517-487-0066 or 1-800-YOUR-EAR



Nominations Wanted: **Student Leadership Training for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Youth** *Michigan State University,* *June 22-27, 2003*

Michigan Association for Deaf, Hearing and Speech Services (MADHS) is now accepting nominations for the statewide Student Leadership Training. This dynamic program is designed to help deaf and hard of hearing freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior high school students develop leadership techniques, self-determination, become responsible citizens in their schools and communities, and learn personal skills to become strong future leaders.

Most of the costs for the week are paid for by the United Way and agency contributions. Students who attend the Leadership Training School must pay \$150 to cover a portion of their room and board. If a student needs financial assistance, contact the MADHS office. If you would like to consider nominating a deaf or hard of hearing student for this program contact MADHS at 1-800-YOUR EAR

How to Double the Usefulness of Hearing Aids

By David G. Myers

Hope College social psychologist David G. Myers is author of A Quiet World: Living with Hearing Loss (Yale University Press, 2000). He can be contacted at myers@hope.edu

“What information would you like to have received from your audiologist?” When attendees at a national hard of hearing persons convention were recently asked that question, their top two answers were ones I have heard voiced by people with hearing loss many times:

“I wish my audiologist had told me about assistive listening devices.”

“I wish my audiologist had told me about telecoils.”

These two answers form the sides of one valuable coin. I became aware of this gold coin after receiving telecoils (“t-coils”) in my new hearing aids three years ago. I knew that this inexpensive little component of nearly all behind-the-ear aids and increasing numbers of in-the-ear aids would be useful for telephone listening. With a simple button push, my hearing aids can shut off their microphones and receive, via their t-coils, the magnetic signal sent by nearly all telephones manufactured since 1989. Bingo! The phone broadcasts right to my eardrum, with increased clarity.

But this hardly prepared me for what I then experienced in Britain, where virtually all churches, cathedrals, and auditoriums now have “induction loop systems” that also broadcast sound directly to hearing aids with telecoils. (Ditto for Scandinavia, the world center for hearing technology, where virtually all churches now have loops—which transmit magnetic energy from a special PA system amplifier through a thin wire that surrounds the seating area.) Voila!, when I switch on my t-coil, deliciously clear sound broadcasts right into my in-

the-ear loudspeakers.

To use a loop system in a public meeting, there's no hassle over locating and checking out a special receiver and headset, no embarrassment over wearing conspicuous equipment, and the sound comes customized for my needs by my own hearing aids. Moreover, my hearing aids have—as all hearing aids now should—not only a microphone (M) setting and a telecoil (T) setting, but also an M/T setting that enables me to hear conversation or singing around me, while also hearing sound that's broadcast through my personalized loudspeakers.

This is so cool, and yet so little known here in the USA, or at least little known outside of Holland-Zeeland, Michigan, which during 2002 has become America's model community for supporting hard of hearing persons. During 2002, some 100 facilities have been looped, including more than 50 churches, most Hope College public facilities, most auditoriums, most senior citizen center facilities, and even some businesses. Dozens of people have reported uplifting experiences, sometimes bringing them to the point of tears as they hear sound like they haven't heard it in years.

More and more West Michiganders are also looping their homes and offices. My TV not only broadcasts through its speakers, but also the sound of my choosing through my in-the-ear loudspeakers. My office is looped, which means I hear phone conversation through both my hearing aids, with much greater clarity than the one-eared sound otherwise delivered by my assistive listening telephone.

During this past year I have spoken to hundreds of hard of hearing people in national, state, and local meetings. Virtually 100 percent would prefer to have PA system, TV, stereo, and telephone sound broadcast directly to their hearing aids through a telecoil. Indeed, the Board of Michigan's Self Help for Hard of Hearing People(MI-SHHH) recently adopted a

unanimous resolution advocating that Michigan's churches, auditoriums, theaters, courts, airports, and other venues where sound is broadcast install assistive listening systems that broadcast sound directly through hearing aids.

The Holland-Zeeland loop initiative is now spreading to Grand Haven, Grand Rapids, and other Michigan communities, and soon will be receiving significant publicity through articles in periodicals for audiologists, audio engineers, the hard of hearing, and the general public. Michigan is en route to becoming a national model of how a state can support people with hearing loss.

Happily, more and more new hearing aids are coming with the inexpensive telecoil receiver built in. In Holland, audiologists are outfitting nearly all new hearing aids with telecoils (except

for completely-in-the-canal aids, which cannot accommodate the part). Rehabilitation counselors can help, too, by educating people about the usefulness of telecoils.

I can now envision an American future where hearing aids come to be understood not only as microphone amplifiers but also as personalized in-the-ear loudspeakers. With double their present usefulness, hearing aids will become so appreciated and effective that most people with hearing loss will use them (unlike today's world where only 20 to 25 percent of people with hearing loss do). As usage increases, the stigma of hearing aids will diminish. The net result—with the hearing-loss-prone over-55 population slated to double in the next 30 years—could be improved quality of life for tens of millions.

Counselors should consider having telecoils installed in hearing aids whenever assistive listening equipment may be used. Consult the audiologist for more information. For more information about induction loops and the Loop Michigan initiative visit www.hearingloop.org.

