

HEAR HEAR

M A G A Z I N E

**FALL
2025**

HEARING LOSS DOESN'T RETIRE

**SEE GLENN'S
HEARING JOURNEY**

P.16





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In loving memory of

Dorothy Hiscock (Ross), Mary Walsh, & Basile Lentzos

In loving memory, we honor the lives of those who have left us. Their support and presence touched our organization for years, and they will be dearly missed. We extend our deepest condolences to their families and friends.

If we have inadvertently omitted a loved one's name, please let us know so we may include them in the next tribute. We deeply appreciate your understanding and support as we remember our cherished members.



Emeritus

Alvin Goldman	Doreen Cons
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A Word from the Executive Director



As we closed out Hear Québec's 45th anniversary celebrations this summer, I've been reflecting on how far we've come and how much more we can accomplish together. Your support, involvement, and belief in our mission have built a stronger, more inclusive community for people affected by hearing loss across Quebec.

This fall marks the beginning of a bold new chapter. With the generous support of donors, we've installed permanent hearing accessibility equipment in the Layton-Lethbridge-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre's main reception a visible and tangible step toward lasting change. The addition of a hearing loop, tablet with communication apps, and a pocket talker ensures that every visitor, especially those with hearing loss, can communicate clearly, confidently, and independently the moment they walk through the door.

This project was shaped by your voices. In fact, it was feedback we received almost eight years ago that inspired this initiative proof that when you share your needs and ideas, real change can follow.

Behind the scenes, we've redefined how we work and why it matters. Our updated Theory of Change now focuses on pathways & Connection, Awareness & Accessibility, and Information & Resources. These priorities are already guiding our programs, partnerships, and our efforts to advance accessibility and inclusion in powerful ways.

You'll also notice other exciting changes: a new phone number to make us easier to reach, and the arrival of new staff, board members, and volunteers whose lived experience and energy are helping us move forward with purpose.



Let's continue building something meaningful together.



We're also enhancing our fundraising incentives to build a more sustainable future. Your generosity fuels everything we do from home visits and peer programs to accessibility consultations and awareness campaigns.

As we move into this next phase, I want you to know: I'm always here to listen. Whether you have questions, concerns, or ideas, please reach out. Your voice shapes the work we do.

Let's continue building something meaningful together the possibilities are endless.

With deep gratitude,
Heidy Wager
Executive Director, Hear Québec



Our 45th Anniversary Soirée was a truly special milestone. It could not have happened without our incredible volunteers, board members, staff, community partners and most of all, you, our members. Thank you for being part of the celebration and for helping make our community so vibrant and inspiring.

New Technologies

From Sound Check To Sound Care: My Experience Testing Apple's Hearing Tools



I am an SLP-Student at McGill University. As a musician and singer, I have a deep appreciation for the gift of hearing. My journey with hearing became personal when my mother lost all hearing due to an acoustic neuroma. Learning more about hearing loss through my audiology classes at McGill has deepened my passion for the subject.

By Abigail McLellan

In preparation for my audiology pure-tone lab, I took Apple's AirPods hearing test. The experience was simple and streamlined. The next day, while performing a hearing test at school on one of my colleagues, I also asked my "patient" to indicate whenever they heard a sound. Unlike with the AirPods, my patient was in a sound-proof booth for the testing. But as a student still learning, I had to stop and think before selecting the next sound to present to my fellow student.

The parallel experience made me wonder if the Apple device was following the same protocol that I was—down 10 decibels, up five decibels—until the threshold was established. It also made me wonder about the variety of hearing tests that were not being performed by Apple, including testing the middle ear function, speech audiometry and bone conduction.

As the name suggests, Apple only tests our threshold for hearing pure tones, and misses many important aspects important to evaluate hearing.

It turns out I was not the only one inspired to ask questions about Apple's technology. I soon learned that many readers of this magazine have been wondering about the suite of testing and treatment options offered by Apple. I also learned that the features I had stumbled upon on my iPhone were actually one of three functionalities, which have not yet been approved for use in Quebec,

despite Health Canada's approval in December 2024. In addition to its pure-tone hearing test, Apple's AirPods can function as Personal Sound Amplification Products (PSAPs), designed for people with normal hearing to amplify sounds in specific environments. They are not regulated medical devices and are not designed for use in contexts of deafness. However, the AirPods Pro can function as an Over-the-Counter (OTC) hearing aid, which is intended for mild to moderate hearing loss and does not require a medical evaluation.

