

# THE LISTENING POST



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association PEI Chapter  
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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

### President's Message

By Annie Lee MacDonald

Welcome back to the The Listening Post after an absence of a few years. Special thanks to Daria Valkenburg for using her talent to put together this edition. Many things have been happening with CHHA PEI since our last meeting, and we felt this is the best way to update everyone on the activities and involvement of members in the community.

I trust our Winter has treated you well and you are looking forward to the longer days and seeing the first evidence that Spring is near. I have seen some first signs like geese flying overhead looking for a perfect spot to land where there is a lot to eat.

Our Chapter has been successful in receiving funding from the Law Foundation of PEI and another project we submitted a proposal for. There is an opportunity for you to be involved and enjoy new experiences and at the same time sharing your skills and expertise identifying with others.

I want to acknowledge Nancy MacPhee's commitment to the Speechreading Program. She

### Advocacy and Public Relations Report

By Daria Valkenburg

CHHA PEI has been very busy since our fall meetings began, and spring is even busier with various events and projects.

On November 8, 2016 we presented a submission for the Seniors and New Health Accord, sponsored by the Federal Retirees Association.

On December 8, 2016 we presented a submission at the Federal Accessibility Consultation meeting in Charlottetown. Copies of both submissions were also sent to the island's Members of Parliament.

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devotes her time as a volunteer preparing and presenting the classes. This is time consuming and we thank you, Nancy, for making this program so successful. Brenda Porter has also been kept busy with her role on the city's Barrier Free Committee and is preparing to present at a gathering of employees at the Charlottetown Airport. Thank you, Brenda, for your dedication to this form of advocacy.

In December we received a grant from the Law Foundation of PEI for a pilot project for helping lawyers to better communicate with their clients. See more info on this in the newsletter.

On December 5, 2016 we had a booth at the Senior Secretariat's Learning and Caring For Ourselves Conference in Summerside. It was the first occasion to showcase the new CHHA PEI banner!

Currently work has begun on a booklet to help communicate with the hard of hearing. Have you helped out by participating in the questionnaire?

Several articles have been published in island papers and in 'Listen' magazine, highlighting the work of CHHA PEI.

## Annie Lee MacDonald Honoured With Senior Islander of the Year Award

By Daria Valkenburg

Retired teacher Annie Lee MacDonald, founding and current president of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, Prince Edward Island Chapter, and former CHHA National board member, was selected for a PEI Senior Islander of the Year Award by the PEI Government's Senior Secretariat, Department of Family and Human Services. The award, presented on October 3, 2016 in Summerside, recognized MacDonald as "a shining example of an active volunteer who has not let age or disability stop her from making a difference in the lives of the people of Prince Edward Island."



*Photo: Left to right: Mary Hughes, Chair PEI Secretariat, Annie Lee MacDonald, Honourable Tina Mundy, Minister Responsible for Seniors (Photo credit: Daria Valkenburg)*

This was the third honour for Annie Lee in 2016. A tireless advocate for her volunteer work in helping people with hearing loss, she was recognized by the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association National Board in April, and by the PEI Council of People with Disabilities in June.

*Do you know of a Barrier-Free Community project in your area? Are you involved? Email us at [hearpei@gmail.com](mailto:hearpei@gmail.com) and tell us about it.*

community social gathering places. As well, CHHA PEI representatives met with The Charlottetown Airport Authority to improve issues for the hearing handicapped.

Much has already been done to raise issues about this 'invisible disability' and there is a very real hope that Charlottetown will be a leader for other small cities in removing barriers for the hearing handicapped.

### Meeting Locations and Time

**Where:**

North Tryon Presbyterian Church  
21592 Trans Canada Hwy  
North Tryon PE

**Time:** 9:30 am

**Next Meeting Date:** Tuesday, March 28, 2017. Guest speakers Rose and Mike Barbour will talk about their recycling of hearing aids project.

**All are welcome to attend!**

## Making the 'Invisible Disability' Visible in Charlottetown

By Brenda Porter

The Charlottetown Civic Board for Persons with Disabilities is involved in a city-wide 'Barrier Free City' initiative. It's exciting that hard of hearing issues are part of the discussion.

In October 2015, Annie Lee MacDonald, Daria Valkenburg, and I attended a forum called Barrier Free City. Members of Charlottetown City Council, city staff from all departments, and representatives from a range of disabilities groups attended, and participated in round table discussions that led to a long list of issues and recommendations.

As a direct result of the day, I now sit on the Board, giving the Hard of Hearing a voice in a wide range of initiatives planned to remove barriers to accessibility in public places in the city.

