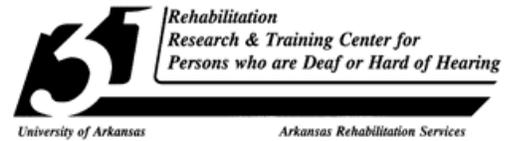




Selected Proceedings of ALDAcon 2005



CHILDREN OF LATE-DEAFENED ADULTS PANEL

Moderator: MARILYN CALL

MARILYN CALL: I'm really excited about this workshop. I met these girls. I thought, to warm up, what we would do is let them each introduce themselves and tell us just a little bit about where you are in life now. Then we'll go ahead with the questions.

BECCA STAKER: My name is Becca Staker and I'm Kathy's daughter. I got married five and a half years ago and I just finished school and got a Master's Degree and worked for a couple of years and had little Morgan, my baby who is here.(points) She is nine months old. My mother is hard of hearing and my father is not. My mother has been hard of hearing for as long as I can remember.

MIRRA EVANS: I'm Mirra and a lot of the same things apply to me that apply to Becca, except that I don't have a baby, I'm not married. I think Becca and I responded differently to my mom's hearing loss, which is why both of us are on the panel. I'm very excited to be here today and to express things that have happened in my life.

JUDY WILKERSON: I'm Judy Wilkerson. I'm Lance's daughter. I am finishing up my MBA. I will be done with that in another semester. I am the controller at Flower Patch and that's all I do, work and go to school.

TRISHA GAVIN: My name is Tricia Gavin. I'm the oldest out of three. Both my parents are hard of hearing. My mom lives here. My dad lives in Washington. I'm married for four years. I have two step-kids, twins.

MARILYN CALL: Okay. First question. If you want to just go down the line or if you don't want to respond to a certain question, just go ahead and take the mike from each other. The first question: "Was it hard to communicate with your mom or your dad who had a significant hearing loss as you were growing up?"

TRISHA GAVIN: I don't know how many times people have asked me that, especially friends and people that I work with. They ask, how did you grow up? Well, it wasn't any

different, because that's all I knew. You know, I didn't grow up with hearing parents, so it wasn't really a big transition but I mean growing up was normal. I just had to make sure we got their attention, you know, tap on the table or wave, especially with my dad. My mom could hear a lot more than my dad could. It was just pretty much easy growing up. It wasn't that difficult.

I did a lot of activities like dance and gymnastics, with loud music and my parents fully supported that. When I was older, four years ago, my mom lost all of her hearing. That was tough because that was a really hard adjustment. She was in Washington and I was here and I could not get a hold of her, you know. She worked on the computer but if I needed to ask her a question about student loans or something, I had to wait. When she got her cochlear implant, that changed everything and we returned to what I was used to.

JUDY WILKERSON: Well, my mom is hearing and my dad has progressively become deafer. When I was younger, he heard more than he does now. He has a cochlear implant now also, it was a lot different. If we needed to talk about anything, we usually would go to our mother first, because it was easier to communicate with her. That, I think, kind of made our relationship different with our father and less personable. Because he was harder to communicate with, we would just -- you know, being younger-- go the easiest route possible. That made it, I think, a lot harder for us kids to have a strong relationship with our dad.

It's changed a lot in the recent years with his implant and him being able to hear better and also wanting to participate a lot more because it's easier for him to hear, too.

MIRRA EVANS: I think, like you were saying, we don't necessarily realize that it's different to have a parent who can't hear. I knew Mom could not hear and Dad could. I think the biggest problem I had communicating with my mother was over the phone. I'm sure a lot of you have trouble with the telephone. That's probably a pretty common thing. But when I called and needed to give a lot of information, I would always have to ask for my dad or one of my siblings.

If I want to express my emotions, because my mom is my best friend, I can't do that over the phone, which is too bad. I know she won't understand everything I'm trying to say. But that's okay, because we can do it in person and that's fun, anyway. But I think, growing up, I didn't so much realize that she was different from other people's parents.