One can see the obvious benefits of these three services offered by Apple. While more than 40% of Canadians aged 20 to 79 are estimated to have hearing loss in at least one ear, only about 23% of those who would

benefit from a hearing aid actually use one. Cost is cited as a barrier in 72% of cases. Amplification is one way to minimize the negative effects of hearing loss such as reduced earning power, isolation, fatigue, anxiety and increased safety risks. Increasing accessibility to amplification technology is a crucial step in minimising these outcomes.

Despite the clear benefits of inexpensive OTC hearing aids to increase access to amplification, AirPods hearing aids do have some limitations. Hearing aids vary in design and function, with different outcomes depending on the model. For

“**Amplification is one way to minimize the negative effects of hearing loss such as reduced earning power, isolation, fatigue, anxiety and increased safety risks.**”



example, someone with a middle ear hearing loss might be a candidate for a bone conduction hearing aid, which bypasses the affected middle ear and delivers sound directly to the still-functioning inner ear via the surrounding bones.

Middle ear problems also highlight the diagnostic limitations of AirPods. Since Apple does not test bone conduction, it would not be able to identify someone with a middle ear problem. With limited testing, we risk missing important interventions that go beyond amplification, such as surgery to correct problems of the middle ear or treatment for other medical conditions—some serious, like infection, and others less so, like earwax buildup. Anyone trying Apple's OTC hearing aid should be aware that results vary depending on individual hearing needs. If the AirPod feels unnatural or distorted, its important to remember other models might be more appropriate.

Limitations are important to consider when determining the best intervention to improve hearing. To date, most individuals in Canada do not have the opportunity to explore these options at all. It remains unclear how long it will take for these features to be approved for use here. This is despite the statement of the OOAQ (Ordre des orthophonistes et audiologistes du Québec), which is calling on the Canadian government to legislate quickly on over-the-counter hearing aids. Quebec law still classifies hearing aids as medical devices requiring professional assessment and fitting. This restricts who can activate, configure, or dispense them—currently only registered



audioprothésistes. For the feature to be legal and functional in Quebec, either provincial law must change or the Ordre des audioprothésistes du Québec (OAQ) would have to permit OTC use. In the meantime, people are pushing for change. A petition on Change.org—"Approve Hearing Test & Hearing Aid Functions on AirPods Pro 2 in Canada"—is actively circulating. It calls for Canadians (including Quebecers) to support immediate access to these features without requiring a prescription or clinic fitting. In addition, one can also reach out to their MNA (Member of the National Assembly) and the Quebec Ministry of Health to voice support for regulatory reform. While the systems Apple offers are not perfect and certainly do not replace the complex medical care of an audiologist, they undeniably reduce barriers to access and allow patients to feel more in control of their health.

It has been fascinating to explore the different ways AirPods are changing the field of sound amplification and hearing testing. I don't think it should be viewed as an either-or question. Apple's OTC hearing aid offering does not replace conventional hearing aids but adds to the possibilities. In the meantime, my fingers are crossed that Canada and Quebec will soon make this service available to all citizens, as appropriate.

Reference:

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BTW

Living Between SILENCE & SOUND

Our Relationship as a Deaf and Hearing Couple

By Andrea Lepore and Tim Liboiron

We are Andrea and Tim, a married couple with different sensory needs, and who come from different experiences — one deaf, one hearing — but who have built a life grounded in understanding and communication.

Our life together has shown us that communication is never one-size-fits-all. For us it is often visual, intentional, and sometimes awkward or funny. But it works because we have learned how to meet each other where needed.

Relationships thrive on communication. But what happens when sound is not always part of the conversation?

Life at Home Where Silence is Normal

Tim:

When Andrea takes off her cochlear implant sound processors at home, everything changes. Suddenly our world becomes completely visual. I cannot call out from the next room or casually start a conversation while cooking. If I want her attention, I need to show up in front of her.

We have smart lights set up throughout our home. They flash in different colors if I need to get Andrea's

attention. Once, I locked myself out and had no way of reaching her because she was relaxing without her devices and didn't have her phone nearby. Now, the lights are my backup plan. Red means there's an emergency. Yellow means I'm stuck outside, even if it's just me being dramatic about forgetting my keys.

Andrea:

Silence is personal to me, and it's not something I avoid. It is where I recharge. My sound processors come off as soon as I get home from work some days, and I love that peaceful disconnect from a world of constant sensory overwhelm. But that also means communication in our home is different.

In such instances, Tim and I rely on visual cues, gestures, or lipreading. We've had to laugh through a lot of misunderstandings. I can be louder in just the way I move around our home and handle objects or operate appliances. I need to be intentional about being quieter. I can be pretty good at monitoring my voice level and tone without my sound processors, but I also know I can easily raise my voice without realizing it at the moment. Early in our relationship, Tim would think I was upset when really, I just couldn't tell how loud I was being. It took practice and more than a few constructive arguments to work through that.