Hard of hearing accessibility is now included in the city's Event Planning Guideline, and plans are underway for a project directly aimed at accessibility for hearing and visually handicapped persons in coffee shops, restaurants, and

## Speechreading – Helping the Hard of Hearing To Communicate

By Daria Valkenburg

When you're hard of hearing, you need to be savvy about different ways to help you communicate. To help improve their ability to understand what others are saying, many hard of hearing people take classes in speechreading, offered by CHHA PEI. Charlottetown resident Nancy MacPhee, certified by the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association to teach speech reading, is a volunteer instructor for Levels I & II.

Classes run for 10 weeks, two hours per week. In addition to teaching students how to lip read and to interpret gestures and facial expressions, the classes address coping strategies and hearing loss issues.

**New Level I session begins Tuesday, April 4, from 1:30 to 3:30 in Charlottetown. Participants MUST pre-register. Cost: \$50 for non-CHHA PEI members, which includes a one year membership. Current CHHA PEI members pay \$25.** For more information, contact [hearpei@gmail.com](mailto:hearpei@gmail.com) Level II classes will run on Thursday evenings, dates to be set.

## Three Island Women Hear Again After Cochlear Implants

By Daria Valkenburg

Fran Salsman and Alma Nunn sang in their church choir – until they were unable to follow the music due to hearing loss.

“I’ve never had much hearing in my left ear,” Fran noted. “In the 1980s I got my first hearing aid. My ‘good ear’ got progressively worse, and two years ago I had a cochlear implant.”

### Hearing loss can lead to social isolation

The hard of hearing can become socially isolated, finding it easier to stay home, no matter how lonely.

Joan Gallant said “I was avoiding groups. People were avoiding me as it was too difficult to repeat



*Photo: Graduates of Speechreading Level II. Left to right: Marion Toole, Alma Nunn, instructor Nancy MacPhee, Debra Leuty, Brenda Porter, and Frances Salsman. Missing from photo: Beth Hodgson and Gillian Hutchings. (Photo credit: Daria Valkenburg)*

### Speechreading

**Level 1** introduces the most visible spoken consonants, as well as thematic groups, such as colours and numbers. Students practice with phrases in class groups as well as with the instructor. General info on hearing loss, as well as coping and communication strategies, are covered.

**Level 2** reviews consonant movements from Level 1, and continues with practice on less visible consonant groups. Group interaction for practice doing presentations and games are used. More info on topics relevant to hard of hearing students are presented and discussed weekly.

what they were saying. I was beginning to feel depressed.

### What is a Cochlear Implant?

The cochlea is a snail-shaped tube that collects electrical signals from sound vibrations and transmits them to the hearing auditory nerve, which in turn sends these signals to the brain to be translated into recognizable sounds.

A cochlear implant may help when the cochlea is damaged and hearing loss is severe in both ears. A receiver is embedded into the skull bone, with an electrode placed in the cochlea. A speech processor is worn behind the ear and a microphone placed on the head near the ear.

### Impact of cochlear implant surgery

After surgery, there is an adjustment period before activating the implant. Fran recalls that “My family

Please see [Three Women Hear Again](#) on page 4

## Grant From Law Foundation of PEI

By Daria Valkenburg

If you're hard of hearing, talking to people is not always easy. If you have to deal with professional services, such as a lawyer or doctor, it can be extremely stressful. The voices are unfamiliar to your ear, the terminology is many times a barrier, and let's face it, no one goes to a lawyer or doctor just to socialize. It can be very stressful for anyone. For the hard of hearing, it can become a nightmare. Do you admit you can't really hear what is being said? Should you take along a friend or family member to act as your pair of ears?

*Do you have a tip or story on communicating with lawyers you'd like to tell us about? Don't be shy! Email us at [hearpei@gmail.com](mailto:hearpei@gmail.com) to share your experience!*

*Three Women Hear Again* from page 3

brought a whiteboard and dry erase pens that I used for the next month!"

Life changes upon activation. For Fran, "Driving home, I could hear the 'whoosh' of cars. The next month was filled with constant surprises. My cat **does** purr! Everything in the house makes a noise! I can hear myself sing again."

As Joan explains, "I am again active in many activities and travel on my own."



Photo: Frances Salsman of Kensington, left, and Alma Nunn of Kensington, centre, and Joan Gallant of North Rustico (Photo credit: Daria Valkenburg)

With financial support from the Law Foundation of PEI, CHHA PEI hopes to help remove some of the stress and barriers to communication when dealing with the legal community, through a pilot project of using assistive listening devices, commonly known as pocket talkers, to make it easier for the hard of hearing to communicate in a safe and stress-free manner.

CHHA PEI will also host awareness sessions for the legal community on tips for better communications with the hard of hearing. Lawyers who have not yet volunteered for the pilot pocket talker projects are encouraged to do so.

## My Journey to a Cochlear Implant

By Alma Nunn

My journey with hearing loss started 15 years ago when I had to question what was being said in everyday conversation. My husband began asking "You can't hear me, can you?" A trip to the audiologist confirmed his suspicions. I had moderate hearing loss. Over the years, I was fitted with various hearing aids, but there was a continuous decline in what I was able to hear.