BECCA STAKER: What I thought, growing up was that, is the same as Mirra says. I didn't know or didn't realize that it was any harder with Mom not hearing. We just had to be in the same room. We could not call for her from a different room. And with Mom staying home to take care of us children, my Dad working, we naturally just went to Mom. It was not a matter of going to talk to Dad instead because Dad was at work. We could call him. We always went to Mom with things, anyway. There weren't any times I got to choose, I guess, to go talk to Dad instead. I was a lot closer to Mom until I got

older, high school or college. Then my Dad and I did a lot more things together and I found it lots of fun to go on a hike. We could hike and not to be looking at each other and stopping and standing still. That turned out to be a lot of fun for me. I didn't do that until I was a little older.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: My name is Pam Conner-Costa. My mom is Edna Shipley-Conner. This is my fourth ALDA con that I have attended with my mom. I feel like I'm a true COLDA.

People in my life have tried to say you are so CODA. I say I'm not CODA. I'm *COLDA*. What in my life was different was that my mother could hear when I was growing up. Her hearing loss was very mild. We didn't even notice it, and it was not until I was in high school that her hearing became a problem. She got progressively harder of hearing and harder of hearing until there was a quick time when it just went. I feel like I am the true COLDA kid, you know. We went from a true hearing mother to hard of hearing to deaf. I talked with my mom on the phone all the time. You know, she made a career out of that and the nice thing that happened with me was that, eventually, it has become my career, too, because I train all these late-deafened people how to use relay service and VCO. I work for a telephone access program in California. So I work with people with a variety of needs. My strength is obviously in working with those people. So, most of you had a hard of hearing person all your life. In my family, it was very difficult. The transition was difficult on all the kids. Some of us handled it better than others.

BECCA STAKER: I remember my friends coming over and always having to explain to each friend that my mom was hard of hearing. "You have to look at her when you're going to speak," I would say. Also, when we would go places where Mom had to talk to a clerk or a cashier, she would usually pull me or Mirra along and say, "You be my ears." It would be funny because the cashier would say something to Mom and she would look at us and we would say the exact same thing and she would say, "Okay." I remember helping Mom out doing things like that. And at the fast food drive-in and the bank drive-through. I think it gave me a little more confidence, made me feel important to help Mom because I could do things that she could not.

MIRRA EVANS: I did a lot of same things Becca did, actually. One thing that was maybe different for me was that I was always a little embarrassed by it. I'm not any more, but as a kid I was a little bit embarrassed to have to repeat everything that people were saying to my mother. Or if someone in a store would come up and say, "Do you need help with anything?" I would be afraid they would think she was being rude because her back was to them. So I would say, "Oh, she's hard of hearing. She does not know you are talking to her." I have noticed that my mom does not present that to people as the first thing. So I always felt a little guilty that I was defining her to other people as a hard of hearing person, instead of just as a person. As for friends, I know she can't understand a lot of my friends. It's kind of influenced my dating life a little bit.

If I talk to a guy and I know that my mom won't understand him and so I delay bringing him home to meet my parents because I know she won't hear a word he says. So I'm trying to date men who speak very well, because I want him to have a good relationship with my mom. That's very important to me.

JUDY WILKERSON: I think a lot of it had to do with when we went out in public with people who didn't know what was going on. In a restaurant, the waiter tries to talk to my Dad and he just looks at us like, what is he talking about? That, sometimes, was a little frustrating, because I'm not patient. So, sometimes, it would frustrate me that I had to repeat myself so much. That was probably the biggest effect on me, that I always had to repeat myself.

I can see now, sometimes, when people ask me questions and I don't respond to them right off, I think that has a lot to do with having a deaf parent. They don't respond to you right off because they are thinking, trying to piece together what you have said. So the biggest effect that I have seen is that I do the same thing, even though I hear just fine. I'll wait a moment to answer a question and that will frustrate people in my life.

