

## Assistive Listening Device Program - an Evolution for Peer Mentoring

Assistive listening devices are essential to a person's hearing journey and accessibility to the world. Hearing aids or cochlear implants are just one step in the journey-- they do not "cure" the hearing loss, but they offer better understanding of speech for most people. In addition, many people with hearing loss could benefit from other devices to support them in their work or home environment. Such equipment includes technology like visual environmental signaling systems for home alarms or doorbells, as well as adapted telephones or amplified television systems that link with a specific hearing device. Many acousticians and/or rehabilitation services can support our members in purchasing these devices and even in setting them up initially.

After careful evaluation, we concluded that our Assistive Listening Device program needed to be modified. Despite many years of wonderful support with ALDs to our members, with low attendance more recently, and after much effort to advertise and support the program, we determined that we could be more helpful supporting members in getting their technology through other service providers. CHIP can still play an important role in the process, making sure that, once members have received the equipment, they continue to use it with ease and confidence.

This aspect of peer mentoring, where members provide support to others, is unique to CHIP and is a component that we feel is essential to maintain and build upon. We currently have peer mentors sharing their personal hearing journeys on our social media platforms, HearHear magazine and via the Outreach Program. This provides our audience with a very exclusive and particular perspective that has a unique and lasting impact on them. Our plan is to carry out further research and hopefully develop a more focused peer mentoring program at CHIP that can address support for technology and, as well, address such other issues as loneliness and social isolation among seniors.

In Montreal, there are many services for seniors that involve advocacy, social activities and assistance with groceries and the like, but there are no anglophone peer mentoring services provided for seniors by seniors (which is the whole point of being peers, after all) - and particularly not for hearing loss. There is much evidence that peer mentoring works well for seniors. Peer mentoring is a natural fit for CHIP and we plan on pursuing the development of a Peer Mentoring Project in the coming year. We will approach some potential partners with whom we can create a collective impact and look for some funders for a project. In the meantime, peer mentors at CHIP continue to share their hearing journeys with the community.