The reality of my hearing loss was hard to accept. I felt robbed of so many things. I could no longer communicate effectively. I could not hear my grandchildren on the phone, group activities were a nightmare, music had little meaning, and I had to give up singing in the choir.

Conversations in the car were almost impossible. Visits to the bank and pharmacy consisted of written notes. I became dependant on others to make appointments. I avoided people and people avoided me.

Two years ago I saw the audiologist connected to the cochlear implant program in Halifax. I was an implant candidate, so surgery was performed. Many trips were made to Halifax for programming and adjustments. Once the device was turned on, I could hear sounds that I had not heard for a long time – the clock ticking, paper crackling, and water running. Everything seemed very loud, and voices were hollow.

The cochlear implant was not an instant fix, but it is possible now to enjoy conversations with a few people at the same time. And I can enjoy some of the old music I love, and hear the sounds of birds, frogs, and wild geese. I am blessed to be able to hear again.

## Fundraising Update

- On November 15, 2016, Nancy MacPhee arranged for Value Village to hold CHHA PEI day and we increased our coffers, plus cleaned out our homes.
- Marion Toole has arranged for Bonshaw Community Hall to have a Ceilidh on the last Sunday of May, with the proceeds to CHHA PEI.
- Margaret McPhail advised that a quilt hanging may be donated to CHHA PEI, and we are looking at a raffle to raise money.

Do you have a fundraising idea? Would you like to sponsor a meeting or one of our activities? All help welcome!



## Meeting Summaries

By Daria Valkenburg

**September 2016:** Guest speakers, Roman and Marilyn Berezowsky of Alberta, touched everyone's heart with their experiences with their granddaughter Clara, who received a cochlear implant on May 31, and has CHARGE syndrome, which affects multiple organ systems, including her hearing and eyesight. (*CHARGE stands for coloboma, heart defect, atresia choanae, retarded growth and development, genital abnormality, and ear abnormality.*)

**October 2016:** This meeting was set aside for discussion and updates on grants applied for, events that CHHA PEI provided submissions to, and all members were asked to participate in filling out a questionnaire to help in the development of a booklet for communicating with the hard of hearing

## Upcoming 'Listen To This' Award at 2017 PEI Science Fair

On Tuesday, April 4, 2017, CHHA PEI will award \$25 for a specialty prize entitled 'Listen To This' to a student whose project best demonstrates awareness of hearing loss and associated issues. This is an annual award handed out to encourage potential young scientists in the making to think about issues of concern to the hard of hearing.

## Airport Commissionaires Get Awareness Training

By Brenda Porter

On Friday, March 17, Nancy MacPhee and Brenda Porter led an awareness session for the Commissionaires at the Charlottetown airport. It was a brief, relaxed workshop that focused on straightforward best practices for those who provide transportation services. Nancy and Brenda used material provided by CHHA, plus their own personal knowledge and experience to outline and talk about tips for communicating effectively with those who have a hearing disability. The commissionaires contributed excellent questions and observations and provided positive feedback about the mini-workshop. Information about CHHA-PEI was left with them. It is hoped that this session might lead to workshops with other groups of service providers in our communities in the future.

**November 2016:** Our annual meeting. Guest speaker Pat Kelly, 911 Provincial Coordinator, outlined the new text messaging system that became effective September 1, 2016 and the call-in protocol to use if you need to access 911.

**Note: No meetings were held in December, January, and February.**

**You are not alone!**

**10% of the world's population experiences hearing loss.**

Source: MarkeTrack 6, Hearing Review

**The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, PEI Chapter**

- *Non-profit organization*
- *Formed 2001*
- *Engages in advocacy for the hard of hearing*
- *Holds regular meetings with guest speakers on hearing related topics*
- *Fosters speech-reading classes*



*"We are Your Bridge to Hear"*



*Meeting Summaries* from page 5



*Photo: Roman and Marilyn Berezowsky spoke about their granddaughter Clara at the September 2016 meeting. (Photo credit: Louise Berezowsky)*

**2017 CHHA PEI Board of Officers**

**President:** Annie Lee MacDonald

**Vice President:** Brenda Porter

**Secretary:** Joan Gallant

**Treasurer:** Annie Wood

**Public Relations & Advocacy:** Daria Valkenburg

*Thank You  
To Our Sponsors*

*Horizon Hearing, who sponsored the lunch at the September 2016 meeting*

*Law Foundation of PEI for the grant to pilot pocket talkers and provide awareness training to lawyers*

*The Copy Shop in Kensington, who sponsored this newsletter*



*Provincial Coordinator for 911, Pat Kelly, on left, spoke about the text messaging system that started on PEI in September. Annie Lee MacDonald is on the right, and both are beside the new CHHA PEI banner. (Photo credit: Daria Valkenburg)*