TRISHA GAVIN: Like they all said about the public thing, we'll go out to the grocery store or go shopping and they'll ask my mom a question, like paper or plastic? And she'll be writing a check. I will either, tap her or if she's too busy, I'll just say, "My mom's hard of hearing; please, look at her." So my mom will look up and they'll talk back and forth. I don't get frustrated. I think it's because I grew up with two hard of hearing parents. That's what I know. There were other things that I helped my parents with. On the farm where I grew up, my dad can't hear the machine running. So, I grew up working on combines or tractors. If something is clicking or ticking, you have to be their ears for them. It's something that he is used to.

When you meet people to introduce to your parents who are hard of hearing or deaf...like when I had my husband first meet my parents, I explained to him and he's fine with it. It's not out of the ordinary for my family.

PAM CONNER-COSTA: I did a lot of that transitional stuff, getting used to not being able to talk to Mom from the other room and then, having to look at her and having to explain that to everyone else, too. I started that in the stores, repeating what the clerk said. My mom would use two amplified telephones and put one on each ear, when she was first losing her hearing. She did okay with that until it got to numbers and addresses and stuff. That's when she would hand the phone over to one of us, usually to me. I went from that to signing, to being Mom's personal interpreter.

MARILYN CALL: I noticed that some of you already covered having a hard of hearing or deaf parent affected the way you communicate. I just wanted to add something from the male perspective. My son kept getting in trouble at school for talking so loud. I was pretty hard of hearing by the time we adopted him, and he was also quite an angry child. We adopted him when he was a little bit older.

He had quite the vocabulary, saying things behind my back that were not very nice after I had asked him to do something. I had to rely on friends to tell me that he was murmuring all these little swear words behind my back.

How did the dynamics of the hearing loss affect your family's social life? And PAM will be able to have the before and after perspective.

BECCA STAKER: I used to think that my parents didn't invite a lot of people over because of the hearing loss. When I grew up, I felt that the family was more isolated because Mom would not be able to communicate with anyone very well. I don't think it has had as big an effect as I thought.

Two big places were affected by the hearing loss: we never went to theaters to see movies, ever. I remember when we got a closed captioner, I was probably eight or ten. We rarely saw movies before that. We never had the radio going anywhere. I didn't know any of the songs my friends knew. My husband still is trying to catch me up on music and movies I should have seen and heard growing up but didn't.

MIRRA EVANS: I think the biggest thing I resented about my mother's hearing loss was that I could not have big group sleepovers. She only let me have one friend over for a sleepover. I wanted 15 and she said, "No." She blamed it on her hearing loss. Whether or not that was a lie, or she didn't want 15 little girls running around the house, I still don't know. I hated that I could not have the big group of friends over because it would overwhelm my mom with all the high-pitched voices that she could not hear, anyway.

Another way that it affected us is that when we do have people over, it's always small groups. If it is not, my mom is not a part of the conversation. She is a very outgoing, loving, empathetic person but a lot of people don't know that because she can't join in a conversation in a big group. That's put some pressure on my dad to answer for both of them when we are in public places.

JUDY WILKERSON: I think when we were younger and my dad was less hard of hearing, we did a lot more as a family. We would go out and do more activities, but I don't know if that's just because there was only two of us then, As we grew up, there were four of us, maybe they just didn't want to take that many kids out anywhere. I don't know if it was the hearing loss. We also didn't ever go to movies.

We got closed caption, I think, when I was 11. That kind of changed the family a little bit. We would watch TV a little more with Dad but we didn't actually watch the same kind of things. He mostly just watched sports. That, right there, is kind of is different. I don't know, but especially for girls, they are always closer to their moms than to their dads. I saw my parents do less and less together as he got more deaf and I think, I know if it was me, it would be more frustrating to go out and not be able to know what's going on. I know when we go to restaurants, I think, oh, is this restaurant too echoy? Does the

volume carry wrong? Is he going to be able to hear here? Things like that I think really affected a lot of things that we did as a family.

