

The MI-SHHH-IGANIAN

Michigan Self Help For Hard of Hearing People

Volume 9 Number 4

WINTER 2004

SHHH & YOU

More than 24 million people in the U.S. have a hearing loss that can hinder daily communication. That translates to one in ten people. By age 65, one in three people has a hearing loss. This invisible condition affects us, family, friends, co-workers and everyone around us. SHHH believes that people can help one another, can be helped, and can participate successfully in society. The mission of SHHH is to open the world of communication to people with hearing loss by providing information, education, advocacy, and support.

Self Help for Hard of Hearing People, Inc. (SHHH) is the largest international consumer organization dedicated to the well-being of people who do not hear well.

If you are not a member of national SHHH, you are encouraged to join. Membership includes the bi-monthly SHHH journal, Hearing Loss, an outstanding information source. Dues are \$25 for USA individual/family, \$50 for Professionals. Make checks payable to "SHHH" and mail to:

SHHH National Office
7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 1200
Bethesda, MD 20814
V/301-657-2248
TTY/301-657-2249
www.hearingloss.org

In this issue:

Workplace Rights of Hard of Hearing.1
Corrections from last issue.....2
Memorial Tribute to Rocky Stone.....3
Chapter Activities..... 4/5
Sponsors/MRS Employment.....6
Donors and Subscription Info.....7
Announcements.....7
Communicating on the Job.....8

Employees with Hearing Loss... Their Rights in the Workplace

By: Ann Liming

Employees with hearing loss are protected by law against discrimination in the workplace. Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) covers a person who is "qualified" for a job. To be qualified, one must be able to perform the essential duties of the job, with or without accommodations. The Michigan Persons with Disabilities Civil Rights Act (PWDCRA) - PA 220 - also protects qualified employees with disabilities against employment discrimination.

An employer may not discriminate against a person with a hearing loss during the recruiting and hiring process. It is important for the person with the hearing loss to know what an employer is permitted or not permitted to do in job interviews:

Employers are not allowed to:

- Ask questions about the person's hearing loss or any other disability
- Force the person to take a medical examination before the job is offered
- Refuse to hire the person with hearing loss if the person can perform the essential duties of the job with accommodation

Employers are allowed to:

- Ask the person if they can do the job, with or without accommodation
- Ask the person to show how they will do the job
- Require the person to pass a medical exam before hire or after a job offer, if other people being hired for the same kind of job are required to take a medical exam

Once a person with a hearing loss is hired, they have the right to accommodations that allow them to perform the essential functions of their job and to enjoy the benefits and privileges of their employment. Benefits and privileges of employment include pay, training, promotions, benefits and time off. Accommodations must also be provided for social events such as company picnics and holiday parties. Employers may not punish a person for trying to get their rights, nor discriminate against the person because a family member, business associate or person in their social group has a disability.

Emergency and safety features of the job that are made available to employees without disabilities must also be available to the employee who has a hearing loss.

- If other employees are allowed to use telephones for emergency and other important calls, a person with hearing loss must have a TTY or amplified phone available to make such calls as well.
- If emergency warning signals are available to other people, visual emergency warning systems must be installed in buildings built after the ADA became law.
- Visual alarms or an alerting procedure must be provided when a person with a hearing loss is alone in a room, office, living or sleeping quarters.

Under both the ADA and PWDCRA, an employer is not required to provide a reasonable accommodation if it will result in undue hardship to the business.

MI-SHHH-IGANIAN is the official newsletter for the Michigan SHHH Self Help for Hard of Hearing People

Michigan SHHH:

President: Janet Haines
jhaines@mi-shhh.org

Vice President: Caroline Caughell
ccaughell@mi-shhh.org

Secretary: Betty Yagi
byagi@mi-shhh.org

Treasurer: Juanita Wikman
jwikman@mi-shhh.org

Chapter Coordinators:
Liz Kobylak

kobylak@mi-shhh.org

Brenda Stimson

bstimson@mi-shhh.org

Newsletter Committee:

Caroline Caughell, Editor

Liz Kobylak

Howard and Georgia Potrude

Betty Saputo

Marla Schindler

The MI-SHHH-IGANIAN is published quarterly. Submit letters and questions by January 31, 2005 to:

Michigan SHHH
PO Box 4808

Troy, MI 48099-4808

www.mi-shhh.org

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the person submitting the information and not necessarily those of the Michigan SHHH. Mention of goods or services does not mean endorsement nor should exclusion suggest disapproval.