Building Accessibility Into Everyday life

Tim:

Our home is wired for accessibility, but I'll be honest, I did not fully understand how much it mattered until I experienced it.

The Philips Hue lights are set up to flash in different colors, red to signal smoke or yellow to signal carbon monoxide. Our RING doorbell vibrates Andrea's phone so she knows someone is at the door. It's all connected through our home Wi-Fi network and an app called IFTTT that allows us to customize how the different technologies work together. It gives me peace of mind, especially when I'm not home and Andrea is alone. Technology bridges gaps, but it also reminds me how hearing people take sound-based safety for granted.

Andrea:

Our smart home setup gives me independence and makes me feel safe. I cannot rely on sound alarms or knocks at the door, so it keeps me connected and allows me to lay my guard down when I'm alone. This is a game changer when it comes to my overall mental health.

But the bigger challenge is outside our home. Movie theatres with malfunctioning captioning devices, public events with no visual supports, those are daily reminders that society still treats access to information and communication as optional.

Early Days and Awkward Conversations

Tim:

When we first started dating, we used a VCO or Voice

Carry-Over service, an older type of phone relay service, to make plans. This was before Andrea received her first cochlear implant in 2004. An operator would listen to me and type everything for Andrea to read in real time.

I will never forget the first time I tried to flirt. I completely forgot the operator was listening and mumbled through some cheesy line. The operator stopped me, completely deadpan, and asked me to repeat myself. It was awkward, hilarious, and a reminder that communication in our relationship would always be unique.

Andrea:

Definitely unique! That moment still makes me smile. It was really awkward, but it showed me Tim was willing to stumble through the uncomfortable parts to connect with me. That means more than perfect words ever could.

“Our life together has shown us that communication is never one-size-fits-all. For us it is often visual, intentional, and sometimes awkward or funny.”

Social Life and the Community That Connects Us

Andrea:

Loud restaurants, crowded spaces, group gatherings, they drain me. Even with cochlear implants, overlapping speakers and background noise are overwhelming. Tim has learned how to support me in those situations and environments, understanding my cues such as tapping my ear, and readily filling in the blanks when I miss parts of conversations. We often debrief after social events so I don't feel left out.



But the best part is how being together has connected Tim to the various d/Deaf and hard of hearing communities. He's attended events, met friends and advocates, and learned that accessibility is not about charity– it is a right.

Tim:

Andrea's deafness has completely changed how I see communication access. I used to think of it as something extra. Since meeting her, I see it as essential, needing to be built-in. Watching her teach, advocate, and lead has been inspiring.

A proud moment was seeing Andrea speak at one of Hear Quebec's annual luncheons. Her honesty, passion, and the way she shared her story reinforced for me the daily challenges d/Deaf and hard of hearing people face, as well as the resilience and ongoing courage it takes to work through them.



“*Our life is a combination of silence, sound, adaptive strategies, smart technology, and a lot of patience.*”

Meeting in the Middle: Silence, Sound, and Everything Between

We come from different sensory experiences, but we meet each other where it matters. Our life is a combination of silence, sound, adaptive strategies, smart technology, and a lot of patience. There are frustrating days, missed words, and funny miscommunications, but there are also small victories, meaningful conversations, and deep respect for each other's worlds.

Living between silence and sound has taught us both that communication is never just about words. It is about effort, understanding, and showing up for each other again and again.



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Administrative Assistant, Amber Perry

Join Our Community

Why Community Matters

Becoming a member of Hear Québec is more than a transaction, it's a statement. You're joining a movement that champions accessibility, celebrates lived experience, and ensures that no one facing hearing loss has to navigate it alone.

Your membership fuels peer support networks, life-changing resources, and support that creates real, lasting impact across our community. Together, we're building a world that listens and includes.

Whether you're living with hearing loss, supporting a loved one, working as a hearing health professional, or simply believe in equity and connection, there's a place for you here. And your voice makes us stronger.

TOP REASONS TO BECOME A MEMBER:

Being a member means more than having access to great programs, services, activities and perks: it also means having a community and a team that helps you unlock them. We're here to guide you through every benefit, every resource, and every step of the way.

DID YOU KNOW THAT THE RESOURCES BELOW EXISTED AND THAT YOU COULD HAVE ACCESS TO THEM?

- ✓ **Accessibility Cell Phone Discounts:** Save up to \$20/month on phone plans.
- ✓ **Disability Travel Card:** Regular fare for you; free or discounted fare for a companion.
- ✓ **Access 2 Card:** Free or discounted admission for a companion at 500+ venues nationwide.

