It’s hard to imagine the emotional whirl when parents learn their child has a hearing loss, especially if they’ve never known any other toddler with hearing loss. A mother shares her personal experience with hearing loss and their two-year-old daughter.

February 2013 marked a “celebration of hearing” in our household as we observed the one-year anniversary of Madeline’s ability to hear the world. On February 21, 2012, Madeline was fitted with bilateral hearing aids at age one. For the first time, we saw her beautiful face come alive with expression as the curtain of silence was lifted, and she received the gift of sound.

While our discovery of her bilateral sensorineural hearing loss, with a moderately severe-to-profound diagnosis, unlocked the answers to many months of questions and uncertainties, it was far from what we expected.

As the youngest of three children, we noticed early on that Madeline was slower to communicate and interact with others. During her first months of life she cried constantly and was labeled a colicky baby. While our pediatrician assured me and my husband, Jason, that her ears were clear, my motherly instincts told me otherwise.

After a one-month span of three back-to-back ear infections and mounting concerns over her communication delays, we scheduled an appointment with the ENT and audiology department at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). We thought that she would be a candidate for ear tubes, like the “4,000 other kids we treat a year” pep talk that the CHOP representative gave us, and we would be on our way. However, as fate would have it, Madeline wasn’t one of the 4,000 kids who simply needed tubes. We fell into a category I never imagined or thought about.

With each passing audiology test performed that day, I knew things were heading in a dangerous direction. As my suspicions became a reality, the short, little months of her life came cascading toward me, and finally started to make sense. Her often expressionless face, even at just a few months old; the inability to repeat what we said; her muffled, underwater sounds; and the smiling eyes with the non-responsive gestures were all real. It wasn’t her age, or her inability to sit still that was at the root of all of her actions, or inactions. Rather, it was her basic inability to hear.

I will always remember, yet felt like I was in a dream, when the audiologist returned to the behavioral booth and told me Madeline’s diagnosis. Madeline was crawling and rolling all over the floor—not a normal part of my germophobe parenting style and constant attachment to Purell”—and I furiously wrote down what she told me in Madeline’s little salmon colored binder, “mild-to-moderate to profound permanent hearing loss for low-pitch sounds and severe-to-profound permanent hearing loss for high-pitch sounds.”

I stared at the words and didn’t even know what they meant. Then I looked at Madeline and didn’t even know what she could hear. In the midst of so many questions swirling around in my mind, I blurted out, “Will she be mainstreamed?” I suppose that comment emerged from the innate desire to want my child to be 100...
Madeline

percent like every other kid, and to feel “normal.” I looked at her and felt sad about what she was missing.

Our Promise to Madeline

Yet, in the face of such life-changing news, as a family, we embraced the gift of knowing now, and not later, and remained committed to promising Madeline a life with all the options to be like every other kid; that she wouldn’t miss a thing, which was declared by Jason on day one of her diagnosis.

When Jason called from work that day to ask how the appointment went, I told him the less than positive news. Jason’s response was amazing: “She’s got great parents. She will be fine; we will make sure of it. And now she is not only our gift, but also a greater gift to the world as she will help others see the beauty of who she is, and allow others to come to appreciate how normal a difference, any difference, can be. Don’t worry, she won’t miss anything.”

What Next?

Within days of Madeline’s diagnosis, our county’s early intervention team contacted us to set up an in-home evaluation. At the time of testing, Madeline scored below average in the areas of communication and adaptive behavior. She automatically qualified for in-home therapy services. For the last year, our therapist Carolyn has taught us hearing aid management, the art of listening, and the beginning basics of speech communication. Madeline’s siblings, Peter and Sophia, are aware of the Ling Six sounds, and repeatedly engages in conditioned response play with Madeline—even with sea shells at the beach! Most importantly, Carolyn and the early intervention team offered us hope, and built Madeline’s confidence.

As Madeline approaches her third birthday, we are preparing to transition from early intervention services into the preschool arena. We are experiencing this educational journey with new eyes and new ears. There are many options to consider and we continue to educate ourselves about all possible resources. Our best resources to date are other parents and families that have children with hearing loss.