Continued from page 1

Hardship criteria are decided for each case individually. **Undue hardship** applies when an accommodation is excessively:

- Costly
- Extensive
- Substantial
- Disruptive
- Would fundamentally alter the nature or operation of the business

Do You Believe Your Employer Has Discriminated Against You Because You Have a Hearing Loss?

- Meet with the employer's ADA coordinator or human resource office to discuss the discriminatory action. If an agreement cannot be reached to resolve the situation, you can ask for a mediator to try to solve the problem.
- File a discrimination complaint under the ADA or PWDGRA as soon as possible.

If you have been discriminated against and need help in solving the problem, contact:

Division on Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DODHH)
Michigan Commission for Disability
Department of Labor and Economic Growth
320 N. Washington Square, Suite 250
Lansing, MI 48913
1-877-499-6232 T/V
1-517-334-8000 T/V
E-mail: DODHH@michigan.gov
Web site: www.mcdd-dodhh.org

To file a complaint under the ADA

File within 180 days of the alleged act of discrimination

Contact:

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
1-800-800-3302 Toll Free (T)
1-800-669-4000 Toll Free (V)

To file a complaint under the Michigan PWDGRA

File within 180 days of the alleged act of discrimination

Contact:

Michigan Department of Civil Rights
1-313-961-1552 (T)
1-800-482-3604 (V)
<http://www.Michigan.gov.mdcr>

WE NEED YOUR HELP

As stated elsewhere in our newsletter, it costs over \$1500 to print and mail each edition. Sometimes as many as 100 newsletters are returned to us for various reasons - moved, left no forwarding address, wrong address given to us, and even the "temporarily away". MI-SHHH must pay postage for all returned newsletters as well as the re-mailed newsletters, which is very expensive.

There is a way you can help defray our costs. If you wish to continue to receive this newsletter, fill out the form on page 7, and mail it to our P.O. Box.

Please do this by January 1st, 2005 in order to avoid having your name permanently deleted from our database.

The Newsletter Committee

CORRECTIONS to the FALL MI-SHHH-IGANIAN issue:

- The article about **Snap Tips** should have included the information that Snap Tips come in sizes (S,M,L). A hearing care provider can determine the proper size an individual needs.
- On page 8, it should be clarified that although all Board Certified Hearing Instrument Specialists (BC-HIS) are "hearing aid dealers", not all hearing aid dealers are Board Certified.

A Tribute to Rocky Stone, Founder of SHHH

By: Ann Liming



On August 13, 2004, Howard E. "Rocky" Stone, Founder of *Self Help for Hard of Hearing People (SHHH)*, died of complications from pneumonia. With his passing the SHHH family, and people with hearing loss from around the world, lost a friend whose compassion for the human spirit was surpassed by none. Rocky retired from the CIA in 1975 and incorporated SHHH as a non-profit organization in 1979. Through SHHH Rocky empowered people who were hard of hearing to overcome the difficulties of living with a hearing loss.

SHHH began in the family room of Rocky and Ahme Stone's home. Rocky's personal funds and donations from friends were used to start the organization. Staff were not paid until 1985 – a year after the first SHHH national convention. During his tenure as executive director, Rocky did not collect a salary. Membership dues were initially set at \$7.00. The first bi-monthly issue of the SHHH Journal was published in July of 1980 and was only 12 pages long. The first chapter also began in 1980 and was located in Gainesville, GA.

During his life time, Rocky Stone garnered many awards and was often honored for his achievements. His life, however, was not defined by personal recognition but rather by his efforts to better the human condition for people with hearing loss. Through his esteem and appreciation of others he inspired self-confidence and growth. Rocky possessed a blend of intelligence and compassion that made him a charismatic leader. People were drawn to him by the genuine sense of importance he conveyed to each person he came in contact with. Often direct and sometimes outspoken, he was fiercely protective of values, ideals and people who were important to him.

Rocky lived the philosophy of self help and was an inspiration and role model for many. Having lost nearly all of his hearing, as well as his vision, Rocky became a cochlear implant recipient and learned how to function in the world as a visually impaired person. In his later years he often rose above physical pain to travel to state SHHH conferences "because of his high regard" for the people who made up the SHHH membership in the state. Most notable of all was Rocky's desire that the qualities and abilities that he possessed be infused into each and every individual with a hearing loss.