Membership Fees/ Payment Options: (2025-26):

STUDENTS & VETERANS: FREE

Individual: \$20/year

Professional & Organizational: \$25/year

Non-Profit Organizations & Staff: \$20/year

Online: hearhear.nationbuilder.com/donate
(add note: "membership fee \$20" etc.)

In-Person: Cash, cheque, credit, or debit

Mail: Send cheques to Hear Québec



**NEW PHONE
NUMBER SEPT 1st!
(438) 380-4327**

*Same team, same service
just a new number.*

Questions?

Contact: info@hearhear.org 514-488-5552 ext 54500 • New phone number starting Sept.1:
(438)380-4327 • Cell: (514) 797-2447

Programs & Services

This fall marks an exciting new chapter for Hear Québec as we begin to align our programming with our refreshed three-year strategic direction. Guided by the 3 core pathways of **Support & Community**, **Awareness & Accessibility**, and **Resources & Referrals**, we're focused on delivering services and activities that create meaningful impact for our members and the wider community. Thanks to your feedback, we're bringing back some impactful activities and at the same time, we're letting go of some to focus on new initiatives that reflect our mission. There's something for everyone this season! When it comes to your hearing journey, our team is always just a phone call or email away.

Program Registration

Registration is required for all activities, events, and services. Please complete the registration form in advance to indicate your interest and complete payment if necessary. Forms can also be downloaded from our website at www.hearhear.org/become-a-member/ and submitted via email or the post.

Subscribe to our emails to receive updates about programs and services.

Support & Community

We create opportunities for our members to participate in peer-centered initiatives that create supportive communities at every stage of your hearing journey.

Peer Mentoring: Connect with Someone Who Understands

The Peer Mentorship Program is a powerful way to foster connection and create lasting impact in the lives of people living with hearing loss. Through one-on-one support, Mentors and Mentees strengthen their communication and self-advocacy skills, reduce isolation, and gain greater access to knowledge, resources, and community.

What makes a good Peer Mentor?

Our Peer Mentors are people who have accepted their hearing loss, are patient, empathetic, and seek to listen without judgement. If you're excited by the idea of providing personalized support to others, then mentorship is for you! We're seeking Mentors to begin training sessions throughout the month of October, 2025. There will be a total of 10 sessions lasting 1-2 hours each. Mentors will need to be available at least 1-3 hours a week to meet with their mentees online or in a public place. Mentorships typically last 4 months.

Who should be a Mentee?

Are you struggling to accept your hearing loss? In need of support navigating your hearing journey? We'll be seeking Mentees who want to grow through peer-support in November, 2025.

If you're interested in becoming a Mentor or Mentee, please complete the corresponding portion of the registration form. Forms can also be downloaded from our website at www.hearhear.org/become-a-member/.

NEW! Young Adult Focus Group

In winter 2026, we're hosting a focus group for young adults aged 16 to 30. We want your help to shape future programs that truly reflect your needs and experiences. Whether you live with hearing loss or know a young adult who does, we invite you to connect with us. Your insights will help us build something meaningful for the next generation.



Resources & Referrals

At Hear Quebec, we take pride in delivering reliable information through our dedicated team and valuable partnerships

We're Here When You Need Us

We take the time to understand your specific needs, connect you with trusted professionals, and keep you up to date on the latest technology and services. Our digital library on the Hear Quebec website offers easy-to-follow guides, articles, and tip sheets on hearing health. We also host seminars and outreach workshops in the local community.

Inbound Requests

We take inbound requests to help any member who needs tailored support. We do our best to connect you with helpful information within 1-2 weeks of your request.

Outreach this fall

Seniors' Action Quebec (SAQ): In honor of Seniors Day October 1st 2025, Hear Quebec will be presenting at the conference event hosted by SAQ on October 4, 2025. We will be sponsoring a full day of accessibility for this event. Attendance is open to everyone and registration is on a first-come-first-serve basis. Please contact SAQ to register at info@seniorsactionquebec.ca

McGill Community Engagement Day Sept 19th 2025, 2pm-5pm: We'll have a table to meet students, promote our services, and recruit interested volunteers.

HEARTalk Workshops: Get expert insights and practical solutions for hearing loss directly from the pros!