In September 2012, Madeline donned a Barney backpack and took her first day of school picture under the tree in the front yard; just like her brother and sister did on their first day of school. Then, Madeline joined her classmates at the Clarke School for Hearing and Speech in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania—a state-of-the-art facility that offers both in-home and center-based programs for children from birth through five years old, Clarke School has been ensuring a solid educational foundation for deaf and hard of hearing children since 1867. Madeline is thriving in their toddler two-year-old program. She has greatly expanded her understanding of the world around her, adhered to the structure of a classroom, and met other children just like her. We have found other families who are just like we are—sharing our hopes for the future and understanding our fears. The Clarke School has not only changed Madeline’s life in so many ways, it has changed ours too.

Madeline’s typical weekly hearing needs, outside of the typical doctor appointment for a flu shot or a regular checkup, add up to about 12 to 15 hours per week. If a trip to CHOP ENT and audiology department is scheduled in any given week, the time allotment jumps to 20 hours. In addition to in-home therapy and Clarke School, Madeline participates in outpatient speech therapy.

We still continue to question, from time to time, whether we are doing enough and making the right decisions for Madeline, ever mindful of our promise to her. Her annual review conducted in February provided an overall assessment of her progress to date. The experts agreed that, “Madeline has had 18 months of growth in a one year period.”

At the time of her diagnosis, her communication delay was noted at 47 percent. After one year of services, therapy and classroom instruction, Madeline has closed the gap. Her communication delay is currently 10 percent. We felt immense pride for her accomplishments, her perseverance and her joyful willingness to do her part—mainly to keep those hearing aids in during all waking hours! At the end of the day, we feel proud of ourselves too.

Friends and family gathered to support Madeline at the Pennsylvania Walk4Hearing last fall.
Under understanding (even when we couldn’t and found answers to meet their level of beginning, we have encouraged questions and as not to dwell upon it, we promised Madeline that “she wouldn’t miss a thing” we made a silent promise to Peter and Sophia too—that they wouldn’t either. We vowed that Madeline would be treated like one of the gang and never would we focus on her disability as a negative. I vowed to mirror the lives of other families who I knew lived this all too well—such as my lifelong neighbors who have a son with muscular dystrophy.

I promised myself our family unit could be as positive, strong and loving as theirs. I learned so much about life watching their lives. I prayed others could use our family as such an example.

As we set upon figuring out how to teach our two older children to set the example, they, in turn, taught us some remarkable life lessons. They taught other children that Madeline’s hearing aids allowed her to hear the world—just like their ears allowed them—dispelling any notion that anything else was different. They saw hearing aids as normal in Made-line’s world and hence, normal for all.

Peter and Sophia immediately embraced Madeline’s “new ears” and we remember the dinner conversation on the eve of her first set of loaner aids. We explained that Madeline’s hearing aids allowed her to hear the world—just like their ears allowed them—dispelling any notion that anything else was different. They saw hearing aids as normal in Made-line’s world and hence, normal for all.

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For his baby sister was heartwarming beyond words and has never strayed.

Sophia seemed riveted by the story of Oliver the Elephant Gets Hearing Aids and I thought I had done my due diligence in explaining. At the end of the story, she looked at me and asked, “So, Madeline won’t need her hearing aids when she is my age, or age five or ten?” For the first time, I really sat with the entirety of this lifetime diagnosis. Sophia, age three at the time, simply thought of the hearing aids as “medicine that will cure” or a “Band-Aid that will heal.” Through the eyes of a child, forever was a concept not easy to grasp (not for an adult either).

In the months following Madeline’s introduction to hearing aids, we saw remarkable pride in Peter and Sophia when speaking of their sister. On one particular occasion, Sophia had a play date and her friend became annoyed at how loud Madeline spoke.

Peter intervened and spoke kindly to the little girl when he said, “See my sister’s ears? She wears hearing aids. She can’t hear like you and me. But these things help her. That is why she talks loud. But it’s okay.”

From that day forward, it was okay. The little friend came to accept that is how things are and who she is—without a thought or a question. For the first time, we saw our oldest child defend and protect his sister while teaching another child about how “normal” differences can be. He will go on to do great things in life, no doubt. But his actions that day leave us proud beyond words. And hopeful that together, one person at a time, we can dispel the negative stigmas associated with so many disabilities.

On Monday after the Walk4Hearing, Sophia proudly wore her Madeline’s Milestones purple t-shirt to school. Her preschool teacher (who also participated in the Walk) spoke to the students about Madeline and the weekend festivities. She was prepared to lead the discussion—until Sophia took over. In front of her 19 peers, all four-year-olds, Sophia explained how her sister wore hearing aids and how one day she was going to invent “invisible hearing aids” so Madeline wouldn’t know when Mommy and Daddy are putting them in.