Rocky retired as the executive director of SHHH in 1993. In his last column to appear in the SHHH Journal he wrote, "Now, SHHH must move on with confidence. To me, each of our lives is like a thread woven into a tapestry of history. We are all part of a whole. Some of you, when you joined SHHH, had to regain your spirit. You lit a candle and joined a crusade. Now you are being asked to carry the torch. You have the capability for taking the torch from here to...anywhere. And so, instead of saying goodbye, I'll simply say, The torch has been passed to you. Run as hard as you can."

In Rocky's death, we are reminded once again, that the torch is still in our hands. Let's continue to carry it forward with the same appreciation and compassion for one another that Rocky had for each of us.

The following quotes from An Invisible Condition, The Human Side of Hearing Loss, by Rocky Stone, give a glimpse of the person that Rocky was.

Rocky speaks of hope, someone to love, and the dignity of work. He cites great minds, but also knows the fears, the hopes, of all of us. When he writes or speaks, he doesn't teach or lecture, he transforms."

Pat Vincent, Grove City, Ohio



"Our deepest appreciation to this man who so passionately believes in the human spirit – a belief and genuine love of people which kept him traveling from one end of the country to the other."

Sue Miller, Rochester, New York



"I told Rocky I had a small hearing loss. He said, 'There are no small hearing losses.' He gave me more compassion in those few words than anyone else could in a 15-minute dissertation."

Teresa Gregory, Las Vegas, Nevada



"Rocky changed my life. The cochlear implant brought me back into the world of sound, SHHH brought me back into the world of people."

Tommie Wells, Fort Worth, Texas



"From Rocky I learned 'people come first, then the SHHH organization' – that SHHH does things with people, not for people."

Howard Potrude, Kalamazoo, Michigan



"The same doors Rocky Stone opened for me, he has opened for thousands of others too. The example he has set, his passionate love of the human spirit, and mostly his belief in others, has motivated and left an indelible mark on all those whose lives he touches."

Joan Kleinrock, Bethesda, Maryland



MI-SHHH Chapter Activities

By: Marla Schindler

In this issue of the MI-SHHH-IGANIAN we focus on being hard of hearing and in the workforce. At our SHHH meetings we share experiences, good and bad, and discuss problems and helpful solutions related to hearing loss. Do something just for "you". Drop in on a meeting of the SHHH chapter in your area. See if you don't feel as though you've found a place where you really belong!

BIRMINGHAM AREA SHHH

December 9: Holiday Party, Bring a dish to pass.
Beginning in January of 2005, this chapter will meet only once a month, on the 2nd Thursday of each month.
January 13: Understanding Your Audiogram
February 10: Hearing Aids, The Latest Advances
March 10: Hearing Loss and Hospital Access
Each meeting includes a speechreading practice session.

CAPITAL AREA SHHH

The October meeting centered on the video, Unheard Voices by Gael Hannan. In November we met to investigate ways to improve communication through the use of assistive technology. It was a hands-on meeting and we had the opportunity to try various kinds of equipment, including the Captel phone. In December we will have our holiday party. Please contact the chapter for time and location.

DEARBORN AREA SHHH

January 19: First meeting, Getting Acquainted
February 16: Gael Hannan video, Unheard Voices
March 16: Coping Strategies for Persons Living with Hearing Loss

DOWNRIVER AREA SHHH

Our chapter continues to enjoy realtime captioning. This wonderful technology has opened the world of communication at our meetings, and we are profoundly grateful. We recently enjoyed a "movie matinee" complete with popcorn featuring the Kathy Buckley video, Hear This! Our list of winter meetings includes a good old fashioned rap session. We continue to offer speechreading practice after meetings for those who wish to stay.

GRAND RAPIDS AREA SHHH CHAPTER

This newly formed chapter will begin meeting in early 2005. Meeting details are unavailable at the time of printing but please contact the chapter for more information at: grand-rapids@mi-shhh.org

Hi/Low Tones - ROYAL OAK SHHH CHAPTER

We will be having our annual Holiday Potluck Dinner on December 7th. On January 25th, Sue Fabian, from Elderwise, will speak on medical power of attorney.

Self Help in Michigan... If you do not already belong to a MI-SHHH Chapter, we hope you will find one near you and plan to attend their meetings. Programs benefit not only those with hearing loss but also their families and friends. Everyone is welcome at all MI-SHHH functions.

