



ALDA NOTE #1

HISTORY, OBJECTIVES, AND PURPOSE OF ALDA

Introduction

The acronym “ALDA” stands for the Association of Late-Deafened Adults. ALDA is a not-for-profit organization incorporated under the laws of the State of Illinois. It has been recognized as being tax-exempt by both the United States Internal Revenue Service under Section 501(c)3 and the Illinois Department of Revenue.

Late-deafened adults are people who were not born deaf, but rather became deaf after they developed language skills. They cannot understand speech without either visual clues or the help of assistive listening technology, and thus they cannot rely on their unaided hearing as a means of receptive communication. Instead, most late-deafened adults must generally depend on some visual mode of receptive communication, such as cued-speech, speechreading, sign language, or text-reading. Their deafness may have been the result of heredity, accident, illness, drugs, surgery, or “causes unknown.” Their hearing loss may have occurred suddenly or it may have progressively deteriorated over a period of years. Most importantly, however, regardless of the cause or rapidity of their hearing loss, most late-deafened adults share the cultural experience of having been raised in the hearing community and having “become” deaf, rather than having been “born” deaf.

History

ALDA traces its roots to a self-help support group for late-deafened adults that was formed in

Chicago in 1985. The leader of the group was Kathie Skyer Hering, a late-deafened social service worker. After struggling for about a year the self-help group disbanded. Not too long thereafter, Bill Graham, who had joined the original self-help group only shortly before it broke up, organized a purely social gathering for late-deafened adults. Invitations to the “party” were based on a list of twenty-five (25) local “contacts” that Kathie Hering had “accumulated.” The party was held at Graham’s apartment on March 28, 1987, and was attended by thirteen adventurous late-deafened individuals. The good feelings generated that evening led to friendships, more social gatherings, and the beginning of a newsletter. The newsletter was written, edited, and published by Bill Graham (he did everything but lick the stamps). Like many other late-deafened adults, Graham had struggled with progressive hearing loss for years, and had gone through a long period of denial, discontent, depression, anger, hatred, and hurt before he finally began to accept his deafness. The newsletter was well received and its circulation grew steadily. By mid-1988, more than 150 people were on the ALDA mailing list, many of them from states other than Illinois. In 1989 ALDA was incorporated, and the first ALDA group outside the Chicago area began in Boston. In addition, the First ALDA Leadership Workshop (retrospectively dubbed ALDAcon I) was held in Chicago in October of that year. It was attended by forty-two (42) late-deafened people from different parts of the United States and Canada, and provided the emotional impetus that

was needed to sustain a truly national growth in the organization.

Today, ALDA is “home” for a great many late-deafened adults throughout the United States, Canada, and several other countries around the world. Informal ALDA Groups and officially chartered ALDA Chapters either exist or are forming in various places in the United States, and hopefully will be followed by similar groups in other countries. ALDA gives late-deafened adults a special place where they can be themselves and share their experiences with their “family” of other late-deafened individuals.

Some Specific Objectives of ALDA

- Hold an annual convention where late-deafened adults can come together in fellowship, empathy, and concern based upon common experiences, feelings, and understandings.
- Publish a newsletter where late-deafened adults can openly discuss their many common problems.
- Encourage the development of official ALDA Chapters and ALDA Groups in various locations so as to effectively serve the welfare of late-deafened adults in those communities where there is a manifest need.
- Encourage general research into all aspects of hearing loss, and encourage technological research specifically into all aspects of potential remedial aid for late-deafened adults.
- Work toward all means of reducing the cost of remedial aid for late-deafened adults.
- Promote an awareness and appreciation of the needs and interests of late-deafened adults.
- Whenever and wherever possible, cooperate with all interested persons, organizations, agencies and institutions on matters concerning the issues created by hearing loss.
- Encourage the further development and use of captioning technology as a communications aid which enables the full participation of people

with hearing loss in the many economic and social aspects of life.

- Provide any services to the late-deafened community that will further the objectives of ALDA.
- Seek out and identify late-deafened adults so as to be able to make them aware of the existence, objectives, program, and activities of ALDA.

The General Objectives of ALDA

EDUCATION ... ALDA is committed to provide educational information to late-deafened adults, their families and friends, deaf service providers, rehabilitation counselors, government agencies, private corporations, and members of the general public concerning the nature of, as well as strategies for coping with, the social, psychological, familial, occupational, economic and communication problems of late-deafened adults.

ADVOCACY... ALDA is committed to advocate on behalf of, and to represent the needs, desires, and interests of, all late-deafened adults in the promotion of public and private programs designed to alleviate the problems of late-deafness and to integrate late-deafened people into all aspects of society.

ROLE MODELS ... ALDA is committed to provide good role models for late-deafened adults who are striving to cope with the issues created by their hearing loss and to enhance their personal image, competence, and quality of life.

SUPPORT ... ALDA is committed to provide support for all late-deafened adults, their families and friends, regarding how to cope with the challenges caused by late-deafness, and to provide social enrichment through the promotion of activities in which they can meaningfully participate.