Mode: Hybrid **Where:** 7000 Sherbrooke St West, Google Meet and in-person

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|--|---|
| ● How to Read Your Audiogram
<i>With Audiologist Abir Kheir from
Polyclinique de l'oreille</i>
Sept.25, 10:00am-11:30am; room C-37B | ● The Hearing Loss Guide to Taxes & Disability Credits
Jan 2026:Date & time TBC |
| ● How to Choose Your Hearing Aid: Top 10 questions to ask before you buy!
<i>With Acoustician Mathieu Baribeau</i>
Date & time TBC | ● Hear Quebec Saves You Money: Cellphone Savings, Accessibility Cards, & Scholarships
<i>With Amber Perry, Administrative Assistant at Hear Quebec</i>
Feb.19, 6:30pm-8:00pm; room C-37B |
| ● How to Protect your Residual Hearing
<i>With Audiologist Dale Bonnycastle</i>
Nov.19, 10:30am-3:00pm; room C-37B | ● March: Hearing Loss in the Workplace: Emploi Quebec, Accessibility, and Rights
<i>With AIME CROIT Québec</i>
Date & time TBC |

For Hearing Health Professionals: Clinics to Community

As part of our strategic direction our Clinics to Community series is looking to support our professional partnerships. Helping our members thrive is even easier when we have a strong network of professionals!

What's new this year? We're beginning the process of securing unité de formation continue (UFC) accreditation from the Ordre des audioprothésistes du Québec, so that hearing health professionals will be able to receive professional development credits for attending our talks.

Don't miss your chance to become a professional member where you will have access to our upcoming sessions and become a referral point for our members. Download the professional membership form on our website at <https://hearhear.org/become-a-professional-member/>

Awareness & Accessibility

Helping make more homes and public spaces hearing accessible and inclusive.

Consult ME: Making Montreal More Accessible

Consult ME is Hear Québec’s bilingual program dedicated to improving hearing accessibility in public spaces across the city. From inclusive staff training, to optimizing equipment, and building systemic, accessible programming, the Consult ME program is helping improve hearing accessibility one location at a time.

In exciting news, over the past year, Hear Quebec has partnered with la Ville de Montreal to evaluate and live-test 16 different Maisons de la culture. Our final report has revealed some great steps that cultural venues– Maisons de la culture and beyond– can take to create inclusive experiences.

Anyone who would like to schedule Consult ME services, can complete the following form: <https://forms.gle/2kQKgLPtH9Xymv5mL6>

Include ME at Home: Maximize Your Assistive Devices

Is your amplified phone, TV device, or assistive listening technology not working the way you expected? Our Accessibility Ambassadors are here for you. Include ME at Home is here to help you stay connected and confident with your hearing technology.

Our trained Ambassadors, who also have hearing loss, offer phone calls and home visits to help you. The Include ME at Home program has **helped nearly 200 members** get their devices set-up, and kept them functioning for maximal personal benefit.

With hands-on training and experience using these tools, our Accessibility Ambassadors are here to offer:

- ✔ **Personalized Guidance:** We’ll walk you through setup and daily use so features on your device work the way you need them to.
- ✔ **Tech Troubleshooting:** Glitches or confusion? We’ll help identify the problem and find practical solutions.
- ✔ **In-Home Support:** Prefer help in-person? We can visit you at home for one-on-one assistance.

Reach out today to get support from one of our trained Ambassadors.



“This is the first time I’ve understood everything during a play in a public space. I usually avoid going to performances.” – user feedback from a Consult ME visit to a Maison de la culture



“Hear Quebec is one of these organizations that understands and brings people back into society who had once felt left out. With the guidance of the staff and the many devices available in this day and age, help is available.” - Shirley Holdbrook, member and Accessibility Ambassador

Special Events: Save the Date(s)!

A Holiday Celebration of Community & Connection: December, 2025 (Date TBC)

Each year, our Holiday Brunch brings together the heart of our community—you. It’s a time to gather, reconnect, and share the joy of the season with friends, family, and fellow members.

Join us for a warm and festive meal, exciting prize giveaways, and a special seasonal activity designed to make this day one to remember. We’re also thrilled to continue our cherished partnership with Résonance Montréal (formerly the Montreal Oral School for the Deaf) for a fun and meaningful intergenerational activity that brings all ages together.

Mark your calendar, we can’t wait to welcome you!



World Hearing Day: March 3, 2026

World Hearing Day is held each year to raise awareness on how to prevent deafness and hearing loss, and promote ear and hearing care across the world.

This upcoming year we will be hosting a special event that coincides with the World Hearing Day. For the first time we will be accepting donations for the event. Our goal is to fundraise \$500 for the Bonnycastle Bursary, which helps recipients purchase hearing assistive technology to improve their quality of life. If you are interested in learning more, please register that you are interested and we will send you updates as they come in.