TRISHA GAVIN: I'm the total opposite. Growing up, I had parties, dance recitals. I was all over the place and my parents were along with me. I mean, they could not hear exactly everything, but when I was ten years old, I had ten friends over. My birthday was on the tenth day. We always had people over. Church members would come visit. My mom would go out visiting, teaching, and I mean she is a little social butterfly. I never resented it or anything. I thought I grew up normally. I never took anything for granted that my parents gave me. I think the main thing is I had a normal childhood. If you talked to my mom, her experience was a lot different. She was more secluded and I think her going through that terrible time made her want us to have a normal life, to be as loud as possible and to be a kid.

PAM CONNER-COSTA: Well, my mom's hearing loss affected the social life in our family dramatically, probably more so for my mom than anybody else. She was going to college while she was in the severe part of the losing her hearing. So she was struggling with a lot of different things. My parents divorced about that time also. We noticed that Mom went to fewer functions with her college friends, fewer church gatherings, and any place where there were larger groups of people. Home was always okay. We were the house that everybody came to, where all the kids came over and hung out. That didn't change socially at home; things didn't change in terms of my friends and me. But in terms of our family, really just in terms of my mom and where she went and where we went with her changed. Now, the social gatherings are with ALDA members. It changed the friends.

MARILYN CALL: The next question is, did one of the children in your family kind of become the little mom because one of the parents could not hear?

MIRRA EVANS: That was me, especially since Becca moved out. I became bossy. I'm trying to recover from that. My little brother used to call me Nazi Mom. I was very, very bossy. Mom could not hear when they started using bad words or when they were threatening each other across the table. Mom didn't know it was going on because they would just sink into that voice that we knew Mom couldn't hear. They would talk to each other like that. So I was disciplining them. When we go to stores, it's come to the point where I don't so much translate the paper or plastic question for her. I don't tell the clerk to get her attention. I just answer for her because I know what she'll say, anyway. So I became the little mom. I don't know how that influenced my older sister. Yeah, that was my job.

JUDY WILKERSON: Since it was my dad, I don't think any of us really became a little mom. There was still somebody at home who could hear what we were doing. She has actually really good hearing and always knew what we were doing no matter how hard we tried to hide it. So that part of it didn't really affect our family.

TRISHA GAVIN: This question got to me because I don't remember being bossy or taking control of anything. I think I just always made sure my mom and dad understood what was going on. Especially in a conversation in a room or out in public, I think all three of us took a responsibility to make sure that they understood. If we had to repeat, it was not a big deal because I would repeat something 100,000 times to make sure they understand what I was saying. I never took control of anything. I just think it's only fair that my mom knows what's going on just as much as I do.

PAM CONNOR-COSTA: This really didn't happen in my family. By the time my mom lost her hearing, we were teenagers or young adults. Maybe I took on a little more of the caregiver role. And much more than my three siblings in terms of communication access. My sister, being there day-to-day does the direct thing. I live 200 miles away but when it comes to communication access, I'm the little mom. Caregiver is maybe more appropriate.

MARILYN CALL: What about discipline? As your parent's hearing went down, did the discipline shift like from Mom to Dad or from Dad to Mom? Who became the disciplinarian?

BECCA STAKER: When we were home during the day while Dad was working, we probably got away with more as Mirra said. We said things under our breath and Mom would not know unless someone told her. It seemed like Dad did not yell but he spoke harshly a little more. He probably had to take care of things that he otherwise wouldn't have. I know his stern voice pretty well.

MIRRA EVANS: I think I became the disciplinarian in our family. If it's a big thing, I passed it over to Mom, explained to her what was going on. For little things, it was me. I think I even tried to ground my little brother one time. That didn't go over very well. But otherwise, yeah, I started doing the discipline.