She wowed the class that day and began an important life step—advocacy for her sister. Since then, she has stopped friends in the schoolyard to show off her sister’s pink hearing aids. She engaged in a passionate conversation with her classmate Christopher, who told her emphatically that “only old people wear hearing aids.” Sophia most certainly did not agree and pushed aside Madeline’s curly locks to reveal the devices. Madeline beamed with pride (and we believe she did so due to her own personal pride but also out of appreciation that her sister “had her back.”)

Our wish—that this is just the beginning of our united support of Madeline within our Party of Five. Somewhere along the way, as we tried modeling the way for our kids, they started leading the way for so many others. As parents to all our children, we couldn’t ask for more. Together, we forge ahead and pledge to make a better world for Madeline and so many others just like she is!

We can’t help but be reminded of what Madeline’s speech and hearing therapist, Carolyn, told us: “This is who Madeline was always going to be. Nothing could have changed that.”

Our work of helping her hit those milestones was always what we were called to do.


Jason and Melissa Bozzone live in Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania, outside of Philadelphia, along with their three children. Melissa and Jason met in college when she was the student government president at Millersville University and he was the student government president at Kutztown University. They both had the same passion for higher education and were admitted to Bowling Green State University’s master’s degree program in college student personnel. Melissa was a college administrator at Saint Joseph’s University for eight years but after the birth of their first child, she made the career move to work in development and alumni relations at the Academy of Notre Dame in Villanova, Pennsylvania. Jason works at Temple University as the assistant dean for Academic and Student Affairs for the College of Education.

May/June 2013  13
Julie Fisher, Walk4Hearing program assistant, interviewed Jason Bozzone, father of two-year-old Madeline, who was born with bilateral hearing loss; a sloping loss in her right ear and moderately severe-to-profound hearing loss in her left ear. His family walked in the Pennsylvania Walk4Hearing last September.

How did you hear about the Pennsylvania Walk4Hearing?
We first heard about the Walk4Hearing through the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), where Madeline's hearing loss was diagnosed. Then, we heard about it again when we enrolled Madeline in the Clarke School for Hearing and Speech. We knew that this was something our family had to participate in, but we had only four to five weeks until Walk day, so we had to get organized fast.

With only four to five weeks to prepare, Madeline's Milestones managed to be the top fundraiser for the Pennsylvania Walk4Hearing. What was your fundraising strategy?
Our first step was to establish a presence on Facebook, and we were blown away by the response. Not only did our family and friends contribute to the Walk, but also previous students of mine, former colleagues, and even high school classmates gave to Madeline's Milestones. In addition, we reached out to our extended family through e-mails and phone calls. We were immediately overwhelmed by all of the support. We were especially grateful to Madeline's great aunt and uncle, Robert and Lisa Scavetta, who live in New York. The Scavettas went beyond just donating to the team, which they did generously; they also shared Madeline's story with their network of friends and colleagues. All of a sudden checks for $500 started rolling in from people we did not even know! It was amazing.

What was your Walk day experience like?
We prepared as if we were participating in a pep rally. We organized our team, prepared our Madeline's Milestones team t-shirts, and painted cars with the Walk4Hearing colors of purple and green, and the logo. We wanted to make this day as memorable as possible for Madeline.

Arriving at the Walk, we were pleased to see there were walkers of all ages, as well as activities for all participants, both hearing and those with hearing loss alike! Since we have two other children, Peter and Sophia, it was important that they could participate and feel a part of the experience too.

As the morning wore on, the Walk4Hearing director, Ronnie Adler, took the stage to welcome everyone. We were completely shocked when Ronnie called our names and asked us to come up to the stage for the “Top Fundraiser” award for the Pennsylvania Walk4Hearing. We felt so honored to be standing in front of hundreds of people who gathered that morning for one reason—hearing loss. Being on that stage, we realized how big of an issue hearing loss is and that we want to contribute to the bigger picture.

During the Walk, we spent a lot of time talking to other families and learning about their experiences. As we walked and talked we felt as if we were becoming part of a bigger family. Additionally, meeting people of all ages with hearing loss gave Melissa and I hope for a bright future for Madeline, one where hearing loss will not hold her back from any of her dreams.

If you had a message for parents who discover their child has a hearing loss, what would it be?
I would say that it is natural to feel devastated at first, but then you must move on and realize that the glass is really half full. You just have to see the silver lining. It’s important to focus on how you are going to help your son or daughter, and then do everything you can to uncover all the resources available that will aid in his or her development.

