Loop New Mexico
An Initiative of the Hearing Loss Association of Albuquerque
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Hearing loss group wants city to get looped

by Stephen O. Frazier, VP for PR - Hearing Loss Association of Albuquerque

"It's fantastic - I can hear everything going on"

Sometimes, people with hearing loss just don't appear to be "with it." That's not because they're "looped, it's because where they are is not looped and they can't hear!

For the Hard of Hearing, looped means a place with an induction loop system that transmits a silent electro magnetic signal to the telecil in their hearing aids - a technology widely used in Great Britain and elsewhere in Europe. For example, the first sentence in the program for the 50th anniversary celebration of the Queen's coronation at Westminster Abbey said, "The whole church is served by a hearing loop. Users should turn their hearing aids to the setting marked with a "T".

Loop technology is now taking hold here in America, including here in Albuquerque, Othel Morre said of the loop system at Christ United Methodist Church, "It's fantastic - I can hear everything going on." Before its installation, even when wearing her hearing aids, she says, "I never heard anything in the service."

Moore is just one of many local Hard of Hearing people who can now hear the church service or the meeting proceedings - or a TV with the volume turned down low. They can even talk "hands free" on their cell phones using loop technology.

So, how does a church or even the TV room at home get looped? They have a sound system installed that consist of a thin wire strung around the perimeter of an area to send a silent signal to telecoil (t-switch) equipped hearing aids. It can be under the mop board, under the carpet, in the attic or basement, encircling the room.

That wire is connected to an amplifier and microphone, a TV set, or some other electronic sound source. The sound is turned into a silent signal and sent through the "loop", resulting in a magnetic energy field that is detected and amplified by the telecoil circuit common to most hearing aids, cochlear implants, or to special headsets for those without telecoils in their hearing devices.

Because the telecoil is only picking up the signal coming from the amplifier and through the "loop" (and the microphones in the hearing aids are turned off), intelligibility of the spoken word is greatly enhanced and background noise almost eliminated. Going through the circuitry of digital hearing aids or a cochlear implant, the sound is also being corrected to that individual's particular hearing loss.

Prompted by the Hearing Loss Association of Albuquerque's (HLAAbq) *Loop New Mexico* committee and committed HLAAbq members, induction loop systems have been installed in a number of Albuquerque area churches and several more are investigating loops. Another version of the technology, neck loops, is in use at Popejoy Hall and the Journal Theater at the Hispanic Cultural Center. There, you can borrow a neck loop that picks up the signal from another technology, infra red, and converts it to an electro magnetic signal emitted by a thin wire loop worn around the neck. Again, the telecoil in hearing aids and implants picks up this signal, corrects it to the wearer's hearing loss, and transmits it as sound.

Neck loops, with a microphone added, are available to plug into cell phones to make them hands free and transmit the incoming caller 's voice not to one ear, but to both! That neck loop, when plugged into the earphones jack of a TV set in the home, transmits the sound from the broadcast to the hearing aids while (over >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>)

(Continued >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>) allowing the volume of the TV's speaker to be low enough that others are not driven from the room. Some members of the Hearing Loss Association of Albuquerque have looped their entire living room or even their whole home. Others loop the area under the chair they use for watching TV and some have even looped their cars.

Loop systems are relatively inexpensive to purchase and install and require little or no maintenance If yuou're at all handy, you can install a home system yourself. A local assistive devices retailer - Sally Schwartz at the ADA Depot (238-0210 or handlinks@yahoo.com) - carries various types of loop equipment in stock. The equipment is also available from such catalog retailers as Harris Communications (1-800-825-6758 or www.harriscomm.com) or Weitbrecht Communications (1-800-233-9130 or www.weitbrecht.com.) Wireless Hearing Solutions of Santa Rosa, CA (707-539-3897 or info@wirelesshearingsolutions.com) will provide information on their loop systems to the public but they must be purchased through participating hearing care providers.

HLAAbq began its "Loop New Mexico," initiative hoping to raise awareness of audio loop technology among religious leaders, governmental decision makers and others where this technology can be used. As mentioned earlier, in England almost all public facilities are looped including, train stations, airports and other places where it is important for people to hear announcements or proceedings, and they have signage to alert the Hard of Hearing to the presence of loops.

Readers of this piece - Hard of Hearing, close to someone who is, or just concerned - can help in this effort. Tell your church leaders you want the church to get looped! Tell the Mayor you want community and senior centers looped. Tell your city councilor to loop the council chamber. Tell your state senator or the Governor you want the Roundhouse looped! Join the effort to Loop New Mexico! To learn more about Loop New Mexico, email HLAAbq@juno.com, go to www.HLAAbq.com/LoopNM.html, or call 401-4195.

Among the facilities that are already looped or that have assistive listening devices that are t-switch compatible (or that are reported to be considering installing an audio loop) are:

Albuquerque Center for Spiritual Living - looped

Albuquerque Marriott - portable loop available

Albuquerque Hearing Associates Office - looped

Albuquerque Little Theater - Investigating

Albuquerque Speech, Language, Hearing - Investigating

Auditorium at the V.A. Hospital Complex - looped

Christ United Methodist Church - looped

Christ Unity Church -neck loops available

Cumberland Presbyterian - Investigating

Deaf Culture Center - looped

Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church - investigating

First Presbyterian Church - investigating

First Unitarian Church - looped

Hearing Evaluation Center Offices - Investigating

Hearing Loss Assn. Of Abq. - meetings looped at Taylor Ranch Community Center and at East Side locations by portable equipment

HL Enterprises - ADA Depot - showroom - looped

Journal Theater at the National Hispanic Culture Center - t-switch compatible neck loops

La Vida Liena - Carter Hall - Meeting room looped

Lobo Theater - Investigating

Los Alamos National Labs - portable loop system available

Metro Court - Room 900 -Judge Clyde DeMersseman: courtroom looped

Montgomery Church of Christ - looped

NMCDHH - looped meeting room and portable loop system for loan

Presbyterian Healthplex - Investigating

Popejoy Hall - neck loops available at information desk

Prince of Peace Roman Catholic Church - sanctuary and meeting rooms looped.

Relay New Mexico - conference room looped

Saint James Episcopal-Santa Fe - Investigating

St. John's United Methodist Church - Investigating

Seventh Day Adventist Church, Corrales - Investgating

Taylor Ranch Community Center - Investigating