JUDY WILKERSON: I don't think it mattered what stage of deafness my dad was in. My mom always did disciplinary stuff unless it was really bad. If Dad disciplined you, it was because it was too much. I don't think it was ever an issue of his deafness. It was just that my mom always handled it unless, if you were really, really bad and Dad got mad. Then you knew you had gone too far.

TRISHA GAVIN: When we were growing up, my mom was the discipliner. She was at home for most of my childhood until she went to work when I was 12. In our teenage years, it was my dad. So they took even turns. Like you others said, it doesn't matter if you are hard of hearing or deaf, you've got that father tone. I still get goose bumps thinking about it. It's just something that I think a parent carries. As far as both my parents, they both disciplined us just as evenly.

PAM CONNOR COSTA: Nothing really changed in our family in terms of discipline. My parents' divorce changed more of that because my dad was not home and it fell on

Mom. She didn't have to do too much disciplining, anyway. They both raised us with good consciences. We always felt really guilty and knew when we were doing something wrong.

MARILYN CALL: Okay. Good answers. Do any of you hate talking on the phone or how do you feel about the phone because you may have had to be a little interpreter or translator?

BECCA STAKER: I don't recall calling very much for my mom when I was at home. Maybe pizza delivery was all but I still was shy about calling businesses. I didn't like to do that at all until I was about 16 and worked for a law firm. Then I had to make calls outside to people I didn't know. I got over being shy and I'm fine now, but when I was younger, I didn't want to call anyone I didn't know.

MIRRA EVANS: I think my anxiety about the telephone is more of a learned behavior than anything else. Every time Mom had to make a call, she would put it off and worry about it. She puts off phone calls for days and days. She'll put them off for weeks. She hates making phone calls. She does not ask us to do it for her, but I've learned to be anxious about the phone because my mom is.

JUDY WILKERSON: I don't really like talking on the phone very much. I had my little teenage years when that's what you do. I don't know if it has anything to do with my dad being deaf. We would make phone calls for him and that kind of thing, but I don't know if it was just a little too much pressure to do that, so now I don't like to make phone calls. I do know that when I make phone calls, I get to the point and get off. I don't have a conversation or spend time being social or anything like that. I phone just for information and I know that, when people try to talk to me socially on the phone, it makes me a little anxious. I want to just say, "Tell me what you need to tell me and get off the phone."

TRISHA GAVIN: I was the opposite. I was always on the phone. Always. When I was a teenager, that phone was connected to my hand. I would get to the point where my parents would take the phone off the hook in their room. After they went to bed, I would sneak in and take the little thing off the hook and take it downstairs. I work with different kinds of people and I have to be on the phone. The phone never really bothered me. There have been a couple of times where somebody will call on the phone for my mom or dad and they will either have like an accent or not talk clearly. Then, my parents will scream for us and one of us will come running. Basically we just need to go back and forth for them. It still happens. It just depends on the phone and how well the person speaks on the other end.

PAM CONNOR COSTA: I am the phone lady. That's my nickname. There were some years when one of my siblings or I did a lot of phone calls for Mom. She got a TTY fairly early. So she had her years of struggling, but stopped at a point and it never affected any of us who used the phone. I think all of the kids in our family learned to speak

clearly on the phone. You never know who that person is on the other end of the line. I think we all had a lot better phone voices than a lot of people do.

MARILYN CALL: There really are rewards if you work in an area where you have to be on the phone a lot. I had a hard of hearing mom growing up. I learned to talk and, now, people who are hard of hearing say they can read my lips perfectly. That's probably the same with all of you. You learn to talk and pronounce your words so that people can understand you.

I have a question now that may be a little more emotional or personal. If you don't feel like answering it, you don't need to. How did you feel that the hearing loss of either your mom or your dad affected the relationship between your mom and your dad? From a kid's perspective do you think it had affected your parent's relationship?

