

## Organization SPOTLIGHT: Hearing Loss Association of Delaware

For this month's SPOTLIGHT, the

[Hearing Loss Association of Delaware](#) (HLADE)

was interviewed. Linda Heller, the organization's founder and Executive Director was our guest. Keep reading to learn more about the Hearing Loss Association of Delaware!

### Background – Fast Facts About Hearing Loss Statistics

This SPOTLIGHT begins with some facts about hearing loss and deafness. According to the

[National Institute of Health hearing statistics](#),

“About 2 to 3 out of every 1,000 children in the United States are born with a detectable level of hearing loss in one or both ears.” During our discussion, Linda from HLADE also provided hearing loss statistics. Across the country, about 28 million people have hearing loss. That is 7 to 14% of the national U.S. population. By 2025, the national percentage of people who have hearing loss is expected to be 25%. A hearing aid does not correct hearing; it is an aid. About 120,000 people in Delaware have hearing loss. This includes between 1000 and 3000 Delawareans who are deaf. Hearing loss happens to both senior citizens and those younger in their 40's and 50's. One reason for hearing loss is noise exposure. Sound is developed early in life. The leading cause is sensory neural hearing loss. 95% is due to the inner ear being damaged. This can occur at birth or later in life. 40% of hearing loss is due to a receptive or dominant gene. Another fact is it is important to effectively communicate with people who experience hearing loss.

### Tips and Strategies for Promoting Successful Interactions

The way in which a person with hearing loss chooses to be addressed differs from person to person. Person-centered language is crucial. Examples: Some people choose to be referred to as hard-of-hearing. Others prefer the term person with a hearing loss. Linda explained: “that varies by person because in a lot of older people, they don't mind using the word, hearing impaired or a hearing loss.” If you are unsure how to address someone with a hearing loss, ask the person. Additionally, when interacting with someone with a hearing loss, it is helpful to face the individual. This detail is important so that the person with hearing loss can use lip-reading skills and see what is being said. If an interpreter is being used, talk directly to the individual with the hearing loss and not the interpreter. One of the Hearing Loss Association of Delaware's key focuses is their support groups.

## Hearing Loss Association of Delaware Support Groups

Hlade refers to its support groups as “circle chat”. This term is used because people with hearing loss need to look at each other and/or use technology in order to communicate. In other words, there is a circle of connection. The groups currently meet once a month in New Castle and Kent counties. The organization also has a support leader in Sussex County. The goal of these meetings is for people with hearing loss to communicate and help each other. Education and advocacy are also helpful.

## Education and Advocacy

One of the ways Hlade educates people is through their web site

[Hlade Resources page.](#)

In addition, the organization provides education to people who learn about the organization and call seeking information. Linda shared that Hlade typically provides 40 lectures annually. Hlade also offers education to individuals in need of guidance in-person. This can include informing people with hearing loss about available technology which can help them. The cost of hearing technology can sometimes pose a challenge. Other people with hearing loss benefit from information about their disability rights so that they can advocate for themselves. Making a difference is important.

## Making a Difference

As founder of Hearing Loss Association of Delaware and a person with hearing loss herself, Linda values the work she does. The thing she enjoys most about being part of Hlade is making a difference in people’s lives. This can include answering questions and providing advice. The goal is to help people with hearing loss have a greater quality of life. Hlade can help people connect and be less isolated. This SPOTLIGHT concludes with a quote from Linda expressing her passion for the work she does. Linda said: “So the hearing loss association is a passion and I want to see it grow and prosper and help as many people as possible.”

Stay tuned for the Delaware Statewide Independent Living Council’s next organization SPOTLIGHT!