Centre de réadaptation
**LETHBRIDGE-
LAYTON-MACKAY**
Rehabilitation Centre

The Lethbridge-Layton-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre offers specialized services for people of all ages living with a hearing disability, including hearing loss and tinnitus. These services are available to anyone living in the Greater Montreal area:

- Rehabilitation
- Cochlear implant
- Technical aids services
- Employment assistance services

Our experienced team includes audiologists, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, social workers, psychologists, and specialized educators. All of these professionals work together to support you in achieving a better quality of life in hearing and communicating in your natural environments.

To learn more or get started, please contact our Admissions Department:

- guichet.ditsadp.ccomtl@ssss.gouv.qc.ca
- 514-488-5552, ext. 51250

Partnership with Hear Entendre

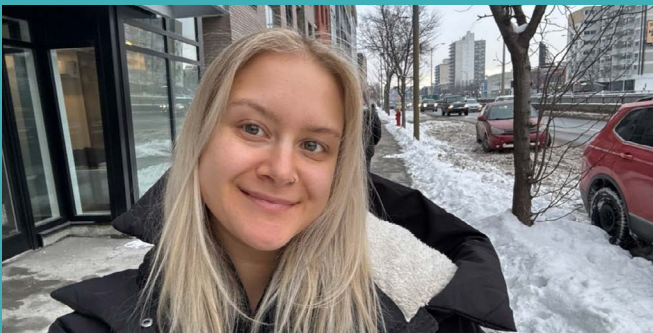
As an important partner of the LLMRC, Hear Entendre can help you with your request for services! Just ask anyone in their office.

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universitaire de santé
et de services sociaux
du Centre-Ouest-
de-l’Île-de-Montréal
Québec



By Ashley Mayoff

I am the Young Adult Representative on the board of directors at Hear Quebec. I am 27 years old and was born in Montreal. I just graduated from Human Relations at Concordia University and will be starting my Masters of Social Work at McGill University in the fall. I was born with a hearing loss and have had the support of Hear Quebec to help navigate various transitions in my life. I enjoy fitness, and am a proud dog mom of my Cavapoo, Mickey. In my free time, I enjoy running and lifting weights. In 2018, I was a Canada Summer Jobs Student which provided me the opportunity to be the animator for Hear Quebec's Noise Induced Hearing Loss program. I have been volunteering with Hear Quebec ever since.



THRIVING in University with a Hearing Loss



Being born with a hearing loss has always come with its challenges. During elementary school and high school, I was always followed by an itinerant teacher from the MOSD (now known as Résonance Montréal), making my educational experience seamless. However, university was the first time where I did not have someone holding my hand every step of the way. Prior to attending CEGEP, I attended a workshop at MAB Mackay. During this workshop, I retained a core piece of information that was incredibly helpful: use the available resources. I remember they talked about the importance of using an accessibility center, so I found out what services are available to help my transition to university. As soon as I got accepted to Concordia, I immediately registered with the access center: Concordia's accessibility support and services. I was told that I could write my tests and exams in quieter rooms to avoid the background noise. At the beginning of the semester, I introduced myself to my professors and informed them that I have a hearing loss, explaining how it might affect my participation in class. I also asked for any relevant slides or transcripts in advance, allowing me to better engage with the course content. All of my professors were incredibly helpful and supportive whenever I reached out for help.

My program, Human Relations, involved a lot of group work, which can be tricky for someone with hearing loss, especially in noisy settings. I developed a habit of explaining my hearing loss and specifically how others could support me. I learned how much easier it was to work in quieter

“

I found the courage to speak up, ask questions, and contribute. I learned that advocating for myself was not just necessary, but empowering.

”

breakout rooms whenever possible, and encouraged my peers to face me when speaking, while taking turns during conversations. I was always met with kindness and patience. Over time, this gave me the confidence to speak up more and take leadership in group settings, rather than shy away from them. I realized that many people are simply unaware of the best ways to support someone with hearing loss, and once I communicated my needs, they were more than willing to accommodate.

I am a highly visual learner, so I relied on detailed lecture slides, written notes, and visual aids to reinforce what I might have missed in real-time. Through the accessibility center, I was provided with a note taker who helped me take detailed notes so I could follow along with the lectures. I always sat at the front of the class, making it easier for me to read lips and follow body language. In courses with fast-paced discussions, I sometimes found it difficult to follow overlapping voices, so I would follow up with professors or classmates afterward to clarify anything I missed.

Participating in class discussions was intimidating at first. However, over time, I found the courage to speak up, ask questions, and contribute. I learned that advocating for myself was not just necessary, but empowering. I also learned to take the initiative outside the classroom such as reaching out to professors by email, checking in with group members ahead of time, and ensuring I had access to course



materials in formats that worked for me.