BIRMINGHAM AREA SHHH CHAPTER

Meets 2nd Thursday of the month
12:30 - 2:30 PM
Birmingham Area Senior Citizen Center
2121 Midvale Avenue, Birmingham
Contact: birmingham@mi-shhh.org

CAPITAL AREA SHHH CHAPTER

Meets 2nd Tuesday of the month
6:30 - 8:30PM
Foster Community Center, Room 110
200 N. Foster Ave., Lansing
Contact: lansing@mi-shhh.org

DEARBORN AREA SHHH CHAPTER

Meets 3rd Wednesday of the month (beginning 1-05)
12:30 - 2:30 PM
Dearborn Senior Center
Ford Community & Performing Arts Center
15801 Michigan Avenue, Dearborn
Contact: dearborn@mi-shhh.org

DOWNRIVER AREA SHHH CHAPTER

Meets 1st Tuesday of the month
1:30 - 3:00 PM
Ford Senior Center
6750 Troy ST, Taylor
Contact: taylor@mi-shhh.org

HEAR ME NOW SHHH CHAPTER

Meets 2nd & 4th Wednesday of the month
9:30 - 11:30 AM
Waterford Senior Center
6455 Harper, Waterford
Contact: waterford@mi-shhh.org

Hi/Low TONES - ROYAL OAK SHHH CHAPTER

Meets 4th Tuesday, monthly (except July & August)
6:30 PM Social, 7:00 PM meeting
1st Presbyterian Church at 6th & Pleasant
Contact: royal-oak@mi-shhh.org

JACKSON AREA SHHH CHAPTER

Meets 3rd Tuesday of every other month
6:30 - 8:30 PM
Disability Connections
409 Linden, Jackson
Contact: jackson@mi-shhh.org

KALAMAZOO AREA SHHH CHAPTER

Meets 2nd Wednesday of the month
7:00 - 9:00 PM
First Congregational Church
Corner of W. Michigan & Park St.,
Contact: kalamazoo@mi-shhh.org

MACOMB COUNTY SHHH CHAPTER

Meets 4th Thursday of the month beginning January '05
1:00 - 3:00 PM
Knox Presbyterian Church
25700 Crocker Blvd., Harrison Township
Contact: macomb-co@mi-shhh.org

MID-MICHIGAN SHHH CHAPTER

Meets 4th Monday of the month
7:00 - 8:30 PM
Butman-Fish Library
1716 Hancock, Saginaw
Contact: saginaw@mi-shhh.org

NORTHERN LightSHHH CHAPTER

Meets 2nd Sunday, monthly (July & August)
1:30 PM
Traverse Area District Library
610 Woodmere Ave, Traverse City
Contact: traverse-city@mi-shhh.org

SENIORS SHARING HEARING LOSS

Meets 3rd Thursday, monthly
3:30 - 5:00 PM
Turner Geriatric Resource Ctr. (Sun Room)
2401 Plymouth Rd., Ann Arbor
Contact: ann-arbor@mi-shhh.org

WASHHH CHAPTER

Meets 1st Monday of the month
7:00 PM
Lewis Room, First Presbyterian Church
1432 Washtenaw St., Ann Arbor
Contact: info@washhh.org

WESTERN WAYNE COUNTY SHHH CHAPTER

Meets 2nd Wednesday of the month
6:30 - 8:30 PM
Garden City Hospital
6245 Inkster Rd.
Contact: wayne-co@mi-shhh.org

WESTSHORE SHHH CHAPTER

Meets 4th Monday of the month
6:30 PM social, 7:00 - 8:00 PM meeting
Roosevelt Park Community Center
Corner of Roosevelt Rd & Glenside Blvd., Muskegon
Contact: muskegon@mi-shhh.org

Contact MI-SHHH

Mailing Address: **PO Box 4808**
Troy, MI 48099-4808

Web-site: **www.mi-shhh.org**
E-mail: **info@mi-shhh.org**

For information about MI-SHHH Programs, call:
517-487-2583 V/TTY

JACKSON AREA SHHH CHAPTER

December 11: Planning Meeting for 2005 followed by Holiday Party at 3:00PM. Contact the Jackson chapter for more information.

