

## SYSTEM REMOVES BACKGROUND NOISE

## Hearing loss group gets looped

By Shelley Shelton  
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The Adult Loss of Hearing Association is looped, and it wants you to get looped, too.

That's not a reference to holiday overindulgence.

Rather, the group would like to see more public places and private homes with hearing-impaired residents - install induction looping technology that sends out a wireless signal to certain hearing aids or to portable headsets.

When someone is "in the loop," he or she can hear speech clearly because sound is being delivered directly from the source, be it a television or a live person, without any background noise.

ALOHA has kicked its awareness campaign into high gear with the renovation of the assistive listening center at its offices, 4001 E. Fort Lowell Road.

The James S. and Dyan Pignatelli Assistive Listening Media Center - named after the former chairman and president of Tucson Electric Power Co. and his wife, who donated the money to improve the center - was dedicated Nov. 21.

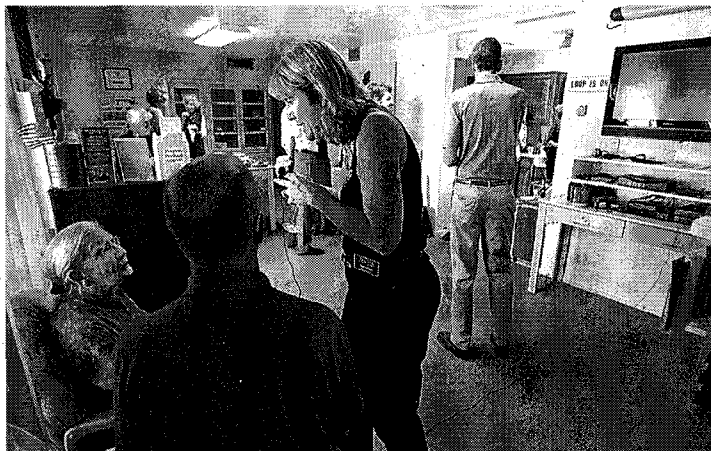
The center features a wall-mounted flat-screen television that displays closed captioning and uses a wireless control panel that allows hearing-impaired people to sample the difference between infrared, frequency and inductive looping technologies to improve sound.

Each type of technology also networks with a CD and DVD player and a telephone, and people can flip a switch to try them all out.

The setup replaces an old analog television with rabbit ears and different boxes that had to be disconnected and reconnected between uses because only one type of box could be connected at a time, said Pam Wood, an audiologist in private practice and vice president of the ALOHA board.

"And half the time, if you don't get it plugged in right, it doesn't work," she said.

Her favorite technology, by far,



JEFFREY SCOTT / ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Pam Wood explains induction looping technology to Ruby Markland as Lou Touchette listens in during an open house Saturday at the ALOHA office.

is the inductive looping. Most hearing aids - about 70 percent to 75 percent - are capable of being equipped with the "telecoils" that can pick up looping, Wood said.

At a cost of \$200 to \$300 to install in a room, the looping cuts out room acoustics, reverberation and the distance sound must travel to the ear, she said.

"When you're in the loop, it's like sitting inside your TV set," she said. Someone listening to a television via a looped system could actually turn the set all the way down so others in the room don't have to hear it.

The Pignatellis became involved after Wood and two other ALOHA representatives went to TEP to make a pitch about looping when Pignatelli was still in charge there, Wood said.

Pignatelli, who is hard of hearing, had a conference room and board room looped after that, she said.

At the upgraded assistive listening center, there is someone available to demonstrate the devices and answer questions about hearing loss in general, said Lou Touchette, an ALOHA board member who describes himself as profoundly hard of hearing.

"Without a loop, I cannot understand what is said on my TV," he wrote in an e-mail. "With the

loop in conjunction with the telecoils in my hearing aids, the sound is right there in my ears?"

Anne Lopez, director of volunteers at Handmaker Jewish Services for the Aging, 2221 N. Rosemont Blvd., said she has seen a change in people's behavior since the facility's multipurpose room got looped earlier this year.

"We had a group in here celebrating Tucson's oldest Jewish citizens in September," she said. "There were probably 100 people in the room, most of whom have hearing disabilities, and nobody complained about not being able

## HELP FROM ALOHA

ALOHA, The Adult Loss of Hearing Association, formed in Tucson in 1984 to meet the needs of people coping with losing their hearing. The group offers the following services:

- Weekly peer support meetings.
  - Cochlear implant information meetings eight times a year.
  - Lip-reading classes.
  - Conversational sign language classes.
  - One-on-one demonstrations of assistive listening devices.
  - Lending library of videos, books and magazines for members.
  - Loop amplification demonstrations for homes and businesses.
- For more information, go online to [www.alohaaz.org](http://www.alohaaz.org) or call 795-9887.

to hear?"

That was very unusual, she said:

"Traditionally, when we have youth groups in here to perform, it's very hard for people to hear what's going on and to see what's going on. We don't have a stage area," Lopez said. "It makes a big difference when they can hear what's going on?"

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