BECCA STAKER: I have to say I don't really know. There are things that my dad could do that Mom could not, so Mom would wait for Dad to get home. Or, she would call him at work and have him do it. But my mom would tell you that her hearing got markedly worse when I was six year old, but I don't remember when she could hear better. So I can't see how my parents' relationship might have changed because of it.

MIRRA EVANS: In comparing my parents' relationship to my friends' parents, I think it's different. I don't think it's because they love each other less. I think it's my mom's hearing. I remember seeing my friends' parents sitting out on the porch and star gazing and chatting with each other. My parents could not do something like that. It would be dark. My mom would not be able to read his lips. I remember I would watch movies with my friends' families and their parents would be all cute and cuddly on the couch, whispering things to each other that the kids could not hear. My parents didn't do that. My mom would not be able to hear. I know that they love each other a lot. There are those little signs of it that I see all the time. But, they can't be at all intimate or flirty like that in a public place, because to do it, they would have to do it very loudly.

JUDY WILKERSON: I think as my dad got progressively more hard of hearing, it did affect their relationship. They would go out more and do things with other couples more when we were younger. As I got older, they didn't do that as much. I don't know if that was because we moved to the city and the structure of our lives changed, or if it was because of his deafness. For me, when I look back at my parents' relationship and the problems that they had, I think that it was more the way that their personalities were and what they wanted more so than my dad's deafness. I think it made communication between the two of them harder to work things out like they should have. I don't think that the sole problem was because of his being deaf.

TRISHA GAVIN: When I was growing up, both my parents were hard of hearing. They had their own way of flirting because they were on the same level. They understood

each other and could help each other when something else happened where the other one couldn't hear. They would make up for each other. It was an equal partnership when it came to hearing for my parents. I never saw them argue because I think when they argued; they would not use their voices. Yeah, I never heard him argue although I heard them snap at each other. Now, as my mom has her cochlear implant and my dad's hearing is getting progressively worse, it's kind of funny because I see my mom getting frustrated. I think, hold on, you can't get frustrated, because you have not gotten frustrated in 27 years. I think the roles are reversing now. But I think that they are patient with each other.

PAM CONNOR COSTA: I know my mom's hearing loss was a source of problems with my parents, but certainly not the only one. My parents divorced right about the time that my mom's hearing was getting worse, but not at its worst stage. She confirms that it definitely had an effect but it was not the only thing. Now, my dad is hard of hearing, wearing hearing aids. Later, after my parents divorced, they actually got back together again for a while. That didn't last either. During those times when my parents were living together after they divorced, my dad and I went to sign language class together. You know, my dad came around.

MARILYN CALL: Thank you all for answering that question. I think that was a hard one. I'm going to end with a long question. Then we'll have some time for questions from the audience. Looking back over a lifetime of living, what were the long-term positive things that you can see from having a parent who is hard of hearing? We maybe have talked more about the negatives, so with this question, let's talk about what were the positive things that influenced your life because you have a parent who is hard of hearing.

BECCA STAKER: I will start by saying your son got in trouble for talking loud at school. I, on the other hand, got an award in eighth grade for being able to read my words so well. I got a prize. I gained more confidence that I could talk to grownups when I was helping my mom do that.

MIRRA EVANS: I think a lot of good things came out of it. As Becca was saying, we can speak a lot better than people our age. That helped me a lot. I used to do theater and I have a loud voice. As she was saying, we learned to speak slowly and clearly, which was always very useful when I did plays.

My mom is a very sensitive person. I think a lot of that comes from her hearing loss. When she can't hear what people are saying, I think she has this special gift to look into people's hearts and communicate with them on a very emotional level. I think that I picked up some of that from her, not to the same degree but just I have seen how well she works with other people, and that's rubbed off on me a little bit. It has helped to make me more sensitive to other people as well, except my little brothers obviously. I also think it helped with my reading skills to always have the captions on at home.