KALAMAZOO AREA SHHH CHAPTER

December 8: Holiday Party at Perkin's (intersection of I-94 and Sprinkle Rd.)
January 12: Ann Liming's power point presentation
February 9: Dr. Cindy Beachler
March 9: Betty Yagi's stamp program

MACOMB COUNTY SHHH CHAPTER

January 27: First Meeting, Getting Acquainted
February 24: Gael Hannan video, Unheard Voices
March 24: Coping Strategies for Persons Living with Hearing Loss

NORTHERN LightSHHH CHAPTER

In the fall of 2004 we viewed and discussed the video, Unheard Voices, by Gael Hannan. Our annual holiday party in December will be given a little boost with a fund-raising event through a silent auction. In January and February of 2005, we will hold our annual open house events, welcoming library visitors and all other interested parties. The open house events provide information about SHHH, samples of various assistive technology and refreshments.

WESTERN WAYNE COUNTY SHHH CHAPTER

In December we will be having our annual Holiday Pot Luck dinner. Contact the chapter for more details. No formal meeting is planned for January but if the weather cooperates and enough people show up we'll have an informal rap session. Plans for other future meetings are still pending but include a visit from a hearing aid specialist or audiologist.

WESTSHORE SHHH CHAPTER

We will be having a Holiday Celebration on December 9th. Due to the winter weather, Westshore will NOT be meeting in January. In February, we will discuss Captioning and how to deal with captioning problems. In March, we look forward to a visit from Margaret Sass-Simon, a local audiologist, who will speak about Empathy towards those who have Hearing Loss.



HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

from

MICHIGAN SHHH

Special Thanks to Our Sponsors!

Platinum Level

Division on Deaf and Hard of Hearing
P.O. Box 30659
Lansing, MI 48909
877-499-6232 V/TTY

Information about sponsorship opportunities may be obtained by contacting Michigan SHHH at: jhaines@mi-shhh.org

MICHIGAN REHABILITATION SERVICES *A Partnership for Employment*

By: Julie Eckhardt

According to a recent study, workers with even a moderate hearing loss experience employment barriers. If you, or someone you know, experience employment struggles as a result of hearing loss, Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) may be able to help. You may be eligible for MRS services if you are looking for work or employed and facing difficulties resulting from hearing loss.*

What Does MRS do?

You may know about someone who worked with MRS to obtain hearing aids, but the agency does much more. Examples include:

- Assistance with finding a job;
- Guidance when a career change is needed;
- Determination of appropriate work place accommodations;
- Assistance with identification and purchase of hearing assistive technology;
- Coaching on effective interviewing techniques, preparing a resume, and networking.

Who Pays for MRS Services?

The good news is that MRS provides many services free of charge. These include vocational evaluations and counseling, job placement services and job follow-up services. If you are working, you may be asked to share in the cost of purchased services such as hearing aids or hearing assistive technology. This will be determined between you and your MRS counselor.

A Partner in the Process...

MRS services will be most effective if you and your counselor work as partners. The MRS counselor has a great deal of experience regarding workers with disabilities. You are the expert on your hearing loss and your unique talents. You can assist the process by reflecting on your skills and interests, considering ways you can improve communication on the job, and researching hearing assistive technology that may benefit you. By working together, employment success is within reach.

Getting Started...

If hearing loss (or another disability) is interfering with your career, contact the nearest MRS office. If you decide you want to work with MRS, you will be assigned a counselor who will be your partner on the road to successful employment.

See the MRS website to find the closest office:

www.michigan.gov/mrs

or call:

toll free 1-800-605-6722 (voice)

1-888-605-6722 (TTY)

* Danish Institute for Social Research, 2003. "When Hearing Fails: Impact of hearing loss on work, education and personal health"

Ed note: Julie Eckhardt is a Consultant on Deaf & Hard of Hearing Services for MRS.

How to receive this Newsletter

There is no subscription or membership fee required to receive The MI-SHHH-IGANIAN. We would like all hard of hearing people to receive it regardless of ability to pay. At the same time, we must use the dollars wisely that have been contributed. If you wish to be added to the mailing list or continue to receive this newsletter, please fill out this coupon, or return a photocopy of this page. *If you have responded in the past twelve months you will continue to receive it and do not need to respond again.* This newsletter is separate from local and National SHHH memberships. **If you have been receiving this newsletter for the past year and have never responded, this may be your last issue.** Contributions will be listed in the next edition unless you request to remain anonymous. Remember no contribution is necessary, but notification is a must.