Besides your family and friends, what resources have helped Madeline, and your family, adapt to her hearing loss?
The Children’s Hospital is the greatest thing that ever happened to us. We are so grateful to the nurses and doctors for detecting Madeline’s hearing loss and providing us with support, guidance, and additional resources. We are also very thankful for CHOP’s Caterpillar Program which loaned Madeline her first pair of hearing aids.

In addition to CHOP, the Clarke School for Hearing and Speech, the Delaware County Intermediate Unit, and HLAA have all been vital to Madeline’s development.
What changes have you seen in Madeline since first being fitted with hearing aids?

Madeline is an impressive little girl. Since she has had her pink, glittery hearing aids she has become a self-advocate. She speaks up for herself and she lets people know when she can’t hear something.

Also, she is becoming more aware of her surroundings. A favorite moment of mine is when Madeline and I went to the Llanerch Diner in Delaware County for our ‘Daddy/Daughter’ breakfast the day after the Walk. She noticed an elderly man sitting nearby who was wearing hearing aids. She pointed at him, then pointed at her hearing aids and said, ‘ears?’ The man turned and started talking to Madeline. He took out his hearing aids and showed them to Madeline, and I helped Madeline take hers out to show them to the gentleman. All of a sudden they were in their own little club, one that I wasn’t a part of, and I was very proud.

Julie Fisher is the Walk4Hearing program assistant. She can be reached at jfisher@hearingloss.org.

Jamie Wenger

age 7

Jamie shared the following about the Walk4Hearing.

“I liked the Zumba dancing and the balloons! It was a really fun day.”

When Jamie was drawing her pictures, halfway through, she said, “Oooh and the rain. I forgot it rained, that was even fun too. And we walked and then had to turn around and come back because the sidewalk was closed.”

Shiven Vadalkar

age 5

“I had a fun time. I remember seeing a big blue bird on the Walk.”

Shiven enjoyed drawing the bird in his pictures and he mentioned that he remembered everyone’s pink shirts!
A Goal Surpassed in Texas

By Kelley Watt
Coordinator, Tri-County East Regional Day School Program for the Deaf

In November 2012, students, parents and staff of the Tri-County East Regional Day School Program for the Deaf participated in the Houston Walk4Hearing.

Supporting HLAA in an effort to raise funds and increase awareness about hearing loss was very important to us. As a local school district that provides services to students who are deaf and hard of hearing, we understand that the right kind of information, resources and assistance are critical!

Our deaf education program joined the Walk as an Alliance group and formed a team of around 50 walkers. Students and staff participated in various fundraisers that were held on campuses. Team members reached out to friends and family in search of donations.

Together, the team surpassed our original goal of $5,000 and raised $6,622! On the day of the Walk, we proudly wore bright teal team shirts that read, “We walk with purpose—support, influence, awareness, hearing loss, and kids.”

Participating in the Walk4Hearing was a gratifying experience. It was touching to see people of all ages and varying degrees of hearing loss walking side by side toward the same goal. Not only were we able to support the community and HLAA, we were also able to raise money for the students in our program. As an Alliance group, we received 40 percent of the total funds raised by our teams. This money, totaling more than $2,500, will be used to purchase hearing aids, FM systems, and interpreting services for our students.

2013 Washington DC Walk4Hearing

By Tammy C. Black, Director of Communications, The Hearing and Speech Agency

The Hearing and Speech Agency (HASA) was founded in response to one woman’s futile search for a gathering place where people with a hearing loss could connect with and share similar experiences with people like them. Nearly a century later, inclusion is still paramount to HASA’s mission.

HLAA and HASA have a long history of working together to make communication a priority. In fact, we host the HLA Greater Baltimore Chapter (Maryland) meetings in our facility. There were many reasons why it made sense for HASA to participate in the Walk4Hearing yet, we never formed a team.

Originally, it just seemed logical not to participate. Raising funds for another organization would be a challenge when we, too, are a nonprofit seeking contributions from donors. We host several events in the community and just weren’t sure if participation in the Walk would diminish interest in our own activities. How did taking a stand for hearing loss affect our message about autism, the Deaf community or speech-language issues? Would it take focus away from any of our other communication programs?