In addition to making academic adjustments, I also found ways to manage the social aspects of university life with hearing loss. Social events, casual conversations after class, and extracurricular involvement often came with its own unique challenges- especially in loud environments such as the cafeteria, networking events, or restaurants. At first, I avoided these settings, worried that I might miss important parts of conversations or feel left out. But eventually, I realized that inclusion required effort not only from others, but from me as well. I began choosing quieter environments to connect with classmates one-on-one or in smaller groups, where it was easier for me to follow conversations. These spaces helped me build a sense of community and belonging, while also allowing me to educate others about hearing loss. I found that many peers were curious, empathetic, and wanted to learn more. Navigating social spaces with a hearing loss wasn't always easy, but it taught me resilience, self-awareness, and the importance of authentic communication, which are skills that I will carry with me post university.

University challenged me to become my own advocate. People cannot always know what we need, so I learned how to speak up for myself and be my own biggest advocate. I learned that communication isn't just about hearing. It's about being seen, understood, and empowered.

Hearing Journey

Hearing Loss Doesn't Retire: Finding Balance, Connection, and Meaning After Work



by Glenn Washer

After 40+ years in the drug development industry, I recently moved into semi-retirement, and spend it consulting and serving on boards. I volunteer for Hear Quebec, the West Island Palliative Care Residence, and BioQuebec. I started in the drug development industry as a toxicologist, but most of my last 20 years have been in executive roles, most notably as President of Charles River Laboratories, here in Montreal. My lovely wife and I have been married for 30 years (she is a clinical psychologist) and we are empty nesters with 2 grown sons in their mid-20's. Interestingly, like Ashley Mayoff, another Hear Quebec volunteer, we are also proud "dog parents" of a Cavapoo named Mikki (different spelling though!). My interests include international travel (most recently completed a biking-cruise of Croatia), fitness, and experimenting with cooking styles and techniques. My bilateral hereditary progressive hearing loss goes back several generations, became evident in my 40's, and has been reasonably addressed with hearing aids.

At 60, after a rewarding 40+ year career in the drug development industry, I recently elected to step into semi-retirement, giving up my full-time role in favour of independent consulting, volunteering, travel and personal projects. I have a family history of progressive hearing loss, going back at least to both maternal grandparents, my mother and my brother (my sister was fortunate not to be affected); but it was only in my 40's that the progressive loss became noticeable, and progressed rapidly after that. I have been wearing hearing aids for close to 20 years now and have been fortunate to benefit from the remarkable technological developments in recent years. As an executive for the last 20 years, the majority of each work-day was spent in meetings, conference calls and 1:1 discussions either face to face, on the phone or by video, and so I must admit that were it not for my hearing aids, my career would have been much shorter and less satisfying. That said, even the

best technology does not adequately address the challenges of trying to process and understand multiple ongoing conversations (something I once took for granted), engaging in business or social group events, or discerning what "soft speakers" are saying. So, it was often the case that I came home from work exhausted from "concentrating" to hear and understand, which to those without a hearing loss may be difficult to fully appreciate.

In retirement, I am less called-upon to be in large group situations, and I have greater liberty to pick and choose which "hearing-challenged" situations I might wish to engage in. That said, I am very conscious of the correlation between hearing loss and dementia, and so my goal is to ensure that I continue to regularly connect with people, both one-on-one and in small groups, on a regular basis. I do this via multiple avenues: my consulting practice has me speaking almost daily with contacts and customers on video or telephone, my volunteering with Hear Entendre Quebec and with the Teresa Dellar Palliative Care Residence allows me to engage with a variety of people and provides satisfaction of being able to give back to the community. I also make sure to take part in social events with friends frequently, and I make sure to do both cardio and strength training workouts frequently during the week (providing both a physical and a mental boost!). I am still in the "exploratory" phase of my retirement, trying to get the right balance and mix of activities, but whatever mix I finally establish, I consider it essential that it include engagement in situations which provide stimulation via all senses, including and specifically hearing.