I would like to receive (or continue to receive) this newsletter. Please read the above paragraph.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

I learned about this newsletter from: _____

- ? Enclosed is my contribution of \$_____ to support the outreach programs of the Michigan SHHH. Donations are tax deductible and will be acknowledged in the next newsletter.
- ? I wish to remain anonymous.
- ? I cannot contribute but would like to receive the newsletter.

**Donations should be made payable to: Michigan SHHH
Please send to: Michigan SHHH, PO Box 4808, Troy, MI 48099-4808**

A VERY IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT FROM MI-SHHH

Michigan SHHH will hold Board of Trustees (BOT) elections at the January, 2005 meeting! All SHHH members living in Michigan (those who receive the bi-monthly **Hearing Loss Journal** publication) are eligible to be nominated for election to the BOT. The Michigan SHHH BOT meets quarterly in Lansing. Nominations must be received by December 31, 2004. If you are interested in more information please contact Michigan SHHH. See page 5 of this newsletter for MI-SHHH contact information.

Michigan SHHH Resource Library

MI-SHHH maintains a resource library of materials that deals with hearing loss topics. The collection of items includes VCR tapes, books, and other matter, such as magazine articles and pamphlets.

Two items can be borrowed at any given time. Please note that the materials are on loan for only one month and shipping costs are the responsibility of the borrower.

The complete list of resources can be viewed on our web-site:

www.mi-shhh.org

Requests for materials can be sent to:

MI-SHHH
Attn: Resource Librarian
PO Box 4808
Troy, MI 48099-4808

Thanks

It costs approximately \$1500 to print and mail out each edition of this newsletter. Please consider helping to defray our costs. We are a non-profit, all-volunteer organization. Without your generous support, we are unable to continue this newsletter.

Thank you! To the following donors:

Karen Darling	Victor & Joan Krause
Marian Davies	June Lynch
Marilyn Dean	Lois Maier
Dave Dubay	Eileen Pagel
Allan G. Feldt	Personalized Hearing Care
Michael & Nancy Graham	Audrey Pleasant
Darlene Grant	Patt Plosaj
Portia Gray	Jean Pyykkonem
Francis Harry	Sally Redrup
Thomas Headrick	Patricia Sandstrom
Laura Hicks	Cindy Schten
Frances Hoover	Louise Schumacher
Ernest Horne	Berenice Simmers
Eugene F. Jones	Clara Tuttle
John Klank	Pat Vincent
	Jack Westover

Betty Yagi in Memory of H. Everett Potrude
Anonymous - 11

Michigan SHHH is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization and your donation is fully deductible within the limits of the law.



**PO BOX 4808
TROY, MI 48099-4808**

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
TROY, MI
PERMIT No. 355

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Communicating on the Job... A Personal Story

By: Marla Schindler

Communication on the job can be a difficult thing even under normal circumstances. When an employee is hard of hearing, it makes matters much more complex. Speaking from the experience of having held a number of different positions throughout my employment career, I can attest to the fact that a full spectrum of emotions is experienced.

My personal experience with employers has been very favorable. I have always gone into a job interview being very confident in my abilities to perform the task at hand. However, I have always made my hearing loss known at the beginning and have been very honest about the limitations regarding my hearing loss. This open communication has enabled me to get around problems that might arise in any number of situations.

Fellow employees that I have encountered over the years, for the most part, have been extremely accommodating and helpful. Unfortunately, there are also individuals in this world who are capable of very insensitive behavior. Those people have, on occasion, caused me grief and hurt me deeply.

I have found it helpful to "train" people I work with regarding how to communicate with me most effectively. Communication is a two-way street and telling my co-workers about my needs gets the process started. I

ask that they get my attention before speaking to me. I also ask them to rephrase something instead of repeating it several times.

For my part, I consider it my responsibility to make sure I have understood what was said and if there is any doubt in my mind, then I do not hesitate to ask for clarification.

It is difficult for hearing people to fully comprehend how hard it is for those with hearing loss to function in a hearing world on a daily basis. There is a critical lack of understanding about hearing loss and this leads to many misconceptions about persons who do not hear well. Advocating for ourselves can help raise awareness and change stereotypical perceptions.

I don't hide my disability for fear of being thought of as weak. As a matter of fact, I could say that *hiding* my hearing loss would be a sign of weakness for me, because it would prevent me from performing at my top level.

Yes, it takes extra effort to educate the people around me. The reward is a very good working environment in which I am recognized for my abilities... not judged on the basis of my disability.