In response to these concerns, and the desire to partner with organizations with similar missions, in 2008 the HLAA Walk4Hearing kicked off its Alliance program. This program creates partnerships between HLAA and groups like HASA, as well as schools, hospitals, hearing health care-related entities and more. For HASA, the opportunity to be an Alliance partner was the perfect solution. They can continue to raise awareness of hearing loss, help raise money and have the benefit of retaining a portion of the total amount raised by their team(s) for their own programs within their local community. It is a win-win in the best possible sense and a true partnership between two organizations.

The benefits of this partnership go beyond financial gain. HLAA’s national presence in the hearing loss community has allowed us to meet and collaborate with new partner organizations; the Walk program has a much larger reach than anything that we could plan locally; and being part of a national movement has energized the HASA team immensely. Additionally, lending our voice to such an important cause, without having to plan an additional event, has renewed our focus on many of our other programs.

Our team is already looking forward to the 2013 Walk!

We’re Here for You

Ronnie Adler is the director of the Walk4Hearing program. She can be reached at radler@hearingloss.org.

Julie Fisher is the Walk4Hearing program assistant at the national office. She can be reached at jfisher@hearingloss.org or 301.657.2248.
A Walker Talks! (and Walks) About the Chicago Walk4Hearing

By Ed O’Brien
HLAA Illinois Cochlear Implant Chapter

For me, October in Chicago is about enjoying a walk along the shores of picturesque Lake Michigan, but not just any walk. My favorite walk includes hundreds of people of all ages coming together to raise awareness for one cause—the Walk4Hearing!

The HLAA Illinois Cochlear Implant Chapter, along with other chapters and alliance organizations, start planning for the annual Chicago Walk4Hearing in the spring and continues throughout the year. We spread the word about the Walk and solicit local sponsorships, as HLAA’s Director of Walk4Hearing, Ronnie Adler, rallies the volunteers, spreads the love, and fills the teams with energy.

On Walk day, the volunteers arrive early in the morning with varying levels of excitement, from calm to pure panic. I’m usually on the panic side. I think to myself, ‘Did I bring everything? Did I remember the duct tape?’ Others are busy organizing the registration materials, sorting the t-shirts, water, and snacks. We have just three hours to get everything ready, and every year we finish with minutes to spare.

Once underway, I love seeing all the teams. Some have homemade costumes, or a token to set them apart. I’ll see dogs, children in strollers, teenagers, and adults of all ages. But we all share one thing. We all have, or know someone who has, trouble hearing. This is our day of solidarity to let the world know we’re here and we hear.

Finally the Walk is over and every year I think we outdid ourselves. It is time to say goodbye to all my old and new friends. I can relax and look forward to the rest of fall and the holidays.

FAQs on the Walk4Hearing

What is the distance of the Walk? The Walk is 5K or 3.1 miles.

Can I bring my family and friends to the Walk? Yes, you can bring your family, friends, co-workers and neighbors. You can even bring your dog.

Is there a rain date? No, the Walk is held rain or shine.

Will there be fun activities for everyone? Yes, we truly believe in making Walk day fun for everyone—kids and young at heart.

Is there a registration fee? No registration fee is required.

How is money raised for the Walk4Hearing? The money for the Walk4Hearing is raised by individual walkers participating at each event, as well as through local and national sponsorships. In preparation for the Walk, participants reach out to friends, family, and colleagues and ask them to donate in support of their participation in the Walk. Additional money is raised through sponsorships of the Walks by local and national companies.

How are the funds raised for the Walk4Hearing used? Funds raised by the walks are split 50-50 between the local community and HLAA. Proceeds have been used for youth scholarships, installation of hearing loops, captioning of live theater and meetings, hearing aids and other technology for people who cannot afford them, grassroots advocacy seminars, professionally facilitated group sessions to learn communication strategies, hearing loss resources for libraries, scholarships for college tuition, workshops for parents of children with hearing loss, and other worthwhile outreach efforts.

How do I get the official Walk4Hearing t-shirt? Register online or onsite as a walker and raise $100 or more to get the official Walk4Hearing t-shirt on Walk day.

Can we create our own team t-shirt? Absolutely and, in fact, you can use our Walk4Hearing logo for your team t-shirt as well. Be sure to use the one with the registered symbol and Hearing Loss Association of America spelled out on top. If you don’t have it, e-mail Walk4Hearing Director Ronnie Adler at radler@hearingloss.org.

Can I start my own team? Yes, you can form a family team, company team, Alliance team, professional team, school team, etc.