BECCA STAKER: I think that Mirra mentioned being a little bossier to the brothers, but I think we had a lot more time for fun interaction with the siblings. It was four of us and Mom at home. I think we got closer. We got along with each other's help when you didn't have the chance to go to Mom. I really feel close to my siblings now. I would say a lot that is attributable to Mom having a hearing loss and being difficult to communicate with.

JUDY WILKERSON: Everybody here said they talked a little louder than normally. That's not the case with my siblings. We are all really quiet. For the most part, we don't yell or anything like that. I think a lot of that was of my mom having really good hearing. That kept us pretty quiet. I think, though, we also learned that it does not really matter how much you yell, Dad still is not going to hear you. So we were actually not a very loud family. It was pretty quiet. Another thing that Dad's being deaf helped was, when you are trying to get a point across, you choose your words wisely because you don't want to be wordy. You want to get to the point and articulate without a whole bunch of filler words. That has helped me a lot in trying to articulate things in school, and also in work and in my career, just being able to think through something a little more quickly and making sure that I'm getting my point across instead of trying to fumble around with it.

TRISHA GAVIN: I'm trying to think what the good things are that have come out of my parents being hard of hearing. I didn't know the difference. I don't think I realized that my parents were hard of hearing until I was 10 or 12. I thought they were normal. That's what I knew. Plus, when I was little, I had severe ear infections and I didn't hear at all. That's how I relate with my mom, and I learned to lip read really young. Some of the things that are great with me growing up the way I did is I'm a lot more patient than most people. If I don't understand, I will ask again until I understand. I have a lot more patience with elderly people. With my great grandma and my grandpa in their older years, that patience helped a lot, especially if they didn't understand what I was talking about. I learned to speak clearly. This took me a lot of effort, especially because I could not hear my own voice when I was little. I've got a clearer voice than my brother or sister, which is something that I worked really hard at. I'm not afraid of the public or any kind of social scene. I pay attention a lot more. I try to understand. A really good benefit is that I hardly watch any TV because we were always out doing activities. So I was not a TV kid at all. I was a farm kid.

PAM CONNOR COSTA: I've had a lot of positive things happen in my life, in my family's life from my mom becoming deaf. When she was two, my 22-year-old daughter learned her ABC's and numbers from the TTY. She knew the keyboard pretty darn well, so when kids started using computers, she was familiar with it already from the TTY. My mom's deafness made a positive impact on my life. I got to meet a whole new group of people when my mom started working in deaf services. I learned about the deaf community and the late-deafened community and made wonderful friends that I would never have made if my mom had not become deaf. It eventually took me into a job that I love dearly. I gained patience, definitely a positive thing there. We learned a lot of

patience. And the excitement. My 22 year old called me last year; "I have two deaf people in my class." She wanted to describe the interpreters to see if I knew them.

I think the openness and the acceptance of people who are just a little bit different made a really positive impact on my kids' lives. I am happy that my children are good, wonderful, caring individuals themselves.

MARILYN CALL: We just have about 10 more minutes. I would like to open up if people have questions from the audience.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: What advice would you give the people trying to help the parents that are either hard of hearing or deaf because I can see the frustration that they have with their hearing children? Could you give me the most important advice that we can give the parents, especially when they are really frustrated with their children?

BECCA STAKER: It's obviously important to talk to them in a way they can understand, but it would be helpful to keep asking if there is anything else you can do to help. I know my mom has a lot of different coping strategies. If something is not working, she knows you need to face her better or talk more slowly or something better for her and she can give you lots of ideas. So ask the parent what she thinks would help her the most.

MIRRA EVANS: I think that, despite the frustration, it's important for our hard of hearing parents to understand that we love them absolutely and that, even though it can get difficult sometimes and we might mutter angry things under our breaths or even take it out on them sometimes, that it does not really affect how much we love them.

JUDY WILKERSON: I think that especially when our parents get frustrated and you are trying to help them, make sure you don't meet their frustration and get angry back because that makes the whole situation worse.