“

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HAVING ACCESS TO CULTURE: THE ADVENTURE OF UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY at the THÉÂTRE DU RIDEAU VERT

By Erika Malot, Cultural Development Coordinator, Théâtre du Rideau Vert



About Erika Malot

Erika Malot holds a master's degree in theatre studies from the Sorbonne-Nouvelle in Paris, a certificate in cultural animation from UQAM, and a master's degree in management of cultural enterprises from HEC Montréal. She has been working in Montreal's cultural and community milieu for over 15 years. Appointed artistic development coordinator at the Théâtre du Rideau Vert in 2021, she has set up a universal accessibility programme there, and founded a community of practice comprising 80 members from the cultural and community sector, with the aim of sharing practices and pooling resources in the area of universal accessibility. Her other professional experience includes positions in communications and cultural mediation in the organisations Danse Danse, RUBBERBAND and ESPACE GO. She is also an active member of the theatre company Les Exclamateurs, which she co-founded in 2007 and where she has directed more than 10 shows, collaborated on the writing of several plays and acted in some twenty productions.

Community Highlights



About the Théâtre du Rideau Vert

Firmly rooted in its community for over 75 years, the Théâtre du Rideau Vert is an inclusive and accessible venue that fully embraces its role as a leader in the artistic community. Since its founding, the company's artistic directors have always been in tune with societal issues and advances, and have always placed the audience at the heart of their concerns, both in their programming choices (between new works and repertory, between Quebec and current international dramaturgy) and in their audience development initiatives (mediation activities, reception, accessibility measures).

When I took up my post at the Théâtre du Rideau Vert in 2021, management gave me carte blanche to create audience development initiatives. Since I have long been aware of the realities of people with disabilities and culture has always played a central role in my life, I immediately proposed making our shows accessible to deaf, hard-of-hearing, blind and partially-sighted audiences. It seemed absurd to me that a large part of the population should not have access to culture in the same way as I do.



Picture taken from: https://www.banq.qc.ca/sites/default/files/styles/article_desktop_21_9/public/2023-11/Theatre_Rideau_Vert_2014_Salle_cr_Francois_Laplante_Delagrave.webp?h=7b4ee072&itok=Ji4uvOy0

I didn't know anything about subtitling, audio description or sign language - even though this language had fascinated me since I was a little girl! Perhaps it would have been wiser to start with a simple trial run, to see whether the audience was interested and whether the project was feasible... but as I never do anything like everyone else, I decided to adapt all the shows in the regular season straight away! And so, in autumn 2022, with the support of enthusiastic management and a motivated team, the Théâtre du Rideau Vert launched its major universal accessibility programme.

It was no mean feat: we had to convince the artistic and technical teams, the financial backers and the general public. How many times have I heard that it would disturb the artists, require too much work to adapt the shows, cost too much or even inconvenience the spectators? Legitimate doubts and questions, to be sure. But these were quickly dispelled by the exciting results, and even by the enthusiasm of the artists, who were delighted that their art could reach so many more people!

The project was so successful and innovative that in its first year it won the Monique Lefebvre Universal Accessibility Award from AlterGo, as well as the RAAMM 2023 'Coup de Coeur' award.

But in concrete terms, what measures are being proposed at the Théâtre du Rideau Vert?

For those with hearing loss, we offer an evening with French subtitles. This service, which transmits the dialogue and intentions as faithfully as possible, allows the audience to follow the plot of the play, while at the same time grasping the atmosphere created by the sound environment of the show. It is thanks to this

coded subtitling that the audience will understand, for example, that there is a knock on the door, that a voice is coming from backstage or that a line is being sung or whispered.

As theatre is a living art form, subtitles must adapt to the rhythm of the show and the performers, which can vary from one performance to the next. That's why subtitling at the Rideau Vert is done live, from the control room, by a technician ready for any eventuality, adapting to all the little surprises that may occur on stage.

At all times, and for every show in the season, hearing aids are an excellent alternative for making the most of your cultural outing. In addition to FM radio receivers, the Théâtre du Rideau Vert also provides its audiences with a system for amplified retransmission of the show, via a free mobile application that they can manage independently. It is also thanks to this application that blind audiences can benefit from evenings with audio description.

“It seemed absurd to me that a large part of the population should not have access to culture in the same way as I do.”

”Who would have thought, in 2021, that we would today be renewing this universal accessibility programme for a fourth season, inspiring a good number of Quebec's cultural institutions (thanks to the establishment of a Community of Practice in Universal Accessibility in the Performing Arts), and thus creating a movement of solidarity and awareness of the challenges faced by audiences of all abilities? I'm personally convinced of the relevance and usefulness of this programme, and I hope that as many people as possible will follow in our footsteps. This is the greatest challenge if we are to perpetuate practices that go beyond the cultural sphere and reflect the major issues facing society.

Did you know?

Tickets at the special rate of \$30 are available to users of accessible services. The Théâtre du Rideau Vert also accepts the Carte Accompagnement Loisir (CAL) and Access 2 card, offering a free ticket for an accompanying person with the purchase of a regular-priced ticket.



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