What is an Alliance? An Alliance is an entity such as a nonprofit organization, local school, hospital, hearing health care-related group or house of worship that wants to form a team to raise money and get back a portion of the funds they raised to go back to their own programs and services for people with hearing loss.

Do you accept company matching gifts? Yes, we do. Just fill out the matching gifts form from your employer and submit it to HLAA Attention: Julie Fisher at 7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 1200, Bethesda, MD 20814, and indicate name of Walk and walker/team.

What is the official Walk website? www.walk4hearing.org
Greetings to HLAA walkers and all of you who contribute to make these walks such a great success. As an audiologist for more than 25 years, I have heard thousands of individual stories about the impact hearing loss has on people, their friends and families. I have seen firsthand the benefit that the local chapters receive from the Walks.

The funds you raise help provide hearing accessibility (such as CART and other hearing assistive technology), library materials, scholarships, theater captioning, and more, and to allow HLAA Chapters to continue their great work in communities. At the national level, these Walks provide greater awareness about hearing loss and its effects on the lives of so many.

—Noreen Gibbens

**Hearing Loss Magazine (HLM):** What are you most proud of after the first year of *hi HealthInnovations’* entry into the marketplace?

**Gibbens:** *hi HealthInnovations* has certainly made an impact in its first year to raise awareness about hearing loss and increase the accessibility of hearing testing and hearing aids. Too many people struggle because they can’t afford hearing aids while paying off mortgages, helping their kids or grandkids pay for college, or taking care of their elderly parents. Because we’re backed by the purchasing power of UnitedHealth Group, we have significantly reduced the price of hearing aids. We are seeing a great influx of people who have had hearing loss for a while and are getting hearing aids for the first time. It is very rewarding to hear how their quality of life and relationships have improved with hearing aids that were once out-of-reach for them.

We also made it easier to access hearing testing through our staff audiologists and hearing specialists, our contracted hearing professionals and the introduction of our patent-pending clinical hearing test in primary care clinics. Our team has worked hard to engage the broader health care community about the importance of hearing to one’s overall health and well-being. This is important because many consumers’ engagements with the health care system are with primary care providers, and in a quiet exam room hearing loss could go unnoticed unless the provider is attuned to it.

**HLM:** What kind of support does *hi HealthInnovations* provide to consumers?

**Gibbens:** We offer a variety of support for our customers, depending on the level of support they need. People who have worn hearing aids before might need less support than someone who is wearing hearing aids for the first time. We offer in-person support from our staff audiologists and hearing specialists in many cities, as well as our network of contracted providers in other locations.

We have captioned videos in English and Spanish that provide a good overview of our hearing aids and how to care for them. In addition, and this is one of my favorite things about *hi HealthInnovations*, every Monday through Friday one of our audiologists hosts a free new user seminar via the telephone. The seminars allow us to answer questions, provide and reinforce information we’ve given them, and lets customers share their tips and experiences with each other. As HLAA members certainly know, this is an important part of the journey with hearing loss! We also strongly encourage
our customers to seek out HLAA and its great peer support.

**HLM: Why do you feel that the importance of hearing loss is getting more attention now?**

**Gibbens:** There are a lot of studies that have been done that link hearing loss with other conditions—the most obvious being depression and social isolation. More recent studies have shown links between hearing loss and diabetes, dementia, heart disease, stroke and an increased risk of falls.

In addition to noise-induced hearing loss, 10,000 baby boomers will turn 65 every day for the next 19 years, so the number of people with hearing loss will increase. They will want to age independently, be safe, have fulfilling relationships and, potentially, be competitive in the job market. Hearing well is essential to these goals.

**HLM: Any closing remarks?**

**Gibbens:** We are happy to partner with HLAA to advance the awareness and treatment of hearing loss and want our customers to participate in the Walk4Hearing and know about the support available from their local HLAA Chapters. We look forward to a successful year for the Walk4Hearing. Thank you, and walk on!

Noreen Gibbens, AuD., is the lead audiologist for Hi HealthInnovations and a field team representative for Tennessee. Her responsibilities include assisting patients with hearing testing, fittings and aural rehabilitation, as well as ensuring clinical quality companywide. Dr. Gibbens brings to this role more than 20 years of experience helping people with hearing loss, including a background in large medical facilities and as an advisor to local chapters of the Hearing Loss Association of America. She received her master’s degree from Vanderbilt University and clinical doctorate from Central Michigan University.

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