TRISHA GAVIN: Yeah, don't lose your cool. I mean, just get directly in front of them. If you can't hear, you're going to get severely frustrated and you feel like the whole world is just crashing down on you. Get in front of them. Take them by the hand; get right in front of them; make sure that your face is not in a shadow, and make sure they understand. The emotion and the expression on your face can do a lot. Not only for lip reading, but just make sure that you just get in front of them, calm down, make them calm down, and then they are able to think more clearly.

PAM CONNOR COSTA: I think one of the pieces of advice is for parents to allow their children to do the same activities that they would if they had good hearing. Let them have ten people spend the night. If they are involved, encourage involvement in music. Go and watch them. You don't have to go every time, but go and watch them, even if you can't hear them. Allow them to do the things that they would do even if their parents could hear perfectly well.

MARILYN CALL: Thank you. Good question. Next.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I have two boys, eight and eleven years old. All the things you say has been affirming and interesting such as care taking roles that you had to fill in and how embarrassing it was. Because my children are so young, it's not always easy for them to clearly communicate what's going on for them. As young adults, I thank you for sharing your experiences. I really like what one of you said: Remind their friends to face Mom. I thank you for some of your tips of wisdom.

My eight-year-old is a very funny, highly active boy who, one time very late at night, he was so overtired, I didn't understand him. He went into a major meltdown. He could understand I could not hear him. He kept saying, "You are just pretending you can't hear because you do." We were at it for a while. I was in tears and he was in tears. We made up afterwards. It was moving. He was apologizing and I was apologizing. It was sweet. It was really, really sweet. That does not mean it's over. It still happens once in a while, but we have these talks.

One question I wanted to ask, did you ever get away with some bad behaviors or bad stuff behind your parents' back when the other parent wasn't there? I'm sure the answer is yes. And what were they?

BECCA STAKER: I will take a moment to mention not something that I did but my brother. I can't remember getting away with anything except muttering. My brother's music is raunchy and in bad taste. Everyone here would know. My mom doesn't know. She can't hear it. When we go to his room, we say, we can't go in there. Mom is in there listening to it and listening to it and can't monitor what they are saying.

MIRRA EVANS: I would go in at night and say "hello" to my mom so she would know I would be in. Then, I would sneak out my window and go play with my friends. I sometimes still do things like that. Unbeknownst to her. The other night, a friend came over kind of late. Mom had gone to bed and didn't know that we were downstairs having a lot of fun. So I still do it but I think I'm an adult and I can make that decision now.

JUDY WILKERSON: You did, we did a lot of sneaking out, too. I know we did. But anything bad I ever did, I fully expected to get caught the majority of time. My mom has some kind of sixth sense to know when we are doing something we should not. I always got caught. So I just never even tried to hide things anymore. It was not worth it.

TRISHA GAVIN: This is going to confirm your suspicions. Lock your children's doors, because I snuck out, too. I was really bad. It was just sneaking out to get away with it. Swearing, if I would swear, the only thing I did in front of my mom. She's more lenient that way. My dad, no. Those were just some of the things that I did.

PAM CONNOR COSTA: We didn't really do or at least I didn't really do things differently. My mom's house was the house where all my friend were hanging out. I will tell you a little bit about your son. I went to one COLDA retreat and had lots and lots of COLDA friends. COLDA is not just actually for adults. COLDA has things for children, too. I think that it helps particularly the eight, ten, eleven-year-old kids to have contact with other children whose parents are like their parents. It gives them an area to vent frustrations and compare and to laugh. Listen to the COLDA adults who will tell you the same story about testing to find out whether their parents were really deaf. Unplugging the vacuum cleaner to see if Mom would notice. They all did something like that. That interaction, I think, can be really, really helpful for kids.

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She received her Masters Degree from the University of Utah in Social Work and is a licensed clinical social worker. Her goal to become a therapist in private practice has been put on hold while she serves as Division Director.

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